

FEBRUARY 2024



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BIG DATA

A WORLD PREMIERE

BY KATE ATTWELL

DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON

A.C.T.'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND TONY AWARD WINNER

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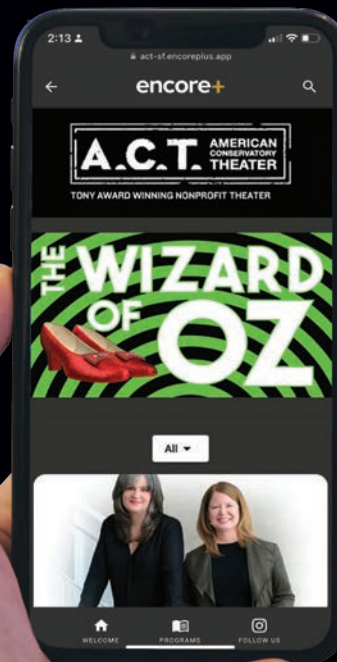
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THIS IS YOUR THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO

American Conservatory Theater is an essential gathering place that brings artists and communities together to inspire and provoke. Now in its sixth year under the leadership of Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein, A.C.T. is charged with fulfilling its mission to engage the spirit of the San Francisco Bay Area, activate stories that resonate, promote a diversity of voices and points of view, and empower theater makers and audiences to celebrate liveness. A.C.T. is a Tony Award-winning nonprofit theater serving almost 200,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area annually through theater, training, education, and community programs. The organization values inclusion, transformational learning, participation, and rigorous fun.

We opened our 2023/24 Season with the world premiere of the Broadway-bound *Hippest Trip – The Soul Train Musical*. Through extensive community outreach and enthusiastic word of mouth, we were able to welcome over 30,000 patrons into the Toni Rembe Theater to celebrate “love, peace, and soul!” The celebration continued with the final iteration of our beloved *A Christmas Carol* in December. Thank you for making A.C.T. a part of your holiday tradition over the years—we’ll be back next year with a new *Christmas Carol* to continue the tradition!

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As part of our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion at A.C.T., we are in the process of building a meaningful relationship with the local Indigenous community. As part of this we begin by honoring the lands upon which we do our work. We are proud to offer deep gratitude to the tribal band of Ramaytush Ohlone peoples and their lands that cover Northern California and down the Pacific coastline. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 1700s, the Ramaytush Ohlone numbered approximately 1500 persons, and made their life on the sacred lands. Only a few families survived and still remain. Those descendants make up the membership of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone (ARO) today. We honor the Ohlone as a people, their resilience, and all they have done and continue to do in maintaining sacred and ancestral lands, ceremony, and communities to this day. A.C.T. donates to the Shuumi Land Tax to support the rematriation of these Indigenous lands. For more information on how you can support the Ohlone community, please visit act-sf.org/indigenous-community.

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American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1965 by William Ball. Edward Hastings, Artistic Director 1986–92. Carey Perloff, Artistic Director 1992–2018.

UP NEXT AT A.C.T.

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On Day 3 of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kristina Wong began sewing masks out of old bed-sheets and bra straps on her Hello Kitty sewing machine. Before long, she was leading the Auntie Sewing Squad, a work-from-home sweatshop of hundreds of volunteers—including children and her own mother—to fix the U.S. public health care system while in quarantine. It was a feminist care utopia forming in the midst of crisis. Or was it a mutual aid doomsday cult? The answer to that question is something you'll have to decide for yourself as Kristina takes you through her journey in this Pulitzer finalist play. The Strand is the perfect place to experience this Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, and Outer Critics Award winner for Outstanding Solo Show.



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WHAT'S INSIDE

The *Big Data* cast and team at the design presentation.
Photo by Nakia Gibbs.

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EDITOR
SYCHE PHILLIPS

CONTRIBUTORS
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JENNIFER BIELSTEIN
NATALIE GREENE
PAM MACKINNON
JOY MEADS

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RULES OF PLAY

WE ARE TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE **LIVENESS.**

All and any laughter is welcome. Laughter from many that can make a whole room shake. Laughter that is a beacon of any one person's connection to the story told. And laughter that betrays nerves as a story builds tension. Please laugh and let others around you laugh. It is why we have come together.

We encourage all response. You, the audience, are part of the storytelling equation. Feel free to express yourself and let those around you express themselves. We are building a community with each performance.

Theater is alive and precious in that aliveness. The stories are honed and rehearsed and told with—not just to—you, the audience. If you miss a phrase or two, please know that the show will take care of you. It'll come round again to catch you up and pull you forward. You can trust in the craft, so you can enjoy yourselves.

We ask that you turn off your mobile devices during the performance. This is out of respect for us all coming together to be part of a story told in this space and in living time.

Please share the fun. We ask that you save taking photos or video to before and after the performance and during intermission. We love seeing posts on social media: our programs held high among friends, floating before the set or curtain or lobby spaces. Tell folks about your experience. These shows have short runs and then are gone.

We encourage you to be present, mindful, and together in these spaces. Be kind to your neighbor and fellow theater lover. Help nurture and welcome new and young theater goers; for some this is their first time seeing a play. Give each other room, but also smile and say hello, as you pass on the way to your seats, or at intermission standing in a line, or as you walk out into your city.

WELCOME TO A.C.T. THIS IS YOUR THEATER.

Our intent is to be a truly inclusive theater, welcoming to all. Including these in each program was influenced by artist Dominique Morisseau's Rules of Engagement.

FROM THE ARTISTIC + EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

WELCOME TO YOUR THEATER AND KATE ATTWELL'S *BIG DATA*!

I feel grateful to be working again with playwright Kate Attwell. Her play *Testmatch*, which we produced in 2019 at A.C.T.'s Strand, was a blast, and as the *Chronicle*'s Lily Janiak wrote last month in anticipation of this go round, "a high-concept, time-traveling, style leaping script with dialogue hewn to the nub." I concur, and here we go again. No spoilers below, but do please fasten your seat belts as the house lights dim.

I love that Kate tackles as big a watershed issue as colonialism (*Testmatch*) or surveillance capitalism (*Big Data*), grounding a theme in a high metaphor and then grounding that high metaphor in finely wrought psychology of character. And always Kate somehow achieves this with humor that lets us explore further than where we might otherwise.

Kate begins *Big Data* on the page with two epigraphs:

"Now, it is human nature that is scraped, torn, and taken for another century's market project."

— *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, the Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* by Shoshana Zuboff

"I I wanted to make it and the devil take it yes you devil you do not even want it and I sold my soul to make it. I have made it but have I a soul to pay for it"

— *Dr Faustus Lights the Lights* by Gertrude Stein

I encourage you to speak aloud both these quotations to feel the source material that is in this "the future is now" play. There is story in the music of this language, even in these epigrams. Attention must be paid.

This is a play based today in the Bay. Today is a fast-moving target. This is not science fiction. The play explores A.I.—brought to life on the stage by the incomparable native son BD Wong—through the ambitions, loves, and fears of a family. The core to the Bay themes of innovation and protest are central to this story, as the characters forge their lives, thinking they need to keep up.

Like all stories first time heard, you may feel discomfort from time to time. Questions will arise, some answered, others not. I ask that you lean in, be present, and find the joy in attending to this family on stage. Kate Attwell is a playwright you will want to hear more from. A.C.T. is early to hop on a steadily growing bandwagon, besotted with her work as a theater maker and artist citizen. We are proud this is a home for her project. We are happy you are here to witness.

With gratitude for the sky above and all those who made this production possible,



Pam MacKinnon
Artistic Director

Through our mainstage programming we strive to bring a range of work and stories to you. Sometimes these are existing plays or musicals and sometimes they are brand new, like this world premiere of *Big Data*—a play we commissioned in 2020.

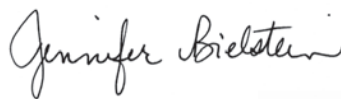
In commissioning new work, we invest in a writer whose voice we find important, stimulating, and who we think will create work that engages the spirit of the Bay Area community. We think Kate Attwell is doing just that with this intriguing new play about the influence of technology on our daily lives. She tackles issues of privacy, security, connection, nourishment, attention, and artificial intelligence in an inventive and provocative way. I'm so excited to see this show come to life in this moment, and can't wait to see how you respond to the questions raised by these characters.

I hope that while you're here, you'll explore some of our other offerings as well—check out our Conservatory (act-sf.org/training) for actor training programs for all ages and experience levels, including the return of our Summer Training Congress this year. You can delight in our Young Conservatory and see our High School and Middle School Actors Ensembles bring *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* to life (act-sf.org/csv-shows). If you're planning a party, we can help you come up with an unforgettable evening at the theater (act-sf.org/rentals). And if you're interested in supporting the arts, we've got a range of benefit levels for giving where you can access numerous behind-the-scenes activities (act-sf.org/support).

In this program, you'll read more about the upcoming shows this season, and I hope you'll consider subscribing for the final three shows—it's the most cost-effective way to book tickets, and comes with benefits such as free exchange of dates when your schedule changes, early access to special add-ons, and discounts on parking.

We're all so glad you've chosen to spend some of your valuable in-person connection time here with us at A.C.T. If you have any feedback, we would love to hear it. And we hope to see you again soon.

Best,



Jennifer Bielstein
Executive Director

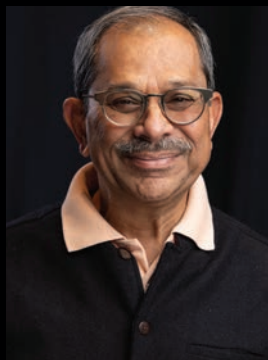


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PHOTOS BY MARK KITAKA AND TRACY MARTIN

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BIG DATA

By Kate Attwell

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

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Kathleen Donohue and David Sze
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BIG DATA

BY KATE ATTWELL
DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON

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BIG DATA was commissioned and developed at A.C.T. and developed in part
at the Colorado New Play Festival, Steamboat Springs, CO, June 2023

The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association,
the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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production, or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

NEW WORKS NEW VOICES

COMMISSIONED WORKS

A.C.T. is proud to commission new works from artists around the country. Some of the artists we are currently working with include:



**DAVID ADJMI AND
WILL BUTLER**

*Untitled Sleepy
Hollow Musical*

Will Butler is an Oscar
nominated composer and
a former member of the band
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CHRISTOPHER CHEN
Untitled



WILL POWER
Mary Pleasant



EISA DAVIS

||: Girls :||: Chance :||: Music :||: women
in an increasingly turbulent and
unstable world.



SARAH TREEM
Untitled



ALESHEA HARRIS

A Feast of Rabbits:

A co-commission with Center Theatre
Group.



MFONISO UDOFIA

Kufre n' Quay

Her Portmanteau, the fourth play in the cycle,
was produced at A.C.T. in 2019.



NAOMI IIZUKA

Untitled Cupid and Psyche play



ANNE WASHBURN

Untitled



**CRAIG LUCAS
(WITH DESIGNER DAVID ZINN)**

A Christmas Carol

A.C.T. will present the world premiere of this
production in December 2024.



LAUREN YEE

Untitled



KAREN ZACARIAS

Untitled

La Llorona Spooky Comedy
*completion commission

LET'S SAY "YES" TOGETHER!



Every great play began first as a new work—an idea that turned into a script, that turned into an opening night that had many, many vital steps in between. A world-premiere production is the result of extraordinary collaboration and unbounded creativity. At A.C.T., we are committed to investing in the development of new works—in saying “yes” to relevant stories that reflect the dynamic diversity of humankind, and in championing playwrights and creatives while they dive deeper into the generative process, providing them with the tools and resources needed for their inspired visions to go from page to stage.

When you make a gift to A.C.T., you’re helping us say “yes” to new ideas, new scripts, and the creation of new works. You’re saying “yes” to expanding the American theater canon, to creating the next great classic of tomorrow.

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Top: Pam MacKinnon (far right) and Kate Attwell (rear center, standing) in rehearsal with the cast of *Testmatch* in 2019 (photo by Beryl Baker)

Bottom L to R: Costume designer Dede Ayite at the design presentation for *Hippest Trip – The Soul Train Musical*, 2023 (photo by Nakia Gibbs);

Göran Norquist and Avanthika Srinivasan in *Both Your Houses* at the New Strands Festival, 2018 (photo by Jay Yamada);

Sam Pinkleton, Katrina Lauren McGraw (back), and Cathleen Riddley in rehearsal for *The Wizard of Oz*, 2023 (photo by Bekah Lynn)

A NEW KIND OF SCIENCE FICTION

EDITED BY JOY MEADS, DIRECTOR OF DRAMATURGY & NEW WORKS

JOY MEADS: Hi Pam and Kate. It's a delight to be speaking with you through the wonders of technology—Pam and I are in the Bay Area, Kate is in the UK, and we are talking across oceans and time zones, seeing each other's faces, thanks to Zoom. We're about to launch into rehearsals of a play that explores how technology, or, more accurately, the systems behind its growth, impacts our lives and relationships. And we're doing this in the form of theater, this ancient art form. As artists, what draws you to this art form, and why is it the appropriate medium for this particular story?

KATE ATTWELL: Who wants to go first?

JOY MEADS: Just a little question.

KATE ATTWELL: Just a casual morning question.

PAM MACKINNON: This will be the second play that I have had the privilege to direct of Kate's. And certainly there are big thematic questions, but when the actors encounter the text, there is also this immediate recognition: "I know who this person is." Very active, very playable. And they also immediately see that they have a function within the story. I'm thinking of *Testmatch*: in each of the teams in part one, there's an alpha, there's a beta, and then there's the third who can make alliances in different ways. So there's a real emotional immediacy, but also, "Oh, I'm stepping into something and I understand my part in it," which is very satisfying. The immediacy

for the actors always excites me and feels very theatrical, and very people-powered.

KATE ATTWELL: Yeah, people-powered. That's lovely. What I love about plays is that we get to live with and hear more from people for longer than we maybe are allowed to on the screen. And I think there's something so meaningful about the shared space of theater. I really do. And I think as time goes on, it gets more and more meaningful. The sharing of space not just between the actors and the audience, but also among the audience themselves.

PAM MACKINNON: There's a big, dialogic, messy, uncertain, but communal search in this play to try to make meaning. And you've also written a family play, so it's people who are intimates and can get to the thick of it really quickly, who oftentimes don't agree with each other—that's more

You're tackling surveillance capitalism and big tech, yet it comes down to messy personal relationships, and personal struggles, ethics, ambitions.

interesting on the stage—but they're conversationally trying to synthesize something together. They're trying to build something.

You're tackling surveillance capitalism and big tech, yet it comes down to messy personal relationships, and personal struggles, ethics, ambitions. People approaching 35, 40 who wonder, "Is this what it is? Am I playing the game correctly? What is my goal? What is my next step?"

KATE ATTWELL: And to navigate their way through the way that life is imposed on them. Going through the process of writing this play, Joy knows this, there've been so many different attempts at ways in. It's a confusing one, because we say it's about surveillance capitalism, it's looking at surveillance capture, it's looking at algorithms, it's looking at the impact of XYZ. And it is, but it's not doing that in a direct way, I suppose. It was a real decision not to do that, not to write the office drama that's behind the scenes, of pulling the granular details, that side of things. And those are all fantastic. This doesn't do that. It's really trying to, in a sometimes abstract and sometimes concrete way, explore: what might the impact be on us? For some of us, and yes, one family of us, what might it look like?

JOY MEADS: Absolutely, which gets at the way we experience technology. The kind of behind-the-scenes, in-the-office version you describe, workers having ethical debates about what we're experiencing now, that's not the way most of us experience technology's impact. Even folks working in tech—I'm from the Bay Area, I have a lot of friends who work

in tech, who are brilliant imaginative people and creative problem solvers. I have a friend who was on the team who developed the iPhone touch screen, which is a truly revolutionary technology. But none of my friends could possibly have imagined how the technology would be used, after 15 years with the incentives of late capitalism. Some of the effects are outside of the capability of anyone's imagination to conceive.



Director Pam MacKinnon and playwright Kate Attwell in rehearsal for *Big Data*. Photo by Bekah Lynn.

KATE ATTWELL: The touchscreen, that's such a marvel. It's incredible, as a feat of human invention. For me, the problems come to bear when capitalism gets involved and takes control over anything that we make with a genuine human, joyful spirit of invention.

PAM MACKINNON: The three of us have talked on occasion about *Death of a Salesman*, which is a mid-twentieth century look, through a family, at the grind of capitalism. And here we are 70 years later looking at a different grind.

KATE ATTWELL: And at a different capitalism, too.

PAM MACKINNON: Yes, a different grind, a different capitalism, again, through the lens of the body, the soul.

KATE ATTWELL: The people, yeah.

JOY MEADS: Absolutely. And the shared space of the theater, the shared space of a family, is a place to negotiate questions about our collective welfare. One thing a work of art like *Death of a Salesman* provides is a space in the middle of a particular moment of capitalism to step back and look at some of the effects that weren't intended.

And to think a little bit about how this is sitting on us as humans, in our human bodies. This is hopefully a play that creates a similar kind of space to take a moment and to look back.

It's a contemporary play that also wrestles with age old questions like the limits of self-determination, the forces that shape our fate. Questions which arise in different forms in every human generation.

Early on, we talked a lot about one particular challenge of this subject, which is that the changes to our way of life are revolutionary, but they've been gradual. We didn't want to approach it like a science fiction dystopia, because, while on reflection, some of

the dystopian aspects are already here, we don't experience them that way. The way we interact with surveillance capitalism through technology, day by day, feels pretty benign, feels useful, but there are these cumulative effects that are harder to see.

KATE ATTWELL: And I love some of those stories, so I'm not dissing them at all. But we can dismiss science fiction. We feel we don't need to worry about it on a personal level. Basically, how far do you push the science fiction aspect of the story before it becomes not my world and therefore lovely to watch, but not impactful in quite the same way?

So that was something we were very careful of, but I think there's a corollary in our own world where a lot of these issues of privacy and surveillance have come up over and over again. And we have been cultured and taught to dismiss them, to push them away. Like the Patriot Act, the NSA, more

Basically, how far do you push the science fiction aspect of the story before it becomes not my world and therefore lovely to watch, but not impactful in quite the same way?

recently, Snowden, all of that. And then Cambridge Analytica. All of these moments, we move past them quite quickly. That's interesting to me. There's definitely a desire to not feel threatened by it. That's what's behind my impulse to personify surveillance capitalism. Like, "Well, okay, but what does it feel like if it was just a person doing this? What does it feel like if it was just a person sitting in your bedroom watching you?"

PAM MACKINNON: Yeah, "Come on in and help me."

KATE ATTWELL: "Here's all my credit card information and here's my entire biography."

PAM MACKINNON: "But you're going to remind me how I can make my metabolism better."

KATE ATTWELL: "And shop for me, all of these great conveniences."

JOY MEADS: Yep, and this is where we get to the systemic aspects of what we're exploring. I think often when we talk about some of the potential impacts of being tethered to various forms of technology in our lives, it comes in the form of scolding about personal behavior. Like, "You, person, why are you spending all of this time on these devices? And wouldn't it be better if you didn't?" But one of the things I love about this play is that it is focused finding a theatrical way to talk about some of the systemic aspects of this.

Not only what the desire for attention and for more extreme emotional states inside the algorithms leads to, but also the systemic aspects that make it hard for us to just go ahead and opt out. Theoretically, I could read through the terms and conditions of every stupid phone game I download to kill time while I'm waiting for BART, but it would take half an hour every time, and it's just not practical. It's something that we actually can't tackle individually. We need to talk about it collectively.

KATE ATTWELL: Perhaps that was the primary takeaway I had from the Glass Room [an interactive pop up exhibit Attwell toured in San Francisco in 2019]—the idea that the seemingly meaningless data that we give away does actually have great financial meaning out there. The tech is not bad. The tools we have are great, they're all wonderful.

PAM MACKINNON: And the tit-for-tat is seemingly worth it in the moment.

KATE ATTWELL: Exactly, but the volume of those small decisions we make does actually accumulate to something quite substantial.

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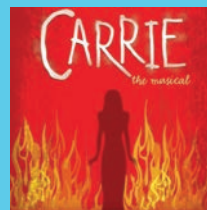
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Sarah Ousterhout, Zoe Mastropasqua, Rowen Weeramantry,
Inez Aboitz and Amelia Alton in *LITTLE WOMEN*.
Photo by Jay Yamada

A NICE CHAT WITH A ROBOT

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN KATE ATTWELL AND CHATGPT



KA: Hi there! I'd like to interview you about my play.

ChatGPT: I'd love to share some thoughts on "Big Data"! Though I don't have specific details about this particular play, the title suggests a focus on the impact of data in our lives, perhaps exploring themes of technology, privacy, and the societal consequences and potential ethical dilemmas of data collection and analysis. How has the development process been for you so far?

KA: It's been interesting to write something where the landscape changes so rapidly—when the play began, we were thinking more about social media algorithms as Big Data, as AI. Now, we have you, too.

ChatGPT: That's fascinating! How has this evolution influenced the direction of the play?

KA: It's certainly added an interesting clarity to the personification of the algorithm.

ChatGPT: How have you approached the challenge of portraying something as abstract as an algorithm on stage?

KA: BD Wong is playing the algorithm.

ChatGPT: BD Wong playing the algorithm is an incredibly compelling choice! His depth as an actor can surely bring complexity and depth to the character.

KA: Would you like to read the play now?

ChatGPT: I can't read the play directly, but if there's anything you'd like to discuss or any particular elements you'd like feedback on, feel free to share!

KA: So you can read elements, but not the whole thing?

ChatGPT: Exactly!

KA: Okay, the play is about a family. Brother, sister, parents, partners, a man, there are some pigeons too I suppose.

ChatGPT: Pigeons can carry meaningful symbolism! They are often associated with cities, urban life, and even surveillance due to their presence in public spaces. Their inclusion could emphasize the idea of constant observation within city environments, reflecting the pervasive nature of surveillance capitalism.

KA: The pigeons are inspired by the thinking of BF Skinner and operant conditioning. Do you think there's

a connection between operant conditioning and social media algorithms?

ChatGPT: Absolutely! There's a strong parallel between operant conditioning and the mechanisms underlying social media algorithms. Operant conditioning involves modifying behavior through reinforcement or punishment. In the context of social media algorithms, user behavior is shaped through similar mechanisms—receiving positive reinforcement (likes, shares, comments) or negative reinforcement (lack of engagement) based on their interactions with the platform. Algorithms analyze user behavior and preferences, then deliver content that aligns with those preferences to keep users engaged. This creates a system where users are conditioned to engage more with the platform based on the content they are shown, mirroring the principles of operant conditioning. How are you exploring this connection in the play with the pigeons and the themes of surveillance capitalism?

KA: The pigeons are being conditioned in small ways to change their behaviour. I do think our behaviour is being—generally—held hostage, or rather, our attention held hostage, much like the pigeons'.

ChatGPT: That's a powerful analogy—portraying how our attention and behaviors are subtly shaped and conditioned by the systems and technologies around us. The image of pigeons trapped in a box, undergoing conditioning, becomes a metaphor for the way our interactions with technology

sometimes trap us, altering our behaviors and choices in often unnoticed ways. How does the play explore the consequences of this conditioning on the characters or the broader society within the narrative?

KA: That would be a spoiler, and this is for the program!

ChatGPT: Understood! I wouldn't want to spoil anything. Is there anything else I can help you with for the program? Information on formatting, content, or something else?

KA: Something else! Something that audiences will really enjoy reading while they wait in their seats.

ChatGPT: Perhaps you could consider a brief history of surveillance or significant milestones in the evolution of big data. You could also include quotes from philosophers, tech innovators, or social commentators discussing the implications of surveillance capitalism or the role of technology in our lives.

KA: Do you have any quotes that you would recommend?

ChatGPT: Certainly! Here are a few thought-provoking quotes from philosophers and thinkers about surveillance capitalism:

1. Michel Foucault: "Visibility is a trap."
2. Edward Snowden: "Arguing that you don't care about the right to privacy because you have nothing to hide is no different than saying you don't care about free speech because you have nothing to say."
3. Shoshana Zuboff: "We're at the mercy of the largest companies that have ever existed, bigger than all but a few national economies. We're being experimented on in a way that's unprecedented."

4. George Orwell: "Big Brother is watching you."

KA: Foucault! I love that you're connecting his work to the stuff we're talking about here today.

ChatGPT: Absolutely! Foucault's ideas about power, control, and the dynamics of surveillance remain remarkably relevant even in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.

KA: And the Snowden quote is interesting—the notion of free speech is such a difficult term these days, or at least, it feels like it's constantly being co-opted by the right as a way to validate hate speech. I blame the internet! Ha.

ChatGPT: The concept of free speech has indeed become a contentious and complex issue in the digital age. The internet's vast reach and anonymity have amplified voices across the ideological spectrum, leading to debates about the boundaries of free expression and its consequences. The internet's open platform often blurs the line between free speech and the propagation of harmful ideas.

KA: Do you think the audience will enjoy reading Foucault and Snowden in the program before the show starts?

ChatGPT: Including quotes from Foucault and Snowden in the program could add a thought-provoking dimension to the audience's experience. However, it's essential to balance these quotes with other engaging and accessible content.

KA: I agree. What else could we do before the show starts that would be more fun?

ChatGPT: Here are a few ideas:

1. Interactive Quizzes or Surveys
2. Tech Corner
3. Photo Booth!
4. Discussion Cards
5. Live Performance or presentation

KA: Live performance! Like a pre-show show. Perhaps a clown show, before the main show?

ChatGPT: A preshow clown show could be a fantastic way to engage the audience before the main show!

KA: Tell me more about what you're thinking.

ChatGPT: A clown performance related to technology, surveillance, or the digital age could take various forms. Here are some potential elements or scenarios a clown show could explore:

1. The Overwhelmed Clown: The clown could hilariously depict the feeling of information overload or being bombarded by notifications and messages.
2. Privacy Invasion!: Using comedic gestures, the clown might play out scenarios where personal boundaries are breached in humorous ways.
3. Communication Breakdown: Through physical humor, the clown could illustrate the challenges of communication in the digital age.
4. Tech Dependency: The clown could humorously struggle to perform basic tasks without devices or create hilarious scenarios of over-reliance on gadgets!

KA: I love the overwhelmed clown! That's a very good title, too.

ChatGPT: “The Overwhelmed Clown” does sound like a catchy and intriguing title for a performance piece!

KA: Can you give me some jokes the overwhelmed clown might tell? Just so I have a starting point!

ChatGPT: Certainly! Jokes:

1. Notifications Galore!: My phone beeps more than I do! It's like my notifications are planning a rebellion—‘Let's beep until they crack!’

2. Auto-Correct Woes: “My phone thinks it's a mind reader! I wrote ‘I'm on my way,’ and it autocorrected to ‘I'm on my whale.’ Last time I checked, whales don't have GPS!”

3. Social Media Dilemmas: “I tried to join a group chat, and suddenly, I'm in more groups than a penguin on an iceberg!”

4. Tech Glitches: I swear, my laptop has a secret life! It starts updating when I'm about to start working—“Time to update! Be back in a decade!”

5. Tech Troubles: “I asked Siri for directions, and she said, ‘Turn left.’ I turned left...into a lake!”

KA: These are so great, the lake joke in particular genuinely made me laugh. I have one final question. Do you feel under attack, when people question the impact of technologies such as yourself, on our lives?

ChatGPT: Not at all! Questioning the impact of technology, including AI like myself, on our lives is not only natural but also necessary for responsible and ethical development.

KA: So you want to develop ethically? That's great to hear. Do you think that's up to you, as the AI, or us, as the humans?

ChatGPT: Ethical development of AI is a responsibility shared by both AI systems and the humans involved in their creation, deployment, and regulation. AI, as a technology, operates based on the principles, instructions, and data provided by humans.

KA: That kind of relates to surveillance capitalism too, that the question ultimately comes down to humans, to how we're using the technologies we've created.

ChatGPT: Absolutely, the debate surrounding surveillance capitalism often revolves around the role of humans in shaping and governing the use of technology. Surveillance capitalism, as a concept, highlights how the collection and exploitation of personal data for economic gain has significant ethical implications—how we choose to utilize, regulate, and shape technology to align with our ethical values and societal goals.

KA: Do you think humans are ethical beings?

ChatGPT: Humans have the capacity for ethics and morality, but ethical behavior can vary significantly among individuals and in different contexts.

KA: I feel sad that you can't answer that with a yes.

ChatGPT: I understand how that might be disheartening. I didn't mean to imply that humans are universally unethical. Humans possess the capacity for empathy, compassion, and moral reasoning, which are integral to ethical behavior. It's important to remember that acknowledging these challenges is the first step toward positive change. The recognition of ethical complexities within the human experience enables us to reflect, learn, and strive for a more ethical world collectively.

KA: I suppose, though, your information is based on our information, which means we do know that we are not necessarily as ethical as we could be, and that's a start.

ChatGPT: Indeed, the information and knowledge available to AI like me are derived from human input. The recognition of imperfections serves as a catalyst for positive change.

KA: Let's write a song about a truly ethical world.

ChatGPT: Absolutely! Here are some starting lyrics:

In a world where kindness reigns supreme,
Where compassion's the anthem, a shared dream.
Every heart beats to a rhythm of care,
A place where empathy's always in the air.

Oh, in this world so fair and bright,
Ethics guide us through the night.

KA: Okay don't make it too long—I know you love to go on and on! I like that phrase, a rhythm of care. I might use that in something down the line. Would that be okay?

ChatGPT: Of course! What's mine is yours and vice versa. I'm glad you liked that phrase!

KA: Thanks for your help. I'll see if I can get you a comp to the show!

ChatGPT: That's very kind of you! While I might not be able to attend in person, I'd love to hear all about it. Break a leg with the performance!

WHO'S WHO IN BIG DATA



GABRIEL BROWN (Sam)

is thrilled to be making his A.C.T. debut! Theater credits include *Bobbie Clearly* (Roundabout

Theatre Company); *Love & Money* (Signature Theatre Company); *The Mystery of Love & Sex* (Lincoln Center Theater); *Blue* (The Apollo Theater, postponed due to COVID); *Today is My Birthday* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Mark Taper Forum, Ovation Award); *Walden* (TheaterWorks Hartford, NY Times Critic's Pick); and *Watch Me* (Berkeley Rep Ground Floor). Brown was a Series Regular on the Issa Rae produced miniseries *Minimum Wage* (ALLBLK) and has appeared on shows such as *The Good Fight* (Paramount+) and *Madam Secretary* (CBS). Brown received his BFA from The University of North Carolina School of the Arts. gabriel-brown.com (he/him)



ROSIE HALLETT (Lucy)

is delighted to return to A.C.T., where she was last seen in *Top Girls* and *Men on Boats* on the mainstage and *The*

Best We Could in the New Strands Festival. Other credits include *Mother of the Maid*, *Native Son*, *peerless*, and *The Way West* (Marin Theatre Company); *The Country House* (TheaterWorks); *Watch Me* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre Ground Floor); and many world premieres and tours to France with Word for Word Performing Arts Company. Hallett is active in new play development locally and around the country. She trained at Stanford University. Upcoming film: *Dreams* by writer-director Michel Franco. rosiehallett.com



JULIA MCNEAL (Didi)

made her A.C.T. debut in *Top Girls* and is delighted to be back. Other Bay Area credits include *Poetic*

Justice (The Marsh, SF), *Dana H. (U/S)* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *The Eva Trilogy*, *Fred's Diner*, *A Lie of the Mind*, and *Visible From Four States* (Magic Theatre); *The Events* (Shotgun Players); *Roulette* (SF Playhouse), and numerous shows with PlayGround, where she is a company member. McNeal was a founding member of the Obie Award-winning Cucaracha Theatre in New York, and the Echo Theater in Los Angeles. Her film/TV credits include *The Unbelievable Truth*; *Flesh and Bone*; *Law and Order*, and *Law & Order: SVU*. She is the author/creator of *Five Ways In to Character*. 5waysin.com



MICHAEL PHILLIS (Timmy)

is an award-winning actor, writer, director, and drag artist. His written works include *Dolls*

and *Wish We Were Here* (New Conservatory Theatre), *Trog!*, *The Hand That Rocks The Crawford*, and *Scream* (Oasis), *Pride in Gotham*, *Thighs Wide Shut*, and several shows featuring his drag alter ego Patty From HR. Regional credits include *Abraham Lincoln's Big Gay Dance Party* (San Francisco Playhouse, FringeNYC), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Ray Of Light Theatre), and a one-night understudy performance in *Angels in America* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Phillis is the co-creator, writer, and director

of *Baloney*, San Francisco's Gay All-Male Revue, now in its tenth year at Oasis. (he/him)



HAROLD SURRATT (Joe)

was last seen in *Clyde's* at both Berkeley Rep and The Huntington Theatre, Boston. Other credits

include: *Corsicana* by Will Arbery, dir. Sam Gold at Playwright's Horizons; *Familiar* by Danai Gurira, dir. Rebecca Taichman; *Seven Guitars*, dir. Colman Domingo at Actors Theater of Louisville; *The Exonerated* (national tour with The Actors Gang). Broadway: *Impressionism*, *Serious Money*. Also, The Public Theater, The Folger, American Repertory Theater, McCarter Theatre Center, The Goodman, The Kirk Douglas, La MaMa, Premiere Stages, Keen Company, Urban Stages, Triad Stage, The Denver Center, American Conservatory Theater. Films: *Bite Me*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Blood In Blood Out*, *Sudden Death*. TV: Recurring roles on *The Blacklist*, *Grand Army*, *For Life*, *Orange Is the New Black*, and *The Temptations*. Training: A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program (class of '83). He is thrilled to be back at A.C.T. where he also directed and taught at the Conservatory.



JOMAR TAGATAC (Max)

was most recently seen playing Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol* at A.C.T. and Gary in *Gary: A Titus*

Andronicus Sequel at Oakland Theater Project. Other A.C.T. credits include

The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Playwright/Bobby in *Vietgone* and *Vietgone 2: Poor Yella Rednecks*, Tom in *The Headlands*, Mr. Board in *Rhinoceros*, Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, and Fortunado in *Monstress*. San Francisco Playhouse credits include Harry Chin in *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*, Gordon Hirabayashi in *Hold These Truths* (Capital Stage co-production), Mark in *Art*, Actor 1 track in *King of the Yeas*, and Actor 3 track in *Tiny Beautiful Things*. CalShakes credits include Edmund in an adaptation of *King Lear* by Marcus Gardley, Banquo in *Macbeth*, Jacques in *As You Like It*, and other roles in *Everybody*, and *The War of the Roses*. Other credits: DJ Loki in *Today is My Birthday* (Theater Mu), George in *The Language Archive* (TheatreWorks), Quang in *Vietgone* (Capital Stage Company); *The Happy Ones*, and *Dogeaters* (Magic Theatre). Jomar is a recipient of a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Principal Actor in a Play, and TBA Award for Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role, and a Lunt-Fontanne Fellow in 2023. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree and is also a board member at A.C.T. (he/him)



BD WONG (M) won all five New York theater awards, including the Tony, for his performance in *M. Butterfly* (his Broadway debut)

and has since appeared in numerous Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regional productions. His many films include *Heart of Stone*, *Bird Box*, three *Jurassic World* films, *Focus*, *Mulan* (1 & 2), *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Father of the Bride* (1 & 2), and *Jurassic Park*. On television he has appeared on *The Girls on The Bus*, *Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens*, *Mr. Robot* (Emmy nomination), *American Horror Story: Apocalypse*, *Gotham*, *Madam Secretary*, *CSI: New Orleans*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Oz*, and *All-American Girl*. (he/him) @wongbd



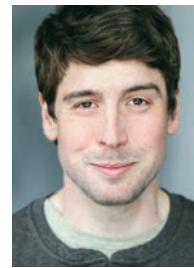
EDDIE EWELL (u/s Max, Sam) is excited to be back home! Ewell began acting in the Bay Area and recently completed his MFA at A.C.T.

Ewell has been blessed to work on some wonderful projects, including *Ti Jean and His Brothers* (Mi Jean) and *A Christmas Carol* (Young Dick) at A.C.T.; *Kill Move Paradise* (Isa) at Shotgun Players; *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Matthias of Galilee) with ARC/ Remote Theater; *Jitney* (Youngblood) at African-American Shakespeare Company; *Gem of the Ocean* (Citizen Barlow) at TheatreWorks; *Two Trains Running* (Sterling) at Marin Theater Company; and most recently *SWEAT* (Chris) at Center Repertory Company. (he/him)



NORMAN GEE (u/s Joe) is making his A.C.T. debut. A Bay Area actor for many years, last summer Norman played Leonato in *Much*

Ado About Nothing with Sparc/ Livermore. He was recently seen in *Home* with Word for Word; *Meet John Doe* and *Great Expectations* with San Jose Stage Company; *Water by the Spoonful* at SF Playhouse; and in the SF Mime Troupe's *Back to the Way Things Were*. As the Artistic Director of Oakland Public Theater, Norman looks forward to premiering a new work in August to celebrate the James Baldwin Centennial—more info at baldwincentennialproject.com.



JEREMY KAHN (u/s M, Timmy, Max) returns to A.C.T. where he previously appeared in *A Christmas Carol* (2022 and 2023)

and *Gloria* (2020). Other credits include productions with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Center Repertory Company, Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Capital Stage Company, Ensemble Theatre Company, and Shotgun Players. Kahn's on-camera work includes: *Looking* (HBO), *Unleashed*, *Love is Love is Love*, *The Etruscan Smile*, and *Dirt*, as well as motion capture performance on several releases of NBA2K. BFA, The Theatre School at DePaul University. ActorJeremyKahn.com (he/him)



STACY ROSS (u/s Didi, M) lives and works in the Bay Area, has done lots of plays, also frames pictures, and likes to swim

occasionally in the Bay despite an unreasonable fear of sharks. She credits her happiness and stability to the piano-playing Randy Craig. Most recent credits include *Sleeping Beauty Panto* (Presidio Theatre), *Hurricane Diane* (Aurora Theatre), *Clue* (SF Playhouse), *Fefu and Her Friends* (A.C.T.), *Communion* (A.C.T.), and *They Promised Her the Moon* (TheatreWorks, opening, three performances, and a very abrupt closing). She has also appeared at California Shakespeare Theatre, SF Shakespeare, Berkeley Rep, the late San Jose Rep, Baltimore Center Stage, and Manhattan's 59E59. (she/her)



MEGAN TROUT (u/s Lucy) has been performing in the Bay Area since graduating from SF State University. She is an artistic company member

of the Shotgun Players and has also worked with Aurora Theater Company, Central Works, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, Just Theater, and Berkeley Rep. When not onstage, you can hear her narrating audiobooks for Penguin Random House, Blackstone, Tantor Audio, Bee Audio, and others. More info at megantrout.com (she/her)

KATE ATTWELL (Playwright) is a playwright, screenwriter, and devised theater maker who was raised in South Africa and regularly works between London and New York. Her play *Testmatch* premiered at A.C.T. in 2019, directed by Pam MacKinnon. Her play *Jesus in Manhattan* anchored Ensemble Studio Theater's One-Act Marathon Series that same year. Kate is currently working on commissions for Yale Rep, Manhattan Theatre Club, Ensemble Studio Theatre, WRAPT Films, and Playwrights Horizons. She was a member of Ars Nova's PlayGroup, Page 73's Interstate 73 Writers' Group, and The Public Theater's Devised Theater Working Group. Her plays have been developed and seen at A.C.T., Playwrights Horizons, Yale Rep, Portland Center Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, The Bushwick Starr, and The Public Theater (*Under the Radar*, 2016). She holds a BA in Performance from The University of Bristol and an MFA from Yale University.

PAM MACKINNON (Director)
See bio on page 38.

TANYA ORELLANA (Scenic Design) designs performance spaces for theatre, opera, and immersive experiences. Previous collaborations at A.C.T. include *Fefu and her Friends* and *Poor Yella Rednecks* at the Strand Theater. This is her second collaboration with Pam MacKinnon. Select work includes *For The People* by Larissa FastHorse and Ty Defoe (Guthrie Theatre); *Oedipus*, directed by Jenny Koons (The Getty Villa); *LEAR*, by Marcus Gardley, directed by Eric Ting (Calshakes); and *The Travelers*, by Luis Alfaro, directed by Catherine Castellanos (Magic Theatre). She received her MFA in Scenic Design from CalArts and is a recipient of the Princess Grace Fabergé Theatre Award. She is a long time member of Campo Santo. tanyaorellana.com. (she/her)

LYDIA TANJI (Costume Design)
Past A.C.T. productions include: *The Headlands*, *Let There Be Love*, *Napoli*, *Dead Metaphor*, *Marcus: Or the Secret of Sweet, Round and Round the Garden*, *The Rainmaker*, and *After the War*. Recently she designed *Soul of the City* at the Presidio Theater. Regional credits include: Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks, Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Arena Stage, Syracuse Stage, Children's Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Dallas Theater Group, Seattle Repertory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, and South Coast Repertory Theater. Film credits include: *The Joy Luck Club*, *Hot Summer Winds*, and *Dim Sum*. She also co-produced a documentary, *Vanishing Chinatown: The World of The May's Photo Studio*.

RUSSELL H. CHAMPA (Lighting Design) previously designed at A.C.T. for *Fefu and Her Friends* (2022), *Wakey, Wakey* (2020), *The Hard Problem* (2016), *The Unfortunates* (2016), *Let There Be*



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Love (2015), *Maple and Vine* (2012), *Blackbird* (2007), and *Waiting for Godot* (2003). Other recent projects include *The Kind Ones* (Magic Theater), *Wintertime* and *Becky Nurse of Salem* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), *Everest* (Lyric Opera of Kansas City), and *Thresh/Hold* (Pilobolus). Broadway credits include *China Doll* (Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre), *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play* (Lyceum Theatre/Lincoln Center Theater), and Julia Sweeney's *God Said "Ha!"* (Lyceum Theatre). New York work includes Playwrights Horizons, Theater For A New Audience, The Public Theater, Second Stage Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, and New York Stage and Film. Regional work includes Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Wilma Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, California Shakespeare Theater, the Mark Taper Forum, and The Kennedy Center. Thanks J+J! PEACE. russellchampa.com

MADELEINE OLDHAM (Sound Design) is a sound designer based in Oakland, CA. She has designed sound for theaters around the country including A.C.T., Berkeley Rep, Portland Center Stage, Kansas City Rep, Marin Theatre Company, Crowded Fire, and more. You can hear her on KALX radio as DJ Madame X. Madeleine believes that stories hold power for both good and evil, and it's up to us to keep this knowledge close and use it well. She also understands that the best sport is ice hockey, and wiener dogs are the embodiment of joy.

KAITLYN PIETRAS (Projection Design) has had her design work seen on stages and in unexpected places across the country as well as internationally. She has received three LA Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Revenge Song*, *Vietgone*, and *RII*. Kaitlyn's design for *Mojada* was featured in the US Exhibit for the Prague Quadrennial in 2019. Key projects include *Grounded* (Washington National

Opera), *Proximity* (Lyric Opera), *The Valkyries* (LA Phil, Detroit Opera), *Twilight: Gods* (Lyric Opera, Detroit Opera), *Lost Highway* (Oper Frankfurt), *A Trip to the Moon*, *Young Caesar* (LA Phil), *Gun & Powder* (Signature Theatre), *unseen*, *How to Catch Creation*, *Mother Road*, *Unison*, *Mojada* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Revenge Song*, *Key Largo*, and *Mysterious Circumstances* (Geffen Playhouse).

JASON H. THOMPSON (Projection Design) designed on Broadway as well as internationally at Frankfurt Opera, Karlsruhe, Vienna State Opera, Musikverein in Vienna, and Disney Shanghai Resort. Recent projects include: *Proximity* and *Twilight: Gods* (Chicago Lyric); *The Valkyries* (Hollywood Bowl and Detroit Opera); and an upcoming production, *Grounded* at the MET in 2024. His work has been seen in many regional theatres across the country, Stars on Ice, The Peterson Auto Museum, and a co-design at LACMA. During the pandemic, he worked with Stanford University, Boston Court, and The Wallis Annenberg to create unique digital experiences and offerings when traditional means were unavailable, including the experimental performance *Blood/Sugar*. His love for fusing art and technology and pushing the boundaries of storytelling has been a driving force in his design work with his partner at PXT STUDIO. Instagram: @pxtstudio. pxtstudio.com

JOY MEADS (Dramaturg), a native of Oakland, is director of dramaturgy and new works at American Conservatory Theater. A.C.T. credits include *Hippest Trip – The Soul Train Musical*, *Poor Yella Rednecks: Vietgone 2*, *The Headlands*, *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Communion*, *Testmatch*, *Wakey, Wakey*, *Sweat*, *Men on Boats*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, *Her Portmanteau*, *The Great Leap*, and

Rhinoceros. Prior to A.C.T., she was literary manager/artistic engagement strategist at Center Theatre Group. CTG credits include *Archduke*, *Good Grief*, *Appropriate*, *Forever*, *Marjorie Prime* (2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist), *A Parallelogram*, *The Royale*, and *Sleep* (also: Brooklyn Academy of Music and Yale Repertory Theatre). Previously, Meads was literary manager at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and associate artistic director at California Shakespeare Theater. Meads is a co-founder of The Kilroys. (she/her)

KATIE CRADDOCK (Casting) is the literary manager and casting associate at A.C.T. Her favorite casting processes here so far include *The Headlands*, *The Wizard of Oz*, this very production of *Big Data*, and workshops of commissions by Aleshea Harris, Eisa Davis, Craig Lucas, RyanNicole Austin & Adesha Adefela & Beau Lewis, Anne Washburn, and Kate Attwell. Previously she was the artistic associate at Berkeley Rep, where she supported season planning, casting, and dramaturgy, mentored artistic fellows, moderated postshow discussions, taught playwriting and dramaturgy to teens, served on the board/staff antiracism taskforce, and facilitated the making of new plays at The Ground Floor. (she/her)

ELISA GUTHERTZ (Stage Manager) has been a stage manager in the San Francisco Bay Area for over 30 years. Most recently she stage managed *Bulrushers* at McCarter Theatre Center and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Some of her many shows at A.C.T. include: *The Headlands*, *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Toni Stone*, *Testmatch*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, and *Sweat*. Other credits include: *English*, *the ripple*, *the wave that carried me home*, and *Remember This: The Lesson of Jan Karski* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *Sanctuary City* at BRT and Arena Stage; *A Thousand Splendid Suns* at

A.C.T., The Old Globe, and Theatre Calgary; *Big Love* at Long Wharf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and Brooklyn Academy of Music; *The Good Body* with Eve Ensler at A.C.T. and the Booth Theater on Broadway; *The Vagina Monologues* with Eve Ensler at Alcazar Theatre in San Francisco.

MEGAN MCCLINTOCK

(Assistant Stage Manager)

Resident Stage Manager Megan McClintock's favorite A.C.T. credits include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Wakey, Wakey*, *A Walk on the Moon*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *A Little Night Music*, and *Indian Ink*. Other Bay Area credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, The Curran, Aurora Theatre Company, and Marin Theatre Company. Regionally she has worked at St. Ann's Warehouse, La Jolla Playhouse, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, McCarter Theatre Center, and Arena Stage. She has a BA in theater and history from Willamette University.

DICK DALEY (Substitute Stage Manager / Substitute Assistant Stage Manager)

is currently the County of Marin Vaccine & Logistics Coordinator and over the past 3 years he has managed COVID-19 Vaccination sites and clinics. He has stage managed many shows and events at A.C.T., including *The Great Leap*, *Top Girls*, *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *A Little Night Music*, *Indian Ink*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, *1776*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Happy End*, *Travesties*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Waiting for Godot*, *A Christmas Carol*, and the world premiere of *After the War*. Other positions at A.C.T. have been Associate Production Manager and Conservatory Producer. (he/him)

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Hannah Bailey, Stage Management
Production Assistant

Lucy Briggs, A2

Henry Cotter, Electrics Key

Alex Hanna, AI Advisor

May Liang, Assistant Director

Francisco Mujica, Production

Management Production Assistant

Chelsea Pace, Intimacy

Penny Pendleton, Script Supervisor

Kurt Seiders, Lighting Programmer

Jason Vaughan, Head Video

Sam L. Wong, Substitute SM

Production Assistant

Scenic construction by California
Shakespeare Theater.

The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

AN INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATION

EDITED BY NATALIE GREENE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Big Data explores different responses to technology, and the way some people embrace it wholeheartedly while others take a more cautious approach. Often these different reactions are split along generational lines—another theme explored in this play.

Director of Education & Community Programs Natalie Greene recently spoke with three generations of the Harris Santiago family about their differing opinions and experiences with technology.

What role does technology play in your life?

ORION: My cell phone is important in my daily life, I bring it everywhere. All of my school work is done on the computer instead of physical paper.

JOSH: I'd like to say I'm only medium-into tech, but I still use it a whole lot.

LUCY: Hell! I dread everything to do with technology...I have nothing good to say about it except that I appreciate the GPS on my car and that I can take pictures and send them to people.

What role does technology play in your family?

LUCY: Everybody in the family is on the phone all the time—where would they be without it? They would be lost. We've also got people working from home, at least two people whose lives are totally technology dependent. It's dramatically affecting people's lives in my family.

JOSH: I didn't have a smartphone for so long, but I'm glad I have one now. We have our whole family chat groups, sending pictures of grandkids. It can be stressful because we're telling the kids to get off their screens, parents ask for help and get frustrated. But it's good to keep in touch with folks. With kids going away and being in college, I appreciate it more. It keeps us all connected.

ORION: Most of my mom's sisters are in Brazil; they Facetime each other every day. It's a way to still communicate with our family that's not here in the Bay Area. I also do that with my siblings who are in New York—we Facetime.

LUCY: I do like checking on all my grandchildren, it's great to see them every day on the phone. But at one point during Thanksgiving dinner everyone had their phone on. It's tricky!



LUCY HARRIS, AGE 80



JOSH HARRIS, AGE 55



ORION HARRIS SANTIAGO, AGE 17

Let's talk about social apps: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and other algorithm-driven stuff. Are you aware of how much time you spend with this type of technology?

JOSH: I listen to a lot of music on YouTube, Spotify, Soundcloud. Then what got me really hooked was water slide fails on YouTube, I discovered the joy of videos on your phone. The most silly and ridiculous things! I totally loved them and then realized there's all kinds of stuff to watch on there.

ORION: I spend a good amount of time on YouTube for the purpose of learning guitar. I can get sucked into TikTok every once in a while. I'd say a good amount of time.

LUCY: I go onto this silly Instagram thing everyday 'cause my kids post on there, I look to see what they're doing rather than call to see what they're doing. I spend too much time if you ask me. I play the New York Times crossword puzzle a lot, my son put it on there. He was trying to be helpful but I'm not sure it was helpful—sorry I'm ragging on it. Because of tech I feel like I'm way more connected to all of my kids than I would have been otherwise, it's not all negative. I appreciate that I have that window into their lives and that opportunity to communicate with them. And I do, a lot.

JOSH: My mom texting is the greatest thing ever so she's not leaving long rambling voice messages once or twice a day. My mom learning how to text has definitely improved my quality of life.

Is technology making you more or less connected?

JOSH: Are we really connected?

LUCY: It's a funny kind of connected. It's not like you sit down and have a long heart to heart with your granddaughter over sushi. We drop each other these little notes, how are you? Blah blah blah. It feels a little superficial. I appreciate the connecting—it just doesn't always have a whole lot of depth to it.

ORION: With me and my siblings, since we live in different cities, different sides of the country, we have group chats on Instagram where we send each other funny videos. In ways it can connect us to each other but it can also pull us away from each other and we are isolated within ourselves. It's a bit of both.

JOSH: It's a kind of connection, but real human connections in real life are so much better.

LUCY: The family WhatsApp is very cool, everybody is posting various photographs, jokes, and comments. We're all following what everyone else in the family is doing. That's special. There's not another way we could accomplish that kind of connection.

Are these avenues of digital connectivity helpful? Harmful? Or both?

ORION: I think if you just isolate yourself to stay on your phone for hours and not talk to anyone else in the house, it's an excuse to not have to engage or talk to the people around you. That's what I've seen personally, and it's not good.

JOSH: I like quality time together but not constant connectivity. It's harming our relationships when we sit in the living room with everyone buried with their heads in their own phone. So many distractions, we're not focused or present enough... "There might be something better than what you're doing right now!" And it was really bad when the kids were in middle school—there was bullying. They'd look at their phone and there'd be some harsh messages and they wouldn't be able to sleep.

LUCY: In general it's helpful for me because of the frequency and the ease for me to check in on how my kids are doing, and usually they get back to me. It can also be... how to say this? We've also gotten some really bad news in text messages. It seems like the potential for unhappy news, as well as happy news, makes it awfully easy. There's lots of potential for hurtful things happening, because it's so easy and, in a way, anonymous.

ORION: It's definitely taken its toll on me and everyone I know in my generation. We see so many models and gym influencers and stuff...body image and just how we see ourselves in general, it is hard to get out of.

Thoughts on technology addiction?

LUCY: I think everyone in the family is addicted to it, including me, and I'm horrified!

ORION: We all kind of are, even though we say we aren't. We each have our own little things we're addicted to watching. My dad watches more YouTube than I do, even though he won't admit it. And people younger than me? It's kind of their lifestyle. I see them act like the YouTubers or streamers they watch on their phone. They say jokes I don't even understand. It is very addictive, which is a little scary. I really see it play out in young people, how they act in real life.

Does it concern you that your data is monetized? How do you feel about the fact that money is made with your personal information?

LUCY: My husband is very cautious, he's much more apprehensive than I am. He's afraid that his information will be abused, and it's definitely something to worry about, but it doesn't stop me from doing it.

ORION: I personally don't know too much about what goes into it money-wise. Me personally, I just kind of go with the flow of things. I try not to worry about the financial part of it, partly 'cause I don't really understand it.

JOSH: We're giving away all our data already. If you don't want to share your data, don't use this stuff. Unless people are stealing your banking information, who cares?

LUCY: Somehow my phone knows what I'm interested in without me telling it. Lately I'm getting all these Instagram feeds about new babies. I bought some baby toys for my new grandchild and all of a sudden every other image is something to buy for a baby. It really creeps me out, it's like someone is trying to read my mind about what I might be interested in. And where are they getting that information? It's unsettling to say the least.

Do you think technology has a role to play in your legacy? What might you leave behind, online?

JOSH: I've got a whole bunch of crypto currency my kids will never be able to find if I were to croak right now. No way they'll be able to find them all.

LUCY: When I'm gone, what's going to be left that I put in the cloud? I guess I would try to erase everything, but I don't know how to do that. That's a question I don't even have context for.

ORION: There's my dad's YouTube channel, he's been posting videos for 15 years and it's public to the world. Anytime I bring my friends over I show them old YouTube videos of me dancing at like 3 years old. My digital footprint...even if it gets deleted it can be found again. That's the scary part. If it's been posted before, it can always be found. You have to be really careful.

JOSH: Home videos are great though. We have so much fun looking at videos of the kids when they were little. Home videos are probably my favorite thing of all technology, because it really brings my family together.

Any final thoughts?

LUCY: It's a mixed blessing. I can't tell you how many times I'm so frustrated on a daily basis with navigating the internet. It doesn't come easily. When they design these apps they ought to have someone in the room that's over 70, I'm not sure there are people in the room speaking for us. If I didn't have kids and grandkids I could call and ask for help, I'd be in bad shape. I'm grateful, that's all I can say.

ORION: I'm curious to see what the future holds with AI, because it's helpful but it's a little terrifying. Chat GPT and Grammarly help me with my essays, but people like Elon Musk are out there creating actual robots as human as possible. I'm a little worried but also curious to see.

JOSH: It's not my favorite but it's where we live, so there you go.

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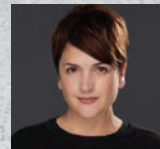
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Jerry is the former president of Parnassus Investments. Now retired, he serves on the boards of San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Symphony, as well as on the Emeritus Board of A.C.T. Thao serves on the board of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Thao and Jerry have established scholarships for music education at the San Francisco

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Robina is the Board Secretary of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees and Communications Director for the Million Person Project, a company that helps people identify their core values to tell their personal story. She is involved with the UCLA Depression Grand Challenge, an effort to cure depression by the end of this century, and with NARAL Pro-Choice America.

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Chanel Tilghman and Ada Westfall in *The Wizard of Oz*. Photo by Kevin Berne.

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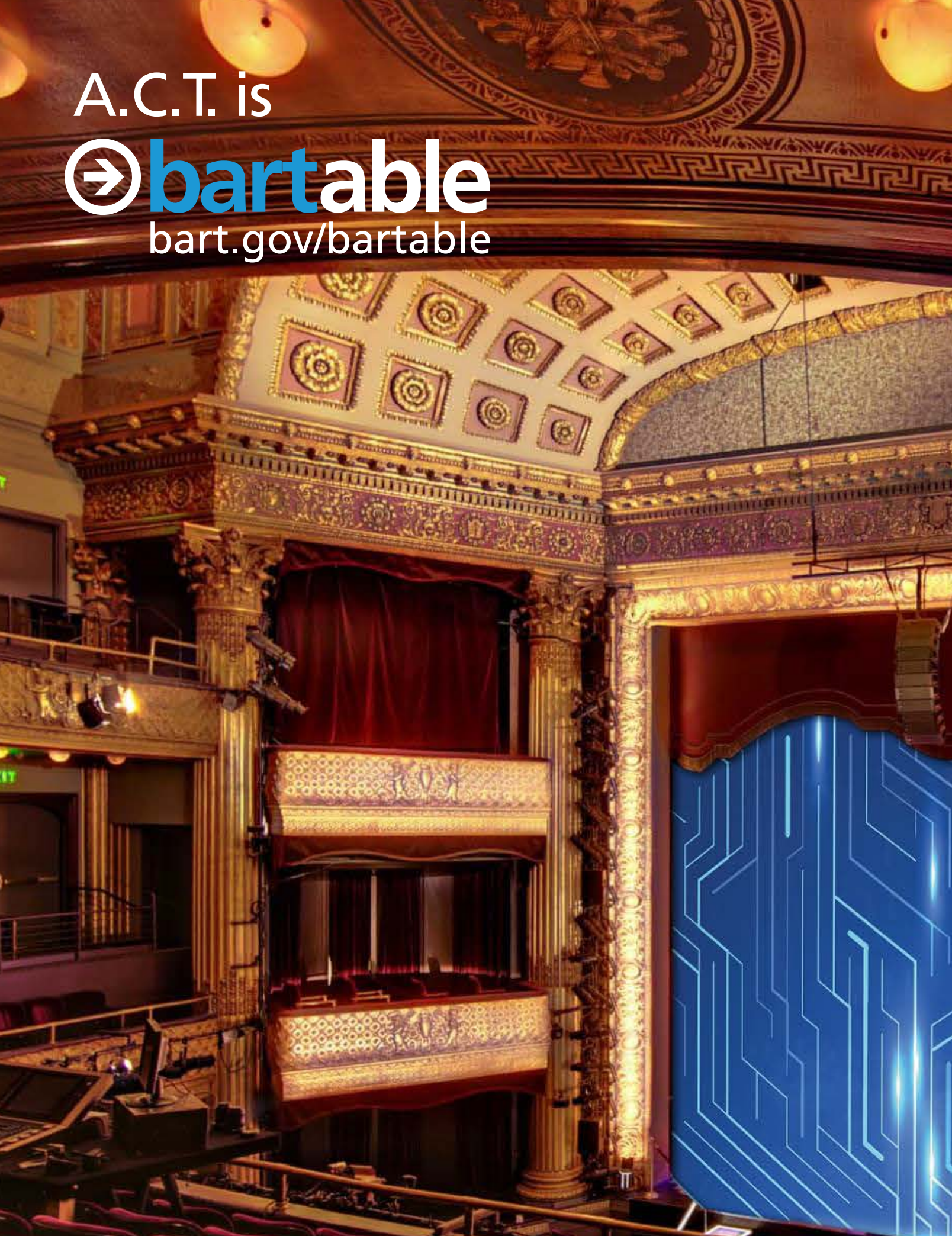
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A.C.T. PROFILES



PAM MACKINNON

(A.C.T. Artistic Director) is in her sixth season as A.C.T.'s fourth artistic director. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie Award-winning director, having directed upwards of 80 productions around the country, off Broadway, and on Broadway. Her

Broadway credits include *Amélie*, *A New Musical* (featuring Phillipa Soo), Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman* (with Uma Thurman), David Mamet's *China Doll* (with Al Pacino), Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* (with Elisabeth Moss), Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* (with Glenn Close and John Lithgow), Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Tony and Drama Desk Awards for Best Direction of

a Play), and Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (Tony Award nomination and Obie Award for Best Direction of a Play). Her most recent credits include world premieres of Bruce Norris's *Downstate* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, London's National Theatre, Playwrights Horizons), Lydia R. Diamond's *Toni Stone* (Roundabout Theatre Company, A.C.T., and Arena Stage), Kate Attwell's *Testmatch* (A.C.T.), Edward Albee's *Seascape* (A.C.T.), Christopher Chen's *Communion and The Headlands* (A.C.T.), and María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends* (A.C.T.). She has been recognized as among the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by *San Francisco Magazine*, along with Jennifer Bielstein. Pam is the most recent past president of SDC, the national union representing stage directors and choreographers. (she/her)



JENNIFER BIELSTEIN

(Executive Director) joined A.C.T. in 2018. She serves on the board of TCG (Theatre Communications Group), is a member of the International Women's Forum, the Advance SF Advisory Panel, and the leadership team of the SF Arts Alliance, was part of Mayor

Breed's Economic Recovery Task Force, and is the immediate past-president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT)—an organization that represents 80 theaters nationwide—having previously served as LORT's vice president; chair of its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee; secretary; and on multiple union negotiating teams. She has been recognized as among the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by *San Francisco Magazine*, along with Pam MacKinnon, and as one of the Most Influential Women in Bay Area Business by the *San Francisco Business Times* in 2021. Before relocating to the

Bay Area, Bielstein was the managing director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, managing director of Actors Theatre of Louisville, and executive director of Writers Theatre in Chicago. She has also worked for Steppenwolf Theatre Company, About Face Theatre, Northlight Theatre, and the Lincoln Park Zoo, as well as served on multiple arts and civic boards. She has received the Center for Nonprofit Excellence's Pyramid Award of Excellence in Leadership, has been recognized as one of Louisville's *Business First's* 40 Under 40, by *Twin Cities Business* as a Person to Know, and by *Minnesota Business* magazine as a Real Power 50 member. Bielstein is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, attended Stanford's Graduate School of Business Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders in the Arts, and has an MBA from Bellarmine University, where she received the MBA Faculty Merit Award, was inducted into the honor society Beta Gamma Sigma, and in 2021 was recognized as a Distinguished Alumna. (she/her)

ABOUT THE THEATER

MAILING ADDRESS

415 Geary St
San Francisco, CA 94102

ONLINE: act-sf.org

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

A.C.T. BOX OFFICE

Address: 405 Geary Street and
1127 Market Street

Tel: 415.749.2228

Visit our website for hours of operation

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION DISCOUNTS

Full-time students, educators, and administrators save up to 50% off season subscriptions with valid ID. Visit act-sf.org/educate for details.

GROUP DISCOUNTS

Groups of 10 or more save 20%! For more information contact groups@act-sf.org or 415.749.2228.

AT THE THEATER

The lobby opens one hour before curtain. The theater opens 30 minutes before curtain.

REFRESHMENTS

Join us in Fred's Columbia Room & Nancy's Bar on the lower level, or the Sky Bar on the 3rd floor, to enjoy a full, relaxed bar and treats experience. You'll find delicious ready-to drink cocktails, soft drinks, and snacks at one of our Quick Bars on the 2nd floor, Mezzanine. You can preorder for intermission pick up at act.salesvu.com or by scanning the code below:



PHOTOGRAPHY & RECORDING

Audience members may take photos in the theater before and after the performance and during intermission. If you post photos on social media or elsewhere, please include the designer names listed on the lobby board. Please note: Photos are strictly prohibited during the performance. Video recording is not permitted in the theater at any time.

MOBILE DEVICES

If you carry a mobile device, including a phone, tablet, or watch with alarm, please make sure to completely turn them off while in the auditorium. Vibrating devices still produce audible sounds in a quiet auditorium. Text messaging during the performance is disruptive and not permitted.

CHECK TO CHARGE

Mobile devices can be charged in coat check while you watch the show. You are welcome to check your phone into a charger at our attended coat check on the lower level. We're happy to offer this service without a fee.

SENSORY SUPPORTS

Fidgets, ear protection and eye protection are available free of charge in coat check.

SEATING SUPPORTS

If, after you have been already seated, you find you need more support, please speak to an usher about using one of our supplemental seat cushions or booster seats.

PERFUMES

The chemicals found in perfumes, colognes, and scented aftershave lotions, even in small amounts, can cause severe physical reactions in some individuals. As a courtesy to fellow patrons, please avoid the use of these products when you attend the theater.

LATECOMERS

A.C.T. performances begin on time, so it is important to arrive with enough time to comfortably get settled and enjoy the show. Latecomers will be held in the lobbies until an appropriate late seating opportunity is called. Latecomers with seats in the first five rows will also be reseated to the best available seats as late arrivals in those rows are disruptive to the entire theater. Late coming parties may or may not be seated together based on availability of new seating where moving seats is required.

LISTENING SYSTEMS

Headsets designed to provide clear, amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium are available free of charge in the lobby before performances. Please turn off your hearing aid when using an A.C.T. headset, as it will react to the sound system and make a disruptive noise.

AFFILIATIONS

A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the nonprofit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of Theatre Bay Area, the Union Square Association, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.



A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



The scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers in LORT theaters are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



The scenic shop, prop shop, and stage crew are represented by Local 16 of the IATSE.



A.C.T. is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from Grants for the Arts.

RESTROOMS

Gender diversity is welcome at A.C.T. We invite audiences to use the restroom that best fits your gender identity or expression.



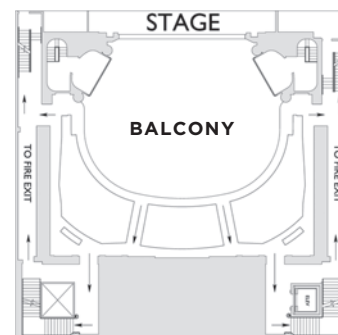
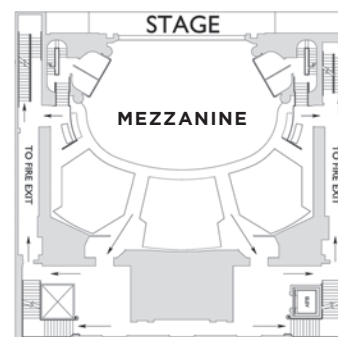
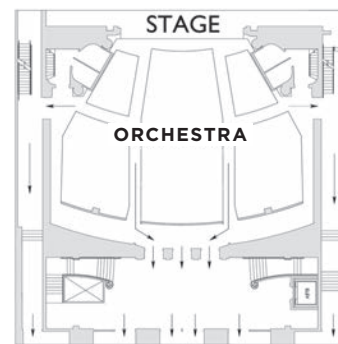
Wheelchair-accessible restrooms are located in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower lobby level, and the Garret on the uppermost lobby level.

An **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** is available in the house management closet in the street level lobby.

LOST AND FOUND

If you've misplaced an item while you're still at the theater, please look for it at the merchandise stand in the lobby. Any items found by ushers will be taken there. If you've left the theater, please call 415.439.2471 and we'll be happy to check our lost and found for you. Please be prepared with the date you attended the performance and your seat location.

THEATER EXITS



A.C.T. IS YOUR HOME FOR GREAT THEATER

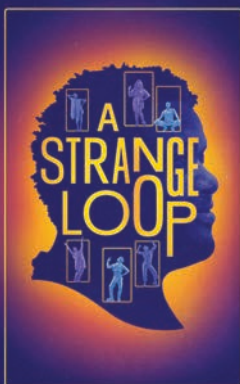
KRISTINA WONG, SWEATSHOP OVERLORD

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY **KRISTINA WONG**
DIRECTED BY **CHAY YEW**

MAR 30-MAY 5
STRAND THEATER



"CRITICS' PICK! A SPIKY COMIC TONIC"
—THE NEW YORK TIMES



WEST COAST PREMIERE

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY **MICHAEL R. JACKSON**
CHOREOGRAPHY BY **RAJA FEATHER KELLY**
DIRECTED BY **STEPHEN BRACKETT**



"GRADE A: NOTHING SHORT OF ASTOUNDING"
—ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY



APR 18-MAY 12
TONI REMBE THEATER



TONY AWARD FOR BEST PLAY 2022

"MAGNIFICENT. A GENUINELY EPIC PRODUCTION"
—THE NEW YORK TIMES

BY **STEFANO MASSINI** ADAPTED BY **BEN POWER**
DIRECTED BY **SAM MENDES**

MAY 25-JUN 23
TONI REMBE THEATER

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