

# AMERICAN THEATRE

NOVEMBER 2014 THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

The Drama & Darkness of  
ROALD DAHL

Audiences Beware of  
YOUNG JEAN LEE

Cautious Optimism in  
THEATRE FACTS 2013

**PLUS:**

Hershey Felder,  
George C. Wolfe,  
Keeping Up with Shaw



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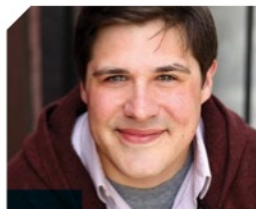
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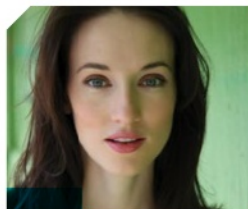
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He revolutionized young-adult fiction with his twisted tales for children. Now they're flourishing on stages across the country—from children's theatre to big commercial hits.

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COVER: *James and the Giant Peach* at Seattle Children's Theatre in 2013. Photo by Chris Bennion.

# Love LUST GREED



The Drama Department in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts presents the 2014-2015 Season, offering both exciting new and fascinating re-telling of classic stories that feature works exploring the most basic human instincts: *LOVE*, *LUST* and *GREED*. These elemental issues drive the basis of all great dramatic works of literature since the time of the Greeks.



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**The Electra Project**  
Apr. 25-May 3  
**Boeing-Boeing**  
May 30-Jun. 6  
**Sweet Smell of Success**

**USED TO SAY HELLO TO YOUNG JEAN LEE EVERY MORNING.**

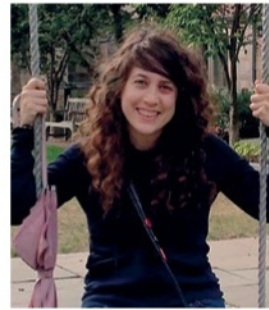
For a time—more than a year and half, between 2005 and 2007—she worked in the cubicle adjacent to the *American Theatre* space in the Theatre Communications Group offices on 8th Avenue in Manhattan. By day, Lee was a soft-spoken program associate in TCG's Artistic and International Programs department. By night, we learned when her *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* had its first workshop productions at CUNY Graduate Center's Prelude Festival and at HERE Arts Center, she was creating rambunctious, confrontational performance art that struck an immediate chord with downtown audiences—and sent critics into a tailspin of agitation and admiration.

*Dragons* sailed off from its subsequent premiere at HERE to points across the U.S. and around the world (you can read the text, incidentally, in the Sept. '07 issue of *AT*), and from then on Lee's voguish, on-the-brink theatre company required her full attention. The rest is history, not to mention fodder for senior editor Eliza Bent's take-no-prisoners interview with the artist ("Destroying the Audience," page 24), on the occasion of the New York debut of Lee's latest flirtation with incendiary subject matter, *Straight White Men*. Hello, Young Jean, we miss you.

There's no missing the ubiquitous trend in theatre that managing editor Suzy Evans explores in her cover story, "Who's Afraid of Roald Dahl?" (page 30): Dahl's tales of youngsters in glorious peril have become omnipresent on stages, youth-oriented and otherwise, in the late writer's native Britain as well as in the U.S., and there are additional adaptations in the works for both stage and film. Move over, *Matilda*, Steven Spielberg is toying with *The BFG*.

Beyond the feature well—which also contains the 2013 edition of TCG's much-anticipated fiscal survey *Theatre Facts*, capsulized by reporter Celia Wren (page 36)—there's coverage of enterprising projects being undertaken by such notables as Gingold Theatricals' David Staller, the actor/director who enlists a gallery of stars to keep the work of George Bernard Shaw alive and kicking (page 56); and George C. Wolfe, the inimitable director and playwright who has lent his efforts of late to creative curation at Atlanta's new Center for Civil and Human Rights (page 52). Critics Hedy Weiss and Linda Buchwald check in to assess, respectively, the work of virtuoso musician and solo performer Hershey Felder (page 64), and that of the Los Angeles-based company Deaf West, whose new production of *Spring Awakening* imbues the widely produced musical with fresh impact (page 48).

Headline references to fear and annihilation notwithstanding, you may rest assured that no readers will be destroyed while accessing the content of this issue. Hello, and bon voyage. —JIM O'QUINN

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Arts reporter **Linda Buchwald's** first experience with Deaf West was in 2009, when she saw the company's co-production (with Center Theatre Group) of *Pippin*. "I was struck by how seamlessly American Sign Language, which I think is already a beautiful language, was woven into the production," she declares. That dynamic remains true in Deaf West's new staging of *Spring Awakening*, Buchwald confirms in her Critic's Notebook essay (page 48). "I hope their incredibly moving production will have a longer life in Los Angeles and elsewhere, so that more people will get a chance to see it," she adds.



Theatre and travel are **Nicole Serratore's** two favorite pastimes. "My assignment was to find interesting American artists presenting work at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival," says the arts reporter and blogger of her Global Spotlight column in this issue (page 72). "After attending the festival for the past three years, I had a working knowledge of many contemporary British artists, but I was excited to discover a gang of innovative American artists working in the UK and the U.S. that I thought more people should hear about." Her commentary on this year's edition of the venerable EdFringe does the trick.

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PICTURED: An MFA Acting student  
in the USC School of Dramatic Arts  
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(Photo by Craig Schwartz)

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MICHAEL BRISLOW

Lucas Hnath's *The Christians* at Actors Theatre of Louisville.

### Is It a Church Bell?

Your Sept. '14 issue is such a gold mine of theatrical information and insight that it's difficult to comment on—but after reading the Lucas Hnath play *The Christians* and the interview conducted by Les Waters, I felt compelled to offer some observations. As a member of the American Theatre Critics Association (ATCA), I had the pleasure of attending the 2014 Humana Festival in Louisville, Ky., where *The Christians* was staged as a festival selection. Not only did I see and review the production, we critics had the pleasure of interviewing Waters in a panel discussion. The play was provocative, powerful, one of the most absorbing 90 minutes I've spent in a theatre in a long time. All sorts of philosophical and theological thoughts, questions and replies kept racing through the corridors of my mind, and those of the rest of the audience, I'm sure.

To see a play in a three-dimensional theatre setting, then read it in the two-dimensional format, reinforces how talented actors breathe life into the words of clever and intelligent playwrights under the guidance of inspired directors. Hnath definitely rang this critic's bell when it came to addressing the ancient and thorny religious questions concerning Heaven and Hell. Unaddressed in the play, of course, are even larger questions, such as "What is the meaning of life?" and "Where did we come from?" But the jury is still out on those issues, and that's another play.

Jack Lyons  
Desert Hot Springs, Calif.

### First Dibs

One thing really surprised me about Isaac Butler's article "Unwelcome Hands on a Texas *Hardbody*" (Oct. '14): The article credits Doug Wright with saying that his collaborator Amanda Green "was incredibly enthusiastic and eager to see the show on the resident-theatre circuit, in part because its run on Broadway was so short. She flew down to Houston on her own dime."

But Amanda Green had already seen New Line Theatre's production of *Hands on a Hardbody* in St. Louis—which was the first regional production of the show after Broadway—before any of this happened at Theatre Under the Stars in Houston. And Wright knew about it, because he'd been talking to us about our production; Amanda had reported back to Doug and Trey Anastasio about how much she loved our show. When Amanda was interviewed about the TUTS mess for *Playbill*, she mentioned how great New Line's production was, without changing a word. I was surprised that your piece made it sound like TUTS was the first to do the show after New York, and like Amanda hadn't already seen it regionally—especially since you had just mentioned our American regional premiere in your previous issue.

Scott Miller, artistic director  
New Line Theatre  
St. Louis, Mo.

### You Should Know Better

"Fuck this."

"What the bell is this?"

"You're fucked forever." —Quoted from "*Two Serious Ladies*" (Sept. '14)

These are quotations from people being interviewed for Eliza Bent's article. If they had been from dialogue in plays, it would have been somewhat understandable. But this is trashy, disgusting, vulgar, undignified language used by people who should know better. And *American Theatre* should know better than to publish it. I know *AT* is not a scholarly journal, but such inappropriate language is still beneath the magazine's dignity.

Dr. Robert M. Post  
Bethesda, Md.

### Title Trouble

"Girls on Top" (Sept. '14)? Was that really the best title you could come up with for a story about successful women directors in Poland?!

Neil Blackadder  
Chicago

### Doubly Disabled

Re: Diep Tran's article, "Building a Better Table" (Oct. '14): I would add to this important discussion the frustration over the even more limited casting of disabled performers, and the lack of behind-the-scenes hiring of disabled talent. The numbers are unbelievably discouraging—and people with disabilities have been fighting this battle even longer than performers of color. How do we change this picture?

Pat Loeb, director  
The Music Companie  
Los Angeles

*American Theatre* welcomes comments from readers. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Write to the Editor, *American Theatre*, 520 Eighth Ave., 24th Floor, New York, NY 10018-4156, via e-mail at letters@tcg.org or online at www.tcg.org/americantheatre. Please include a daytime phone number.

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# A Place for Remembering

BY TERESA EYRING

*Because its nature of bringing people together and, having therefore, a political character, theatre has been proven an especially apt medium to feed collective memories.* —Juan Mayorga, playwright, writing for *Holocaust Theatre Catalogue*

**T**HEATRE FACTS 2013, TCG'S REPORT ON THE state of resident theatres across the U.S. for the most recent fiscal year, is complete—and summarized for your perusal in Celia Wren's detailed report in this issue of *American Theatre*. For most big-picture observers, the report's numbers carry on in a similar vein to previous years, confirming an overall five-year trend that shows modest improvement in many key areas. Attendance slipped a bit since 2012, but has nevertheless seen a net increase over the five-year period since 2009.

About a half of the theatres posted deficits in 2013, but the five-year trend overall favored surpluses, particularly in 2010 and 2011. And cash flow problems represent a growing source of stress for many theatres. As for the subscription system, reports of its death may have been greatly exaggerated—while subscription totals declined between 2009 and 2013, the number of subscribers has increased in each of the last two years.

Less examined across the field is the increasing audience and community interest in connecting with theatre's process—taking the deep dive into understanding what goes into making theatre, into the ideas it brings forward, into the powerful ways it pulls communities together to explore issues as well as to create collective historical memory. While total attendance at resident performances grew by 1.2 percent over the five years, *Theatre Facts* shows a 28.8-percent increase in attendance at behind-the-scenes activities such as workshops and staged readings.

In Wren's article, Charles Varin of Denver Center Theatre Company points to the increasing attendance the DCTC's Colorado New Play Summit and goes on to say, "There's just an adventurous audience out there that likes the idea of being in at the ground level." He It turns out that cultivating a deeper sense of connection between theatremakers and their audiences by inviting them into parts of the process

more regularly, and with more attention to the development of an overall relationship, really does work.

When the subscription model took off in the 1970s, it succeeded because it offered a pathway for building tighter relationships between community members and theatre organizations. It encouraged people to *buy into* the idea of that theatre, rather than shopping for a particular play title. Subscription became like a form of community-supported agriculture—people paid in advance

to see a full season, even though they weren't sure what kind of fruits and vegetables those new plays might turn out to be.


So the challenge today becomes how to mine more than ever before what is truly unique about theatre—and theatre's aliveness does become more unique every day. Can models be formed and shared beyond a single institution? This is a key goal of TCG's Audience (R)Evolution, now entering its second round, with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. What happens if several theatres in a community (or across the nation) try a new program simultaneously for greater impact?

In October, the National Jewish Theater Foundation/National Jewish Theatre launched a new website, the Holocaust Theatre Catalogue ([htc.miami.edu](http://htc.miami.edu)), with over 550 entries of plays written since 1933, about or related in some way to the Holocaust. Addressing the absence of any such comprehensive resource, the archive also came about in part because we are losing the last of the survivors of the Holocaust—and with them go their first-hand accounts of that horrific time in our history. The archive's catalogue provides an opportunity for resident theatres to read and produce these plays and engage survivors in community dialogue about their experiences. In addition, the catalogue, which has an advisory board of scholars and theatre leaders (on which I am privileged to sit), aims to strengthen the idea that theatres and other community institutions can combine their resources to create stronger community awareness around pressing topics, current and historical.

The archive is open to the listing of any and all plays dealing with the Holocaust, and information on how to obtain the script is available on the site. "It is our sincere hope that the utilization of these select theatre works in education and production will inspire all to keep alive the lessons of the Holocaust and provide an artistically driven moral compass for future generations," says the website's introduction.

There are also specific suggestions for national impact. On Holocaust Remembrance Day in April, the hope is that theatres around the country will select one of these plays for a production or a staged reading, and that there will be a wide local and national discussion about the lessons of the Holocaust, involving audiences, scholars and survivors.

Our theatre movement stands at a unique place in time, where the work on our theatres' stages is more intentionally reflecting social and historical realities, and where the possibility is stronger than ever of nuanced and powerful conversations taking place among audiences and artists. Longtime practitioners may feel that has always been the case—but as people become exponentially inundated with technology, time spent in the presence of a live, handmade art form becomes more special and very difficult to replicate in other media.

Theatre has the capacity to bring sense and meaning to individual lives and shared histories. There's nothing like it. 

The work on our theatres' stages is more intentionally reflecting social and historical realities, and the possibility is stronger than ever of nuanced and powerful conversations taking place among audiences and artists.

# Staging Ground

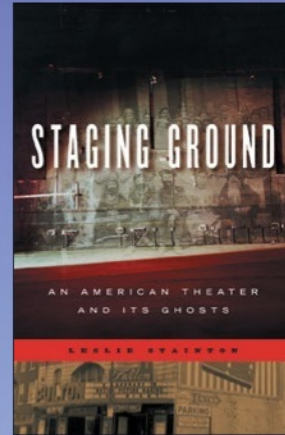
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Leslie Stainton

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—Helen Sheehy,  
author of *Eleonora Duse: A Biography*

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## CONVERSATIONS

 on Facebook

Last month, we released our annual Top 10 Most-Produced Plays list, for the 2014–15 season. Our Facebook followers had some opinions about the names on that list.

**SCOTT RICHARD:** It's great to see how much *Tribes* is being produced. Fantastic opportunities for the deaf acting community.

**ANDREA DODD COOLEY:** I'd like to know the playwrights' marketing strategy. How did they get theatres to produce their plays? I am marketing a play for a playwright now and I'd love to know some secrets.

**ALICE T. CARTER:** By my count eight of these have played or are scheduled to play here [in Pittsburgh]. We're sooo theatre forward.

**ALADDIN ULLAH:** It's segregated as usual. All the theatres say they are about diversity, but this proves it's all bs.

 Like us at [www.facebook.com/AT.magazine](http://www.facebook.com/AT.magazine).

 on Twitter

Some Twitter reactions to our Top 10 list:

**@rwkzowski:** The two leading playwrights in America are two white guys in their 60s. Who says we can't relate to the Tea Party?

**@CeciliaCopeland:** #WhiteMale stories are certainly given the stage an awful lot it seems... #Sad #whereisthediversity?

**@BrokenNoseChi:** @AmericanTheatre's list of 11 most-produced plays in 14–15, only two by women. We can (and should) do better.

**@JennySeidelman:** SO MANY WHITE MEN.

**@petermarksdrama:** Two plays by women make the

@AmericanTheatre list of top 11 produced plays in U.S. Same old woeful statistic, hovering around 20 percent.

 Follow us at [twitter.com/AmericanTheatre](https://twitter.com/AmericanTheatre).

## TCG Circle

• **Spirit of Another Sort** • What kind of magic do the unique experiences of disabled actors bring to that most magical of plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? The Apothetae's artistic director Gregg Mozgala shares his company's revelatory experience on the Circle: [www.tcgcircle.org/author/gregg-mozgala](http://www.tcgcircle.org/author/gregg-mozgala).

• **A Fox Francophile** • Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellow Bruce Turk decided to journey to that mecca of all Molière lovers, France, to learn more about the master playwright-comedian. His journey, detailed on the TCG Circle, also brought him into contact with a variety of comedic techniques, and his discoveries are now available to you, sans plane ticket: [www.tcgcircle.org/author/bruce-turk](http://www.tcgcircle.org/author/bruce-turk).

TCG Circle is TCG's artist-contributed and -curated blog. Want to hear about what theatre artists around the country are concerned about? Want to add your voice to the mix in these or other salons? Visit the TCG Circle at [www.tcgcircle.org](http://www.tcgcircle.org).

E-mail Gus Schulenburg at [gschulenburg@tcg.org](mailto:gschulenburg@tcg.org) to get involved.

**TALK BACK!** Post your comments on stories from this issue and from our archives at [www.americantheatre.org](http://www.americantheatre.org). Visit our publisher, Theatre Communications Group, at [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

## THE FACTS OF (THEATRE) LIFE

The latest edition of *Theatre Facts*, TCG's annual research report on the fiscal health of the not-for-profit theatre field, is now available. Do a stats dance of joy for a five-year record high in earned income and the 34.9 million audience members served last year; then, do a deeper data dive into various theatres' ongoing challenges with cash flow: [www.tcg.org/tools/facts](http://www.tcg.org/tools/facts).

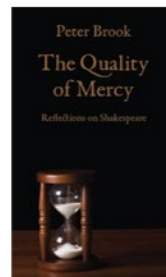
## OUR MINDS ON OUR MONEY

## CASH &amp; CULTURE

Speaking of cash-flow challenges, TCG is assembling 200-plus theatre leaders and trustees in New York City Nov. 7–9 for the **2014 Fall Forum on Governance: Cash & Culture**. Learn more about the research, expert speakers and honest peer dialogue about that evergreen conversation of cash and capitalization: [www.tcg.org/events/fallforum/2014/index.cfm](http://www.tcg.org/events/fallforum/2014/index.cfm).

## NEW FROM TCG BOOKS

*The Quality of Mercy* contains a sequence of essays—all but one published for the first time—by revered theatre director Peter Brook, exploring such questions as who was the man who wrote Shakespeare's plays, why Shakespeare is never out of date, and how actors should approach Shakespeare's verse. Order your copy of *The Quality of Mercy* at [www.tcg.org/publications/books](http://www.tcg.org/publications/books).

ONSTAGE/  
THEATRE PROFILES

Up-to-date schedules of TCG theatres from coast to coast. **PLUS:** details about production venues, designers and choreographers, artistic leader statements and general information about each theatre at [www.tcg.org/profiles](http://www.tcg.org/profiles).



Mary Patton  
in *Dreamgirls* at  
Portland Center Stage.

PATRICK WEISHAMPEL



Reading of Zenith, by Kirsten Greenidge. Photo by John Moore.

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## En Garde Arts 2.0

Tyler La Marr (pictured, right) performs in *BASETRACK Live* from En Garde Arts.

**NATIONWIDE:** To many people, **Anne Hamburger**'s decision to step down as executive V.P. of **Walt Disney Creative Entertainment** to produce Off-Broadway theatre may seem a little unusual. Or, in her own words, "It was so insane!"

For eight years at Disney, Hamburger overlooked the stage shows, parades and general entertainment programming for Disney theme parks worldwide. One day, after she had launched the 50th anniversary programming at Disneyland—which included a nighttime fireworks display called "Remember...Dreams Come True," in which Tinker Bell flew over Sleeping Beauty's castle—Hamburger was sitting on Main Street in the park. Suddenly, a thought came to her, "More people are seeing the results of my creative work on this day than have seen the creative work of my entire artistic career!" In retrospect, she says, "There was something so wonderful and so depressing about that."

Her previous career was high-profile in its own way,

if not as widely exposed. From 1985 to 1999, Hamburger ran **En Garde Arts**, a company she founded to focus on site-specific productions, from **Jonathan Larson**'s *J.P. Morgan Saves the Nation* on Wall Street to **Reza Abdoh**'s *Father Was a Peculiar Man*, performed throughout New York's meatpacking district. After that, she briefly served as artistic director of California's **La Jolla Playhouse**, then took the job with Disney.

After leaving Disney, she returned to New York City and rebooted her nonprofit. Her first new production, though not site-specific, is boundary-breaking in its own way, and fulfills one of her company's main goals: community engagement. *BASETRACK Live* is a documentary multimedia theatre piece about Marine veterans coming home from war. It incorporates real-life photographs taken by Marines, videos and interviews with veterans. The project takes its name and inspiration from *Basetrack*, a citizen journalism project created by **Teru Kuwayama**, designed to

give Marines a platform to document their experiences and showcase photos from the front. Composer **Edward Bilous** saw the photos and decided to adapt it into a multimedia piece; Hamburger saw an early workshop version of Bilous's work at Juilliard, and approached him about developing it into a full-length touring piece. She brought on writer/director **Seth Bockley** and playwright **Jason Grote** to adapt the *Basetrack* material. The writers also took the work further, conducting original interviews with more than 100 veterans and their families and incorporating material from than 500 pages of transcribed text into the piece.

In *BASETRACK Live*, two actors (**Tyler La Marr** and **Ashley Bloom**) portray real-life Marine **AJ Czubai** and his wife **Melissa**, following their journey as a couple from his tour in Afghanistan to his battle with PTSD and his readjustment to civilian life. "His story is complicated and hopeful," says Hamburger. "He's a young guy when he goes

to war. He's naïve, as many of these guys are." He was also away when she gave birth—or as present as he could be: "There's a part in the piece where he tells her to 'push' over the phone."

Intertwined with their story are videos and photos of real-life Marines, with original music composed by Bilous (who co-directs with Bockley), **Michelle Dibucci** and **Greg Kalember**. The show has been touring the country since its premiere in Austin on Sept. 11, and it's set to play this month at **Brooklyn Academy of Music** (Nov. 11–15), **Bucknell University** (Nov. 18) in Lewisburg, Pa., **Adelphi University** (Nov. 20) in Garden City, N.Y., and **Purchase College** (Nov. 22) in Purchase, N.Y. There are also tour dates planned for 2015.

One concern Hamburger had when touring the show was how veterans would react. "There's a lot of nervousness. These guys have been through such awful things. Is it going to bring them down? Is it going to be cathartic?" Early reports have been positive: "They are so

flooded with relief. This one guy just started weeping afterwards, talking about how meaningful this was for him.”

She hopes it will have a similar impact on non-veterans, as well. “Part of what’s been a driving force for me in my entire career is bringing people together who aren’t normally in conversation,” she says, noting that the military and theatre are “strange bedfellows” who don’t usually mix. “That was the instinct behind the original En Garde Arts and what I’m doing now.” Mission accomplished. Visit [base-tracklive.com](http://base-tracklive.com). —Diep Tran

## You Know, for Kids

**NEW YORK:** “Even though it was cute and sweet, it wasn’t right,” confesses **Barbara Zinn Krieger** of her theatre company’s now-former name, **Making Books Sing**. She’d started the company in the late ’90s as a youth-focused branch of her work producing original plays and musicals at the **Vineyard Theatre**, the Off-Broadway powerhouse she’d founded in 1981. The initial company name fit snugly, as its mission was to adapt children’s books—typically ones with a social

or educational bent, not the usual kiddie franchises—into musicals. But after Zinn Krieger left the Vineyard to work on children’s theatre full-time—perhaps ironically, the year the theatre shared a Tony win for *Avenue Q*—her new company’s mission soon expanded to include anti-bullying programs, puppet work and even ballet. The “singing books” moniker began to seem limiting.

“We thought of lots of new names but we kept coming back to **New York City Children’s Theater**,” she says. “We’re in the five boroughs, and that says what we are.”

What’s amazing is that the name wasn’t already taken. But, as Zinn Krieger points out, there’s an unfilled niche for original work created in New York City for New York City children. The city boasts at least one major theatre that commissions new work for young audiences, **TheatreWorks**, but after a short New York run, those shows hit the road and tour the country; the **Vital Theatre Company** tends to favor lighter fare in the *Pinkalicious* vein; and **New Victory Theater** chiefly presents exciting children’s theatre from all over the world (though they, too,



COURTESY OF ELEMENTS THEATRE COMPANY

Brad Lussier, Sr. Danielle Dwyer and Chris Kanaga in Elements Theatre Company’s *God of Carnage*.

are now developing work with New York artists).

NYC Children’s Theater stages two-show seasons at the **Mint Theatre** in midtown Manhattan: one show for three-to-seven-year-olds, and another for eight and older. The troupe’s next show is for the former cohort, and it’s in the familiar singing-books mode: *The Amazing Adventures of Harvey and the Princess*, based on **Loryn Brantz’s** book, *Harvey the Child Mime*, features a script by Zinn Krieger herself and songs by children’s-music favorite **Laurie Berkner** and runs Nov. 15–Dec. 7. But some other recent pieces—*Dear Albert Einstein*, *Louis Armstrong*—were based on ideas, not on any particular books. What all the shows, as well as the other programs the company runs in NYC public schools, have in common, Zinn Krieger says, are that “they’re all about theatre.” —Rob Weinert-Kendt

## Gods of the Theatre

**ORLEANS, MASS.:**

You’ve heard of *Murder in the Catbedral*. How about *Carnage* in the monastery? That’s

more or less what will transpire when **Elements Theatre Company**—the resident stage company at the Community of Jesus, an ecumenical monastic outpost on Cape Cod—presents French playwright **Yasmina Reza’s** Tony-winning play *God of Carnage*, a coruscating comedy of bad manners featuring projectile vomiting, profanity and wanton cellphone destruction. The production, helmed by artistic director **Danielle Dwyer**, will first be mounted off-site, in the non-ecclesial setting of the **Art House** in nearby Provincetown, Nov. 7–9.

But then it comes home to the **Paraclete House**, on the sprawling grounds of the Community of Jesus, Nov. 14–23—directly across from the stunning Church of the Transfiguration, and among the sex-segregated living quarters in which adherents from a variety of Christian denominations live in accordance with Benedictine principles while pursuing a variety of creative endeavors, from jam-making to farming to music. The theatre company, founded in 1992, is comprised of celibate



CAROL ROSEBERG

Laura Hankin and James Ortiz in Making Books Sing’s *Wanda’s Monster*.

brothers and sisters—Dwyer is among these ranks—as well as “oblates,” community members who may be married or single and who live offsite, but are more invested in the community’s activities

than your average weekly church congregant.

**Chris Kanaga**, who plays Michael, is a lawyer by day; and **Brad Lussier**, who plays Alan, is the company dramaturg.

So how will Reza’s

biting play go over with the Elements audience? Well, for a clue, the last Elements production was a robust, bloody rendition of *Julius Caesar*, staged in the stately courtyard of the church itself—which

should indicate that neither the church community nor the audience is full of shrinking violets.

“The violence and the disrespect and the emotions of this play are not that different from *Julius Caesar*,” reasons Dwyer, who also plays the role of Annette. “Dealing with our human condition and how we act toward each other—that fits our theatre’s mission, and that’s what we’re dedicated to exploring.” Dwyer says that when they do a modern piece, they look for “something that has classical roots to it, that will allow for a journey for the audience and the actor.” She cites one of the lesser-known Benedictine vows, which even oblates take.

“The vow of conversion is another doorway to see another part of yourself,” Dwyer explains. “So a character will leave us with something of themselves that will change us. That’s an important part of why we do what we do.”

While Dwyer can’t say whether Elements’s relatively edgy programming is unique among Benedictine communities, Kanaga notes that most religious communities he knows of who do theatre “commit themselves to sacred theatre or mystery plays.” But Dwyer is quick to point out what theatre and religion have in common: “Being authentic and truthful, and willing to serve and make sacrifices for a larger goal—that’s in all theatre.” Go to [elementstheatre.org](http://elementstheatre.org). —*Rob Weinert-Kendt*

## ALL POINTS BULLETIN

Here’s news you may have encountered this month on [www.americantheatre.org](http://www.americantheatre.org):

■ In Seattle, the small **Balagan Theatre** closed its doors, citing a large debt and the loss of its 133-seat Erickson Theatre venue. It was founded in 2006 and staged mostly eclectic alternative musicals like *Earnest Shackleton Loves Me*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *The Vaudevillians*.

■ **Tennessee Repertory Theatre**, now in its 30th year, has officially taken its Music City location to heart and changed its name to **Nashville Repertory Theatre**. Artistic director **René D. Copeland** said in a renaming ceremony that the theatre has “come to embrace the idea that it’s part of our job to help drive Nashville’s ‘theatre engine.’”

■ Another theatre has rechristened itself: After 20 years, **Seanachai Theatre Company** has rebranded itself **Irish Theatre of Chicago**. “Seanachai” is a Gaelic word for “storyteller,” but with a season that includes **Conor McPherson’s** *Shining City* and **Karen Tarjan’s** *The White Road* (the latter a world premiere), there seems little danger that the company will give up its yarn-spinning role.

■ Also in Chicago, real estate entrepreneur and theatre pro **Amy Rubenstein** is starting up a new Equity theatre called the **Windy City Playhouse** in the city’s Albany Park neighborhood. The new space will kick off a four-show season in March 2015, with plays directed by such Chi-town mainstays as **Henry Godinez**, **Chuck Smith** and **William Brown**.

■ In Detroit, the **Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company** has announced it will wind down operations at the end of the coming season. The company will offer its Shakespeare in Prison program at Women’s Huron Valley Correctional Facility throughout the season, then seek another sponsor to take it over.

■ The **New Black Fest** at New York’s **Segal Theatre Center** will feature new works by **Lynn Nottage**, **Alexander Thomas** and **Christina Anderson**, on Nov. 12; on Nov. 17, an event titled “Hands Up” will feature six “testaments,” monologues and performance essays on police practices from the likes of **Dennis Allen II**, **Idris Goodwin**, **Nathan James**, **Glenn Gordon**, **Nathan Yunkerberg** and **Eric Holmes**.

■ Chicago’s **Steppenwolf Theatre Company** has announced its three “Garage Rep” companies, which will stage productions in rotating rep next spring (February through April). They are **Cold Basement Dramatics** with **Steven Simoncic’s** *Heat Wave*; **Pride Films and Plays**, which will mount **Topher Payne’s** *Angry Fags*; and **Red Tape Theatre**, with a production of **Taylor Mac’s** *The Walk Across America for Mother Earth*.

■ NYC students can now qualify for the new Scholastic and Artistic Merit (SAM) scholarships via the organization **Rosie’s Theater Kids**, the arts education organization co-founded by **Rosie O’Donnell** and **Lori Klinger**. This year’s scholarship winner is a 17-year-old from Queens, now a senior at Professional Performing Arts High School in NYC. The program is made possible by a \$500,000 donation from the Gerald and Dorothy R. Friedman Foundation.

■ Billing itself as the first literary journal dedicated to publishing original plays, the Portland, Ore.-based **Proscenium Journal** bowed in September with **Andrea Lepcio’s** *Looking for the Pony*, **Damon Chua’s** *Black Coffee Green Tea*, **Augusto Fredérico Amador’s** *Kissing Che*, **Chris Holbrook’s** *Ski Lift* and **David Jacobi’s** *Mai Dang Lao*. The free journal is offered online, on a quarterly basis, though the publishers said they plan to have it available in hard-copy form as well.



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Photo: *Deluge*, or *The Panda Play*, 2014. Photo by: J. Carmody



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■ **Anna D. Shapiro** will be the new artistic director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company, after longtime leader **Martha Lavey** steps down at the end of the 2014–15 season. In addition, current Steppenwolf managing director **David M. Schmitz** is taking over for **David Hawkanson** as executive director in January 2015.

■ **Gina Vernaci** has been named executive producer

of PlayhouseSquare in Cleveland, Ohio. Vernaci has been on the PlayhouseSquare staff since 1984, mostly recently occupying the position of senior vice president of theatre operations.

■ A leadership transition is scheduled at ArtsEmerson in Boston. In January 2015, **Rob Orchard** will step down from his position as executive director of the presenting organization, after which he will serve in a part-time capacity as founder and creative consultant for ArtsEmerson. **David Dower** will assume the post of executive director. Dower is currently the organization's director of artistic programs.

■ **Robert Serrell** has been promoted to executive

director of the Barrow Group Theatre Company and School in New York City. Serrell first joined the theatre in 2010 as its director of education.

■ **Matt Morrow** is the new executive director of Diversionary Theatre in San Diego, Calif. He will start work at the theatre this month, after serving since 2013 as the company's acting executive artistic director. Prior to that, he was the associate artistic director of Pittsburgh's City Theatre Company.

■ **Matt Chapuran** has started his new job as managing director of Lyric Stage Company of Boston. He comes to Lyric Stage from the nearby Huntington Stage Company, where

he managed institutional giving. Chapuran isn't unfamiliar with Lyric Stage—he was an intern there in 1994.

■ **Sarah McLellan** is the new managing director of Clubbed Thumb in New York City. She takes over for **Nora DeVeu-Rosen**, who is leaving the company after two and a half years to move to Los Angeles.

■ Director/choreographer/playwright **David Bridel** is the new head of the MFA acting program at the School of Dramatic Arts at the University of Southern California. He replaces **Andrew J. Robinson**, who recently stepped down to focus on his stage and screen career. (He will continue to teach at USC). ☒

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■ This month, **Stephen Adly Guirgis**, author of *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* and *The Motherfucker with the Hat*, will receive the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award at the seventh annual "Mimi" Awards. The \$200,000 award is presented by the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust and recognizes a playwright's body of work.

■ The MacArthur Awards—colloquially called the "Genius Grants" and honoring multiple disciplines—were announced in September. Each fellowship comes with a stipend of \$625,000 distributed over five years.

Playwright **Samuel D. Hunter**, whose play *The Whale* has been widely produced, was recognized, and a Genius Grant also went to novelist **Alison Bechdel**, whose memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* was adapted into a musical by Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron.

■ The Wilde Awards, honoring Michigan theatre, were bestowed in September, with 28 productions earning some 34 honors. The most popular recipients were **Michigan Shakespeare Festival** and **Farmers Alley Theater**, which won four awards each. Michigan Shakes won for *The Importance of Being Earnest* (best comedy, actor **David Blixt**, costume designer **Suzanne Young**) and *Cymbeline* (best of the Bard). Farmers Alley won for *Old Wicked Songs* (best drama and sound designer **Derek Menchinger**), *Collected Stories* (actress **Sharon Williams**) and *Next to Normal* (actress

**Michelle Duffy**).

■ At the New York Innovative Theatre Awards in September, honoring Off-Off Broadway theatre, *Don Juan in Hell* from **Phoenix Theatre Ensemble** received the most accolades, with three awards (revival of a play, lead actor **Jason O'Connell** and stage manager **Haejin Han**). Other citations went to *Dark Water* by **David Stallings** (at MTWorks) for outstanding full-length script, and to **Blessed Unrest**, which copped the Caffè Cino Fellowship Award.

■ The 10th annual Ivey Awards, handed out in September to Twin Cities productions, celebrated the co-production of *Cabaret* from **Theater Latte Da** and **Hennepin Theatre Trust**; *Ordinary Days* at **Nautilus Music-Theater**; and *Rose* at **Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company**, among other productions.

■ The Tanne Foundation has announced the recipient of its 2014 awards. The awards total \$42,000 and are presented to seven artists and one artist-run organization across a variety of disciplines. **Deborah Margolin** is the only recipient of the award with a theatrical bent. She is a founding member of Split Britches Theater Company in New York City.

■ Playwright **Jennifer Haley** has been awarded the 2014 Francesca Primus Prize for her play *The Nether*. The prize, presented by the American Theatre Critics Association and the Francesca Ronnie Primus Foundation, recognizes

emerging female playwrights and comes with \$10,000.

■ The Playwrights Realm has announced its 2014–15 writing fellows. The four early-career playwrights selected are **Michael Yates Crowley**, **Sarah Gancher**, **Emma Goidel** and **Tony Meneses**. They will be working on a new play over the course of nine months with development support and \$2,500 from the Playwrights Realm.

■ **Matthew Lopez**, author of *The Whipping Man*, is the 2014–15 Denver Center Playwriting Fellow at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts in Colorado. During his six-month fellowship, Lopez will serve on Denver Center Theatre Company artistic team, assisting in the play selection for the 2015–16 season and serving as the playwright host for the 2015 Colorado New Play Summit.

■ The League of Professional Theatre Women presented the Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award to Colombian playwright, poet and actor **Patricia Ariza** in a ceremony in October. The prize recognizes non-American female theatre artists.

■ Gay Men's Health Crisis honored playwright **Terrence McNally** in September with the 2014 Howard Ashman Award, for his efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. 📧

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# Sheldon Patinkin: 1935–2014

BY DAVID CROMER



Patinkin

■ Sheldon Patinkin managed, through some unfathomable store of energy and generosity, to be many things to many people. And he managed to make many of us feel somehow that he was ours personally. This became very clear following the inevitable gut punch caused by his passing on Sept. 21.

There'll be no trashing of Facebook in this tribute, because that's how at least five generations of the Chicago theatre community—a community Patinkin built, nurtured, sustained, enriched, scolded and taught; a community that stretches to New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, London and who knows where else—kept in daily contact with him and where, since he died, have been able to speak to each other and cry over and mourn and joke about and quote our friend, director, teacher and mentor.

As all these people took to social media—people from the formation of the Chicago improv movement, in which Sheldon was instrumental from the 1950s on to today (Compass Players, Second City, Second City Toronto, SCTV); people from storefronts to LORT theatres in Chicago (where he served officially and unofficially as an advisor and friend and teacher, and where he would trek on cold nights to watch your dress rehearsal or preview and give sorely needed notes); thousands of Columbia College students (where he served as chair of the theatre department for nearly 30 years and taught, directed, advised, mentored, hired, hugged, screamed at, raised and watched EVERY SINGLE FINAL SCENE of so many of us, including myself)—as we posted about, liked, commented and shared what he'd

given. What I marveled at and will always marvel at is: How did he have so much to give?

We have a tradition of ensemble in Chicago theatre. But “ensemble” is a word we use, abuse and take for granted, and Sheldon—I realize far too late—may have been the keeper of the dim flame of what that word actually means, and must mean, for the kind of work he valued most to survive. “This isn't about YOU!” he could sometimes roar at us at school when we were fucking around onstage or backstage or in class. A furious note about our transgressions was posted on the third-floor board, usually ending with an all caps: “YOU DON'T HAVE THAT PRIVILEGE!” Meaning the group was not ours to jeopardize, the art form itself not ours to disrespect.

To Sheldon, ensemble was not necessarily a cuddly, feel-good notion of team spirit and togetherness. It was a principle of group survival and the only true means of flourishing artistically.

I could never speak for the entire ensemble he coaxed into being. It's not my place to do so. I'll just report the first example that pops to mind of something he gave me and taught me.

I went to Columbia College to study acting beginning in the fall of 1982, and eventually embarked on what was shaping up to be a perfectly pleasant career as a smarmy

character man, when I read a play I inexplicably felt like directing. I asked Sheldon how one might go about directing something, and he said, “Why don't you take Directing II?” (which he taught). I explained that there was no more money for college and he sort of shrugged his shoulders and said, “Eh. Just come to class.”

So for two years I directed plays with small budgets and used the school's theatres, and for good or ill became a director. With a shrug of his shoulders, Sheldon gave me free grad school and a new career and an entire life. I doubt it's because he saw anything special in me (he may have even told me that later), but because that's just how he was. If you wanted to know something, he told you; if he had it to give, he gave to whoever asked or needed.

He would be very surprised, I think, if he heard me quote Shakespeare, but here goes: “When comes such another?” 📌

**David Cromer is a director trained in Chicago and based in New York.**

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# FRONT & CENTER

■ NEW YORK CITY

## A Plucky Collaboration



The ensemble of *Bright Star* at the Old Globe.

JOAN MARCUS

### THE OPENING LYRICS WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE.

“When you get to Asheville / Send me an e-mail,” chirped sweetly and simply over a loping banjo line, is the beguiling, scene-setting first phrase of “Love Has Come for You,” the Grammy-winning 2013 album from Edie Brickell, a one-hit wonder from the late 1980s (“What I Am”), and Steve Martin, the film-comedy giant who’s built credible side careers as a playwright and a bluegrass bandleader. While that opening salvo—casually linking an old-time sound and a contemporary reference—gave notice right away that their album would be more than just a vintage throwback, the new musical that emerged from the unlikely Brickell/Martin collaboration, *Bright Star*, is resolutely a period piece, set in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina in the 1940s. It tells the story of a young soldier who returns from the war to uncover a life-changing secret from his past.

The idea of writing a musical with Martin came up in conversation on the last day they were recording their album, says Brickell, interviewed in the midst of rehearsals for *Bright Star*’s premiere at San Diego’s *Old Globe*, where it plays through Nov. 2. “We had a similar

desire and intention—we were hoping we could make a musical like the ones we grew up with and just adored.”

Writing a musical, though, necessitated a new batch of songs—in fact, that opening song is one of only two from the album that have survived in the transition to the stage. But Brickell is embracing the challenge.

“To have a character speak through a song—I think I found my niche,” she effuses. “I love putting myself in the moment of their experience, and what is it that I would say? It’s allows you to bring a greater range of emotion and color to songwriting.”

The sense of novelty is noted all around. Says veteran director Walter Bobbie (*Chicago*, *Venus in Fur*), “Steve will create these chord progressions on the banjo, a whole bed of music, and Edie will write melodies on top of it. Two creators are responsible for the music in a way I’ve never seen before.”

And that opening anachronism? Says Brickell, “I’ve changed those lyrics to ‘When you get to Asheville / Write me, if you will.’”

—Rob Weinert-Kendt

## ■ MINNEAPOLIS

## How Sacred Is Your Stuff?



NICK GOLFIS

display, *Relics* invites its audience to be VIP guests at a gala opening of the new wing of an American museum. The result is an immersive installation and a promenading theatrical event that blends the feelings one might experience at an art opening, a museum exhibit and a haunted house.

“Nick Golfis conceived the idea of a visual art show in the future—pieces of artifacts from the present day have been found, and the missing portions are being reinvented and rebuilt,” says Chantal Pavageaux, who, along with Golfis and Sarah Agnew, is a co-creator of *Relics*. “We started riffing on turning the idea for an art show into a theatrical event—an opening of a new wing in a museum for these found artifacts and their misinterpretations, surrounded by all the trappings of a gala event.”

Audiences begin the *Relics* journey by going up nine floors in an elevator to the Dowling Studio, which has been entirely transformed. A performance unfolds before a ribbon-cutting ceremony, after which audiences roam around taking in interactive displays, dioramas and artifacts. “The evening culminates in a dramatic historical reenactment of the epic ‘bathe’ of 2014, as imagined by the future archeologists of 2314,” says Pavageaux.

Their leader is Eleanor Buncliffe, a character who, Pavageaux explains, acts as “the unwitting leader of a major movement of people from the future who call themselves ‘Anarchyologists.’ They are committed to bringing to light the hidden peoples of the past.” Pavageaux, Agnew and Golfis drew on the 1979 book *Motel of the Mysteries*, in which an archeologist meets a mysterious end, much like Buncliffe’s in the play. Pavageaux describes the character as a combination of Michael Rockefeller, Dian Fossey and Carol Burnett.

Meanwhile, an oppositional faction called “the Friendlies” (who view history as heresy) silently protest and may even crash the historical reenactment that’s set to unfold. Fifteen actors in all (including Pavageaux, Agnew and Golfis) bring *Relics* to life. Much of the text has been culled from improvisations in rehearsals.

Declares Pavageaux, “We were really excited about the idea of our culture’s current obsession with ‘stuff,’ and how we treat many of the objects in our daily lives as if they are sacred. By putting our audience *in* the exhibit, they have the space and time to engage with the objects, and perhaps when they leave, they will look differently at things they encounter on a daily basis.” —*Eliza Bent*

**HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT A** smartphone, when placed on a table during a meal, takes on a kind of special, almost holy, prominence?

Do you use your iPhone more than your brain?

Will people still be taking selfies 200 years from now?

*Relics*, showing at the **Guthrie Theater’s** Dowling Studio Nov. 13–23, prompts these questions and more, in manners both rhetorical and real. Set in 2314, after an apocalyptic event in 2014 that leaves behind only the objects on

## ■ NEW YORK CITY

## CONQUERING A MARLOWE CLASSIC

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU** saw a four-hour play? Probably not recently, considering the proliferation of 90-minute one-acts. But this month, through Dec. 21, **Theatre for a New Audience** on Brooklyn is defying that trend by bringing back a lengthy classic: Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2*. The play will be presented in one four-hour set with a 30-minute intermission. John Douglas Thompson, a TFANA mainstay, plays the title fictional conqueror—based on the real-life Muslim emperor Timur the Lame—whose rise to power as the Prince of Persia and subsequent fall from greatness is documented in Marlowe’s saga. This is the first production of the play in New York City in 60 years, and 19 actors will play 60 roles. Former **Royal Shakespeare Company** artistic director Michael Boyd is at the helm of the production, having edited the play down to fit the three-and-a-half-hour run-time. Call it un-divide and conquer. —*Diep Tran*

## ■ PITTSBURGH, PENN.

## PERMANENT RESIDENCY?

**PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTOR ED DIXON ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS DESTINED** for a career in the theatre. He has been in “15 Broadway shows or so,” he’ll tell you, “just as many national tours, and countless plays and musicals in repertory.” He has also, in days gone by, worked with names like Busby Berkeley and Ruby Keeler. His latest work, *L’Hôtel*, will receive a premiere at **Pittsburgh Public Theater**, where it is scheduled to run Nov. 13–Dec. 14.

*L’Hôtel* is a collaboration between Dixon and Pittsburgh Public’s producing artistic director Ted Pappas. The show takes place at a “strange and wondrous hotel” where six stars from different centuries all find themselves under the same roof. And though the plot seems innocent enough, the roots for it lie somewhere in the Paris cemetery Père-Lachaise.

“Ted Pappas and I had a meeting several years ago, and during the course of a long discussion, he said to me, ‘I’ve always thought someone should write a play about Père-Lachaise,’” Dixon said. “Then Ted handed me a list of the people who are buried there, and I went home and forgot about it until about midnight that night, when I sat upright in bed with an ‘aha!’ about what the play could be.”

The road from page to stage has been a long one for *L’Hôtel*. After a “frenzy” of writing, the first draft of the show was done in under a month; then came “many, many rewrites, followed by several readings with more rewrites,” Dixon said. And at first that frustrated him. But after Pappas took an interest in putting *L’Hôtel* in the Public’s 40th anniversary season, things fell into place.

“I could never understand why it was not being done while other projects of mine were moving to the front of the line,” Dixon said. “But now I realize, luckily, that it was never right until now, with this production, this version, this director, this theatre.”

—*Megan Wrappe*



Ed Dixon

DANNY GHITIS

## NOVEMBER ALMANAC

### 60 YEARS AGO (1954)

Lionel Barrymore dies on November 18 at the age of 76. The actor made his stage debut when he was 15, and he acted in more than 15 Broadway productions. He is also known for his film roles, such as Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life* and Martin Vanderhof in *You Can't Take It with You*.

### 55 YEARS AGO (1959)

The original production of *The Sound of Music* opens on November 16 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. Starring Mary Martin as Maria and Theodore Bikel as Captain von Trapp, the show features music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II and will win five Tony Awards in 1960. The musical will later be made into a film in 1965 starring Julie Andrews as Maria.

### 50 YEARS AGO (1964)

The original production of *Oliver!* closes at the Shubert Theatre after 774 performances. Bruce Prochnik starred as orphan Oliver Twist and Clive Revill as Fagin, and the show has written by Lionel Bart, adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens. The musical will go on to have two Broadway revivals.

### 20 YEARS AGO (1994)

Arthur Miller is appointed as a professor of contemporary literature at Oxford University. Miller graduated from the University of Michigan in 1938 with a B.A. in English. Upon graduation, he began his career in theatre after joining the Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal agency established to provide jobs in the theater.

## NEW YORK CITY

JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION



Sarah Ruhl

### CALL IT HELICOPTER PARENTING

or being a tiger mom, but modern-day parents can be borderline obsessed with their offspring. So what would happen if one of their precious children were identified as a reincarnated Buddhist teacher and asked to go to a Tibetan monastery before they've even started preschool?

## LOS ANGELES

# SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

GEORGEY WADE PHOTOGRAPHY



Veralyn Jones, Gregg T. Daniel, Robert Prosky and Leo Marks in rehearsal.

## A CLASSIC IS GENERALLY DEFINED AS A WORK THAT'S STOOD

some substantial test of time. But what about a little-known gem that never really got a fair shake in its day? That's the thinking behind the **Antaeus Company's** new production of Alice Childress's *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*, a 1962 play whose subject—interracial marriage—meant it didn't get a production until 10 years after it was written, at the **New York Shakespeare Festival** in 1972. In staging a seldom-revived play by a too-little-known African-American playwright, Antaeus—a classical troupe best known for productions of Shakespeare and Chekhov and Brecht—is making a “very deliberate” statement, asserts director Gregg T. Daniel. “We’re saying this play is an American classic.”

Its scarcity onstage, admittedly, may have as much to do with the play's combustible tone as its miscegenation theme. Set in WWI-era South Carolina, *Wedding Band* features a couple almost designed to complicate our responses: Julia, an intelligent if prickly black seamstress, and Herman, a German-American handyman who faces his own unique form of war-related discrimination, are celebrating 10 years together, though not as legal spouses.

Childress may be best known for the 1950s backstage comedy *Trouble in Mind*. And though *Wedding Band*—set in a Gullah section of Charleston not far from the Catfish Row of *Porgy and Bess*—has its share of rich comic characters, it's ultimately closer to a tragedy.

“It's no *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*—it does wake you up,” cautions Daniel. “It's so stark in saying things that are on your mind, but that you've never said out loud. It makes you uncomfortable in just the right way.” —*Rob Weinert-Kendt*

## THE FAITH TO LET GO

That's what playwright Sarah Ruhl wants to know. Her latest work, *The Oldest Boy*, which plays at **Lincoln Center Theater** through Dec. 28, explores what happens when the son of an American woman and a Tibetan man is discovered to be a Tulku, a reborn Buddhist lama, and the parents must make the decision whether to send their son to Tibet to fulfill his spiritual destiny.

“It's the first play I wrote since I had twins,” says Ruhl, whose son and daughter are now four (she also has an eight-year-old daughter). “I deal with the question of separation every day. Every day I send my kids to preschool. Every day they take a new leap and do something slightly dangerous, so you're wrestling with your sense of wanting to protect and keep them and

your sense that they need to grow and develop and become their own person.”

Ruhl initially got the idea for *The Oldest Boy* from her babysitter, who told her a story about a friend of hers whose child was recognized as a reincarnated lama. Though set in the U.S., Ruhl's drama focuses specifically on Tibet, a culture in exile struggling with the Chinese occupation. More and more non-Tibetans are being identified as Lamas, Ruhl says, and the diversity of cultures and religions in life and onstage fascinates her.

“I was raised Catholic, and my first play was *Passion Play*,” says Ruhl, who calls herself a student of Buddhism. “I've always been interested in ritual on stage—and also just in the tradition of theatre as coming from a sacred place.” —*Suzy Evans*

# Who's Afraid of Roald Dahl?





He revolutionized young-adult fiction  
with his twisted tales for children.  
Now they're flourishing on stages across  
the country—from children's theatre  
to big commercial hits.

BY SUZY EVANS

The company of *Charlie and the  
Chocolate Factory* at the Drury  
Lane Theatre in London.

JOHAN PERSSON

MOST OF THE REALLY EXCITING THINGS WE DO IN OUR LIVES SCARE US TO DEATH.  
THEY WOULDN'T BE EXCITING IF THEY DIDN'T.

—Roald Dahl, *Danny, the Champion of the World*

If you want to get a child's attention, the first thing to do is get rid of Mom and Dad.

That's according to Roald Dahl, the deliciously dark author who has delighted children of all ages for years with his devilishly imaginative tales.

"He changed the face of children's literature completely," says Tim McDonald, the CEO of iTheatrics, a New York City-based organization that develops musicals for young audiences. "Dahl's technique was to scare kids right at first, and eliminate the parents, so now it's them and the storyteller—then you can go anywhere."

And he did—from an escaped rhino devouring the title character's parents in *James and the Giant Peach*, to a land of giants who eat children in *The BFG*, to the halls of a school where the headmistress operates a veritable torture chamber in *Matilda*, to a magical candy lair where greedy children almost meet their demise in tubes of sugar in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. And now Dahl's going somewhere else: the stage.

Contemporary adaptations of Dahl are commanding attention at venues in the U.S. and abroad ranging from children's theatre companies to Broadway, and in varying formats, from straight plays performed in schools, to large-scale commercial musicals, to an opera.

British playwright David Wood was one of the first to make the leap—he has adapted eight of Dahl's novels into plays for children. And iTheatrics's McDonald more or less led the musical-theatre charge, creating the first official musical adaptation of a Dahl work—*Willy Wonka*, inspired by the 1971 film, co-written with the film's composer, Leslie Bricusse, and using songs from the movie. McDonald followed up with a *James and the Giant Peach* musical, written with Tony-nominated songwriters Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. *James* had its world premiere at Connecticut's Goodspeed Opera House in 2010; a retooled version was presented at Seattle Children's Theatre in 2013; and it will be performed this season at Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and Nashville Children's Theatre.

The Royal Shakespeare Company launched its energetic musical staging of *Matilda* as its 2010 holiday show, and, four years later, the show continues to attract multi-generational audiences in the West End and on Broadway. Following *Matilda* came Warner Brothers Theatre Ventures's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, with music by the Tony-winning duo Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman and book by David Greig, which has been running in London for more than a year. In September, Opera San Antonio presented Tobias Picker and Donald Sturrock's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* opera, and this spring, Enda Walsh and John Tiffany, of *Once* fame, will deliver Walsh's (non-musical) adaptation of *The Twits* at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

It's a very Dahlian moment, indeed.

"There's something rather magical about Dahl," says Wood, noting that the Welsh-born British author, who died in 1990, was a multifaceted figure, known as a novelist, short-story writer, poet, fighter pilot and screenwriter as well as for his enduring contribution to children's lit. "The situations in his tales are larger than life, and you often have a child as the protagonist—and that child is often the underdog who triumphs through adversity. That is a very good, very theatrical way of telling a story."



Willy Wonka at the Kennedy Center Theater Lab in 2004.

COURTESY OF THE KENNEDY CENTER

DAHL RELEASED *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH*, HIS FIRST

major children's work, in 1961, the same year as Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* and just two years before Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, ushering in a new era of darkness in children's fiction. Not unlike those authors, Dahl took many of his tropes from classics.

"In *James and the Giant Peach*, there's the whole idea of the peach growing—it's very much like Jack and the Beanstalk," suggests Wood. "And you can find parallels to Cinderella, with the two unpleasant stepmothers being very similar to Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge in *James*. He uses classic ingredients and contemporizes them."

And now many point to Dahl as the precursor for modern series like *Harry Potter*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *The Hunger Games* and *A Tale Dark & Grimm*, all of which contain ominous themes, from magic to murdering teenagers.

"You have to look to *Matilda* a little bit to see the origins of *Harry Potter*, I reckon," concurs Tim Minchin, who wrote the music and lyrics for the *Matilda* musical. "It has a hero with great odds stacked against her, who, through nothing but books and reading and the power of her own incredible brain, sort of vanquishes everyone. We love stories about genius and stuff."

At their core, these Dahl stories are written for a young readership, though they may actually stem from gloomy adult concerns, sometimes personal ones for the author. When Dahl started writing *James and the Giant Peach*, for example, he penned much of it in a hospital waiting room after his son's baby carriage had been hit by a car.

"He's really using fantasy as a coping mechanism for those things that happen to us in life," reasons Ernie Nolan, producing artistic director of Chicago's Emerald City Theatre, where *The BFG* is running through Jan. 4, 2015. "There's something so amazing about sharing those kinds of survival stories with young people, and dealing with those dark elements that young people are able to overcome."

Still, the notion of rhinos eating moms and dads or giants devouring innocent children is far tamer on the page than when such actions come to life on the stage—and when McDonald was working on *James and the Giant Peach* at Seattle Children’s Theatre, he was unsure whether the scary opening would work for young audiences.

“Just a loud clap of thunder can startle a kid, and once they start crying, you’ve lost them for the show,” McDonald points out. “So how do you balance that? And not do it in a way so that the older kids are

When the front-of-house manager inquired as to what was wrong, the teacher pointed back to the auditorium and shouted “Giants! Giants!” “There was this feeling that giants are things of evil,” Wood explains. “I’m not trying to make it sound as though in the UK everything is more advanced, because there were similar reservations about Dahl here. He was not a recommended author in schools or on reading lists for many years.”

Things have changed, though, Wood says, and he cites productions of *The BFG* at Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis and at Philadelphia’s Arden Theatre Company as two of the best he’s ever seen.

For his part, Minchin posits that reservations about Dahl in the U.S. could have something to do with cultural differences. “The broader American tropes are about *hope*—they are aspirational,” Minchin says, while “Britain’s a bit more post-colonial and a bit more self-flagellating. There is a tiny percentage of the American audience that is like, ‘Hold on, you’re making us feel conflicted.’ It’s never the little kids who find it dark—they find it hilarious and fun. It’s always some 50-year-old who wants a Mars Bar of a show. The kids never have a problem with the complexity.”



Top: *The BFG* at Minneapolis’s Children’s Theatre Company in 2006.  
Right: The ensemble of *Matilda* on Broadway.



JOAN MARCUS

going, “That’s stupid!”—and in a way that means that the parents in the audience are getting another message.”

The show’s opening involved James dreaming about the rhino incident, with the beast embodied by a large puppet. In case that beginning proved to be too frightening in early previews, McDonald, Pasek and Paul had alternatives in mind. However, there didn’t end up being any issue.

“Watching kids in the theatre, you discover that the parts that you think will be very scary to them are the parts when they lean in the most,” says Pasek.

When Wood was adapting *The Twits*, about a nasty couple who torture monkeys, among other things, he struggled with making things that seem funny on the page seem equally funny in action. He came across a line in the book about Mr. and Mrs. Twit living in the circus, and he suddenly thought, “Let’s set the whole thing in the circus! That way we can use clowning techniques legitimately—and it means that we can make some of the physical stuff, which is really quite unpleasant if you do it for real, more slapstick.”

Wood says that American audiences have tended to be more skeptical than the British of Dahl’s penchant for the dark side—though reactions have gotten better over the years. When *The BFG* was first done stateside, “There were worries about making the giants too frightening,” he explains. “The tendency was to make them a bit too colorful, and when they came on they were almost a bit jolly, and that slightly worried me.” Wood recounts that during a production of *The BFG* at Dallas Children’s Theater, a teacher escorted her class out of the theatre and told them, “Face the wall and pray for forgiveness.”

#### DARKNESS ISN’T THE ONLY OBSTACLE IN ADAPTING

Dahl’s work. His writing style is very episodic, Minchin points out, as his children’s books were designed to be read a chapter at a time at bedtime, and many of the books feature a quiet, passive child as the central character. This might work well in print, where the stories’ crazy, chaotic worlds keep the reader’s attention, but it doesn’t provide a lot of dramatic energy for the stage. In *Matilda*, Minchin initially had trouble finding a way to make the title character sing, and even considered making her a nonsinging character.

“Deciding who sings what where is the great challenge of writing musical theatre,” declares Minchin. “Some people don’t seem to *want* to sing, so getting Matilda to sing at all was tough, because we didn’t want her to be Annie. She’s a quiet reader, but she’s got guts.” Matilda’s first song, “Naughty” (which is essentially a repurposing of the show’s second-act opener, “When I Grow Up,” set to a different tune with the same harmonic basis), was the last thing Minchin wrote for the production.

While Shaiman and Wittman didn’t have trouble getting Charlie to sing, they did struggle with making him a more dynamic character. “Charlie is more or less a witness in the story,” Wittman elaborates. “That doesn’t necessarily work onstage—he has to be part of the action of things. When a story is so well known, as it is in London,

where the book is part of the kids' DNA, they know what's going to happen, and they're very attentive. The trick is to surprise them when it does happen."

While *Matilda* has somewhat of a cathartic journey, moving from being an ill-cared-for-yet-brilliant child to one who is well loved and looked after, both Charlie and James, in their respective worlds, just stumble along. Charlie starts well loved and ends up well loved, inheriting a chocolate factory along the way; James just happens to meet a mysterious man who supplies him with the magic that's crucial to his future.

When it came to musicalizing the latter character's story, however, Pasek and Paul found that embellishing the wacky world actually created more problems. "When we tried to take something that was bizarre and make it sound *really* bizarre, we found we were taking things too far," Paul concedes. "What's there is already so quirky and different and atypical that sometimes we needed to serve it up as it was, and not try and make some sort of even more bizarre refraction of it."

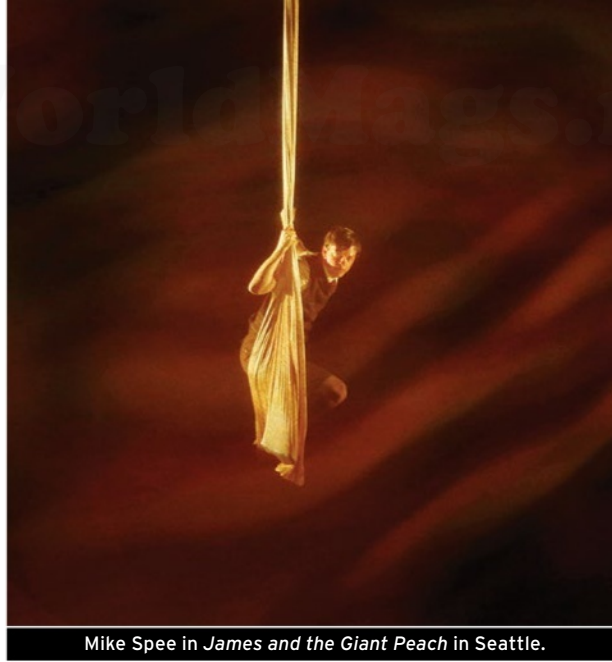
Shaiman had his own problems with *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*: Two films and the TYA *Willy Wonka* already existed, so the proliferation of adaptations could muddy the mind, thanks to one song in particular. "So many people feel like that movie is their *Wizard of Oz*," allows Shaiman, noting that the song "Pure Imagination" is omnipresent. "Even our best friends who knew better would say to us, 'Oh, is "Pure Imagination" going to be in it?' So after a while it became clear it would be foolhardy to not include it."

**EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF DAHL'S WORK,** and that's another reason for its growing popularity at children's theatres across the country.

"The cross-curricular opportunities are ripe with Dahl's work," enthuses Nolan, who says he loves working with schools and theatre education departments to come up with lesson plans. "With a piece like *James and the Giant Peach*, sure, there are English and language arts things you can do with it—but the material lends itself to sharing questions with students like, What's a fruit? How does a fruit grow? There's a geography lesson, since they go all the way from the UK to NYC. There's even a discussion of map-reading. They cross a body of water. There's a discussion of insects."

Wood has adapted his longer Dahl plays, which are intended to be performed by adults for children, into playlets (published by Puffin Books, an imprint of Penguin) that are built for large casts of schoolchildren to perform. "It's a very good way of encouraging children to read," Wood says. "If you're reading a play, embodying the different characters and having conversations with other people who are playing other parts, it becomes more of a communal experience. It's more fun, and learning to read *should* be fun, for heaven's sake."

Another thing that makes Dahl a good fit for today's young audiences is the fact that many modern parents grew up on Dahl's stories and are excited about introducing them to their children. Nolan calls parents and teachers the "gatekeepers" for TYA audiences, and the box office for at a children's theatre is typically split between four-to-five



Mike Spee in *James and the Giant Peach* in Seattle.

CHRIS BENNION

school-sourced shows during the week and three-to-four shows for family audiences on weekends. "We produce work for an audience that doesn't buy the tickets—they may have a passion level, but they're an audience who can't drive themselves to the theatre. So when the work does have multigenerational appeal, or that memory factor for the parents, or when a teacher can open up that book in the classroom as part of the curriculum, it's important for us—that's how we can put butts in seats."


Though Dahl is proving popular onstage, the man himself was not a fan of adaptations of his work. Dahl died just months

before Wood's *BFG* premiered in England, and there were two prior stage adaptations of Dahl's books that he killed, the playwright notes. "I remember Tessa Dahl, his daughter, saying to me years later, 'You were very lucky that Daddy died when he did—he probably wouldn't have liked your adaptations any more than anybody else's,'" Wood recalls.

With so many adaptations circulating the market at the moment, the Dahl estate is alert about maintaining the brand and deciding whether a particular project is right for the theatre. "There's a difference between saying, 'Does this story belong onstage?' as opposed to, 'Oh, people love Dahl, let's put it onstage,'" Minchin says. "The stories are wonderful, but there are great challenges in making sure you don't lose their inherent Dahl-ness when you change the format."

And the fact that a book has already been adapted doesn't mean there can't be yet another iteration. While Wood's and McDonald's adaptations are built for children, the big Broadway and commercial shows based on the same material are quite different. There are also several film adaptations coming up, adding to the existing Dahl canon: *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Danny DeVito's *Matilda*, *The Witches* and Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Steven Spielberg is slated to take on *The BFG*, and Guillermo del Toro's *Witches* remake is in the works. This proliferation of Dahl on screen may mean the plays will be staged even more often.

"They wouldn't stop selling the book because the film's coming out, so it would be rather odd to have people stop doing the play," figures Wood, adding that no fewer than six regional theatres in and around London are doing his plays this holiday season. "If you're a playwright writing for adults, there aren't that many who achieve the longevity whereby their plays are put on regularly for years and years," Wood says, citing Mamet, Miller, Pinter and Stoppard. "Children's plays don't seem to date as much."

Though the royalty percentage is different, as costs are kept low and runs are kept short, Wood says that's as it should be. "There is still this slight stigma about creating work for children, which is ironic, really, because children are the future—and one would think the theatre profession in general would appreciate the importance of children's theatre," Wood goes on. "I don't get as much of a buzz from anything I do as from standing in the back of an auditorium full of children reacting favorably and un-cynically and becoming totally immersed in the play. As long as I keep getting that buzz, I'll continue." 

What I learned during my two years of training continues to shape my work today. I'm so proud to be a graduate of the top classical acting program in the country.  
-Shirine Babb (MFA '11)



Shirine Babb in The Old Globe's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* (left), and the MFA production of *The Winter's Tale*.

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Photos: Craig Schwartz and JT MacMillan (inset photo)

# DESTROYING THE AUDIENCE

YOUNG JEAN LEE talks about the traps she lays for her public

AN INTERVIEW BY ELIZA BENT

**A**FTER A RECENT PRE-OPENING RUN-THROUGH OF Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men* at Columbia University, the playwright and director, sporting distressed jeans and a leather jacket, posed questions to her audience. "Did you know what that character's problem was?" she queried from a chair onstage. As onlookers replied, she listened intently and rapidly typed out responses on her laptop. "Did you think and feel beyond the family stuff? What did that scene make you question?" Lee pressed for answers with dramatic flair. At one point, an audience member was caught off-guard mid-response. "Forgive me," said the accomplished monologist and veteran performer Mike Daisey. "I'm not used to dissecting a play in this way."

In the theatrical universe of Young Jean Lee, unorthodoxy tends to be the rule, not the exception. Lee has made a name for herself by consistently tackling what she calls "the last show in the world" that she actually wants to make. These worst-case-scenario plays have included a solo show about depression and dying (*We're Gonna Die*, for which she won an Obie award); a Shakespeare adaptation (*Lear*, complete with dazzling Elizabethan garb); and an assortment of identity-politics plays that subversively and overtly combust the form with adventurous aplomb.

These latter works include *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, which ingeniously addressed Asian-American identity (published in the Sept. '07 issue of this magazine, it was Lee's first show to tour internationally); *The Shipment*, a sly riff on black identity; and *Untitled Feminist Play*, a wordless show that featured nude dancers addressing issues in feminism. The latest of these identity plays with a twist, Lee's *Straight White Men*, opens Nov. 7 at New York City's Public Theater.

"She simply doesn't shy away. From anything. It's an incredibly fertile place to collaborate," says performer Pete Simpson, who has worked with Lee since 2004, as well as with Blue Man Group and Elevator Repair Service. (*Straight White Men* is his fourth Lee collaboration.) "In the early days, amidst the stakes of her trying to establish herself, there was an all-or-nothing energy to everything—a giddy, apocalyptic humor." That dark humor still pervades her work. The laughs one hears at a Lee play can sound explosive, then shocked, then apologetic and perhaps timid—as if the audience is wondering whether they should be laughing at all.

"She deliberately has these curve balls," says Charles Helm, director of performing arts at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, which has developed and presented a number of Lee's shows. "You start to wonder, 'Is this supposed to be funny?"

Do I have permission to laugh?' And it forces you to question where you are relative to the questions she's posing."

"Young Jean's also the only writer or director I know who has no problem posing textual and structural problems to the show's cast, and employing those suggestions—which results in a high-morale ownership of the process," Simpson says. Lee also often poses questions to her followers on Facebook, resulting in a kind of crowd-sourced dramaturgy. "This speaks to the high degree of confidence she has in her directorial/textual voice," offers Simpson. "She approaches the culling of these extra-sourced 'idea avalanches' from a place of confidence and rigor-of-mission."

Lee's openness and rigor has paid off not only in international tours, commissions and a stack of prestigious awards—including two Obies, a Doris Duke artist award and Guggenheim Fellowship—but in widespread critical acclaim. *Time Out New York* has called her "one of the best experimental playwrights in America," while the notoriously tough-to-please *New York Times* critic Charles Isherwood wrote in his review of *Untitled Feminist Show*, "Young Jean Lee is, hands down, the most adventurous downtown playwright of her generation."

It's hard to argue with that assessment—the title alone of *Straight White Men* indicates that Lee is up to something of considerable scope. *American Theatre* sat down with her to find out more.

## Is it true that you started off in academia?

I was in a Ph.D. program at Berkeley, studying to be a Shakespeare professor. I had no artistic aspirations—I was training to be a literary critic. I went to a therapist because I was so miserable. She was like, "You're not depressed. How could you be happy when you hate everything you do all day long?" She asked me to say, off the top of my head, what I wanted to do with my life and I said, "I want to be a playwright."

That thought had never even really crossed my mind before. I was embarrassed, but she was like, "Well, let's talk about this." It turned out that I was only studying Shakespeare because I secretly wanted to be a playwright. It was like being a veterinarian who says, "I want to be a dog!"

Eventually you found your way to Brooklyn College, where your credo "to make the last show in the world you would want to make" kind of took hold. Can you explain that?



Young Jean Lee  
and members of the band  
Future Wife in Lee's  
*We're Gonna Die*.

BLAINE DAVIS

Yes. I was trying to write a play for [theatre professor and playwright] Mac Wellman, and it was such a disaster because of my background. If your brain has been trained for 10 years in theatre criticism, it becomes the stoniest ground for creativity. Everything I wrote was incredibly derivative. I was imitating Mac and Richard Maxwell and the Wooster Group, and I knew it was bad, because I was a critic.

So I was in despair. I called Mac at home and said, “I don’t know if I can be a playwright. Everything I write is so bad. I think I just can’t do it.” He said, “Well, if you’re such a bad writer, then let’s see how bad you can be! If you write the worst play you can possibly write, and it’s bad enough, then you’ll get a good grade and you won’t flunk out of the program.”

That assignment opened everything up—I was so full of self-



CARL SKUTSCH

From left, Becky Yamamoto, Jennifer Lim, Haerry Kim, Jun Sky Kim in *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* at HERE Arts Center in 2006.



BLAINE DAVIS

From left, Regina Rocke, Amelia Zirin-Brown, World Famous \*BOB\*, Katy Pyle and Hilary Clark in *Untitled Feminist Show*.



From left, Pete Simpson, Austin Pendleton, Scott Shepherd and James Stanelly in an early workshop of *Straight White Men*.

BLAINE DAVIS

hatred that it was easy. If I thought, “What would I *love* to write about?” I’d have nothing. But what would I *hate*? Everything was there.

I never really liked the Romantic poets, except for Blake—they were all really annoying to me. So I thought, “What would be more annoying than a historical-period drama of the English Romantic poets, talking about life and art in a cottage?” That sounded uncool and horrible on every level. I wrote that play [*The Appeal*], and it was like a kid playing really sadistically with Barbie dolls. You stick their heads in the toilet, you throw them out the window. The characters were really annoying, and I wrote as badly as I could. When I got bored, I’d restart the scene in the middle without throwing anything away, like a video-game reset. I just did whatever I wanted and followed every impulse, and then the play was done. I was scared to bring it into class, but when we read it, everyone was just hysterical. It turned out to be funny and interesting, because Mac had found a way to tap into my actual creative impulses.

**His contrary nature has inspired many. How else did being in that program, with those playwrights, influence you?**

Mac is one of the best teachers I’ve ever had, and the reason why is because none of his focus is on his own ego as a teacher. The only question is, “What is the best thing for the student as a writer?” Everyone in the program has to read so much—but I read almost nothing, because Mac said, “You’ve read *too much*. You need to *write*.”

**Plus, your cohorts read like a greatest-hits list—you were with Thomas Bradshaw...**

...Kate Ryan, Karinne Keithley Syers, Kelly Cooper. I had never been in a functional situation in my life, and suddenly I landed in this completely healthy environment. I always tell people I had a totally happy artistic childhood because I started at 29. I haven’t had trauma around a project. Mac got me when I was a baby, and he was such a good parent that he trained my brain to expect healthy relationships—and I think that’s a big part of why my career has been so charmed. I still get blocked and have problems, but in terms of basic self-esteem and self-worth and not getting destroyed by things, I’m okay, and gravitate toward healthy people.

That’s kind of been the key to everything—just how good those relationships have been. I’ve never felt exploited or mistreated. That’s all thanks to Mac.

**Your idea is to tackle the last thing in the world you want to make, but over time, does that flip and become the thing you want to make? If not, how do you sustain that discomfort?**

It’s gone away from the thing that I hate, and now it’s more the thing that I *don’t know how to do at all*, or the thing that’s *really hard to do*. So with *Untitled Feminist Show*, I was never like, “Ah, I *love* making a show about feminism”—these projects are very masochistic. Sometimes I wonder if it’s unhealthy, because I don’t get to build on prior skills. Every show I have to learn a new skill set from scratch, which basically requires me to work nonstop. For *Straight White Men*, I had to teach myself how to write a naturalistic play—which is a really hard thing to do if you’ve never done it before. So every play has this horrible, growing-pains, learning-curve aspect to it.

**How did you teach yourself how to write a naturalistic play?**

You just read a bunch of naturalistic plays and you dissect them. I have a genius dramaturg, Mike Farry—he's worked with me on every play that I've ever written. None of my shows would be the way they have been if it weren't for him. There's a lot of trial and error and a lot of rewriting.

**It sounds like there's a stark contrast between the happy artistic childhood and the masochistic constant reinvention of the wheel.**



BLAINE DAVIS  
Amelia Workman, Paul Lazar, Okuwi Okpokwasili and April Matthis in *Lear* at Soho Rep in 2010.

**How do you manage the masochism?**

Um, alcohol? [*laughs*] I'm having to force myself to do things like cook and exercise and sleep, so that I don't get really sick. That's a constant struggle for me—"Do I need to do this every time?" I see what happens to people sometimes—to artists—who just start doing easier and easier things, and it's like all the power goes out of their work. I feel that the torment I go through gives the shows an energy. There's a desperate quality to all of my work.

**Your shows are super alive, like live, raw nerves.**

Exactly. And I think that for my process, the key is to have enough scaffolding around me—like my company and the theatres I work with—so that I can sustain that level of pain. Every show involves so many people putting in so much work to make things happen—I just have this little part in the middle of it, where I'm just like...

**That sounds rather modest.**

But it's really true! I'm more of a central cog. It's really a collective endeavor.

**Do you generate dialogue with actors and performers and then sculpt it?**

Normally we talk about stuff in rehearsal, and then, based on what we talk about, I go home and write. I come in, once I've written the thing, and that's when everyone pitches in. *Straight White Men* was a

little different, because I didn't know how to write naturalistic dialogue. The first draft of it, which we did at Brown University, was built out of improv with the actors.

The scripts are really collaborative. I'll bring in a line and ask how to fix it, and everyone in the room just screams out stuff. My dramaturg is involved in the writing—it's a team effort. There's no way I could have written any of those plays on my own. That's an important distinction between me and other playwrights—it's never me alone in a room. It's not springing forth from my brain. It would be interesting to give my texts to everyone who has been on an artistic team and ask, "Tell me what things in this play were your idea."

**Because it would be such a jumble?**

Absolutely. Most of it originates with the actors and dramaturg. That could be a worst-nightmare scenario: Me having to write something completely on my own. There's also audience feedback. I get constant feedback, and when someone shares an idea, that trickles into the writing. I'm sort of like a curator, where all this information is coming in all the time.

**How does your process intersect with social media?**

I'm in front of my computer all the time writing. And every now and then a question will come up, and my collaborators aren't there and I need instant response. If I finish a draft of something and I need someone to read it, I'll ask, "Who can read this by the end of the day today?" I'll have six people read it and e-mail me feedback. It's hugely helpful as an immediate resource. People have told me it's a genius marketing strategy, but, I mean, I pay people to do marketing for me so...

**You weren't plotting and scheming.**

No. It's not my job to do the marketing. I only post stuff when I wonder how people will respond.

**In an interview you did with Richard Maxwell for *Bomb* magazine you said, "Failure is basically my M.O. in everything." Let's talk about that.**

I think failure is connected to masochism. For a lot of writers, there's a pleasure in mastery: You're a master of this form, and what you're writing isn't shit. For me, during most of the process, what I am writing *is* shit, in my opinion. But it's like, we have to go through that in order to get to where we want to go; 90 percent of the process is just sucking and failing. I don't think that's an exaggeration. Everybody is failing, and it's hard, but there's always forward momentum—it's always getting better as we go along. Still, that's what makes the beginning of the process almost unbearable.

We've had presenters say, "We don't want this piece anymore," based on the workshops, which are so terrible—not "false modesty" terrible, but so terrible people pulled their funding. That's why failure is so essential—we couldn't do it without that part, the part where we're failing and we throw it away and start from scratch. ▶

I remember a marvelous early iteration of *Untitled Feminist Show* at the New Museum that was full of text, and I couldn't believe the show eventually became wordless. In the same *Bomb* interview you said, "The hardest thing for me in making theatre that is political is trying to trap the audience so they can't escape through ways of their dismissive loopholes...by saying, 'I don't want to be preached at.'" And yet your plays never feel preachy.

Our audience is so jaded and slippery that pretty much everything that I do can be dismissed, left and right. With *Straight White Men*, all of the feedback, up until this point, has been getting less and less dismissive. But that's why I am constantly testing.

**Tell me more about *Straight White Men*.**

When I was at Brown doing the first workshop, there was a room full of students, people of color and queer people, a very diverse room. And they started talking very harshly about straight white men. I said, "Okay. Now I know all the things you *don't* like about straight white men. Why don't you give me a list of the things you wished straight white men would *do* that would make you hate them less?"

So they told me all these things, and I wrote down the whole list, and then I wrote that character. And they all hated him. They *bated* him.

**You wrote the character that was supposed to be the embodiment of a good straight white man? A utopian version?**

Yes, and they hated him because he was a loser. And that's what made me realize that, in spite of all these social-justice values, in our peer group, being a loser is worse than being an asshole. It kind of revealed our continuing investment in the patriarchy. So that became interesting to me in the play, and this character became a litmus test.

The play is about a family of straight white men who come home for Christmas together, and they are super P.C.—not in an annoying way, just very politically aware and sensitive. They're not assholes. They aren't like David Mamet or Neil LaBute or Adam Rapp characters—they are cool guys, and they really love each other. They are very straight white male, but very loving.

So they are in this family situation, and one of them is the utopian character based on the feedback from the Brown students—he's a son, and the play is about how his two brothers and father are driven insane by him being the way that he is, which exposes their actual value systems. That's the movement of the play, and I want the audience to kind of get caught in that bind of, "Oh, well, we *say* we want straight white men to be like *this*, but we *actually* want them to be like *this*. And that says something about my investment."

**Can you give me an example of this?**

Everyone at the workshop was like, "I want a straight white man to sit down and shut up. I want him to take a back seat, to take a supporting role. I don't want him to be aggressive. I want him to be passive and sit there and take it. I want him to listen. I don't want him taking the head role or the biggest job or to be going after the biggest stuff. I want him in a supporting role to me." And like...I don't want to date that guy! Do we actually want that? No, not according to our value system.

So the audience is supposed to get trapped in this kind of bind,

this disjunction between the desire for social justice and the desire for things to stay the same, and for people not to be losers, and to be aligned with power. The audience can say, "Oh, this play is about straight white male assholes. I am completely distanced from it and dismiss the utopian character." But they're not assholes. And they're also trapped if they say, "That character is lazy. That's his problem," because he's not lazy. There are loopholes that the audience is using so that they don't end up trapped by their own hypocrisy.

**Doesn't your company have a T-shirt that says, "Destroy the audience"?**

Yeah. That's because every play has malicious intent against the audience—not so much malicious as destructive. I think this comes

down to the fact that the thing that I hate the most is complacency. I don't like it when people think that they know everything and they're right and they are satisfied with themselves. One of the things I believe in most is self-critique and self-awareness. So every show is a challenge to myself, even in the way I approach it—even if it's the last thing in the world I want to do, I'm forced to change.

What I am going for with every show is to get in the way of the audience's self-complacency, or to put a little piece of gravel into their brains that irritates them. That's my goal with every show, and that's what "destroying the audience" is about.

Correspondingly, every show I've ever done has forced me to change and become a different kind of person and a different kind of artist.

**How has each show changed you?**

With *Straight White Men*, it's really prevented me from feeling totally self-righteous as an Asian female. I mean, "I'm a woman of color! I can scapegoat the straight white guy! I'm not a person of privilege! I'm doing great things for the world just by totally selfishly pursuing what I want, because I'm making the world more diverse!" A straight white guy can't do that. He can't say, "I'm making the world a more diverse place by just doing whatever I want"—there are expectations on him that require him to *do something*. So working on this show has sort of forced me to confront my own hypocrisy and challenge my sense of how committed I am to social justice—how big a hypocrite I am. It's also forced me to stop being so snotty about naturalistic theatre, you know? It's really hard to make.

It's really hard to make *anything*—and it's really hard to make *good* theatre. Period. No matter what kind of theatre it is. I think I've been more generous toward experimental theatremakers in the past because I know what they are trying to do—and now I'm realizing naturalistic theatre is really equally difficult, if not moreso, because you're constrained in more ways—there's less freedom. So working on a naturalistic play is probably going to change me. My brain has been rewired to think in terms of character and plot. I don't know if I can just get rid of that, you know? I'm sure I'll be able to write nonlinear things again, but I'll be writing them with the knowledge of what the linear version would be. 📌

**For Eliza Bent's full conversation with Lee, visit [www.americantheatre.org](http://www.americantheatre.org).**

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# Finding Ways to Firmer Ground

*Theatre Facts 2013* shows companies are taking smart steps to regain their economic footing after the Great Recession



James Newcomb, center, in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* at the Goodman Theatre.

LIZ LAUREN

BY CELIA WREN

**G**UARDED RELIEF. WARY OPTIMISM. A renewed enthusiasm for fiscal discipline. Those sentiments are mingling with stoicism and weariness as theatre folk look back on the experience of the last half decade.

“The good news is that we are still alive,” says René D. Copeland, producing artistic director of Nashville Repertory Theatre (formerly Tennessee Rep).

“It definitely feels like a much more optimistic time than it did a few years ago—there’s no question about that,” says Maggie Boland, managing director of Signature Theatre, in Arlington, Va.

“There are challenges out here that we are all dealing with. We need to be smart; we need to keep alert,” but “the

sky is not falling,” remarks Scott Nolte, producing artistic director of Seattle’s Taproot Theatre Company.

These and other comments from leaders around the country dovetailed with the findings of *Theatre Facts 2013*, the latest iteration of TCG’s annual report on the not-for-profit theatre’s financial health. The study contains some relatively upbeat news—not surprising, given that the base year for much of its trend analysis was 2009, a twelvemonth that saw the nadir of the Great Recession, with unemployment at its worst. A chronicle of the theatre’s experience after that juncture fortunately shows some big-picture improvement.

Between 2009 and 2013, total income growth climbed by double digits, in inflation-adjusted figures, while expenses—which had dipped in 2010 as theatres economized—climbed

3.2 percent. With capital campaigns coming to fruition in the form of new, renovated or expanded facilities, not to mention bolstered investments, total net asset growth beat inflation by 9.6 percent.

And in 2013, as in 2012, 50 percent of companies finished the year with either break-even or positive CUNA (an acronym standing for Change in Unrestricted Net Assets, meaning the balance that remains after subtracting total expenses from total unrestricted income). That's down from 2010 and 2011, when a modest majority of theatres had break-even or positive CUNA, but it's still better than 2009, when a majority of theatres found themselves in the red, with negative CUNA. Overall, the authors of *Theatre Facts 2013* believe that America's dramatic establishment has "largely participated in the country's general economic recovery" since the downturn.

But there is still reason for anxiety. Total attendance at resident productions did tick upwards over the five-year period, but it was by a modest amount—1.2 percent—and it declined between 2012 and 2013. Subscription income was lower in 2013 than in 2009; contributed income lagged behind inflation over the five-year period. And average working capital—the unrestricted resources available to meet day-to-day obligations and cash needs—was negative in each of the last five years, a bad state of affairs, in the opinion of the *Theatre Facts* authors, who warn that negative working capital is "a threat to the future viability of many theatres in the field."

Written by Zannie Giraud Voss and Glenn B. Voss, of Southern Methodist University, with Ilana B. Rose and Laurie Baskin of TCG, *Theatre Facts 2013* parses financial, performance, attendance and ticket data that TCG Member Theatres have supplied for fiscal years that concluded anytime between Oct. 31, 2012, and Sept. 30, 2013. Embellished with helpful charts and graphs, the report is available online at [www.tcg.org/tools/facts](http://www.tcg.org/tools/facts). (Previous editions of *Theatre Facts* are there too.)

*Theatre Facts* scrutinizes the dramatic establishment's welfare from several complementary angles. The section titled "The Universe" takes a panoramic approach. Extrapolating from figures provided by 176 theatres that completed the 2013 edition of TCG's annual Fiscal Survey, and taking into account information provided to the IRS by 1,597 additional theatres (this group had filled out IRS Form 990), the Universe analysis comes up with estimates related to income, expenses, staffing and other key variables for 1,773 not-for-profit professional theatres.

Zooming in for more detail, the longitudinal "Trend Theatres" section contemplates data supplied by 115 TCG theatres that have filled out the Fiscal Survey each year since 2009. For added perspective, a side note examines figures furnished by 87 theatres that have been Fiscal Survey participants since 2004.

Finally, the "Profiled Theatres" section, working with responses from all of the 176 Fiscal Survey 2013 participants, breaks down the statistics by budget size for an added level of detail. The Profiled Theatres, which ranged in budget size from \$140,000 to \$64 million, are organized into six budget



ERIK STUHAUG

Ryan Childers and Tyler Trerise in *The Whipping Man* at Taproot Theatre Company.

groups, based on annual expenses—from Group 1 (theatres with annual expenses of \$499,999 or less) to Group 6 (theatres with expenses of \$10 million or more).

To begin with the widest snapshot: *Theatre Facts* estimates that the 1,773 Universe theatres mounted 215,800 performances of 21,600 productions, attracting an audience of 34.9 million.

The companies relied on a workforce of 126,100 people, of whom 65 percent fell into the artistic category. What with payments to personnel—plus the money plunked down for goods and services—the theatres directly funneled over \$2 billion into the U.S. economy. But the industry's contribution to local and national coffers is likely much larger than that figure suggests: For instance, a ticketholder may pay for a parking spot, a meal at a Yelp-endorsed eatery, a sitter for the kids, and so on, turning a night at the theatre into a real driver of economic growth.

As for the financial well-being of the theatres themselves: As a whole, the Universe theatres experienced positive CUNA in 2013.

Moving on to the Trend Theatres, which tend to be bigger than the Universe ones: *Theatre Facts* reveals that total income growth climbed by an inflation-adjusted 17.9 percent between 2009 and 2013, powered by earned income. The earned-income growth rate clocked in at an inflation-adjusted 40.8 percent, if you include investment income for the period—a stretch of time that saw the stock market revving up considerably. (The *Theatre Facts* authors note that exceptional capital gains and losses at two theatres distorted these figures somewhat. Analysis that left those two companies



*Peter and the Starcatcher* at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

TERRY SHAPIRO

out would yield an inflation-adjusted earned-income figure of 26 percent, rather than 40.8 percent, while total income growth would register at 11 percent, rather than 17.9 percent.)

Investment proceeds aside, average five-year earned income rose each year, outperforming inflation by 4.5 percent. When it comes to the dynamic of ticket sales, however, the picture becomes a little more complicated. Thespians have been fretting for years about the viability of the traditional subscription model, as Americans' hectic and variable schedules, and seeming yen for last-minute decision-making, whittles away at a structure that has given not-for-profit theatres a degree of financial stability, not to mention scope for some risky programming.

The *Theatre Facts 2013* findings suggest that the subscription system is neither at death's door nor thirsting to run a marathon. On the one hand, the period between 2009 and 2013 saw an 8.7-percent drop in total subscription tickets sold. Looking through a dollars-and-cents lens: Average subscription income faltered significantly in 2010, as the effects of the recession continued to register; although it climbed in the three subsequent years, it was still 9.3 percent lower in 2013 than in 2009, in inflation-adjusted numbers. On the other hand, the number of season-ticket holders increased in 2012 and 2013—possibly a token of “future promise,” in the opinion of the *Theatre Facts* writers. (It is worth noting that data related to subscriptions reflect both subscriptions and memberships.)

Theatre leaders have not stood idly by in the face of their audiences' overloaded schedules and commitment-phobia: Several interviewees said their companies had made changes to subscription packages in an attempt to address new realities. [See sidebar.]

Flexible subscription income hovered at roughly the same level during the five-year period, accounting for between 8 and 11 percent of total subscription income during the five years.

With subscriptions not always an easy sell, theatres must

cope with single-ticket buyers, who generally cost more to market to, compared with subscribers. Single-ticket sales were the biggest source of Trend Theatres' earned income in each year from 2009 to 2013. The number of single tickets sold was 0.8 percent higher in 2013 than in 2009, while average single-ticket income outpaced inflation by 7.8 percent over the five-year period.

Alas, purchasers of single tickets can be fickle, making it hard to foresee the success of any given show. Michael Gennaro, executive director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I., says he has recently noticed “completely unpredictable” swings in show-by-show revenue, based largely on erratic single-ticket sales.

A chart of single-ticket sales over a year “can look like a heart monitor: up and down, just varying so wildly by show and by season,” agrees Signature's Boland. All in all, she says, “It's getting increasingly difficult to predict how a production is going to do.”

Another source of single-ticket-related angst is today's instant-gratification mindset—a mentality that is no doubt reinforced by contemporary phenomena like on-demand television, quick and easy web searches and the ever-more-omnipotent smartphone. “It continues to be mind-numbingly frustrating that the new wave of single-ticket buyers is subject to last-minute impulse buying,” says Taproot's Nolte.

What with single-ticket buyers and subscribers, plus nonpaying audience members (a category that filled a slightly higher percentage of capacity over time), aggregate attendance at resident productions was 1.2 percent higher in 2013 than in 2009, as was mentioned at the top of this article. Factor in tours, and attendance growth was 0.4 percent. The number of performances offered by Trend Theatres also increased over the five-year period.

A caveat: A closer look at the attendance and performance information during the five years shows a more complicated story. After dropping between 2009 and 2010, presumably in response to the recession, attendance and performance numbers increased in both 2011 and 2012. Between 2012 and 2013, however, attendance and performance numbers dipped.

What explains this up-and-down motion? José González, executive director of the Miracle Theatre Group, in Portland, Ore., offers one hypothesis, observing that the theatre industry does not operate in isolation: Just as theatres have profited from a rebounding economy, so too have other cultural organizations, resulting in more competition.

“In our community, that has expanded the playing field, as it were, so customers have a lot more options to exercise in terms of their disposable income for entertainment,” he says. “Theatre, music, dance—everything has mushroomed.” As a result, following “a big spike” in the initial part of the recovery period, a theatre could well see ticket demand



COURTESY OF CARA MIA THEATRE CO.

*The Dreamers: A Bloodline* at Cara Mia Theatre Co. in Dallas.

and the like “settle down” somewhat, he hypothesizes. In short, in this more flourishing economy “you need to invest more in visibility and in promoting your programs, and in pushing the envelope as far as you can qualitatively, so that you stand out.”

While possibly reinvigorating multiple art forms and increasing overall competition, the economic recovery also brought relatively sunny days for theatres’ education and outreach programs: Earned income from such programs, including classes and workshops, outpaced inflation by 6.4

## SUBSCRIPTION? HOW ABOUT A SEASON PASS?

### DALLAS’S CARA MÍA THEATRE CO.

was born anew in the crucible of the Great Recession. Founded in 1996 with a mission of broadening public appreciation of Chicano and Latino culture, the company became inactive around 2008. Then David Lozano, a former artistic director, proposed reviving it for a play he’d co-written: *Crystal City 1969*. That 2009 show was successful enough to give the company a new lease on life. Lozano, now Cara Mía’s executive artistic director, says the theatre has grown from a budget of “basically zero dollars in 2009” to about \$200,000 today.

As it moves ahead, Lozano says, Cara Mía will be instituting, for the first time, a season-pass system. “Offering a season pass will tie our core audience to us more securely” and maybe even draw more patrons, the artistic director says.

The subscription model has been under strain in recent years, but, as Lozano suggests, the underlying idea still has currency. As a result, theatres continue to tinker with their subscription templates, aiming to fit the model to the times. Modern theatregoers are busy and may be reluctant to pin their schedules down in advance; in an attempt to lure such folk into the subscriber base—or keep them there—theatres are

making adjustments to the types and range of subscription packages they sell.

Martin Miller, executive director of TheatreSquared in Fayetteville, Ark., says that, among other strategies, his company has added a “Preview Saver” series, and also a “Dine Around” series that pairs five performances with pre-show meals at five different area restaurants. “More options, without becoming a plethora of options: I think people appreciate that,” he says.

“We have added a flex pass, which we had dabbled at before and put away. It’s back,” says Scott Nolte, producing artistic director of Seattle’s Taproot Theatre Company. “We’re seeing it as a point-of-entry or a gift package,” he says, noting that many flex-pass holder subsequently convert to three- or five-play subscription packages, sometimes lured by the prospect of better seating.

Offering packages of fewer plays appears to be a popular strategy these days: *Theatre Facts 2013* points to “a drop in the average number of performances per subscription” between 2009 and 2013.

But offering more smaller packages isn’t the answer for everybody. Michael Gennaro, executive director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I., says that his the-

atre is making changes to subscriptions this year “by offering less choice”—doing away, for example, with a three-show package. The move was motivated by an interest in keeping potential purchasers of larger packages from downscaling, he says.

Tristan Wilson, managing director of Barrington Stage Company, in Pittsfield, Mass., says his company recently instituted an “8-Show Combo Pass” covering an entire season’s worth of productions on both its mainstage and in its second space. The option hadn’t existed previously. “We started doing that and found that very successful,” he says. “There are a lot of people who want to see every show we do.”

“Subscription is never going to go away. It is always going to be a key part of what we do,” says Roche Schuller, executive director of Chicago’s Goodman Theatre. The difference now, he suggests, is that new developments in technology have made theatres less dependent on the subscription system. “We have so many different ways to fill seats that subscribers don’t fill—because of our ability to target different constituencies; our ability to manage ticket prices through dynamic pricing, both up and down; and our ability to price the house accurately by analyzing attendance patterns,” he says. —Wren



James Gardiner and Erin Weaver in *The Last Five Years* at Virginia's Signature Theatre.

TERESA WOOD

percent in the studied five-year stretch. "That's part of the economic recovery. Families have the resources," observes Nolte.

In another intriguing development, attendance at staged readings and workshops was 28.8 percent higher in 2013 than in 2009, even though the number of these events actually dipped nearly 11 percent during the period.

"There's just an adventurous audience out there that likes the idea of being in at the ground level," says Charles Varin, managing director of Denver Center Theatre Company,

noting that his institution's Colorado New Play Summit has seen increasing attendance.

Nashville Repertory Theatre's Copeland says her company began a staged reading series about five years ago and "the response to that has just exploded." She sees the series, on one level, as a way to work on building "really good relationships with our patrons. They come in to our rehearsal hall and hear a play read by professional actors—and we have a conversation afterwards."

Another trend discernible in the earned-income data: rental income beat inflation by a solid 33.4 percent, and was at its highest level in 2013. Between 83 percent and 89 percent of Trend Theatres earned income from rentals annually. Theatres are also, increasingly, becoming landowners. Of Trend The-

atres, 47 percent reported owning both their stage and office space in 2013—a higher number than in the years 2009–12.

Owning—rather than renting—a space has obvious advantages. An owned building is an asset. It can be used to generate rental income. Ownership may firm up a theatre's bond with a community. But ownership has its challenges. In the thrill of securing a permanent abode, theatres sometimes underestimate occupancy and maintenance costs. "Even our most aggressive predictions and projections for the new building didn't quite make what it actually costs to operate it," notes Ian Tresselt, managing director of Baltimore's Everyman Theatre, which flung open the doors on its new home—a historic vaudeville house—in 2013.

As a building ages, its upkeep costs may rise. Barrington Stage Company—which held a 2007 opening for its fully renovated mainstage in Pittsfield, Mass., purchased two years earlier—has planned for that phenomenon, says managing director Tristan Wilson. To pay for maintenance costs and the like, the theatre created a building and capital reserve fund that is fueled by a fee on each ticket sold. "We're well aware that, in the next 5 to 10 years, our maintenance costs are going to start increasing, and things will need to be replaced, and maintenance is just going to need more attention," Wilson says.

As if theatre companies didn't have enough to do dealing with physical spaces, figuring out attendance dynamics and mastering the earned-income puzzle, they also have to cope with contributed-income trends. While earned income increased between 2009 and 2013, contributed income lagged behind inflation, as was mentioned earlier in this article. Ending the year with a positive bottom line depends on a delicate mixture of earned and contributed revenue to cover theatres' expenses. That fact is apparent when comparing the percentage of expenses covered by earned versus contributed income in the two bookend years. In 2009, 43.7 percent of expenses were covered by earned income and 44.9 percent by



Jenny Littleton as Sally Bowles in Nashville Rep's 2013 production of *Cabaret*.

BRITANIE KNAPP

contributed income. (The percentages do not add up to 100 percent because in 2009, average CUNA for Trend Theatres was negative, with expenses exceeding total unrestricted income.) In 2013, earned income covered 59.6 percent of expenses, and contributed income 41.7 percent. (The percentages exceed 100 percent here because average CUNA was positive in 2013.)

While foundations remain the second-largest source of contributed income for Trend Theatres, foundation giving decreased between 2009 and 2013 in both absolute dollars and inflation-adjusted figures, as did giving from government sources; corporate giving over the period lagged behind inflation.

Individuals were the biggest source of contributed money each year, with 15 percent of that largesse directed at capital campaigns in 2013. Trustee giving beat inflation by 13.3 percent over the course of the five years; giving from individuals who were not trustees beat inflation by 13.8 percent. Support garnered from fundraising events and guilds displayed the sturdiest growth of any contributed-income category.

One factor behind the seeming robustness of individual

giving may be recent developments in data-management software and other technologies. As advertisements stalk us across multiple websites—and privacy experts bemoan the era of Big Data—it is some relief to know that the brave new cyber-age is, at least, benefiting the not-for-profit theatre industry, too. [See sidebar.] ▶



SCOTT BARROW

Richard Topol, Jeff Cuttler and Ben Rosenbach in *The Chosen* at Barrington Stage Company.

## ADVANTAGES OF THE 'BIG DATA' ERA

**THE OTHER DAY I BROKE THE** household coffeepot. I priced a replacement on two websites, but, procrastinating, didn't make a purchase. Later, I was skimming news online—and there was an ad for my replacement coffeepot, dancing on the edge of my screen. The ad knew who I was. The ad knew where I had been.

As news stories and privacy experts often remind us, we are living in the era of Big Data. Technological advances have made it possible for commercial entities, and political campaigns, to make sense of reams of information drawn from corporate databases, smartphones, web activity and other sources. The information can be analyzed, and cobbled together with other records and statistics, so as to draw an eerily detailed picture of individuals and their behaviors.

A silver lining to this cloud: Theatres, too, are increasingly able to use the tools of the Big Data era in marketing and fundraising, resulting in a greater level of efficiency in both areas.

Data mining is "the most valuable thing that we have done in terms of a marketing

strategy that actually has revenue associated with it," says Ian Tresselt, managing director of Baltimore's Everyman Theatre. The company hired a consultant to assess the patron-related data Everyman already had, and then partnered with a firm that was able to dig deeper into the information and match it to other data. The resultant level of detail, Tresselt says, has allowed the company to make progress in "really understanding our patrons, who they are, where they come from, who else out there is like them, [who else] should we market to." It's an advance that has helped the company personalize direct mail and otherwise be more efficient in marketing to single-ticket buyers.

Tresselt notes that going this route requires an investment of dollars and time. "You have to allocate money to it," he observes. "You have to be willing to put the time into looking at what your data person comes up with."

Refined data can also aid a development department. Using information from its ticket and donor software, Seattle's Taproot Theatre Company has been able to draw up

a list of "people who have been subscribers for eight years or more and, on the other hand, have demonstrated very low giving capacity," says producing artistic director Scott Nolte. He believes that outreach to these specific individuals—explaining very clearly what even modest gifts can help accomplish—can "expand their sense of ownership and vision" and turn them into donors. He compares support from such unassuming contributors to "the Hogwarts Express [that] goes to Platform 9 3/4" at King's Cross Station in the Harry Potter books: It may be unobtrusive, but it can fulfill a vital function.

"What we've seen, thanks to technology, is a completely new way to communicate with our audience, to sell tickets, to manage revenue. It's been about the most exciting thing I have experienced during the course of my career," says Goodman Theatre executive director Roche Schulfer, who has been with the Chicago company for more than four decades. "It makes me want to keep going for years." —*Wren*



Eric Poch in *The Beaux' Stratagem* at Everyman Theatre.

CLINTON PHOTOGRAPHY

Demographic trends, too, may be having an impact on contributed income patterns, and indeed are probably affecting the financial experience of theatres overall, suggests Roche Schulfer, executive director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre. "The whole American economy was fueled by baby boomers for a long time," he says. "The aging of the baby boomers, and the fact that we're not buying as much as we did before—different things like that have an overall impact on the economy. [People] talk about slowdown and growth in the economy—well, it's really adjusting to a new demographic reality. And it's saner now, because there is less chance for boom-and-bust."

Before leaving the income-related pages of *Theatre Facts*, it is worth noting that, when it comes to the Profiled Theatres, larger companies were able to support more expenses with ticket income. The smallest theatres (Group 1) supported only 12.9 percent of their expenses with ticket income, while the largest (Group 6) covered 40.3 percent of expenses with funds received from tickets.

Having examined the money-in side of the equation, it makes sense to ponder the money-out side. *Theatre Facts* reports that Trend Theatres trimmed expenses in many areas in 2010, no doubt in reaction to the economic downturn. Thereafter, total expenses climbed each year, for a 3.2-percent inflation-adjusted increase over the half decade.

Many interviewees said their companies had, in response to the gloomy economic times around 2009–10, frozen or tapered salaries or benefits, cut positions, or left vacant positions unfilled. As the fiscal climate improved, several people said, restoring those benefits was a paramount concern. "The first priority was the staff," said Gennaro.

Programming shows with smaller casts or sparer production demands was another survival tactic. Rosier times may have made such restraint less critical, but for Signature's Boland, the crunch time taught fiscal discipline—a virtue that will be useful going forward. Known for its musicals, Signature "really had to take a look at our balance" of show-tune extravaganzas and smaller pieces, she says. From that process, and the need for other cutbacks around 2009–10, Boland and her colleagues learned "that we could still produce

## WORKING CAPITAL IS NOT A LUXURY

"CAPITALIZATION IS DEFINITELY the thing that keeps us up at night," says Maggie Boland, managing director of Signature Theatre, in Arlington, Va., speaking of a subject that comes up when she chats with her industry peers.

She and her confidants are not alone: As has been the case for many years now, the writers of *Theatre Facts* are sounding an alarm about the theatre field's lack of working capital: unrestricted funds that are available to meet an institution's quotidian obligations and cash needs.

A lack of working capital means that theatres are badly positioned to deal with challenges and unexpected setbacks.

"The joke [in the field] is that, if an air-conditioning unit goes out, you wonder who you need to lay off. We don't need to be in that place!" observes Scott Nolte, producing artistic director of Seattle's Taproot Theatre Company.

A lack of working capital can also hamper a company's growth, and—by forcing

theatre leaders to focus on short-term cash-flow issues—crimp artistic vision.

While many theatre leaders are keenly aware of the problem, only a few feel they are getting the situation under control.

Ian Tresselt, managing director of Baltimore's Everyman Theatre, says he considers his company "fortunate" because, when it geared up for a recent capital campaign (the company opened the doors on a new building in 2013), several board members "were adamant that the campaign be inclusive of reserves." As a result of that trustee vision, he says, the company currently enjoys "working capital funds to help sustain us throughout the year," so that he and his colleagues can focus on the company's mission, "rather than living hand-to-mouth."

Rigorous financial discipline may also be an aid to building working capital. Martin Miller, executive director of TheatreSquared in Fayetteville, Ark., said that the experience of the economic crisis gave him and his colleagues the resolve to create—and sus-

tain—a cash reserve. At the worst part of the recession, he says, cash flow was a constant worry; several staff members even had to temporarily stop taking paychecks. "The week-to-week pressures" of that period "made it palpably clear that we can't work under that sort of stress," he says. So, as the theatre's financial health improved (with the help of a grant from the Walton Family Foundation), he says, "We have managed to put at least three to four months' worth of our operating budget into the bank" as a cash reserve.

There is a constant temptation to draw down that money: After all, he points out, "Everything could use more resources immediately!" But, in the aftermath of the crisis, he and his colleagues started thinking of cash reserves as a necessity, rather than as a luxury.

"I think that, philosophically, made a difference," Miller says. —*Wren*

absolutely great work with a different kind of financial investment,” she says. Now, in 2014, she goes on, “we’re back on the road to having a little more artistic freedom. But we still have that financial discipline,” which involves “having to be as clear about our budget priorities as possible and as rigorous in sticking to our budget agreements as we can.”

In each year of the five-year trend period, payroll accounted for at least 53 percent of theatres’ expenses. Between 2009 and 2013, Trend Theatres added 9 percent more full-, part- and jobbed-in employees, contributing to total payroll growth that outperformed inflation by 1.8 percent. Artistic payroll did not fare comparably, ending the period 1.3 percent lower compared to inflation than in 2009, while the administrative category ended 4.7 percent higher; production payroll also surpassed inflation, by 1.7 percent.

In other expense-related news: marketing expenses lagged behind inflation. Marketing is “much more targeted” these days, observes Sharon Fogarty, co-artistic director of New York City–based Mabou Mines. “It’s more financially focused and strategized. The money goes exactly where it’s going to produce the most box-office income.”

Occupancy, building, equipment and maintenance costs climbed each year. The *Theatre Facts* writers note that companies’ fixed assets—as well as their long-term investments—have grown over the years, in part as a result of capital campaigns. In 2013, 39 percent of Trend Theatres were in a capital campaign, while 17 percent had completed one in the previous five years.

Unfortunately, a fixed asset is of limited help in meeting day-to-day cash needs. You may have a comfortable venue, and dressing rooms that cry out to be featured in *Architectural Digest*, but those blessings will not help you pay the electric bill. To measure theatres’ ability to cope with such routine obligations, *Theatre Facts* relies on an indicator called “working capital”—an institution’s total unrestricted net assets, minus its fixed assets and unrestricted long-term investments. Negative working capital suggests that the institution is essentially borrowing money (e.g., taking out loans or delaying payables) in order to meet daily operating requirements.

On average, working capital for Trend Theatres was negative each year between 2009 and 2013. It became more severely negative between 2009 and 2010, improved to its least severe point in 2011, worsened again in 2012, and ended 2013 slightly better than in 2012, but still with a more severe negative figure than in 2009. Looking at the matter through the Profiled Theatres lens, we see that, on average, working capital was negative for every budget group except for Group 1, the smallest theatres. Judging by interviewee responses, many theatre leaders are aware of the problem. [See sidebar. Capitalization is also a major focus for TCG and will be a prominent part of the programming for the 2014 TCG Fall Forum on Governance: Cash & Culture convening in New York Nov. 7–9. For more information, visit: <http://www.tcg.org/events/fallforum>.]

As theatre folk contemplate the numerical aspects of their institutions’ recent track records, they are also think-



BETTENCOURT CHASE PHOTOGRAPHY

Rita Harvey and Jared Nepute in *Next to Normal* at TheatreSquared.

ing qualitatively—making deductions about how modern audiences want to consume theatre in the era of Twitter, Snapchat and Vimeo.

“I feel that we’re in a transition period in the field,” says Charles Varin, general manager for Denver Center. In former times, the theatre/theatregoer relationship followed “the witnessing model, where the audience comes in, sees a show and then leaves,” he says. Some older audience members still consume theatre in a more traditional way, he observes; but younger folks are often “looking for this very highly interactive and experiential experience. They want to be able to share with their friends immediately: what they’re doing, what a cool experience it was.”

To appeal to these (presumably smartphone-wielding) patrons, he says, Denver Center Theatre has committed to projects like making the lobby more of a social-media-friendly experience, with a backdrop wall that connects visually to each show, allowing theatregoers to pose for pictures that can immediately be posted on Twitter or other platforms. More generally, Varin says, “we are trying to really define who our customers are; that will influence what mix of product we have.”

Theatre practitioners are also keeping an eye on movements in the broader culture. Mabou Mines’s Fogarty says she has noticed that some young people involved in the company’s artist-residency program have appropriated the language and ideas of the locavore/artisanal-product movement.

These young artists are talking about their work in terms of “hand-crafted original performances” and other ideas drawn from the “artisanal movement that’s happening in terms of food and clothing and jewelry,” Fogarty says.

That conceptual alignment makes a lot of sense to the Mabou Mines veteran.

“[Theatre] is local, and it’s handmade,” she says. “Very carefully wrought, and from a place of intelligence.”

**Freelance reporter and critic Celia Wren is a former managing editor of this magazine.**

# Into the Woods

FIASCO THEATER & McCARTER THEATRE CENTER  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM COX



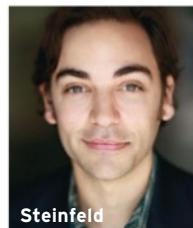
*For its 11-actor production of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's musical Into the Woods, Fiasco Theater took an actor-driven, ensemble approach to the material. In this production, everyone did everything—acted, played instruments and moved props. —Diep Tran*

**Ben Steinfeld, CO-DIRECTION, ACTOR:** As we talked about *Into the Woods*, we realized that the piece deals a lot with inheritance, and what we do with the things that we inherit—family and expectations and emotions and objects. And so we came up with the attic of memory, a space full of objects you could find in an attic, maybe from 100 years ago—it contained a grandfather clock, a ladder, sheet music, packing crates, pieces of furniture and a piano that we based the whole show around. Personally, I've inherited my grandfather's piano from my parents—it's an object made up of wood and strings, but when a piano becomes part of your family history, it takes on a magical power. And that's true of all the objects in the story.

We take our roles as storytellers seriously, and that means contributing to the scenes we are not in, in terms of providing musical support, sound support and physical support. As far as music goes, we always just base it on what the actors can play. I play the guitar quite a bit in the show—so we created a guitar/banjo sound for Jack and Jack's mother, to really make them feel like they're on the farm. The lifeblood and the heartbeat of the production have to do with the way the whole ensemble shares in the storytelling.

**Derek McLane, SET DESIGN:** When Fiasco approached me, they said they didn't want a forest, but they needed a container to put the show into. I felt I needed to create some abstract version of the woods. So I thought: What if it was all inside a piano? Upstage, there's a giant exploded piano harp, with hundreds and hundreds of piano strings in different layers, going from bass strings to treble strings.

They're over-scaled, but they're laid out in a way that's very true to the pattern and angle of the strings you would find in a grand piano. On the sides of the stage are a number of stripped-down piano harps. All of this is open so everything can be lit-through—which is part of what gives it that evocation of the woods, even though nothing *looks* like the woods.



Steinfeld



McLane

New York City's Fiasco Theater's reimagined *Into the Woods*, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by James Lapine, was commissioned and first produced by McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, N.J., where it ran May 3–June 9, 2013. It then played July 12–Aug. 17, 2014, at the Old Globe in San Diego, Calif., and will next play at Roundabout Theatre Company in New York City (Dec. 18–March 22). The production was directed by Noah Brody and Ben Steinfeld and featured choreography by Lisa Shriver, scenic design by Derek McLane, costume design by Whitney Locher, lighting design by Tim Cryan, sound design by Darron L. West, music direction and orchestrations by Matt Castle, and associate direction by Michael Perlman.

Pictured above and on the opposite page: The cast of the Fiasco Theater's *Into the Woods* at the Old Globe.



# A New Awakening

Deaf West's *Spring Awakening* puts the musical's themes—voiceless youth, generational misunderstanding—into even sharper focus



BY LINDA BUCHWALD

Daniel Marmion, Joshua Castille, Jimmy Bellinger, Austin McKenzie, Joseph Haro and Daniel Durant in Deaf West's *Spring Awakening*.

TAKE TULLER

**T**OME, THE PLAY SPEAKS TO THOSE WHO ARE denied a voice, to those who don't fit into the norm, to those who are questioning and experiencing the pains of growing up." That's a key sentence from Michael Arden's director's note in the program for a new production of Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater's award-winning 2006 rock musical *Spring Awakening*. Arden's production, though, raises and complicates the stakes of fitting in and finding your voice: Almost half of the characters are deaf.

Based on Frank Wedekind's once-scandalous 1891 play about German schoolchildren exploring their sexuality, *Spring Awakening* has offered contemporary audiences a fresh and bracing portrayal of adolescence. Arden's version—coproduced by Los Angeles's Deaf West Theatre, in association with the Forest of Arden, and playing at the Rosenthal Theater at Inner-City Arts through Nov. 9—doesn't lose any of the musical's relevance, but adds new layers of insight.

In its Off-Broadway premiere at the Atlantic Theatre Company and its two-year Broadway run, *Spring Awakening* was praised for breaking open the musical theatre form. Sheik, Sater and director Michael Mayer didn't update the time period of the story, but they gave the material a modern feel by having characters whip out microphones to express their teenage angst in pop and rock songs with anachronistic lyrics ("Then there's Marianna Wheelan / As if she'd return my call / It's like, just kiss some ass, man / And you can screw 'em all"). This juxtaposition struck a chord with both critics

and audiences—especially young audiences. The show took eight Tony Awards, including best musical, made stars of its young, attractive cast, including Lea Michele and Jonathan Groff, and has since been produced widely around the country.

The idea of a deaf-and-hearing version of the show arose when Deaf West's artistic director, David Kurs, approached Arden about directing a show for the company. Arden credits his partner, Andy Mientus, for the idea of doing *Spring Awakening*. Kurs was initially hesitant—he felt there had already been enough productions of the show—but he trusted Arden, a hearing actor with experience in Deaf West's unique stagings of musicals. Arden appeared on Broadway as Tom Sawyer in the company's *Big River* in 2003, and he shared the title role in *Pippin* with deaf actor Tyrone Giordano in Deaf West's co-production with Center Theatre Group in 2009.

The more Kurs thought about the idea, the more right it felt. The material, he realized, was a natural fit for sign language, as Deaf West musicals are performed simultaneously in English and ASL. "The musical moments are very clear," Kurs says, referring to the way the show's songs are bracketed, set apart from the story. "We have this wonderful dialogue switching into the musical moments, and that really helps our deaf audience understand the story." Perhaps more important, "I felt it would appeal to our deaf audience," Kurs says. "That's always the first question I ask myself when we're doing a production."

One reason for that appeal is that the show addresses

the difficulty of communication and understanding between adults and young people. The generational point is crucial—about 90 percent of deaf people are born to hearing parents. “We have to remember that there’s a difficulty in trying to communicate with our own parents, or with our relatives, or with our caretakers,” Kurs says through a sign-language interpreter. “It’s really simple things, like asking for something to drink. That experience is in all of us.”

**ASTUTE OBSERVERS WILL NOTE ONE**

subtle but significant departure from previous practices: Unlike in past Deaf West musicals, this version of *Spring Awakening* acknowledges that certain characters are deaf.

“The past two shows I did with Deaf West that Jeff Calhoun directed were incredible experiences—he was able to create a seamless ballet of language,” Arden says. “It wasn’t about who was deaf and who was not, and everyone was working together as a true ensemble. In *Big River* and *Pippin*, we never really acknowledged that characters were deaf, because they weren’t. We were living in a world where everybody knew sign language magically.”

But once Arden decided that wouldn’t be the case with the new *Spring Awakening*, a lot of thought went into which characters would be deaf and which would be hearing. In researching the period, Arden discovered that in 1880, the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf (commonly known as the Milan Conference) deemed oral education superior to sign language and passed a resolution banning sign language in school. It made sense to make the character of Moritz—a rebellious, individualistic student who struggles in school—deaf, as the “term given to deaf students who were unable to succeed with the often abusive oral method was ‘failure,’” Arden writes in his director’s note. “It is more than interesting that the word that sends young Moritz Stiefel on his downward spiral is none other than the word ‘fail.’ It was a culture that people attempted to eradicate, in a way, through oralism.”

There was some discussion about whether the lead character Melchior Gabor should be deaf, but it felt more appropriate in the context of the play’s historical conception to make Melchior a hearing character—he is a confident and strong youngster who comes from a supportive home, with one deaf parent and one hearing parent. Melchior becomes saddled with guilt over the death

of his friend Moritz and that of Wendla Bergmann, also deaf in this production, who dies from a botched abortion after Melchior impregnates her.

Heightening the drama, the deaf Wendla comes from hearing parents, so that the show’s beginning—in which Wendla asks her mother where babies come from (“Mama, who bore me”)—presents an even steeper barrier to communication. Not only does her mother struggle emotionally with explaining sex; she also has difficulty with the sign language. “I think that is what Wedekind was trying to say: When you don’t tell the truth, bad things can happen,” Arden says. “It’s a morality play—and hopefully moreso in this production than in previous ones.”

Indeed, by making the story about deaf and hearing adolescents, this *Spring Awakening* intensifies the conflicts at the heart of the show. Moritz’s struggles in school and his teachers’ wishes for him to fail feel even more unjust here, as he is forced to learn in a way he can’t understand. The new production takes the original notion of characters singing their inner thoughts further by having members of the band “play” the voices of the

deaf characters. These band-member voices sing the lyrics and speak the dialogue as their corresponding characters sign.

“Each counterpart for a deaf character has a different device,” Arden elaborates. The deaf actress playing Wendla hands her speaking/singing “voice” a guitar, which that performer then plays throughout the show; Moritz hands his voice counterpart the microphone before “The Bitch of Living” song, echoing the original production, and Martha Bessell’s voice performer stays at a distance, because her voice is stifled by her abusive family. At the moment of Moritz’s suicide, he takes the microphone away from his voice counterpart, making the moment even more chilling.


**SMALL, TELLING DETAILS LIKE THIS**

add new poignancy to lines lovers of the show have heard before. When Wendla finds out she is pregnant, she asks her mother, “Why didn’t you tell me everything?” This powerful moment becomes even more heartbreaking, as it’s the only moment the deaf actor playing Wendla speaks out loud with her own voice.

Arden even manages to make one scene

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work that never quite worked on Broadway: After hearing about Martha's domestic abuse, Wendla asks Melchior to beat her so that she, too, can feel something—and he eventually does. As serious as the actions are, this moment often got inappropriate laughs on Broadway, which had more to do with the staging than the acting. In the Deaf West production, Melchior appears as if he's actually hurting Wendla, and the other cast members make slapping noises as he beats her, making it more believable.

Another of Arden's decisions, part of his plan since the beginning, was to have the actors get prepared for the performance in front of the audience. They change clothes, picking up garments off chairs on an otherwise mostly bare stage; they play warmup games as the audience is seated. It all adds to the intimacy of the experience in the Rosenthal's 99-seat space.

"We're not pretending anything here," Arden says of such decisions. "We're not pretending that people aren't deaf, or that we're not doing a play." Christopher Scott Murillo's sets—the wooden chairs and school uniforms—recall those of Christine Jones



Jimmy Bellinger, Joseph Haro, Daniel David Stewart, Daniel Durant (standing on bed), Joshua Castille and Miles Barbee in Deaf West's *Spring Awakening*.

and Susan Hilferty for the original; but the backdrop trades in glowing lights for projections, with translations for both the deaf and hearing audience. Some of the characters, like the doctor who examines Wendla, don't know how to sign, and some of the dialogue is only signed, which is where the projections come

in. One scene is performed entirely in ASL. "That scene is silent," the director notes, "and we're not going to project the dialogue, so it's really a glimpse into what that home would be like."

Spencer Liff's new choreography, which incorporates ASL, can also be seen as

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TATE TOLLER

Sandra Mae Frank, Treshelle Edmond, Natcha Roi (seated), Katie Boeck (on guitar), Lauren Patten, Amelia Hensley (obscured), Alexandra Winter and Ali Stroker in *Spring Awakening*.

a natural extension of Bill T. Jones’s original, Tony-winning work, which used expressive hand and body movements to create a fresh choreographic language. Three ASL masters translated the lyrics and dialogue, and Liff incorporated the translations into the process, as the signs still had to be comprehensible.

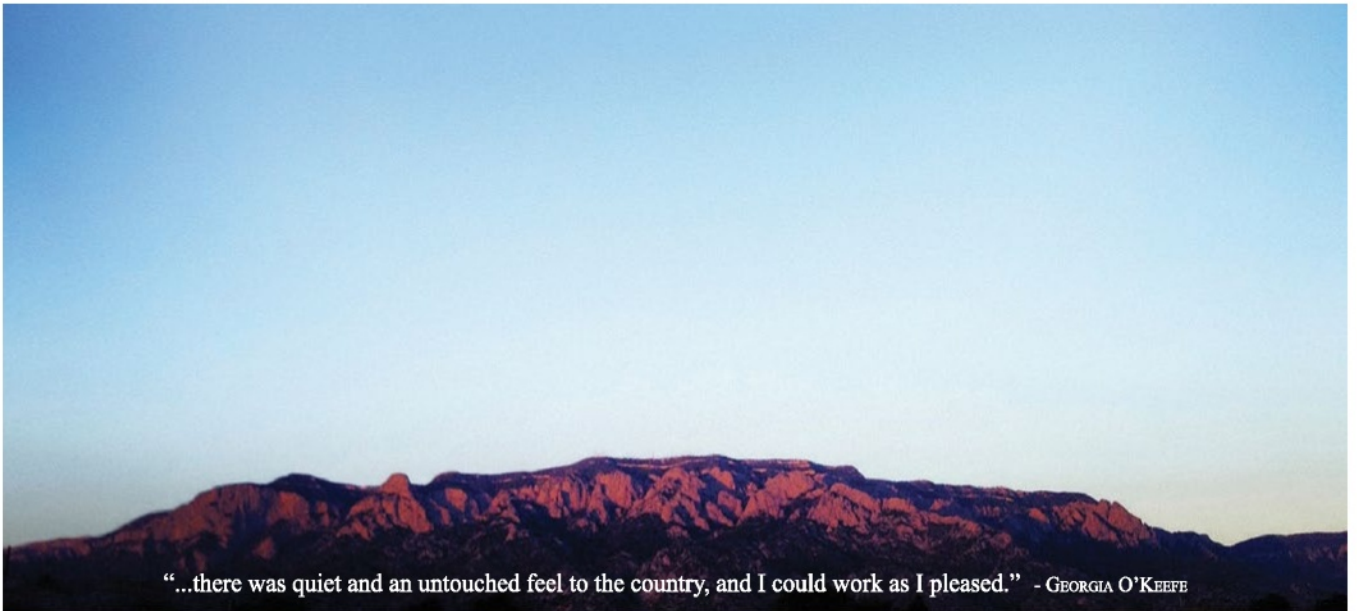
“This allows deaf people to see the music through the characters, through the story, through the movement—and it helps us to bridge this gap that exists [between the hearing and deaf communities],” says Kurs. Bridging gaps is indeed Deaf West’s mission. “In this production, we’re bridging the spaces

between the cast and crew, between members of the cast, and of course between our deaf and hearing audience members.”

Actors, mostly under the age of 24, have come from all over the country to be a part of the show. They have big shoes to fill. Daniel N. Durant, who plays Moritz, the role which won John Gallagher Jr. a Tony, has a natural star quality—when he dances and signs, often in desperation, he is so expressive that it’s easy to forget he isn’t singing. Sandra Mae Frank captures Wendla’s innocence and confusion perfectly, and there are standout performances throughout.

Though *Big River* made it from a tiny North Hollywood space all the way to Broadway, Kurs and Arden say there are no definite plans for the future of their new *Spring Awakening*. “I just hope that this is the beginning of a conversation—this is an important play, and I hope more people get to see it than we can fit in this theatre’s seats.”

**Linda Buchwald is a writer based in New York City. Her writing has appeared in TDF Stages and Backstage.**



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# A Museum of Many Colors

George C. Wolfe brings the Civil Rights Movement to vivid life in Atlanta

BY CHRISTOPHER KOMPANEK

George C. Wolfe, center, with chief executive officer Doug Shipman, left, at the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta.

COURTESY OF THE CENTER FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## “I DIDN’T DO THEATRE, I WOULD BE AN HISTORIAN,”

George C. Wolfe confesses over a cup of tea on an unseasonably cool late August afternoon in Atlanta, Ga. The Tony-winning theatre director and playwright is wearing a sweater with shorts and speaking at breakneck speed, causing his sentences to crash into each other on their way to forming big ideas.

Wolfe envisioned one of his earliest plays, *The Colored Museum*—a satirical survey of African-American identity and culture—as a series of exhibits an audience would travel through. While the concept ended up being scratched for practical reasons, nearly three decades later, Wolfe finds himself the unlikely curator of an actual exhibit, “Rolls Down Like Water,” detailing the struggles of the American Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968 at the newly opened Center for Civil and Human Rights, a wedge-like three-story building flanked by a massive wall of windows in downtown Atlanta.

Four years ago, Wolfe received a call from Andrea Bernstein, who served on the board of New York City’s Public Theater when he was that company’s artistic director. Bernstein connected Wolfe with Shirley Franklin, Atlanta’s mayor at the time, who was a leading proponent of the new center and served as the head of its board.

When Franklin proposed that Wolfe create one of the center’s four primary exhibitions, he was intrigued and instantly began research. “It was the same process as when I do a play,” he allows. “If it’s set in another period, I absorb as much information as I possibly can. I read as many books and try to put the period in my body as much as I possibly can, so there’s no distance between me and it, so it feels like

it’s happening with some immediacy as opposed to through the lens of history.”

Wolfe, who holds the title of chief creative officer for the center, is particularly fascinated by what he calls a “living newspaper phenomenon, using the visceral intimacy of theatre, the intellectual rigor of a museum, and the intimacy of a documentary.” He traces this style of working back to the creation of his hit shows *Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’da Funk* and *Harlem Song*, and more specifically to the idea of seeing history through the eyes of the people who made it, an impulse that goes back to his childhood. “There was a very specific moment I remember in third grade—my mother, who was a teacher and a principal, read a chapter of my history book to me. It was about the Pilgrims and the mosquitoes and them getting sick, and, you know, killing Native American people, which was left out of most books at the time. It changed history for me. I was like, ‘Oh, this happened to people—fragile, interesting, complicated people.’”

People, to be more specific, like Viola Liuzzo, a housewife from Detroit who became a Freedom Rider, and Claudette Colvin, who preceded Rosa Parks in refusing to give up her seat on a bus. Figures like these drove Wolfe’s research and insisted to him (like characters in a play) that he include their stories in the exhibit.

Liuzzo appears in a mural of Freedom Riders’ mugshots that’s attached to the life-sized side of a bus that hangs prominently in one gallery. Gazing up at the tinted windows, you can’t help but put yourself in the place of the brave activists who rode in racially integrated groups into southern towns, often

to violent ends. Liuzzo was shot by members of the Ku Klux Klan in Montgomery, Ala.

“These stories are extraordinary and thrilling and heartbreaking,” Wolfe avows. “On the opening day of the center, I met Liuzzo’s children and a couple of sisters of the four little girls who were victims of the 1963 church bombing in Birmingham. They were very happy that their names were there, because they’re usually just referred to as the ‘four little girls.’” There’s considerably more there than just their names—Wolfe had stained-glass portraits made of Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair that hang to poignant effect toward the back of the exhibit’s first floor, which is cloaked in black, echoing the theatrical environments that usually serve as Wolfe’s canvas.

“My theory about theatre is that everything you do either serves the play or distracts from it,” he notes. “You’ve got to make sure that every source lends energy to the story that you’re telling. Everything matters. Nothing is wasted. My determination here was to not have any surface wasted.”

Indeed, the exhibit is brimming with

information. A thorough visit takes a full day and perhaps a box of tissues—unlike exhibits that are first and foremost intellectually absorbing, Wolfe goes for the heart with staggering results. He’s employed actor friends like Chuck Cooper, Tonya Pinkins and Phylicia Rashad to deliver the exhibit’s many audio segments, including one detailing the thriving black-owned businesses on Atlanta’s nearby Auburn Avenue. Complete with musical interludes courtesy of longtime collaborator Robin Silvestri, the clips serve more as a portal through time than merely a system for delivering information.

A screening area for a documentary on the Freedom Riders, narrated by Jeffrey Wright, is tucked behind the bus façade and features old school-bus benches on which the audience can sit.

**THE MOST THEATRICAL EXHIBIT IS AN**

actual lunch counter at which visitors may sit and experience what it was like to participate in a sit-in. After putting on headphones, you’re instructed to place your hands on the counter and close your eyes. What comes next is a chilling and mind-alteringly visceral rec-

reation of vicious mobs that descended on the activists. “I want to use the language of today but not have you notice the technology—just try to elicit the bravery and the focus that was needed, so you feel it. If you say to someone, ‘People were really brave—they risked their lives, and it was really important,’ the response may be, ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah—words. You don’t get it until you create the incredible sense of isolation people must have felt, and the discipline it took to not punch the shit out of somebody.’”

The exhibit includes a clock above each seat that counts how long you stay at the counter. The time remains displayed until another person takes the seat. On my visit, one clock read seven minutes plus. The entire audio program lasts only about 90 seconds, though it feels much longer.

Mayor Franklin told Wolfe that she saw a woman throw her purse up in the air with elation on the exhibit’s opening day. For his part, Wolfe witnessed a 14-year-old girl leave the faux lunch counter abruptly, only to be told by her mother to go back and endure the refusal of service. “I thought these responses were really fascinating,” he recalls. ▶

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Wolfe also observed Andrew Young, the civil rights legend turned politician who was by Martin Luther King Jr.'s side when he was assassinated outside the Lorraine Motel, sit through a panoramic video of the 1963 March on Washington two or three times, crying continuously. Boxes of tissues are now placed on each bench. "When I first drew it, the room was a circle with all these little pathways in," Wolfe notes. "As we started to explore it, it turned into this panoramic screen. The room was inspired by the 'America, the Beautiful' thing at Disneyland," he adds, referring to the 360-degree film that opened there in 1960.

"People cannot help but be moved when they walk through this exhibition," declares Georgia congressman John Lewis. Now 74, Lewis was the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington and carries the reverberations of those times deeply within him. "For those of us who lived then, the march and the death and funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are events we can never, ever forget. Witnessing what George Wolfe created brings all these memories back. We remember what it took, and begin to consider



David Rockwell, Doug Shipman, Shirley C. Franklin, George C. Wolfe, and Phil Freelon.

what it will take to help redeem the soul of America," Lewis goes on.

In Wolfe's initial sketch, the lunch counter sits prominently in its own room, a massive counter with chairs on each side. The final product is more modest, tucked in a corner with just a handful of stools, unassumingly ready for unsuspecting patrons. David Rockwell, who collaborated with

Wolfe previously on the theatrical projects *Free Man of Color* and *The Normal Heart*, designed the exhibit space and was, Wolfe says, an ideal partner for his intense vision. "I have an incredibly specific, and some might say aggressive, sense of visual brain—when I see a moment, I don't see it existing in abstraction," Rockwell confirms. "I see it existing in a space."

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Directing theatre, Wolfe believes it's important to never tell an actor "no," but to instead pose questions that answer why a particular choice doesn't work. "If an impulse comes to me, it's for a reason—and I might not be able to intellectually articulate why I see it the way I see it," Wolfe reasons. For example, when he saw that the bars of King's Birmingham jail cell (on which his famous letter is projected) were not constructed of steel, Wolfe insisted they be changed, and they were.

**OBJECTS NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO** the design of the space but serve as vehicles for information and, more important, a connection to a time and place. It's easy for hours to disappear as you turn the knobs of grand old antique televisions stacked on top of each other—which serve to broadcast news clips making the case for segregation and change as the viewer switches the channel. Wolfe fought for this setup, as opposed to having the clips on a reel. Similarly, Jim Crow laws are displayed on an old-fashioned train information board hung high above buttons labeled for each state in which they existed. Push one and the letters reconfigure to display the state's laws on education, employment and the like. The revelation is that, after the big production of watching the letters rotate, actual differences between the states are miniscule. "There were no options," Wolfe emphasizes. "That's why neighborhoods like Sweet Auburn and Harlem had to be so vibrant."

Past the assassination of Dr. King—which is detailed on a black staircase via a cacophony of chaotic newsreels from the infamous day—lies a room named "requiem." It serves as a memorial to people of all races and backgrounds who gave their lives for the cause of civil rights, and, perhaps paradoxically, as a looking-glass for the future. An interactive screen lets visitors compare before-and-after photos of places like Basin Street and Harlem, and lets you draw your own conclusions without commentary. But the juxtapositions belie Wolfe's position: "They were gentrified communities that have been stripped of their soul. Basin Street now looks like Disneyland," he laments.

Geography and real estate also played a huge role in creating the Harlem Renaissance, he points out. "If you can't live anywhere else, Paul Robeson is going to live down the street from Langston Hughes, who's across the street from Countee Cullen, who's having

breakfast with Zora Neale Hurston. Compression creates this kind of thing."

By the same token, the South wasn't uniformly the South of racial division. (Wolfe is working on a new play set in Virginia in the '50s, which he'll also direct, but he's keeping quiet about the details for now.) In Birmingham, Ala.—where the thuggish dolt of a commissioner for public safety, the aptly named Bull Connor, responded to peaceful protests with police attack dogs and fire hoses—stood in stark contrast to Atlanta, where discrimination festered quietly under the surface of a more polite sheen. When Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, a dinner was held in his honor, but tickets to it remained unsold until J. Paul Austin, president of the Coca-Cola Company, convened a meeting of business leaders and declared that he would move the company headquarters elsewhere unless the city paid

due honor to its Nobel winner. The dinner sold out in two hours.

Wolfe describes stepping into the museum space for the first time "as moving into Barbie's dream house, and it's not made out of cardboard. It's made out of mortar and steel." He felt as though he'd been sucked inside a play, one that dissolved his normal perspective on what's working and how it's delivered to an audience. "Because you don't have the proscenium, you can't control storytelling that way," he says of the curatorial experience. "You have to figure out new special rules on how you can command storytelling. It took a while for me to trust what was being communicated." ❏

**New York City-based arts journalist Christopher Kompanek writes regularly for this magazine.**

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COURTESY OF THE GINGOLD THEATRICAL GROUP

**N**OT LEAST AMONG THE PLEASURES OF attending a Project Shaw evening is watching artistic director David Staller work the room.

Every month since January 2006 (with Augusts off), Staller has directed a staged reading of one of George Bernard Shaw's plays. He's done all 65 of them at least once, some as many as four times, but he still has a GBS.-like twinkle in his eyes as he flogs raffle tickets to an invariably sold-out house, urging the audience to "help send my cats to college" and offering prizes from scripts to tote bags.

He greets many of those present by name and never forgets to thank his active, financially supportive board of directors. In his mid-50s, sporting a Shavian beard flecked with gray and spectacles that wouldn't look out of place on a member of the Fabian Society, Staller has a courtly manner ever so slightly tempered by an undercurrent of irony as he clasps hands meaningfully and says, "How wonderful to see you." He may have sidelined his acting career, but he invites you to enjoy his performance as impresario, cheerleader and tireless fundraiser.

There's no play-acting, however, about Staller's commitment to and ambitions for the organization he founded nearly nine years ago. The Gingold Theatrical Group, declares its mission statement, "is dedicated to presenting plays about human rights using the work of George Bernard Shaw as our platform...while encouraging individuals to breathe these humanitarian ideals into their contributions for the future."

Project Shaw is the organization's longest-running effort, but its widest-ranging is Shaw New York, an annual festival launched in 2012. Centered on a fully staged Shaw play, the festival also includes a scholarly symposium about the play; another symposium addressing the role of criticism; a concert featuring music that GBS. championed; and the reading of a script from Press Cuttings, a new-play-development program aimed at encouraging theatre journalists to follow Shaw's path from drama critic to practicing playwright.

"Just putting on a Shaw play isn't the point—it's everything around it," says Staller. "The idea is to make Shaw New York a more community-driven, all-encompassing event. I would like the festival to become an active and ongoing part of the fabric of New York."

Count at least one of Staller's goals met, according to David Cote, theatre editor at *Time Out New York*.

"David has definitely enlarged the audience for Shaw in New York," says Cote. "What he's doing is radical in the sense that he doesn't think these plays are just polite little conversations; there's more at stake. He tries to find the living core of the play, and that's fresh. Shaw on the page is ridiculously dense with predetermined rhetorical elegance, and yet the language is incredibly alive. It's a real dance between 'People don't talk that way!' and 'Yes, but these people *have* to talk that way.' David is very good at making sure the characters and their actions are believable, but also allowing the intellectual energy of a play its full scope. I think

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he's made people realize that the plays can actually be funny and passionate."

Cote is among the many theatre journalists Staller has inveigled into offering introductory remarks before a Project Shaw reading (*American Theatre's* Rob Weinert-Kendt is another), and he's also a member of an even smaller group: one of three critics commissioned to write plays for Press Cuttings. An untitled script by *Newsweek's* Jeremy McCarter was workshopped in 2012, and *The Last Word* by Robert Simonson, who writes for *Playbill*, has been through several drafts. Cote's comedy of ideas, *Otherland*, has had the most sustained development, with readings at Shaw New York in 2012 and 2013 that featured such prominent New York talents as Laila Robins, Condola Rashad and Harriet Harris (a new draft will get a reading in December as part of the 2014 festival).

"I'm trying to juggle a lot of ideas about identity and belonging and crossing borders," Cote explains. "David didn't say, 'Write a play like Shaw,' but I think because that's his passion, his influence may have pushed it in a certain direction."

While the new-play readings are an

important element of Shaw New York, the festival's flagship remains that year's full-scale Shaw production. Shaw New York 2012 spotlighted *Man and Superman*, done as a joint venture with the Irish Repertory Theatre. Staller directed a nicely balanced rendering of one of Shaw's most difficult plays, slashing it by more than two hours but preserving the often cut "Don Juan in Hell" act.

He followed it up in 2013 with a romp at the Pearl Theatre Company, the seldom-seen *You Never Can Tell*. Headlining Shaw New York 2014 will be *Major Barbara*, a coproduction with the Pearl opening this month and featuring company regulars Dan Daily as the munitions manufacturer Andrew Undershaft and Sean McNall as Dolly Cusins, the sardonic professor he entices to abandon Greek for gunpowder. Joining them as the fervent Salvation Army major, Undershaft's daughter and adversary, is Hannah Cabell, Project Shaw's first Eliza in a 2007 *Pygmalion*.

**THE PLAYWRIGHT'S CHALLENGING** ethos has inspired Staller since he was a boy. While visiting his father in London at age 10, he turned on the radio to find a musical



David Staller.

DANIEL RIECHERT

voice with a faint Irish accent emanating from a vintage BBC program. "I heard Shaw say, 'Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself,'" he recalls, "and it absolutely floored me. That expression has goaded me all of my life. How far do I dare to be an iconoclast or simply make bold choices for my life without allowing myself to be dictated by what I feel is expected of me? We are the sum of our decisions."

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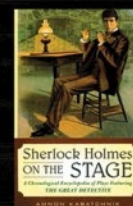
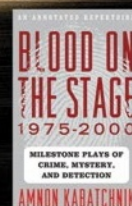
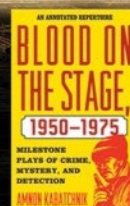
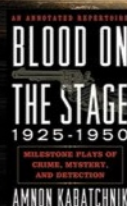
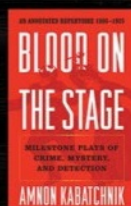
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Sean McNall and Amelia Pedlow in *You Never Can Tell* at the Pearl Theatre Company.

AL FOOTER III

Staller was playing Praed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* at the Irish Rep when he decided that a monthly dose of GBS. was just what New York needed. He'd been alarmed in the wake of the 2004 Iraq invasion by "the way the administration manipulated 9/11 to

control what was going on in this country. It was a world being governed by fear, and I felt deeply concerned." He tried to interest Irish Rep leaders Charlotte Moore and Ciarán O'Reilly—and "everyone else I knew who had a company"—in sponsoring Project Shaw, but

they all had the same reaction: "You'll never get the talent. You'll never get the space. You won't be able to rehearse enough. What will the Equity agreement be?"

So Staller formed Gingold Theatrical Group (named in honor of actress Hermione Gingold, whom he had known since childhood) as a 501(c)(3) umbrella for his Shavian mission. He booked a Monday each month for a year at the Players Club, of which he is a member, with the understanding that low attendance would cancel the arrangement. On the contrary, from Project Shaw's launch in January 2006 with the pointed selection of *Arms and the Man*, every reading sold out. They continued to sell out after the series moved to Symphony Space last October, and the new uptown location has expanded the audience base.

Marian Seldes, Brian Murray, Rebecca Luker, Fritz Weaver and Tovah Feldshuh are among the prominent theatre figures Staller has been able to enlist. "The actors call it 'Shaw camp,'" he says. "Most of them have never had a chance to work on Shaw, certainly not in the roles I cast them in; they get to stretch themselves." Staller is quick to

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add that he pays the performers, as required by the special agreement Equity wrote for the readings, and that he goes beyond the agreement to provide food during the five-hour rehearsal and a catered dinner before the performance. "I try to do everything that I thought was lacking when I was an actor doing these kind of readings. The script is in a binder, large type and single-sided pages, with pencils and highlighters for notes. I provide dramaturgy for each play."

Observing Staller at a Project Shaw rehearsal, it's easy to understand why he has as yet been unable to persuade anyone else to direct one of the readings. Guiding actors through the Shavian ballet of language and ideas in a single afternoon virtually mandates the intimate familiarity with the play and its history that he possesses—which results from a daunting amount of preparation. Staller assembles each script from multiple versions (Shaw liked to rewrite), then consults production notes and letters for clarification of the playwright's intentions. In rehearsal, he's not shy about explaining a character's motivations or the subtext for a particular line; occasionally he coaches people beat

**"There's a whole discipline of working with Shaw that's quite different than working with most other playwrights... But what's thrilling is that, like Shakespeare, Shaw needs to be spoken; the thoughts have to occur on the line." —David Staller**

by beat through an exchange, almost like a silent movie director.

"Clearly, I have a very specific point of view," he acknowledges. "I have an agenda with each of these plays, which is the mission of our company: to remind us we're in charge of our lives, it's up to us to make good in the world, and we can only do that one person at

a time. Only twice in nine years have I ever had an actor resent that approach."

He's somewhat less hands-on, Staller says, when directing a full-scale production with a normal rehearsal period. Nonetheless, he says, "I like to get the whole thing staged as quickly as possible, then let them play with it; I think it's very difficult for actors to flounder around, figuring out where they want to stand or move. I also want them to be off book as soon as possible. To have to go home and memorize when you're exhausted after a full day of rehearsing seems mad.

"There's a whole discipline of working with Shaw that's quite different than working with most other playwrights," he continues. "Part of it is the complexity of the text; he writes in an extremely irregular rhythm, so getting the words early is really helpful. But what's thrilling is that, like Shakespeare, Shaw needs to be spoken; the thoughts have to occur on the line.

"And there's so much subtext; Shaw was fascinated by Freud and by psychological explorations of human behavior, the inexplicable elements of why we are who we are. So in rehearsal there's so much room for interpretation, but you need to keep the focus on what the play is meant to be saying."

One of the principal things *Major Barbara* is saying, Staller notes, is that ideas need to be put into action. "It's one thing to be picketing Wall Street in a tent; it's another to actually be one of them and make change. That's what Barbara finally realizes—it's not going to do anybody any good if she stands outside the arms factory with a sign; she has to get in there. Clearly it's Barbara who's going to be running the company, not Dolly, and clearly it's what Undershaft had in mind from the beginning." But can she really "make war on war" as a weapons manufacturer?

"Well, then the curtain comes down!" Staller replies. "Shaw makes a deliberate point of encouraging the audience to feel as though the entire play they've just experienced is the preface to what is about to happen. He wants people to be walking up the aisle at the end arguing." ❏

**New York City-based arts reporter Wendy Smith writes frequently for this magazine.**

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# Let's Talk About the Weather

NACL Theatre connects climate change, community and performance

BY ISABEL BRAVERMAN

Brett Keyser as Stu Starkweather in NACL Theatre's *The Weather Project*.

ALICIA GREGA

**S** TILT WALKERS, DANCERS, TWO BANDS, ACTORS a swarm of children, flying dove puppets. A river, storms, a tsunami, clouds.

These were the characters of *The Weather Project*, an outdoor performance about climate change created by NACL Theatre and featuring more than 75 professional and community performers. The show went up Aug. 9 at a ball field in Yulan, N.Y., a rural town 100 miles northwest of New York City.

*The Weather Project* was conceived and directed by Tannis Kowalchuk, the co-founder and artistic director of NACL—an ensemble based in Highland Lake, less than five miles east of Yulan, since 1997—with the aim, she says, of “doing something big, flinging open the theatre doors and getting the community involved, not just as spectators but as participants.” Kowalchuk could not have known that just six weeks after the Yulan performance, climate change would be the impetus for one of the largest public protest marches in history, with 400,000 people marching in New York City on Sept. 21, 2014.

Highland Lake is in Sullivan County, part of the Upper Delaware River Region, an area dotted with small towns. The bucolic setting has a strong arts community, but also holds a country-life mentality—potlucks, penny socials, county fairs, fall-harvest festivals and tractor parades bind its citizens together. Even though city dwellers have flocked to the region recently years, many have lived here for generations. It's a safe bet they've never seen anything like *The Weather Project* before.

The NACL ensemble (North American Cultural Laboratory) is known for producing professional, edgy, collaborative and devised original works—its recent *STRUCK*, for example (created by Kowalchuk and ensemble members Brett Keyser and Ker Wells, with text by Kristen Kosmas), was designed to

bring audiences on a nonlinear journey along with the protagonist (played by Kowalchuk) as she experiences a stroke. “Our plays are adventurous and complex,” says Kowalchuk. So it was unlikely, in a way, for NACL to produce a community play.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 2013 Kowalchuk put the word out that she wanted to involve the community in creating and performing a new show. “People signed up and they didn't even know what the show was—and it was not *Mary Poppins*,” she quips. Indeed, many members of the community, even those who had joined the cast, were a bit unsure, their minds filled with questions: Just what was *The Weather Project*?

The impulse for the show had come to Kowalchuk the previous winter, which saw very little snow; she was feeling concerned about how climate change was affecting her family's vegetable farm, Willow Wisp Organic Farm in Damascus, Penn. She asked her husband, farmer Greg Swartz, about the changes he had noticed in his 15 years of farming in the area, and his observations included later frost dates, more frequent flooding and warmer temperatures. After Superstorm Sandy ravaged the area and the polar vortex followed on its heels, people were talking about the weather with intense interest, and Kowalchuk was listening.

Talking about the weather connects us all: Together we take misery in brutal heat, or delight when the snow melts and spring shows its first signs. Kowalchuk wanted to capitalize on that bond. “We need to talk about climate change with this community and not start with ‘Climate change is bad, let's freak out together,’ but with understanding what climate change is and what can we do about it,” Kowalchuk felt. Her approach took the discussion in a positive direction, so that audience members would understand that they could all contribute

to preventing climate change in some way.

The Yulan performance attracted between 600 and 700 audience members. The weather conditions were perfect, and the rural community witnessed a performance in which their own friends and families told stories about climate change.

**AT THE OUTSET OF THE WEATHER**

*Project*, three science students (played by local teens) exhibit a climate change project at a science fair—their presentation for the judge (played by NASA scientist, Elaine Matthews of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies) is filled with numbers and data. Suddenly, a storm, portrayed by six stilt walkers, blows in, carrying the students away. Transported to a far-away land, the group embarks on a *Wizard of Oz*-like journey, narrated by Starkweather (played by NACL company member Brett Keyser), a kooky weatherman. The students meet the Cloud Collectors, the River Dancers and the Solar Munchkins, who live in a world powered by solar energy, and head off in search of the Great Scientist; on the way they encounter a Japanese rice farmer (who rides in on a tsunami) and the Fossil Fuel Gang (an evil but likeable group who remind us that we all use fossil fuels to drive, heat our homes and power our electronics). When they finally reach the Golden Garden, where they find the Great Scientist at work among her bee hives (performed by Strike Anywhere Performance Ensemble), the kids ask the climatology guru what they can do about climate change. The message is simple: Use less.

The stilt storm sweeps in again, and the show's 50-person ensemble joins in a climactic whirlwind of stilts and kabuki streamers, as the students get transported back to the science fair. This time, when asked the final question by the judge, they don't expound on numbers and data—they share what they have just learned: "Ask yourself who and what you love. Ask yourself what you are willing to work and fight for. Ask yourself how far you're willing to see into the future. Keep searching." These are the final words of the play.

"People really felt the magic that night—it was a rare, incredible performance that all of this community came out to see," says Kowalchuk, who was initially worried that the show's topic would be too complex to boil down to a cogent message. But the play's final lines echo the themes that emerged from initial improvisations that Kowalchuk and scientist Matthews conducted: "Tannis looked

at me and said, 'What is the one thing you want to say?' I just said, 'Live with less.' That's my message," Matthews confirms.

*The Weather Project* was supported by a National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant of \$50,000, and the list of collaborators stretched from the Town of Highland to local schools, environmental groups and civic and arts organizations. The show generated other events, including a two-day climate change symposium organized by project partner Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development—which Kowalchuk considers "the play's research period, where so many dynamic ideas were generated and we began to educate ourselves"—and weekly workshops for dancers, stilt-walkers, actors, singers and children. Kowalchuk managed the project's many collaborative relationships with the help of NACL dramaturg Mimi McGurl and collaborating writer Mark Dunau, a former playwright from New York City who has been organic farming in a neighboring county for over 20 years.

"This is going to inspire other communities—this is the spirit we need, of communities coming together around climate change," says Kazzrie Jaxen, a professional musician who was part of *The Weather Project's* chorus. A touring version of the play (details not set at press time) will hit the road in 2015, and NACL is making a documentary film about the project with the Brooklyn-based production company Decades Out. Kowalchuk is also developing a *Weather Project* template to build new theatre collaborations with other communities around the issue of climate change.

The topic is often talked about in complicated, serious, even morose tones—but Kowalchuk is convinced that more can be accomplished by broaching it in an entertaining way. "As a theatremaker, my tendency is to keep humor in the rhythm of a play, no matter what it's about," she posits. Matthews shares similar thoughts: "The subject didn't get simplified to the point of just entertainment—it was amazingly scientifically correct." Humor, playfulness, creativity and a colorful cast of characters came together in *The Weather Project* to address a subject of urgency and consequence. It was this juxtaposition that made the show—like the weather itself, and the giant Sept. 21 demonstration calling attention to the science of climate change—something to talk about. ☑

**Isabel Braverman is an editorial assistant at the River Reporter.**

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# HERSHEY FELDER

## Artists and Repertoire

He explains them, he embodies them, he plays their music well. The great composers have been good to him, and he's returning the favor.

BY HEDY WEISS

Hershey Felder in *Franz Liszt in Musik* at Laguna Playhouse.

EIGHTY EIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

**W**HEN PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY WELCOMED an audience of Nobel laureates to the White House in 1962, he famously remarked that it was the most extraordinary collection of talent that had ever gathered there, “with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.”

That quip easily could be reworked to apply to Hershey Felder: actor, pianist, writer, director, composer, conductor, mentor, producer and conjurer of the spirits of George Gershwin, Frédéric Chopin, Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Liszt, Leonard Bernstein and (coming soon) Irving Berlin.

Felder, 46, the Canadian-born artist whose solo shows have been seen across America—at the Geffen Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, American Repertory Theater and Cleveland Playhouse, as well as in long runs at Chicago’s Royal George Theatre and in brief engagements at New York’s Town Hall, among many other venues—is in a category all his own.

Felder has devised a type of performance that feeds on his unique gifts as a seductive portraitist, compelling storyteller and superb concert pianist. Musical biographies? That doesn’t come close to suggesting what it is Felder does. It would be one thing for an actor to arrive onstage, as Felder does in his show *George Gershwin Alone*, and present a self-penned study that captures alluring if often anguished aspects of the composer who died far too young. It is quite another to also sing and play your way through the story—including an aria from *Porgy and Bess*—and then top it all off with a knockout rendition of “Rhapsody in Blue.”

Similarly, it’s conceivable that you might be able to find an actor who could capture a sense of the polymorphous talent that was Bernstein, an impression of his ability to teach and

perform in the most seamless way, a suggestion of the man’s desperate energy, intellect and neuroses. But it is the rare performer who also possesses the profound musical understanding that could bring this legend to life—or the ability to sit at the piano, as Felder does in *Maestro Bernstein*, and play and sing excerpts from *West Side Story* and *Candide* as if had composed them himself.

And then there is the way Felder finesses an enthralling performance of “The Moonlight Sonata” in his show *Beethoven as I Knew Him*, a portrait that draws on the memoir of Gerhard von Breuning, a friend of the composer in his later years. Felder can captivate an audience with little or no background in classical music while at the same time satisfying aficionados. And, when he is dealing with masters of the great American songbook, he can easily leave a crowd unable to suppress the desire to sing along.

**FELDER HAS BECOME A SORT OF ONE-MAN COTTAGE** industry. At the same time he’s busy creating a new show—most recently, *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*, slated for its world premiere Nov. 11–Dec. 21 at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles—he keeps his other productions in rotating repertory. Over the course of the past 15 years, he has given more than 4,500 performances and never canceled a single date.

Work ethic? Call Felder for a chat at 9 a.m. and he might tell you he has just completed three hours of practicing the piano.

“I’ve been working on an interesting project for myself,” says Felder. “I’m playing all the preludes in Bach’s ‘Well-Tempered Clavier,’ and all the Chopin preludes, and have been looking for the connections and dramatic through lines



CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Felder in *Beethoven, As I Knew Him* at the Cleveland Playhouse.

tandem. Felder was born into an observant Jewish immigrant family in Montréal, Quebec, in 1968, the child of a Polish father and Hungarian mother, and was educated at the city's Hebrew Academy Day School. He admits to being something of a ham from the start.

"I was a quiet child, but I loved telling stories, and my parents would put me in the center of the room where I would repeat things I'd heard in funny ways," he recalls. "Friday nights we observed the Sabbath, so there was no television or Atari, just singing and storytelling at the table. The fascination with music began when I was four and visited my grandmother at a senior home in Montréal. They had a piano there, and I would escape the adults and pound on it. The lady in the gift shop at the place finally said: 'Kill that kid or give him piano lessons.'"

His grandfather gave him an upright piano as a Passover gift and a friend of his mother's began giving him lessons. He took to it, but confesses, "I wanted to be accomplished right away, and I struggled with the discipline you need to make that happen. I also had an ability to read music very quickly, which could have been my downfall, because

while that enabled me to learn things easily, I would also muck things up just as easily, and blur the details."

Acting also came naturally. He began playing roles in a semiprofessional Yiddish theatre in Montréal from the age of nine, and loved the whole environment of the stage. Still, he says, "My childhood was far more of a rabbinic world than a cultural world. I went to the synagogue, and unlike my secular friends, I saw only a couple of musicals. But I think my sense of storytelling began in that world. And my understanding of how theatre is important—not in the showbiz sense of it being an exclusive universe—is a result of that upbringing. I also think it's why I create my own work."

The piano began to take precedence as Felder studied with teachers from McGill University in Montréal, then headed to New York while still a teenager to work with pianist Jerome Lowenthal at the Juilliard School. "I wasn't crazy enough to be an actor at that time, and I wasn't ready to take those risks," Felder admits. "Then, at 19, I was hired as a pianist for the workshop of a new musical based on *The Master and Margarita* being showcased

in them. I've also been consulting what has become my greatest teacher now, YouTube, which gives me access to so many archival recordings and rare videos of great artists. I study them, and they help keep me on the ball pianistically."

So which came first, the acting or the piano? They seem to have blossomed in

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MICHAEL LAMONT

Hershey Felder in *Maestro Bernstein* at the Geffen Playhouse.

at Hal Prince's Musical Theatre Program in New York. That's where I met actress Tovah Feldshuh, and found myself friends in a whole new circle of theatre people."

It was Stu Silver, a film and television writer, who noticed Felder's energy and told him he should meet his pal, movie director Joel Zwick (who turned out to be a distant cousin of Felder's, and who, many years later, would direct him in *George Gershwin Alone*). At 21, Felder headed to Hollywood, thinking he would get work as a pianist, but instead was asked to do interviews for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation (in part because he spoke Yiddish). While at the Canadian consulate to get his passport updated, he met the new consul general of Canada, Kim Campbell (who would later briefly serve as prime minister of Canada). The two married in 1997, and now have apartments in New York and Vancouver, and houses in Paris and San Diego.

Zwick told Felder to contact him if he had "anything interesting." A friend, producer Greg Willenborg, suggested to Felder that he do a play about Gershwin. He spent five years researching what would become *George Gershwin Alone*, along the way realizing that securing the rights to the music would be difficult. But, as Felder explained, "I just pestered the estate—not to be defiant, but because I had a vision of what the show could be. I asked them to just let me try. I did a reading in Los Angeles, and realized I had something. Then I took it to Florida, and finally, in 2000, to the Helen Hayes Theatre on Broadway. It ran for 12 weeks and got some nice reviews, but it got lost amid the fervor surrounding *The Producers*, and it suffered from having practically no advertising budget."

That was hardly a setback; in fact, the show got better as it moved forward.

"I think my gift is to know when and how to listen to criticism," says Felder. "I knew how to fix the show. I also learned what it takes to be a producer. *Gershwin* ran for six months at the American Rep in Cambridge, went on to Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., and in 2004 arrived in Chicago, running for 11 months in a theatre that some had warned me was 'cursed.' My time in Chicago marked the launch of the mature part of my career."

**IN RECENT YEARS, FELDER HAS BEEN** approached by others inspired by his particular mix of storytelling and live music. His greatest success as mentor has been as the adapter and director of *The Pianist of Willesden Lane*, in which the superb concert pianist Mona Golabek spins the story of her mother's experiences as a young pianist sent to England from Vienna as part of the Kindertransport during World War II. Chris Lemmon's recent memoir of his father, *Jack Lemmon Returns*, which Felder also helped adapt and direct, turned out to be more problematic.

"I approached Hershey after I saw him in his Beethoven show, and he just took me under his wing," said Golabek, who debuted *Willessden Lane* at the Geffen Playhouse in 2012, and has had successful runs with it in Chicago (also at the Royal George, where Felder's *Gershwin Alone* ran), at Berkeley Rep, at New York's 59E59 Theater and, this past September, at San Diego Repertory.

"Hershey has an incredibly generous spirit, but he also is utterly, painstakingly demanding, and uncompromising in his vision," said Golabek. "He is adamant in

his attention to detail, and insists that every element of the production be at the highest artistic level. Having him as your director is no picnic—I will always remember him telling me, 'Absolutely no water during the show, and if your mouth gets dry, just use spit.' But he is the first to say that anything worthwhile is achieved at a tremendous cost. And the way he was able to help me blend the music and narrative of my mother's story was magic."

If Felder can be hard on his collaborators, he's no less demanding of himself. Says Randall Arney, artistic director of the Geffen since 1999 and a producer of all Felder's shows, as well as Golabek's, "Hershey does something that no one else does—he has the ability to forge an astonishingly personal, deeply connected relationship with his audience. He can hold an audience at attention, teach them things, bring such nuance to many different characters, then sustain the incredible focus required for playing the most technically demanding music. He is prolific, indefatigable."

It was Arney's predecessor at the Geffen, the late director/producer Gil Cates, who was not only a fan of Felder's but made him promise that he would create a show about Irving Berlin.

"It is an amazing story, and in many ways the most dramatic piece I've done," Felder ventures. "It's really the story of this country—about an immigrant kid who created America's most iconic music, who went with the flow of every style for six decades, who faced anti-Semitism even as he wrote two of the most iconic songs about Christian holidays ["White Christmas" and "Easter Parade"], and then felt completely betrayed when rock-and-roll pushed him out of the picture."

Felder admits that the world of the one-man show can be lonely, but he has a team of offstage collaborators that has worked with him on many productions. And he has begun work on that most collaborative of all endeavors—the stage musical—teaming up with journalist Joshua Hammer to adapt his book *Chosen by God: A Brother's Journey*.

"I suppose you could call me an auteur," Felder says, summing up. "But I create and produce my own shows because the only thing I care about is quality. It's not about ego—it's about responsibility. I have to keep my promise to the audience." ❏

**Hedy Weiss is theatre and dance critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and WTTW-TV's "Chicago Tonight."**



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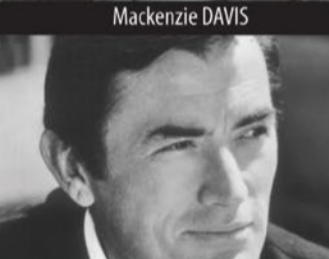
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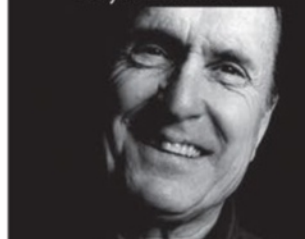
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# Commission + Commitment



Yale Rep's Binger Center has hit upon a way to fund not only the writing of new plays but their productions as well

BY STUART MILLER

Jeanine Serralles and David Wilson Barnes in *These Paper Bullets!* at Yale Repertory Theatre.

JOAN MARCUS

**WHEN YALE REPERTORY THEATRE HIRED** Jennifer Kiger nine years ago, the institution already had a sterling reputation for producing new plays by the likes of August Wilson, Athol Fugard, Lee Blessing and Suzan-Lori Parks. But, as Kiger explains, she was brought on as associate artistic director in part “to create a formal program that would allow us to develop new work.”

Sounds easy enough. But, as managing director Victoria Nolan explains, creating a set-aside for new-play commissions and development was a daunting challenge. “We are deeply subsidized by Yale, but we didn’t have resources to create a program that would be robust and ongoing,” she says. New plays were not a strategic priority at the school, where issues like financial aid, artistic pay and buildings that “were state of the art for theatres in the 1800s” often took precedence.

Then, in 2008, Yale Rep got the boost it needed in the form of a three-year, \$2.85-million gift from the Robina Foundation, created by the late James Binger, a Yale alumnus and owner of the Jujamcyn Theaters on Broadway. Kiger now heads up the New Plays Program at the Binger Center for New Theater. The gift was a large one, but Yale Rep decided to begin raising funds for an additional reserve, so the program could continue after the initial infusion expired; the Robina Foundation gave a supplementary gift in 2010, and the Andrew Mellon Foundation kicked in an additional \$1 million that year.

But it was in 2012 that the Binger Center attained a shot at financial stability, a rarity in theatre. The Robina Foundation asked for a “transformative proposal,” Kiger says. The result: a donation of \$3 million for operating costs

## CHALLENGE

To create a new-play program that doesn’t just commission writers but helps get their plays produced, both at Yale Rep and elsewhere.

## SOLUTION

An endowment with an “enhancement fund” to encourage and facilitate future productions.

## WHAT WORKED

More than 40 artists have been commissioned since 2008.

## WHAT DIDN'T

The connection between the new program and the Yale School of Drama was weak.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Increasing the number of workshops on campus; finding other ways to bring students and faculty on board.

and \$15 million for endowments. Managing director Nolan says that given Yale’s 13.7-percent average rate of return on its endowment investments, the endowment should grow to hundreds of millions of dollars over the next three decades, while providing millions more for annual operations.

“We were really impressed with the quality of the process,” says Peter Karoff, who sits on the Robina board. “We were also drawn to the idea of investing in the creative experience. It is a very rare opportunity for a foundation.”

Many theatres commission new work, but the Binger Center stands out because of money dedicated to productions



Mary Beth Fisher and Jefferson Mays in *Dear Elizabeth* at Yale Rep.

JOAN MARCUS

outside of Yale. As Yale Rep artistic director James Bundy explains, this goes back to the initial gift in 2008: \$2.25 million was earmarked for the plays, with another \$600,000 added for an “enhancement” fund—i.e., money specifically set aside to help other theatres produce the commissioned writers’ works, either as world premieres or after an initial production at Yale (in which case the other theatre would not have to pay Yale for the rights).

This emphasis on providing money not just for the writing but for productions, both at Yale and beyond, has been transformative. The more than 40 artists commissioned thus far at various stages of their careers—including Lucy Thurber, Sarah Ruhl, Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins and Amy Herzog—have enjoyed productions not only at Yale but across the country.

“We try to be flexible,” Kiger says. “We start by listening. We give them the funding and the space to make the art they want, and we ask what else they need. We say, ‘What is the play you feel you must write next, or the risk or change you want to make?’”

Encouraging playwrights to take chances, Kiger says, can sometimes yield surprising results. Will Eno, for instance, decided he wanted to go outside his comfort zone by trying a naturalistic play. The result was *The Realistic Joneses*, which moved to Broadway after its New Haven run.

Other plays required big budgets or large casts, or presented more complex technical challenges than what many playwrights typically feel they can ask for. Examples include Robert Woodruff and Bill Camp’s adaptation of *Notes from Underground*, with its video projections; David Adjmi’s *Marie Antoinette*, with its lavish wigs and costumes;

Rolin Jones’s *These Paper Bullets!*, a mashup of *Much Ado About Nothing* and Beatlemania, had a band on stage performing original songs by Green Day’s Billie Joe Armstrong.

The Binger Center’s answer to playwrights’ wildest dreams is, typically, to simply say yes. Each artist is treated according to his or her needs and desires, Kiger says—which can be shocking and unnerving for many. “It was surprising for me to see how much time and energy we have to put into building trust—they are just not used to this,” Kiger marvels.

Sheila Callaghan, whose *Elevada* premieres at Yale this season, says the faith the theatre has placed in her is astounding; she’s used to working in small theatres with accordingly small budgets. “It feels like such a gift, to have that money and support for a playwright from inception to production,” Callaghan says.

Woodruff adds that starting from inception means just what it says. “I had an idea based on a page-and-a-half of dialogue, so it wasn’t like I had to do all this work and then

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JOAN MARCUS

Bill Camp and Merritt Janson in *Notes from Underground* at Yale Repertory Theatre.

try to peddle it," he says. "They are investing in people and their imaginations, and that is something extraordinary in theatre."

Yale, like many theatres with commissioning programs, can't put on every show it commissions—especially now that Kiger is tapping five to eight playwrights a year.

That's where the enhancement fund comes in. "If we are committed to creating new works, then we must make sure they are produced," Kiger says flatly. "Otherwise it's all just an exercise. So the enhancement fund is a real boon."

Bundy calls the enhancement fund the

"most variegated element" of the program, because it can be used in different ways to help bring a play to life. A play with a cast of four that transfers to New York may not need money to be staged again elsewhere—but a cast of 12 in period costumes can limit a play's future prospects. One theatre wanted to add two new songs for a musical commissioned by Yale Rep, and the fund covered fees for arranging them; another needed funding for extra rehearsals. Your typical play commission wouldn't cover any of that.

So while a Yale Rep production on your résumé may interest other theatres in your daring new play, the enhancement fund actually encourages them to take a chance on it.

The Binger Center program is still evolving, thanks in part to a built-in review of the program by experts in the field that will occur every five years. The Robina's Karoff says the first review revealed that while "the primary goal was accomplished," there was more work to be done, especially in connecting the program to the School of Drama.

Some of the disconnect was simply logistics—if the playwrights prefer to be in New York, or if they want workshops or readings either in private or with New York actors, then the center has sought to accommodate them, especially since Yale Rep has a perpetual space crunch with its own stages.

But Bundy, who is also the school's dean, says steps have been taken—Kiger is teaching in the playwriting program, and last year, a reading of a musical on the campus was opened to the schools' students. This year and next, Yale Rep is producing five plays instead of six per season, opening up rehearsal space. "As we revitalize our facilities there will be even more space here," Bundy adds.

The ongoing internal review is especially important, because this gift will keep on giving, says Nolan. "The next generations will have the flexibility to grow and will have the capacity to truly lead the field," she says. "That could mean having 15 writers on full-time salaries around the world—who knows?"

Whether other foundations and institutions can replicate this model in its approach or its scope remains to be seen. Karoff says he has received inquiries from theatres and donors, which he takes as a good sign. "This did send a really strong message that more can be done in supporting plays and playwrights," he says. 📧

Arts journalist Stuart Miller writes regularly for this magazine.

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# Fringe, American Style!

At this year's EdFringe, American artists leapt the fourth wall to hug, prod and party down with audiences



BY NICOLE SERRATORE

Brian Lobel's *You Have to Forgive Me, You Have to Forgive Me, You Have to Forgive Me.*

CARIS LEVIN

**S**OMETIMES YOU FIND YOURSELF CLIMBING A hill because you've been promised theatre at the top. One recent afternoon I was in Edinburgh, Scotland, for that city's renowned Fringe Festival, hurrying uphill holding onto directions, trying to figure out if the flowers on the side of the path were the yellow ones meant to signal my next turn. Eventually I managed to find my way to the location of American artist Greg Wohead's theatre piece, *Hurting*.

After it was over, I bounded back downhill, brain whirling with thoughts of memory, time and human connection. Everything around me seemed new in light of the emotional journey I'd had in *Hurting*. Then I stopped. I realized I was lost—that I'd never been down this path before. *Hurting* had so overtaken me that my sense of direction was completely gone.

Although Wohead's piece is based on a deceptively simple concept, it blooms into something penetrating and intimate. As the performance's sole live participant, I sat at a desk on a grassy hillside overlooking the blue waters of the Firth of Forth with a tape player and a pair of headphones on. I pressed play and Wohead spoke to me from the recording. His voice traveled from the past; he had sat in the same chair, looked out at the same view, earlier that morning. We breathed together. I heard him chomp an apple, which now sat on the desk before me, half-eaten. Yellowjackets were flying around the apple; Wohead's bite mark had oxidized. Decay had begun in that short while, and this apple marked time before my eyes in a simple but beautiful way. As he whispered in my ear, all I could think about was time—my past, my present, this indelible moment.

I can't say much more, because *Hurting* works best if you discover it for yourself. And you should, if it comes your way.

I've been coming to EdFringe for the past three years. This time, armed with a raincoat, some outrageously colorful

European comfort shoes and a local bus pass, I crisscrossed the historic Scottish town over five-and-a-half days to visit 13 venues, see 29 shows, and eat so many Tunnock's Teacakes I felt sick. Begun in 1947 as an unofficial offshoot of the Edinburgh International Festival, the Fringe is now the largest arts festival in the world. There were more than 3,000 shows—ranging from comedy to cabaret to music to plays to indescribable, genre-defying performance art—on the official program this year, and many additional ones happening unofficially around town.

Despite the decidedly British flavor of many of the Fringe offerings, there's always a strong American contingent as well. And through one-on-one performance, audience participation or just good old-fashioned punk-rock antics, American artists at the Fringe this year seemed intent on obliterating the fourth wall, demanding an exciting new level of direct engagement.

American artist Brian Lobel, for instance, kindly asked his audience if they wanted a hug. I fell in love with Lobel's work when I saw his *Purge* at Forest Fringe (an artist-curated offshoot of EdFringe, celebrating its eighth year in Edinburgh) in 2013. Originally, *Purge* was a 5-day, 25-hour performance in which Lobel spent one minute talking about each of his 1,300-plus Facebook friends; after each précis the audience would vote whether to keep or delete the friend. Now when Lobel performs *Purge*, we find out what happened in the aftermath of those original votes. As Lobel reflected on his relationships, our social-media lives and the early death of a young ex-boyfriend, I could not help but turn those reflections on myself and my relationships—both IRL and otherwise.

Lobel has a knack for creating a welcoming space for gentle introspection and for shifting, ever so slightly, the way you think about your world. So it was no surprise that for this year's show—titled *You Have to Forgive Me, You Have to Forgive Me*

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*Me, You Have to Forgive Me*, after a pivotal quote from “Sex and the City”—he invited audience members to climb into bed with him for a chat and a clinch. Audience members were required to fill out a 92-question survey made up of questions Carrie Bradshaw asked during the show’s six seasons; these answers were shared with Brian, who then joined each individual audience member in bed to cuddle, talk and watch a “Sex and the City” episode.

“What I got excited about with regard to live performance versus the DVD box set is that box sets don’t change, but we always change every time we watch them,” Lobel ventured. “With this show, a lot of people have cried; a lot of people have talked about their horrible relationships; a lot of people have talked about how their relationship will never feel as good as a fictional one, which has been a really emotional common theme.”

Of course, creating a work that involves sharing your most intimate experiences pushes theatre to the edge of comfort for many people. Lobel figures that some 80 percent of audiences would not want to participate in a show like this, starting with the probing questionnaire (e.g., “Is it better to fake it



ASHER THORNTON

The stage for Greg Wohead’s *Hurting*.

than to be alone?”)—but for that remaining, adventurous 20 percent, Lobel is making theatre where the vitality comes from candid, personal interactions.

**OTHER ARTISTS AT FRINGE WERE** looking to generate similarly candid, up-close interactions—minus the comfort zone. A number of shows, in fact, set out to agitate, thrusting audiences into unsettling scenarios

with little room for reflection or release.

Brooklyn-based director Rachel Chavkin joined forces with UK theatre artist Chris Thorpe to create the one-man show *Confirmation*, based on Thorpe’s attempt to engage in “honorable discussion” with men who hold political views as far from his own as he can imagine, including a neo-Nazi and a Holocaust denier. A charismatic performer, Thorpe speaks in the voice of a man named



Glen, whom he calls a “nuanced, complicated racist.” In one scene, audience members pose questions to Thorpe, who responds as Glen, turning the spectators into participants in the inquiry, with no choice but to face “Glen” and his way of thinking. The play is probing and unnerving, especially when you are called upon to challenge or question long-held beliefs.

I was similarly tied in knots watching Greg Wohead’s second piece at the Forest Fringe, *The Ted Bundy Project*, about the fabled serial killer. Wohead, who’s been based in the UK since 2005, grew up in Texas, trained originally as an actor, and got a taste of devised work after spending a summer at the Hangar Theater in Ithaca, N.Y., studying with directors Chavkin, Lear deBessonet, Steve Fried and Shana Cooper. “The four of them were amazing,” Wohead recalls, “and what they were interested in really influenced us.”

After creating a number of autobiographical works that were often described by audiences as “really lovely,” Wohead moved on to harder-edged material. In *The Ted Bundy Project*, he is intent on creating tension and anxiety; luring the audience in with his affable nature (not unlike the purported charm of the real Bundy), Wohead then taunts the audience with violent imagery, a confessional tape made by Bundy himself and a ritualistic presentation of evidence from one of Bundy’s victims. Attracted by curiosity, we’re then repulsed by our own engagement. Wohead says he’s interested in taking the kind of dark excitement from which people might derive pleasure “in a private space” and bringing that energy into “a communal space.” With the lights up on the audience, there is nowhere to hide; we are forced to look at ourselves individually and as a group gathered to watch, to confront our roles as gawkers and consumers of violent media. Wohead’s approach makes us all culpable—himself included.

On the night I saw *The Ted Bundy Project*, though, something unexpected happened: During a scene in which an audience member is called onstage to help out, the selected spectator hesitated, and for a long moment it seemed as though the show might not go on; eventually he acquiesced. Perhaps because the audience member, Paul Soileau, was a performer himself (as I later learned), he was less trusting in this theatrical situation.

Afterwards, Soileau told me he felt “gullible” going onstage and standing where Wohead told him to, sensing he was being treated “like the victim.” It was when Wohead

handed him a prop that the tenor of the moment changed and Soileau felt that he was able to assume “the power position.”

Soileau knows a little something about danger and power onstage. I later encountered him at a late-night show, *The Christeene Machine*, starring as Christeene, a genderqueer singer-dancer-den-mother-of-destruction, blowing up the concept of cabaret. In an almost indescribable maelstrom, Christeene arrives onstage carried in the arms of her back-up dancers, removes from her anus a butt plug decorated with balloons, and proceeds to spray the audience from various bodily orifices. Christeene and her dancers, with their shredded clothes, filth-smearred bodies and lyrically explosive, infectiously danceable tunes (titles include “Fix My Dick” and “Tears from My Pussy”), create a world of contradicting extremes. While the show is raucous and dangerous, Christeene herself turns out

to be eager, vulnerable and understanding. With a message about connecting to the child you were and listening to the “ponies” inside your belly, an unexpected gentleness emerges.

As Soileau explained to me, the point of the show is to have the audience “find their true character—get out of the character you play on the street every day. Forget that. That’s your gender, your job, your relationships, your character.” Christeene proves the beguiling spirit-guide to help you do just that.

This year’s EdFringe offered no hiding in the dark with proscenium boundaries to protect you. The Americans at the Fringe reached out beyond the confines of the stage to ask us to think, share or connect. 📧

**Nicole Serratore is a theatre lover based in New York. She blogs at Mildly Bitter’s Musings and talks all things theatre on the Maxamoo podcast.**



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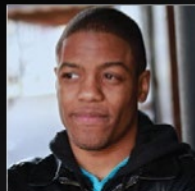
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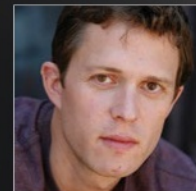
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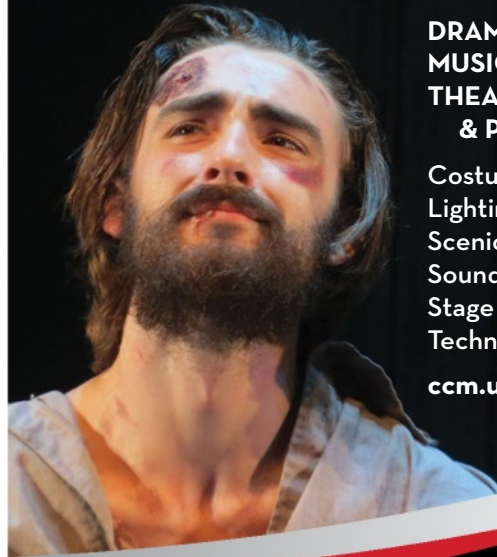
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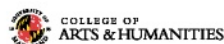
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TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

FOR INFORMATION:

215.777.9135 or [TFMA@temple.edu](mailto:TFMA@temple.edu)

[www.temple.edu/theater](http://www.temple.edu/theater)

Here's what's playing this month

at TCG theatres nationwide.

For the most up-to-date

information about

performance schedules,

contact the theatre or

visit Theatre Profiles online:

[www.tcg.org/profiles](http://www.tcg.org/profiles).

## ALABAMA

Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Montgomery, (334) 271-5353, [www.asf.net](http://www.asf.net)

**A Christmas Carol**, Nov 23-Dec 24.

## ALASKA

Cyrano's Theatre Company, Anchorage, (907) 274-2599, [www.cyranos.org](http://www.cyranos.org)

**Hedda Gabler**, Ibsen; dir: Tamar Shai Bolkvadze. Thru Nov 2.

**Alexander and the Horrible, Terrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**, book and lyrics: Judith Viorst; music: Shelly Markham; dir: Janet Stoneburner. Nov 20-Dec 22.

Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre, Fairbanks, [www.fstalaska.org](http://www.fstalaska.org)

**Sleepless Night IV**, Thru Nov 1.

Perseverance Theatre, Douglas, (907) 463-tixx, [www.perseverancetheatre.org](http://www.perseverancetheatre.org)

**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson; dir: Art Rotch. Thru Nov 2.

**Chicago**, book: Fred Ebb (also lyrics), Bob Fosse; music: John Kander; dir: Shona Strauser. Nov 2-Dec 7.

## ARIZONA

Actors Theatre of Phoenix, (602) 888-0368, [www.actorsattheatrephx.org](http://www.actorsattheatrephx.org)

**Seminar**, Theresa Rebeck; dir: Ron May. Thru Nov 9.

Arizona Theatre Company, Tucson, (520) 622-2823, [www.arizonatheatre.org](http://www.arizonatheatre.org)

**Wait Until Dark**, adapt: Jeffrey Hatcher from Frederick Knott; dir: David Ira Goldstein. Thru Nov 8. Nov 13-30.

**Murder for Two**, book: Joe Kinosian; lyrics: Kellen Blair; dir: Scott Schwartz. Nov 29-Dec 20. Co-production with Indiana Repertory Theatre.

Childsplay, Tempe, (480) 350-2822, [www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org)

**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane**, adapt: Dwayne Hartford; music: Kyle Sorrell, Kyle Sorrell; dir: David Saar, David Saar. Thru Nov 16.

**Junie B. Jones in Jingle Bells, Batman Smells!**, adapt: Allison Gregory; dir: David Saar. Nov 23-Dec 28.

Invisible Theatre Company, Tucson, (520) 882-9721, [www.invisibletheatre.com](http://www.invisibletheatre.com)

**Handle with Care**, Jason Odell Williams; dir: Susan Claassen. Nov 11-23.

The Rogue Theatre, Tucson, (520) 551-2053, [www.theroguetheatre.org](http://www.theroguetheatre.org)

**Jerusalem**, Jez Butterworth; dir: Cynthia Meier. Nov 6-23.

Southwest Shakespeare Company, Mesa, (480) 644-6500, [www.swshakespeare.org](http://www.swshakespeare.org)

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt and dir: David Vining; Nov 29-Dec 20.

## ARKANSAS

The Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, (501) 372-4000, [www.arkansasartscenter.org](http://www.arkansasartscenter.org)

**Pinocchio**, Keith Smith (also dir); Thru Nov 9.

**The Velveteen Rabbit**, Allan Keith Smith; dir: Bradley Anderson. Nov 28-Dec 21.

Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Little Rock, (501) 378-0405, [www.therep.org](http://www.therep.org)

**Wait Until Dark**, Frederick Knott; dir: Robert Hupp. Thru Nov 9.

TheatreSquared, Fayetteville, (479) 443-5600, [www.theatre2.org](http://www.theatre2.org)

**Proof**, David Auburn; dir: Shoshana Gold. Thru Nov 2.

**Around the World in 80 Days**, adapt: Mark Brown from Jules Verne; dir: Mark Shanahan. Nov 26-Dec 21.

## CALIFORNIA

24th Street Theatre Company, Los Angeles, (213) 745-6516, [www.24thstreet.org](http://www.24thstreet.org)

On tour:

**Walking the Tightrope**, Mike Kenny; music: Michael Redfield; dir: Debbie Devine. Thru May 3.

**Enter Stage Right**, Debbie Devine (also dir), Jay McAdams. Thru Jul 25.

Actors Co-op Hollywood, Hollywood, (323) 462-8460, [www.actorsco-op.org](http://www.actorsco-op.org)

**The Diviners**, Jim Leonard Jr.; dir: Mark Stephenson. Thru Nov 23.

African-American Shakespeare, San Francisco, (800) 838-3006, [www.african-americanshakes.org](http://www.african-americanshakes.org)

**The Tempest**, Shakespeare; dir: Nancy Carlin. Thru Nov 9.

American Conservatory Theater,

San Francisco, (415) 749-2228, [www.act-sf.org](http://www.act-sf.org)

**Testament**, Colm Toibin. Thru Nov 23.

The Antaeus Company, North Hollywood, (818) 506-1983, [www.antaeus.org](http://www.antaeus.org)

**Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White**, Alice Childress; dir: Gregg Daniel. Thru Dec 7.

Aurora Theatre Company, Berkeley, (510) 843-4822, [www.auroratheatre.org](http://www.auroratheatre.org)

**Breakfast with Mugabe**, Fraser Grace; dir: Jon Tracy. Nov 7-Dec 7.

B Street Theatre, Sacramento, (916) 443-5300, [www.bstreettheatre.org](http://www.bstreettheatre.org)

**The Flying Machine**, Jerry R. Montoya. Thru Nov 9.

**Outside Mullingar**, John Patrick Shanley; dir: Buck Busfield. Thru Nov 23.

**Snow White and Rose Red**, Dave Pierini. Nov 18-Dec 28.

**Holiday Show**, Buck Busfield (also dir). Nov 29-Jan 4.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre, (510) 647-2949, [www.berkeleyrep.org](http://www.berkeleyrep.org)

**Party People**, William Ruiz, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp, Steven Sapp; dir: Liesl Tommy. Thru Nov 16.

**Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins**, Allison Engel, Margaret Engel; dir: David Esbjornson. Nov 21-Jan 4.

Bootleg Theater, Los Angeles, [www.bootlegtheater.org](http://www.bootlegtheater.org)

**O Rejane**, Ilana Turner; dir: Christopher Sivertsen. Nov 14-Dec 13.

CalArts Center for New Performance, Valencia, (661) 253-7800,

[www.centerfornewperformance.org](http://www.centerfornewperformance.org)

**Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary**, Marissa Chibas; dir: Mira Kingsley.

Thru Nov 9. Co-production with Los Angeles Theater Center, CA.

**Carolyn Bryant Workshop**, Natakai Garrett (also dir), Andrea LeBlanc. Nov 1-3.

California Repertory Company, Long Beach, (562) 985-5526, [www.calrep.org](http://www.calrep.org)

**The Colored Museum**, George C. Wolfe; dir: Trevor Bishop. Thru Nov 1.

**The Tale of the Allergist's Wife**, Charles Busch; dir: Gavin Cameron-Webb. Nov 7-Dec 6.

**Ubu The Sh\*t**, adapt: Jeremy Aluma from Alfred Jarry; dir: Jeremy Aluma. Nov 21-Dec 6.

Capital Stage Company, Sacramento, (916) 995-5464, [www.capstage.org](http://www.capstage.org)

**Anna Karenina**, adapt: Helen Edmundson; dir: Stephanie Gularte. Thru Nov 23.

Center Repertory Company, Walnut Creek, [www.centerrep.org](http://www.centerrep.org)

**Deathtrap**, Ira Levin; dir: John McCluggage. Thru Nov 22.

**Wunderworld**, Thru Nov 2.



James Arthur M., Mike Sagun, Taj Campbell in *Shakespeare's R&J* by Joe Calarco at New Conservatory Theatre Center in San Francisco.

LOIS TENA

**Center Theatre Group**, Los Angeles, (213) 628-2772, [www.centertheatregroup.org](http://www.centertheatregroup.org)  
**The Trip to Bountiful**, Horton Foote; dir: Michael Wilson. Thru Nov 2.

**What the Butler Saw**, Joe Orton; dir: John Tillinger. Nov 12-Dec 21.

**Luna Gale**, Rebecca Gilman; dir: Robert Falls. Nov 23-Dec 21.

**The Chance Theater**, Anaheim, (714) 777-3033, [www.ChanceTheater.com](http://www.ChanceTheater.com)

**She Loves Me**, book: Joe Masteroff; lyrics: Sheldon Harnick; music: Jerry Bock; dir: Sarah Figoten Wilson. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**The Colony Theatre Company**, Burbank, (818) 558-7000, [www.colonytheatre.org](http://www.colonytheatre.org)  
**Handle with Care**, Jason Odell Williams; dir: Karen Carpenter. Nov 8-Dec 14.

**The Cutting Ball Theater**, San Francisco, (415) 525-1205, [www.cuttingball.com](http://www.cuttingball.com)  
**Superheroes**, Sean San José (also dir). Nov 14-Dec 14.

**Cygnat Theatre Company**, San Diego, (619) 337-1525, [www.cygnattheatre.com](http://www.cygnattheatre.com)  
**Fool for Love**, Sam Shepard; dir: Sean Murray. Thru Nov 2.

**True West**, Sam Shepard. Thru Nov 2.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt, dir and lyrics: Sean Murray; music: Billy Thompson. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**Dell'Arte International**, Blue Lake, (707) 668-5663, [www.dellarte.com](http://www.dellarte.com)  
 On tour:

**Pippi Longstocking**, adapt: Ensemble; dir: Michael Fields. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**Diversionsary Theatre**, San Diego, (619) 220-0097, [www.diversionary.org](http://www.diversionary.org)  
**Tru**, Jay Presson Allen; dir: Derek Livingston. Nov 20-Dec 21.

**East West Players**, Los Angeles, (213) 625-7000, [www.eastwestplayers.org](http://www.eastwestplayers.org)

**TAKARAZUKA!!!**, Susan Soon He Stanton; dir: Leslie Ishii. Nov 6-Dec 7.

**foolsFURY Theater**, San Francisco, (800) 838-3006, [www.foolsfury.org](http://www.foolsfury.org)

**Faulted**, Angela Santillo; dir: Evren Odcikin. Nov 14-Dec 13.

**Geffen Playhouse**, Los Angeles, (310) 208-5454, [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com)

**The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord**, Scott Carter; dir: Matt August. Thru Nov 16.

**Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin**, Hershey Felder; dir: Trevor Hay. Nov 11-Dec 21.

**Golden Thread Productions**, San Francisco, (415) 626-4061, [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)

**Dear Armen**, Kamee Abrahamian, Tiffany Golarz (also dir), D. Lee Williams Boudakian. Thru Nov 9.

**Independent Shakespeare Company**, Los Angeles, [www.iscla.org](http://www.iscla.org)

**Dr. Faustus**, Christopher Marlowe; dir: Melissa Chalsma. Thru Nov 23.

**L.A. Theatre Works**, Venice, (310) 827-0889, [www.latw.org](http://www.latw.org)

**Racing Demon**, David Hare. Nov 13-16.

**La Jolla Playhouse**, (858) 550-1010, [www.lajollaplayhouse.org](http://www.lajollaplayhouse.org)

**The Hunchback of Notre Dame**, book: Peter Parnell; lyrics: Stephen Schwartz; music: Alan Menken; dir: Scott Schwartz. Thru Dec 7.

**The Second City's Nutcracking Holiday Revue**, Second City Theatricals. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts**, (562) 944-9801, [www.lamiradatheatre.com](http://www.lamiradatheatre.com)

**Late Nite Catechism Las Vegas : Sister Rolls the Dice**, Maripat Donovan; dir: Marc Silvia. Thru Nov 16.

**Los Angeles Theatre Center**, [www.thelatc.org](http://www.thelatc.org)

**La Esquinita U.S.A.**, Ruben C. Gonzalez; dir: Kinan Valdez. Thru Nov 9. Co-production with El Teatro Campesino, CA.

**Enrique's Journey**, adapt and dir: Anthony J. Garcia; music: Daniel Valdez. Thru Nov 9.

Co-production with Su Teatro, CO.

**Zoetrope Part I**, Javier Gonzalez (also dir). Thru Nov 9.

**Your Problem With Men**, Emilio Williams; dir: Alexandra Luna. Thru Nov 9.

**Premeditation**, Evelina Fernandez; dir: Jose Luiz Valenzuela. Thru Nov 9. Co-production with the Latino Theater Company, CA.

**Patience, Fortitude and Other Antidepressants**, Mariana CorreËo King; dir: Daniel Jaquez. Thru Nov 9.

**Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary**, Marissa Chibas; dir: Mira Kingsley. Thru Nov 9. Co-production with CalArts Center for New Performance, CA.

**Dancing in My Cockroach Killers**, Magdalena Gomez; dir: Rosalba Rolon. Thru Nov 9. Co-production with Pregones Theater, NY.

**Aqua a cucharadas (Water by the Spoonful)**, Quiara Alegria Hudes; dir: Ismanuel Rodriguez. Thru Nov 9.

**Properties of Silence**, Theresa Chavez (also dir), Rose Portillo, Alan Pulner. Thru Nov 9.

**The Long Road Today/El Camino Largo de Hoy**, Jose Cruz González. Nov 7. Co-production with South Coast Repertory, CA.

**Alisai**, Juliette Carrillo. Nov 8. Co-production with Cornerstone Theater Company, CA.

**The Maginificent Dunbar**, Levy Lee Simon; dir: Ben Guillory. Nov 22-Dec 21. Co-production with Robey Theatre Company, CA.

**Magic Theatre**, San Francisco, (415) 441-8822, [www.magictheatre.org](http://www.magictheatre.org)

**And I and Silence**, Naomi Wallace. Thru Nov 23.

**Marin Theatre Company**, Mill Valley, (415) 388-5208, [www.marintheatre.org](http://www.marintheatre.org)

**The Complete History of Comedy (Abridged)**, Reed Martin, Austin Tichenor. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**MOXIE Theatre**, San Diego, [www.moxietheatre.com](http://www.moxietheatre.com)

**Enron**, Lucy Prebble; dir: Jennifer Eve Thorn. Nov 6-Dec 7.

**Native Voices at the Autry**, Los Angeles, (323) 667-2000,

[theautry.org/whats-here/about-native-voices](http://theautry.org/whats-here/about-native-voices)

**Legacy & Loss: Stories from the Indian Boarding School "Cut Short"**, Nov 9.



PATRICK WESHAMPEL

Nattalyee Randall, Mary Patton and Lexi Rhoades in *Dreamgirls* at Portland Center Stage in Oregon.

**The New Conservatory Theatre Center**, San Francisco, (415) 861-8972, [www.nctcsf.org](http://www.nctcsf.org)  
**Die! Mommie, Die!**, Charles Busch. Thru Nov 2.  
**Shakespeare's R&J**, Joe Calarco; dir: Ben Randle. Nov 7-Dec 14.

**New Village Arts Theatre**, Carlsbad, [www.newvillagearts.org](http://www.newvillagearts.org)

**The Nutcracker**, book: Phillip Klapperich, Jake Minton (also lyrics); music: Kevin O'Donnell; dir: Kristianne Kurner. Nov 29-Dec 31.

**A Noise Within**, Pasadena, (626) 356-3100, [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)

**The Tempest**, Shakespeare. Sep 7-2.

**The Importance of Being Earnest**, Oscar Wilde. Sep 21-22.

**The Dance of Death**, adapt: Conor McPherson from Strindberg. Thru Nov 23.

**North Coast Repertory Theatre**, Solana Beach, (858) 481-1055, [www.northcoastrep.org](http://www.northcoastrep.org)

**Freud's Last Session**, Mark St. Germain; dir: David Ellenstein. Thru Nov 9.

**Odyssey Theatre Ensemble**, Los Angeles, (310) 477-2055, [www.odysseytheatre.com](http://www.odysseytheatre.com)

**Othello**, Shakespeare; dir: John Perrin Flynn. Thru Dec 14.

**The Old Globe**, San Diego, (619) 234-5623, [www.theoldglobe.org](http://www.theoldglobe.org)

**Bright Star**, book: Edie Brickell (also music and lyrics), Steve Martin (also music); dir: Walter Bobbie. Thru Nov 2.

**The Royale**, Marco Ramirez; dir: Rachel Chavkin. Thru Nov 2.

**Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas**, book and lyrics: Timothy Mason; music: Mel Marvin; dir: Jack O'Brien, James Vasquez. Nov 15-Dec 27.

**The Pasadena Playhouse**, (626) 356-7529, [www.pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org)

**Stop Kiss**, Diana Son; dir: Seema Sueko. Nov 4-30.

**PCPA Theaterfest**, Santa Maria, (805) 922-8313, [www.pcpa.org](http://www.pcpa.org)

**Christmas Is Here Again**, book, music and lyrics: Brad Carroll, Jeremy Mann. Nov 13-Dec 24.

**The Road Theatre Company**, North Hollywood, [www.roadtheatre.org](http://www.roadtheatre.org)

**Melissa Arctic**, Craig Wright; dir: Scott Alan Smith. Thru Nov 15.

**Rogue Machine**, Los Angeles, (855) 585-5185, [www.roguemachinetheatre.com](http://www.roguemachinetheatre.com)

**Cock (the cockfight play)**, Mike Bartlett; dir: Cameron Watson. Thru Nov 3.

**Nice Things**, Vince Melocchi; dir: Elina de Santos. Thru Nov 23.

**San Diego Repertory Theatre**, (619) 544-1000, [www.sdrep.org](http://www.sdrep.org)

**Honky**, Greg Kalleres; dir: Sam Woodhouse. Nov 8-Dec 7.

**San Francisco Playhouse**, (415) 677-9596, [www.sfplayhouse.org](http://www.sfplayhouse.org)

**Ideation**, Aaron Loeb; dir: Josh Costello. Thru Nov 8.

**Schooner**, Rinne Groff; dir: Marissa Wolf. Thru Nov 22.

**Promises, Promises**, book: Neil Simon; lyrics: Hal David; music: Burt Bacharach; dir: Bill English. Nov 18-Jan 10.

**Shadowlight Productions**, San Francisco, [www.shadowlight.org](http://www.shadowlight.org)

**wayang kulit**, adapt: Larry Reed. Nov 13-13.

**Shotgun Players**, Berkeley, (510) 841-6500, [shotgunplayers.org](http://shotgunplayers.org)

**Harry Thaw Hates Everybody**, Laura Meade; dir: M. Graham Smith. Thru Nov 16.

**TBA**, Thru Nov 23.

**South Coast Repertory**, Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, [www.scr.org](http://www.scr.org)

**Zealot**, Theresa Rebeck; dir: Marc Masterson. Thru Nov 16.

**Charlotte's Web**, adapt: Joseph Robinette; dir: Laurie Woolery. Nov 7-23.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Jerry Patch; dir: John-David Keller. Nov 28-Dec 27.

**The Theatre @ Boston Court**, Pasadena, [www.bostoncourtcourt.org](http://www.bostoncourtcourt.org)

**Seven Spots on the Sun**, Martin Zimmerman; dir: Michael John Garcés. Thru Nov 1.

Co-production with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, NY.

**PLAY/ground Annual New Play Festival**, Nov 8-9.

**Theatre West**, Los Angeles, (213) 851-7977, [www.theatrewest.org](http://www.theatrewest.org)

**Little Red Riding Hood**, book, music, lyrics and dir: Lloyd J. Schwartz. Thru Feb 8.

**Millennium Magic XV**, Nov 7-9.

**WestFest '14**, Nov 14-Dec 7.

**TheatreWorks**, Palo Alto, (650) 463-1960, [www.theatreworks.org](http://www.theatreworks.org)

**Sweeney Todd**, adapt: Christopher Bond from Hugh Wheeler; music and lyrics: Stephen Sondheim; dir: Robert Kelley. Thru Nov 2.

**The Western Stage**, Salinas, (831) 755-6816, [www.westernstage.com](http://www.westernstage.com)

**Harvey**, Mary Chase; dir: Bill Wolak. Thru Nov 23.

**A Christmas Story: The Musical**, book: Josephine Robinette; lyrics: Benj Pasek; music: Justin Paul; dir: Jeff McGrath. Nov 15-Dec 13.

## COLORADO

**Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities**, (720) 898-7200, [www.arvadacenter.org](http://www.arvadacenter.org)

**She Loves Me**, book: Joe Masteroff and Miklos Laszlo; lyrics: Sheldon Harnick; music: Jerry Bock; dir: Gavin Mayer. Nov 25-Dec 21.

**Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company**, (303) 444-SEAT, [www.betc.org](http://www.betc.org)

**Ambition Facing West**, Anthony Clarvoe; dir: Stephen Weitz. Thru Nov 2.

**Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center Theatre Company**, (719) 634-5583, [www.csfineartscenter.org](http://www.csfineartscenter.org)

**Dracula**, adapt: Steven Dietz; dir: Nathan Halvorson. Thru Nov 2.

**Stuart Little**, adapt: Joseph Robinette; dir: Joye Levy. Thru Nov 2.

**Curious Theatre Company**, Denver, (303) 623-0524, [www.curious theatre.org](http://www.curious theatre.org)

**Lucky Me**, Robert Caisley; dir: Chip Walton. Thru Dec 6.

**Denver Center Theatre Company**, (303) 893-4100, [www.denvercenter.org](http://www.denvercenter.org)

**Lord of the Flies**, Nigel Williams; dir: Anthony Powell. Thru Nov 2.

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang; dir: Jenn Thompson. Thru Nov 16.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Richard Hellesen from Dickens; music: David de Berry; dir: Bruce Sevy. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**OpenStage Theatre & Company**, Fort Collins, (970) 221-6730, [www.openstagetheatre.org](http://www.openstagetheatre.org)  
**Spring Awakening**, book and lyrics: Steven Sater; music: Duncan Sheik; dir: Candice Ingold. Nov 1-29.

**THEATREWORKS**, Colorado Springs, (719) 255-3232, [www.theatreworks.org](http://www.theatreworks.org)

**Psycho Beach Party**, Charles Busch; dir: Kevin Landis. Thru Nov 9.

## CONNECTICUT

**Connecticut Repertory Theatre**, Storrs, (860) 486-2113, [www.crt.uconn.edu](http://www.crt.uconn.edu)

**Cloud 9**, Caryl Churchill; dir: Vincent J. Cardinal. Thru Nov 2.

**25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**, book: Rachel Sheinkin; lyrics and music: William Finn; dir: Paul Mullins. Nov 20-Dec 7.

**Hartford Stage**, (860) 527-5151, [www.hartfordstage.org](http://www.hartfordstage.org)

**Hamlet**, Shakespeare; dir: Darko Tresnjak. Thru Nov 9.

**A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story of Christmas**, adapt: Michael Wilson; dir: Maxwell Williams. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**Long Wharf Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 787-4282, [www.longwharf.org](http://www.longwharf.org)

**Our Town**, Thornton Wilder; dir: Gordon Edelstein. Thru Nov 2.

**Picasso at the Lapin Agile**, Steve Martin; dir: Gordon Edelstein. Nov 26-Dec 21.

**Yale Repertory Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 432-1234, [www.yalerep.org](http://www.yalerep.org)

**War**, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins; dir: Lileana Blain-Cruz. Nov 21-Dec 13.

## DELAWARE

**Delaware Theatre Company**, Wilmington, (302) 594-1100, [www.delawaretheatre.org](http://www.delawaretheatre.org)

**Rest, In Pieces**, Steve Bluestein; dir: Bud Martin. Nov 5-23.



Sonja Parks in *Seedfolks*, based on the book by Paul Fleischman, at Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis.

DAN NORMAN

**Resident Ensemble Players**, Newark, (302) 831-2204, [www.rep.udel.edu](http://www.rep.udel.edu)  
**Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Leslie Reidel. Nov 13-Dec 7.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Arena Stage**, (202) 488-3300, [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org)

**Our War**, dir: Anita Maynard-Losh. Thru Nov 9.  
**Fiddler on the Roof**, book: Joseph Stein; lyrics: Sheldon Harnick; music: Jerry Bock; dir: Molly Smith. Thru Jan 4.

**Five Guys Named Moe**, book: Clarke Peters; lyrics and music: Louis Jordan; dir: Robert O'Hara. Nov 14-Dec 28. Co-production with Cleveland Play House, OH.

**Folger Theatre**, (202) 544-7077, [www.folger.edu/theatre](http://www.folger.edu/theatre)

**Julius Caesar**, Shakespeare; dir: Robert Richmond. Thru Dec 7.

**Ford's Theatre**, (202) 347-4833, [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org)  
**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Michael Wilson from Dickens; dir: Michael Baron, James Gardiner, Craig A. Horness. Nov 20-Jan 1.

**GALA Hispanic Theatre**, (202) 234-7174, [www.galatheatre.org](http://www.galatheatre.org)

**Fuego Flamenco X: Flamenco Aparicio Dance Company**, Nov 7-9.

**Fuego Flamenco X: Mariana Collado and Carlos Chamorro**, Nov 13-16.

**Kennedy Center—Theater for Young**

**Audiences**, Arlington, (202) 467-4600, [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org)

**Shear Madness**, dir: Bruce Jordan. Thru Aug 31.

**Little Dancer**, book: lyrics: Lynn Ahrens; music: Stephen Flaherty; dir: Susan Stroman. Thru Nov 30.

**The Gift of Nothing**, Patrick McDonnell, Aaron Posner (also dir), Erin Weaver. Nov 22-Dec 28.

**The Shakespeare Theatre Company**, (202) 547-1122, [www.shakespearetheatre.org](http://www.shakespearetheatre.org)

**As You Like It**, Shakespeare; dir: Michael Attenborough. Thru Dec 7.

**The Studio Theatre**, (202) 332-3300, [www.studiotheatre.org](http://www.studiotheatre.org)

**Wolfe Twins**, Rachel Bonds; dir: Mike Donahue. Thru Nov 2.

**Bad Jews**, Joshua Harmon; dir: Serge Seiden. Nov 5-Dec 21.

**Theater J**, (202) 777-3210, [www.theaterj.org](http://www.theaterj.org)  
**The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures**, Tony Kushner; dir: John Vreeke. Nov 13-Dec 21.

**Young Playwrights' Theater**, [www.yptdc.org](http://www.yptdc.org)  
**New Writers Now!**, Nov 18.

## FLORIDA

**American Stage Theatre Company**,

St. Petersburg, (727) 823-7529, [www.americanstage.org](http://www.americanstage.org)

**Laughter on the 23rd Floor**, Neil Simon. Nov 19-Dec 14.

**Arca Images**, Coral Gables, [www.arcaimages.org](http://www.arcaimages.org)  
**Hurac n**, Nilo Cruz (also dir). Thru Nov 8.

**Asolo Repertory Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 351-8000, [www.asolo.org](http://www.asolo.org)

**South Pacific**, book: Oscar Hammerstein (also lyrics), Joshua Logan; music: Richard Rodgers; dir: Rob Ruggiero. Nov 11-Dec 28.

**Florida Repertory Theatre**, Fort Myers, (239) 332-4488, [www.floridarep.org](http://www.floridarep.org)

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang; dir: Robert Cacioppo. Thru Nov 22.

**Tribes**, Nina Raine; dir: Chris Clavelli. Nov 5-30.

**Florida Studio Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 366-9000, [www.floridastudiotheatre.org](http://www.floridastudiotheatre.org)

**RAP-Punzel**, Beth Duda, Adam Ratner; dir: Jason Cannon. Thru Nov 14.

**Out of Bounds Match Up**, Thru Jan 3.

**Dancing in the Street with the Prima Donnettes**, Richard Hopkins, Jim Prosser; dir: Dennis Courtney. Thru Feb 12.

**Hairspray**, adapt: Thomas Meehan, Mark O'Donnell from John Waters; lyrics: Marc Shaiman (also music), Scott Wittman; dir: Richard Stafford. Nov 12-Jan 10.

**GableStage**, Coral Gables, (305) 445-1119, [www.gablestage.org](http://www.gablestage.org)

**Bad Jews**, Joshua Harmon. Nov 22-Dec 21.

**Gulfshore Playhouse**, Naples, (866) 811-4111, [www.gulfshoreplayhouse.org](http://www.gulfshoreplayhouse.org)

**Body Awareness**, Annie Baker; dir: Cody Nickell. Thru Nov 16.

**Jobsite Theater**, Tampa, (813) 229-7827, [www.jobsitetheater.org](http://www.jobsitetheater.org)

**Vampire Lesbians of Sodom**, Charles Busch; dir: David Jenkins. Thru Nov 23.

**Maltz Jupiter Theatre**, (561) 575-2223, [www.jupitertheatre.org](http://www.jupitertheatre.org)

**The Foreigner**, Larry Shue; dir: Matt Lenz. Thru Nov 9.

**Palm Beach Dramaworks**, (561) 514-4042, [www.palmbeachdramaworks.org](http://www.palmbeachdramaworks.org)

**Our Town**, Thornton Wilder; dir: J. Barry Lewis. Thru Nov 9.

**Miami Theater Center**, (305) 751-9550, [www.mtcmiami.org](http://www.mtcmiami.org)

**Hedda Gabler**, adapt: Stephanie Ansin (also dir), Fernando Calzadilla from Ibsen. Thru Nov 16.

**Red Barn Theatre**, Key West, (305) 296-9911, [www.redbarntheatre.com](http://www.redbarntheatre.com)

**The Signature of Fear**, Bob Bowersox (also dir), Rebecca Tomlinson. Nov 4-29.

## GEORGIA

**Alliance Theatre**, Atlanta, (404) 733-5000, [www.alliancetheatre.org](http://www.alliancetheatre.org)

**Steel Magnolias**, Robert Harling; dir: Judith Ivey. Thru Nov 9.

**Courage**, Scott Warren; dir: Rosemary Newcott. Nov 3-3.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: David H. Bell; dir: Rosemary Newcott. Nov 21-Dec 24.

**It's a Wonderful Laugh**, The Dad's Garage Ensemble; dir: Kevin Gillese. Nov 28-Dec 20.

**Aurora Theatre**, Lawrenceville, (678) 226-6222, [www.auroratheatre.com](http://www.auroratheatre.com)

**Aurora's Christmas Canteen**, adapt: Brandon O'Dell; dir: Anthony Rodriguez. Nov 20-Dec 21.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Tony Brown (also dir) from Dickens. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**The Twelve Dates of Christmas**, Ginna Hoben; dir: Kelly Criss. Nov 29-Dec 20.

**Center for Puppetry Arts**, Atlanta, (404) 873-3991, [www.puppet.org](http://www.puppet.org)

**The Headless Horseman of Silly Hollow**, Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers of Bar Harbor, ME. Thru Nov 9.

**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer**, adapt: Jon Ludwig (also dir). Nov 11-Dec 28.

**Dad's Garage**, Atlanta, (404) 523-3141, [www.dadsgarage.com](http://www.dadsgarage.com)

**Morgan Freeman Presents: The Magic Negro and Other Blackness**, Mark Kendall; dir: Megan Leahy. Nov 13-Dec 7.

**It's a Wonderful Laugh**, adapt: The Dad's Garage Ensemble; dir: Kevin Gillese. Nov 28-Dec 20. Co-production with the Alliance Theatre, GA.

**Georgia Ensemble Theatre**, Roswell, (770) 641-1260, [www.get.org](http://www.get.org)

**Ramona Quimby**, Len Jenkin; dir: Laurel Crowe. Thru Nov 16.

**The Elephant Man**, Bernard Pomerance. Thru Nov 16.

**Horizon Theatre Company**, Atlanta, (404) 584-7450, [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com)

**The Santaland Diaries**, David Sedaris; dir: Jeff Adler. Nov 21-Dec 31.

**Out of Hand Theater**, Atlanta, (404) 462-8836, [www.outofhandtheater.com](http://www.outofhandtheater.com)

**Group Intelligence School Tour**, Out of Hand; dir: Adam Fristoe. Thru Jun 10.

**White Rabbit, Red Rabbit**, Nassim Soleimanpour; dir: Ariel Fristoe. Thru Nov 22.

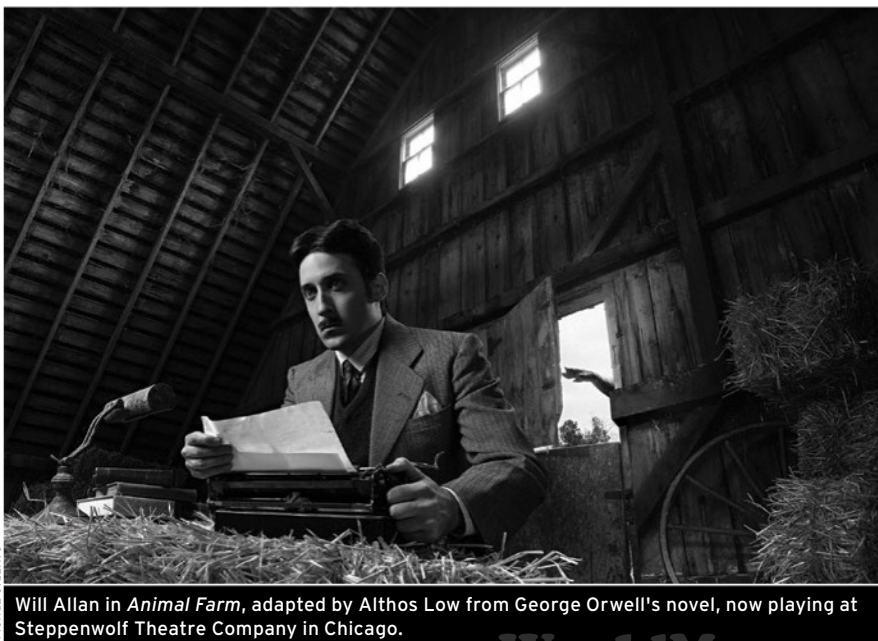
**True Colors Theatre Company**, Atlanta, (877) 725-8849, [www.truecolortheatre.org](http://www.truecolortheatre.org)

**How I Learned What I Learned**, August Wilson; dir: Todd Kreidler. Thru Nov 2.

## HAWAII

**Honolulu Theatre for Youth**, (808) 839-9885, [www.htyweb.org](http://www.htyweb.org)

**Ku A Mo'ō: Becoming a Guardian of Hawai'i**, dir: Eric Johnson. Thru Nov 8.



Will Allan in *Animal Farm*, adapted by Althos Low from George Orwell's novel, now playing at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago.

**Rock'n the Holidays with Rakugo**, Yasu Ishida (also dir). Nov 28-Dec 20.

## IDAHO

**Boise Contemporary Theater**, (208) 331-9224, [bctheater.org](http://bctheater.org)

**Venus in Fur**, David Ives; dir: Matthew Cameron Clark. Thru Nov 1.

**Narwhal! Unicorn of the Sea**, Dwayne Blackaller, Matthew Cameron Clark; dir: Julie Ritchie. Nov 25-Dec 20.

## ILLINOIS

**16th Street Theater**, Berwyn, (708) 795-6704, [www.16thstreettheater.org](http://www.16thstreettheater.org)

**Our Holiday Stories**, adapt: Ann Filmer (also dir) from Elizabeth Berg, Robert Koon, Juan Francisco Villa. Nov 13-Dec 13.

**Adventure Stage Chicago**, (773) 342-4141, [www.adventurestage.org](http://www.adventurestage.org)

**The American Revolution**, Theater Unspeakable; dir: Marc Frost. Nov 4-29.

**American Blues Theater**, Chicago, (773) 404-7336, [www.americanbluestheater.com](http://www.americanbluestheater.com)  
**It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!**, adapt: Frank Capra; dir: Marty Higginbotham. Nov 21-Dec 28.

**Black Ensemble Theater**, Chicago, (773) 769-4451, [www.blackensembletheater.org](http://www.blackensembletheater.org)  
**At Last: A Tribute to Etta James**, Jackie Taylor (also dir). Thru Dec 28.

**Chicago Shakespeare Theater**, (312) 595-5600, [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com)

**King Lear**, Shakespeare; dir: Barbara Gaines. Thru Nov 9.

**A Q Brothers' Christmas Carol**, adapt: GQ (also dir), JQ (also dir), Jackson Doran, Postell Pringle. Nov 19-Dec 28.

**Pericles**, Shakespeare; dir: David H. Bell. Nov 30-Jan 18.

**Court Theatre**, Chicago, (773) 753-4472, [www.courttheatre.org](http://www.courttheatre.org)

**Iphigenia in Aulis**, Euripides; dir: Charles Newell. Nov 6-Dec 7.

**First Folio Theatre**, Clarendon Hills, (630) 986-8067, [www.firstfolio.org](http://www.firstfolio.org)

**The Gravedigger**, Josepheh Zettelmaier; dir: Alison Vesely. Thru Nov 2.

**Goodman Theatre**, Chicago, (312) 443-3800, [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org)

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Tom Creamer; dir: Henry Wishcamper. Nov 15-Dec 28.

**The House Theatre of Chicago**, (773) 769-3832, [www.thehousetheatre.com](http://www.thehousetheatre.com)

**The Magic Parlour**, Dennis Watkins (also dir). Thru Jul 31.

**The Nutcracker**, book: Phillip Klapperich, Jake Minton (also lyrics); music: Kevin O'Donnell; dir: Tommy Rapley. Nov 7-Dec 30.

**Lookingglass Theatre Company**, Chicago, (312) 337-0665, [www.lookingglasstheatre.org](http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org)

**Lookingglass Alice**, adapt: David Catlin (also dir). Nov 12-Feb 15.

**Northlight Theatre**, Skokie, (847) 673-6300, [www.northlight.org](http://www.northlight.org)

**The Mousetrap**, Agatha Christie; dir: Jonathan Berry. Nov 7-Dec 14.

**Oil Lamp Theater**, Glenview, [www.oillamptheater.org/](http://www.oillamptheater.org/)

**Dinner with Friends**, Donald Margulies; dir: Josh Johnson. Thru Nov 9.

**It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play**, Joe Landry; dir: Keith Gerth. Nov 13-Dec 28.

**Silk Road Rising**, Chicago, [www.silkroadrising.org](http://www.silkroadrising.org)  
**The Hundred Flowers Project**, Christopher Chen; dir: Joanie Schultz. Thru Nov 23.

**Steppenwolf Theatre Company**, Chicago, (312) 335-1650, [www.steppenwolf.org](http://www.steppenwolf.org)

**Steppenwolf for Young Adults: George Orwell's Animal Farm**, adapt: Althos Low; dir: Hallie Gordon. Thru Nov 9.

**Strawdog Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 528-9696, [www.strawdog.org](http://www.strawdog.org)

**Desperate Dolls**, Darren Callahan; dir: Michael Driscoll. Nov 23-Dec 23.

**Great Expectations**, adapt: Gale Childs Daly; dir: Jason Gerace. Thru Dec 13.

**Teatro Vista**, Chicago, (773) 599-9290, [www.teatrovista.org](http://www.teatrovista.org)

**Tamer of Horses**, William Mastrosimone; dir: Ron Parson. Nov 8-Dec 14.

**Timeline Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 281-8463, [www.timelinetheatre.com](http://www.timelinetheatre.com)

**Danny Casolaro Died for You**, Dominic Orlando; dir: Nick Bowling. Thru Dec 21.

**Victory Gardens Theater**, Chicago, (773) 871-3000, [www.VictoryGardens.org](http://www.VictoryGardens.org)

**The Testament of Mary**, Colm Tóibín; dir: Dennis Zacek. Nov 14-Dec 14.

**Writers Theatre**, Glencoe, (847) 242-6000, [www.writerstheatre.org](http://www.writerstheatre.org)

**Isaac's Eye**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Michael Halberstam. Thru Dec 7.

## INDIANA

**Indiana Repertory Theatre**, Indianapolis, (317) 635-5252, [www.irtlive.com](http://www.irtlive.com)

**Red**, John Logan; dir: James Still. Thru Nov 9.

**Christmas Carol**, Tom Haas; dir: Courtney Sale. Nov 13-Dec 26.

**The Velveteen Rabbit**, James Still; dir: Carol North. Nov 18-Dec 14.

## IOWA

**Riverside Theatre**, Iowa City, (319) 338-7672, [www.riversidetheatre.org](http://www.riversidetheatre.org)

**Kimberly Akimbo**, David Lindsay-Abaire; dir: Sean Christopher Lewis. Thru Nov 2.

**A Grateful Nation**, Ron Clark (also dir), Rick Williams. Nov 15-16.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Paul Morella; dir: Ron Clark. Nov 28-Dec 14.

## KENTUCKY

**Actors Theatre of Louisville**, (502) 584-1205, [www.actorstheatre.org](http://www.actorstheatre.org)

**Tribes**, Nina Raine; dir: Evan Cabnet. Nov 11-Dec 7.

**Fifth Third Bank's A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Barbara Field; dir: Drew Fracher. Nov 25-Dec 23.

**Lexington Children's Theatre**, (859) 254-4546, [www.lctonstage.org](http://www.lctonstage.org)

**A Charlie Brown Christmas**, adapt: Eric Schaeffer from Charles M. Schultz; dir: Amie Dunn Kising. Nov 29-Dec 8.

**Walden Theatre**, Louisville, (502) 589-0084, [www.waldentheatre.org](http://www.waldentheatre.org)

**Slant Culture Series [play TBD]**, dir: Alec Volz. Nov 13-23.

**The Snow Queen**, adapt: Stanton Wood; dir: Neill Robertson. Nov 13-23.

## LOUISIANA

**Southern Rep**, New Orleans, (504) 522-6545, [www.southernrep.com](http://www.southernrep.com)

**Broomstick**, John Biguenet; dir: Amy Holtcamp. Thru Nov 2.

## MAINE

**Penobscot Theatre**, Bangor, (207) 942-3333, [www.penobscottheatre.org](http://www.penobscottheatre.org)

**The Mystery of Irma Vep**, Charles Ludlam; dir: Matt Morrow. Thru Nov 2.

**Portland Stage**, (207) 774-0465, [www.portlandstage.org](http://www.portlandstage.org)

**Souvenir**, Stephen Temperley. Thru Nov 16.

**From Away**, Nov 3.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Anita Stewart from Dickens. Nov 28-Dec 24.

**The Public Theatre**, Lewiston, (207) 782-3200, [www.thepublictheatre.org](http://www.thepublictheatre.org)

**I Married an Alien**, Susan Poulin. Nov 7-9.

## MARYLAND

**Center Stage**, Baltimore, (410) 332-0033, [www.centerstage.org](http://www.centerstage.org)

**Next to Normal**, book and lyrics: Brian Yorkey; music: Tom Kitt. Thru Nov 16.

**It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play**, adapt: Joe Landry. Nov 18-Dec 21.

**Chesapeake Shakespeare Company**, Baltimore, (410) 244-8570, [www.chesapeake-shakespeare.com](http://www.chesapeake-shakespeare.com)

**Richard II**, Shakespeare; dir: Kevin Costa. Thru Nov 9.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Ian Gallanar (also dir) from Dickens. Nov 29-Dec 23.

**Everyman Theatre**, Baltimore, (410) 752-2208, [www.everymantheatre.org](http://www.everymantheatre.org)

**Grounded**, George Brant; dir: Derek Goldman. Thru Nov 16. Co-production with Olney Theatre Center, MD.

**Imagination Stage**, Bethesda, (301) 280-1660, [www.imaginationstage.org](http://www.imaginationstage.org)

**101 Dalmatians**, adapt: Martha King de Silva; lyrics: Joan Cushing; dir: Janet Stanford. Nov 19-Jan 11.

**Single Carrot Theatre**, Baltimore, (443) 844-9253, [singlecarrot.com](http://singlecarrot.com)

**Social Creatures**, Jackie Sibbles Drury; dir: Kellie Mcleary. Thru Nov 2.

**Theatre Project**, Baltimore, (410) 752-8558, [www.theatreproject.org](http://www.theatreproject.org)

**Cabaret Macabre**, Happenstance Theater Ensemble. Thru Nov 2.

**Charm City Fringe Festival**, Nov 5-9.

**Charm City Kitty Club**, Nov 14-15.

**SONAR new music ensemble**, Nov 21-23.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**Actors' Shakespeare Project**, Somerville, (866) 811-4111, [www.actorsshakespeareproject.org](http://www.actorsshakespeareproject.org)

**Phèdre**, Jean Racine; dir: M. Bevin O'Gara. Nov 19-Dec 7.

**American Repertory Theater**, Cambridge, (617) 547-8300, [www.americanrepertorytheater.org](http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org)

**OPC**, Eve Ensler; dir: Peshla Rudick. Nov 28-Jan 4.

**ArtsEmerson**, Boston, (617) 824-8000, [www.artsemerson.org](http://www.artsemerson.org)

**The Old Man and the Old Moon**, PigPen Theatre Co. Nov 19-23.

**The Trip to Bountiful**, Nov 20-Dec 7.

**Company One Theatre**, Boston, (617) 933-8600, [www.companyone.org](http://www.companyone.org)

**Brahmaji: A One Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show: Part of the Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy**, Aditi Brennan Kapil; dir: M. Bevin O'Gara. Thru Nov 22.

**The Chronicles of Kalki: Part of the Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy**, Aditi Brennan Kapil; dir: M. Bevin O'Gara. Thru Nov 22.

**Shiv: Part of the Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy**, Aditi Brennan Kapil; dir: Summer L. Williams. Thru Nov 22.

**Huntington Theatre Company**, Boston, (617) 266-0800, [www.huntingtontheatre.org](http://www.huntingtontheatre.org)

**Ether Dome**, Elizabeth Egloff; dir: Michael Wilson. Thru Nov 23.

**Awake and Sing!**, Clifford Odets; dir: Melia Bensussen. Nov 7-Dec 7.

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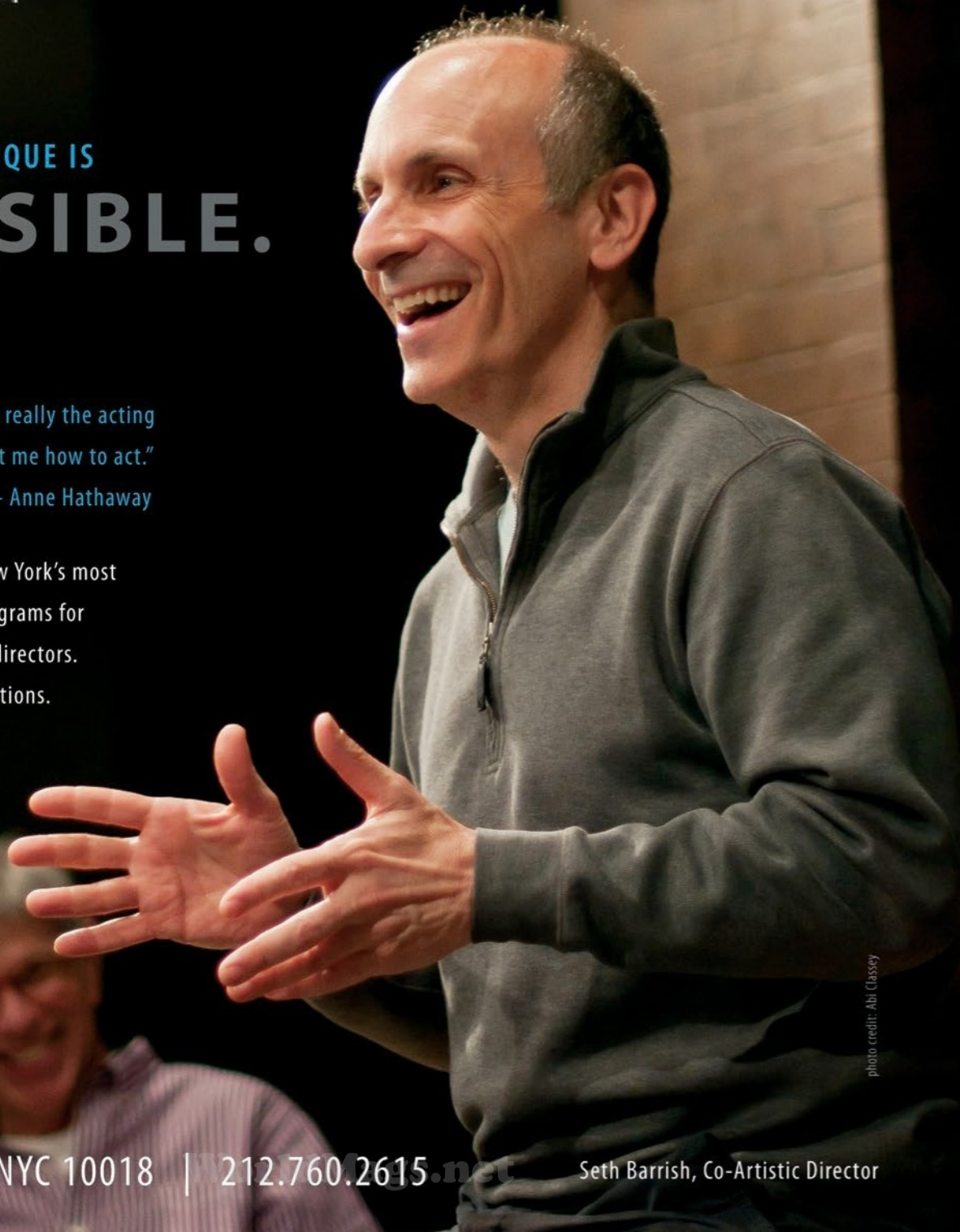


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Seth Barrish, Co-Artistic Director

**The Lyric Stage Company of Boston**, (617) 585-5678, [www.lyricstage.com](http://www.lyricstage.com)  
**Dear Elizabeth**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: A. Nora Long. Thru Nov 9.

**The Tale of the Allergist's Wife**, Charles Busch; dir: Larry Coen. Nov 21-Dec 20.

**Merrimack Repertory Theatre**, Lowell, (978) 654-4678, [www.mrt.org](http://www.mrt.org)  
**Dusk Rings a Bell**, Stephen Belber; dir: Michael Bloom. Thru Nov 16.

**13 Things About Ed Carpolotti**, book, music, lyrics and dir: Barry Kleinbort. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**New Repertory Theatre**, Watertown, (617) 923-8487, [www.newrep.org](http://www.newrep.org)  
**The Little Prince**, book: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry; lyrics: John Scoullar; music: Rick Cummins; dir: Ilyse Robbins. Nov 22-Dec 21.

**SpeakEasy Stage Company**, Boston, (617) 933-8600, [www.speakeasystage.com](http://www.speakeasystage.com)  
**Bad Jews**, Joshua Harmon; dir: Rebecca Bradshaw. Thru Nov 29.

## MICHIGAN

**Detroit Repertory Theatre**, (313) 868-1347, [www.detroitreptheatre.com](http://www.detroitreptheatre.com)  
**BUZZ**, Richard Strand; dir: Harry Wetzel. Nov 6-Dec 28.

**Meadow Brook Theatre**, Rochester, (248) 377-3300, [www.mbttheatre.com](http://www.mbttheatre.com)  
**A Christmas Carol**, Charles Nolte; dir: Terry W. Carpenter. Nov 14-Dec 21.

**Performance Network Theatre**, Ann Arbor, (734) 663-0681, [www.pnttheatre.org](http://www.pnttheatre.org)  
**This Wonderful Life**, Steve Murray; dir: Tony Caselli. Nov 18-Dec 18.  
**Gift of the Magi**, Annie Martin; dir: Suzi Regan. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**Williamston Theatre**, (517) 655-7469, [www.williamstontheatre.org](http://www.williamstontheatre.org)  
**The Gravedigger, A Frankenstein Story**, Joseph Zettelmaier; dir: John Lepard. Thru Nov 2.  
**Miracle on South Division Street**, Tom Dudzik; dir: Rob Roznowski. Nov 28-Dec 28.

## MINNESOTA

**Bedlam Theatre**, Minneapolis, (612) 338-9817, [www.bedlamtheatre.org](http://www.bedlamtheatre.org)  
**Ten Fests, Maybe Babies, Bedlam you and ongoing new work collaboratives**, Thru Dec 31.

**Beans! In Conversation with Elmer Siebhart**, Josef Evans; dir: Jon Mac Cole. Nov 1-Dec 31.

**Children's Theatre Company**, Minneapolis, (612) 874-0400, [www.childrenstheatre.org](http://www.childrenstheatre.org)  
**Seedfolks**, music: Victor Zupanc. Thru Nov 9.  
**Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas**, book and lyrics: Timothy Mason; dir: Peter C. Brosius. Nov 11-Jan 4.

**Commonweal Theatre Company**, Lanesboro, (507) 467-2525, [www.commonwealtheatre.org](http://www.commonwealtheatre.org)  
**Arcadia**, Tom Stoppard. Thru Nov 9.  
**Every Christmas Story Ever Told**, John K. Alvarez, Michael Carleton, James FitzGerald. Nov 14-Dec 21.

**Guthrie Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 377-2224, [www.guthrietheater.org](http://www.guthrietheater.org)  
**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Crispin Whittell from Dickens; dir: Joe Chvala. Nov 13-Dec 28.

**The Cocktail Hour**, A.R. Gurney; dir: Maria Aitken. Nov 22-Jan 4.

**History Theatre**, St. Paul, (651) 292-4323, [www.historytheatre.com](http://www.historytheatre.com)  
**Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story**, Alan Janes; dir: Ron Peluso. Nov 20-Dec 21.

**The Jungle Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 822-7063, [www.jungletheater.com](http://www.jungletheater.com)  
**On Golden Pond**, Ernest Thompson; dir: Bain Boehlke. Nov 7-Dec 21.

**Mixed Blood Theatre Company**, Minneapolis, (612) 338-6131, [www.mixedblood.com](http://www.mixedblood.com)  
**Colossal**, Andrew Hinderaker; dir: Will Davis. Thru Nov 9.

**Mu Performing Arts**, St. Paul, (651) 789-1012, [www.muperformingarts.org](http://www.muperformingarts.org)  
**Mu Daiko in Concert**, Mu Daiko; dir: Jennifer Weir. Nov 13-16.  
**A Very Asian Christmas Concert**, Randy Reyes (also dir). Nov 29-30.

**Pangea World Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 203-1088, [www.pangeaworldtheater.org](http://www.pangeaworldtheater.org)  
**Reconciliation**, Marisa Carr; dir: Dipankar Mukherjee. Nov 14-23.

**Penumbra Theatre Company**, St. Paul, (651) 224-3180, [www.penumbra theatre.org](http://www.penumbra theatre.org)  
**Let's Talk Theatre: An Evening with Petronia Paley and Lisa Jessie Peterson**, Nov 10.

**Pillsbury House Theatre**, Minneapolis, (612) 825-0459, [www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org](http://www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org)  
**The Chicago Avenue Project: Out on a Limb**, Nov 3-4.  
**The Late Nite Series**, Nov 8-22.

**Stages Theatre Company**, Hopkins, (952) 979-1111, [www.stagestheatre.org](http://www.stagestheatre.org)  
**Zen Ties**, Jeannine Coulombe; book: John J. Muth. Thru Nov 2.  
**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical**, adapt: Robert Penola; dir: Sandy Boren-Barrett. Nov 21-Jan 3.

**Ten Thousand Things Theater Company**, Minneapolis, (612) 203-9502, [www.tenthousandthings.org](http://www.tenthousandthings.org)  
**Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Peter Rothstein. Thru Nov 2.

**Theater Latte Da**, Minneapolis, [www.latteda.org](http://www.latteda.org)  
**Master Class**, Terrence McNally; dir: Peter Rothstein. Thru Nov 2.

## MISSISSIPPI

**New Stage Theatre**, Jackson, (601) 948-3531, [www.newstagetheatre.com](http://www.newstagetheatre.com)  
**All the Way**, Robert Schenkka; dir: Francine Thomas Reynolds. Thru Nov 2.

## MISSOURI

**The Coterie Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 474-6552, [www.thecoterie.org](http://www.thecoterie.org)  
**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer**, adapt: Robert Penola; music and lyrics: Johnny Marks; dir: Jeff Church. Nov 4-Jan 4.

**Kansas City Repertory Theatre**, (816) 235-2700, [www.kcrep.org](http://www.kcrep.org)  
**The Who & the What**, Ayad Akhtar; dir: Eric Rosen. Thru ov 16.  
**A Christmas Carol**, Dickens; dir: Jerry Genochio. Nov 21-Dec 26.

**Paul Mesner Puppets, Inc**, Kansas City, (816) 235-6222, [www.mesnerpuppets.org](http://www.mesnerpuppets.org)  
**The Best Pet of All**, Paul Mesner. Thru Nov 22.

**The Repertory Theatre of St Louis**, (314) 968-4925, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org)  
**The Emperor's New Clothes**, book: Kim Esop Wylie; lyrics: Sheila Schultz; music: Joe Dreyer; dir: Kat Singleton. Thru Mar 29.  
**A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Shakespeare; dir: Paul Mason Barnes. Thru Nov 9.  
**A Kid Like Jake**, Daniel Pearl; dir: Seth Gordon. Thru Nov 16.  
**Bah! Humbug!**, book, music and lyrics: Jack Herrick. Nov 10-Dec 23.

**Unicorn Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 531-7529, [www.unicorntheatre.org](http://www.unicorntheatre.org)  
**Bad Jews**, Joshua Harmon; dir: Cynthia Levin. Thru Nov 16.

## MONTANA

**Montana Repertory Theatre**, Missoula, [www.montanarep.org](http://www.montanarep.org)  
**Once Upon a Time in Ancient Greece**, Laramie Dean; dir: Cohen Ambrose. Thru Nov 11.

## NEBRASKA

**The BLUEBARN Theatre**, Omaha, (402) 345-1576, [www.bluebarn.org](http://www.bluebarn.org)  
**Every Christmas Story Ever Told (and Then Some!)**, John K. Alvarez, Michael Carleton, James Fitzgerald; dir: Susan Clement-Toberer. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**Omaha Theater Company**, (402) 345-4849, [www.rosetheater.org](http://www.rosetheater.org)  
**A Wrinkle in Time**, adapt: John Glore from Madeleine L'Engle; dir: Kit McKay. Nov 1-16.



Mu Daiko in Concert at Mu Performing Arts in Minneapolis.

MICHAEL DANIEL

## NEW JERSEY

**Cape May Stage**, (609) 770-8311, [www.capemaystage.org](http://www.capemaystage.org)

**Mistakes Were Made**, Craig Wright; dir: Roy Steinberg. Nov 5-22.

**Merry Melodies: A Holiday Celebration**, Marlena Lustik; dir: Bridget Grace Sheaff. Nov 28-Dec 31.

**The Santaland Diaries**, David Sedaris; dir: Roy Steinberg. Nov 29-Dec 30.

**Centenary Stage Company**, Hackettstown, (908) 979-0900, [www.centenarystageco.org](http://www.centenarystageco.org)  
**Peter Pan**, adapt: Piers Chater Robinson from J.M. Barrie; dir: Michael Blevins. Nov 28-Dec 14.

**McCarter Theatre Center**, Princeton, (609) 258-2787, [www.mccarter.org](http://www.mccarter.org)

**The Understudy**, Theresa Rebeck; dir: Adam Immerwahr. Thru Nov 2.

**New Jersey Repertory Company**, Long Branch, (732) 229-3166, [www.njrep.org](http://www.njrep.org)  
**Angels and Ministers of Grace Defend Us**, Elaine Smith. Thru Nov 9.

**Two River Theater Company**, Red Bank, (732) 345-1400, [www.tworivertheater.org](http://www.tworivertheater.org)  
**Camelot**, book and lyrics: Alan Jay Lerner; music: Frederick Loewe; dir: David Lee. Nov 15-Dec 14.

## NEW MEXICO

**FUSION Theatre Company**, Albuquerque, (505) 766-9412, [www.FUSIONnm.org](http://www.FUSIONnm.org)  
**Year of the Rooster**, Eric Dufault; dir: Aaron Worley. Nov 6-23.

## NEW YORK

**Amas Musical Theatre**, NYC, [www.amasmusical.org](http://www.amasmusical.org)  
**I Am, I Will, I Do**, book, music and lyrics: Dan Manjovi; dir: Christopher Scott. Nov 1-30.

**Atlantic Theater Company**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [www.atlantictheater.org](http://www.atlantictheater.org)  
**FOUND**, book: Hunter Bell; music and lyrics: Eli Bolin; dir: Lee Overtree. Thru Nov 9.

**Castillo Theatre**, NYC, (212) 941-1234, [www.castillo.org](http://www.castillo.org)  
**The Proverbial Loons! in Musical Improv Comedy at Castillo**, dir: David Nackman. Thru Aug 1.

**Accept "Except"**, Karimah; dir: George Faison. Thru Nov 23.

**Still on the Corner**, book, music and lyrics: Fred Newman; music and lyrics: Annie Roboff; dir: David Nackman. Nov 7-Dec 14.

**All Stars Talent Show Network-Talent Shows**, Nov 15-Aug 29.

**The Cider Mill Playhouse**, Endicott, (607) 748-7363, [www.cidermillplayhouse.org](http://www.cidermillplayhouse.org)  
**One Slight Hitch**, Lewis Black. Thru Nov 16.

**The Civilians**, Brooklyn, [www.thecivilians.org](http://www.thecivilians.org)  
**Met Museum Presents: The Civilians in Residence**, dir: Steven Cosson. Thru May 16.

**Classic Stage Company**, NYC, (212) 677-4210, [www.classicstage.org](http://www.classicstage.org)

**Allegro**, book and lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II; music: Richard Rodgers; dir: John Doyle. Nov 1-Dec 7.

**Monday Night Seagull**, Anton Chekhov. Nov 17-Dec 1.

**Geva Theatre Center**, Rochester, (585) 232-4382, [www.gevatheatre.org](http://www.gevatheatre.org)  
**Good People**, David Lindsay-Abaire; dir: Mark Cuddy. Thru Nov 16.

**'Til Death Do Us Part**, Maripat Donovan. Nov 4-30.

**A Christmas Carol**, book: Mark Cuddy (also dir); music and lyrics: Gregg Coffin. Nov 26-Dec 27.

**Irish Classical Theatre Company**, Buffalo, (716) 853-4282, [www.irishclassicaltheatre.com](http://www.irishclassicaltheatre.com)  
**Bourgeois Gentleman**, dir: Fortunato Pezzimenti. Thru Nov 2.

**Death of a Salesman**, Arthur Miller; dir: Greg Natale. Nov 7-30.

**Kitchen Theatre Company**, Ithaca, (607) 272-0403, [www.kitchentheatre.org](http://www.kitchentheatre.org)  
**From White Plains**, Michael Perlman (also dir). Thru Nov 10.

**Lonely Planet**, Steven Dietz; dir: Rachel Lampert. Thru Nov 2.

**La MaMa E.T.C.**, NYC, (212) 475-7710, [www.lamama.org](http://www.lamama.org)

**Tempest**, adapt: Karin Coonrod (also dir) from Shakespeare. Thru Nov 2.

**AdA: Authors Directing Authors**, Marco Calvani (also dir), Nathalie Fillion (also dir), Neil LaBute (also dir). Thru Nov 2.

**The Dream Vault Cycle**, R. Patrick Alberty (also dir), Christian De Gré (also dir). Thru Nov 2.

**Dead End, Dummy**, Dick Zigun. Nov 7-16.

**What Tammy Needs to Know About Getting Old and Having Sex**, Lois Weaver (also dir). Nov 7-16.

**The Tempest**, adapt: Tae-Suk Oh (also dir) from Shakespeare. Nov 20-23.

**King of Hearts Is Off Again**, dir: Piotr Borowski. Nov 27-30.

**Lark Play Development Center**, NYC, (212) 246-2676, [www.larktheatre.org](http://www.larktheatre.org)  
**Girl Shakes Loose Her Skin**, Zakiyyah Alexander. Nov 5-6.

**Lincoln Center Theater**, NYC, (212) 239-6200, [www.lct.org](http://www.lct.org)

**brownville song (b-side for tray)**, Kimber Lee; dir: Patricia McGregor. Thru Nov 16.

**The Oldest Boy**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: Rebecca Taichman. Thru Dec 28.

**Manhattan Theatre Club**, NYC, (212) 239-6200, [www.ManhattanTheatreClub.com](http://www.ManhattanTheatreClub.com)

**The Country House**, Donald Margulies; dir: Daniel Sullivan. Thru Nov 9.

**Lost Lake**, David Auburn; dir: Daniel Sullivan. Thru Dec 14.

**By the Water**, Sharyn Rothstein; dir: Hal Brooks. Nov 4-Dec 28.

**Ma-Yi Theater Company**, NYC, [www.ma-yitheatre.org](http://www.ma-yitheatre.org)

**Chairs and a Long Table**, Han Ong; dir: Lindsay Firman. Thru Nov 22.

**Living' La Vida Imelda**, Carlos Celdran; dir: Ralph Peña. Thru Nov 23.

**NACL Theatre**, Highland Lake, (845) 557-0694, [www.nacl.org](http://www.nacl.org)

**Shakespeare's Will**, Vern Thiessen. Nov 15-15.

**National Black Theatre, Inc**, NYC, [www.nationalblacktheatre.org](http://www.nationalblacktheatre.org)

**Carnaval**, Nikkole Salters; dir: Awoye Timpo. Thru Nov 16.

**New York Neo-Futurists**, NYC, (347) 829-6963, [www.nynf.org](http://www.nynf.org)

**Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind**, Thru Jun 27.

**New York Theatre Workshop**, NYC, (212) 460-5475, [www.nytw.org](http://www.nytw.org)

**The Invisible Hand**, Ayad Akhtar; dir: Ken Rus Schmoll. Nov 19-Jan 4.

**Playwrights Horizons**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [www.PHNyc.org](http://www.PHNyc.org)

**Grand Concourse**, Heidi Schreck; dir: Kip Fagan. Thru Nov 30.

**Pocatello**, Samuel D. Hunter; dir: Davis McCallum. Nov 21-Jan 4.

**The Public Theater**, NYC, (212) 967-7555, [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org)

**The Fortress of Solitude**, adapt: Daniel Aukin; book: Itamar Moses; music and lyrics: Michael Friedman; dir: Daniel Aukin. Thru Nov 2.

Co-production with Dallas Theater Center, TX.

**Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2, & 3)**, Suzan-Lori Parks; dir: Jo Bonney. Thru Nov 16.

**Straight White Men**, Young Jean Lee (also dir). Nov 7-Dec 7.

**Red Bull Theater**, NYC, [www.redbulltheater.com](http://www.redbulltheater.com)  
**TBA**, Thru Aug 31.

**Revelation Readings**, Thru Aug 31.

**Repertorio Español**, NYC, (212) 225-9999, [www.repertorio.org](http://www.repertorio.org)

**Barceló con hielo (Barceló on the Rocks)**, Marco Antonio Rodríguez; dir: José Zayas. Thru Feb 22.

**Aire frío (Cold Air)**, Virgilio Piñera; dir: Leyma López. Thru Feb 8.

**La zapatera prodigiosa (The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife)**, Federico García-Lorca; dir: Andrés Zambrano. Thru May 11.

**Cita a ciegas (Blind Date)**, Mario Diamant; dir: Jorge Alí Triana. Thru Feb 13.



MARK GARVIN

Maxwell Eddy and Alex Boyle in Lantern Theater Company's production of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* in Philadelphia.

**La nena se casa (Our Little Girl is Getting Married)**, Carlos Ferrari; dir: José Zayas. Thru Feb 21.

**El amor en los tiempos del cólera (Love in the Time of Cholera)**, adapt: Caridad Svich; dir: José Zayas. Thru May 15.

**En el tiempo de las mariposas (In the Time of the Butterflies)**, adapt: Caridad Svich; dir: José Zayas. Thru May 12.

**Crónica de una muerte anunciada (Chronicle of a Death Foretold)**, adapt: Fabio Rubiano; dir: Jorge Alí Triana. Thru May 13.

**El Quijote**, adapt: Santiago García; dir: Jorge Alí Triana. Thru May 29.

**La gringa**, Carmen Rivera; dir: René Buch. Thru Jun 9.

**Doña Flor y sus dos maridos (Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands)**, adapt: Jorge Alí Triana, Verónica Triana; dir: Jorge Alí Triana. Thru Feb 15.

**Bésame Mucho**, Pablo Zinger; dir: José Zayas. Nov 2-Dec 21.

**Su nombre será su sombra para siempre (Your Name Will Follow You Home)**, Carlos Murillo; dir: José Zayas. Nov 7-Feb 6.

**La casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba)**, Federico García-Lorca; dir: René Buch. Nov 12-May 28.

**Roundabout Theatre Company, NYC**, (212) 719-1300, [www.roundabouttheatre.org](http://www.roundabouttheatre.org)

**Indian Ink**, Tom Stoppard; dir: Carey Perloff. Thru Dec 7.

**The Real Thing**, Tom Stoppard. Thru Jan 11.

**Signature Theatre Company, NYC**, (212) 244-7529, [www.signaturetheatre.org](http://www.signaturetheatre.org)

**Our Lady of Kibeho**, Katori Hall; dir: Michael Greif. Thru Dec 7.

**A Particle of Dread (Oedipus Variations)**, Sam Shepard; dir: Nancy Meckler. Nov 11-Dec 21.

**Soho Repertory Theatre, NYC**, (212) 941-8632, [www.sohorep.org](http://www.sohorep.org)

**generations**, debbie tucker green; dir: Leah C. Gardiner. Thru Nov 2. Co-production with the Play Company, NY.

**Sundance Institute Theatre Program, NYC**, [www.sundance.org](http://www.sundance.org)

**Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at MASS MoCA**, Nov 30-Dec 14.

**Syracuse Stage**, (315) 443-3275, [www.syracusestage.org](http://www.syracusestage.org)

**The Piano Lesson**, August Wilson; dir: Timothy Bond. Thru Nov 9. Co-production with Seattle Repertory Theatre, WA.

**Hairspray**, book: Thomas Meehan, Mark O'Donnell; lyrics: Marc Shaiman (also music); Scott Wittman; dir: Bill Fennelly. Nov 28-Jan 4.

**Theatre for a New Audience, NYC**, (212) 229-2819, [www.TFANA.org](http://www.TFANA.org)

**TAMBURLAINE Parts 1 & 2**, adapt: Michael Boyd (also dir) from Christopher Marlowe. Nov 1-Dec 21.

**Urban Stages, NYC**, (212) 868-4444, [www.urbanstages.org](http://www.urbanstages.org)

**Shatter**, Trina Davies; dir: Susan Fenichel. Thru Nov 16.

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Actor's Theatre of Charlotte**, (704) 342-2251, [www.atcharlotte.org](http://www.atcharlotte.org)

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang; dir: Chip Decker. Thru Nov 8.

**The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical**, book: Betsy Kelso; music and lyrics: David Nehls; dir: Chip Decker. Nov 26-Dec 28.

**Cape Fear Regional Theatre, Fayetteville**, (910) 323-4233, [www.cftrt.org](http://www.cftrt.org)

**The Bluest Eye**, adapt: Lydia Diamond; dir: Khanisha Foster. Thru Nov 16.

**North Carolina Stage Company, Asheville**, (828) 239-0263, [www.ncstage.org](http://www.ncstage.org)

**Don't Dress for Dinner**, Marc Camoletti. Nov 12-Dec 7.

**PlayMakers Repertory Company, Chapel Hill**, (919) 962-7529, [playmakersrep.org](http://playmakersrep.org)

**A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Shakespeare; dir: Shana Cooper. Nov 1-Dec 7.

**Into the Woods**, book: James Lapine; music and lyrics: Stephen Sondheim; dir: Joseph Haj. Nov 2-Dec 6.

**Triad Stage, Greensboro**, (336) 272-0160, [www.triadstage.org](http://www.triadstage.org)

**The Member of the Wedding**, Carson McCullers. Thru Nov 9.

**Snow Queen**, book: Preston Lane; music and lyrics: Laurelyn Dossett. Nov 28-Dec 21.

## OHIO

**Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park**,

(513) 421-3888, [www.cincyplay.com](http://www.cincyplay.com)

**I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti**, adapt:

Jacques Lamarre; dir: Rob Ruggiero. Thru Nov 2.

**Safe House**, Keith Josef Adkins; dir: Timothy Douglas. Thru Nov 15.

**Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical**, Mark Friedman, Janet Yates Vogt; dir: Blake Robison. Nov 15-Dec 28.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Howard Dallin from Dickens; dir: Michael Evan Haney. Nov 26-Dec 28.

**Cincinnati Shakespeare Company**,

(513) 381-2273, [www.cincyshakes.com](http://www.cincyshakes.com)

**The Birds**, Conor McPherson; dir: Brian Isaac Phillips. Thru Nov 8.

**The Comedy of Errors**, Shakespeare; dir: Patrick Flick. Nov 19-Dec 13.

**Cleveland Play House**, (216) 241-6000, [www.clevelandplayhouse.com](http://www.clevelandplayhouse.com)

**How We Got On**, Idris Goodwin; dir: Jaime Castaneda. Thru Nov 16.

**Three Sisters**, Chekhov; dir: Ron Wilson. Nov 12-22.

**A Christmas Story**, Phil Grecian; dir: John McCluggage. Nov 28-Dec 21.

**Cleveland Public Theatre**, (216) 631-2727, [www.cptonline.org](http://www.cptonline.org)

**Leap/Conceive**, Thru Nov 1.

**Y-Haven**, The Ensemble, Adam Seeholzer, Chris Seibert (also dir). Nov 6-9.

**Dobama Theatre, Cleveland Heights**, (216) 932-3396, [www.dobama.org](http://www.dobama.org)

**The Norwegians**, C. Denby Swanson; dir: Shannon Sindelar. Thru Nov 22.

**Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati**, Cincinnati,

(513) 421-3555, [www.ensemblecincinnati.org](http://www.ensemblecincinnati.org)

**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson; dir: Michael Evan Haney. Thru Nov 2.

**Great Lakes Theater, Cleveland**, (216) 241-6000, [www.greatlakestheater.org](http://www.greatlakestheater.org)

**Les Misérables**, adapt: John Caird, Trevor Nunn from Alain Boublil, Claude-Michel Schönberg (also music); lyrics: Herbert Kretzmer; music: John Cameron; dir: Victoria Bussert. Thru Nov 9.



Aidan Armstrong, Cassandra Lowe Williams and Erin Schmidt in Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* at Triad Stage in Greensboro, N.C.

VANDERVEEN PHOTOGRAPHERS

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Gerald Freedman (also dir) from Dickens; dir: Sara Bruner. Nov 29-Dec 23.

**The Human Race Theatre Company**, Dayton, (937) 228-3630, [www.humanracetheatre.org](http://www.humanracetheatre.org)  
**Mame**, book: Jerome Lawrence, Robert E. Lee; music and lyrics: Jerry Herman; dir: Kevin Moore, Scott Stoney. Thru Nov 23.

## OKLAHOMA

**CityRep**, Oklahoma City, (405) 848-3761, [www.cityrep.com](http://www.cityrep.com)

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang; dir: Michael Jones. Nov 13-23.

## OREGON

**Artists Repertory Theatre**, Portland, (503) 241-1278, [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org)

**Blithe Spirit**, Noël Coward; dir: Christopher Liam Moore. Nov 25-Dec 21.

**Bag&Baggage Productions**, Hillsboro, (503) 345-9590, [www.bagnbaggage.org](http://www.bagnbaggage.org)

**Dial M for Murder**, Fredrick Knott; dir: Brandon Wolley. Thru Nov 2.

**A Miracle on 43rd Street**, adapt: Scott Palmer (also dir) from Valentine Davies. Nov 28-Dec 23.

**Oregon Contemporary Theatre**, Eugene, (541) 465-1506, [www.octheatre.org](http://www.octheatre.org)

**I & YOU**, Lauren Gunderson; dir: Craig Willis. Thru Nov 15.

**Miracle Theatre Group**, Portland, (503) 236-7253, [www.milagro.org](http://www.milagro.org)

**iO Romeo!**, Play Ensemble, Olga Sanchez (also dir). Thru Nov 9.

**Oregon Children's Theatre**, Portland, (503) 228-9571, [www.octc.org](http://www.octc.org)

**Ivy + Bean: The Musical**, adapt, music and lyrics: Scott Elmegeen; dir: Issac Lamb. Thru Nov 23.

**Oregon Shakespeare Festival**, Ashland, (541) 482-4331, [www.osfashland.org](http://www.osfashland.org)

**The Tempest**, Shakespeare; dir: Tony Taccone. Thru Nov 2.

**The Cocoanuts**, adapt: Mark Bedard; book: George S. Kauffman, Morrie Ryskind; music and lyrics: Irving Berlin; dir: David Ivers. Thru Nov 2.

**The Comedy of Errors**, Shakespeare; dir: Kent Gash. Thru Nov 2.

**Water by the Spoonful**, Quiara Alegría Hudes; dir: Shishir Kurup. Thru Nov 2.

**A Wrinkle in Time**, adapt: Tracy Young (also dir). Thru Nov 1.

**The Great Society**, Robert Schenkkan; dir: Bill Rauch. Thru Nov 1. Co-production with Seattle Repertory Theatre, WA.

**Portland Center Stage**, (503) 445-3700, [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org)

**Dreamgirls**, book and lyrics: Tom Eyer; music: Henry Krieger; dir: Chris Coleman. Thru Nov 2.

**The Typographer's Dream**, Adam Bock; dir: Rose Riordan. Thru Nov 16.

**The Second City's A Christmas Carol: Twist Your Dickens**, Peter Gwinn, Bobby Mort. Nov 22-Dec 24.

**The Santaland Diaries**, adapt: Joe Mantello; dir: Wendy Knox. Nov 23-Dec 28.

**Portland Playhouse**, (503) 488-5822, [www.portlandplayhouse.org](http://www.portlandplayhouse.org)

**The Piano Lesson**, August Wilson; dir: Kevin Jones. Thru Nov 2.

**Profile Theatre**, Portland, (503) 242-0080, [www.profiletheatre.org](http://www.profiletheatre.org)

**Kicking a Dead Horse**, Sam Shepard; dir: Adriana Baer. Nov 5-23.

**Third Rail Repertory Theatre**, Portland, (503) 235-1101, [www.thirdrailrep.org](http://www.thirdrailrep.org)

**That Hopey Changey Thing**, Richard Nelson; dir: Brandon Woolley. Nov 22-22.

**Sweet and Sad**, Richard Nelson; dir: Brandon Woolley. Nov 22-22.

**Sorry**, Richard Nelson; dir: Brandon Woolley. Nov 23-23.

**Regular Singing**, Richard Nelson; dir: Brandon Woolley. Nov 23-23.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**1812 Productions**, Philadelphia, (215) 592-9560, [www.1812productions.org](http://www.1812productions.org)

**This Is the Week that Is**, dir: Jennifer Childs. Nov 28-Dec 31.

**Act II Playhouse**, Ambler, (215) 654-0200, [www.act2.org](http://www.act2.org)

**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: James J. Christy. Thru Nov 23.

**Arden Theatre Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 922-1122, [www.ardentheatre.org](http://www.ardentheatre.org)

**Great Expectations**, adapt: Gale Childs Daly from Dickens; dir: Matthew Decker. Thru Dec 14.

**Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble**, (570) 784-8181, [www.bte.org](http://www.bte.org)

**'Twas the Night Before Christmas**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Cassandra Pisieczko. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**Bricolage Production Company**, Pittsburgh, (412) 334-2351, [www.bricolagepgh.org](http://www.bricolagepgh.org)

**Midnight Radio, SCarrie: The Musical**, book and lyrics: Tami Dixon; music: Joel Abbott; dir: Matt M. Morrow. Thru Nov 8.

**Bristol Riverside Theatre**, (215) 785-0100, [www.brtstage.org](http://www.brtstage.org)

**Lost in Yonkers**, Neil Simon; dir: Keith Baker. Nov 11-30.

**City Theatre Company**, Pittsburgh, (412) 431-2489, [www.citytheatrecompany.org](http://www.citytheatrecompany.org)

**Outside Mullingar**, John Patrick Shanley; dir: Tracy Bridgen. Thru Nov 2.

**Smart Blonde**, Willy Holtzman; dir: Peter Flynn. Nov 15-Dec 21.

**EgoPo Classic Theater**, Philadelphia, (267) 273-1414, [www.egopo.org](http://www.egopo.org)

**Death of a Salesman**, Arthur Miller; dir: Lane Savadove. Thru Nov 9.

**Gamut Theatre Group**, Harrisburg, (717) 238-4111, [www.gamutplays.org](http://www.gamutplays.org)

**An Ideal Husband**, adapt: Daniel Morris from Oscar Wilde; dir: J. Clark Nicholson. Nov 1-23.

**InterAct Theatre Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 568-8079, [www.interacttheatre.org](http://www.interacttheatre.org)

**Caught**, Christopher Chen; dir: Rick Shiomi. Thru Nov 16.

**Lantern Theater Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 829-0395, [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org)

**Arcadia**, Tom Stoppard; dir: Kathryn MacMillan. Thru Nov 2.

**QED**, Peter Parnell; dir: M. Craig Getting. Nov 20-Dec 14.

**Montgomery Theater**, Souderton, (215) 723-9984, [www.montgomerytheater.org](http://www.montgomerytheater.org)

**Greetings**, Tom Dudzick; dir: Tom Quinn. Nov 12-Dec 7.

**Off the Wall Productions**, Carnegie, 188871TICK, [www.insideoffthewall.com](http://www.insideoffthewall.com)

**The Small Room at the Top of the Stairs**, Carole Frechette; dir: Robyne Parrish. Thru Nov 1.

**Open Stage of Harrisburg**, (717) 232-6736, [www.openstagehb.com](http://www.openstagehb.com)

**Bill W. and Dr. Bob**, Samuel Shem, Janet Surrey; dir: Donald Alsedek. Nov 28-Dec 14.

**The People's Light & Theatre Company**, Malvern, (610) 644-3500, [www.peopleslight.org](http://www.peopleslight.org)

**Row After Row**, Jessica Dickey; dir: David Bradley. Thru Nov 9.

**Arthur and the Tale of the Red Dragon: A Musical Panto**, Samantha Bellomo, Pete Pryor (also dir). Nov 19-Jan 11.

**Philadelphia Young Playwrights**, (215) 665-9226, [www.phillyyoungplaywrights.org](http://www.phillyyoungplaywrights.org)

**Saturday Reading Series**, Nov 8-Feb 7.

**Pittsburgh Public Theater**, (412) 316-1600, [www.ppt.org](http://www.ppt.org)

**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Pamela Berlin. Thru Nov 2.

**L'Hotel**, Ed Dixon; dir: Ted Pappas. Nov 13-Dec 14.

**Society Hill Playhouse**, Philadelphia, (215) 923-0210, [www.societyhillplayhouse.org](http://www.societyhillplayhouse.org)

**New Voices Cabaret**, dir: Larry McKenna. Thru May 19.

**Til Divorce Do Us Part**, book and lyrics: Ruthe Ponturo; music: John Thomas Fischer; dir: Deen Kogan. Thru Dec 7.

**Theatre Horizon**, Norristown, [www.theatrehorizon.org](http://www.theatrehorizon.org)

**The Syringa Tree**, Pamela Gien; dir: Steve Pacek. Thru Nov 9.

**Touchstone Theatre**, Bethlehem, (610) 867-1689, [www.touchstone.org](http://www.touchstone.org)

**The Morningtime of Now**, Mock Turtle Productions & Anne Hills. Nov 6-9.



T. CHARLES ERICSON

The cast of Elizabeth Eglhoff's *Ether Dome* at Huntington Theatre Company in Boston.

# PREVIEW

COMING  
DECEMBER 14



## 'HIR'

By Taylor Mac

Everything's shifting in Taylor Mac's extravagant and unsettling new family comedy—the dynamics between suburban California housewife Paige and her once-abusive husband; the gender identity of her teenage child Max (formerly Maxine); the alarming psychological state of her older son Isaac, a Marine just back from Afghanistan; even the ground beneath their Central Valley home. After its world premiere early this year at San Francisco's Magic Theatre (pictured, with Jax Jackson in the role of Max), critic Rob Hurwitt called *Hir* "a tantalizing view of contemporary American life." The latest in *American Theatre's* ongoing series of complete play texts.

## TALK IT OVER WITH TIM ROBBINS

An interview by Joseph Eastburn  
He's an Academy Award-winning movie star, all right, but Tim Robbins can't get the theatre out of his system. One reason for that is the enduring vitality of the stage company he founded some 33 years ago and continues to supervise—the Los Angeles-based Actors' Gang. Robbins's posse has just returned from excursions to Nashville, Tenn. (where it conducted an acting workshop in a prison), and Porto Alegre, Brazil, performing an alluring new *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Arts reporter Joseph Eastburn talks candidly with Robbins about the Gang and its multifaceted aspirations, including a fresh push for global participation in the arts.

**The Wilma Theater**, Philadelphia, (215) 546-7824, [www.wilmatheater.org](http://www.wilmatheater.org)  
**Rapture, Blister, Burn**, Gina Gionfriddo; dir: Joanna Settle. Thru Nov 2.

### RHODE ISLAND

**Gamm Theatre**, Pawtucket, (401) 723-4266, [www.gammtheatre.org](http://www.gammtheatre.org)  
**Hedda Gabler**, adapt: Tony Estrella (also dir) from Ibsen. Thru Nov 30.

**Trinity Repertory Company**, Providence, (401) 351-4242, [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com)  
**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Richard Cumming (also music and lyrics), Adrian Hall; dir: Taibi Magar. Nov 8-Dec 31.  
**Barefoot in the Park**, Neil Simon; dir: Michael Perlman. Nov 20-Dec 21.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**Centre Stage**, Greenville, (864) 233-6733, [www.centrestage.org](http://www.centrestage.org)  
**Hands on a Hardbody**, Trey Anastasio, Amanda Green, Doug Wright. Thru Nov 27.  
**A Flea in Her Ear**, adapt: David Ives from Georges Feydeau. Thru Nov 15.

**Charleston Stage Company**, (843) 577-7183, [www.charlestonstage.com](http://www.charlestonstage.com)  
**Young Frankenstein**, book: Mel Brooks (also music and lyrics), Thomas Meehan; dir: Marybeth Clark. Thru Nov 2.  
**Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**, book and lyrics: Judith Viorst; music: Shelly Markham; dir: Derek T. Pickens. Thru Nov 1.  
**PURE Theatre**, Charleston, (843) 723-4444, [www.puretheatre.org](http://www.puretheatre.org)  
**SLOWGIRL**, Greg Pierce; dir: Sharon Graci. Thru Nov 22.

**Trustus**, Columbia, (803) 254-9732, [www.trustus.org](http://www.trustus.org)  
**The Other Place**, Sharr White; dir: Jim O'Connor. Thru Nov 1.  
**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Patrick Barlow; dir: Chad Henderson. Nov 21-Dec 20.  
**The Village Repertory Company**, Charleston, [www.villagerep.com](http://www.villagerep.com)  
**Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Evan Parry. Thru Nov 1.  
**Natasha, Pierre and the Great Come of 1812**, Dave Malloy; dir: Keely Enright. Nov 14-Dec 6.

**The Warehouse Theatre**, Greenville, (864) 235-6948, [www.warehousetheatre.com](http://www.warehousetheatre.com)  
**Evil Dead the Musical**, book and lyrics: George Reinblatt; music: Frank Cipolla, Melissa Morris, George Reinblatt. Thru Nov 1.

### TENNESSEE

**Clarence Brown Theatre Company**, Knoxville, (865) 974-5161, [www.clarencebrowntheatre.org](http://www.clarencebrowntheatre.org)  
**4000 Miles**, Amy Herzog. Thru Nov 16.  
**A Christmas Carol**, Dickens. Nov 26-Dec 21.  
**Tennessee Repertory Theatre**, Nashville, (615) 782-4040, [www.tennesseerep.org](http://www.tennesseerep.org)  
**A Christmas Story**, adapt: Phillip Grecian; dir: René Copeland. Nov 29-Dec 21.

### TEXAS

**A. D. Players**, Houston, [www.adplayers.org](http://www.adplayers.org)  
**Mass Appeal**, Bill C. Davis. Thru Nov 16.  
**ACardboardChristmas**, John Jensen. Nov 25-Dec 23.  
**Alley Theatre**, Houston, (713) 220-5700, [www.alleytheatre.org](http://www.alleytheatre.org)  
**Dracula, the Original Vampire Play**, John L. Balderston, Hamilton Deane; dir: Gregory Boyd. Thru Nov 2.  
**A Christmas Carol—A Ghost Story of Christmas**, adapt: Michael Wilson from Dickens; dir: James Black. Nov 21-Dec 24.



Charlie Pollock and Mary Kate Morrissey star in *Elmer Gantry* at Signature Theatre in Arlington, Va.

CHRISTOPHER MUELLER

**Amphibian Stage Productions**, Fort Worth, (817) 923-3012, [www.amphibianproductions.org](http://www.amphibianproductions.org)  
**Fully Committed**, Becky Mode; dir: Evan Mueller. Thru Nov 23.

**Cara Mia Theatre Company**, Dallas, (214) 516-0706, [www.caramiathatre.org](http://www.caramiathatre.org)  
**the sand show**, Jeffrey Colangelo (also dir). Thru Nov 2.

**Dallas Children's Theater**, (214) 740-0051, [www.dct.org](http://www.dct.org)  
**Miracle on 34th Street**, Valentine Davies. Nov 21-Dec 21.

**Kathy Burks Theatre of Puppetry Arts' Frost & Friends**, book, music and lyrics: B. Wolf. Nov 21-Dec 21.

**Dallas Theater Center**, (214) 252-3927, [www.dallastheatercenter.org](http://www.dallastheatercenter.org)  
**Driving Miss Daisy**, Alfred Uhry; dir: Joel Ferrell. Thru Nov 16.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Kevin Moriarty; dir: Lee Trull. Nov 25-Dec 27.

**The Ensemble Theatre**, Houston, [www.ensemblehouston.org](http://www.ensemblehouston.org)  
**A Soulful Christmas**, Stepp Stewart; dir: Patdro Harris. Nov 8-Dec 21.

**Jubilee Theatre**, Fort Worth, (817) 338-4411, [www.jubileetheatre.org](http://www.jubileetheatre.org)  
**Jubilation II: The Colors of Christmas**, Tre Garrett, Geno Young. Nov 29-Dec 28.

**Kitchen Dog Theater**, Dallas, (214) 953-1055, [www.kitchendogtheater.org](http://www.kitchendogtheater.org)  
**The Arsonists**, Max Frisch; dir: Tim Johnson. Nov 7-Dec 13.

**Lyric Stage, Inc.**, Irving, (972) 252-2787, [www.lyricstage.org](http://www.lyricstage.org)

**The Golden Apple**, book and lyrics: John La Touche; music: Jerome Moross; dir: Stefan Novinski. Thru Nov 2.

**Main Street Theater**, Houston, (713) 524-6706, [www.mainstreettheater.com](http://www.mainstreettheater.com)  
**The Cat in the Hat**, adapt: Katie Mitchell from Dr. Seuss; dir: Jef Johnson. Thru Nov 1.  
**The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**, Barbara Robinson; dir: Mark Adams. Nov 13-Dec 21.  
**Madeline's Christmas**, book and lyrics: Jennifer Kirkeby; music: Shirley Mier; dir: Mark Adams. Nov 13-Dec 19.

**Mary Moody Northern Theatre**, Austin, (512) 448-8484, [www.stedwards.edu/theatre](http://www.stedwards.edu/theatre)  
**Hamlet**, Shakespeare; dir: Michelle Polgar. Nov 13-23.

**Mildred's Umbrella Theater Company**, Houston, (832) 463-0409, [www.mildredsumbrella.com](http://www.mildredsumbrella.com)  
**Late: A Cowboy Song**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: Bree Bridger. Nov 14-22.

**Rude Mechs**, Austin, (512) 476-7833, [www.rudemechs.com](http://www.rudemechs.com)

**Fixing Timon of Athens**, Kirk Lynn; dir: Lana Lesley. Nov 2-9.

**Now Now Oh Now**, Rude Mechs. Nov 20-23.

**Theatre Britain**, Addison, (972) 492-4202, [www.theatre-britain.com](http://www.theatre-britain.com)

**Beauty & the Beast**, Jackie Mellor-Guin; dir: Sue Birch. Nov 29-Dec 28.

**Undermain Theatre**, Dallas, (214) 747-5515, [www.undermain.org](http://www.undermain.org)

**The Fairytale Lives of Russian Girls**, Meg Miroshnik; dir: Dylan Key. Nov 15-Dec 6.

**The VORTEX**, Austin, (512) 478-5282, [www.vortexrep.org](http://www.vortexrep.org)

**Ask the Psychomp**, Wendy Vastine. Thru Nov 2.

**WaterTower Theatre**, Addison, (972) 450-6232, [www.watertowertheatre.org](http://www.watertowertheatre.org)

**Bonnie & Clyde**, book: Ivan Menchell; lyrics: Don Black; music: Frank Wildhorn; dir: Rene Moreno. Thru Nov 2.

**ZACH Theatre**, Austin, (512) 476-0541, [www.zachtheatre.org](http://www.zachtheatre.org)

**A Year with Frog and Toad**, Arnold Lobel; dir: Nat Miller. Thru Nov 29.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Dave Steakley from Dickens. Nov 26-Dec 28.

**This Wonderful Life**, Steve Murray; dir: Richard Robichaux. Nov 28-Dec 28.

## UTAH

**The Salt Lake Acting Company**, Salt Lake City, (801) 363-7522, [www.saltlakeactingcompany.org](http://www.saltlakeactingcompany.org)  
**Rapture, Blister, Burn**, Gina Gionfriddo. Thru Nov 16.

## VIRGIN ISLANDS

**Pistarckle Theater**, St. Thomas, [www.pistarckletheater.com](http://www.pistarckletheater.com)

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang; dir: Frank Bartolucci. Nov 13-29.

## VIRGINIA

**Virginia Repertory Theatre**, Richmond, (804) 282-2620, [www.va-rep.org](http://www.va-rep.org)

**Sight Unseen**, Donald Margulies; dir: Rusty Wilson. Thru Nov 8.

**They're Playing Our Song**, book: Neil Simon; lyrics: Carole Bayer; music: Marvin Hamlisch. Nov 7-Jan 4.

**Nome**, book: Jerome Lawrence, Robert Edwin Lee; music and lyrics: Jerry Herman; dir: Patti D'Beck. Nov 21-Jan 11.

**Firehouse Theatre**, Richmond, [www.firehousetheatre.org](http://www.firehousetheatre.org)

**A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration**, Paula Vogel; dir: Tawnya Pettiford-Wates. Nov 20-Dec 20.

**Signature Theatre**, Arlington, (703) 820-9771, [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org)

**Elmer Gantry**, book: John Bishop; lyrics: Bob Satuloff; music: Mel Marvin; dir: Eric Schaeffer. Thru Nov 9.

**Sex with Strangers**, Laura Eason; dir: Aaron Posner. Thru Dec 7.

## WASHINGTON

**ACT Theatre**, Seattle, (206) 292-7676, [www.acttheatre.org](http://www.acttheatre.org)

**Vania and Sonia and Masha and Spike**, Christopher Durang. Thru Nov 16.

**A Christmas Carol**, adapt: Gregory Falls from Dickens. Nov 28-Dec 28.

**Book-It Repertory Theatre**, Seattle, (206) 216-0833, [www.book-it.org](http://www.book-it.org)

**Pride and Prejudice**, adapt: Marcus Goodwin (also dir). Nov 25-Dec 28.

**Harlequin Productions**, Olympia, (360) 786-0151, [www.harlequinproductions.org](http://www.harlequinproductions.org)  
**The Stardust Christmas Commotion**, Harlowe Reed; dir: Linda Whitney. Nov 28-Dec 31.

**Seattle Children's Theatre**, (206) 441-3322, [www.sct.org](http://www.sct.org)

**The Garden of Rikki Tikki Tavi**, Y York; dir: Rita Giomi. Thru Nov 9.

**Dick Whittington and His Cat**, Jeff Church; dir: Allison Narver. Nov 13-Dec 21.

**Seattle Repertory Theatre**, (206) 443-2222, [www.seattlerep.org](http://www.seattlerep.org)

**The Vaudevillians**, Jinx Monsoon, Major Scales. Thru Nov 2.

**All the Way**, Robert Schenkkan; dir: Bill Rauch. Nov 14-Jan 4.

**Taproot Theatre Company**, Seattle, (206) 781-9707, [www.taproottheatre.org](http://www.taproottheatre.org)  
**Appalachian Christmas Homecoming**, Phillip Depoy; dir: Scott Nolte. Nov 21-Dec 27.

**Jet City Improv**, Seattle, (206) 352-8291, [www.jetcityimprov.com](http://www.jetcityimprov.com)

**Jet City Improv**, dir: Andrew McMasters. Thru Jun 27.

**Twisted Flicks**, dir: Mike Christensen. Thru Jun 27.

**Clues**, dir: Brandon Jepson. Thru Nov 21.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**Greenbrier Valley Theatre**, Lewisburg, (304) 645-3838, [www.gvtheatre.org](http://www.gvtheatre.org)  
**The Mystery of Irma Vep: A Penny Dreadful**, Charles Ludlam. Thru Nov 15.

## WISCONSIN

**American Players Theatre**, Spring Green, (608) 588-2361, [www.americanplayers.org](http://www.americanplayers.org)  
**American Buffalo**, David Mamet; dir: Kenneth Albers. Thru Nov 9.

**Alcestis**, adapt: Ted Hughes; dir: David Frank. Thru Nov 9.

**Milwaukee Chamber Theatre**, (414) 291-7800, [www.milwaukeechambertheatre.com](http://www.milwaukeechambertheatre.com)

**The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised]**, Adam Long, Daniel Singer, Jess Winfield; dir: Ray Jivoff. Nov 19-Dec 14.

**Milwaukee Repertory Theater**, (414) 224-9490, [www.milwaukeekeerep.com](http://www.milwaukeekeerep.com)

**The Doyle & Debbie Show**, Bruce Arntson; dir: JC Clementz. Thru Nov 2.

**The Color Purple**, book: Marsha Norman; lyrics: Stephen Bray, Brenda Russell, Allee Willis; dir: Mark Clements. Thru Nov 2.

**after all the terrible things I do**, A. Rey Pamatmat; dir: May Adrales. Thru Nov 9.

**Libracel**, Brent Hazelton (also dir). Nov 7-Jan 11.  
**Harvey**, Mary Chase; dir: KJ Sanchez. Nov 18-Dec 21.

**Next Act Theatre**, Milwaukee, (414) 278-0765, [www.nextact.org](http://www.nextact.org)

**Heresy**, A.R. Gurney; dir: David Ceasarini. Nov 13-Dec 14.

**Renaissance Theaterworks**, Milwaukee, (414) 291-7800, [www.r-t-w.com](http://www.r-t-w.com)

**Amelia**, Alex Webb; dir: Laura Gordon. Thru Nov 9.

**Stage Door Theatre Company**, Sturgeon Bay, (920) 743-1760, [www.thirdavenueplayhouse.com/stage-door-theatre](http://www.thirdavenueplayhouse.com/stage-door-theatre)

**Blue Collar Diaries**, Michelle Myers Berg; dir: Michelle Myers Berg. Nov 6-23.

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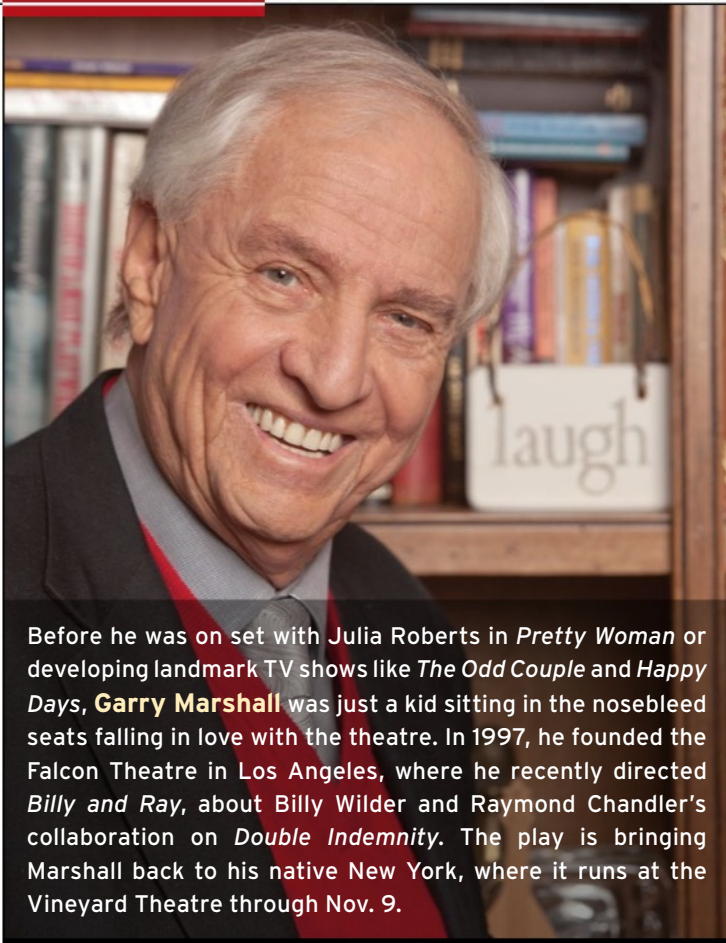


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COURTESY OF GARRY MARSHALL

Before he was on set with Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* or developing landmark TV shows like *The Odd Couple* and *Happy Days*, **Garry Marshall** was just a kid sitting in the nosebleed seats falling in love with the theatre. In 1997, he founded the Falcon Theatre in Los Angeles, where he recently directed *Billy and Ray*, about Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler's collaboration on *Double Indemnity*. The play is bringing Marshall back to his native New York, where it runs at the Vineyard Theatre through Nov. 9.

**You directed *Billy and Ray* in 2013 at the Falcon. What made you come back to it now?**

Out in L.A., they thought it was about Billy Ray Cyrus and his daughter Miley, but after a while, they got it. It's about film, and how Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler changed filmmaking. It was so successful in L.A. that the Vineyard Theatre said they wanted to do it, and we said, "Yeah let's go!"

**It's been a long time since you've directed a play in New York. Why now?**

I grew up in the Bronx. I froze. I went to school in Chicago. It was very cold. So I said, "That's it! I'm staying where it's warm in L.A." But then I kind of missed New York, so I came back with a lot of coats.

**Has the theatre changed at all since you were last here?**

No, the theatre is booming! *Pretty Woman* is becoming a musical, and I'm involved too! Theatre is bigger than ever!

**Tell us about the *Pretty Woman* musical.**

We're going to have multiple composers rather than one composer, and we're using some music from the picture—the song "Pretty Woman" in a different arrangement.

**You have a different cast at the Vineyard than at the Falcon. How is it directing the same play with different actors?**

I gotta say, we went for a lot of funny people in L.A., but in New York, you have to have depth. So here we have actors who can really play the dramatic moments very well and also do

comedy—Vincent Kartheiser from *Mad Men* is playing Billy Wilder, and Larry Pine, who's done everything on Broadway, is Raymond Chandler. Drew Gehling, from *Jersey Boys*, can do comedy and drama. And Sophie von Haselberg, do you know who she is?

**She's Bette Midler's daughter.**

Yeah! Last time I was with her, we spent a lot of time on beaches. She was two years old so I carried her around a lot. Now she's a lovely young woman, and I don't carry her around. She speaks much better than when she was two, I gotta tell you. She's bright and funny and quite a good actress.

**Who got you interested in theatre?**

My mother was a dance teacher who always taught me that live performances are the best. When I was a kid, my mother would take me to the Broadway theatre, and we sat in the last row in the back of the balcony, so I never saw what an actor's face looked like—but I saw singing and dancing. Another big influence was Terrence McNally, who is a great playwright and who wrote *Frankie and Johnny*, a movie that I did. A lot of people in L.A., if they see a play, they think, "Will it make a TV series?" They don't care. But here in New York, theatre is very alive, and I love it.

**What was the last show you saw?**

I just saw the thing that won the Tony, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder*, and I saw Terrence's play that's up [*It's Only a Play*]. I also saw *Beautiful*—I know Carole [King]—and I really enjoyed them all. There are a lot of revivals, but *Billy and Ray* is new, written by Mike Bencivenga. Mike also works for ABC News.


**You also studied journalism, right?**

I went to the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern, which is a great school—I learned a lot, but mostly I learned how to meet a deadline. So I'm never late. My three kids went to Northwestern, and it was the highlight of my life just a month ago when my first grandchild, Charlotte, started at Northwestern. She's in media studies. She's a whiz on the Internet. I don't even have a computer.

**What do you do when you're not working?**

What has kept me sane all these years is first, my wife. She's a nurse. She doesn't care that much for show business. And second, softball. I still play softball. I just got a new knee because I couldn't play as well. With softball, nobody cares what you're working on—you either hit the ball or you don't!

**How long have you been playing softball?**

I played baseball when I was younger, but now I play senior softball. It's older people. They let you take a nap. In New York, they have a show league, and one of my highlights was when our team from *Wrong Turn at Lungfish*—it was Tony Danza, George C. Scott, Jami Gertz and Kelli Williams, along with my son, who works with me, and some stagehands—we beat *Miss Saigon*. We played against everybody, but *Miss Saigon* was a big show. That was a highlight. 



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LEFT TO RIGHT FROM TOP: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, TWELFTH NIGHT, THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH, THE TOOTH OF CRIME, VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE, THE GRAPES OF WRATH, TWELFTH NIGHT. PHOTOS BY MARK TUREK

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