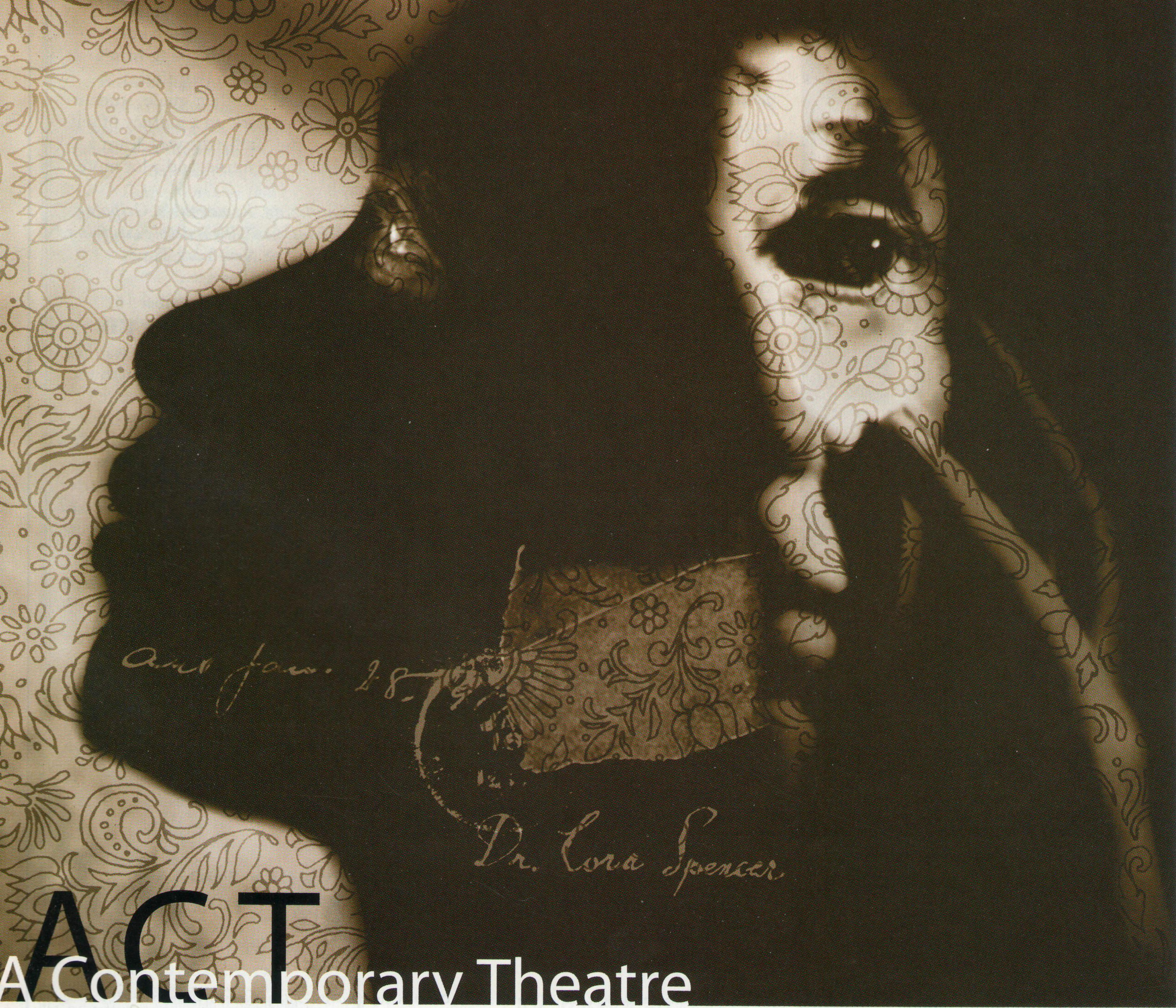




Lee Blessing's

Going to St. Ives



and Jan. 28

Dr. Cora Spencer

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BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY

BY PEARL CLEAGE

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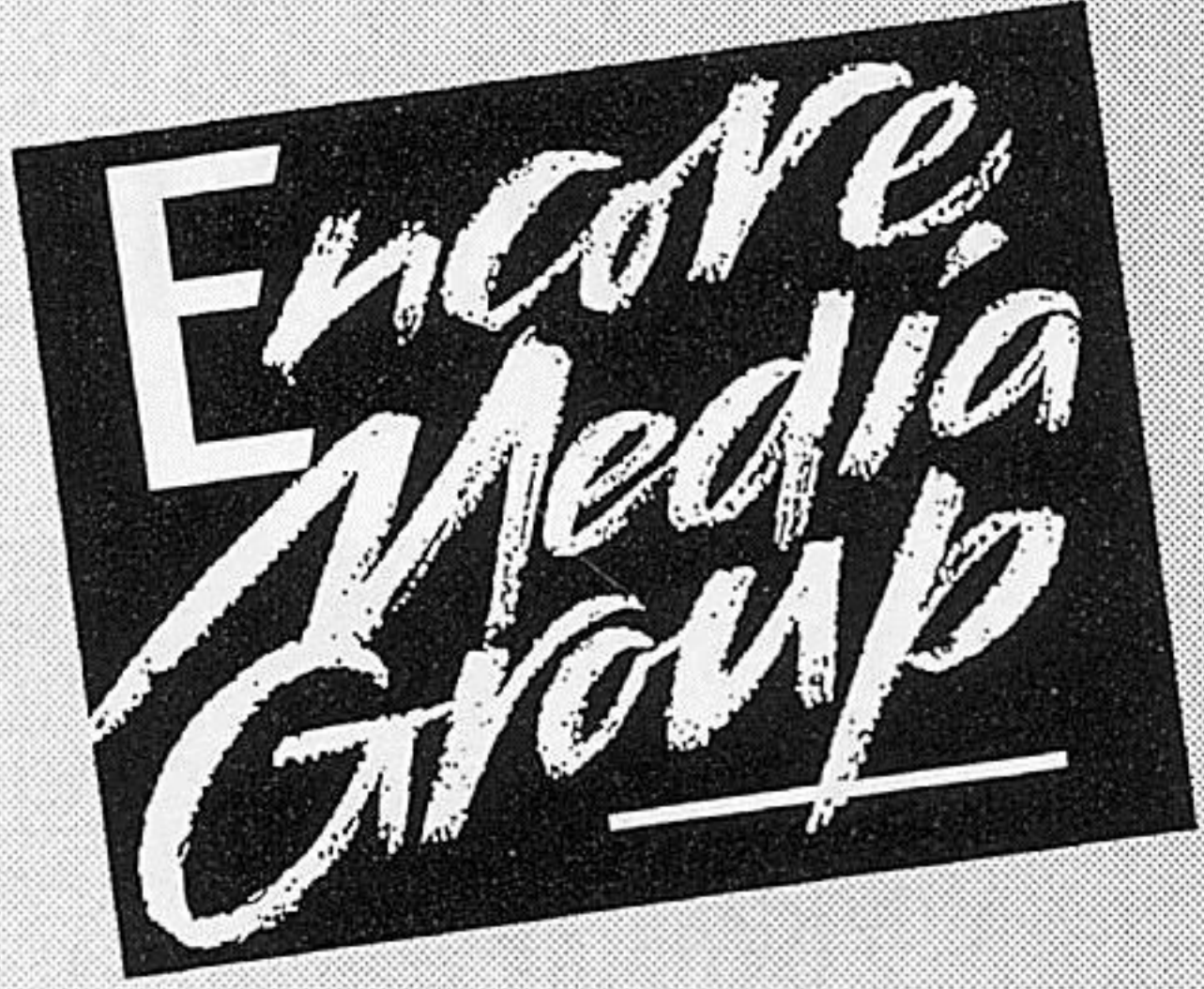
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A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Going to St. Ives

by Lee Blessing

directed by Leslie Swackhamer

JULY 3 – AUGUST 3, 1997

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Editor: Noreen O'Brien

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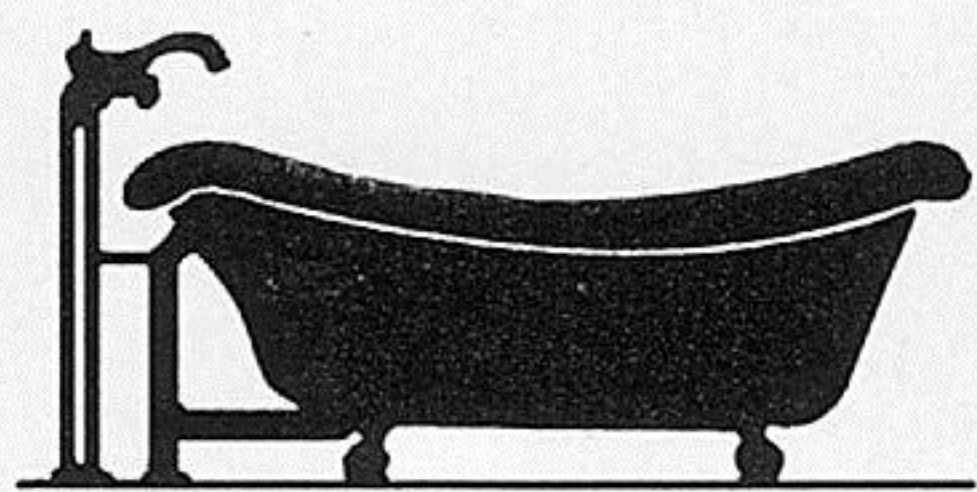
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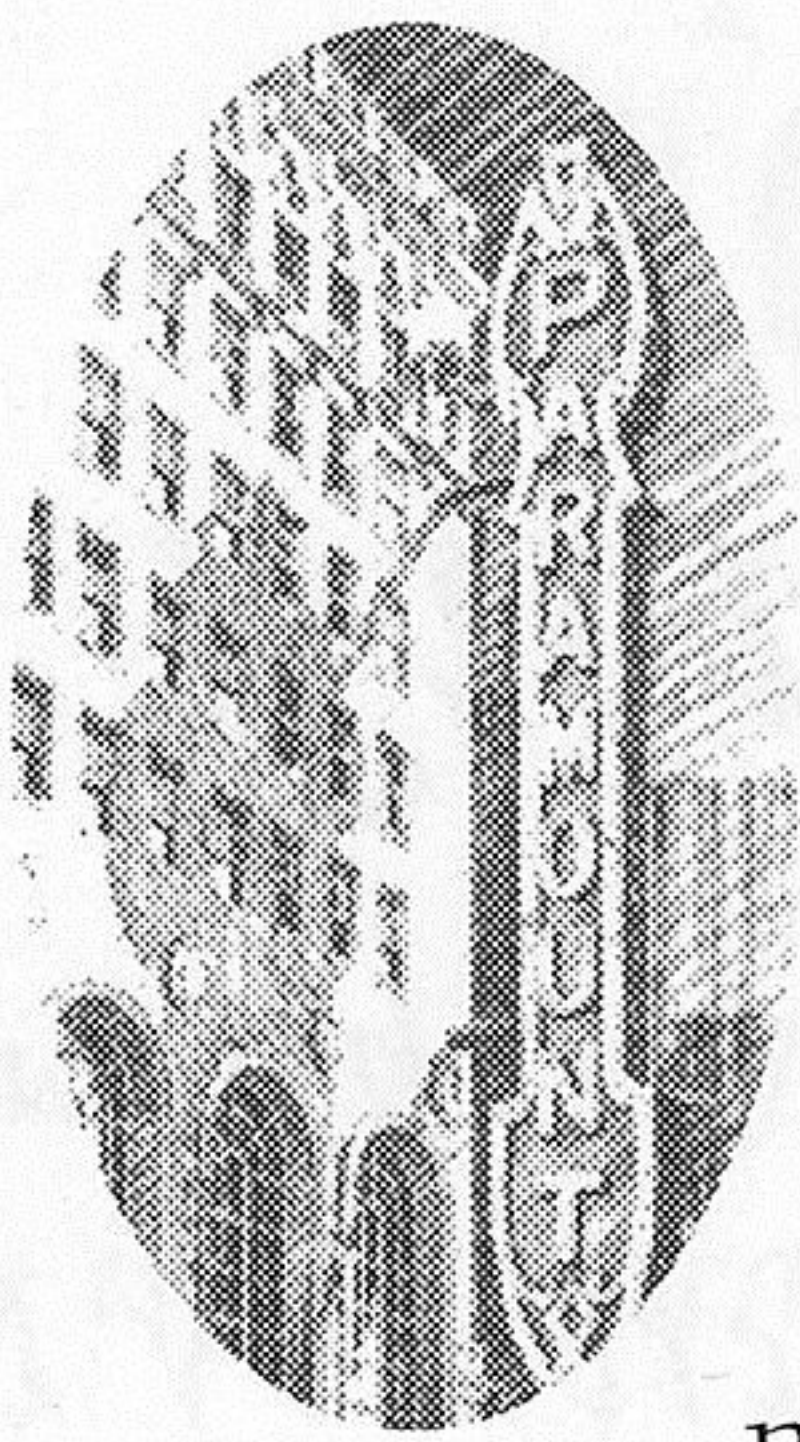
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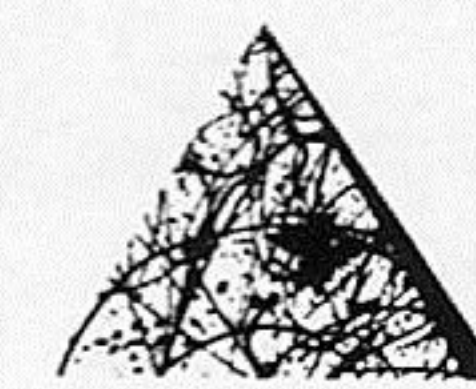
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Richard E. Bensinger, M.D.,
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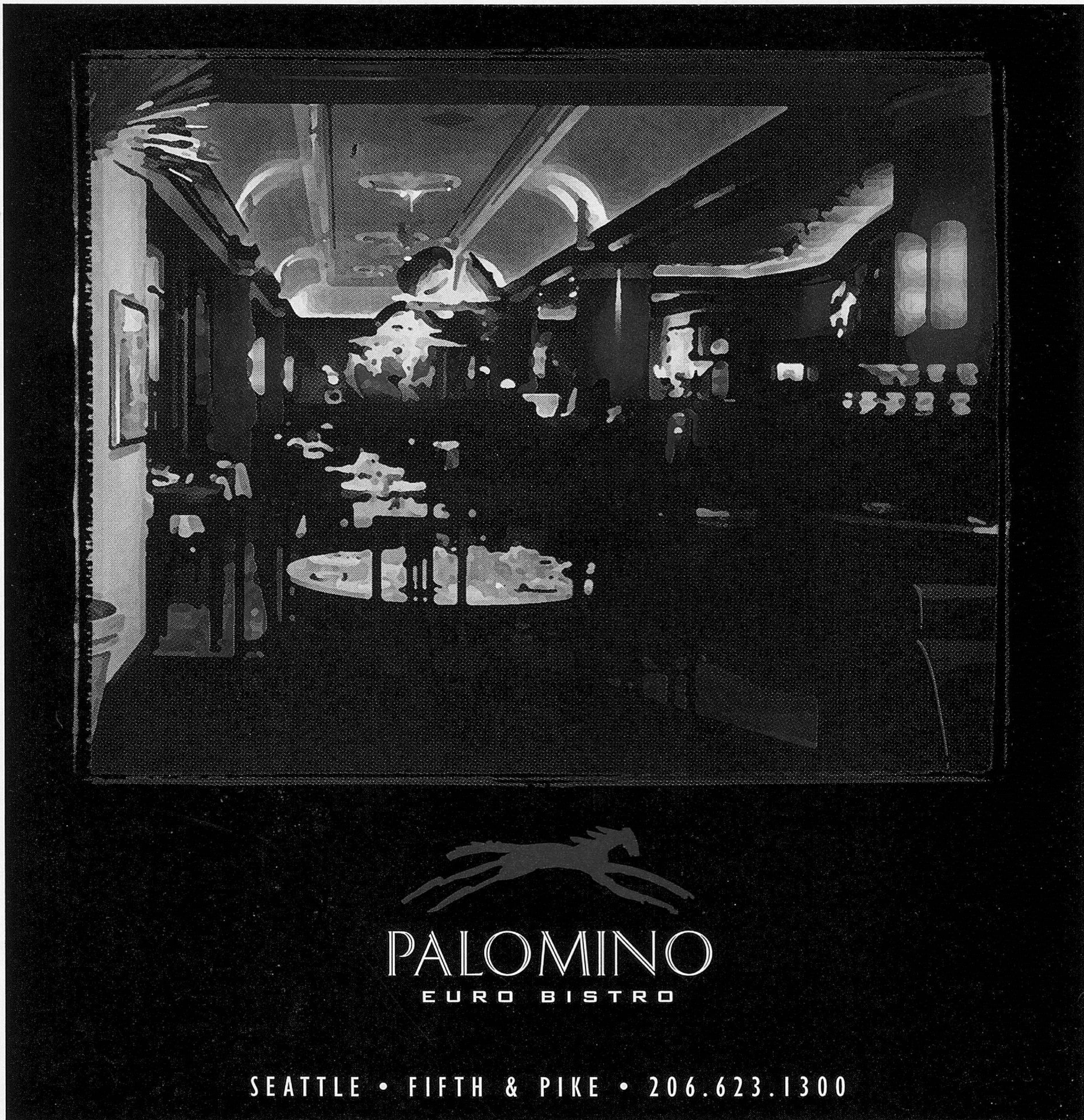


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DIRECTOR'S REMARKS



Dear Friends,

I'm exceptionally proud to welcome you to this world premiere production of *Going to St. Ives*, a remarkable new

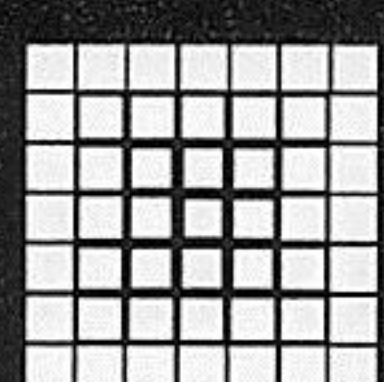
play by Lee Blessing, one of our foremost American playwrights. ACT audiences have already experienced the power and elegance of Lee's writing in our productions of *A Walk in the Woods* and *Eleemosynary*, and I feel very honored that he has chosen ACT for the premiere of *Going to St. Ives*.

As you know, our mission as A Contemporary Theatre is not only to present the finest in contemporary plays, but also to offer contemporary playwrights the resources and support to continue developing their craft and making their unique contribution to the vitality of the arts in America. Over the years ACT has directly commissioned over 30 new plays, and our audiences have seen world premieres of 27 of them, including work by Jon Klein, Doris Baizley, Jim Leonard, John Pielmeier, and no fewer than five world premieres by Steven Dietz!

Last year I received a Theatre Communications Group observership for the express purpose of visiting and learning from new play development programs across the country, and while I was at the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill Theatre Center I had the opportunity to attend a workshop of one of the new plays being developed there: *Going to St. Ives*. The audience was absolutely rapt, riveted by the play's powerful story of sacrifice and healing, and by the characters of Cora and May, two complex women struggling to reconcile their deepest personal beliefs with the darker sacrifices required for political justice. Clearly this was a play that spoke to the heart and the mind with equal force and clarity, and I knew immediately that we had to premiere it here at ACT!

With the recent decision by the National Endowment for the Arts to eliminate its grants to individual playwrights, it's more important than ever for this country's regional theatres to recognize and act upon our responsibility to provide an artistic home for the development of new plays. It's not just about insuring a

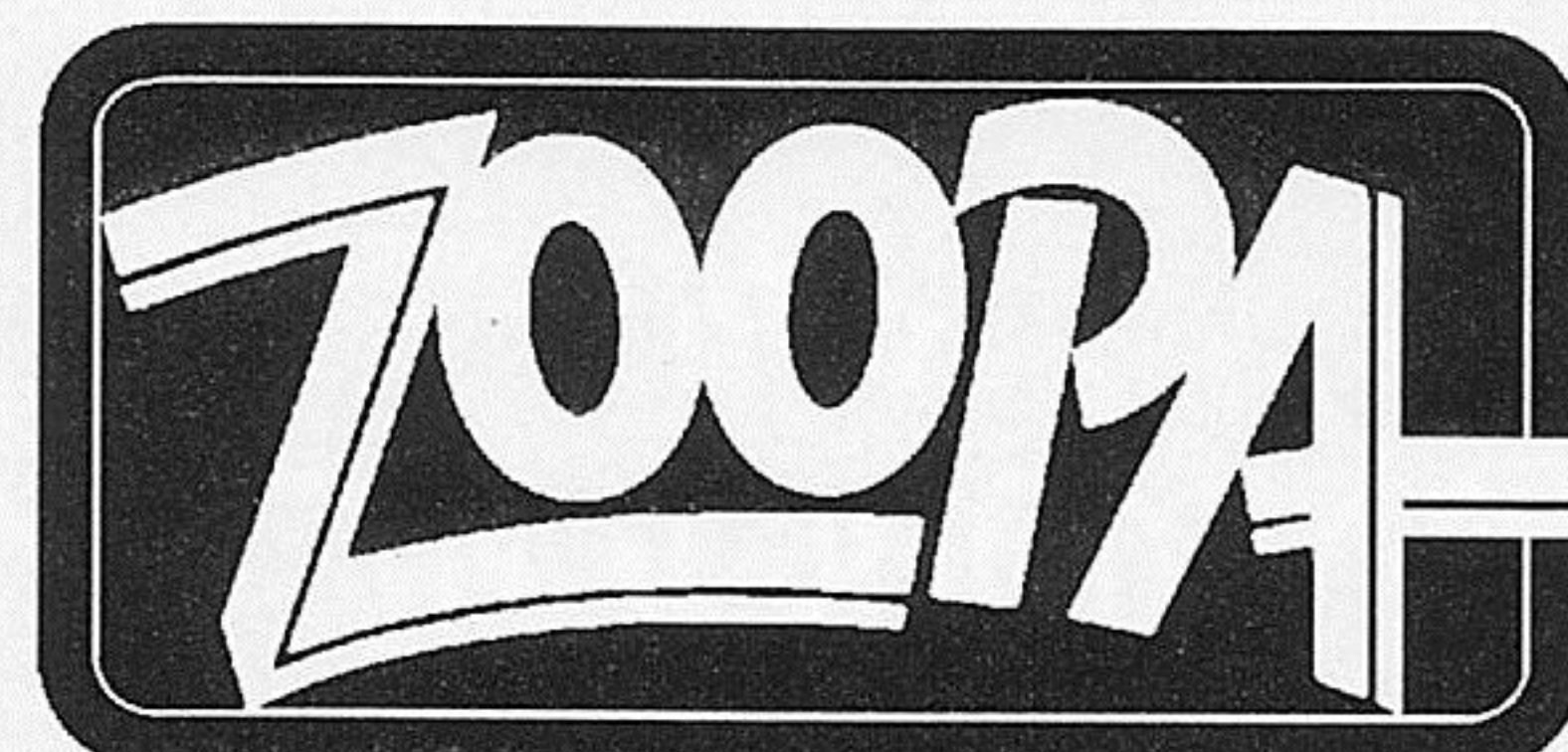
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INTERVIEW WITH LEE BLESSING

While Lee Blessing, an award-winning playwright, was in Seattle developing the world premiere of *Going to St. Ives*, the ACT staff had the opportunity to discuss his work with him. Another excerpt of the discussion was printed in ACT's subscriber newsletter, *Back Stage*. For more information about the body of Blessing's work, please refer to his biography on page 11.

*Could you talk a little bit about the imaginative origins and creative evolution of *Going to St. Ives*?*

I started thinking — and I have no idea where this idea came from — about what you would do if you were in the situation of being the mother of an Idi Amin-like figure, a Pol Pot or Caligula. Someone who was that much of a patent monster, and you were a person who was close to them every day. You were a person who could not on any level approve of what they did, and you had an opportunity to do something about it if you wished... I spent a lot of time considering different parts of the world where it might be most intriguing [to set it], and ultimately I settled on a fictional sub-Saharan African country and England because it allowed me to take the play in another direction and explore an issue that I thought was useful, which is the residue of colonialism: the fact that we still live in a world that's dominated by the images and mythologies of colonialism, and everybody has to deal with that.

Do you aim for a political message?

It's valuable always, for me anyway, in my plays to ask myself what is the political dimension of what I'm writing about, whatever story has fascinated me. This play very quickly became one that wanted to talk a great deal about colonialism and its aftereffects as much as it wanted to talk about the nature of motherhood, the nature of bonding between women who have had roughly analogous

tragedies in their lives. It's also obviously in some ways a story about a great crime that's being contemplated and which creates a lot of suspense about whether that crime will occur or not.

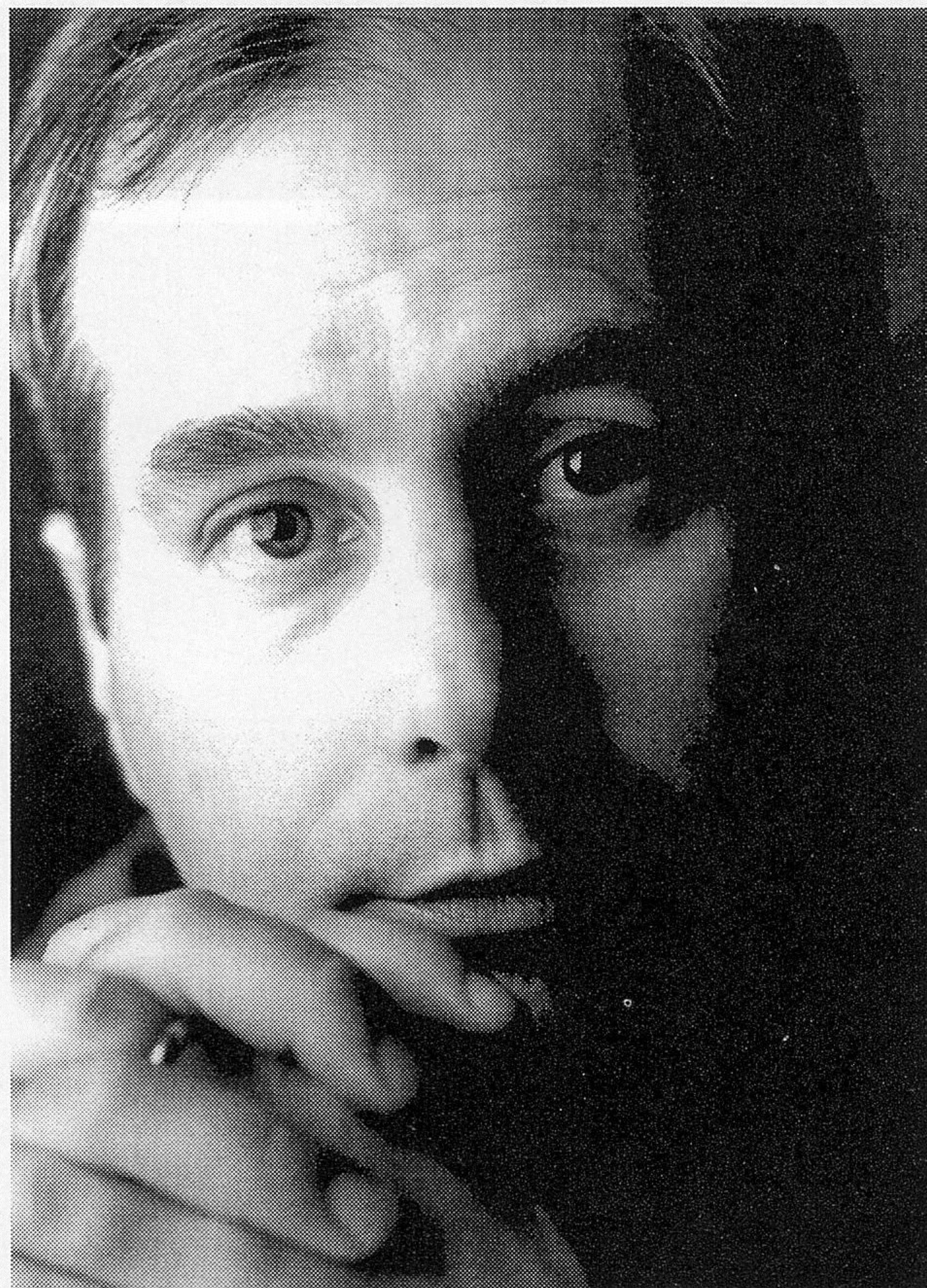


Photo by Susan Johann

What are the challenges of working in a two-character format?

In some ways two-handers are extremely hard plays to write. It's easier to write one character or three characters than two. Three, because you're getting a little variety and you can change the coupling. You can have alternating duets. With a single one, they're free to talk straight to the audience. With two characters, the conversation obviously has to be about something very very involving or you feel like you're watching these two people lob a tennis ball rather softly across the net all night long, which can get very dull. *A Walk in the Woods* [Blessing's 1989 play] was done in

four scenes, and every scene had to be about something very important just having happened that these two people had to talk about, and it had to have a very strong conflict. Otherwise you just get two guys gassing around. ...One of the things I like about *Going to St. Ives*, even though it's only two characters, is that it's very multi-faceted.

How is it multi-faceted?

It involves audiences in a broad number of ways — that if you're afraid to see a political play or that you'll be bored by a political play, this won't feel like a political play. While it uses a lot of humor and plays some familiar entertaining suspenseful games, it's also a play with a lot of substance. It has a powerful theme for women and a powerful theme for men. I have the feeling that, unlike some of my plays, it appeals to a wide spectrum of people. It also continues my tradition of writing about places I've never been, which I think is analogous to this: they say

that to be a terrific translator it's far less important to know the foreign language than it is to know your own. In a sense, I think to write an effective play it's far less important to actually have been somewhere than to know what makes a play live on stage. And I know enough about these places, I've learned enough, that I can take that information and marry it to what can happen productively on stage, without overburdening it with too many details. You learn to find the right proportion of elements — just enough to create a credible world which is still quite fictional but which can't be denied either.

Did you see Cora and May as somehow opposites, or were you looking for similarities between them first?


I always begin with the assumption that we're all human and there are always more similarities than there are differences. In a way one

selects characters with very different backgrounds and very different personalities just because humans are so alike that you need to build in room for conflicts. As in *A Walk in the*

Woods, I have a foreign person (at least from an Anglo-American point of view) who is very sophisticated, very well-educated, *very* worldly, who in a sense educates the person with the Anglo-American point of view through the course of the play. That strategy has definitely been borrowed from *Woods*, but it's interesting to me how almost immediately this play started staking out its own thematic territory. While

there are superficial similarities between the two plays, the minute I selected a theme for two women *St. Ives* became a very different play. It's a *huge* difference from what the men are dealing with. And, too, it's about colonialism rather than a geo-political competition of superpowers.

"This play very quickly became one that wanted to talk a great deal about colonialism and its aftereffects as much as it wanted to talk about the nature of motherhood, the nature of bonding between women..."




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Director's Remarks continued from page 5

future for the American theatre. It's about the message that we send to that future about ourselves: who we were, what we thought was important, and how we thought about our world and our selves. Playwrights are among our most gifted messengers. We've been very privileged to have Lee Blessing here at ACT through the entire rehearsal process and to have been able to support him as he refined and revised this particular message-in a-bottle, which we now cast figuratively into the sea by presenting it to you.

The final crucial ingredient in making a new play is you, the audience. That complicated chemistry created between the words, the actors and the audience is what this art form is all about. Thank you for joining us!

Leslie Swackhamer
Interim Artistic Director



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THE RIDDLE

*As I was going to St. Ives,
I met a man with seven wives.
Each wife had seven sacks,
Each sack held seven cats,
Each cat had seven kits.
Kits, cats, sacks and wives —
How many were going to St. Ives?*



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SUSAN BAIRD TRAPNELL
Managing Director

GREGORY A. FALLS
Founding Director

World Premiere

GOING TO ST. IVES

by Lee Blessing
directed by Leslie Swackhamer

Set Designer	Carey Wong
Costume Designer	Jeanne Arnold
Lighting Designer	Greg Sullivan
Sound Designer	Stephen LeGrand
Dialect Coach	David Morden
Assistant Director	Shannon O'Donnell
Dramaturg	Jeanne Blake
Stage Manager	John Kingsbury

CAST

Dr. Cora Spencer	Mari Nelson
May N'Kame	Gloria Foster

Act I takes place in St. Ives, England.

Act II takes place a year later in a central African nation.

There will be one intermission.




This production is sponsored by **SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION** with additional support from  KeyBank

Cast members belong to Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers. A Contemporary Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres, the American Arts Alliance, the Washington State Arts Alliance, and is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group. This theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Directors and choreographers at ACT are members of the Society of Stage Directors, an independent national labor union.

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.
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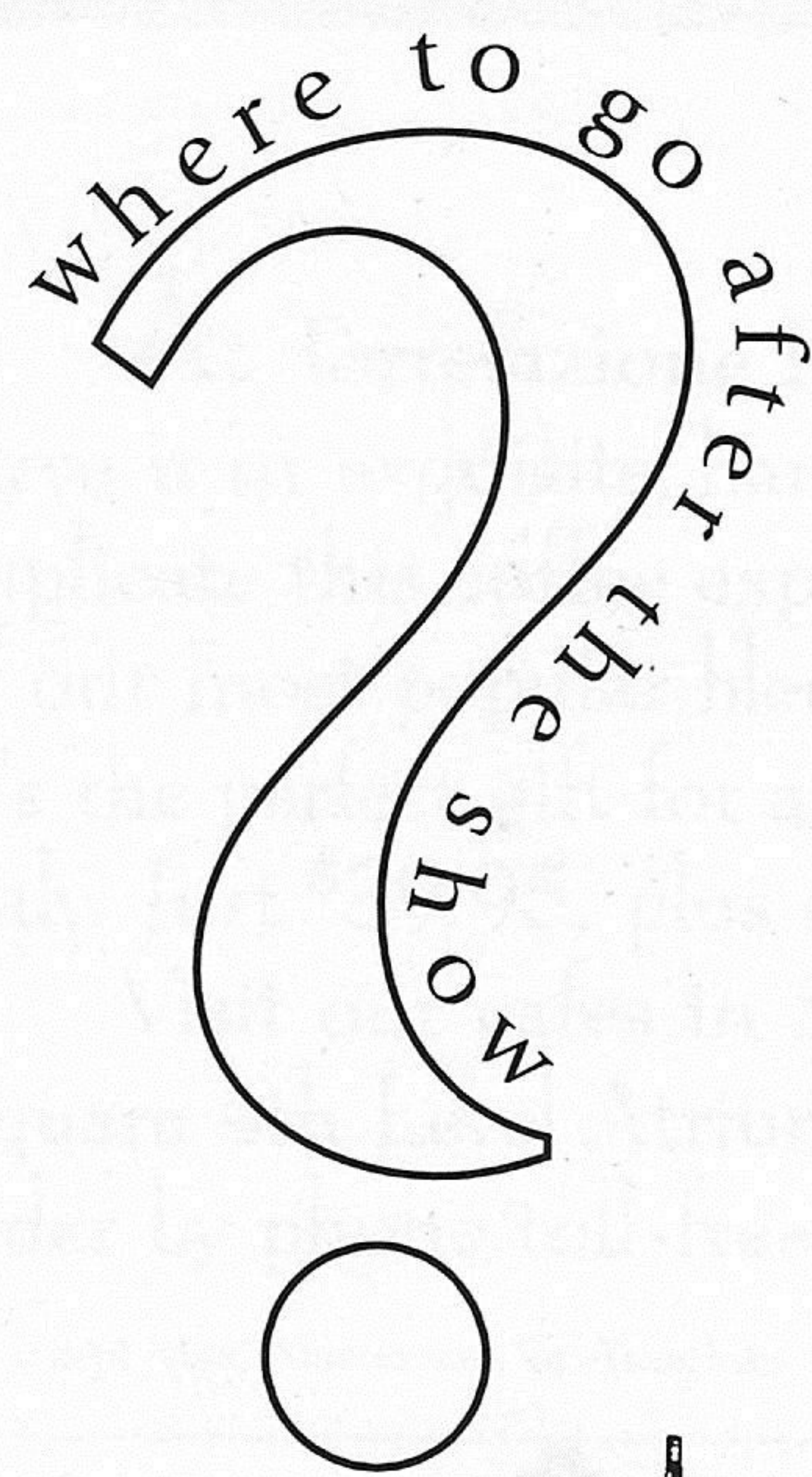
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THE ACTORS



GLORIA FOSTER
May N'Kame

Ms. Foster made her Off-Broadway debut in Martin Duberman's *In White America* for which she received the Drama Desk Award and the first Obie Award presented for Best Performance Off-Broadway. Other Off-Broadway: *Medea* (title role, Theatre World and Obie Awards); *Titania and Hippolyta* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*); *Anna* (Joseph Chaiken's *Trespassing*); *Yerma* (title role, Vivian Beaumont Theatre).

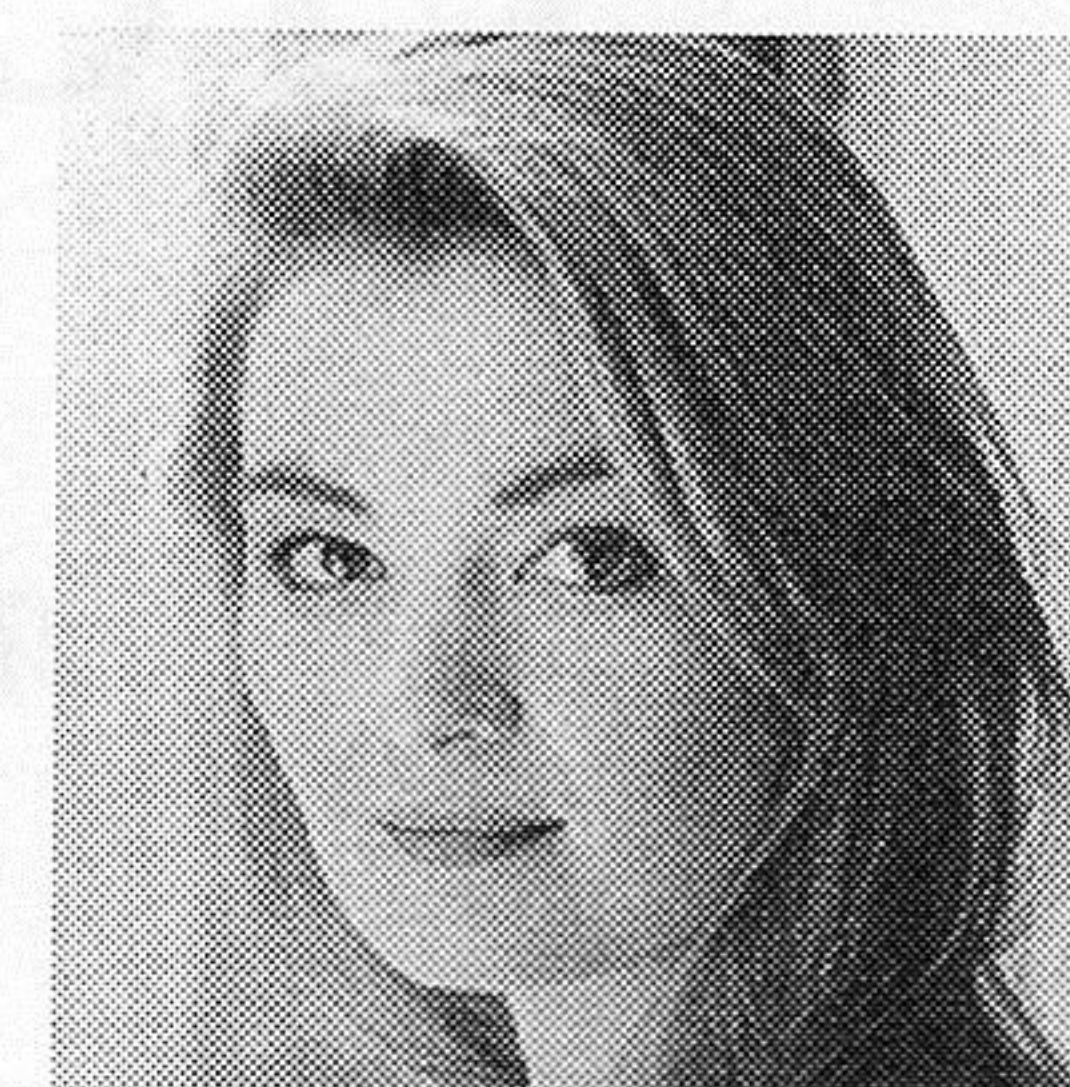
Major roles for the New York Shakespeare Festival include Clytemnestra (Andre Serban's *Agamemnon*, Delacorte); Mother Courage (Ntozake Shange's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, AUDELCO Black Theatre Award); Mme. Ranevskaya (*The Cherry Orchard*); Sonja Sanchez's Sister Sonja—*Black Visions* (AUDELCO Award); the Mother in Adrienne Kennedy's *Movie Stars Have to Star in Black and White*; Volumnia (*Coriolanus*); Mother of the Groom (*Blood Wedding*); Mary Tyrone (*Long Day's Journey into Night*); *An Evening of Negro Poetry and Folk Songs*, later on Broadway as *A Hand is on the Gate*; Miss Molly (Bill Gunn's *The Forbidden City*, directed by Joseph Papp, AUDELCO and Obie Awards).

Major touring, regional, and university roles include Hecuba (*The Trojan Women*); Jocasta (*Oedipus Rex*); Hekabe (*Hekabe*); Ruth Younger (*A Raisin in the Sun*); Andromache (*The Trojan Women*, Circle in the Square production); Asa (*Peer Gynt*); Indra's Daughter (*A Dream Play*). Recently Ms. Foster created the role of Sadie Delany in *Having Our Say* on Broadway.

Her distinguished film career including *The Comedians*, *The File on Jill Hatch*, Shirley Clark's *The Cool World*, Michael Roemer's *Nothing But a Man*, and John Sayles' *City of Hope* has earned her the Public Theatre's Susan Stein Shiva Award, induction into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and membership in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Major television appearances include the Emmy Award-winning films *Separate But Equal*, *To All My Friends on Shore*, *Atlanta Child Murders*, and *Law and Order*.

Ms. Foster trained at the Goodman Theatre School of Drama, received a Master of Education degree from The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, taught master classes at Juilliard and was a visiting professor at Hofstra University in 1990. Ms. Foster received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Hofstra University.



MARI NELSON
Cora Spencer

Ms. Nelson's Broadway credits include Elizabeth in *Six Degrees of Separation*, Sarah in *Guys & Dolls*, and Moira in *Translations*.

Off-Broadway credits include Rowena in *Up Against It* at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, and Olivia in *Twelfth Night* at the New York Shakespeare Festival. She has also performed *The Witch* in Honneger's *King David* with The Orchestra of St. Lukes and The Choir of St. Thomas, Fifth Avenue, New York City. Regional theater includes Sibyl in *Private Lives*, Alley Theater, Houston; Guenevere in *Camelot*, Paper Mill Playhouse, New Jersey; Raina in *Arms & The Man*, Baltimore Center Stage; Joanna in *Present Laughter*, Hartford Stage; Lady Croom in *Arcadia*, Harlequin Productions, Olympia and most recently Quincy Quince in *An American Daughter*, Seattle Repertory Theatre. Mari's TV roles and credits include Ilsa in *One Life to Live*, Brenda in *Another World*, MTV's comedy series *Pirate TV*. Her film credits include *Relationships*, *English Literature* (narrator) and *Bad Girls*. Mari is currently working on the new musical, *Slain In The Spirit* with Taj Mahal under the auspices of The St. Ann's Center for Restoration & The Arts, Brooklyn, New York.

THE DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION STAFF

LESLIE SWACKHAMER
Interim Artistic Director
Director, Going to St. Ives

Leslie co-directed Steven Dietz' *The Nina Variations* and will direct Jon Marans' *Old Wicked Songs*. She has also directed the last two productions of *A Christmas Carol*, as well as *Avenue X* and *Later Life*, and produced ACT's new play development project, FirstACT. As artistic associate for four years at The Cleveland Play House, she developed, directed and dramaturged for the CPH new plays series, DiscoverREADS, the mainstage and the CPH Lab Company. Her productions of Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz* and the premiere of KC Davis' *LOVE & SCIENCE: an AIDS*

Diatribes toured theatres throughout Ohio, and her premiere of David Eliet's *Japanese Ghost Stories* in Bratislava, Slovakia. Leslie has also directed new work for the Intiman Theatre, the Seattle Playwrights Alliance, the Playwright's Center (Minneapolis) and the Cleveland Public Theatre. Numerous world premieres include Paul Monette's *A Country Beyond Tears* (Northern Ohio Live Award of Excellence), Wendy Kesselman's *The Butcher's Daughter* (AT&T Onstage Award) and Anne Harris' *Scenes from the Penitentiary* (Mark Klein Award). Leslie directed the American premiere of Nicholas Wright's *Mrs. Klein*. She produced the U.S. debuts of the National Theatres of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, and an Eastern European Tour by the Cleveland

THE DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION STAFF, *continued*

Play House. She has directed as a guest artist at Case Western Reserve University, the University of Washington, and the University of Southern California. She is the Vice President of Theatre Puget Sound, representing the community of theatres and theatre artists in this region. Once upon a time, she practiced law, representing many entertainment clients. The recipient of a 1996 TCG Observership in new play development, Leslie holds an M.F.A. in directing from the University of Washington and is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. She is married to Ten Eyck Swackhamer, and they reside happily on the non-sliding part of Magnolia.

SUSAN B. TRAPNELL

Managing Director

Susan joined ACT in 1982 as Administrative Manager and became Managing Director in 1989. Susan holds a B.A. in French from the University of North Carolina and attended the University of Lyons in France. She also did graduate work in dance education at George Washington University. Prior to coming to ACT, Susan spent four years with Bill Evans Dance Company/ Dance Theatre Seattle as Educational Director and then General Manager. She served as a UNESCO bilingual aide in Paris and held writing and editing positions in the Washington, DC, area. Other experience includes work with the National Urban League and a teaching position in Algeria. She is the president and past member of the Washington State Arts Alliance, a past member of the King County Arts Commission, a member of the Leadership Tomorrow class of 1992, and a board member of the Downtown Seattle Association. Susan is a native of Arlington, Virginia.

LEE BLESSING

Playwright

The Signature Theater devoted its second season to Lee Blessing's work, a season which included the world premiere of his play *Patient A*. Lee's *A Walk in the Woods* ran on Broadway and was subsequently produced in Moscow and London, where it starred Alec Guinness. It was also seen on PBS' *American Playhouse*.

Lee's plays have premiered at the Manhattan Theatre Club, Yale Repertory Theater and the La Jolla Playhouse among others, and have been nominated for Tony and Olivier Awards as well as the Pulitzer Prize. His play *Eleemosynary* won a 1997 L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award.

Lee's TNT film *Cooperstown*, starring Alan Arkin and Graham Greene, won the Humanitas Prize. He lives with his wife and collaborator Jeanne Blake in Santa Monica. Together they've written episodes for *Homicide: Life on the Streets* and *Picket Fences*, as well as Andrew Davis' film *Steal Big, Steal Little*. They have also completed projects for HBO and Fox-TV.

JEANNE ARNOLD

Costume Designer

Jeanne is pleased to be returning to ACT where her previous projects include *The Revengers' Comedies* and *Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend*. Other design credits include *Hamlet*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and *Hansel Und Gretel* for Seattle Opera, as well as designs for Tacoma Actors Guild, The Group, The Bathhouse Theatre and Village Theatre. Jeanne holds an MFA from the University of Washington and teaches costume design at the University of Puget Sound.

JEANNE BLAKE

Dramaturg

Jeanne has collaborated with Lee Blessing in the development of new plays since 1981. She directed the world premieres of several of his plays, including *Patient A* and *Eleemosynary*. In 1992-93 she directed a season of Blessing's work for the Signature Theatre in New York, and in 1994 won a Drama-Logue award for the direction of his play *Riches* in Los Angeles. As a dramaturg, Jeanne has worked with Des McAnuff at the La Jolla Playhouse and Lynne Meadow at Manhattan Theatre Club. Jeanne directed *Down the Road*, a play she and Blessing recently adapted for HBO, at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's Humana Festival of New Plays. She and her husband currently live in Santa Monica, where they work on stage, film and TV projects.

JOHN KINGSBURY

Stage Manager

John has stage managed at The Old Globe Theatre, The Alley Theatre, PCPA, The Shakespeare Theatre and the Seattle Rep. Productions at ACT include *The Notebook of Trigorin*, *Das Barbecü*, *Cheap*, and *My One Good Nerve* with Ruby Dee. John has also served as production manager at Seattle Rep, and The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger; associate professor at the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee; director for *Greater Tuna* and *Season's Greetings*; and designer for Greek Active's *The Best Man* and *King John*. As a Fulbright recipient, John was also managing director for ART and associated with De Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam. Recently John co-produced Squeaky Quean's production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

STEPHEN LEGRAND

Sound Designer

This is Steve's first production for ACT. His work has previously been heard in Seattle in *The Ballad of Yachiyo* at the Seattle Repertory Theatre and in *Twilight: Los Angeles* at the Intiman. He has worked as both a composer and/or sound designer in theaters throughout

the United States including the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Huntington Theater of Boston, the Mark Taper Forum, the Berkeley Repertory Theater, and the La Jolla Playhouse. He recently moved to Seattle, vacating his position as resident sound designer for the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.

SHANNON O' DONNELL

Assistant Director

Shannon has just graduated with honors from the University of Puget Sound with a degree in the Theatre Arts. At UPS she directed Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, and appeared as Nina in *The Seagull*, winning an Irene Ryan acting nomination. Her directing credits also include *Telling Tales* and *The Glass Menagerie*. She collaborated on UPS productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Lonely Planet*, and developing a new work, *An Evening of Edgar Allen Poe*. She performed in *Dandelion Wine* and several student-directed productions. Shannon designed costumes for the world premiere adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, and has designed six other student productions. Her design mentor is Jeanne Arnold whom she assisted at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival.

DAVID MORDEN

Dialect Coach

This is David's second collaboration with ACT as dialect coach, having worked on last year's *A Christmas Carol*. David is co-producer for Greek Active/Squeaky Queen Productions where he recently directed *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. As an actor, he has performed at ACT (*Sunsets and Glories*), The Shakespeare Theatre and the Utah and Colorado Shakespearean Festivals, among others. He has taught acting (University of Washington), served as dialect coach (Civic Light Opera, University of Washington, Encore Playhouse), makeup artist (Seattle Opera, Pacific Northwest Ballet), and fight captain (Utah Shakespearean festival, University of Washington).

GREG SULLIVAN

Lighting Designer

Greg recently designed lighting for ACT productions of *Man of the Moment* and *The Crimson Thread*. Other work includes *The Odyssey*, *Bunnicula*, *A Wrinkle In Time*, *Alice In Wonderland*, *Naomi's Road*, *Sara Crewe*, and *The Witch Of Blackbird Pond* at the Seattle Children's Theatre; *Harvey*, *Scapin*, *Voir Dire*, *Eye Of God*, and *The Cider House Rules* at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Peter Pan*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Intiman Theatre Company; *Otello*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Alcina* for Los Angeles Music Center Opera; *Carmen* for Houston Grand Opera; *Iolanthe* for Glimmerglass Opera;

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PRODUCTION STAFF

ABOUT KREIELSHEIMER PLACE

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Macbeth and *Good* at the American Conservatory Theatre; *Richard III* for the late John Houseman at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego; and an epic production of *East of Eden* for Jon Jory at Actors Theatre of Louisville.

CAREY WONG

Set Designer

Carey has designed shows for the Berkeley Rep, Portland Center Stage, The Portland Rep, and locally for Intiman, ACT, Seattle Children's Theatre, The Empty Space, The Group, Tacoma Actors Guild and the Seattle Opera. He was resident designer of Portland Opera for eight years, Opera Memphis for two seasons, and is currently in his 14th season at Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts, where he is also Director of Productions. Regional opera credits include designs for the San Francisco Opera Center, New York's Valhalla Wagnerfest, Charleston's Spoleto Festival, Pittsburgh Opera, Vancouver Opera, and Anchorage Opera. Upcoming designs include *Pink and Say* for the Seattle's Children's Theatre, *Twelfth Night* for Tacoma Actor's Guild, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* for Portland's Musical Theatre Company, and *La Cenerentola* for Wildwood Park's 25th Anniversary Season in 1998. Carey is a graduate of Yale College and attended the Yale School of Drama. Previous set designs for ACT were *Fish Head Soup* and *Holy Ghosts*.



Kreielsheimer Place was built in 1925 as the national headquarters, or Aerie #1, of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. Designed by local architect and engineer Henry Bittman, the Eagles Building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. One year later it was designated a Seattle Landmark to recog-

nize its important role in local heritage. Decades of neglect took its toll on some of its cosmetic features, but by 1993 it was judged to be structurally sound and experts determined it could be restored as a public facility.

The renovation by ACT and its partner, Seattle Housing Resources Group (SHRG) received the approval of the National Park Service, the government agency that has jurisdiction over historic buildings. It saved the terra cotta exterior of the building and all but one of the interior historic landmark features. The building now holds a thrust theatre, an arena theatre and a cabaret space, as well as providing 44 units of much-needed downtown affordable housing. ACT opened Kreielsheimer Place in September 1996.

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