

# THE LEAN HOUSE by Sarah Ruhl Directed by Allison Narver

2007 Season

### The Clean House

By Sarah Ruhl March 30 – April 29

### Souvenir

By Stephen Temperley May 11 – June 10

### **Stuff Happens**

By David Hare June 22 – July 22

### First Class

By David Wagoner July 27 – August 26

### The Mojo and the Sayso

By Aishah Rahman August 31 – September 30

### The Women

By Clare Boothe Luce October 5 – November 11 Kurt Beattie

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ACT Theatre presents

## THE LEAN HOUSE

### by Sarah Ruhl

**Directed by Allison Narver** 

March 30 - April 29, 2007

Opening Night April 5, 2007

Seasonal support provided by:









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Support for The Clean House provided by:

The Nesholm Family Foundation



The Clean House is produced by special arrangement with Bruce Ostler, BRET ADAMS, LTD., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036.

World Premiere produced by
Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut
James Bundy, Artistic Director; Victoria Nolan, Managing Director

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A large print version of the Program is available from the house staff.

ACT is a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the American Arts Alliance and Theatre Puget Sound, and is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group. ACT is also a member of the Downtown Seattle Association.

### WELCOME TO ACT



I couldn't be happier or more excited to welcome everyone to ACT's 2007 season, which promises to be an artistic feast with something to suit all palates. We begin with what may well be the most acclaimed new play of the last two years, Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House*.

In many ways, *The Clean House* epitomizes the kind of play ACT was created to present, and that our audiences come to us to experience. It is a new work by a very young, remarkably gifted writer, with a unique and original voice; it has an inherently theatrical sensibility, reveling in the ways that the stage allows the mystical

blurring of time and space; and, most importantly, it gently invites us to consider the world we find ourselves living in, and our relationship to it and to each other. It is a play about the art of living as richly as we can in the present tense we are given.

As we watch a global situation that seems to spiral faster every day towards chaos, it is human nature (and perhaps a particularly American impulse, as well) to combat the anxiety we feel by imposing as much order and clarity as we can on our personal spheres of existence. But Sarah Ruhl reminds us that in our individual lives, order is too often the enemy of true emotional experience and connection; it is in the moments of maximum "messiness" that we feel most profoundly the richness and color and variety of life. It is the pain we go through that makes our joy the more intense, the losses we suffer that make what we find the more precious. And it is through our power to forgive, to acknowledge the pain of betrayal or loss and to transcend it anyway, that we confer some magic of our own on the people who matter to us.

I know the extraordinary women of *The Clean House*, and the voice of their extraordinary creator, will live in your minds long after the play is done—which is the only eternity theatre knows. Welcome back to the theatrical home we share. May it always be gloriously and rewardingly untidy!

Kurt Beattie

Artistic Director

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### This season. Only at ACT - A Contemporary Theatre.



## SOUVENIR

by Stephen Temperley
Directed by R. Hamilton Wright

May 11 - June 10 (206) 292-7676, acttheatre.org

700 Union St, downtown Seattle

### **Stuff Happens**

By David Hare June 22 – July 22

### First Class

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### The Mojo and the Sayso

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### The Women

By Clare Boothe Luce October 5 – November 11



In your life. In our name. And on our stage.

### THE COMPANY

### CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Anne Allgood Virginia

Lane

Suzanne Bouchard

Lanc

Christine Calfas

Matilde

Allen Fitzpatrick

Charles/Man

Priscilla Hake Lauris

Ana/Woman

### PRODUCTION TEAM

Allison Narver

Director

Matthew Smucker

Scenic Designer

Frances Kenny

Costume Designer

Michael Wellborn

Lighting Designer

Eric Chappelle

Sound Designer/Composer

Wade Madsen

Choreographer

Judith Shahn

Dialect Coach

Jeffrey K. Hanson

Stage Manager

Nora Menkin

Assistant Stage Manager

Richard Schaefer

Assistant Lighting Designer

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Audience members are cordially reminded to silence all electronic devices such as cell phones, watch alarms, and pagers prior to the performance.

All forms of photography and the use of recording devices are strictly prohibited.

Please do not walk on the stage before, during or after the show.

ACT operates under agreements with the following:





The Director and Choreographer are members of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



"It is man alone who laughs; he alone suffers so deeply that he had to invent laughter."

-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

"I WOTTY sometimes that we're apt to confuse Forgiveness with Forgetfulness. The potency of forgiveness comes precisely from the fact that it must be done while being goaded by an unhappy memory."

-Patrick Gale

s a director, it's both thrilling and daunting to be given a play that Lyou're completely in love with. I think you'll find that *The Clean* House is an extraordinary play that both breaks theatrical rules and redefines them with grace, elegance, and wonderful wit.

I have admired Sarah Ruhl's work for many years and think that she represents the best of an extraordinary group of the next generation of writers who are aggressively reclaiming American Theater as their own.

In Ruhl's metaphysical version of a Connecticut home, normal boundaries dissolve as the practical world begins to merge with a fantastical one and create its own unique logic. What results is a world that is both epic and intimate as she vividly juxtaposes the mundane with issues of life, death, love and forgiveness.

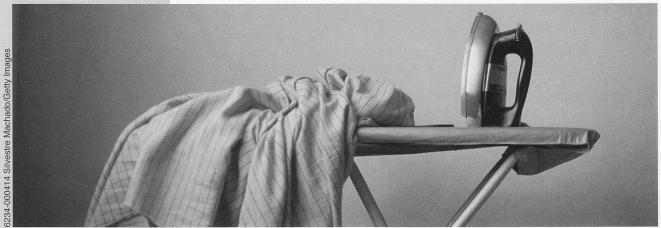
To me, this is a marvelous piece of magical realism—a mythic story that takes place in a surreal, absurd and ultimately sympathetic universe.

In the first half of the play we see characters who have submerged their passionate selves, living their lives in an antiseptic and controlled world. But very often the best things in life are messy, complicated and filled with contradictions. As these characters allow life with all of its complexity, ambiguity and contradictions to come bellowing into their own lives, new and rich colors begin to emerge. These colors represent the unpredictability and pleasure of living life with passion, good jokes and a bossa nova beat.

> -Allison Narver, director of The Clean House

We two alone will sing like birds in the cage. when thou dost ask my blessing, I'll kneel down And ask of thee forgiveness; so we'll live, And pray and sing and tell old tales...

from Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl





## SPIRITUAL CLEANLINESS

### An Interview with The Clean House Playwright Sarah Ruhl

By Pamela Renner

### What was your inspiration or the first image in your head when you started writing *The Clean House*?

I was at a party full of doctors. A doctor walked in and said: "It's been such a hard month. My cleaning lady from Brazil is depressed, and I took her to the hospital and had her medicated, and she still won't clean. And in the meantime, I've been cleaning my house. And I'm sorry, but I didn't go to medical school to clean my own house." I was fascinated and horrified by the political and cultural implications of the speech, but also by how transparently the woman laid out her case. It became the first monologue in the play. I think the play was originally more political, but as I wrote it, it became less and less like a political treatise and more and more about the vast psychological expanses involved with cleaning. The play became more of a meditation on the clean and the dirty.

### Is your house clean? I hope you don't mind my asking.

No, I love that question. It's often not clean. We often dismiss the question of cleaning, as if it were something trivial, but if you really start talking to people about their relationship to cleaning, it reveals so much about our attitudes towards death and mortality and decay.

### Is *clean* a feminist issue, in the same way that *fat* is a feminist issue?

Yes, absolutely. Traditionally women are assigned the role of cleaning up after men, and even in a household where both partners work, it's still often considered the woman's job to clean up after men. There was actually an article in the *New York Times* where they measured how much time working men and women spend cleaning, and women spend twice as much time on household chores. So it's actually quantified now. If they can afford it, people wiggle out of the problem by hiring someone else to clean—so you have a gender problem, and then a class problem on top of it.

### What about the character Matilde? It's not just that she hates cleaning, is it? It seems she has the gift of comedy, and cleaning just isn't important to her.

When Matilde started talking to me, it was clear that she wasn't really depressed, but that she just hated to clean. Then I realized that she loved to make up jokes.

### Is there a relationship between death and humor for you? After all, in the play, a number of characters actually die laughing.

Yes. I remember when my father had bone cancer, humor was an incredibly important release for everyone. The humor allowed us to be one step removed from the suffering. My father had a gift for that—he made jokes up until the last minute.

I remember, at a talk-back after a reading of *The Clean House*, a woman approached me with this story. She'd had surgery, and when she was under anesthetic she had one of those near-death experiences. She was moving toward a place full of all the people she loved, which

is fairly typical—but in her case they were all laughing, as if there was some kind of cosmic joke she couldn't hear. I loved the idea that the end might involve a sublime joke.

### Do you write and clean in cycles?

Yes. I'll be in the middle of a project and my room will be extremely chaotic, and then, before I start a new project, everything has to be restored to order. I think it's something about keeping entropy at bay. Cleaning is emotional surgery.

I was so interested to hear that the classical definition of surgery is: to keep separate that which should remain separate and to conjoin that which should be conjoined. In a way, cleaning is an act of separation. You're marking time. You're throwing out old stuff, separating your new magazines from your old ones, your dust from your lemon-scented Pledge.

### I have some friends who are studying to be doctors, and they never clean their houses.

Well, doctors don't. Doctors really can't be responsible for their own mess. And I think it's interesting because they're dealing with the decay of the human body constantly at work, but they're totally sheltered from it themselves—psychologically, physically, everything.

When I was at Brown, I met a woman named Dijana Milosevic from the theatre collective "DAH" in Belgrade. Before we started our workshop, we would clean the floors with mops. We'd have bare feet. And there was something about wiping the floor before getting on stage that felt very important. I think it's no accident that different religious practices have certain ritual cleanings. From washing your hands before Sabbath to cleaning the space of the theatre, there's something about our relationship to sacred and secular spaces that has to do with washing.

### That makes me think of the Noh theatre I once visited in Kyoto. It was so clean it felt like a sacred space.

Yeah, and you can't get that when you hire someone to clean your house. Because they don't really care—and why should they?—if your house glows with a spiritual cleanliness.

### Your characters speak very straightforwardly in this play. Can you tell me what you were striving for in terms of the "cleanliness" of the text?

I don't really know how to explain it, except that I wrote poetry before I started writing plays, so I think there was always for me a sense of the line being clean. It has to do with where the subtext is, I think—the subtext is not below the line, but sort of parallel to the line, if that makes sense. Finding a simplicity is the key.

This interview is reprinted courtesy of American Theatre magazine, where it appeared in November 2004.

ACT THEATRE

### WHO'S WHO



ANNE ALLGOOD

(Virginia)
has appeared at
ACT in Vincent in
Brixton (as Ursula),
Miss Witherspoon (in
the title role), and A
Christmas Carol (as

Mrs. Cratchit). On Broadway, she appeared in Carousel, The Sound of Music, The Most Happy Fella, Imaginary Friends and Beauty and the Beast. She has toured the U.S. in Urinetown, Floyd Collins, Parade, Evita, and more. Anne's Seattle credits include Bad Dates, The Constant Wife (Seattle Rep); Cymbeline (Intiman); Company, Gypsy, The Secret Garden (5th Avenue); and Sleeping Beauty (Seattle Children's Theatre). Regionally, she has appeared in Candide, Jane Eyre, Tintypes, A Little Night Music and Das Barbecül, to name a few, at theatres nationwide including the Goodman, La Jolla, Old Globe, Asolo and Guthrie.



### SUZANNE BOUCHARD

(Lane) most recently had the great fortune to play daughter Regan to Denis Arndt's King Lear at Kansas City

Rep. Last season at Intiman, she played Queen Margaret in *Richard III* and Lady Utterword in *Heartbreak House*. She is tickled to work with Allison Narver again, who once actually let her dodge a mobile in *Valley of the Dolls*. Other favorite roles include Amanda in *Private Lives*, Lina Szczepanowska in *Misalliance*, Hannah Jelkes in *The Night of the Iguana*, Charlotte in *A Little Night Music*, and her perennial favorite, Karen Knightly in Ayckbourn's *The Revengers' Comedies*.

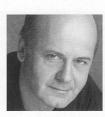


### CHRISTINE CALFAS

(Matilde)
debuted at ACT as
Maryamma in Miss
Witherspoon, and is
delighted to return to
Seattle. Her Portland

credits include Lina in Misalliance, Cordelia in King Lear, Philomel in O Lovely Glowworm, Nina in The Seagull, Eurydice/Aphrodite in Metamorphosis, Seta in Beast on the Moon, Elizabeth in Richard III, Laura in The Glass Menagerie, Rosalind in As You Like It, Anna in Burn This, and Electra in Libation Bearers. At Shakespeare & Co. in Lenox,

Massachusetts, she played Titania in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Jessica in The Merchant of Venice, and Jaquenetta in Love's Labor's Lost. Christine has produced and performed two full-length solo pieces: Sappho's Arrow and Sounding Hekate. She is a Fulbright scholar in Odissi Classical dance, and a dedicated disciple of Guru Surendra Nath Jena of New Delhi.



### ALLEN FITZPATRICK

(Charles/Man)
has appeared locally in
Proof (TAG), Richard
III (Intiman), Private
Lives (Seattle Rep),
and starred as Sweeney

in Sweeney Todd (5th Avenue Theatre, Footlight Award). Broadway credits include Les Misérables, 42nd Street, The Sweet Smell of Success, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Damn Yankees, The Scarlet Pimpernel, Passion (in concert), and The Boys from Syracuse. Allen's national tours include Six Degrees of Separation, Aspects of Love, Guys & Dolls, Elmer Gantry, Whistle Down the Wind (directed by Hal Prince), and Sunset Boulevard opposite Petula Clark. Seven feature films include Kissing Jessica Stein, and on TV he's often seen on Law & Order. He created roles in 12 off-Broadway plays, and has appeared in 138 roles in regional theatres. Allen is the founder of Icicle Creek Theatre Festival (Leavenworth), and recently directed The Exonerated (Everett) and Sea Marks (off-Broadway). www.allenfitzpatrick.com



### PRISCILLA HAKE LAURIS

(Ana/Woman)
has appeared at ACT
in A Christmas Carol
and The Marriage of
Bette and Boo. Priscilla's
favorite leading roles

with other theatres are Truffles in the Soup (Seattle Rep); Laughing Wild (Empty Space, Milwaukee Rep); Driving Miss Daisy, Quilters and Belle of Amherst (TAG). Highlights from four seasons with Oregon Shakespeare Festival include What the Butler Saw (Drama-Logue Award), Blithe Spirit, Three Sisters, Henry V, Three Penny Opera, Ah, Wilderness!, Hamlet and Crimes of the Heart. Recent activities include musical workshops with Village Originals, recording Scott Warrender's Plexiglass Slipper, and modeling jobs in Alaska and China. Priscilla still receives residuals from her tiny movie role as

Dean Wormer's secretary in *Animal House*. Her theatrical Lauris-Collins family and 101-year-old mother keep her energized and laughing.

SARAH RUHL (Playwright) has written The Clean House (Pulitzer Prize finalist, 2005; Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, 2004); Passion Play, a cycle; Dead Man's Cellphone; Melancholy Play; Eurydice; Orlando; and Late: a cowboy song. Her plays have been produced at Lincoln Center Theater, Goodman Theatre, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, South Coast Rep, Yale Rep, Berkeley Rep, Wilma Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Madison Rep and Piven Theatre, among others. Her plays have also been produced in London, Germany, Australia, Canada and Israel, and have been translated into Polish, Russian, Spanish, Norwegian, Korean and German. Ruhl received her MFA from Brown University where she studied with Paula Vogel. In 2003, she received the Helen Merrill Emerging Playwrights Award and the Whiting Writers' Award. She is a member of 13P and New Dramatists, and recently won the MacArthur Fellowship.

ALLISON NARVER (Director) was artistic director at the Empty Space for five seasons, where she directed the world premieres of BUST, 1984, Vera Wilde, G-d Doesn't Pay Rent Here, Texarkana Waltz and Valley of the Dolls. As the artistic director of Annex Theatre, her productions included world premieres of The Fatty Arbuckle Spook House Revue, Radio Pirates, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, I See London, I See France, and Bessemer's Spectacles. Allison was the resident director for Julie Taymor's The Lion King on Broadway, and directed off-Broadway productions of Texarkana Waltz (Kirk Theater) and Leaving Queens (Women's Project). Recent and upcoming regional credits include 100 Dresses (Seattle Children's Theatre); I Am My Own Wife, Memory House, Bad Dates (Seattle Rep); BUST (Boise Contemporary Theater); Little Women (Book-It); and Leaving Queens (Portland Stage Company). She earned her MFA in directing from Yale University, where she served as artistic director of the Yale Cabaret.

MATTHEW SMUCKER (Scenic Designer) is pleased to return to ACT, where previous designs include *The Pillowman, Wine in the Wilderness, Flight, Bach at Leipzig, The Ugly American, Jumpers* and *Black Coffee.* Matthew's work has appeared locally at



### WHO'S WHO

Seattle Rep, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Book-It, Empty Space, Village Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild, and Youth Theatre NW; and nationally at Portland Center Stage, San Jose Rep, Kansas City Rep, and Childsplay Theatre in Tempe, AZ. Matthew was a founding ensemble member of Deus X Machina (DXM), and was a longtime company member and resident designer with Annex Theatre. He is an adjunct faculty member in the fine arts department at Seattle University, and received his MFA in scenic design from the University of Washington School of Drama.

FRANCES KENNY (Costume Designer) began her career in the fashion industry and fell in love with theatre costume design when returning to the University of Oregon to study art history and art. Her work has been seen at ACT in Miss Witherspoon, Born Yesterday, Enchanted April and The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?. She has also designed locally for Intiman, Seattle Rep, Seattle Children's Theatre, On the Boards, House of Dames, Empty Space, and the Pat Graney Dance Company. Regionally, she has designed for Denver Center Theatre Company, Mark Taper Forum, Honolulu Theatre for Youth, Long Wharf Theatre, San Jose Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Arizona Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and on Broadway. When not working in the theatre, Frances styles wardrobe for local and national commercials, photo shoots and corporate media.

MICHAEL WELLBORN (Lighting Designer) is pleased to return to ACT for The Clean House. Previous designs at ACT include The Night of the Iguana, Bach at Leipzig, Avenue X, Das Barbecü! and A Christmas Carol (for 11 years). Michael has also designed lighting for Portland Center Stage, Seattle Rep, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild, Tacoma Opera, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, and the American University in Cairo (Egypt), where, as you read this, he is lighting Guys & Dolls. Michael is also on the faculty of the University of Washington Dance Program. With Spectrum Dance Theater and the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, his designs for dance have toured the US, Mexico, Northern Europe and Southeast Asia.

ERIC CHAPPELLE (Sound Designer/ Composer) has designed The Underpants, Bach at Leipzig, Fiction, A Christmas Carol, Omnium-Gatherum, Side Man and The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia? at ACT, where he also played violin for Goblin Market, fiddled for Das Barbecü, and composed music and designed sound for The Crimson Thread. His other work includes sound designs and compositions for Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman, Empty Space, Northwest Asian American Theatre, Bathhouse Theatre, Northwest Actors Studio, Belltown Theatre Center, Kaleidoscope Dance Company and Co-Motion Dance. Most recently, he was an onstage musician in Buddy at the 5th Avenue Theatre. Eric's Music for Creative Dance series of compact discs is used by dance educators internationally.

WADE MADSEN (Choreographer) has received choreographic fellowships from the NEA (1994 and 1996), King County and Artist Trust. He has also received grants from Seattle Arts Commission and Washington State Arts Commission, along with Art Matters and the Bossak/Heilbron Foundation. Wade is currently teaching for the 21st year at Cornish College of the Arts, where he is a professor of dance. His work has been seen at ACT, Seattle Rep, Seattle Opera and House of Dames. Wade's company, Wade Madsen and Dancers, has been producing and performing in Seattle since 1979.

JUDITH SHAHN (Dialect Coach) has coached dozens of productions in and around the Northwest, including Woman in Mind, The Night of the Iguana, A Number, and ten productions of A Christmas Carol at ACT. Other credits include Native Son, The Grapes of Wrath, Our Town, Singing Forest, Homebody/Kabul, Blue/Orange, The Kentucky Cycle, Angels in America, Candida (Intiman); Private Lives, The Constant Wife, The Chosen, The Shaughran, London Suite and The Sisters Rosensweig (Seattle Rep). She has also coached at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Utah Shakespearean Festival, and Shakespeare & Co. Judith has been the voice/dialects teacher for the UW graduate program since 1990.

JEFFREY K. HANSON (Stage Manager) stage managed his first production at ACT, Lloyd's Prayer, in 1990. Now in his 18<sup>th</sup> season, he has stage managed over 40 ACT productions including A Number, Wine in the Wilderness, The Pillowman, Flight, The Night of the Iguana, Bach at Leipzig, Alki, Jumpers, Fiction, Absurd Person Singular, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Fully Committed, Mourning

Becomes Electra, Yellowman, Fuddy Meers, and A Christmas Carol the past five seasons. Other highlights include Grand Magic, Big Love, Dinner with Friends, Waiting to Be Invited, A Skull in Connemara, Quills, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, The Gospel at Colonus, Halyon Days, The Illusion and The Revengers' Comedies. Outside of ACT, Jeffrey has stage managed at Seattle Rep on productions such as Metamorphoses and The Cider House Rules, Parts I and II, and on productions at Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman, Arizona Theatre Company and New Mexico Rep.

NORA MENKIN (Assistant Stage Manager) most recently worked on A Christmas Carol, The Underpants and Mitzi's Abortion at ACT, where in past seasons she has been the production assistant on Born Yesterday, Vincent in Brixton and A Christmas Carol. Around town, Nora has worked on Honus & Me, The Magic City (Seattle Children's Theatre); The Mystery of Irma Vep, The Play's the Thing, Blue/Orange (Intiman); The Chosen and The O'Connor Girls (Seattle Rep).



KURT BEATTIE (Artistic Director) has been ACT's artistic director since 2003, where he has directed The Underpants, Mitzi's Abortion, The Pillowman, Vincent in

Brixton, Bach at Leipzig, A Christmas Carol, Black Coffee, Alki, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Fuddy Meers and Fully Committed, as well as Via Dolorosa during ACT's 2000 Bullitt season. Elsewhere he has directed Things Being What They Are, Art and True West at Seattle Rep, as well as productions at Empty Space, Intiman, University of Washington, Milwaukee Rep and Alley Theatre. He has served as a dramaturg and director at Ojai New Play Festival, the New Works Festival at Mark Taper Forum, and South Coast Rep's Pacific Playwrights Festival. In 2007, he will direct three evenings of readings for Town Hall's Short Stories Live series.



JOLANNE STANTON (Managing Director) was appointed Managing Director in 2007 and brings to ACT a passion for building active communities in the

arts, education and social arenas. As an ACT Trustee, Jolanne recently developed a strategic

### WHO'S WHO

plan that will guide the theatre into the next decade. She was previously a founding principal of eAdvancement.org, serving non-profit institutions in the areas of development, member relations, communications, operations and strategic planning. For Princeton University, she developed an award-winning online community for higher education. In addition, Jolanne has worked with *Business Week*, Scribners, Greater Good, the Japan-America

Society and Campus Pipeline. She has been an active volunteer in the Seattle community, where she helped create arts and cultural programming for Lakeside School, Mercer Island schools, and Seattle Art Museum, Prior to arriving in Seattle in 1985, Jolanne was a marketing consultant in Singapore. She graduated cum laude from Princeton University in Art History with special emphasis in French, Theatre and Dance.

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Portuguese Coaching

Melissa Kallstrom

Marta Olson

Stitchers

Joy Brooke Fairfield

Assistant to the Director

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