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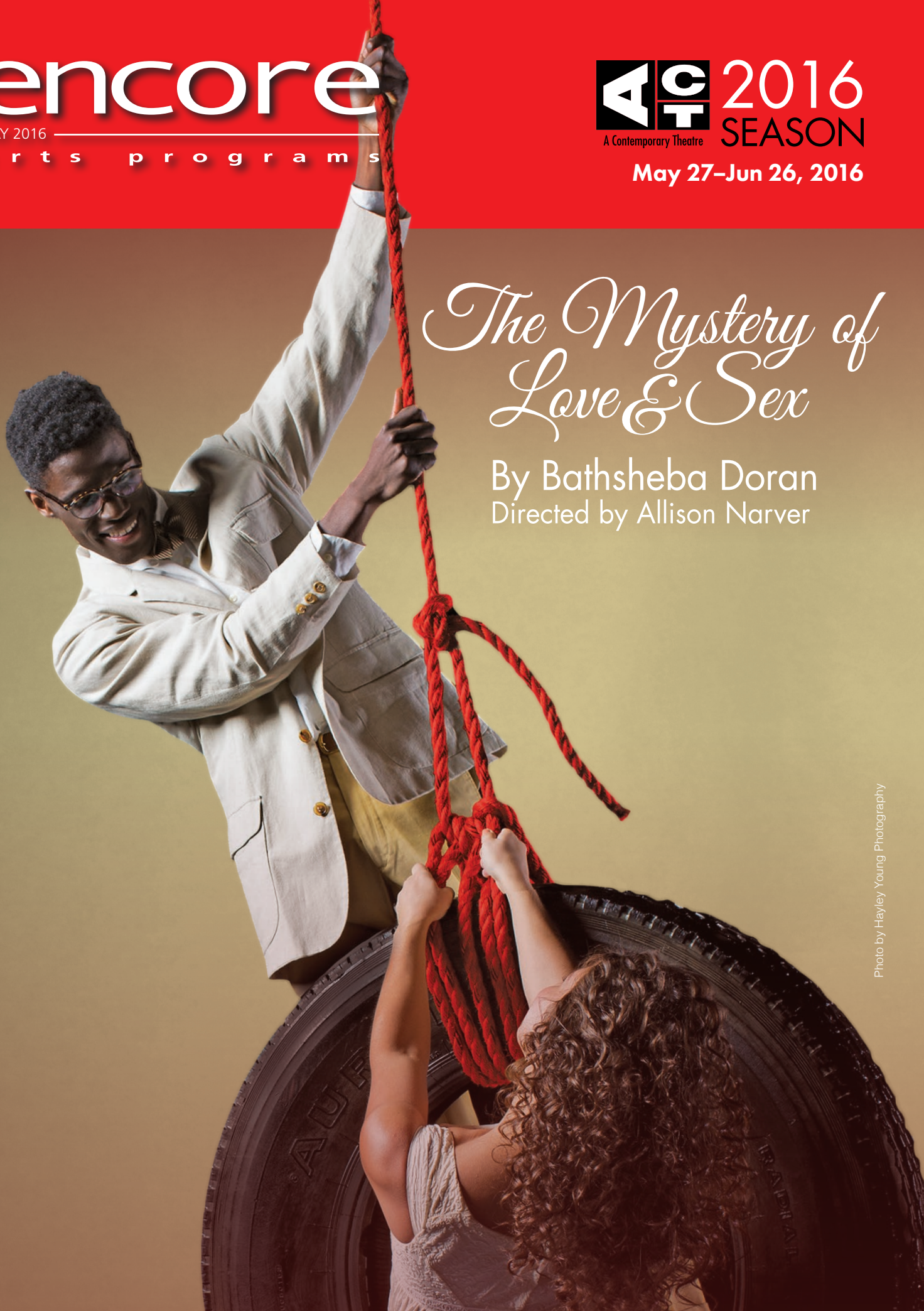
## 2016 SEASON

May 27–Jun 26, 2016


# *The Mystery of Love & Sex*

By Bathsheba Doran  
Directed by Allison Narver

Photo by Hayley Young Photography







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Q &amp; A with

## Sarah Rose Davis

The actor on singalong music, “second breakfast” and knowing yourself.

BY BRETT HAMIL

Sarah Rose Davis is an actor and Seattle native with a BFA in musical theatre from The Boston Conservatory who began her career in the Village Theatre’s KIDSTAGE program. In 2014 Davis successfully tackled Barbra Streisand’s signature role as Fanny Brice in Village’s *Funny Girl*, for which the Seattle Times called her “highly appealing.” You may have seen Davis at the 5th Avenue Theatre as Maggie in *A Chorus Line*, Frenchy in *Grease* and at least 15 other shows there. Most recently, she played the role of Rosemary Pilkington in their production of *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

### What’s the best performance you’ve seen lately?

*Come From Away* at Seattle Rep. It was beyond brilliant. It was captivating, intense, humorous, and had me completely enthralled. It’s totally my kind of theatrical experience, both as an audience member and a performer myself. It’s ensemble-driven—the whole cast was involved and onstage working together almost the entire show. The music was new and exhilarating with incredible rhythmic movement. The story, about a small

town in Canada whose population doubled overnight when 38 planes were re-routed there on September 11th, was intense yet surprisingly relatable.

It was a show about human experience, about amazing strangers who were forced to work through an incredibly difficult time together. I could go on and on about this show! I love seeing new and inspiring theater in Seattle especially when I have so many friends involved in the process!

The best movie I’ve seen recently was a Disney Pixar animated short called *Lava*. Oh man, watch it. Disney tears.

### What’s the best meal in Seattle?

I have to admit I’m not much of a foodie—not that I don’t LOVE food. I do, really. I’m just not good at finding all the cool places in Seattle to eat. I am, however, a huge breakfast person and a huge proponent of second breakfast as well. Sometimes one breakfast simply is not enough. My two favorite breakfast spots are The 5 Point Cafe and Brave Horse Tavern.

I could eat breakfast all day long. My boyfriend often makes amazing breakfasts as well. He can throw anything into an egg scramble and it is delicious.

*continued on page 4*

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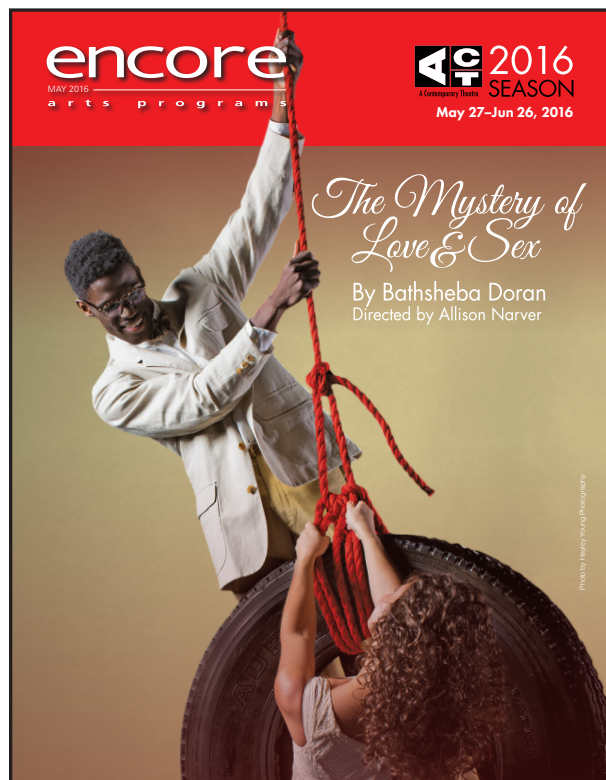
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## The Mystery of Love & Sex **A1**

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### ENCORE ARTS NEWS

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## Sara Rose Davis, continued

### What music gets you pumped up? What do you listen to when you're sad?

I love to listen to music I can sing along to. This usually means a female singer or high tenor—I've found that if I cannot comfortably sing along and belt out the songs, I won't really get that into it. I love listening to an album until I know absolutely every single word. Before my shows right now I've been listening to Demi Lovato. She's incredible and her range is outrageous.

I've also just barely started to scratch the surface on Lin-Manuel Miranda's new show, *Hamilton*, and I know how obsessed I'm going to be with it shortly.

If I need some completely calming music when I'm feeling a little down, I listen to Carole King's *Tapestry* (brilliant), which I belt out with joy, or Colbie Caillat's album *Breakthrough*.

### What's the most crucial element of any production?

There are a million crucial elements that contribute to a successful production: story, casting, direction, production design, acting, etc., which is why I would say that communication is the most important element for a production to work. Let's assume that the story is already worth telling, which is why someone has decided to theatricalize it. For the production to be a success, everyone involved in the process needs to be on board in telling the SAME story, whether that be through the lights, costumes, sets or character relationships.


Whenever I am in a really successful production—and of course we could have a really long conversation about the definition of a successful production—I always attribute that success to awesome

communication from everyone involved, both on the creative team and as part of the cast. For *How To Succeed*, I felt that our director, Bill Berry, was really great at making sure everyone was telling the same story and we were all living in the same world from set design to costume design and musical direction. Same world, same story. To me that is the key.

### What's the most useful thing anyone's ever taught you about working in theatre?

Be yourself and keep learning. Keep learning about the arts and about yourself. Theater is an incredibly strange world in which you have to know so much about yourself that you can then completely lose yourself within a character. I don't mean hide yourself behind a character, because you need the personal connection in order to fully transform into this person, but if you don't understand who you are as a human, artist, friend, lover, daughter, etc., it's impossible to approach a character with any sort of authenticity.

It's really easy, especially in a musical theatre BFA program, to lose yourself in a million suggestions, but ultimately YOU have to decide which pieces of advice to follow. I have tattoos and currently have blue hair—never thought I could do that in theater with auditions as frequent as they are but then I decided: Why not?

I've also been told to never stop learning about your craft. I continue to study voice and I push myself to take more dance classes and improve my skills. I'm sure I could articulate more clearly, but as I understand it now, this is the best way I know how to share the advice I've been given. I am still learning. 



John Langs  
*Artistic Director*

Carlo Scandiuzzi  
*Executive Director*

Becky Witmer  
*Managing Director*

ACT – A Contemporary Theatre presents

# The Mystery of Love & Sex

BY BATHSHEBA DORAN

Directed by Allison Narver

*Beginning May 27, 2016 • Opening Night June 2, 2016*

## CAST

Emily Chisholm*	Charlotte
Lorenzo Roberts*	Jonny
Mary Kae Irvin*	Lucinda
Ray Abruzzo*	Howard

## CREATIVE TEAM

Allison Narver	Director
Matthew Smucker	Scenic Designer
Catherine Hunt	Costume Designer
Andrew D. Smith	Lighting Designer
Robertson Witmer	Sound Designer
Geoffrey Alm	Fight Choreographer
Jeffrey K. Hanson*	Stage Manager
Briana Kersten	Production Assistant
Marcella Barbeau	Assistant Lighting Designer
Gin Hammond	Dialect Coach

Running Time: This performance runs approximately two hours. There will be one intermission.

\*The actors and stage manager employed in this production are Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

"The Mystery of Love & Sex" is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

Originally produced by Lincoln Center Theater in 2015, New York City.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

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Audience members are cordially reminded to silence all electronic devices. 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. Patrons wearing Google Glass must power down the device if wearing them in the theatre.



*John Langs*

PHOTO BY ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

# WELCOME to ACT

One of the great boundaries that has been broken at the beginning of this century is the right to love whom we choose. Although the battles are still being waged, it seems clear that tradition and dogma are giving way to the choice the heart makes about whom and how we love.

Coming of age in this more liberated time seems exhilarating, but as this play points out, freedom might not always make the path to love a smooth one. Although society may be more accepting or less prescriptive, we all have our own deep internal struggles based upon our identity, personal history, and familial expectations. Finding yourself, your voice, seems to me to be a lifelong effort, but never more immediate than when we are young, in those intensely-felt years that span high school and college when we simultaneously know nothing and everything; that moment when for the first time we're able to make choices that will give our lives shape, but also put our young hearts at risk. This play is about that moment and the ramifications it has for our family, friends, and the world at large.

In my own experience, just this past year, I was introduced by my friend and his husband to their new girlfriend, as they formed a new family unit. Even as every intellectual part of myself identifies as accepting, open-minded, and ready to celebrate the new, I was in that moment surprised to find myself shocked, bewildered, and confused. The look on my face, I was told later, was like a reaction from a bad sitcom. Reflecting on these conflicting emotions, where change in the world collides with subconscious traditional

expectations, I remembered the joy of this play—and why I felt so strongly about programming it for ACT Theatre.

By the end of this year, I will be a father to two children: one boy and one girl. I have never been more aware of the social climate that's defining the next generation. It's also challenging my generation to move toward acceptance, and to meet these changes with an open mind and heart.

I have certainly taken my own parents on an unexpected—and, for them, untraditional—journey that I'm sure tested their patience and understanding. I expect the same will be true of my youngsters. In these days of change, it feels like the one and only constant is the primal human need for the acceptance and love of family.

It is into this well that *Bathsheba Doran* has dipped her pen, and out of it spread this beautiful play that honors all the complications of being a human and illuminates the power we all have to change, adapt, and find grace with whatever choices our loved ones make. Here's to family. Thank you for being here.

John Langs  
Artistic Director





# Writing from a New Perspective

## An Interview with BATHSHEBA DORAN

BY PATRICK FOLLIARD, WASHINGTON BLADE

*The Mystery of Love & Sex* is about love—love between fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, best friends and ultimately romantic relationships, says playwright Bathsheba Doran, who's familiarly known as Bash. It charts the turbulent journey of longtime best friends Charlotte who is Jewish, and African-American Jonny, who was brought up a strict Baptist. Now college age, they take their relationship to the next level despite an absence of attraction. And while Charlotte attests to love Jonny, she also thinks she loves a new friend, Claire. Charlotte's parents have mixed feelings. Doran requests no spoilers, citing the word "mystery" in the play's title.

As playwright, Doran's way into the work was the experience she shares with Charlotte. The details are different yet the emotions are the same. But, she adds, it's not a coincidence that she wrote this after she became a parent.

"Having a child gave me an ability to look back at youth with a degree of omniscience, allowing me to write from a new and different perspective," she says.

What still surprises Doran is how much Charlotte's quasi-romantic relationship with her best friend Jonny resonates with gay theatregoers. After the play was first produced at New York's Lincoln Center last spring, she heard from many people who'd been through the same thing.

"It's a really lovely example of a specific experience becoming general and relatable, and one that's not

dramatized much. It's something beautiful but has a tragic element about it too, because it can prevent you from being who you actually are."

Until now, Doran's work didn't include a lot of gay characters or specifically gay themes. "It's partly because a not-very-great mentor advised me not to," she says. "On some level it had an effect on me. I had an anxiety that writing gay characters ran the risk of not being universal. This is not something I feel now."

"With *The Mystery of Love & Sex*, I didn't feel it needed to be about heterosexuals," Doran says. "The play burst out of me. I wasn't sure it would be produced. I'd thought the moment for characters struggling with their sexuality had passed. Well, turns out it hasn't. We still live in a world of resentment and hatred. Sometimes I think people living in the bubble of Manhattan don't understand that."

Visit [acttheatre.org](http://acttheatre.org) to read the full article.

*The play takes place on the outskirts of a major city in the American South.*

Act 1, Scene 1 – Charlotte's Dorm Room

Act 1, Scene 2 – Charlotte's Dorm Room, 3am

Act 1, Scene 3 – Howard and Lucinda's home

Act 1, Scene 4 – Howard and Lucinda's home

Act 1, Scene 5 – The Backyard

Act 2, Scene 1 – The Backyard, 5 years later

Act 2, Scene 2 – The Dining Room

Act 2, Scene 3 – On Skype

Act 2, Scene 4 – The Swallow's Lodge

Act 2, Scene 5 – The Backyard

# COMING SOON TO ACT



THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH FOR YOU TO STAY HOME.

# DAISY

BY SEAN DEVINE

DIRECTED BY JOHN LANGS

Jul 8-Aug 7

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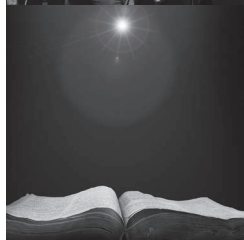
Sandbox Radio returns for "The Bridal Issue," the latest installment of the locally grown variety show that combines killer music, engaging storytelling, the city's best performers, and an ultra cool sparkly host ... all recorded live.



## THE LOVE MARKETS

Aug 13

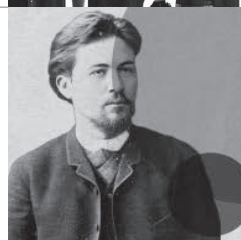
Lift your glass and join the celebration as The Love Markets play their new album live, transforming The Falls Theatre into a musical boudoir full of decadence, subversion, and resistance against the machine!



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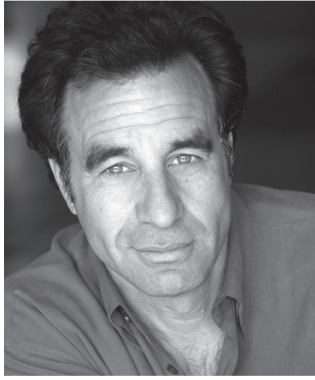
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Welcome to Club Abu, the darkest party in Baghdad. An incendiary rock musical that pulls back the curtain of one of the greatest moral challenges we have faced as a nation and sets it to a wicked irreverent back beat.



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# A Conversation with Ray Abruzzo

Howard in *The Mystery of Love & Sex*

BY JOHN LANGS, ACT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**John Langs:** Ray, welcome to ACT Theatre—I'm so happy you're here. We had a little conversation in the first day of rehearsal that I thought was really poignant about *The Mystery of Love & Sex* by Bathsheba Doran, which you are rehearsing right now.

**Ray Abruzzo:** ... And having a great time.

**JL:** I'm so glad! I have always thought of this play as sort of the balm in the age of sexual confusion. And I know that you had some experience on this kind of groundbreaking show that's changing culture ...

**RA:** *The Sopranos*? [laughs]

**JL:** That one as well! I was talking about *Transparent*. It's just a lovely gift for all of us.

**RA:** I was fortunate enough just to be asked to do this recurring little thing on *Transparent*. It's based on a true story. The premise: Jeffrey Tambor plays a man 70 years old, who comes out to his family that he wants to transition to a woman. As the story unfolds, you see the fluidity of sexuality and gender identification not just through him but through his kids. Once you get immersed into that world, as I became immersed very quickly, it was freeing in a sense, you know? Afterwards, I actually felt better about myself. Basically, as open as you think your mind is, there's more opening to be done. When I first read Howard [in *The Mystery of Love & Sex*], I thought: here he is—New York, very liberal Jewish intellectual—as you dig deeper, he realizes maybe he does have some little biases and prejudices that he thought he was free of. It's always a challenge, you're always challenged, and I think it really reflects and mirrors what I went through with working on *Transparent*. Love is love. It's two people. And you know, who the hell am I to say what it should be or shouldn't be?

**JL:** What's the favorite scene that you've been working on this week?

**RA:** Oh, god, this play really has some [laughs] ... I'm working with Lorenzo, Lorenzo and I have a couple very intense scenes. There's some physical stuff I'm looking forward to—actually Lorenzo seems more interested in getting to the physical stuff that happens.

**JL:** [laughs]

**RA:** Already, he can't wait! I don't know why [laughs]. The beauty is, there's a couple of scenes where [Howard] actually realizes that he has the biases and bigotries that he really thought he didn't have.

And he goes on this journey, and I like a play where you go on a journey. And this is taking me on a journey as well.

**JL:** Hey, I'm really, really happy you're here. I mean, authentically you're so genuine. You've brought such a great spirit into the room.

**RA:** Oh, thank you!

**JL:** Welcome to Seattle. I can't wait to share this play with Seattle audiences. I can't wait for them to get to see you. You've had all these tremendous experiences and we're really lucky. We're really lucky to have you.

**RA:** I'm lucky. Doing theatre revives me and this play is perfect for that.

Love is love.  
It's two people.  
And you know,  
who the hell am  
I to say what it  
should be or  
shouldn't be?

Watch the full interview at [acttheatre.org](http://acttheatre.org).

# Spotlight on

## ACT Core Company Member

# LORENZO ROBERTS

BY ANGIE KAMEL, ACT ARTISTIC  
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

**L**orenzo Roberts moved to Seattle from New York in January 2015 and he's been working steadily as an actor on our stages ever since. You've seen him around town with Seattle Shakespeare Company, Seattle Immersive Theatre, and in ACTLab as part of the 2015 Kenan Directing Fellowship. I sat down with him over a smoothie in April. He has an infectious smile, a casual manner, and the grace of a southern gentleman. This should come as no surprise, as he spent his youth between New York City and South Carolina, where he says he became an artist.

### **What was your initial response when you read this play?**

When I first read the play, I was like, honestly, "I don't know if I know who this guy is." Normally, when I have a role, I'm like, "Oh, I know exactly who this person is and where I'm gonna go," or I have an idea of where this is gonna go. And I read this and I was like, "He scares me." Which, I think for actors is always a great feeling: to be scared by something. We want to jump into the fear. I really fell in love with the relationships between the characters, but it's been a long process of me having that fear of who this guy is and using the different tools in my belt to kind of work backward, [to] bring him closer to me.

### **What do you like about Jonny?**

He holds secrets and I don't. He's very grounded, which I think I am as well, but he's grounded in a different way. There is a mystery to Jonny—he holds people at a distance, and I think there's power in that and I'm very interested in that power. I also love how smart he is.

He was raised by an old Black Baptist woman; respect is one of the number one rules in a southern household, which I know



*Lorenzo Roberts in Othello (Seattle Shakespeare Company), directed by John Langs in 2015.*

PHOTO BY JOHN ULMAN

from experience. It's an endearing quality but I think there's also power in the change. Respect is having a certain feeling and reserving it, in a way, but there's also power in letting that out.

Jonny grew up without a father. Howard is the closest father figure in his life. But it's complicated because he's a white Jewish man from New York who is also the father of his best friend. He's been over at this guy's house every day for the past 10 years, just about. There's a friction that happens when you spend enough time with someone, but it's different when they're not your blood relative. There's a choice that needs to be made, whether you're going to stick it out or not, and I think Jonny and Howard are bumping heads all the time. And Howard's position ... he kinda has to deal with it because Charlotte's his world. I'm at the point now where I'm dreaming about these guys—I can't stop thinking about it now, which is great.

### **Already? Before you even start rehearsal?**

That's part of the point of the Core [Company]. We can kind of do that, we can have this long-form theatre conversation. Normally in a theatre process you get maybe five or six weeks for the entire thing. You get cast, you get maybe a week or two of prep, and then you go into rehearsal for two or three weeks, then you're up. With this, I knew in November. So I've had a lot of time to think about it, you know, which is great. And I think nothing but good things can come from that if you handle it the right way. Early on, I just read the play once every week. Last month I

started reading the play every day just to see what my opinions were. Now I'm starting to do the deep research before I go in [to rehearsal].

### **Tell me more about your process when preparing for a role.**

It changes with everything, but for this I have been people-watching. Reading the play every day. [I] started doing simple things like [asking], what's my backstory with my mom, with Charlotte? What's Charlotte's favorite color? What's the restaurant we go to all the time?

### **Do you feel like there's been a significant change in the way you function as an artist since you joined the Core Company?**

Yeah, I think this year in Seattle, this year in America, this year in the Core Company specifically have all inspired me to look at art differently.

### **What do you mean by that?**

I mean, I don't want to get too political. For me, black men and women are still dying. The racial tension is huge. I think the conversations are happening. I don't know if the conversation is going the way it should be, right now. If we're hearing all the voices.

### **If you could program one show next season what would it be?**

Let's do *Hamilton*!

*Catch Lorenzo at ACT this season in The Mystery of Love & Sex, The Royale, and Dangerous Liaisons.*



## Who's Who in *Mystery*



### Emily Chisholm

(Charlotte) Previous ACT appearances include *Sugar Daddies* directed by Sir Alan Ayckbourn and *Bethany* directed by John Langs. Recent credits include Vivie in *Mrs.*

*Warren's Profession* (Seattle Shakespeare Company) and Rosemary in *Outside Mullingar* (Seattle Repertory Theatre). Emily is a member of New Century Theatre Company where she co-produced and performed in the west coast premiere of Annie Baker's *The Flick*, and *Festen*, directed by Wilson Milam. She is also a member of The Seagull Project where she will play Sonya in *Uncle Vanya* at ACT Theatre. Other credits include productions at Arena Stage, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Public Theatre, and Washington Ensemble Theatre. Chisholm is a graduate of Cornish College of the Arts.



### Lorenzo Roberts (Jonny)

A graduate of North Carolina School of the Arts, Lorenzo has appeared in *As You Like It* (ACTLab), *Henry IV Part 1* (Wooden O) and *Othello* (Seattle Shakespeare

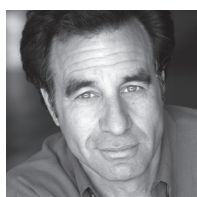
Company). He is a member of ACT's 2016 Core Company, and will next appear at ACT in *The Royale*.



### Mary Kae Irvin

(Lucinda) is delighted to be back on the boards at ACT, having previously been seen as Annie, the nurse, in *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*; Jessie Mae in *The*

*Trip to Bountiful*; *The Summer Moon*; and *A Christmas Carol*. She has worked regionally as well as locally at many Seattle theatres, including Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild, The Bathhouse Theatre, and The Group Theatre. Irvin also works frequently on TV and her voice can be heard on many video games, commercials, and audiobooks. She holds an M.F.A. from the University of Washington Professional Actor Training Program.



### Ray Abruzzo (Howard)

recently starred in Dan Lauria's *Dinner with the Boys* (New Jersey Repertory Company) and then again when the play moved to New York's Acorn Theatre. Ray

performed the two-hander *The Guys* (Malibu Playhouse) with Wendie Malick. Previously, he

received rave reviews in the title role of *Lombardi* at Florida's Mosaic Theatre. Ray has been active in the L.A. theatre scene for decades, appearing in many productions. For 10 of those years, Ray was both an actor and director for the Playwrights Kitchen Ensemble. He played Sterling in the west coast premiere of Theresa Rebeck's *Mauritius* (Pasadena Playhouse) directed by Jessica Kubzansky, Lucky Luciano in Louis LaRusso's *Vesper's Eve*, and Aldo in the world premiere of John Patrick Shanley's *Italian American Reconciliation*. In Chicago and Boston, Ray performed Robert Dubac's one-man show *The Male Intellect: An Oxymoron*. Back in New York in 1977, Ray was a founding member of The Bond Street Theatre Coalition, which is still going strong and traveling the world. Ray's television credits include guest starring roles on: *NYPD Blue*, various episodes of *Law & Order*, *NCIS*, *House*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Mentalist*, *Castle*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Ray Donovan*, *Hot in Cleveland*, and dozens more. He's been a series regular or recurring on *L.A. Law*, *Dynasty*, *Night Court*, *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, *The Practice*, *Boston Legal*, *Mad Men*, and most notably as Little Carmine for four seasons of *The Sopranos*. Presently, he can occasionally be seen as the transamorous Sal on Amazon's groundbreaking series *Transparent*.



### Bathsheba Doran

(Playwright) Bash is the author of various plays including the *The Mystery of Love & Sex* which received its world premiere at Lincoln Center under the direction of

Sam Gold, starring Diane Lane and Tony Shalhoub and the critically acclaimed play *Kin* which received its world premiere in spring 2011 at Playwrights Horizons, also directed by Sam Gold. She is the recipient of various playwriting awards and prizes including a Helen Merrill Award, and she is a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist. Bash also served as a writer/producer for the second season of Showtime's hit series *Masters of Sex*, and was a story editor on *Smash* for NBC. Bash wrote on season two of the acclaimed Martin Scorsese/HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* (for which her episode received a Writers Guild nomination). Bash is currently under commission from Atlantic Theater and Playwrights Horizons in New York City. Other current projects include a pilot for HBO, a mini series for FX about the life of Hedy Lamarr to star Diane Kruger, a new series for Channel 4 in the UK, and a feature film for Levantine Films. Her work is available from Samuel French, Dramatist Play Service and Playscripts Inc. A collection entitled *The Marriage Plays* will be published by Oberon Books in 2017. B.A./M.A., Cambridge University. M.A., Oxford University. M.F.A., Columbia University.



### Allison Narver

(Director) In the Northwest, Allison's work has been seen at Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Book-It Repertory

Theatre, New Century Theatre Company, Annex Theatre, Alice B. Theatre, The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Portland Center Stage. Nationally, Allison's work has been seen at Studio Theatre in D.C., Pittsburgh City Theatre, Boise Contemporary Theatre, Circle X Theatre, REDCAT, Portland Stage Company, and Yale Repertory Theatre. In New York, her work has been seen at Kirk Theatre, The Public Theater, New Victory Theater, Ars Nova, and The Women's Project. Allison is the former Artistic Director of The Empty Space Theatre, Annex Theatre, and Yale Cabaret. Allison has an M.F.A. in directing from The Yale School of Drama.

**Matthew Smucker (Scenic Designer)** is pleased to return to ACT, where previous designs include *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play; *The Invisible Hand*; *Sugar Daddies*; *Rapture Blister Burn*; *Grey Gardens*; *Ramayana*; *First Date*; *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*; *Vanities*; *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*; *Yankee Tavern*; *The Trip to Bountiful*; *Rock 'n' Roll*; *Below the Belt*; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Eurydice*; *The Clean House*; *The Women*; and *The Pillowman*. Smucker's work has appeared in *Elf*, *Oklahoma!*, *Candide* (The 5th Avenue Theatre); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Or, Circle Mirror Transformation*, *Speech & Debate*, *Three Tall Women* (Seattle Repertory Theatre); Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, Artists Repertory Theatre, San Jose Rep, Kansas City Rep, Paper Mill Playhouse, Houston's Theatre Under the Stars, and Minneapolis Children's Theatre Company. Smucker received the 2011 Gregory Award for Outstanding Scenic Design, a 2012 Seattle Magazine Spotlight Award, and appeared on The Stranger's 2011 and 2015 Genius Awards shortlists. Smucker teaches at Cornish College of the Arts and received his M.F.A. from the UW School of Drama.

**Catherine Hunt (Costume Designer)** is delighted to be back at ACT. Previous ACT productions include *Bloomsday*; *Bethany*; *Grey Gardens*; *The Pitmen Painters*; *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*; *Vanities*; *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*; and *Becky's New Car*. Catherine's work has been seen at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Opera, Intiman, and Village Theatre. Catherine is a Gregory Award winner, and also won a Los Angeles Theatre Drama Logue Award and a San Diego Theatre Critics Award for her production of *The Women* with Anne Bogart. She

## Who's Who in *Mystery*

designed the computer game *Riven*, is a NEA/TCG design fellow, and a guest lecturer at both Cornish College of the Arts and the University of Washington.

**Andrew D. Smith** (*Lighting Designer*) returns to ACT having previously designed *Bethany, Worse Than Tigers* (REDSTAGE, ACTLab), *The Seagull* (The Seagull Project, ACTLab), *Red Light Winter* and *25 Saints* (Azeotrope, ACTLab). In Seattle, his designs have been seen at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Azeotrope, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Seattle Public Theatre, Washington Ensemble Theatre, Theatre Off Jackson, ArtsWest, On The Boards, Velocity Dance Center, and Broadway Performance Hall. Nationally, Andrew has designed with Cornerstone Theatre Company, Flint Youth Theatre, Horizon Theater Company, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Roust Theater, and Cardinal Stage Company. He received the 2010 and 2011 Gregory Award for Outstanding Lighting Design, as well as the 2010 Seattle Times Footlight Award. Andrew is a member of New Century Theatre Company, holds a B.A. from Duke University, and an M.F.A. from the University of Washington, where he currently teaches.

**Robertson Witmer** (*Sound Designer*) was seen recently onstage at ACT as the musician in *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*. His recent sound design credits include *Stupid Fucking Bird*, *Seven Ways to Get There*, *The Three Sisters* (ACT); *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Mother Courage* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); and *The Flick* (New Century Theatre Company). His onstage appearances include *A Doctor in Spite of Himself* (Intiman, Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Village Theatre), and *West* (On the Boards). In 2013, Rob received the Gregory Award for Outstanding Sound Design. He is a member of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local USA-829.

**Geoffrey Alm** (*Fight Choreographer*) is very pleased to be returning to ACT to be a part of *The Mystery of Love & Sex*. His work was last seen in *Assassins*. Recent local work includes *Romeo & Juliet* (Seattle Shakespeare Company), *View from the Bridge* (Seattle Repertory Theatre), and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Seattle's Children's Theatre). National credits include work at The Old Globe, the Shakespeare Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Arizona Theatre Company, and Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Mr. Alm teaches stage fighting at Cornish College for the Arts, the UW Professional Actor Training Program, and Freehold Theatre Lab. He is a Fight Master with The Society of American Fight Masters, and a proud member of SDC.

**Jeffrey K. Hanson** (*Stage Manager*) Now in his 26th season at ACT, Hanson has stage managed more than 70 shows including *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*; *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Sugar Daddies*; *The Pinter Festival*; *The Pitmen Painters*; *Double Indemnity*; *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*; *Becky's New Car*; *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*; *Das Barbecü*; *The Women*; *Stuff Happens*; *The Pillowman*; *Mourning Becomes Electra*; *A Skull in Connemara*; *Quills*; *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*; *The Gospel at Colonus*; *Halcyon Days*; *The Revengers' Comedies*; and *Lloyd's Prayer*. At The 5th Avenue Theatre, he has been production stage manager for *A Night With Janis Joplin*, *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, *A Chorus Line*, *Oklahoma!*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Candide*, *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, *Hello Dolly!*, and *Mame*. He has stage managed *Metamorphoses*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Parts One and Two* (Seattle Repertory Theatre); and for Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman, and Arizona Theatre Company.

**Gin Hammond** (*Dialect Coach*) Gin Hammond is a Harvard University/Moscow Art Theatre grad and a certified Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework™. She has performed nationally at theatres such as The Guthrie, Arena Stage, The Longwharf Theatre, ACT, The Pasadena Playhouse, the ART, The Berkshire Theatre Festival, and The Studio Theatre in Washington D.C., where she won a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actress for her performance of *The Syringa Tree*. Internationally, she has performed in Russia, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and England. Ms. Hammond also received a Kathleen Cornell award, and Washington state grants from Allied Arts, The Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Artist Trust, 4 Culture, as well as from the NEA. Hammond teaches voice, voice-over, public speaking, and dialect coaching, and can be heard on commercials, audiobooks, radio plays, and a variety of video games including DotA 2, Aion, and Halo 3 ODST. Around town, she most recently performed with Book-It Repertory Theatre, and various Sandbox Artists Collective productions. She also premiered *I'm/Migrant* a short solo play by award-winning playwright Yussef El Guindi, and will premiere *Ed, Downloaded* at Washington Ensemble Theatre (WET). Hammond has also been a dialect and vocal coach for ACT, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Taproot, Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theater, and films.



**John Langs** (*Artistic Director*) John has been delighted to serve as Associate Artistic Director of ACT for three years, and is ACT's Artistic Director in 2016. John's

16-year freelance career has afforded him the opportunity to work with many prestigious theatre companies across the country. He has directed productions at Playwrights Horizons NY, Ensemble Studio Theater NY, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Lookingglass Theater Company in Chicago, Circle X in Los Angeles, The Resident Ensemble, New Century Theatre Company, Washington Ensemble Theatre, and Seattle Shakespeare Company. John received his directing degree from UNCSCA. Some of his favorite directing credits include *The Shaggs Philosophy of the World* (LA Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Original Musical), and *Brothers Karamazov* (seven LADCC Awards, including Best Production of the year and Best Direction) and directing Kurt Beattie in *King Lear*. John received the first annual Seattle Gregory Award honoring excellence in direction for *The Adding Machine*. Recent Seattle credits include *Mary's Wedding* (NCTC), *The Three Sisters* (The Seagull Project's), and *Othello* (Seattle Shakespeare Company). As a dedicated fan of original work, John has shepherded over a dozen projects to their premieres.



**Carlo Scandiuzzi** (*Executive Director*) is a founder of Agate Films and Clear Pictures, producing such films as *Prototype*, *Dark Drive*, *Outpatient*, and *The Flats*, and Indieflix, a

distribution company. In 1979, Scandiuzzi started Modern Productions, bringing to Seattle such legendary bands as The Police, Devo, Nina Hagen, Iggy Pop, The Ramones, John Cale, Robert Fripp, James Brown, Muddy Waters, and many more. He performed in several plays at Empty Space Theatre including *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, *The Return of Pinocchio*, and *Dracula*. In the early '80s, he collaborated with many Seattle performance artists such as Norman Durkee, Alan Lande, and Jesse Bernstein. He also acted in various films including *Bugsy*, *The Public Eye*, *Another You*, *Casanova's Kiss*, and *Killing Zoe*. He graduated from the Ecole Supérieure D'Art Dramatique of Geneva. Carlo currently serves as a member of the Seattle Arts Commission.



**Becky Witmer** (*Managing Director*) has been with ACT since 2011, serving as the General Manager (2014-2015) and also the Director of Marketing and Communications (2011-

2014). Becky began her career in arts management through marketing and communications. She was the Director of Marketing and Public Relations at Intiman Theatre (2008-2011) and Opera Colorado (2006-



2008). She was the Associate Director of Marketing with Central City Opera (2002-2005). Becky is an advisory board member for TeenTix, a founding co-chair of the Cultural Resource Collective, an Arts Business Consultant with Shunpike, and she frequently appears as a guest lecturer for Seattle University's Arts Leadership M.F.A. program. She is a current participant in the Leadership Tomorrow program.

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**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.**

## Diverse Harmony

June 8, 6:30pm

Before the evening performance of *The Mystery of Love & Sex*, the nation's first queer-straight alliance youth chorus will perform a special pre-show concert in Buster's! See the 22-member chorus present music that opens hearts and minds of communities and provides a safe environment for youth of diverse backgrounds to share their love of music and be accepted for who they are.



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In the event of an emergency, please wait for an announcement for further instructions. Ushers will be available for assistance.

### Emergency Number

The theatre's emergency number in the Union lobby is 206.292.7667. Leave your exact seat location with your emergency contact in case they need to reach you.

### Smoking Policy

Smoking is NOT allowed in any part of the theatre or within 25 feet of the entrance.

### Firearms Policy

No firearms of any kind are allowed in any part of the theatre.

### Food

Food is not allowed in the theatre. Tuxedos & Tennis Shoes is the exclusive caterer of ACT.

### Accessibility

Wheelchair seating is available. The theatre is equipped with the Williams Sound® Listening System for the hard of hearing; headsets are available from the house manager for use, free of charge, with a valid ID and subject to availability. ACT offers American

Sign Language interpreted and audio-described performances. For more information, email [service@acttheatre.org](mailto:service@acttheatre.org).

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Call 206.292.7676 between 12:00pm and 6:00pm, Tues-Sun.

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# The Indomitable Kathy Hsieh

*Cultural Partnerships and Grants Manager,  
City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture*

By Andrew Storms

Artist, activist, civil servant, theatre addict—Kathy Hsieh wears many hats better than most of us manage to wear just one. As Cultural Partnerships and Grants Manager for the City of Seattle's Office of Arts & Culture, Hsieh oversees a number of programs for a diverse array of organizations. In addition to focusing on community-building and racial equity initiatives, Hsieh's role as grantmaker makes her an integral player in the funding process.

A prime example of Hsieh's work is the Civic Partners program, a city grant which generously supports general operating expenses for arts and cultural

**"In a town like Seattle, where we have so many creative artists, ACT has always saved a space for the creation of new work."**

organizations. Applicants are judged on three criteria: public access and benefit, quality and impact of programs in relation to mission, and organizational soundness and capacity. Hsieh refers to the grant as "the most core funding program at the office." ACT was recently awarded a Civic Partners grant for sustained support in the 2016-17 funding cycle.

The program, which currently funds over 160 organizations, is a fantastic reflection of Seattle's thriving cultural scene. "Our goal is not to be the sole sponsor of a few

organizations, but really to ensure that as much art that people want out there is supported in some way," says Hsieh. A former National Endowment for the Arts panelist, she notes that programs like Civic Partners can lend prestige to smaller organizations, which in turn helps them leverage additional funding.

Hsieh's role in Seattle's theatre scene far surpasses her impressive contributions at the Office of Arts & Culture. She's also a seasoned director, playwright, actor, and producer. She has previously served as Managing Director for the Northwest Asian American Theatre (NWAAT) and is the cofounder of SIS Productions, a company that works to create, develop, and produce quality works that involve Asian-American women, themes, and issues. Most recently she was onstage in the ArtsWest production of *Chinglish*, and is currently reprising the same role at Nevada Theatre.

Hsieh's first experiences with ACT were as a teenager, when ACT called Queen Anne Hall home. She cites the former Young ACT Program as one of her entry points to the organization's work. "There's something about seeing these stories come to life at that age," she remembers of the program, which focused on retelling classic stories for teenage audiences. Hsieh's debut as an artist with ACT was as the Ghost of Christmas Past during the 1996 run of *A Christmas Carol*. The organization had only recently moved into its new downtown home; it was ACT's first production of the play at Kreielsheimer Place. What



Kathy Hsieh and Evan Whitfield in *Chinglish* (ArtsWest).

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BRUNK

continues to impress Hsieh is ACT's focus on facilitating new theatre: "In a town like Seattle, where we have so many creative artists, ACT has always saved a space for the creation of new work."

On top of it all, Hsieh takes the time to see all the theatre and art that she champions every day. She sees an average of 165 shows per year and organizes a group of fellow theatre junkies, the "Over 100 Club," who commit to joining her in seeing over 100 live performances annually.

Her artwork—acting, writing, producing—informs her public service. "I remember how hard and how valuable the role of an artist is in the community," she says. And so Hsieh continues to work diligently for the artists of Seattle.

From her standout achievements in the area of racial equity to showing up and supporting the work, Hsieh is a paragon of civic arts advocacy. The theatres of Seattle are lucky to have a friend and ally in the indomitable Kathy Hsieh.

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**“There has to be a surplus of joy at the end for it to be a really significant experience.”**

BY BRETT HAMIL

R. Hamilton Wright is a Seattle actor and playwright who's been in more than 130 productions over 35 years of working in theatre. Most recently, he appeared in Seattle Shakespeare's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Seattle Rep's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and ACT's *Vanya, Sonia, Masha and Spike*.

His play, *Sherlock Holmes and the American Problem*, receives its world premiere at the Rep in April, directed by Allison Narver. He's also been chosen as a member of ACT's new Core Company, serving as an ambassador and regular contributor to their productions throughout the coming year.

Wright—his friends call him Bob—lives in a little brick house in North Seattle with his wife, the playwright and master baker Katie Forgette.

### **What's the best performance you've seen lately?**

Whenever my dear wife, confronted by four day's growth of beard on my sorry face, says, “I love you.” It is beautifully delivered and there are endless little variations in how she delivers this simple phrase. It is magic. I always buy it.

### **What's the best meal in Seattle?**

In the winter, when the water gets cold, I love the oysters at The Walrus and the Carpenter. They are delicious—if you like oysters—and they make it possible for us to order the maple bread pudding for dessert, which is magnificent.



We live not far from Holman Road and we both grew up in Seattle so whether we need it or not we eat at Dick's once a month. When I was ten or eleven, I could get a hamburger, cheeseburger, fries and a shake for about a dollar. I get the same meal today.


### **What music gets you pumped up? What do you listen to when you're sad?**

I don't listen to music to get excited. I don't listen to music if I'm doing anything else. I really don't listen to much music, actually, which sounds like I'm admitting to being an alien but it is true. I listen to The Beatles when I am in the car. Sometimes Django Reinhardt.

### **What's the most crucial element of any production?**

A good play. Good actors. The text is important but the really crucial thing is the cast. Talent is critical but everyone has to want to work really hard and there has to be a surplus of joy at the end for it to be a really significant experience.

### **What's the most useful thing anyone's ever taught you about working in theatre?**

Woody Allen has said that 80% of success is showing up. I learned a long time ago from older and wiser and far more talented men and women that you need to arrive at rehearsal on time and ready to work. Ready to talk, but more importantly, ready to listen. 



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As spring turns the corner into summer, theatre houses conclude the season with a bang, from award-winning modern musicals to celebrated adaptations to world premieres.

### **Stupid F\*cking Bird**

**April 8–May 8**

This sort-of adaptation of *The Seagull* grapples with familiar Chekhovian themes around the role of theatre and the ossification of culture. Written by Aaron Posner, the LA Weekly called it “the best Chekhov adaptation in two decades.”

**ACT Theatre**

### **Sherlock Holmes and the American Problem**

**April 22–May 22**

In this world premiere by Seattle actor/playwright R. Hamilton Wright, the Victorian sleuth brings his powers of deduction to the American Wild West of 1887. Directed by Allison Narver.

**Seattle Repertory Theatre**

### **Billy Elliott**

**May 12–July 3**

This charming musical tells the story of a boy who dreams of dancing ballet, set against the conflict and poverty of a Northern England miners' strike in the mid-80s. Based on the hit movie and featuring music by Elton John, it won ten Tony Awards and has been called “best musical of the decade.”

**Village Theatre Issaquah**

### **American Stories**

**June 3–12**

This program brings together folk, jazz and classical in a selection of work from three of the world's greatest choreographers. Jerome Robbins's *Fancy Free* set to the music of Leonard Bernstein, George Balanchine's *Square Dance* and Twyla Tharp's *Waiting at the Station* featuring the music of recently departed jazz great Allen Toussaint.

**Pacific Northwest Ballet**

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# Breaking the Fifth Wall: Dying While Performing

BY BRETT HAMIL

Recently I was shocked to read the story of an Italian actor who accidentally hung himself during an immersive performance in Pisa. After reciting a monologue from Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* in a courtyard in front of just one audience member, Raphael Schumacher placed his head in a noose and an apparent malfunction rendered him asphyxiated. A second spectator arrived, noticed that something had gone wrong and rushed to help Schumacher, but it was too late. Doctors later declared him brain dead.

Sheer horror sent me scrambling to debunk the story. It seemed too awful to be true, but several reputable news sources confirmed it. The worst possible thing had occurred.

One likes to think of the performance space as an inviolable microcosm, a zone where the most terrible things that can happen are a flubbed line, a missed sound cue, a critically panned production. Death—the actual kind, not the theatrical facsimile—doesn't enter into the equation. But here the “fifth wall” had been breached.

I couldn't stop thinking about Schumacher: his last conscious moments, the shock of the onlookers, the heartbreak of his loved ones. Driven by morbid curiosity, I jumped on Google and started looking for other instances of mid-performance fatality.

Death onstage bears its own strange poetry; the literal embodiment of the old trope, “He died doing what he loved.” The circumstances of each stage death—and there are many—stand out variously as ironic, or eerily appropriate, or even slapstick; consider the great Molière's death in 1673 by violent coughing fit while playing the lead in his own play, *Le Malade imaginaire* (The Hypochondriac). In 1888 the British bass-baritone Frederick Federici succumbed to a heart attack after singing the last note of the opera *Faust* in the role of the demon Mephistopheles as he was descending through a trap door to the Underworld.

The comedian Redd Foxx, known for faking heart attacks as Fred Sanford on *Sanford and Son*, died of an actual heart attack in 1991 during the filming of his new sitcom, and the cast assumed he was clowning on his signature role. In 1986, an actor named Edith Webster died at the close of her death scene in the play *The Drunkard* after singing the song “Please


Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone” and slumping to the floor, dead, as indicated in the script.

In a cemetery on Capitol Hill lies the final resting place of Brandon Lee, who became one of the most notorious modern on-set fatalities when a gun malfunctioned during the filming of the movie *The Crow*.

My macabre search turned up another Seattle connection to death-in-performance I hadn't known about. In 1985, the Japanese butoh troupe Sankai Juku came to town for the first stop on their tour, in which they opened their residency with a unique public performance. The piece, entitled “Jomon Sho” (“Homage to Prehistory”), consisted of dancers suspended from ropes mounted to the top of the Mutual Life Building in Pioneer Square. Over the course of a half hour they were to gradually unfurl themselves while being lowered to the earth. One of the ropes broke, sending Yoshiyuku Takada plummeting to the sidewalk below. He was pronounced dead at Harborview Medical Center later that afternoon.

Video footage still exists of that horrific event, recorded from Japanese news footage, but I wouldn't recommend watching it. The camera cheapens and flattens the existential shock of that tragedy, somehow robs it of its solemnity. It's disturbing to consider that now, in the age of the ever-present smartphone, the possibility of a public death not recorded on digital device becomes ever more remote. Some things you just don't need to see.

Sankai Juku cancelled the rest of that tour, but they chose Seattle as the first US stop on their tour the following year. Decades later, they're still at it; they performed here last October.

It's difficult to imagine what it would take to return to the stage after witnessing the death of a colleague, impossible to consider what's going on in the minds of Raphael Schumacher's fellow company members right now. Perhaps they're feeling the frivolity of theatre in the face of mortality, the taunting absurdity of dying over made-up diversions. But viewed another way, is there any greater symbol of the victory of art over death than the willingness to continue creating when confronted with such loss? As we mourn the departure of artists great and unknown, the show must go on. 

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