

SAN FRANCISCO  
**PLAYHOUSE**

THE  
**GREAT KHAN**

BY MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN  
DIRECTED BY DARRYL V. JONES



**BAYSTAGES**  
PROGRAMS | 2021.10

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## **TWELFTH NIGHT**

**NOV 24, 2021 – JAN 15, 2022**

CONCEIVED BY  
KWAME KWEI-ARMAH & SHAINA TAUB

A soulful shake-up of a Shakespearean classic with a jazz-funk musical score.



## **HEROES OF THE FOURTH TURNING**

**JAN 26 – MAR 5, 2022**

BY WILL ARBERY

A Pulitzer finalist, *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* speaks to the heart of a country at war with itself.



## **WATER BY THE SPOONFUL**

**MAR 16 – APR 23, 2022**

BY QUIARA ALEGRIA HUDES

A heartfelt meditation on lives on the brink of redemption, and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.



## **THE PAPER DREAMS OF HARRY CHIN**

**MAY 4 – JUNE 18, 2022**

BY JESSICA HUANG

A gripping drama based on the true story of an immigrant who skirted the Chinese Exclusion Act.



## **FOLLIES**

**JUNE 30 – SEP 10, 2022**

BOOK BY JAMES GOLDMAN  
MUSIC & LYRICS BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Winner of seven Tony Awards and perhaps the greatest musical ever.

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## FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The concept of “teenager” only became part of the public consciousness in post-WWII times. Prior to that, there was little consideration that young people aged thirteen to eighteen merited any kind of special attention, nor were they thought to have needs that deserved unique consideration.

As time has passed since those falsely “idyllic” fifties, at least in the US, being a teenager has become more and more fraught with complexity and challenges from the fracturing of the family and the onset of readily available drugs to the pummeling of negative news



and the raising of the nuclear doomsday axe. Multiply those challenges exponentially by adding the challenges young Black teens face in a culture where they are viewed as de facto suspects, and we can only imagine the maze of obstacles they must navigate to reach adulthood intact.

Fortunately, as we face a strenuous workout in the empathy gym with the teens

in *The Great Khan*, we are blessed to be in the company of Michael Gene Sullivan, who in addition to his great skills as an actor and playwright, has both been and raised a young Black teen. Generously offering his gracious hand, he leads us through that dangerous world. More commonly than not these days, teens are being raised by a single parent, or being shuttled between serial single parents who have their hands full making ends meet, and who operate in families where there are few extended family or cultural systems in place to support them, fewer churches, youth programs, community organizations.

Luckily, from Michael’s fertile imagination, springs a male mentor to fill the void in young Jayden’s life. In a bolt of imagination, Genghis Khan – himself oppressed and imprisoned for being the “other” in his youth and a maligned victim of Asian stereotyping for centuries, who triumphed against impossible odds to become a compassionate leader to his people – appears through the magic of theatre to guide Jayden towards a more illuminated future. We, blessed to be along for the ride and are reminded how essential is mentoring, how criminal are the racist fictions generated by our white-centric distortion of history, and how courageous and honorable are the struggles of our young teens of color as they navigate their way through the “mindfields” that have been laid in their path.

### Bill English

*artistic director*

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SCENES FROM  
**THE GREAT KHAN**



## FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

Orwell said “He who controls the Present controls the Past, and he who controls the Past controls the Future.” In other words you can never let some jerks who hate you write your history, because that history will determine who your kids will think they can be. (Orwell didn’t say that last part, but I bet he thought it.)

First, I know *The Great Khan* is an unusual play. Sure, as an examination of racial oppression in the United States it may not be uncommon, and as a show about Black teens trying to define themselves in a nation that has already defined them as potential criminals at best and runaway slaves at worst, it’s not unique. As a play about who gets to write history it’s entering a less trodden area, and as seriously comedic social commentary it’s getting rare.

Then Genghis Khan shows up. Seriously. Genghis Khan.

As the father of a Black teen I’ve had to struggle with how and when to give my son “The Talk.” Not the talk about the birds and the bees, but the talk every Black parent has to give: the one about how much this country fears and despises them. It’s heartbreaking to see that light of innocence dim in their eyes, but it’s that talk that can save their lives. Black parents cannot protect their children from a nation poised to strike them down at any moment, but we do what we can to help them not become twisted into a shape designed by those who cannot, will not see the fullness of their beauty.

We, all of us, are more than this society can see, but for Black kids how others stereotype them is life-or-death.

So, you may wonder... comedy? If this is such a serious subject what’s with the funny? My wife always says comedy is a way to get people to relax, to see their shared humanity, to let their guard down, and that’s when you can crack their heads open, and stick some hard truths in there. It’s a disgusting mental image, but you get the point. The world needs to change, and we need to use all the tools we can to make this a better, fairer, more just world for our children. We all use different tools to achieve this revolutionary change, and mine is comedy.

So, three teens, two Black, one Asian American – one trying to hide from a frightening world, one wanting to be a kid just a little bit longer, one dealing with parental expectations – all of them have to decide: will they swim against the tide, fight to define themselves, or will they float with the current of a culture that wants them to drown?

Grown-ups, struggling against stereotypes of their own – of them and by them - act like they know what they are and have all the answers because that’s what all grown-ups are supposed to do. Do they? Do any of us? Then Genghis Khan shows up.

### Michael Gene Sullivan

*playwright*



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& collective member*

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**SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE**  
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**CLAY FOUNDATION - WEST** present  
a co-production with  
**THE SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE**  
a **NATIONAL NEW PLAY NETWORK**  
rolling world premiere

# THE GREAT KHAN

by Michael Gene Sullivan

## CAST

*Crystal*..... Velina Brown\*  
*Ant*..... Jamella Cross\*  
*Jayden*..... Leon Jones  
*Gao-Ming*..... Kina Kantor\*  
*Mr. Adams*..... Adam KuveNiemann  
*Temujin*..... Brian Rivera\*

Originally produced by San Francisco Playhouse, San Francisco, California.  
Bill English, Artistic Director | Susi Damilano, Producing Director

Developed with the support of Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco.  
Jessica Bird Beza, Artistic Director

## CREATIVE TEAM

*Director*..... Darryl V. Jones  
*Scenic Designer*..... Richard Olmsted<sup>^</sup>  
*Costume Designer*..... Kathleen Qiu  
*Lighting Designer*..... Kurt Landisman<sup>^</sup>  
*Sound Designer*..... Anton Doty  
*Projections Designer*..... Teddy Hulsker  
*Properties Designer*..... April Ballesteros  
*Stage Manager*..... Vanessa Hill  
*Assistant to the Director*..... Tyler Jeffreys  
*Assistant Costume Designer*..... Marisely Cortes Fonseca  
*Production Assistant*..... Kamaria Atiba

\* Member of Actors' Equity Association. This theater operates under an agreement with Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



<sup>^</sup> Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.



ROLLING WORLD PREMIERE  
National New Play Network



**PERFORMANCE DATES:** October 13 to November 13, 2021

**SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE**, 450 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

The performance lasts approximately two hours.  
There is one intermission.

Please note the location of all exits and turn off your electronic devices.  
Please respect the audience and the performers on stage. Photographing,  
videotaping, or recording this production is strictly prohibited.  
Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium at this time.







BROWN



CROSS



JONES



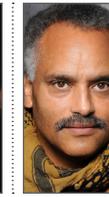
KANTOR



KUVENIEMANN



RIVERA



SULLIVAN



JONES

## BIOGRAPHIES

### CAST

#### VELINA BROWN\* CRYSTAL

Velina is pleased to return to the Playhouse after acting here in *Company* and *Abraham Lincoln's Big Gay Dance Party* (Best of Fringe at the New York International Fringe Festival), for which she received a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle award. Velina is also a director, singer, songwriter, and collective member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. She has worked with American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Shotgun Players, Central Works Theater Company, Symmetry Theatre Company, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Word for Word, and Denver Center for the Performing Arts Theatre Company, as well as in film and television. Velina writes a monthly advice column titled *The Business of Show Biz* for Theatre Bay Area, named after her coaching practice. [velinabrown.com](http://velinabrown.com)

#### JAMELLA CROSS\* ANT

Jamella has worked with Bay Area Children's Theatre, Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Marin Shakespeare Company, Oakland Theater Project, Virago Theatre Company, and Berkeley Playhouse. She feels very blessed to be on the Playhouse stage for the second time after her virtual debut here in [*hieroglyph*]. Jamella hopes you enjoy this stimulating piece.

#### LEON JONES JAYDEN

Leon is honored make his Playhouse debut. He is committed to creating space for other BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists on stage and screen. Leon began his professional career playing Macduff's Son in *Macbeth* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre with Frances McDormand and Conleth Hill. He attended Oakland School for the Arts, studying acting and musical theatre. Recent acting credits include Young Man in *Begin the Beguine* (Oakland Theater Project), Marcellus in *The Music Man* (Throckmorton Theatre), the roles of Damascus and Demeter in *...And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*, the Watchmen's Friend in *The Oresteia*, the Player King in *Hamlet*, and Curly in *Rising* (Oakland School for the Arts), and the title role in *Hamlet* (Marin Shakespeare Company). In addition to acting, Leon is an emerging producer, director, and writer who recently received an award from Regina Taylor for his short film *Through My Mind*. He currently serves as founding executive director for Youth Uproar Theatre Company and education director of Marin Shakespeare Company. [@theleonjones](mailto:@theleonjones) | [leonjonesjr.com](http://leonjonesjr.com)

#### KINA KANTOR\* GAO-MING

Kina is beyond thrilled to join the Playhouse again, having returned to the Bay Area after living another existence as a cellist abroad. Selected acting credits include Letter Writer #2 in *Tiny Beautiful Things* and understudy for Vanessa in *Significant Other* (San Francisco

Playhouse), understudy for Leiko in *The Great Wave* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), Murasaki Shikibu in *Unrivaled* (Boston Court Pasadena), and Nancy Wake (aka Madame Andrée) in *Madame Andrée* (Stage to Screen). Kina is company member of the Actor's Reading Collective (ARC).

#### ADAM KUVENIEMANN MR. ADAMS

Adam is making his debut with the Playhouse. Other credits include *Exit Strategy* (Aurora Theatre Company), *Arcadia* (Shotgun Players), *The Gentleman Caller* (New Conservatory Theatre Center), and understudying for *Angels in America* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Adam is also co-host of the podcast *Green Eggs...and Man?* in which he gives a very serious close-read analysis of a children's book, one page at a time. Adam sends his love to Panayiota and Katerina "Welcome to the world, Baby Kate!" [adamkuvienieman.com](http://adamkuvienieman.com)

#### BRIAN RIVERA\* TEMUJIN

Brian most recently performed on stage over a year ago in *Translating Selena* with Campo Santo. Bay Area credits include *Major Barbara* and the US premiere of *The Orphan of Zhao* (American Conservatory Theater), *Yellowjackets* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), and *Hamlet* and *American Night* (California Shakespeare Theater). Brian can currently be heard in *Tales of the Resistance*, a series of radio play episodes (San Francisco Mime Troupe) and online in *The Machine Stops* (Word for Word Performing

Arts Company). Brian is a proud member of Campo Santo, Word for Word Performing Arts Company, Actors' Equity Association, and SAG/AFTRA. @brianrivera

## AUTHOR

### MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN PLAYWRIGHT

Michael is an award-winning playwright, director, and actor based in San Francisco. His plays have been produced and performed at theatres throughout the United States, and in Greece, England, Scotland, Spain, Columbia, Ukraine, The Netherlands, Argentina, Canada, Mexico, as well as at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in Australia, the International Festival of Verbal Art in Berlin, The Spoleto Festival in Italy, and the Hong Kong Arts Festival. Michael is resident playwright for the Tony and Obie award-winning (and despite its name never, ever silent) San Francisco Mime Troupe, where he has written or co-written over twenty plays, including *Tales of the Resistance*, *Freedomland*, *Schooled*, *Red State*, *Posibilidad*, *Making a Killing*, and *1600 Transylvania Avenue*. He was a resident playwright for the Playwrights Foundation and was awarded a 2017 artist residency at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program. In addition to SFMT work, Michael has written the award-winning, all-woman political farce *Recipe*, *A Red Carol*, his critically-acclaimed one-person production *Did Anyone Ever Tell You - You Look Like Huey P. Newton?*, and the stage adaptation of *1984* by George Orwell, which opened at The Actors' Gang Theatre Company in Los Angeles under the direction of Academy Award winner Tim Robbins. *1984* has since been produced nationally (most recently at the Alley Theatre in Houston and national tour with Aquila Theatre of New York), in fourteen countries around the world, translated into five

languages, and has been published in the United States, Canada, and Spain. [michaeldesullivan.com](http://michaeldesullivan.com)

## CREATIVE TEAM

### DARRYL V. JONES DIRECTOR

Darryl is professor of theatre at California State University, East Bay and adjunct faculty in the MFA Program at American Conservatory Theater. He served as acting artistic director at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre for two years. Recent directing credits include *The Devil's Music: The Life and Blues of Bessie Smith* (Center REPeratory Company) and *Kill Move Paradise* (Shotgun Players and Lorraine Hansberry Theatre). He directed *Detroit '67* and *The Royale* (San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle award) for Aurora Theatre Company. Other directing credits include the Off-Broadway production and national tour of *We Are Your Sisters* (AUDELCO Award for production), *A View from the Bridge* (Theatre Lobby Award for direction), *Spunk* (Helen Hayes Award nomination), *The Minneola Twins* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), and *The Brothers Size* (Theatre Rhinoceros). West Coast directing credits include the premieres of *Follow Me to Nellie's* by Dominique Morisseau and *Xtigone* by Nambi Kelley. Darryl was directing associate at Arena Stage where he co-produced the new play program and choreographed *Candide* and *Dance of Death*. He is an active member of Actors' Equity Association and was featured in the *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* at Word for Word Performing Arts Company. In 2017 he was a TBA Award finalist for outstanding supporting actor in the original production of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* at Theatre Rhinoceros. Darryl earned a BM in vocal performance from the Catholic University of America and an MFA in directing from Boston University.

### KAMARIA ATIBA

#### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, ELECTRICIAN

Kamaria was a stage management intern and production assistant at the Playhouse for *Non-Player Character*, *An Entomologist's Love Story*, and *Groundhog Day the Musical* and assistant stage manager for *King of the Yees*. She previously served as stage manager for *Cradle Will Rock* and *Mamma Mia!* (City College of San Francisco), *Tomfoolery* (Shelton Theatre), and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Multi Ethnic Theater). Most recently, Kamaria worked on the Playhouse productions of *Starting Here*, *Starting Now* and *The Song of Summer*.

### APRIL BALLESTEROS PROPERTIES DESIGNER

April has been in the Bay Area theatre scene for years, both on and off the stage with San Francisco Playhouse, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, and Theatre Cultura, and is a familia member with Latinx Mafia. She is an actor, director, theatre educator, stage manager, and properties designer, as well as being the associate artistic director at Theatre Cultura and artistic learning and development associate at California Shakespeare Theater. April recently directed staged readings of *Memoria Del Silencio* for Latinx Mafia and *La Lechuza* for Theatre Cultura. With every project, she hopes to empower and uplift BIPOC voices and their stories with the intention of enriching the look and the content of the American theatre. April earned a BA in theatre arts from California State University, East Bay and is a proud Chicana from East Los Angeles where her family still resides.

### ANTON DOTY SOUND DESIGNER

Anton is a sound designer, audio engineer, and music producer who hails from San Francisco. Along with his musical collaborations with multi-platinum, Grammy-winning

producers, artists, and songwriters, Anton works as a sound designer for one of the country's leading podcast networks, building soundscapes and editing music for some of the most popular narrative horror and true crime podcasts in the world. He recorded and mixed vocal performances for major media projects like the upcoming films *Minions: The Rise of Gru* and *King Richard*, and the video game *Call of Duty - Black Ops: Cold War*. His theatrical credits include *Single Black Female*, directed by Aejay Mitchel and produced by Darryl V. Jones, and *Intimate Apparel*, directed by Jan Hunter at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre.

### **VANESSA HILL** STAGE MANAGER

Vanessa is a Bay Area stage manager with a BA in theatre arts from the School of Theatre and Dance at San Francisco State University. Through the pandemic, she stayed connected to the arts and worked on a few virtual productions, proving "the show will always go on," but is more than excited to return to the stage in her first production with the Playhouse. Recent stage management credits include *Twelfth Night* (African-American Shakespeare Company), *Intimate Apparel* (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre), *Funeral Games* (Bread & Butter Theatre), and *The Niceties* and *Kill Move Paradise* (Shotgun Players). Vanessa is forever grateful for all her friends and family who constantly support her throughout every endeavor she chooses.

### **TEDDY HULSKER** PROJECTIONS DESIGNER

Teddy is a Bay Area multidisciplinary theatre artist specializing in sound and projection design. Recent design credits include *Art* (San Francisco Playhouse), *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Word for Word Performing Arts Company), *Eureka Day* (Aurora Theatre Company), and *Love* (Marin Theatre Company). He received the Landisman Fellowship

for Emerging Designer in 2012 and has received San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle awards for sound design for *Warplay* (New Conservatory Theatre Center) and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Ray of Light Theatre), and for projection design for *Sunday in the Park with George* (San Francisco Playhouse). In addition to theatre design work, Teddy has created original installations and performances in San Francisco, Oakland, Berlin, New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles. He also runs after school Dungeons and Dragons camps for children, teens, and families.

PRONOUNS: HE | HIM | HIS

### **TYLER JEFFREYS** ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

Tyler is excited to work behind the scenes at the Playhouse. The theatre is one of her favorite topics to cover for the website *Theatrus* where she writes theatre reviews. Tyler theorizes that the lessons of theatre training can be applied to everyday life to enhance mental wellness. Her fitness brand, Spinally Free, tests this theory while blending fitness and wellness with theatre techniques. The quarantine fostered her directorial debut with the devised online trilogy *What Had Happened Was...* and *US in the U.S.* Recent performances include *Much Ado About Nothing* in reality-television style (Plethos Productions), Lampito in *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, and *The Late Wedding* by Christopher Chen (Pear Theatre). Tyler thanks Darryl V. Jones and Yahweh the Creator for their support. [@ty.though](mailto:ty.though)

### **KURT LANDISMAN**<sup>^</sup> LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kurt has designed lighting for many Playhouse productions, including *Yoga Play*, *Red Velvet*, *Colossal*, *Jerusalem*, and *Bloody, Bloody, Andrew Jackson*. His lighting designs have been seen at most Bay Area theatre companies including American Conservatory Theater, Marin Theatre Company,

Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Center REPeritory Company, San Francisco Opera, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, and TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. Kurt has received numerous San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle and Drama-Logue awards. Nationally, his designs have been seen at Arizona Theatre Company, Laguna Playhouse, Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, Sacramento Opera, Virginia Opera, Tulsa Opera, Ballet Arizona, Guthrie Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse, as well as Off-Broadway at Circle Repertory Company and the Douglas Fairbanks Theater. His association with playwright Sam Shepard included the world premieres of *True West* and *Fool for Love*. Internationally, his designs have been seen in Tokyo, Singapore, and Shanghai. [kurtlandisman.com](http://kurtlandisman.com)

### **RICHARD OLMSTED**<sup>^</sup> SCENIC DESIGNER

Richard is very pleased to work with the Playhouse for the first time. He has designed numerous productions with Darryl V. Jones including *The Devil's Music: The Life and Times of Besse Smith* (Center REPeritory Company) and *Detroit '67* and *The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company). He has designed other world premieres, including *Eureka Day* and *Partition* (Aurora Theatre Company), *See Under: Love* and *God's Donkey* (Traveling Jewish Theatre), lighting for *Love is a Dream House in Lorin* by Marcus Gardley and *This World in a Woman's Hands* (Shotgun Players), *Santos and Santos* by Octavio Solis (Thick Description), *Hillary and Soon-Yi Shop for Ties* (Magic Theatre), *Apertura Modotta* (Brava Theater Center), and *Let My Enemy Live Long!* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Richard teaches stage design at California State University, East Bay, and lives with his wife Evelyn in Oakland. [olmstedscenic.com](http://olmstedscenic.com)

## KATHLEEN QIU

### COSTUME DESIGNER

Kathleen is an artist and costume designer based in Los Angeles who is thrilled to be making theatre once again. Previously at the Playhouse, she designed *The Fit* and *You Mean to Do Me Harm* in the Sandbox Series. Other Bay Area credits include *How to Transcend a Happy Marriage* and *Passion* (Custom Made Theatre Co.), *Orfeo ed Euridice* (West Edge Opera), *Sweat* (Pear Theatre), *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Bay Area Children's Theatre), *An Invitation Out* and *Universal Robots* (Quantum Dragon Theatre), *Two Mile Hollow* (Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company), and *Hickorydickory* and *Shoggoths on the Veldt* (Dragon Productions). [kathleenq.com](http://kathleenq.com) | [@kat.jlq](https://twitter.com/kat.jlq)

## PRODUCTION TEAM

### STEPHANIE DITBERN

#### WARDROBE ASSISTANT, COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Stephanie has designed properties and costumes for the Playhouse, and for The Breadbox, Cutting Ball Theater, EXIT Theatre, and Custom Made Theatre Co. Favorite credits include costumes for *Vampire Christmas* (EXIT Theatre), and properties for *Timon of Athens* (Cutting Ball Theater), *Isaac's Eye*, *Kurt Vonnegut's Mother Night*, and *Tinderella: the modern musical* (Custom Made Theatre Co.), and *A White Girl's Guide to International Terrorism* and *The Daughters* (Sandbox Series at San Francisco Playhouse). She has been kicking it at the Playhouse as wardrobe assistant since 2015, occasionally moonlighting as a production assistant as she did on *Seared*, *La Cage aux Folles*, and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Stephanie earned an AS in theatre costuming from Cañada College and a BA in theatre design and technology from Plymouth State University.

PRONOUNS: SHE | HER | HERS

## ANTON HEDMAN

### SOUND ENGINEER

Anton was born and raised in the Bay Area. He is the owner of Hedman Sound and the general manager of Sound Productions. Anton has worked at the Playhouse since 2014. Credits elsewhere include *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, *LIZZIE*, *The Silence*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Victoria Theatre), *Assassins*, *Woyzeck*, and *Black Rider* (Shotgun Players), and projects at Pier 39, Eureka Theatre, Brava Theater Center, Cape Fear Regional Theatre in Fayetteville, and La MaMa E.T.C. in New York. He thanks his family and friends for their support and the cast and crew of this production for their hard work and talent. Anton feels "blessed to make a living in the arts!" [hedmansound.com](http://hedmansound.com)

## HEATHER KENYON<sup>A</sup>

### SCENIC ARTIST

Heather is a Bay Area scenic designer and lighting designer. Previous Playhouse lighting designs include *Songs for a New World*, *I Was Right Here*, *Art*, and *The Fit*. Heather worked on the sets for the Playhouse productions of *The Fit*, *Washed Up on the Potomac*, *Born in East Berlin*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *King of the Yees*, and *Art*. Other set design credits include *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (MFA Program at American Conservatory Theater), *American Hero* and *Cloud 9* (Custom Made Theatre Co.), and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (South Bay Musical Theatre). She has also worked with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Aurora Theatre Company, Ballet San José, CMT San José, and WVLO Musical Theatre Company. Heather earned an MFA in scenic design from San Francisco State University and is a proud member of United Scenic Artists 829. [heatherkenyon.net](http://heatherkenyon.net)

PRONOUNS: SHE | HER | HERS

## ANGELA KNUTSON

### PRODUCTION MANAGER, COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Angela is excited to be in her twelfth season with the Playhouse. She has recently taken on a production management position overlooking the new world of filmed productions and is so grateful for all the opportunities the Playhouse has opened up for her. Angela also works closely with the Westlake School for the Performing Arts, where she discovered her love of performing arts.

PRONOUNS: SHE | HER | HERS

## TISH LEUNG

### SCENIC ARTIST, ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Tish has been building productions for Bay Area theatre companies since 2001. This is her seventh season as the assistant technical director at the Playhouse. Tish is also the technical director for the Sandbox Series. In the strange new ventures of pandemic theatre, she is also pulling out some previous experiences with Independent film and video crews as well as photography.

## ELIZABETH NEWTON

### ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER

Elizabeth is originally from Chico and works as assistant production manager and operations associate at the Playhouse. She graduated from Saint Mary's College with degrees in accounting and technical theatre and served as stage manager on many productions there including her personal favorites, *Twelfth Night* and *Cabaret*. She worked as a production assistant on *Elevada* at Shotgun Players and stage manager on *Born in East Berlin* for the Sandbox Series at the Playhouse. Most recently, Elizabeth worked on *Shoot Me When...* and *[hieroglyph]* on the Playhouse mainstage. She is very excited to share this experience with the cast and crew.

## ANDREA SCHWARTZ MASTER ELECTRICIAN

Andrea is thrilled to be in her fourth season as the master electrician at the Playhouse. She is also master electrician for the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco and a lighting designer around the Bay Area. Andrea is proud to call the Playhouse her home.

PRONOUNS: SHE | HER | HERS

## ZACH SIGMAN TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Zach has been technical director at the Playhouse since 2014, starting with *Promises, Promises*. He has been a part of the Bay Area theatre community since the early 1990s and has worked for many theatre companies, including San Jose Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Opera San Jose, and Lamplighters Music Theatre. Zach lives in San Lorenzo with his wonderful wife, Shannon Sigman.

## SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

### SUSI DAMILANO FOUNDER, PRODUCING DIRECTOR

Susi is co-founder and producing director of the Playhouse. She is a five-time recipient of the Excellence in Theatre Award for Principal Actress in a Play from the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle for the Playhouse productions of *Abigail's Party*, *Harper Regan*, *Bug*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, and *Reckless*. Susi has also performed leading roles here in *Yoga Play*, *The Effect*, *The Roommate*, *Red Velvet*, *Tree*, *Bauer*, *Abigail's Party*, *Harper Regan*, *Coraline*, *Slasher*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Landscape of the Body*, *First Person Shooter*, *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train*, *The Crucible*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Our Town*, and *The Smell of the Kill*. Directing credits include Playhouse productions of *Groundhog Day the Musical*,

*Cabaret*, *Mary Poppins*, *Noises Off*, *She Loves Me*, *Stage Kiss*, *Company*, *Stupid Fucking Bird*, *Into the Woods*, *A Behanding in Spokane*, *Den of Thieves*, and *Wirehead* (SFBATCC nomination), the West Coast premieres of *Honey Brown Eyes* (SFBATCC nomination), *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Coronado*, *The Mystery Plays*, and *Roulette*, and the world premieres of *On Clover Road* by Steven Dietz, *From Red to Black* by Rhett Rossi, and *Seven Days* by Daniel Heath in the Sandbox Series.

PRONOUNS: SHE | HER | HERS

### BILL ENGLISH FOUNDER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Bill English is the co-founder and artistic director of the Playhouse. In fifteen years with Susi Damilano, he has guided its growth from a bare-bones storefront to the second-largest nonprofit theatre company in San Francisco. Bill designed our first theater space at 536 Sutter Street and personally reconfigured our current space from a barn-like 700-seat hall into the current gracious and intimate 199-seat venue. Along the way, he has served as director, actor, scenic designer, and sound designer, winning San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle nominations or awards in each of those categories. Bill is also an accomplished musician and builder. Milestone accomplishments include bringing Pulitzer Prize-winner Stephen Adly Guirgis to the Bay Area by directing three of his plays, commissioning twelve playwrights including Theresa Rebeck, Aaron Loeb, Lauren Gunderson, Lauren Yee, and Christopher Chen, and developing world premieres from workshops to Sandbox Series to Mainstage Season to Off-Broadway (including the Off-Broadway transfers of *Ideation* and *Bauer*), and presenting the very first production of *Grounded* by George Brant which later played at the Public Theater. He coined the

phrase “the empathy gym” and it drives everything at the Playhouse.

### DANIKA INGRAHAM GENERAL MANAGER, COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Danika is an artist and passionate advocate for inclusion and diversity in the performing arts. She takes pride in helping to shape organizational cultures where all people feel valued and seen. In previous managerial roles, she has established inclusive practices in the workplace and instituted policies to ensure the safety of all staff members. She has worn many hats including producing, budget management, theater tech, and everything in between. Danika recently became a certified COVID Compliance Officer to oversee and implement the safety program at the Playhouse.

## SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

was founded in 2003 and is the only mid-sized professional theatre company in downtown San Francisco, an intimate alternative to the larger, more traditional theaters. Presenting a diverse range of plays and musicals, the Playhouse produces new works as well as reimagined classics, “making the edgy accessible and the accessible edgy.” Its bold San Francisco Playhouse Sandbox Series – the only subscription series in the Bay Area devoted solely to presenting world premieres – is dedicated to nurturing new playwrights beyond readings. There is also a commitment to more in-depth work through individual commissions, including plays by Theresa Rebeck, Steve Yockey, Christopher Chen, Lauren Gunderson, and Aaron Loeb. The Playhouse has developed, presented, and transferred three world premieres to New York. Gunderson’s *Bauer* and Loeb’s *Ideation* opened Off-Broadway, and Loeb’s *Abraham Lincoln's Big, Gay Dance Party* won the best of New York International Fringe Festival. Their commitment to new works in the

San Francisco Playhouse Sandbox Series has been honored by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Theatre Wing. The Playhouse secured their two highest-profile commissions to date: *Seared* by Theresa Rebeck, which opened the 2016-2017 Mainstage Season and was nominated for ten San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle awards, and *You Mean to Do Me Harm* by Christopher Chen, winner of the Lanford Wilson Award from the Dramatists Guild of America in 2016. Works developed by the Playhouse have gone on to receive regional and national acclaim. Yockey's *Pluto* – a Playhouse commission – was named a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere, George Brant's *Grounded* – a Playhouse premiere – was produced at the Public Theater starring Anne Hathaway and directed by Julie Taymor in 2015, and Loeb's *Abraham Lincoln's Big, Gay Dance Party* has received productions from Birmingham to Off-Broadway. [sfplayhouse.org](http://sfplayhouse.org)

## THE SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE

### ELLEN CALLAS

GENERAL MANAGER,  
COLLECTIVE MEMBER

Ellen is a native Chicagoan who cut her teeth on Second City. In 1976, she co-founded Hit and Run Theater, a political sketch comedy troupe that toured rural northern California for many years. Since joining the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1986, Ellen has worked as a writer on *Ripped Van Winkle*, *Secrets in the Sand*, *Rats*, *Back to Normal*, *Escape from Cyberia*, *Revenger Rat*, *Soul Suckers*, *Eating It*, *1600 Transylvania Ave*, *Doing Good*, and *Possibilidad*, an actor in *Rats*, director of *Making a Killing*, and production, company, and stage manager for various productions including the international collaboration and

Asian tour of *Big Wind*. She also served as company manager for the long running production of *Angels in America: Parts I & II* at American Conservatory Theater. Ellen is committed to mentoring future activist artists and from its beginning has been an enthusiastic teacher and occasional project director for the twenty-four-year-old Youth Theater Project at the Mime Troupe. She credits her ability as an improviser for helping to navigate the rocky road of nonprofit political theatre.

### MARISSA ELLISON

BOOKING COORDINATOR,  
TOUR MANAGER

Marissa was born and raised in Wisconsin and has been a lover of theatre since her debut as an orphan in Annie in the third grade. Her relationship with the Troupe began in the summer of 2017, when she spent her summer as a workshop student. Marissa graduated with a BA in theatre performance from Marquette University. Since then, she has performed in the Bay Area with Ross Valley Players and Landmark Musical Theatre. Marissa is always excited to spend time at the Mime Troupe and be involved with such passionate theatre professionals!

### KAREN RUNK

PRODUCTION STAGE  
MANAGER

Karen moved to San Francisco with the intention of only staying for a few months. Two decades later she is still here! This is largely due to the talented folks at the Troupe, and thanks to Golden Thread Productions where she is a resident artist, but mostly due to rent control! Karen first experienced the Troupe as stage manager for two 1997 youth projects, *Revenger Rat Meets the Merchant of Death* and *Inside Out*, after which she ran screaming into the arms of the Magic Theatre and there she stayed, contently for two years. The Troupe then wooed her back for their 1999 summer production

*City for Sale*. Still under the wooing spell of the Troupe, Karen has stage managed a plethora of summer productions and has only managed to escape, successfully, one full summer back in 2002, when she worked with San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. However, Karen is plotting a daring escape...

## SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE

The always radical, never ever silent, Tony and Obie award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe is a democratically run, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multi-cultural, gender-balanced theatre of social justice that by its very existence sustains a vision of community governance of, by, and for The People. For over sixty years, The Troupe has created and produced theatre with a working-class analysis of the events that shape our society, used theatre to expose social and economic injustice, and demanded revolutionary change on behalf of working people. The San Francisco Mime Troupe has performed across the country, Off-Broadway, at the Kennedy Center, and at theatre festivals around the world, but to reach the broadest possible audience most of our productions are presented at a price every worker can afford, at a place they can all attend: free, and in the parks. (Or, for the two pandemic summers, as radio plays!) [sfmt.org](http://sfmt.org)

## ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

was founded in 1913. It is the US labor union that represents more than 50,000 actors and stage managers. Equity seeks to foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages and working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. [actorsequity.org](http://actorsequity.org)

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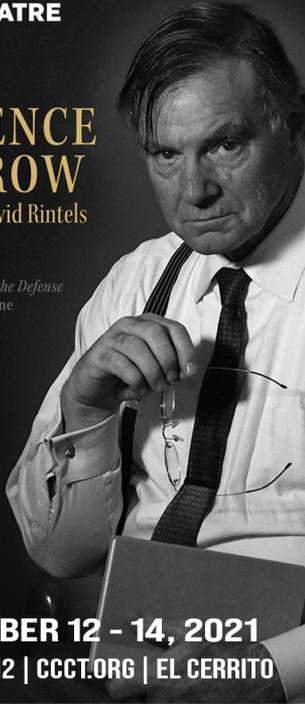
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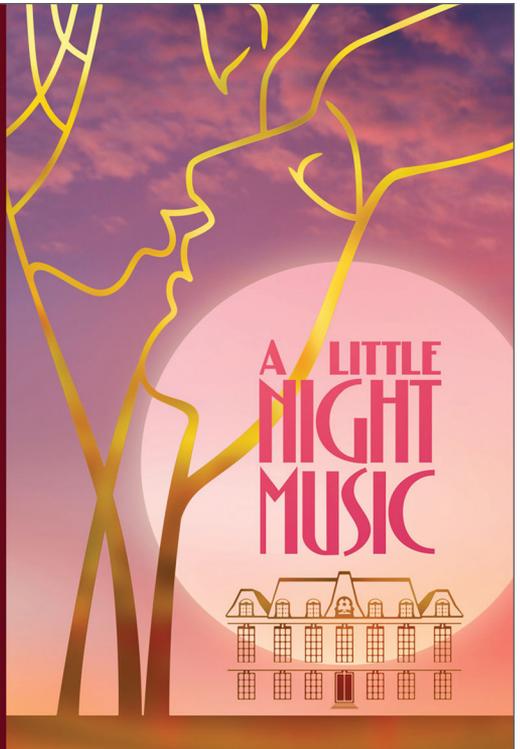
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