ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

presents

MRS. LOMAN IS LEAVING

by Katie Forgette

directed by Julie Beckman

October 12-27, 2024

CAST

JONELLE JORDAN*
PENNY

SHAUNYCE OMAR*
BRENDA/SHEILA

MJ SIEBER*
SAM LUCAS *(Oct 12-15)*

ALEXANDRA TAVARES*
JOANNE ROGERS

NATHANIEL TENENBAUM*~
SAM LUCAS *(Oct 16-27)*

R. HAMILTON WRIGHT*~
GEORGE RATCLIFFE

CREATIVE TEAM

JULIE BECKMAN
DIRECTOR

ANDREA BRYN BUSH
SCENIC DESIGNER

DEB TROUT
COSTUME DESIGNER

LILY MCLEOD
LIGHTING DESIGNER

ROBERTSON WITMER
SOUND DESIGNER

CRYSTAL DAWN MUNKERS
CHOREOGRAPHER

CASEY PRICE
ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

MEGHAN ROCHE
ASSOCIATE SOUND DESIGNER

STAGE MANAGEMENT

JR WELDEN*
STAGE MANAGER

GABRIELLE NORRIS*
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

THEATRE & SEASON PARTNERS

4 CULTURE

ARTSFUND

KATHARYN ALVORD GERLICH

THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION INC.

NESHOLM FAMILY FOUNDATION

TRIAL & ERROR PRODUCTIONS

ACT's World Premiere of *Mrs. Loman is Leaving* made possible with the generous support of Allan & Anne Affleck.

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States
~ACT Core Company member

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 – A Welcome from Interim Artistic Director Elisabeth Farwell-Moreland

4 – Mission, Values, and Land Acknowledgment

5 – A Letter from Director Julie Beckman

8-10– Who's Who in *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*

11-14 – An Interview with Katie Forgette and Julie Beckman

16 – ACT Staff

17 – ACT Leadership, Core Company, & Commissioned Artist

19 – Notes from the ACT Collective/New Works in Focus

21 – New Works Spotlight: Holly Arsenault

22 – Partner Circles/ Thank You!

PATRON INFORMATION

DURING THE SHOW

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings or streams in any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited, a violation of the author(s)'s rights and actionable under United States copyright law.

Audience members are cordially reminded to silence all electronic devices.

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

FOOD AND DRINK

Bar service and concessions are available in the lobby. Pre-ordering for intermission is available for most shows. No outside food or drink is allowed.

SMOKING POLICY

Smoking is not allowed in any part of the building or within 25 feet of the entrance.

FIREARMS POLICY

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

LOST AND FOUND

Please contact the Box Office at boxoffice@acttheatre.org or call 206.292.7676. For Box Office hours, visit acttheatre.org/visit/box-office.

ACCESSIBILITY

ACT offers the **Figaro MobiTxt® Closed Captioning System for audience members who are Deaf or hard of hearing**. This system is offered at all performances in most of our theatres. ACT is also equipped with the **Williams Sound® Audio Equipment, which amplifies stage sounds with the aid of headsets and also provides sound for our Audio Description performances**. Both devices can be reserved at the time of ticket purchase and/or requested upon arrival to the theatre at the Accessibility table (please ask staff for assistance).

Large Print Programs are available and can be picked up at our Accessibility table.

Audio Description and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation is offered at the following performance of *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*: Saturday, October 19, 2024 at 2:00pm.

ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE CONTACT INFORMATION

700 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101

Phone: 206.292.7676 | acttheatre.org

A WELCOME FROM INTERIM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ELISABETH FARWELL-MORELAND

One of my first memories of sitting in a theatre was watching my mother wrapped in a blue chiffon and cellophane dress, with every inch of her exposed skin covered in blue make-up. I don't remember the name of the play, or really what it was about, but I remember her standing tall, surrounded by actors and bathed in cool blue theatrical lighting, the young audience mesmerized. The stage was small, and she looked like a queen. Or perhaps she was a witch. The theatre smelled like heated lighting gels, casein paint, and sawdust—a smell I have loved ever since. Later, I watched my father perform the role of El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* on this same stage. As I spent time in that space I learned new names. Greg Falls. Jean Falls. And the name of the theatre: ACT. These names (and the acronym A Contemporary Theatre) became part of the mythology of my childhood, part of my DNA.

"...this is what ACT has always been about: upending our expectations, challenging our perceptions, inviting us to take another look, opening our minds."

Many years have passed, and ACT Contemporary Theatre has become one of the most notable theatres in the country for our support of emerging playwrights, new works, and local artists. This season we are presenting two world premieres by local playwrights that will undoubtedly become a part of the American canon. Although both deal with where we fit into our own stories, they could not be more unique.

Katie Forgette's *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*, ACT's 48th World Premiere, takes place on opening night of one of the most famous plays in the world, but quickly turns our assumptions about its greatness upside down. As life imitates art, we suddenly question how we hear and value these stories, depending on who is telling them and how society changes (or doesn't change). From these questions, as well as some unexpected hilarious and touching chaos, a new way of telling the story emerges. To me, this is what ACT has always been about: upending our expectations, challenging our perceptions, inviting us to take another look, opening our minds. Changing our DNA.

It is thrilling to be back.

See you around the theatre!

ACT has renewed our commitment to our mission, values, culture, and the creation of New Works. We are publishing them here to invite conversation and hold ourselves accountable.

OUR MISSION

ACT is a contemporary theatre where artistic ambition and civic engagement unite.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ACT Contemporary Theatre acknowledges that the land on which this theatre stands is part of the ancestral homelands of the **Muckleshoot**, **Suquamish**, **Duwamish**, **Snoqualmie**, and **Tulalip** peoples along the waterways of the **Salish Sea**. We honor the **29 federally recognized sovereign nations** within the state of Washington as well as the many other unrecognized peoples in this area.

As we gather and strive to share stories of our world with joy and clarity, **we honor with gratitude the original stewards and storytellers of these lands — past, present, and future**. We value the immense contributions, sacrifices and **resilience of Indigenous People here**, and fully **acknowledge** the profound multi-generational impact that colonization has had on Native people everywhere, including ongoing disparities, racism, and political and social **INVISIBILITY**. **To heal, we need truth and understanding that everyone actively participates in, together**.

Please consider taking action to support Indigenous communities. Support Native-owned businesses, Native artists, and Native causes. Donate your time, energy, and money to support Native people, and contact your local elected representatives. This land acknowledgement is one small act in recognizing the importance of continuing to care for the land and our important relationship with the original people of this place we all call home who are still here. We are all in relationship to each other.

WE BELIEVE

ACT STATEMENT OF VALUES AND COMMITMENTS

ACT believes in the power of theatre to change lives. For too long, the lives of our institution has focused on have been predominantly white and able-bodied. We acknowledge that ACT has worked inside biased systems that have continued to center only a small group of our global community. We want our art to be joyful and our work to have a spirit of adventure, so we commit to building thoughtful guardrails to bolster an environment where we can all be brave and buoyant together.

Developed by the Staff, Core Company, and Trustees of ACT Contemporary Theatre, this statement of values and commitments was created to ensure the well-being of artists, collaborators, board members, and staff to engage in the spirit of an ever-improving process.

OUR VALUES

We are people-led and art-centered.

We believe in creating a safe space in which to do dangerous work.

We depend on each other for clear, honest, and responsible communication.

We believe that the building of excellent art is risky and joyful, and takes time.

We strive to ensure that artistic trust is baked into the way we work.

Learn more about Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging.

A LETTER FROM DIRECTOR
JULIE BECKMAN

I have always loved backstage comedies for the opportunity for theatre people to poke fun at themselves, and also to "pull back the curtain" on many of the traditions and foibles of the theatre world. In *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*, we get a taste of the excitement and nerves of opening night in a fast-paced, zany love letter to theatre. We also get "insider" insight into one of the most famous plays in American literature—*Death of a Salesman*—from the standpoint of a "supporting" character. We see how the personal journey of actors can sometimes intersect with their onstage counterparts—though fortunately in our story, the actors (Joanne and George) demonstrate more capacity for growth, change, humor, and hope than the tragic journeys of their characters—Linda and Willy Loman.

All of the characters in this lively story (actors, director, stage manager, and producer) are at turning points in their lives, all of them desperately need this production to succeed, and all depend on each other to realize their aspirations. This is not just an apt metaphor for theatre as a collaborative art, but also an invitation to remember our inter-connectedness with our entire community—both the people we have chosen, and the people who may not always see eye to eye with. In a time of intense polarization, it is helpful to remind ourselves of our common purpose.

Mrs. Loman is Leaving also explores what it means to "come back" to theatre after being away—something we have all experienced much more than we ever imagined—and how deeply we can be affected by the experience of making and seeing theatre. At the center of the story are several talented, caring, and under-appreciated women—not unlike Linda Loman. They find themselves shoring up a ship that starts to go down around them, and their resourcefulness (along with help from surprising places) allow them all to safely reach shore, though at a different destination from what they originally intended.

I am deeply appreciative of Katie Forgette for creating these charming and compelling characters, to ACT for believing in new work and bringing this brilliant play to the stage, to these outrageously talented actors and designers for making every moment of this process a pleasure, and to you, the audience, for sharing the journey!

Need a refresher on *Death of a Salesman?*

Learn more here!

NW2 NEW WORKS NORTHWEST

SECOND ANNUAL FESTIVAL

October 30-November 3, 2024

All performances in ACT's Bullitt Cabaret

20 NEW WORKS.
5 DAYS.
20 SEATTLE PLAYWRIGHTS.

SOLO ACT – *A MONOLOGUE SLAM*
OCTOBER 30 @7PM

REFUGEE RHAPSODY *BY YUSSEF EL GUINDI*
NOVEMBER 1 @7PM

UHURU *BY GLORIA MAJULE*
NOVEMBER 2 @4PM

LEGACIES: A GHOST STORY *BY AMONTAINE AURORE*
NOVEMBER 2 @7PM

UNDERWATER WEATHER *BY HOLLY ARSENAULT*
NOVEMBER 3 @4PM

HOME *BY NAGHMEH SAMINI*
NOVEMBER 3 @7PM

All performances are Pay-What-You-Choose.

ACT

**SPACE IS LIMITED—
GRAB YOUR TICKETS TODAY!**

NEW WORKS DINNER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE
700 UNION STREET

ACT Contemporary Theatre Board of Trustees invites you to

Dinner celebrating New Works Northwest Festival (NW²)

&

Honoring John Langs

Kick off the NW² festival with dinner hosted by **Steven Dietz** and **Sarah Rudinoff**! Let's celebrate the lasting legacy of John Langs as we raise money for the future of New Works at ACT.

Enjoy tasty cocktails, dinner by award-winning Kaspars, and a once-in-a-lifetime evening featuring excerpts from ACT World Premieres and New Works!

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS

$250 | $500 | $1,000

TABLES

$2,500 | $5,000 | $10,000

There are benefits at each level, including complimentary parking tickets to NW² readings, and more. For more information and to purchase tickets scan the QR code or visit events.act-theatre.org/nw2dinner

WHO'S WHO IN *MRS. LOMAN IS LEAVING*

JONELLE JORDAN*
(she/her)
PENNY

Jonelle Jordan is happy to join this ensemble introducing Katie's story to the world. She has previously performed at ACT in *Bethany*. A selection of other local productions includes *The Lower Depths* (Intiman Theatre/The Seagull Project); *Last Drive to Dodge* (Taproot Theatre); *Sense and Sensibility* (Village Theatre); *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *The Government Inspector* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); *The Revolutionists* (ArtsWest); and *The Thanksgiving Play* (Seattle Public Theatre). Jonelle has a BFA in performance from Otterbein University. She is a mom of two (a 3-year-old and a 3-month-old!) and is a student pursuing her MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Instagram: @nelleb

SHAUNYCE OMAR*
(she/her)
BRENDA/ SHEILA

Shaunyce Omar holds a BA degree in Theatre from Southern University and A&M College. Her regional credits include: Seattle Rep, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Intiman Theatre, True Colors Theatre, Village Theatre, The Ensemble Theatre Houston, The Alley Theatre, and TUTS. National Tour: *Menopause the Musical*. TV/ Film credits include *The Librarians*, *Last Seen in Idaho*, and *Portal Runner*. Her voice can also be heard as the character Madison Grant in the *State of Decay: LIFELINE* video game. Shaunyce is the recipient of two Gregory, Footlight, Broadway World, and The 5th Avenue Theatre Subscriber's Choice awards. In addition to stage and screen work, Omar is a teaching artist and has taught in both public and private schools, arts organizations, and overseas as a Master Sensei of Gospel Music in Japan. "Lead With Love"

MJ SIEBER*
(he/him)
SAM LUCAS
(Oct 12-15)

MJ Sieber most recently appeared in *The Adding Machine* with The Feast. Other Seattle credits: Keiko Green's *The Bed Trick* (Seattle Shakespeare Company), *Outside Mullingar*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Photograph 51*, *Dry Powder* (Seattle Rep), *Stupid F-ing Bird*, *Oslo*, *The Crucible* (ACT). In San Diego, he won Outstanding Featured Actor from the Critics' Circle for his work in Kate Hamill's world premiere of *The Little Fellow*. Next, he'll direct Stephen King's *Misery* in San Diego with Backyard Renaissance. Huge thanks to Keiko, Mariko, Wade and Gus.

ALEXANDRA TAVARES*
(she/her)
JOANNE ROGERS

Alexandra is excited to be a part of the World Premiere of *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*. Most recently, she portrayed Anna in Seattle Shakespeare's World Premiere, *The Bed Trick*, and The Seagull Project and Intiman Theatre's world premiere of a new adaptation of Maxim Gorki's *The Lower Depths*. Other productions include *The Thin Place* and *Middletown* at ACT; Caliban in *The Tempest*, *Odyssey*, *Constellations*, *The Great Moment* at Seattle Rep; *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* with Intiman Theatre and The Williams Project; *Ironbound* at Seattle Public Theatre; *Frost/Nixon* at Strawberry Workshop Theatre; Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Clean House*, *Italian-American Reconciliation, Tom Jones* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Somebody/ Nobody*, *Sherlock Holmes* at Arizona Theatre Company; and *Medea* at Seattle Shakespeare Company. She is a co-founder of The Seagull Project and has performed with them in *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters*, and *Uncle Vanya*. She holds an MFA from the University of Washington.

NATHANIEL TENENBAUM*~
(he/him)
SAM LUCAS
(Oct 16-27)

Before Pandemic: *Indecent* (Seattle Rep); *UrineTown* (ACT/The 5th Avenue Theatre); *Boeing-Boeing* (TheatreO); and *The Pillowman - ActOne*, *HAIR* (Phoenix Theatre). Quarantine: Baked one strawberry cheesecake, sewed one shirt (unwearable), played his vinyl. Post-quarantine: *Mamma Mia* (Village Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); *The Wiz* (The 5th Avenue Theatre); *Cowboy Bob* (The Alley Theatre); and *A Case for the Existence of God* (ACT Contemporary Theatre). <3 2 my Dolls, my boys and Langes

R. HAMILTON WRIGHT*~
(he/him)
GEORGE RATCLIFFE

R. Hamilton Wright has appeared in over 55 productions at ACT Contemporary Theatre, the first being Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* in 1981, directed by Robert Loper, and the latest being Reginald Andrē Jackson's *History of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near* in 2023, directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton. Some of his favorites over the intervening 40 plus years were *Red Noses*, *Chorus of Disapproval, Intimate Exchanges*, *Middletown*, *A Christmas Carol* (a few times as both Actor and Director, including directing this year), *Double Indemnity* (Writer), *End of the World*, *Souvenir*

(Director), *The Revengers' Comedies*, *The Pillowman*, *The Royale*, *Oslo*, *Assisted Living* (Director), *The Odd Couple,* and *Stuff Happens*. The long-running production of Bob and Katie's Marriage recently celebrated its 28th season. It has been extended indefinitely.

KATIE FORGETTE
(she/her)
PLAYWRIGHT

Katie Forgette spent the first part of her professional career as an actor. She performed at a number of theaters including Seattle Rep, ACT Contemporary Theatre, and Intiman Theatre. Her play, *A Facility for Living*, premiered at ACT in 2013. Other plays include: *Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, *Welcome to Vital Vista Village*, *The Body Snatcher*, *Evidence of Things Unseen*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*, *The O'Conner Girls*, *Everybody's A Critic*, and *It Went Like This*. Her plays have been produced at the Alley Theatre, Penguin Rep, Asolo Rep, Florida Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, Human Race Theatre, Greater Boston Stage, Seattle Rep, Manitoba Theatre Centre, CAP21, People's Light, Park Square Theatre, Barter Theatre, The Dorset Theatre Festival, Vertigo Theatre, Taproot Theatre, Centenary Stage, and Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. She lives in a tiny, brick house in Seattle with her favorite husband, actor R. Hamilton Wright.

JULIE BECKMAN
(she/her)
DIRECTOR

Julie Beckman is a freelance theatre director and adapter based in Seattle. She most recently directed her own adaptation of Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance* with Island Shakespeare Festival on Whidbey Island. Previous productions include *A Christmas Carol* at ACT Contemporary Theatre (2021); *Downstairs* with Theatre22; and *Bernie's Apt* with eSe Teatro. Other Seattle directing credits include her own adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Jane Eyre*, *Hard Times*, and *The Bunner Sisters*. She also directed the Seattle premieres of *Animals Out of Paper*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *The Revolutionists*, *Annapurna*, *The Bells*, *Trevor*, *26 Miles*, and *A Small Fire*. Her work has also been seen in Chicago, Washington, D.C, Cincinnati, Atlanta, St. Louis, and at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Company in Canada. She has an MFA in directing from Northwestern University.

ANDREA BRYN BUSH
(she/her)
SCENIC DESIGNER

Andrea is thrilled to be part of the creative team for *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*. As a scenic designer, she has worked with many Seattle based companies including Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Seattle Public Theater, and Cornish College of the Arts. She is a former Ensemble member and resident designer at Washington Ensemble Theatre. Andrea is an MFA graduate from UW where she is currently on staff in the Scene Shop. She received the 2010 Gregory Award for outstanding scenic design.

LILY MCLEOD
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lily is a Seattle-based lighting designer/associate with a BA in Theatre from Seattle University. Her designs have been seen onstage at Youth Theatre Northwest, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Theatre 9/12, and ACTLab (*Measure for Measure* and *Guards at the Taj*). Though her background is primarily in theatre, in recent years she has assisted on a few film projects, including *The Jinkx & DeLa Holiday Special*, *Potato Dreams of America*, and Seattle Rep's *A Winter's Tale*. As an assistant/associate she has worked at venues all around Seattle, including over 20 productions here at ACT. She is a former Seattle Rep intern and is now on staff as their Lighting Associate.

CRYSTAL DAWN MUNKERS
CHOREOGRAPHER

Crystal is thrilled to be back at ACT Contemporary Theatre after choreographing *A Christmas Carol*, *Bad Apples*, *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play*, *Little Shop of Horrors* (ACT/The 5th Avenue Theatre), and *Passing Strange* (Sidecountry Theatre/ACT). Northwest credits include *Boeing, Boeing!*, *Hound of the Baskervilles* (Seattle Rep); *Hairspray* (Gregory Nominee), *No Way to Tread a Lady*, *Watt?!?*, *West Side Story*, *Peter Pan* (Village Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Rivals*, *The Government Inspector*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo + Juliet*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); *Princess Ida* (Seattle Gilbert & Sullivan Society – Gregory Nominee); and directing the film *Her Heart*. Crystal produced, directed, and designed a Fosse retrospective for Carnival Cruise Lines and is currently developing *Operation: Mindcrime* for SideCountry Theatre. She completed the UW's graduate program in Directing for the Stage and Screen and is an educator for Cornish College of the Arts and the University of Puget Sound.

CASEY PRICE
ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Casey Price is a scenic and lighting designer based in Seattle, WA. His work has been seen across the country at Arizona Broadway Theatre, Hale Center Theatre Sandy, Arts West, Orlando Family Stage,

WHO'S WHO IN *MRS. LOMAN IS LEAVING*

Mad Cow Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, and many others. He is excited to be working with ACT Contemporary Theatre again on this project. Love to his family and friends for always supporting him. CaseyPriceDesign.com

DEB TROUT

COSTUME DESIGNER

Ms. Trout is amazed to be entering her 30th year designing costumes for the Seattle community and ACT Contemporary Theatre. A few favorite designs at ACT include *The Crucible*, *Mr. Burns – A Post Electric Play*, and *Dracula*. Other selected Northwest delights have been *Something's Afoot* at The 5th Ave Theatre; *Beatrice and Benedict*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Turn of the Screw* at Seattle Opera; *A Doll's House, Part 2*, the "Sherlock Holmes" plays at Seattle Rep; *Cyrano*, *Twelfth Night* at Portland Center Stage; and *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *Adventures with Spot* at Seattle Children's Theatre. Two less traditional pieces have been Jeffrey Fracé's *The Old Man and His Tea* and Alice Gosti's *How to Become a Partisan*. Other theaters include Actors Theater of Louisville, The Alley Theatre (Houston), The Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Arizona Theatre Co., The Children's Theatre (Minneapolis), The Denver Center Theatre, Manhattan School of Music, The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Yale Repertory Theatre, and many more. Ms. Trout is a member of USA Local 829, was co-founder of "Mackey and Trout," a NYC-based theatrical millinery business, and is Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington.

ROBERTSON WITMER

(he/him)

SOUND DESIGNER

Rob is a Seattle-based sound designer and musician. Previously at ACT Contemporary Theatre, Rob composed music for *The Lehman Trilogy* and *Dracula*. Other recent productions include: *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (Seattle Opera); *Once on This Island*, *Camelot* (Village Theatre); *Murder on the Links* (Laguna Playhouse); *Clyde's* (ArtsWest); *The Moors* (Seattle Public Theatre); and *Romeo & Juliet* (Seattle Shakespeare Company). Rob is a member of United Scenic Artists, and plays with several bands, including the Love Markets and "Awesome."

JR WELDEN*

STAGE MANAGER

ACT Contemporary Theatre: *A Case for the Existence of God*, *Mary Stewart*, *The Underpants*, *Miss Witherspoon*, *Eurydice*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Threesome*, *Uncle Ho to Uncle Sam*, *One Slight Hitch*, and 16 years of *A Christmas Carol*. At The 5th Avenue Theatre: *White Christmas*, *Spring Awakening*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods*, *The Wiz*, *Choir Boy*, *Afterwords*, *West Side Story*, *Austen's Pride*, *Rock of Ages*, *Hunchback*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Pajama Game*. He has also stage managed many productions for Seattle Rep, Intiman Theatre, and Mark Taper Forum. He adopted his beautiful son, Travis, after becoming a licensed foster parent.

GABRIELLE NORRIS*

(she/her)

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Gabrielle Norris is excited to make her Seattle SM debut with ACT Contemporary Theatre! She has been around the world managing hundreds of different stages on cruise ships and the *RENT* 20th and 25th Anniversary Tour. Favorite credits include *Burn the Floor*, *Blue Man Group*, and *Cirque Dreams* (NCL), and the aerial/ice-skating shows at the Canadian National Exhibition. Gabrielle has been seen working administratively in company management and casting for The 5th Avenue Theatre since settling in Seattle with her German Shepard, Zuri, and her partner, Jeremy. She annoys her friends with recycling and aerospace fun facts. Sometimes at the same time. Thanks to Caitlin and Laura K. for dragging her on this fun journey!

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Wayne Horvitz. Music from *Death of a Salesman* (ACT Theatre, 1998) composed by Wayne Horvitz, performed by the 4 plus 1 Ensemble.

ACT operates under agreements with the following:

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.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATIE FORGETTE AND JULIE BECKMAN

What goes into making a new play? Katie Forgette, playwright of *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*, chats with Director Julie Beckman on the unique challenges and opportunities involved in staging a world premiere.

What's unique about staging a world premiere as compared to a play that's been produced before?

Julie Beckman: Every play is a process of exploration, but a world premiere provides the opportunity for an even more exciting layer of discovery. You don't have the benefit (or burden) of having seen previous productions, or having read different interpretations of the play. We just start with the text as it is—we uncover things, we discover things, we share and learn and teach each other. The experience of collaboration can be particularly rich and fruitful, especially when the playwright is present, because the playwright brings an invaluable connection to the text, but also has the opportunity to hear things in a new way. There can be surprises for everyone as the actors bring their own history and insights, connect with each other, and find things that sometimes the playwright doesn't even know are there.

It's also super exciting for actors because they are literally originating the roles. It's a challenge and a privilege, and creates an increased level of energy. This is absolutely true for me as a director as well, since I get to serve as a midwife—helping bring a brand-new creation to life.

Katie Forgette: What Julie said! Because I start from what I call my "mind's eye production," I sometimes think of world premieres as being the second production. I go from the production I have in my head—which is pretty specific, I mean, you could give me a line of dialogue and I could tell you where everyone is onstage—to being in the room with people, and now it's up on its feet in reality. It's kinda like baby steps—seeing a baby walk the first time. Sometimes they take two steps and falls, and sometimes they take ten. That is super exciting—you learn so much. Rehearsal will bring something to the fore that you hadn't thought about as a playwright, and then something you thought was as obvious as the Grand Canyon, the actors don't get. If you're willing to roll like that, it can be really fun.

The Mrs. Loman is Leaving *cast and creative team sit for a table read at first rehearsal; photo by Giao Nguyen*

It also takes, I think, a certain kind of actor who likes to be in a world premiere, because you're going to be getting changes fast and furious—you might even be getting them in previews—and some actors can roll that way and some actors can't.

JB: That makes a lot of sense. Sometimes we get into the middle of a scene, and something's not quite working. And then we need to discover... is that because the staging isn't quite right, or because the actor doesn't quite understand the character or the moment, or does the language need tweaking? So your toolbox is bigger because you have all of those options.

I will name/confess that one of the particular challenges of directing a premiere production is that in addition to wanting to bring my own vision to the play, I really want to honor the intentions of the playwright and do right by her. With the playwright in the room, I can get a little nervous that I'm missing something, or that I've misinterpreted something. Fortunately, I have a great admiration for Katie and I really trust her writing, and I am very grateful that we entered the process with a great rapport—but the stakes are high and that adds to the anxiety!

KF: I think that anxiety really triangulates in the room—the actors are like "does the playwright think I'm doing ok?" The playwright is thinking, "are the actors wishing they hadn't signed their contract?" The director is thinking, "does the playwright get what I'm saying?; that actor didn't take my note." So there's this pinging off of each other, I think, because it's brand-new.

***Mrs. Loman is Leaving* follows a long tradition of theatre about theatre—why do you think such "metastories" remain compelling to playwrights and audiences?**

JB: I know I'm a little bit biased, but theatre people are fun! They're interesting, they're quirky, they're creative, sometimes they're larger than life. They're great storytellers or they wouldn't be there. It's a great starting point, because you have the opportunity to integrate all

Katie Forgette speaks with former ACT Artistic Director John Langs at last year's Mrs. Loman is Leaving *talkback; photo by Jeremy Jackson*

those entertaining elements.

I also think that theatre is a world that is truly collaborative, so you're telling a story where each of the characters really needs the other characters. The actors (Joanne and George), the director (Sam), the producer (Sheila), and the stage manager (Penny)—they all need each other. They have a shared goal of creating this piece of theatre. They also have a built-in deadline—in this case, it's opening night. There are obstacles for each of the characters—we're not sure that they are going to make it, that the show is actually going to get on its feet. And yet you have this underlying theme that the show must go on, and the audience is going to be there, the critic is going to be there...and that they will succeed or fail together.

KF: I think that most people in theatre love all forms of artistic expression—if you love plays, you like books; if you like books, you might like opera—there's a lot of overlap. I think folks like stories where the process of creating is part of the background: TV shows about putting on a TV show—*30 Rock*; movies about making movies—*Get Shorty*; novels about writing a novel—Stegner's *Angle of Repose*. Like Julie said, there's just an element of fun for the lover of those artistic expressions. I'm not sure you get a lot of reality or facts—but there are definitely inside jokes, and who doesn't love an inside joke? Even though you're not seeing specifically how the sausage is made, and it's a heightened, exaggerated, and sometimes, not completely realistic portrayal of that world, it's still a lot of fun.

This play was part of ACT's inaugural New Works Northwest Festival—can you talk about that experience and how it fits into the development of a new play?

KF: It's incredibly helpful—maybe the better word is useful. It's great to hear it read out loud for the first time—not even up on its feet. You're able to hear the rhythms of a scene, and to me, the pace and the rhythm of the scene is everything.

Even though the actors had a very short rehearsal period and had new pages to look at the second day, they did a bang-up job. I could hear the play at speed. Then I was able to go, "Oh, this scene is four exchanges too long. That other scene has to go faster." It's like playing music at the wrong speed: the scene might be right, but if it's not at the right speed, you're not gonna get it. And other times, you'll hear something, and it doesn't matter what speed it's at, it has to be cut—it doesn't work. I refer to it as "unnecessary freight." Sometimes you realize you don't need a line of dialogue from someone, and other times you say "oh, he should really say something here." You get so much from it—it's a gift to have a reading. Nothing beats it—you're ahead of the game once you start rehearsal.

JB: Not only is the new works festival valuable for script development, it's also incredibly valuable to ACT because they get to hear scripts read by fabulous actors and hear audiences respond in real time—and in the case of *Mrs. Loman is Leaving*, the response was extremely positive, so I'm sure it was a great encouragement for putting it in the season. And in festivals like this, even if the hosting organization isn't in a position to produce the play, the word can spread and lead to productions elsewhere, so it's a win all around.

Why should audiences take risks on a new play?

JB: In new work—when the audience comes, they're part of the process. We learn a huge amount in rehearsals, and we adjust as necessary. But until you get the audience in there, and the actors feel the audience, and the audience responds to the actors—the process is not complete. You don't have theatre without the audience. Their input contributes to the creation.

KF: I'll reiterate what Julie said—the audience, especially in a world premiere, is a part of it. I've been in a couple of world premieres where, if you came to the third preview, you might have seen a different show than first preview audiences saw. A scene might have been cut or added—any number of things can change. You can't do theatre without an audience—they are the third leg of that stool. And that collective consciousness of the audience gives you important feedback. They are a part of it.

JB: I have one other related thought. New work is speaking to this moment in a unique way, because it has been written recently. Seeing new work allows for a conversation—a cultural

experience of this moment. Seeing plays that have been around awhile can also speak to that, but it's unique to have a play that's beginning a new conversation. The audience not only experiences that in the room, but it also becomes part of the city's experience. It informs how we continue to be in Seattle, how we continue to grow as theatre people. This is a new piece of information that hopefully takes us a step forward in our collective conversation.

What's your favorite moment of this process so far?

JB: Because we haven't started rehearsal yet, my favorite moment so far has been in the auditions. There was electricity between the actors from the very start. And though sometimes auditions can be tedious because you're hearing the same scenes over and over, in this case I found myself discovering new things each time. And in one scene in particular, the central character, Joanne (who plays the long-suffering Mrs. Loman), begins to share some of her questions about *Death of a Salesman* and about her character which she hasn't been able to do up until that moment Every time I watched the scene, I wanted to respond with a vocal "Yes!" Women often find themselves shutting down or being shut down, so I love that we get to hear this character speak her unfiltered truth. Fortunately, the character is incredibly articulate and engaging and funny and smart (thank you, Katie!) so it's a very satisfying as well as entertaining scene.

KF: I don't know if I would call it a fun moment, but I was talking to my husband (actor R. Hamilton Wright, who plays George in the show) in the kitchen about the second act. I didn't know if I should show the play within the play—if we should see any part of the Teacup Theater's production of *Death of a Salesman*. Especially since I wouldn't be able to use any of the Miller script. It was a satisfying moment for me to realize we needed to see part of the production and that it could be done without using any dialogue from *Salesman*.

JB: One more part of the journey so far that was really exciting is that a couple weeks before starting rehearsal, we had a two-day script workshop. Not only was this a wonderful way to support Katie in her ongoing script development, but Katie and I had all five actors in the room together for two full days and it was a blast. In these days when rehearsal processes are being squeezed, it felt like heaven to be able to dive into the work "early," to plant some seeds knowing that we will come back later after the ideas have ripened. I felt a great sense of gratitude from the whole group as we got this "bonus" time to start our process together, and the result was a room full of discovery, and also full of laughter. I wish every rehearsal process could have this starting point!

Editorial note: This interview took place in August.

Behind-the-scenes of the Mrs. Loman is Leaving *photoshoot with Rosemary Dai Ross.*

SEATTLE'S FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITION RETURNS FOR ITS 49TH YEAR!

A Christmas Carol

WRITTEN BY
CHARLES DICKENS

ADAPTED BY
GREGORY FALLS

DIRECTED BY
R. HAMILTON WRIGHT

MUSIC BY
ADAM STERN

NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 27

ACT
CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

acttheatre.org

ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE STAFF

EXECUTIVE
Elisabeth Farwell-Moreland
Interim Producing Artistic Director
Alyssa Montgomery
General Manager

ARTISTIC
Shana Bestock
Artistic Associate, Education and Engagement
Margaret Layne
Casting Associate

BOX OFFICE
Amber Granger
Box Office Representative
Peter Hiebert
Box Office Manager
Jeremy Jackson
Box Office Assistant Manager
Christina Liburd
Box Office Lead

DEVELOPMENT
Madyson Ellars
Individual Giving Manager
Kristine Haroldson
Stewardship and Events Coordinator
Joceline Hitchcox-Lain
Development Assistant
Katie McKenna
Development Officer for Institutional Partnerships

FINANCE
Mirna Fritz
Director of Finance
Kevin Peterson
Staff Accountant
Summer Stack
Finance Department Assistant

IT SUPPORT
InterPlay

LEGAL REPRESENTATION
Dresden Law PLLC
Foster Garvey PC
Pacifica Law Group
Perkins Coie

MARKETING, SALES, & COMMUNICATIONS
Tess Berger
Creative Brand Manager
Amanda Cantlin
Marketing Specialist
Colleen Flanigan
Interim Director of Marketing & Sales
Amber Granger
Marketing Associate
Giao Nguyen
Digital Content & Communications Manager
Shane Regan/Michelle Sanders Communications
Public Relations

OPERATIONS
Jae Dooley
Facilities Manager
Charlie Warden
Director of Facility Operations

PATRON SERVICES
Tanya Wanchena
Patron Services Manager

Patron Services Staff
Bill Abelson
Monica Axelsen
Dano Beal
Renee Boehlke
Talia Colten
Natalia Elston
Karen Gillespie
Coco Justino
Marlene Lahaise
Lynn Lambie
Alfreda Lanier
Matthew Long-Rhyme
Mel Longley
Kwan Lui
Sarah Meltzer
Tracie Nettles
Maryann Palmer
Markus Rook
Mel Smith
Sharen Spencer
Summer Stack
Erin Sutter
Carole Sykes
Dominic W. Wallace
Haleigh Wanchena
Claudia Webb

PEOPLE & CULTURE
Astrid Helgeson
Director of People and Culture

PRODUCTION
Nikki Anderson-Joy
Costume Shop Assistant
Lisa Bellero
Head Scenic Painter
Zachary Burns
Head Audio Technician
Kim Dancy
Head Draper
Chandler Eichele
Stage Operations Swing Technician
Patricia Emmert
Head Draper
Nick Farwell
Stage Operations Supervisor
Melissa Gomez
Firsthand / Swing Dresser / Crafts
Justine Halsey-Martin
Lead Props Artisan
Joel Herrera
Head Props Artisan
Cal Hostetler
Lead Scenic Carpenter
Ada Karamanyan
Production Office Manager
Cat Kerr
Prop Shop Manager
Eric Koch
Technical Director
Caitlin McCown
Director of Production
Sally Mellis
Head Dresser
Nick Murel
Associate Technical Director
James Nichols
Head Stage Carpenter
A G Quinn
Lead Scenic Carpenter
Jeff Scott
Scenic Charge Artist
Logan Thomas
Head Electrician
Jason Tribby
Head Scenic Carpenter
Christine Tschirgi
Costume Shop Manager

FOR THIS PRODUCTION
Meghan Boyle
Scenic Carpenter
Joyce Degenfelder
Juliette Lewis
Wigs and Hair

ACT LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Cynthia Huffman, Chair
Erika Nesholm, Secretary
Gary Houlahan, Treasurer
Bill Kuhn
Brian Markham
Al Roundtree
Ben Spicer
Hana Tadesse
Bob Wright

FOUNDATION BOARD

Kermit Anderson, President
Brad Fowler, Vice President
Gary Houlahan, Treasurer
Jim Minorchio, Secretary
Trevor Cobb
Cynthia Huffman
Rachel McCracken
Sheila Smith

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sheena Aebig
Kermit Anderson
Joan Dee Barokas
Kurt Beattie*
Dr. Eric Bennett
Laurie Besteman
Jeannie M. Falls
John H. Faris
Charles Fitzgerald
Brad Fowler
Katharyn Alvord Gerlich
Carolyn H. Grinstein
Sara Comings Hoppin
C. David Hughbanks
Kate Janeway
Jonathan D. Klein
Diane Lind
Jane W. Lyons
Douglas E. Norberg
Dr. George Ojemann
Kristin G. Olson
Eric Pettigrew
Pamela Powers
Katherine L. Raff
Suzanne Ragen
Catherine Roach
Jo Anne Rosen
Faye Sarkowsky
Carlo Scandiuzzi
Barry Scovel
Susan Trapnell
Brian Turner
George V. Willoughby

Emeritus Council
Richard C. Clotfelter
Esther Schoenfeld
**Artistic Director Emeritus*

CORE COMPANY

Anne Allgood
Christine Marie Brown
Joshua Castille
Avery Clark
Khanh Doan
Yussef El Guindi
Keiko Green
Rachel Guyer-Mafune
Reginald André Jackson
Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako
Brandon O'Neill
M.L. Roberts
Chip Sherman
Jasmine Jean Sim
Adam Standley
Ray Tagavilla
Nathaniel Tenenbaum
Tori Thompson
Amy Thone
Connor Toms
Lindsay Welliver
R. Hamilton Wright
Connie Yun

ARTISTS UNDER COMMISSION

Andrew Lee Creech
Holly Arsenault

DID YOU KNOW THAT MANY COMPANIES MATCH THEIR EMPLOYEES' CHARITABLE GIVING?

We are honored to partner with dozens of employers who match hundreds of donations to ACT. Since March 2020, over 10% of corporate support has come from employee matches! We're grateful to our donors and partners at Adobe, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Boeing Company, Coca Cola, Google, Microsoft, Nordstrom, Patagonia, and elsewhere.

Check with your HR manager or supervisor to see whether your employer matches and watch your impact grow!

Photo: Truman Buffett

FALLS LEGACY CIRCLE

Do you love ACT Contemporary Theatre? Power the future!

You can help the curtain stay up! It's simple – name ACT as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, or other account.

We will include you in the Falls Legacy Circle when you let us know you've named ACT as the beneficiary of an account or in your estate plans.

For more information or to inform us of your plans, please contact Kristine Haroldson, Stewardship & Events Coordinator, at kristine.haroldson@acttheatre.org.

NOTES FROM THE ACT COLLECTIVE

Allan and Anne Affleck are longtime supporters of ACT and were inspired to sponsor Mrs. Loman is Leaving, *our 48th World Premiere, after attending a reading at the first annual New Works Northwest Festival. Here's what they had to share about their history with ACT:*

"Enjoying live theater has always been part of our lifestyle. Even vacation plans include attending local productions wherever we go. We have had season tickets at ACT since 1972, following this amazing theatre through all its many stages (pun intended) over the years. All things must change and evolve to thrive, and ACT has never been slow in this regard. Now comes New Works Northwest: the beautifully creative road to ACT's future, along with the exciting opportunity to participate in the journey through sponsorship. Participation creates a sense of belonging and we like belonging here. "

NEW WORKS IN FOCUS

Through community contributions, ACT is investing in the theatre of tomorrow. Our 2024/25 Season includes two World Premiere productions of plays featured in 2023's inaugural New Works Northwest festival – *Mrs. Loman is Leaving* by Katie Forgette and *Golden* by Andrew Lee Creech. To workshop, green-light, and stage these productions in under a year shows our commitment to New Works is stronger than ever.

2023/24 Season YCC World Premiere *The Sunless Scar* by Maggie Lee. Photo by Jeremy Jackson.

What does it take to bring a New Work from the page to the stage? ACT nurtures new plays at every step of the creative process, from readings, artistic mentorship, workshops, and rehearsals, all the way to fully mounting a World Premiere. **Donor generosity is essential to bring New Works to life.**

Make a gift today to directly support the art, artists, and New Works on ACT's stages. Visit give.acttheatre.org/encore25 or scan the QR code to make your donation.

The Dina Martina Christmas Show

with **Chris Jeffries**, *musical director*

December 6 – 24

"Comic genius"

- The Atlantic

The **most hilarious holiday show in Seattle** returns to ACT with Dina's annual Christmas extravaganza, a beloved tradition for over 25 years.

TICKETS START AT $30

NEW WORKS SPOTLIGHT: HOLLY ARSENAULT

Holly Arsenault's play, Underwater Weather, *will be presented November 3 at ACT's New Works Northwest festival as a special collaboration with ACT's Young Core Company (YCC).*

What are the unique challenges and opportunities of writing plays for an ensemble of young artists?

I want them to feel seen, and I want to ask questions that interest them, and I want to write parts that feel fun and rich for them. I don't approach making a play with this ensemble any differently than I would approach co-creating with any other group of artists. I do think teenagers are in many ways the best of us, and so I see any opportunity to be in community with teens and absorb a little bit of their perspective and magic as a gift.

What does it mean to collaborate on the creation of a play? What's your role as the playwright?

I think my job is to listen to my collaborators and to process what I hear into a script. At our first meeting, I told the ensemble that writing is listening, and I'm trying to hold that idea in my mind as I work. I didn't begin the process with a really fleshed out idea of what the play would be. Instead, each time we meet, I listen listen listen, and then I go back and write, and then I bring those pages to them and they read and respond, and so it's a gradual process of finding the play together.

Why this play now? Or, what are you most curious to discover in *Underwater Weather*?

As the parent of a person who is coming of age in this calamitous time, I'm really interested in how hope is created and destroyed. My work pretty much always talks about families, and activist movements are really rich territory for exploring family dynamics. And my YCC collaborators have expressed a strong interest in having an intergenerational conversation around climate change.

What do you hope artists and/or audiences will take away from the experience of this play?

I hope that audiences will feel like watching this play was a worthwhile use of their time and attention. I honestly just want them to be glad that they made the effort to share a live experience with other people. I hope that our work can reveal some deeper truth, but I'm pretty sure that can only happen if I do my job well, and that's writing a captivating play. And yes, okay, I also hope that it will make people think more about whales.

The Young Core Company's 2024 World Premiere production of The Sunless Scar *by Maggie Lee, originally read at the 2023 NW² festival; photo by Jeremy Jackson*

SEE *UNDERWATER WEATHER* & MORE AT NEW WORKS NORTHWEST 2024! TICKETS ON SALE NOW.

PARTNER CIRCLES

ACT is proud to produce adventurous contemporary theatre and invites you to see the magic behind the curtain. When you make a gift of $100 or more, you enjoy season-long benefits as a member of ACT's Partner Circles.

TECH TALKS

Supporting Players+

An insider's look at the technical wizardry that brings our productions to life.

DRESS REHEARSALS

Ensemble Players+

Be among the first to experience a brand-new production at a private Dress Rehearsal.

NEW WORKS RECEPTIONS

Activists Circle+

Light bites and bubbles during the 2nd Annual New Works Northwest Festival.

As your support deepens, so do your benefits. Pre-show toasts with ACT leadership, backstage tours, ticket discounts, parking passes, and so much more are all available. Tech Talk invites start with just a $100 donation.

Ready to step into the spotlight? Scan the QR code to easily donate online or visit give.acttheatre.org/encore25. If you'd prefer to make your gift via mail, donation envelopes are available in the lobby.

THANK YOU!

As ACT opens its 59th season, we are overwhelmed with gratitude for you – our dedicated, inspired, and consistently curious ACT donors. The stories you see on our stages this season are only made possible through the generosity of our community. You are vital to our success!

ACT gratefully recognizes all donors of $1+ in alphabetical order.

View a complete list of donors who have given in the last 12 months:

We are incredibly grateful to our Institutional Partners who power audacious theatre and bold New Works.

View a complete list of Institutional Partners and learn more:

Thank you to the volunteers who have donated their time and talents.

View a complete list of volunteers and learn how to get involved:

"**NEARLY PERFECT**, BROWN HAS COME UP WITH A WINNING COMBINATION" – *VARIETY*

ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

THE FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

WRITTEN & COMPOSED BY
JASON ROBERT BROWN

DIRECTED BY
SHERMONA MITCHELL

FEBRUARY 8 – MARCH 16, 2025

2x DRAMA DESK AWARD WINNER

This modern musical is a **raw and intimate window** into two perspectives of one relationship, taking a **devastatingly honest** look at Cathy and Jamie and their journey of falling in and out of love over five years.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Originally produced for the New York Stage by Arielle Tepper and Marty Bell
Originally produced by Northlight Theatre Chicago, IL

ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

2024/25 SEASON

All the joy.
All the drama.
All Seattle.
All ACT.

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Written & Composed by Jason Robert Brown
Directed by Shermona Mitchell
February 8 - March 16, 2025
A Co-Production with The 5th Avenue Theatre

GOLDEN

By Andrew Lee Creech
Directed by Tyrone Phillips
April 26 - May 11, 2025

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

By Henrik Ibsen
Directed by John Langs
June 7 - 22, 2025

SAVE WITH A 3-PLAY SUBSCRIPTION!

Packages start at $111: pick any dates and seats to all three shows!

acttheatre.org
206.292.7676