



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“A thrilling, gender-flipped slice of Manifest Destiny” —Time Out New York

“Men on Boats is off-the-canyon-walls funny” —Chicago Tribune

**AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR
MEN ON BOATS, JACLYN BACKHAUS’S SUBVERSIVE RETELLING OF
19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN EXPLORERS**

A.C.T.’s Strand Theater
October 17–December 16, 2018

SAN FRANCISCO (August 30, 2018)— American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon announced today casting for *Men on Boats*—Jaclyn Backhaus’s hilarious, historical, and moving adventure—playing at A.C.T.’s **Strand Theater** (1127 Market St., San Francisco) **October 17–December 16, 2018**. Spinning historical, theatrical, and gender conventions on their heads, this subversive tale of ten men, four boats, and two rivers contains *none* of the above. Pack your gear for this 21st-century theatrical spin on 19th-century American explorer and one-armed Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell, who assembles a brawny and eclectic band of men—soldiers, trappers, and adventurers—to explore Wyoming’s waterways. Inspired by Powell’s actual travel log from 1869, Jaclyn Backhaus’s nimble and ingenious script is provocative, laugh-out-loud theater, performed by a diverse cast of female-identifying actors who infuse America’s historic myths of male conquest with a sly blast of subtext. With the speed and force of white-water rapids, Backhaus conjures her epic story—in which simple materials are transformed into perilous canyons and death-defying cliffs—out of movement and sheer imagination, shaping an innovative and innately theatrical play that became an off-Broadway sensation. [Press nights for *Men on Boats* will be held on Thursday, November 1 and Friday, November 2, 2018.](#) **Single tickets** (ranging from \$15–\$110) are available at the A.C.T. Box Office at **415.749.2228** or online at www.act-sf.org. *Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.*

“I am passionate about plays that push the theatrical form,” says **MacKinnon**. “First produced by the New York downtown theater company Clubbed Thumb—which gave me my start as a director—*Men on Boats* is such a play. A troupe of ten amazing Bay Area–based, female-identifying performers bring to life John Wesley Powell’s 1869 expedition to discover the Grand Canyon. It is a harrowing and outrageously fun adventure!”

Under the direction of **Tamilla Woodard** (co-founder of PopUP Theatrics; Artistic Director of The Five Boroughs/One City Initiative at Working Theater), *Men on Boats* features a cast of ten local San Francisco Bay Area actors. They are (in alphabetical order): **Arwen Anderson** (*King Lear* at California Shakespeare Theater; *Hamlet* at Marin Shakespeare Company), **Rosie Hallett** (*Red Speedo* at Center REPeratory Company; *Thomas and Sally* at Marin Theatre Company), **Lisa Hori-Garcia** (*The Gangster of Love* at Magic Theatre; *Snow Queen* at Marin Theatre Company), **Libby King** (*RooseElvis* at The TEAM; *Uncle Vanya* at East 13th Street Theatre), **Amy Lizardo** (*The Unfortunates* at A.C.T.; *Quijote Nuevo* at California Shakespeare Theater), **Ruibo Qian** (*The Nether* at SF Playhouse; *Tiger Style!* at Huntington Theatre Company), **Annemaria Rajala** (*A Little Night Music* at A.C.T.; *Our Enemies* at Golden Thread Productions), **Katherine Romans** (A.C.T. M.F.A student; *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Livermore Shakespeare Festival), **Liz Sklar** (A.C.T. M.F.A. graduate; *Seagull* at Marin Theatre Company), and **Lauren Spencer** (*King Charles III* at A.C.T.; *Anne Boleyn* at Marin Theatre Company).

The creative team for *Men on Boats* includes **Nina Ball** (Scenic Designer), **Christine Crook** (Costume Designer), **Robert Hand** (Lighting Designer), and **Kate Marvin** (Sound Designer).

In connection with *Men on Boats*, A.C.T. will offer numerous **InterACT events**—many of which are presented free of charge—that will give patrons opportunities to get closer to the action while having an entire night out at the theater. Visit act-sf.org/interact to learn more about subscribing to these events throughout the season:

- **Bike to the Theater Night:**
Wednesday, October 17, 6:30 p.m.
Providing a greener alternative to theater transportation, A.C.T. and the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition offer free valet bike parking, as well as a special discount on tickets, for these select performances.
- **Prologue:**
Tuesday, October 30, 5:30 p.m.
Before the curtain goes up, get a sneak peek at the artistic process at this fascinating preshow discussion with the director and artistic staff.
- **Audience Exchanges:**
Tuesday, November 6, 7 p.m. | Sunday, November 25, 2 p.m. | Wednesday, November 28, 2 p.m.
After the show, stick around for a lively Q&A session with the actors and artists who create the work onstage.
- **OUT with A.C.T.:**
Wednesday, November 7, following the 7:30 p.m. performance
The best LGBT night in town! Mingle with the cast and enjoy free drinks and treats at this popular after-party.

- **Theater on the Couch:**
Friday, November 9, following the 7:30 p.m. performance
This exciting postshow discussion series addresses audience questions and explores the minds, motives, and behavior of the characters.
- **Wente Vineyards Wine Series:**
Tuesday, November 20, 6:30 p.m.
Before the show, raise a glass at this wine-tasting event featuring the Bay Area's hottest local winery.
- **PlayTime:**
Saturday, December 8, 12:45 p.m.
Before this matinee performance, get hands-on with the artists who make it happen at this interactive theater workshop.

A.C.T.'s production of *Men on Boats* is made possible by associate producers **Linda K. Brewer; Dr. Allan P. Gold and Mr. Alan C. Ferrara;** and **Robina Riccitiello.**

A.C.T. would like to acknowledge its 2018–19 season presenters **Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson; Priscilla and Keith Geeslin; James C. Hormel and Michael P. Nguyen; Fred M. Levin and Nancy Livingston, The Shenson Foundation; Toni Rembe and Arthur Rock; Robina Riccitiello; Jeff and Laurie Ubben;** and **Kay Yun and Andre Neumann-Loreck.**

A.C.T. would also like to acknowledge its 2018–19 company sponsors **Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; Frannie Fleishhacker; Kevin and Celeste Ford; Mr. and Mrs. Gordon P. Getty; Jeri Lynn and Jeffrey W. Johnson; Burt and Deedee McMurtry; Patti and Rusty Rueff; Mary and Steven Swig; Jack and Susy Wadsworth;** and **Barry Williams and Lalita Tademy.**

Additional support provided by **The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; PG&E; The Shubert Foundation; The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust; San Francisco Grants for the Arts;** and **Wells Fargo.**

Up next, A.C.T. presents the return of the Bay Area's favorite holiday tradition, *A Christmas Carol* (**December 6–29, 2018**). Ringing in 2019, A.C.T. will present the wildly imaginative and satirical Pulitzer Prize–winning comedy, **Edward Albee's *Seascape* (January 23–February 17, 2019)**. Next, A.C.T. will present Mfoniso Udofia's achingly poignant drama *Her Portmanteau* (**February 13–April 14, 2019**). In spring 2019, A.C.T. will present Lauren Yee's exploration of cultural identity, global politics, and basketball, *The Great Leap* (**March 6–31, 2019**), followed by Kate Hamill's rollicking new stage adaptation of William Thackeray's classic novel, *Vanity Fair* (**April 17–May 12, 2019**). Closing out the 2018–19 season, A.C.T. will present Eugène Ionesco's "seminal absurdist satire" (*Los Angeles Times*) *Rhinoceros* (**May 29–June 23, 2019**)—translated by Derek Prouse and directed by two-time Tony Award winner Frank Galati.

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FACT SHEET FOR MEN ON BOATS

WHAT:

Spinning historical, theatrical, and gender conventions on their heads, this subversive tale of ten men, four boats, and two rivers contains *none* of the above. Pack your gear for this 21st-century telling of 19th-century American explorer and one-armed Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell, who assembles a brawny band of soldiers, trappers, and adventurers to explore Wyoming's waterways. Inspired by Powell's actual travel log from 1869, Jaclyn Backhaus's nimble and ingenious script is provocative, laugh-out-loud theater, performed by a diverse cast of female-identifying actors who infuse America's historic myths of male conquest with a sly blast of subtext. With the speed and force of Powell's white-water rapids, Backhaus conjures her epic story—in which simple materials are transformed into perilous canyons and death-defying cliffs—out of sheer imagination, shaping an innovative and innately theatrical play that became an off-Broadway sensation.

WHO:

by **Jaclyn Backhaus**

Directed by **Tamilla Woodard**

CAST:

Arwen Anderson, Rosie Hallett, Lisa Hori-Garcia, Libby King, Amy Lizardo, Ruibo Qian, Annemaria Rajala, Katherine Romans, Liz Sklar, and Lauren Spencer.

CREATIVE TEAM:

Nina Ball (Scenic Designer), **Christine Crook** (Costume Designer), **Robert Hand** (Lighting Designer), and **Kate Marvin** (Sound Designer)

WHERE:

A.C.T.'s Strand Theater (1127 Market St., San Francisco)

WHEN:

October 17–December 16, 2018

Press Nights: Thursday, November 1 and Friday, November 2, 2018

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:

Tuesdays–Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2 p.m.

Sundays at 2 p.m.

INTERACT EVENTS:

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Wine Series: **Tuesday, November 20, 6:30 p.m.**

Playtime: **Saturday, December 8, 12:45 p.m.**

TICKETS:

\$15–\$110

INFO:

415-749-2228 | act-sf.org/boats

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