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San Francisco’s
THEATER COMPANY

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER, San Francisco’s Tony Award–winning nonprofit theater, nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training, and an ongoing engagement with our community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff, we embrace our responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent our relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of our creative work.

Founded by pioneer of the regional theater movement William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season in 1967. Since then, we’ve performed more than 350 productions to a combined audience of more than seven million people. We reach more than 250,000 people through our productions and programs every year.

Rising from the rubble of the catastrophic earthquake and fires of 1906 and immediately hailed as the “perfect playhouse,” the beautiful, historic Geary Theater has been our home since the beginning. When the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake ripped a gaping hole in the ceiling, destroying the proscenium arch and dumping tons of debris on the first six rows of orchestra seats, the San Francisco community rallied together to raise a record-breaking $30 million to rebuild it. The theater reopened in 1996 with a production of The Tempest directed by Perloff, who took over after A.C.T.’s second artistic director, gentleman artist Ed Hastings, retired in 1992.

Perloff’s 20-season tenure has been marked by groundbreaking productions of classical works and new translations creatively colliding with exceptional contemporary theater; cross-disciplinary performances and international collaborations; and “locavore” theater—theater made by, for, and about the San Francisco area. Her fierce commitment to audience engagement ushered in a new era of InterACT events and dramaturgical publications, inviting everyone to explore what goes on behind the scenes.

A.C.T.’s 45-year-old Conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, is at the center of our work. Our three-year, fully accredited Master of Fine Arts Program has moved to the forefront of America’s actor training programs, and our intensive Summer Training Congress attracts enthusiasts from around the world. Other programs include the world-famous Young Conservatory for students ages 8 to 19, led by 25-year veteran Craig Slaight, and Studio A.C.T., our expansive course of study for adults. Our alumni often grace our mainstage and perform around the Bay Area, as well as stages and screens across the country.

A.C.T. also brings the benefits of theater-based arts education to more than 10,000 Bay Area school students each year. Central to our ACTsmart education programs, run by Director of Education and Community Programs Elizabeth Brodersen, is the longstanding Student Matinee (SMAT) program, which has brought tens of thousands of young people to A.C.T. performances since 1968. We also provide touring Will on Wheels Shakespeare productions, teaching-artist residencies, in-school workshops, and in-depth study materials to Bay Area schools and community-based organizations.

With our increased presence in the Central Market neighborhood marked by the opening of The Costume Shop theater, the current renovation of The Strand Theater across from UN Plaza, and the launch of our mobile Stage Coach initiative, A.C.T. is poised to continue its leadership role in securing the future of theater for San Francisco and the nation.

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American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1965 by William Ball. Edward Hastings, Artistic Director 1986–92

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VOLUNTEER!
A.C.T. volunteers provide an invaluable service with their time, enthusiasm, and love of theater. Opportunities include helping out in our performing-arts library and ushering in our theaters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: ACT-SF.ORG/VOLUNTEER

BIKE TO THE THEATER
MAY 20, 8PM
In partnership with the S.F. Bicycle Coalition, ride your bike to A.C.T. and take advantage of secure bike parking, low-priced tickets, and happy-hour prices at our preshow mixer.

PROLOGUE
MAY 26, 5:30PM
Go deeper with a fascinating preshow discussion and Q&A with A Little Night Music director Mark Lamos. Can’t make this event? Watch it live—online!
Visit act-sf.org/interact for details.

THEATER ON THE COUCH
MAY 29, 7PM
Take part in a lively discussion in our lower-level lounge with Dr. Mason Turner, chief of psychiatry at SF’s Kaiser Permanente Medical Center.

AUDIENCE EXCHANGES*
JUNE 2 AT 7PM, JUNE 7 & 10 AT 2PM
Join us for an exciting Q&A with the cast following the show.

OUT WITH A.C.T.*
JUNE 3, 8PM
Mix and mingle at this hosted postshow LGBT party.

WINE SERIES
JUNE 9, 7PM
Meet fellow theatergoers at this hosted wine-tasting event in our third-floor Sky Lounge.

PLAYTIME
JUNE 13, 12:45PM
Get hands-on with theater at this interactive preshow workshop.

To learn more and order tickets for InterACT events, visit act-sf.org/interact.

*Events take place immediately following the performance.

UP NEXT:
A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC
At A.C.T.’s free InterACT events, you can mingle with cast members, join interactive workshops with theater artists, and meet fellow theatergoers at hosted celebrations in our lounges. Join us for our upcoming production of A Little Night Music and InterACT with us!

CONNECT WITH US
LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE SAN FRANCISCO SPACE FOR YOUR UPCOMING EVENT?
HOST YOUR GATHERING AT A.C.T.’S GEARY THEATER!

Whether you are planning a board meeting or a social mixer, a wedding or a product launch, we have an event space that is right for you! Centrally located in San Francisco’s vibrant Union Square area, A.C.T.’s hundred-year-old Geary Theater is an exciting destination, rich with personality, versatility, and resources—without the catering restrictions that drive event planners crazy.

With four venues to choose from—suited for intimate parties, thousand-person extravaganza, and everything in between—we’re ready to make your upcoming event one to remember.

RENTALS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE AT OUR NEW STRAND THEATER, COMING SOON!

OUR SPACES INCLUDE:

**THE GARRET ROOM**
This charming, private space tucked away on the top floor of the theater is ideal for dinner parties, cocktail receptions, and meetings. **Capacity 110**

**THE SKY BAR**
The Sky Bar features a classy backlit lounge and bar overlooking Geary Street, perfect for receptions at which mingling is key. **Capacity 135**

**FRED’S COLUMBIA ROOM**
With a full bar, couches, and table seating that can be configured for any occasion, Fred’s is a comfortable and elegant option with versatile possibilities. **Capacity: 228**

**THE MAIN THEATER**
Called the "perfect playhouse" when it opened its doors in 1910, The Geary’s ornate and magnificent theater will make any event unforgettable. With three levels of seating, a large proscenium stage, and state-of-the-art lighting and sound capabilities, the main theater has been impressing audiences for a hundred years. **Capacity: 1,015**

A.C.T. AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

Fully stocked bars, A/V equipment and production staff, onsite convection ovens, and ticketing services are just a few enhancements we can add to your event. For more information about any of our spaces or to schedule a tour, please contact A.C.T. Company Manager Amy Hand at ahand@act-sf.org.
Dear Friends,

Immigration is such a central part of this country’s experience that we tend to view the issues it raises as particularly American. So it was with great fascination that I first encountered Kwame Kwei-Armah’s *Let There Be Love*, which explores the immigration story through a completely different lens. *Let There Be Love* imagines the encounter between an older West Indian man, Alfred, who has forged his way with difficulty in contemporary London, and his young Polish caregiver, Maria, who has recently arrived in the country. There are over a million Poles working in Britain today, and Kwei-Armah’s play explores the complex changes in British culture that have brought this new wave of immigrants to the country. He also offers a beautiful story that reveals the challenges that arise from different immigrant groups coexisting, let alone understanding each other. But the play is simultaneously a deeply personal one about our family ties and the people we love; it wrestles with a daughter’s ambivalence about caring for her aging father, and a father’s deep-seated regrets over the things he has done to estrange his family over the years. It also offers a refreshing take on forgiveness, as well as shifting definitions of family—especially in diverse urban settings. And, of course, one of the delights of *Let There Be Love* is its soundtrack, which delivers up gems by Nat King Cole as the glue that ultimately binds two radically different human beings.

I am always interested in artists who are truly engaged with the world around them, and Kwei-Armah is remarkable in that regard. An actor, writer, director, and producer who started out in London and had a major television career at the same time that his plays were being produced at the National Theatre, he now makes his home in Baltimore as the artistic director of Center Stage. As artistic directors who are also playwrights, we both found immediate solace in each other’s company. One of the pleasures of producing *Let There Be Love* has been the chance to let Kwei-Armah be an artist at someone else’s theater, where he doesn’t have to produce the play but can simply function as the writer at the heart of the enterprise. It is a great joy to introduce his singular imagination to the Bay Area under the guidance of Maria Mileaf, a director whose work I have long admired. The fact that the play stars three actors new to A.C.T., including local treasure Carl Lumbly, whose family hails from the West Indies (just as Kwei-Armah does) and who was passionate about playing the role from the moment he read the play, is icing on the cake.

The countdown to the opening of The Strand continues, and every day more beauty emerges inside the space. The day I wrote this letter, I took a group on a tour of the construction site, and we climbed to the ceiling where the original grille work and ceiling molding from the 1917 building were being meticulously restored. Like The Geary, The Strand will be a striking combination of old and new, of rich history and astonishing contemporary touches. It is being rebuilt and restored with loving care, and I want to take this moment to salute all the construction workers and craftspeople who are bringing this abandoned building in the Central Market area back to life. We look forward to sharing it with all of you soon!

As I’m sure you know, we will open The Strand with Caryl Churchill’s inventive *Love and Information*, a play of 57 short scenes that can be performed in any order, exploring how we search for love and meaning in a world awash in data. Over the summer, The Strand will be home to a plethora of educational and training opportunities: Back to the Source (our teacher training program), a new musical from our Young Conservatory, American Musical Theater Conservatory (a new musical-theater training program for people ages 19 and older), classes in our Summer Training Congress, and much more. To celebrate The Strand’s opening and this momentous time in A.C.T.’s history, our annual gala on April 25 will star the incomparable Alan Cumming and will take place around the new Strand. Don’t miss it!

Until then, welcome to *Let There Be Love*.

Best,

Carey Perloff
Artistic Director
BY Kwame Kwei-Armah
DIRECTED BY Maria Mileaf

SET DESIGN BY Daniel Ostling
COSTUME DESIGN BY Lydia Tanji
LIGHTING DESIGN BY Russell H. Champa
SOUND DESIGN BY Bart Fasbender
CHOREOGRAPHY BY Stephen Buescher
CASTING BY Janet Foster, CSA
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Allie Moss

CAST
GEMMA Donnetta Lavinia Grays*
ALFRED Carl Lumbly*
MARIA Greta Wohlraube*

UNDERSTUDIES Arwen Anderson*
Kemiyondo Coutinho†
Adrian Roberts*

TIME
Now

PLACE
London

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THERE WILL BE ONE 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION.

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States
†Member of the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program class of 2015 and an Equity Professional Theatre Intern

Commissioned and first produced by the Tricycle Theatre, London
Let There Be Love received its U.S. premiere at Center Stage in Baltimore, 2010.

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In 2005 Kwame Kwei-Armah was moved to write *Let There Be Love* after seeing an art exhibition at London’s Geffrye Museum of the Home. The show, entitled *The West Indian Front Room: Memories and Impressions of Black British Homes*, recreated the front rooms (living rooms) of African-Caribbean immigrants of the 1960s and ’70s, while providing stories from the first wave of West Indians to England. The vivid installations, awash in a sensorial landscape of sounds and sights, struck Kwei-Armah profoundly, and from his memories of the “politics of my family’s front room,” the story of Alfred, Gemma, and Maria emerged.

The exhibition’s curator, Michael McMillan, describes the quintessential front room (living room), which is derived from the Victorian parlor: “colorful floral-patterned wallpaper and carpet that never matched, a glass cabinet that displayed glass and chinaware you never used, plastic-covered sofas, homemade crochet doilies, framed photographs . . . and other elements that embodied the family’s aspirations, prescribed codes of behavior, and moral values.” The exhibition included such memorabilia alongside compelling firsthand narratives of West Indian immigrants.

McMillan, who is also a playwright and fine artist, met Kwei-Armah in 1988. At the time, Kwei-Armah was acting in one of McMillan’s plays, *First Impressions*. After this creative collaboration, the two kept in contact, although McMillan was unaware that Kwei-Armah had seen *The West Indian Front Room* “until he told me it had inspired his writing *Let There Be Love,*” recalls McMillan. When McMillan saw the play during its inaugural run at London’s Tricycle Theatre in 2008, he “was struck by how Alfred and his relationship with his home caregiver, Maria, signified the shifting landscape of migration in British society,” he says.

McMillan, whose family hails from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, notes that the exhibition reveals the struggles and social aspirations of the black diaspora. “For many of [the people in] their generation, moving from living in one room to having a front room in a home of their own was a sign that you had ‘made it.’ No matter who you were, if the front room looked good, then your family was respectable.”

McMillan’s 2005–06 exhibition was well received by black British audiences, as well as others from immigrant and working-class backgrounds, ultimately garnering over 35,000 visitors. In 2009 *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home* was published by Black Dog Publishing; it has been a reliable visual reference for A.C.T.’s production of *Let There Be Love*.

McMillan’s exploration of the importance of music among London’s West Indian immigrants is also significant in *Let There Be Love*. The key item of front-room furniture on which Kwei-Armah decided to focus is the “Blue Spot” radiogram, a common feature in West Indian homes throughout Britain. The radiogram usually included a radio and phonograph housed in a wooden cabinet, sometimes with a drinks bar beneath it. Jazz, soul, ska, bluebeat (Jamaican rhythm and blues), calypso, and reggae were imported in the form of seven-inch vinyl records, which offered immigrants a sense of home “that they could listen and dance to,” says McMillan.

Historians have suggested that the arrival of the television subverted the formality of the front room and led to its eventual disappearance. “Many of my parents’ generation have passed away, and their front-room stuff has either been dumped or been used in my exhibitions,” says McMillan. Other West Indians have returned to their home countries, taking with them the contents of their front rooms. However, one can still occasionally find front rooms much like Alfred’s, where West Indian elders cherish what they worked so hard to acquire.
After his first play, *Bitter Herb* (1998), produced at Bristol Old Vic, won the prestigious Peggy Ramsay Award, Kwei-Armah became the theater’s resident playwright from 1999 to 2001. His fifth play, *Elmina’s Kitchen*, was produced at the National Theatre in 2003 and became the first play by a black British playwright to appear in the West End. The play was shortlisted in the Best New Play category of the Olivier Awards, and Kwei-Armah won the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising New Playwright. The 2005 television adaptation won a BAFTA Award. The two subsequent parts of his “political triptych,” *Fix Up* and *Statement of Regret*, were also produced at the National Theatre, where he initiated the Black Plays Archive, which documents the first professional production of every play by black British, African, and Caribbean writers in the United Kingdom.

In 2007 he made his directorial debut at Center Stage in Baltimore with Naomi Wallace’s *Things of Dry Hours*; there, he also directed Matthew Lopez’s *The Whipping Man* in 2012. At Center Stage in 2010, Jeremy Cohen directed *Let There Be Love*. In 2011 Kwei-Armah was appointed artistic director of Center Stage, and in 2012 he was named an officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. He is currently writing *Marley*, a musical based on the life and music of Bob Marley, which will have its world premiere at Center Stage in May 2015.
**About the Play**

Part of the impetus for *Let There Be Love* was an art exhibition called *The West Indian Front Room: Memories and Impressions of Black British Homes* at London’s Geffrye Museum of the Home in 2005–06, which recreated the front rooms of black Caribbean immigrants to Britain in the 1960s and ’70s.

The show was curated by an artist named Michael McMillan. I walked in and immediately felt as if I’d walked into my personal front room and those of many of my aunties and uncles of my youth. It struck me so viscerally, so profoundly, that I at once understood the power of recreating art that is fashioned by one’s influences. I realized that many of my plays, certainly the early plays, came from the politics of my family’s front room.

I also read that another seed of the play came from walking down the street in Southall [a neighborhood in West London that has been home to various immigrant communities over the years] and hearing Asian men talk about the way foreigners were taking their jobs; you later heard West Indians saying the same thing. Abso-bloody-lutely. I can still see them now. I can still see the seats that they sat on, talking about “these bloody foreigners stealing jobs from our children.” And I was so stunned by it. How easy it is to forget! It was only a few years ago that we were being spoken about in that way. I found that ironic and fascinating and disturbing. I think that these two things [seeing the exhibition and overhearing the immigrants on the street] happened within a couple weeks of each other. Then I started to write the play.

Many of your plays are about displacement or families in transition. Personal, cultural, and social history seem to be significant to you.

I’m a little addicted to the notion that history is the present and also heavily influences the future. I’ve come from a community whose history has been hidden from them for a very long time. This lack of history has been allowed to get a purchase on culture and on self-esteem, to some degree. Using art as a way to explore one’s history, both personal and communal, has always been something I’ve found myself very interested in.

**Why did you choose to use songs by Nat King Cole in the play?**

The wonderful thing about Eastern Caribbean [where Grenada is located] music is that the influences are calypso, of course, and soca [a blend of calypso and soul music] when it developed, but also American music. I grew up listening to reggae, calypso, Nat King Cole, American soul, and country western. Oddly, I don’t even know why Nat jumped into it, but I think that the title, *Let There Be Love*, came to me when I thought about Alfred. What does he most want in his life? He wants love. And what does Gemma most want? She wants love. As I was writing the speech about Nat King Cole, where Alfred says, “Nat has the answer to everything,” I thought of one of my uncles who would often play Nat King Cole or the other great crooner of the time, Billy Eckstine. So I thought, rather than do the stereotypical thing of quoting calypso, Nat felt rather apt.

We haven’t mentioned Maria yet. Some people might be surprised to know that she contains aspects of your mother.

My mother died two years before I wrote the play, and in a way, it’s part of why I became a director. *Let There Be Love* was the first or second thing I ever directed. I didn’t want to give it up to anybody else because I wanted to continue the dance with my mother. And Maria is very much the quintessential smart immigrant. She negotiates the world in front of her with ambition but also a kind of sorrow about having left home. In a way, she has the heart of my mother.

You were named artistic director of Center Stage in Baltimore in 2011. How did that come about?

They had produced two of my plays, *Elmina’s Kitchen* and *Let There Be Love*, and I had directed a Naomi Wallace play there, called *Things of Dry Hours*, so I had a relationship with Center Stage. I became an associate artist, so I would come back often. And when [then–Artistic Director] Irene Lewis was leaving, they asked me if I would throw my hat in the ring. I had been moaning a lot about choices that artistic directors were making. But I thought, “Why moan? Become a gatekeeper and see if you can do it any better.”

Could you point to one or two things you’ve learned about being an artistic director?

Being an artistic director is about how we listen, how we gently lead, how we gently step back, how we hear what our audience wants and give them that, and then give them something a little bit more, trying to push their taste just a little bit further. The whole dance of being an artistic director is not about power, but about service.
THE UNFORGETTABLE NAT KING COLE

by Shannon Stockwell

ABOUT THE PLAY

NAT KING COLE WAS BORN NATHANIEL ADAMS

Coles in Montgomery, Alabama, on March 17, 1919. His family moved to Chicago in 1923, where his father, Edward Coles, realized his dream of becoming a Baptist minister. Young Cole learned to play the piano under the tutelage of his mother, Priscilla Coles, who was the organist at his father’s church.

Cole began performing in the mid 1930s when he was still a teenager, playing piano with his brother Eddie in jazz clubs. It was during this time that he acquired the nickname “Nat King Cole,” derived from the nursery rhyme about Old King Cole. After that, he became the pianist in the national tour of Broadway theater legend Eubie Blake’s revue Shuffle Along. The show went under in Long Beach, California, where Cole elected to stay.

Cole’s next big project was the King Cole Trio, made up of guitarist Oscar Moore, double bassist Wesley Prince, and Cole on the piano. The trio was extremely successful wherever it played, and Cole’s innovative setup of double bass, piano, and guitar would influence jazz trios for years to come. As he played with the trio, audiences began to recognize Cole for his soft, clear baritone voice. In 1943 Cole penned the song that catapulted the trio to fame: “Straighten Up and Fly Right.” The song was recorded that winter after the trio signed with the fledgling Capitol Records, and it became a hit.

In the late 1940s and early ’50s, the King Cole Trio began to record and perform more pop melodies. Cole generated his most popular songs during these years, including “The Christmas Song” (also known as “Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire”), which was recorded four times between 1946 and 1961. In 1946 he released “(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66,” which recounted the various stops along the famous highway that ran from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California. Other famous songs from this period include “Mona Lisa” (1950), “Orange Colored Sky” (1950), and “Unforgettable” (1951).

Cole made history with the 1956 premiere of NBC’s The Nat King Cole Show, the first television show of its kind to be hosted by a black person. Despite its popularity, companies were reluctant to endorse a program hosted by a black man, fearing that white customers would boycott their products. Without a national sponsor, the show was doomed to lose money. In December 1957, Cole pulled the plug.

In the late 1950s and early ’60s, Cole, along with his contemporaries, noticed that the pop ballads with which he had risen to fame did not seem to be selling well among younger generations. Still, he retained relevance. In 1961 “Let There Be Love,” similar in style to his pop ballads of the ’50s, was a number-one hit in Britain.

After a brief and painful battle with lung cancer, Cole died on February 15, 1965, but his music and his clear, soft, articulate baritone live on. In the words of jazz musician and producer Dick Katz, his “deep groove, harmonic awareness, supple phrasing, touch, dynamics, taste, and just plain delicious music” have influenced generations of musicians and remain admired by critics, historians, and enthusiasts alike. “The musicality is just there,” says jazz musician Roger Kellaway. “It’s understood. It’s an assumption. His playing sparkles. And it seems effortless.” Aside from his technical mastery, Cole is beloved by fans for something more—a certain kindness and intimacy evoked by his singing. “At his best and most characteristic, Nat Cole was not so much a singer as a whisperer, or, as one might put it, a confider,” says music critic Henry Pleasants. Kellaway sums it up well: “When you hear something like this, you think to yourself, ‘Boy, would I like to hang out with that person!’”

“THE MUSICALITY IS JUST THERE; IT’S UNDERSTOOD. IT’S AN ASSUMPTION. HIS PLAYING SPARKLES. AND IT SEEMS EFFORTLESS.”

—Roger Kellaway, jazz musician

This intimate element of Nat King Cole’s music attracted playwright Kwesi Kwei-Armah when he was writing Let There Be Love. “[Alfred] lives in this world all by himself, in this big house with no family, with no friends anymore—just an absolutely lonely existence,” Kwei-Armah says. “So I thought, ‘I need to give him something, some sort of musical friend, someone that he plays and has conversations with.’ And someone who made a huge impact on black music here was Nat King Cole. He represented a time in music when it was both sophisticated and beautiful, erudite and popular. Alfred could listen to him and think, ‘That’s my friend Nat.’”
**WHO’S WHO IN LET THERE BE LOVE**

**DONNETTA LAVINIA GRAYS***

*(Gemma)* is an actor and playwright whose Broadway credits include Sarah Ruhl’s *In the Next Room or the Vibrator* and Lisa Kron’s *Well*. Other New York credits include work with Clubbed Thumb, Ars Nova, Primary Stages, New York Stage and Film, and multiple projects with The Civilians as an associate artist. Regionally, she has worked with Westport Country Playhouse; Arena Stage, where she earned a Helen Hayes Award nomination for *Ruined,* TheaterWorks in Hartford, where she earned two Connecticut Critics Circle Awards for *No Child . . . ;* Center Stage in Baltimore; Huntington Theatre Company; the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and the Los Angeles Women’s Shakespeare Company. Her film credits include *Wild Canaries, The English Teacher,* and *The Wrestler.* Her television credits include recurring roles on AMC’s *The Sopranos,* *Rubicon,* and NBC’s *Law & Order: Criminal Intent,* and a recurring role on *The English Teacher* on AMC’s *Rubicon,* and *The Critic.* She is also an alumna of the Eugene O’Neill National Theatre and the Park (League of Cincinnati Theatres Award Best Actress in a Play) and Cardinal Stage Company. Regional credits include *Celia in As You Like It* and Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Santa Cruz Shakespeare; *Venus in Fur* at both Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (League of Cincinnati Theatres Award Best Actress in a Play) and Milwaukee Repertory Theater; *Clybourne Park* at both Milwaukee Repertory Theater and Arizona Theatre Company; Kyra in *Skylight* (Wall Street Journal Best Performance in a Play 2012), *Twelfth Night,* *Troilus and Cressida,* *The Critic,* *The Taming of the Shrew,* and *The Tempest* at American Players Theatre; and *Cabaret* and *A Christmas Carol* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. She received her M.F.A. in acting from Purdue University and her B.A. from Wheaton College in Massachusetts. She is also an alumna of the Eugene O’Neill National Theatre Institute. Wohlrabe will return to Santa Cruz Shakespeare this summer to play Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Banquo in *Macbeth.*

**CARL LUMBLY***

*(Alfred)* recently starred as Leo Price in Julie Hébert’s *Tree* at San Francisco Playhouse and previously as Chester Kimmich in John Patrick Shanley’s *Storefront Church.* Lumbly played the lead role of Alexander Ames in the world premiere of Regina Taylor’s off-Broadway play *stop. reset.* at Signature Theatre in New York City. Bay Area audiences also saw him as Troy in August Wilson’s *Fences* at Marin Theatre Company, directed by Derrick Sanders. With dozens of film and television credits to his résumé, Lumbly can be seen in the ensemble cast of A&E’s suspense series *The Returned,* which debuted March 9, 2015.

**GRETA WOHLRABE***

*(Maria)* makes her A.C.T. debut with *Let There Be Love.* Wohlrabe most recently finished a production of George Brant’s one-woman show, *Grounded,* at Cardinal Stage Company. Regional theater credits include Celia in *As You Like It* and Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Santa Cruz Shakespeare; *Venus in Fur* at both Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (League of Cincinnati Theatres Award Best Actress in a Play) and Milwaukee Repertory Theater; *Clybourne Park* at both Milwaukee Repertory Theater and Arizona Theatre Company; Kyra in *Skylight* (Wall Street Journal Best Performance in a Play 2012), *Twelfth Night,* *Troilus and Cressida,* *The Critic,* *The Taming of the Shrew,* and *The Tempest* at American Players Theatre; and *Cabaret* and *A Christmas Carol* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. She received her M.F.A. in acting from Purdue University and her B.A. from Wheaton College in Massachusetts. She is also an alumna of the Eugene O’Neill National Theatre Institute. Wohlrabe will return to Santa Cruz Shakespeare this summer to play Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Banquo in *Macbeth.*

**ARWEN ANDERSON***

*(Understudy)* returns to A.C.T., where she was last seen in *A Christmas Carol* in 2012. Regional theater credits include *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Verona Project* (world premiere) at California Shakespeare Theater; *Circle Mirror Transformation,* *Bellwether* (world premiere), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Marin Theatre Company; *An Accident,* Mrs. Whitney, *Expedition 6,* *The Rules of Charity* (all world premieres), and *Maturius* at Magic Theatre; *Love in American Times* (world premiere) at San Jose Repertory Theatre; *Miss Julie* with Stanford Repertory Theater/Strindberg Forum; *Lobby Hero* and *The Shape of Things* at Aurora Theatre Company; *You Know When the Men Are Gone* and *4 Adverbs* with Word for Word Performing Arts Company; as well as roles with TheatreWorks, Brava! For Women in the Arts, Marines’ Memorial Theatre, Encore Theatre Company, Central Works Theater Company, and Climate Theater. Her film work includes *Hog Island,* *Ashley 22,* and *Dark Retreat.* Anderson is a graduate of Wesleyan University.

**KEMIYONDO COUTINHO***

*(Understudy)* is a third-year M.F.A. Program student at A.C.T. She was last seen as Beth in *A Christmas Carol* at A.C.T., where she has also appeared as Margarita in *Napoli!.* She has appeared in numerous M.F.A. Program productions, including *The Glass Menagerie,* *Hamlet,* and *Seven Guitars.* She is an annual performer at the National Theatre of Uganda and was recently seen in *In the Continuum* and *Silent Voices.* She has written and performed in two one-woman shows, *Jabulile! and Kawuna . . . you’re it!,* which were selected to be a part of The National Arts Festival in South Africa. She started the NuVo Arts Festival in Uganda, which uses art to address social change. Coutinho holds a B.A. in theater, communications, and rhetoric from Lewis & Clark College.

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ADRIAN ROBERTS
(Understudy) was last seen as Gabriel in Breakfast with Mugabe at Aurora Theatre Company. Other Bay Area credits include Gabriel in Fences at Marin Theatre Company, Martin Luther King, Jr., in The Mountaintop at TheatreWorks, Claudius/Ghost in Hamlet at California Shakespeare Theater, and Charles Boyd in Pen/Man/Ship at Magic Theatre. Roberts has also spent three seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Other regional credits include Ken in The Playboy of the West Indies at Lincoln Center Theater, among many others. Roberts has also appeared in such television shows as Scrubs, Criminal Minds, and Brothers and Sisters. Roberts is a graduate of A.C.T.’s Master of Fine Arts Program.

KWAME KWEI-ARMAH
(Playwright), OBE, an award-winning British playwright, director, actor, and broadcaster, is in his fourth season as artistic director of Center Stage in Baltimore. His plays include Elmina’s Kitchen, Let There Be Love, A Bitter Herb, Statement of Regret, and Seize the Day. His latest play, Beneath’as Place, debuted at Center Stage in 2013 as part of the groundbreaking Raisin Cycle. Some of his directorial credits include the world premieres of Detroit ’67 at The Public Theater, The Liquid Plain at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Much Ado About Nothing for The Public Theater’s Mobile Unit. He is currently writing a musical based on the life and music of cultural icon Bob Marley. Marley will have its world premiere at Center Stage in 2015.

MARIA MILEAF
(Director) makes her A.C.T. debut with Let There Be Love. Mileaf is a New York–based freelance director. Her favorite directing credits include Lisa D’Amour’s Detroit and Neil LaBute’s reasons to be pretty at Philadelphia Theatre Company, where she also won a Barrymore Award for Outstanding Direction for Tracey Scott Wilson’s The Story; Patricia Wettig’s F2M at New York Stage and Film; and Lucy Prebble’s Sugar Syndrome, John Belluso’s A Nervous Smile, and Noel Coward’s Blithe Spirit at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Mileaf has directed the New York premieres of Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros’s The Argument at Vineyard Theatre, Lee Blessing’s A Body of Water at Primary Stages (Outer Critics Circle Award for Best New Play), Kira Obolensky’s Lobster Alice at Playwrights Horizons, and Vijay Tendulkar’s Sakhasam Binder at The Play Company. On the West End, Mileaf directed Richard Schiff in Glen Berger’s Underneath the Lintel.

DANIEL OSTLING
(Scene Designer) is based in San Francisco. At A.C.T. his designs include The Orphan of Zhao, Major Barbara, Stuck Elevator, Endgame and Play, Once in a Lifetime, The Homecoming, War Music, and Brainpeople. Recent designs include the new ballet Carmen (K-Ballet in Tokyo), Guys and Dolls (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), Title and Deed (sets and lights, Lookingglass Theatre Company), and Baskerville (McCarter Theatre Center/Arena Stage). On Broadway he has designed Clybourne Park (Walter Kerr Theatre, 2012 Tony nomination) and Metamorphoses (Circle in the Square Theatre, 2003 Tony nomination). Regional credits include work for the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the New York Shakespeare Festival, Lincoln Center Theater, The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Long Wharf Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and Portland Center Stage, among others. Opera designs include Lucia di Lammermoor (La Scala, "Our goal is to preserve our client’s dignity and humanity")
WHO’S WHO IN LET THERE BE LOVE

Milan/Metropolitan Opera, New York City/Tokyo, La sonnambula (Metropolitan Opera), The Merry Widow (Lyric Opera of Chicago), and Philip Glass’s Galileo Galilei (New York City/London/Chicago). Ostling is a Lookingglass ensemble member and teaches at Northwestern University in Chicago.

LYDIA TANJI (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for Napoli!, Dead Metaphor, Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet, Round and Round the Garden, The Quality of Life, Curse of the Starving Class, Brainpeople, The Rainmaker, After the War, and Woman in Mind for A.C.T. Other regional theaters with which she has worked include Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Repertory, Arena Stage, The Children’s Theatre Company, East/West Players, California Shakespeare Theater, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Geva Theatre Center, Syracuse Stage, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, and Court Theatre. She has received six Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards and two Drama-Logue Awards. Film credits include The Joy Luck Club, Hot Summer Winds, Dim Sum, The Wash, Thousand Pieces of Gold, and Life Tastes Good.

RUSSELL H. CHAMPA (Lighting Designer) previously worked at A.C.T. on Maple and Vine, Scorched, War Music, The Little Foxes, The Voysey Inheritance, and Waiting for Godot. Current and recent projects include 27th Man (The Old Globe), You Got Older (Page 73 Productions/HERE), Zealot (South Coast Repertory), To the Bone (Cherry Lane Theatre), The Quatsim (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), and When We Were Young and Unafraid (Manhattan Theatre Club). Broadway credits include In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play (Lyceum Theatre/Lincoln Center Theater), and Julia Sweeney’s God Said “Ha!” (Lyceum Theatre). Other New York credits include Lincoln Center Theater, The Public Theater, Pilobolus, Second Stage Theatre, Vineyard Theatre, and New York Stage and Film. Regional credits include Long Wharf Theatre, The Old Globe, The Wilma Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, the Mark Taper Forum, and The Kennedy Center.

BART FASBENDER (Sound Designer) previously designed Humor Abuse at A.C.T. His other West Coast credits include The Rainmaker, directed by Maria Mileaf at The Old Globe, and Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, directed by Alex Timbers at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. New York credits include A Month in the Country at Classic Stage Company; Mr. & Mrs. Fitch and Lonely, I’m Not at Second Stage Theatre; Drunken City and Three Changes at Playwrights Horizons; Burning and The Good Mother for The New Group; and John Patrick Shanley’s Storefront Church and Conor McPherson’s Port Authority at Atlantic Theater Company. He has also designed for The Public Theater, Primary Stages, The Play Company, Cherry Lane Theatre, LAByrinth Theater Company, The Actors Company Theatre, and many others in New York. Regionally, his designs have been heard at the Guthrie Theater, the Virginia Shakespeare Festival, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, Barrington Stage Company, New York Stage and Film, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, Bay Street Theatre, and Two River Theater.

STEPHEN BUESCHER (Movement Director) has designed movement for The Orphan of Zhao, Stuck Elevator, and Underneath the Lintel at A.C.T.; A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Private Lives at Long Wharf Theatre; A Christmas Carol at Trinity Repertory Company; and Love’s Labour’s Lost at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. Buescher is the head of movement in A.C.T.’s Master of Fine Arts Program. In the Conservatory, he has directed Romeo and Juliet, The House of Bernarda Alba (which traveled to Moscow), Archangels Don’t Play Pinball, and Hotel Paradiso. Buescher has taught physical theater at Yale School of Drama, Brown University/Trinity Rep, and New York University’s La Pietra program. Buescher has performed nationally and internationally with the physical-based company Dell’Arte International, and locally with Shotgun Players, Scott Wells and Dancers, and Deborah Slater Dance Theater. Buescher is a graduate of the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theater and the California Institute of the Arts.

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Casting) joined A.C.T. as the casting director in the 2011–12 season. On Broadway she cast The Light in the Piazza (Artios Award nomination), Lennon, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, and Taking Sides (co-cast). Off-Broadway credits include Lucy, Brundibar, True Love, Endpapers, The Dying Gaul, The Maiden’s Prayer, and The Trojan Women: A Love Story at Playwrights Horizons, as well as Floyd Collins, The Monogamist, A Cheever Evening, Later Life, and many more. Regionally, she has worked at Intiman Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, Yale Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Old Globe, Center Stage in Baltimore, Westport Country Playhouse, and the American Repertory Theater. Film, television, and radio credits include Cosby (CBS), Tracey Takes on New York (HBO), Lewis Black’s The Deal, Advice from a Caterpillar, “The Day That Lehman Died” (BBC World Service and Blackjack Productions; Peabody, SONY, and Wincott awards), and “‘T’ is for Tom” (Tom Stoppard radio plays, WNYC and WQXR).

STEPHANIE SCHLIEMANN* (Stage Manager) has worked on Venus in Fur, Elektra, Race, Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet, The Tosca Project, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and Edward Albee’s At Home
at the Zoo, among others, at A.C.T. Other local stage-management credits include One Night with Janis Joplin, A Minister’s Wife, Bill W. and Dr. Bob, Double Indemnity, Spring Awakening, and The Dresser, among others, at San Jose Repertory Theatre; Flower Drum Song, Guys and Dolls, The King and I, Gypsy, and The Wizard of Oz at American Musical Theatre of San Jose; Anansi the Spider, Orson’s Shadow, and The Last Schwartz at Marin Theatre Company; Le nozze di Figaro and The Magic Flute at Opera San Jose; and Water by the Spoonful, Silent Sky, and the New Works Festivals of 2009, 2010, and 2013 at TheatreWorks. She has also worked with Teatro ZinZanni and the Circus Center of San Francisco.

DEIRDRE ROSE HOLLAND: (Assistant Stage Manager) regional theater credits include 2 Pianos 4 Hands (TheatreWorks); The Great Tragedies: Mike Daisey Takes on Shakespeare and Lady Windermere’s Fan (California Shakespeare Theater); Game On, Next Fall, Next to Normal, A Christmas Carol 2011 and 2012, and Spring Awakening (San Jose Repertory Theatre); the world premiere of Bonnie and Clyde and The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later (La Jolla Playhouse); and the Shakespeare Festival 2011, How the Grinch Stole Christmas!, Brighton Beach Memoirs and Broadway Bound, and The Mystery of Irma Vep (The Old Globe). Holland holds an M.F.A. in stage management from the University of California, San Diego.

FRED M. LEVIN AND NANCY LIVINGSTON, THE SHENSON FOUNDATION (Executive Producers), are stewards of the Shenson Foundation and lifelong theatergoers who have subscribed to A.C.T. together for 29 years. A San Francisco native, Levin attended A.C.T. performances as a student while Livingston developed her passion for theater at her hometown Cleveland Play House. A former advertising copywriter, Livingston is chair of the A.C.T. Board of Trustees and also serves on the Dean’s Advisory Board, College of Fine Arts at Boston University. In addition, she serves on the board of the National Council for the American Theatre. A former importer from the Pacific Rim, Levin serves on the governing boards of the San Francisco Symphony, the Asian Art Museum, and the San Francisco Film Society (which his father founded). He is a former chair of the San Francisco Performances board. Both Livingston and Levin serve on the Council of Advocates of the Boston Arts Academy and on the National Advisory Board of Washington, DC’s National Museum of Women in the Arts.

BARRY WILLIAMS AND LALITA TademY (Executive Producers) have supported A.C.T. for many years. Williams founded Williams Pacific Ventures, Inc., a real-estate and private-equity investment and consulting firm, in 1987. As a member of the National Park Foundation board, Williams cofounded the African American Experience Fund to support the foundation’s African American parks and historic sites. Williams is on A.C.T.’s Emeritus Advisory Board and served as a board member from 1998 to 2010. Tademy, a former vice president of Sun Microsystems, left the corporate world to immerse herself in tracing her family’s history and writing her first historical novel, Cane River, which Oprah Winfrey selected as her summer book group pick in 2001. Tademy’s second historical novel, Red River, another New York Times best seller, debuted in 2007.

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States
“ALL OF US ARE ARTISTS, AND WE CAN LEARN from each other.” This is what A.C.T. Community Producer Rebecca Struch, who leads our participatory-theater program Stage Coach, believes. When she met first-year M.F.A. Program student Diana Gonzalez-Morett last August, the two immediately connected over their mutual passion for social justice and community-based theater.

They realized that Sky Festival, the annual event that gives A.C.T. M.F.A. Program students the opportunity to work on independent projects throughout the month of January, was the perfect opportunity to explore their shared convictions. Together, they discussed which San Francisco communities would benefit from sharing their stories. “You can’t help but witness the reality of homelessness in the Tenderloin,” says Gonzalez-Morett. “We wanted to figure out how we, as theater artists, could learn from and collaborate with that community.” They found the answer in Hospitality House.

Hospitality House is not only San Francisco’s first homeless shelter—it also provides free access to art supplies, classes, and studios for those who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness. “If there is one thing that poverty stifles, it is feelings of well-being, creativity, and self-worth,” says Ivan Vera, Hospitality House’s community arts program manager. “As an organization, we try to figure out grassroots ways that we can holistically help improve those areas.” Struch proposed that Hospitality House team up with Sky Festival and Stage Coach, which seeks to create theater with and for the diverse communities of San Francisco, and Stories from the ’Loin was born.

Struch and Gonzalez-Morett then worked on assembling a team. Through our unique Citizen Artist curriculum, A.C.T. encourages our M.F.A. Program students to actively consider what being a theater artist means within a greater cultural, social, and political context—so Josie Alvarez, Alexa Erbach, Narea Kang, and Akilah Walker joined their classmate Gonzalez-Morett in what was sure to be a powerful creative experience.

In December, Hospitality House clients came to A.C.T. to participate in a “story circle.” With Gonzalez-Morett and Struch facilitating, community members and the M.F.A. Program students built an environment of trust and respect, and from such simple questions as, “If you could have any superpower, what would it be?” arose stories of homelessness, poverty, addiction, and mental illness. “We realized right away that we were with a group of people who really wanted their voices to be heard,” says Gonzalez-Morett.

For many of the participants, the opportunity to talk about their experiences was profound. Visual artist and participant Jim Housley had never spoken about his experiences with homelessness. “I had no intention of ever talking about it,” he says, “so that was difficult. But it was good, because from it came something to put into Stories. It became art. It made me feel a little more relaxed about it.”

Akilah Walker, who has experience with spoken-word performance, transcribed and integrated the stories told by the Hospitality House participants, and by the time Sky...
Festival started in January, they had a skeleton of a script full of their own experiences. Next came a two-week rehearsal period during which everyone worked together to develop and stage the production. The Hospitality House participants had varying levels of experience with theater—for some, this was their first time onstage—so Struch and the M.F.A. Program students provided artistic support and encouragement where it was needed. “I think a lot of the substance in this piece came from working with these professionals,” says Housley. “They couldn’t have our stories, but we couldn’t have their experience.”

Vera was impressed by everyone’s dedication to the project. “A.C.T. managed to get everyone to come back to every rehearsal, to be present every single time,” he says. “They made it interesting enough, compelling enough, that they committed to it.” Struch and the M.F.A. Program students helped to create an environment the Hospitality House participants looked forward to being a part of. “The crew has treated our people with compassion and respect,” Vera says. “The participants feel so invisible on the street, and the M.F.A. Program students have given them so much meaning and value and power.”

“I almost quit!” remembers Hospitality House participant James. “And then one day, Akilah came up to me and said, ‘How’s it going?’ I thought for a second, and then I said, ‘I haven’t had this much fun in a long time.’ So I kept at it. It’s easy to quit; the hardest thing to do is stay. I’m glad I did.”

The final product was a vibrant amalgamation of monologues, poetry, visual art, dance, and song, featuring the performances of Hospitality House participants, with supporting roles played by the M.F.A. Program students. Since Sky Festival in January, the group has performed the show at Grace Cathedral and Kelly Cullen Community. This compelling play has inspired feelings of empathy in audience members, who said that they came away from the performance feeling “humbled, grateful, present,” “appreciation, respect, connection, hope, love,” and “all kinds [of emotions] because I see some of me in all of them.”

Above all else, Stories from the ‘Loin is proof of theater’s power to heal. For Struch and Gonzalez-Morett, theater provides an opportunity for participants to bear witness to each other’s humanity. “Bearing witness means I’m here, I’m present, I’m inviting your voice, and I’m ready to listen to it,” says Struch. “People really step up to the call when you say, ‘I value you as a person and I want to hear what you have to say.’ They have been waiting for that.”
A.C.T.’S AWARD-WINNING TRAINING PROVIDES

the kind of artistic and personal development that makes rigorous work feel like play—and what better time to play than summer? If you’re in search of the perfect summertime activity, check out A.C.T.’s multifaceted programs: the Summer Training Congress, Back to the Source, and the all-new American Musical Theater Conservatory (offered every summer); and the Young Conservatory and Studio A.C.T. (offered year-round).

Designed to engage everyone from the complete novice to the accomplished thespian, A.C.T.’s summer training offers a special peek behind the curtain, paired with an engaging, immersive experience that’ll give students something fun to write home about. Students can take courses at a world-class theater while leaving ample time for work, travel, and soaking up San Francisco’s many cultural treats.

SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS

Within just a couple years of A.C.T.’s founding, its first educational program, the Summer Training Congress (STC), was launched and set the groundwork for what would become A.C.T.’s Master of Fine Arts Program. The STC is open to people ages 19 and older and is meant to refuel professional actors while offering a jumpstart to those who might be in the exploratory phase. The program boasts such illustrious alumni as Teri Hatcher, Camryn Manheim, and Omar Metwally.

Structured as either a two-week or five-week session offered five days a week and eight hours a day, the STC is “for those who eat, pray, and love theater and acting,” says Conservatory Director Melissa Smith. Daily classes in movement, voice, text, acting, and other theatrical disciplines are complemented by other workshops on special topics, as well as Q&A sessions with some of the nation’s most successful theater artists. Many students are so taken by the program that they end up diving in headfirst and attending both sessions.

According to STC Director Chris Herold, “The STC has an international student body, with actors coming from all over the world to study at A.C.T.; it’s a splendid opportunity to connect with people from every sort of background.”

BACK TO THE SOURCE

The central purpose of Back to the Source is to help teachers embrace their inner artists, according to A.C.T. Director of Education & Community Programs Elizabeth Brodersen. Currently in its fourth year, this week-long workshop gives classroom teachers and teaching artists a unique learning experience. While engaging with our world-class M.F.A. Program faculty, educators take a refreshing sip from the creative source that is A.C.T.’s actor training while also gaining valuable professional development that enables them to take what they learn back into their classrooms.

Back to the Source and its innovative strategies aren’t just applicable to teachers of drama; in fact, many of the participants specialize in a wide variety of curriculum areas—from English and history to science and early-childhood learning. The curriculum offers workshops in movement, voice, speech, and creating a devised acting project. Brodersen also addresses the specific concerns of each incoming cohort by organizing sessions with guest artists and educators who
help teachers integrate the week’s experiences into their classroom environments.

Back to the Source is especially vital in ensuring that theater stays alive for the greatest number of students; last year’s teacher cohort will reach 3,000 students collectively during the current school year.

“'I’m amazed by how much of the material, exercises, and experience was applicable to my life as a creative-writing teacher,” participant Annie Rovzar said about Back to the Source 2014. The program fueled a collaboration between A.C.T. and Rovzar, who teaches poetry to pregnant and parenting teens at Hilltop Special Services Center as part of the San Francisco Arts Commission’s WritersCorps. A.C.T. teaching artist Tristan Cunningham has joined Rovzar in residency in her classroom to help her students dramatize and perform their written work.

AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATER CONSERVATORY

Another exciting summer offering at A.C.T. is our first training program dedicated to musical theater. American Musical Theater Conservatory (AMTC) is a rigorous six-week course of study providing musically talented actors a world-class education in the history and performance of this beloved art form. The program is tailored to committed students and offers college credit to approved undergraduates. Anyone 19 and older may apply, and limited scholarships are available for qualified applicants.

Students will learn about the different eras of musical theater and take classes in singing, lyric interpretation, musical-theater scene study, musical-theater dance styles, the Alexander Technique, auditioning for musical theater, and more.

“We teach singers and dancers how to act well,” says AMTC Director Nick Gabriel, who also presides over the company’s Studio A.C.T. program. “And we teach good actors how to act well while they’re singing and dancing.”

AMTC students will also reap the many benefits of performing three concerts directed by major professional directors on the Geary stage, an unprecedented opportunity.

“This new program is intended to immerse students in rigorous multidisciplinary musical-theater training in collaboration with the larger A.C.T. community,” says Gabriel. “If you want to develop your talent, learn new techniques and transferable skills, advance your professional prospects, and enhance your résumé, AMTC is right for you.”

THE YOUNG CONSERVATORY

Young Conservatory Director Craig Slaight is accustomed to seeing hundreds of students walk through A.C.T.’s doors during the school year, but there’s no actual “off season” for this theater program that serves young people ages 8 to 19.

With local students and theater enthusiasts who hail from as far as Japan, India, Vietnam, and China, the summer YC is a great opportunity for talented young people to continue their training in a focused environment. Classes range from musical-theater workshops to creating physical character. On the final day, each session ends with an “open class” that friends and family are invited to check out; students then demonstrate the techniques they’ve picked up over the weeks to rapt audiences.

During the summer, participants are taught by a variety of instructors, including professionals and students from A.C.T.’s M.F.A. Program; undergraduates from universities across the country also get the chance to be teaching assistants during the summer’s high-energy sessions. Performance opportunities are available to summer students, who are invited to audition for the YC’s upcoming three-play festival, which includes a play, a musical, and an exciting coproduction with A.C.T.’s Education & Community Programs department as well as Oakland’s Destiny Arts Center. This summer also marks the YC’s entrée to the new Strand Theater, where all of the program’s future productions will take place.

Slaight and his colleagues will have their hands full, given that last summer alone, the YC served 700 students. “It’s serious actor training—but it’s still really fun,” says Slaight. “There’s a class for every kid who is just interested in exploring, but the program also caters to the ones who absolutely know, ‘This is for me!’”

STUDIO A.C.T.

Those interested in getting a taste of our training will want to check out Studio A.C.T., the Conservatory’s extended-learning program that offers year-round classes to the general public.

“We are trying to enrich the lives of theater enthusiasts with these classes,” says Studio A.C.T. Director Nick Gabriel.

Summer sessions run for five weeks and include courses such as Introduction to Acting, Shakespeare, Auditioning, and The Art of Public Speaking. All courses are intended to support students in transferring performance-related skills to a variety of “real world” contexts, from the workplace to their social activities. A theater background isn’t necessary, and anyone age 19 or older may register for as many courses as they desire.

Because courses are meant to provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, many students return in subsequent seasons to soak up Studio A.C.T.’s other offerings. With classes ranging from playwriting to directing to acting to stage makeup, “anyone can find something within the curriculum to satisfy a desire for creativity,” says Gabriel. “We will illuminate each and every student’s artistry through this thrilling educational experience.”
CAREY PERLOFF

(Director, A.C.T.
Artistic Director) is celebrating her 23rd season as artistic director of A.C.T. This past fall, she staged the New York premiere of Tom Stoppard’s Indian Ink at Roundabout Theatre Company before bringing the show to A.C.T. Recent A.C.T. productions also include Testament, Underneath the Lintel, Arcadia, Elektra (coproduced by the Getty Villa in Malibu), Endgame and Play, Scorching, The Homecoming, Tosca Café (cocreated with choreographer Val Caniparoli; toured Canada), and Racine’s Phèdre in a coproduction with the Stratford Festival. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and championing new writing for the theater, Perloff has also directed for A.C.T. José Rivera’s Bolero for the Disenchanted; the world premieres of Philip Kan Gotanda’s After the War (A.C.T. commission) and her own adaptation (with Paul Walsh) of A Christmas Carol; the American premieres of Tom Stoppard’s The Invention of Love and Indian Ink, and Harold Pinter’s Celebration; A.C.T.–commissioned translations/adaptations of Hecuba, The Misanthrope, Enrico IV, Mary Stuart, Uncle Vanya, A Mother, and The Voysey Inheritance (adapted by David Mamet); the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian’s Singer’s Boy; and major revivals of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore, The Government Inspector, Happy End (including a critically acclaimed cast album recording), A Doll’s House, Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters, The Threepenny Opera, Old Times, The Rose Tattoo, Antigone, Creditors, The Room, Home, The Tempest, and Stoppard’s Rock ‘n’ Roll, Travesties, The Real Thing, and Night and Day. Perloff’s work for A.C.T. also includes Marie Ndiaye’s Hilda, the world premieres of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer and David Lang/Mac Wellman’s The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, and the West Coast premiere of her own play The Colossus of Rhodes (Susan Smith Blackburn Award finalist).

Perloff is also an award-winning playwright. Her play Kinship was developed at the Perry-Mansfield New Play Festival and at New York Stage and Film (2013), and premiered at the Théâtre de Paris this October in a production starring Isabelle Adjani and Niels Schneider. Waiting for the Flood has received workshops at A.C.T., New York Stage and Film, and Roundabout Theatre. Higher was developed at New York Stage and Film, won the 2011 Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation Theatre Visions Fund Award, and received its world premiere in February 2012 in San Francisco. Luminescence Dating premiered in New York at The Ensemble Studio Theatre, was coproduced by A.C.T. and the Magic Theatre, and is published by Dramatists Play Service. The Colossus of Rhodes was workshopped at the O’Neill National Playwrights Conference, premiered at Lucille Lortel’s White Barn Theatre, and was produced at A.C.T. in 2003.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound’s Elektra, the American premiere of Pinter’s Mountain Language, and many classic works. Under Perloff’s leadership, CSC won numerous OBIE Awards, including the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s opera The Cave at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music.

A recipient of France’s Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the National Corporate Theatre Fund’s 2007 Artistic Achievement Award, Perloff received a B.A. Phi Beta Kappa in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years, and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. Perloff is on the board of the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Sarasota, Florida, and is the proud mother of Lexie and Nicholas. Perloff is the author of Beautiful Chaos: A Life in the Theater (City Lights, March 2015).

MELISSA SMITH

(Conservatory Smith, Head of Acting) has served as Conservatory director and head of acting in the Master of Fine Arts Program at A.C.T. since 1995. During that time, she has overseen the expansion of the M.F.A. Program from a two- to a three-year course of study and the further integration of the M.F.A. Program faculty and student body with A.C.T.’s artistic wing. She has also taught and directed in the M.F.A. Program, Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T. Prior to assuming leadership of the Conservatory, Smith was the director of theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught introductory, intermediate, and advanced acting. She has taught acting classes to students of all ages at various colleges, high schools, and studios around the continental United States, at the Mid-Pacific Institute in Hawaii, New York University’s La Pietra campus in Florence, and the Teatro di Pisa in San Miniato, Italy. She is featured in Acting Teachers of America: A Vital Tradition. Also a professional actor, she has performed regionally at the Hangar Theatre, A.C.T., California Shakespeare Theater, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre; in New York at Primary Stages and Soho Rep; and in England at the Barbican Theater (London) and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Smith holds a B.A. from Yale College and an M.F.A. in acting from Yale School of Drama.