MASTER OF FINE ARTS

TOP-RANKED PROFESSIONAL ACTOR TRAINING IN THE HEART OF SAN FRANCISCO

A.C.T. AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

2020 | 21 M.F.A. PROGRAM
AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training in its conservatory, and an ongoing engagement with its community. A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent 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 A.C.T.’s creative work.
The closing date for materials in this bulletin was July 15, 2019. A.C.T. reserves the right to withdraw or modify the courses of instruction and faculty members at any time.

For complete program information—including application forms, policies, and procedures—please visit act-sf.org/mfa.
The American Conservatory Theater Master of Fine Arts Program prizes curiosity, imagination, and initiative in actors; emphasizes dedication to craft and technique; encourages the development of original work; and recognizes the potential of live performance to effect social change. Through exposure to professional artists and engagement with diverse audiences inside and outside A.C.T., MFA Program actors discover how theater reflects the life of a community and how the life of a community inspires its theater.

This highly competitive graduate program is designed to educate and stimulate the most promising young actors, who are selected through nationwide auditions. The rigorous and multifaceted curriculum produces well-rounded performers.

A.C.T. recognizes that different styles of theater require different styles of training, so MFA Program actors study and perform a wide variety of theater, including both classical and contemporary work.
Reaching beyond the stage, the Citizen Artistry curriculum is a course of study unique to A.C.T. in which students create theater for and with San Francisco Bay Area communities.

MFA Program actors also have the opportunity to create and develop their own work with A.C.T.’s annual Sky Festival, in which students may take on any role—from director to performer to writer—and enrich their understanding of how theater is made.

And, to top it all off, MFA Program actors will be cast in at least one of A.C.T.’s mainstage shows, providing student performers with professional theater experience.

Oliver Shirley, class of ’18, and Micah Peoples, class of ’19, in Othello in Sky Festival 2018 (photo by Jay Yamada)
The MFA Program’s place at the center of a renowned professional theater company, as well as its urban location in San Francisco, enriches every aspect of the program, bringing students of various backgrounds into close contact with writers, directors, designers, and actors of many different theatrical traditions.

With this intensive curriculum and prime location, the A.C.T. MFA Program produces actors who go on to energize the art of performance and ensure the future of theater in America.

The Strand Theater on Market Street
(photo by Bruce Damonte)
FROM THE DIRECTORS

The Geary Theater (photo by Sara Morales)
What is A.C.T.? A.C.T. is a Tony Award-winning theater located in San Francisco, a cultural hub of Northern California and an international destination. A.C.T. is also a multigenerational artistic and educational community where growth is artistic, individual and lifelong. Everyone here—young and old, novice and master—is engaged in the art of storytelling through live theater.

The MFA Program sits in the center of A.C.T. Acting classes unfold in studios next to rehearsals for mainstage shows. You share the halls with professional veterans and with children and teenagers, all of whom are excited to act and make theater for the first or fiftieth time. The professionals are your peers as well as mentors; you may be in class with an teacher one month and in rehearsal with them the next.

In turn, you mentor younger actors, performing alongside them in conservatory and mainstage productions and teaching them in summer.

When you choose to train at A.C.T., you choose a place that celebrates self-discovery and self-exploration through the discovery and exploration of others—other people, places, cultures, and times. Here, you are in a company that values theater for its power to change lives. We cultivate “citizen artists,” actors who are community-minded and socially aware, who see theater as an art and a service, a means of developing empathy and compassion for all members of society.

In A.C.T.’s MFA Program, you practice craft and stretch your creative muscles in ways you never thought possible, and do so with a whole community behind you. You free your voice, hone your body, sharpen your ear, and enrich your imagination. You act, sing, clown, and dance your way through dramas, comedies, and experiments in form. You create and collaborate, and you generate as well as interpret material. Over three years, you traverse a wide-ranging theatrical landscape and encounter a panoply of characters: classical and emerging playwrights, directors, designers, fellow actors, and all manner of audience. You grow as an artist and as a person. The journey is arduous, joyous, revelatory and transformational. By its end you possess the skills and experience to succeed in virtually any professional performance arena.

The theater is our church, our town hall, our social act. We aim to change the world with the theater we make—one play, one performer, one audience at a time. Imagine. Empathize. Stretch. Transform. Awaken. Grow.

Join us!

ACT-SF.ORG/MFA | MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM

Melissa Smith
Conservatory Director

Pam MacKinnon
Artistic Director

LEFT Melissa Smith and Pam MacKinnon
(Illustration by Kimberly Rhee)
THE CITY, THE THEATER

Photo by Evgeny Tchebotarev
Established in 1965, American Conservatory Theater is a Tony Award–winning theater and conservatory whose work is energized and informed by a profound commitment to developing the next generation of theater artists. A.C.T. is the largest theater company in the San Francisco Bay Area and employs more than 800 people each season, from teachers and artists to technicians and administrative staff. During the past four decades, more than 330 A.C.T. productions have been seen by close to seven million theatergoers in The Geary Theater—the company’s magnificent Beaux Arts–style mainstage theater located in San Francisco’s Union Square theater district—as well as the 283-seat Strand Theater, reconstructed from the bones of a nearly 100-year-old cinema.

THE VISION A.C.T. continues to nurture its legacy as one of America’s most respected regional theaters. It is constantly expanding its reach to include new areas of dramatic literature, new communities, and new collaborations—as well as innovative interpretations of classical work. Central to A.C.T.’s vision is the philosophy of lifelong education. A.C.T. is dedicated to enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the classroom and on the stage. In this dedication, A.C.T. recognizes that students and performers come from various backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. A.C.T. believes embracing those differences elevates craft, art, and our institution.

THE SCENE Famed for its energetic individualism, its sophisticated cultural landscape, and its breathtaking beauty, San Francisco is home to more than 300 resident theater companies, from new-play repertories to acclaimed Shakespeare festivals to Broadway touring houses. An ideal location for actors beginning their careers, the Bay Area theater scene is both large enough to be noticed nationally and intimate enough to ensure that you’ll soon be a familiar face. Actors in the Bay Area are involved in all levels of the entertainment industry, from developing contacts to attending auditions and industry gatherings, and frequently make the successful transition to thriving theater and film careers.

“A.C.T’s MFA Program has singlehandedly changed my life. My experience these past 3 years has been nothing but incredible. A.C.T. has not only made me a better actor, it’s made me a better human being.”

Avanthika Srinivasan | MFA Class of 2019
THE LOCATION
Located in the heart of San Francisco’s bustling Union Square district, the A.C.T. Conservatory features eight studios and shares its rehearsal spaces with A.C.T.’s mainstage productions. Classrooms, studios, and administrative offices are fully integrated—student life is an essential part of A.C.T.’s culture—and students have the opportunity to interact daily with artists and staff. A few blocks away is A.C.T.’s historic and dazzling mainstage, The Geary Theater—one of San Francisco’s cultural landmarks, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2010.

Located down the street in San Francisco’s bustling Central Market arts neighborhood is A.C.T.’s dynamic and versatile performance complex, The Strand Theater. It houses two performance spaces—The Rembe stage, a performance space that can house 283 seats, and The Rueff, a 120-seat event and performance space. The Strand offers unprecedented learning and performance opportunities to our students, as well as the chance to connect with a new community of theater lovers. Next door to The Strand is The Costume Shop Theater, a versatile black-box performance venue and A.C.T.’s dedicated home for innovative MFA Program works and community partnerships. In addition, The Garret—tucked into the fifth floor of The Geary—provides a warm, intimate space for student cabarets and other performances.

Nearby (and easily accessible via public transportation), students can explore the theater district, museums, parks, Chinatown, North Beach, and the Embarcadero waterfront. On a day off, the City by the Bay offers students an extraordinary range of activities. Take a hike in Muir Woods, go sailing on the Bay, catch a baseball game, hit a jazz club, bike across the Golden Gate Bridge, check out a pop-up restaurant, or soak up paintings in local artists’ open studios. Tucked into the beautiful landscape of Northern California, the Bay Area also offers easy access to other unforgettable adventures. Spend a day exploring wine country in nearby Napa and Sonoma valleys, head down Highway 1 to view the dramatic coastal landscape near Big Sur, or check out the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.
Summer Brown, class of '20, and Zahan Mehta, class of '21 in Medea (photo by Alessandra Mello)
Just a few doors down from the studio classrooms where MFA Program actors learn and rehearse, you'll find a bustling company making professional theater happen. During their training at A.C.T., MFA Program actors come to think of themselves as apprentices rather than acting students. The A.C.T. community doesn't recognize a group of “acting students,” but rather student actors; the difference is small, but crucial. Outside of training, students are encouraged to sit in on professional rehearsals, listen to directors present production concepts, and see a show at the theater more than once just because they love an actor's performance.

360° THEATER: THE MFA ACTOR EXPERIENCE The essence of A.C.T.'s actor training lies in the interplay between our professional company and our conservatory. Within the A.C.T. artistic community, professionals and students are constantly learning from each other—MFA Program actors audition for and perform in A.C.T. productions and establish valuable mentor relationships with the artists, producers, literary staff, and other professionals who make theater happen. A.C.T. draws on a federation of artists—from actors who regularly appear on our stages to directors, designers, and playwrights who continually return to create new work at A.C.T.—who are the MFA Program actors’ living link to the professional theater world. In turn, MFA Program actors serve as mentors to younger artists in A.C.T.’s renowned Young Conservatory and in the Education & Community Programs Department through teaching opportunities or performing onstage together in various productions.

A.C.T. CORNERSTONES At A.C.T., training requires immense physical energy, intellectual curiosity, emotional honesty, vivid imagination, and willingness to take risks. Central to the program’s mission is its focus on an actor’s “readiness” to perform at A.C.T.’s Geary Theater, our demanding, 1,024-seat historic home. Success on a stage of this caliber requires enormous depth and agility and is vital in developing the total actor—a performing artist.
possessing the skills and experience to succeed in any professional arena, from Broadway and regional theater to film and television. To extend these powerful skills into the world, actor training at A.C.T. also cultivates citizen artists—socially conscious and community-minded theater professionals with the passion and heart to unleash theater as a force for sociocultural change wherever they go.

To prepare actors for these challenges, our curriculum focuses on four cornerstones of A.C.T. readiness: expressivity—tuning the actor’s instrument (voice, body, and mind) to unleash the talent within; professionalism—understanding and embracing the responsibilities of the professional actor, from caring for a costume to expectations when hired; transformation—synthesizing all aspects of the craft, fusing technique and imagination to create a character within the world of a play; and collaboration—working with artists to make a piece of theater, a process requiring the courage to make bold choices and the passion to inspire creativity in others.

THE CITIZEN ARTIST Our exciting Citizen Artist training aids students’ understanding of the artist’s role in society. Citizen Artists are actors dedicated to craft and committed to social change through the practice of their art. Through a variety of programs, A.C.T. is able to train socially aware, transformative theater artists with the tools to use their art to create change. A.C.T.’s Education & Community Programs Department provides theater-based arts education and engagement opportunities for more than 17,000 school students and community members each year through three programs: Student Matinee performances, with related pre- and post-show workshops; the Will on Wheels tour, with second-year MFA Program actors presenting Shakespeare productions at Bay Area schools and community centers; and the ACTsmart Intensive Residency Program, which provides in-depth instruction in writing and performance to socioeconomically disadvantaged youth in San Francisco continuation high schools and community-based organizations.

“The Citizen Artistry program was a big part of why I chose A.C.T. for my MFA. I had just come out of undergrad, and I was really a big activist. That was a thing that I wanted to continue, and A.C.T. was the only place that had a focus on being a citizen artist and giving you the tools and the language to do that.”

Jerrie R. Johnson | MFA Class of 2019
PERFORMING ON THE STAGE—AND BEYOND  Student actors at A.C.T. perform frequently within the program, working with professional directors and designers in a variety of performance venues. In the first two years of training, MFA Program actors participate in productions at The Costume Shop Theater, The Rueff, and The Garret, as well as Will on Wheels—a Shakespeare play that tours to schools and venues around the Bay Area. In the third year, student actors begin their transition to the professional world by stepping into productions on the Geary and Strand stages and earning their Actors’ Equity Association membership. Throughout their training at A.C.T., student actors participate in the process of creating new work for the theater by performing in A.C.T.’s staged readings, the New Strands Festival, and other presentations of new and upcoming plays.

CAREER TRANSITION  At the end of the third year of training, MFA Program actors launch their careers with a showcase presented to industry professionals (agents, casting directors, and artistic directors) in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Upon graduation, students continue to experience a community of support, with A.C.T. alumni working in theater, film, television, and arts education across the country.

CONSERVATORY HOURS  During their training, students have the opportunity to attend Conservatory Hours—exclusive Q&A sessions with successful actors, directors, producers, writers, and alumni. Previous speakers have included Jason Alexander, Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Eve Ensler, Harvey Fierstein, Woody Harrelson, Bill Irwin, Cherry Jones, Baz Luhrmann, David Mamet, Frances McDormand, Suzan-Lori Parks, Bill Rauch, Mark Ruffalo, Anna Deavere Smith, Tom Stoppard, David Strathairn, John Douglas Thompson, and BD Wong.
THE CURRICULUM
Classes in acting, text analysis, voice, text/dialects, and movement are taught by core faculty members, who guide each student toward achieving their fullest potential. Distinguished guest artists, A.C.T. staff members, and other industry professionals enhance the program with master classes, seminars, and lectures on such subjects as dance, stage combat, on-camera acting, the business of acting, and what it means to be a citizen artist. All curriculum classes are compulsory, with no elective subjects.

Performances frequently combine students with actors from all around A.C.T. Throughout their three years in the program, MFA Program students may find themselves onstage alongside faculty, young actors from our Young Conservatory, professional guest artists, and fellow MFA actors from all years of the program. Student actors also have opportunities to generate their own work—as actor, writer, director, adaptor, and more—in the annual Sky Festival. Other performance opportunities include musical cabarets, as well as opportunities to work with professional actors, directors, and playwrights on public readings of new plays under consideration for development by A.C.T.

In addition, student actors are also invited to apprentice with teaching artists as part of A.C.T.’s growing education and community programs. This integral part of the curriculum connects MFA Program actors with enthusiastic students and community members from across the Bay Area—some of whom will experience theater for the very first time through their contact with A.C.T.
FIRST YEAR
In the first year, students focus on acting as storytelling, learning to cultivate authenticity, flexibility, imagination, and daring in all aspects of the craft.

COURSES Acting, voice, text/dialects, movement (Alexander Technique, stage combat, masks, dance), singing, script analysis, theater history, studies in the San Francisco cultural landscape, as well as special workshops, new-play development, and citizen artist training.

PROGRESS First-year actors train individually in the context of their development as an ensemble. During extensive course work, student actors focus on both the interpretation and generation of material. They engage with a range of literature, exploring the dynamics of classic and modern texts. Particular attention is paid to identifying and playing the given circumstances in a range of contemporary and modern realistic plays (e.g., Rajiv Joseph, Dominique Morisseau, Annie Baker).

Heightened and elevated language is also introduced. By the end of the first year, student actors possess a strong, flexible foundation for their artistic journey, and are equipped with skills to interpret—and tools to devise—a variety of work.

PERFORMANCES First-semester work includes the performance of a created movement project under the direction of a choreographer, the presentation of a devised theater piece, and the performance of a one-act play. At the end of the second semester, first-year actors perform alongside second-year actors in modern plays or classics—enabling them to apply the first year’s practical studies.

CREDITS
603 A&B Acting (6.5 credits)
613 A&B Physical Theater I (7 credits)
623 A&B Voice/Text/Dialects I (8 credits)
643 A&B Theatrical Imagination I (4.5 credits)
653 A&B Rehearsal & Performance I (19 credits)
673 B Citizen Artist I (1 credit)
46 credits total
SECOND YEAR

The second year focuses primarily on truth and size in acting, with particular emphasis on the demands of dramatic texts with elevated language and heightened emotional and physical expression (primarily classical and verse plays).

COURSES Act ing (scene study in Shakespeare, August Wilson, Tennessee Williams), voice, text (including dialects), singing, script analysis, and movement (Alexander Technique, commedia mask, clown), as well as special workshops in stage combat, new play development, and citizen artist training.

PROGRESS With an increased emphasis on collaboration in rehearsal and performance, student actors expand their technical skills and their capacity to transform and collaborate as they work with a variety of directors in the production of plays by such writers as Shakespeare, Sheridan, Kate Hamill, Wole Soyinka, August Wilson, Euripides, and others. Through their engagement with poetic texts, nonrealistic theater, and their own devised work, they gain confidence in a range of performance styles and rehearsal processes. Students perform for public audiences in a wide variety of spaces, putting their expressivity, collaboration, and professionalism to the test.

PERFORMANCES Second-year performances include classical and modern plays that demand sustained and explosive emotion; plays or projects that demand physically based characterization; verse dramas that demand mental agility, rhetorical dexterity, and imagination; and a musical cabaret. Second-year actors perform in our popular Will on Wheels production, a Shakespeare play that tours Bay Area schools and community centers in March. They also present performances of modern plays or classics in the spring at The Costume Shop Theater or The Rueff at The Strand Theater.

CREDITS

703 A&B Acting II (5 credits)
713 A&B Physical Theater II (6.5 credits)
723 A&B Voice/Text/Dialects II (7.5 credits)
743 A&B Theatrical Imagination II (1 credit)
753 A&B Rehearsal & Performance II (22.5 credits)
773 B Citizen Artist (1 credit)
43.5 credits total

“The first year is about learning about yourself and your own tools, your habits, what’s hindering you. In the second year you use a lot of your emotion and mess that you found and cracked open in your first year and honing in and using that in performance.”

Summer Brown | MFA Class of 2020

“Eddie Ewell and Summer Brown, class of ’20, in The School for Scandal (photo by Alessandra Mello)
During the final year, students transition toward the professional realm as they synthesize skills, performing on A.C.T.’s Geary and Strand stages while continuing to stretch themselves through intensive classroom work and participation in workshops of new plays.

**COURSES** Master classes in acting, clown, singing, and on-camera work; tutorials in voice, text/dialects, and movement; and special workshops on such topics as audition techniques and the business of acting augment the cycle of rehearsal and performance. Interested students may participate in additional citizen artist opportunities.

**PROGRESS** From the performance of devised pieces to the mastery of the A.C.T. mainstage in *A Christmas Carol*, student actors complete their third year having gained professional experience on an A.C.T. stage and possessing a wealth of resources that will help launch their careers, including their Actors’ Equity Association membership. They are transparent, versatile performers—at home with a wide range of contemporary and classical material, in theatrical spaces vast and intimate, and with audiences large and small. Toward the end of the third year, the entire class is presented in a showcase for professional theater and film directors, agents, and casting directors in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

**PERFORMANCES** Student actors perform on the A.C.T. mainstage in *A Christmas Carol*—and may be cast in a role or as an understudy in another professional production on the Geary or Rembe stage. In addition, third-year actors perform in The Garret at The Geary Theater, join fellow MFA Program actors in productions at The Costume Shop Theater or The Rueff at The Strand Theater, and in the spring, present solo recitals designed for third-year actors to make an artistic statement through acting.

**CREDITS**

- 803 A&B *Acting III* (4 credits)
- 813 A&B *Physical Theater III* (2 credits)
- 823 A&B *Voice/Text/Dialects III* (0.5 credits)
- 890 A&B *Rehearsal & Performance III* (35 credits)
- 873 B (Optional) *Citizen Artist* (flexible credits)

41.5 credits total
The cast of Clickshare (photo by Stefan Cohen)

UNIQUE PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES
**THE SKY FESTIVAL** This dynamic annual event brings together the A.C.T. community in the creation, rehearsal, and performance of a vibrant and eclectic range of work. Students, faculty, and artistic staff submit proposals for projects they are personally passionate about, offering participants an opportunity to approach work from multiple angles—from directing to devising to performing. Ranging from self-written work to movement-based interpretations of published texts to more unconventional explorations of known classics, the chosen projects (14 in 2019) are developed over three weeks of intense rehearsal and discovery, culminating in a festival of in-house presentations.

**ON THE MAINSTAGE** Every year the third-year class auditions for leading and ensemble roles in A.C.T.’s mainstage productions. In addition to the Bay Area favorite *A Christmas Carol*, MFA Program actors have appeared in recent A.C.T. productions of *Men on Boats*, directed by Tamilla Woodard; *Hamlet*, directed by Carey Perloff; *Ah, Wilderness!*, directed by Casey Stangl; *The Unfortunates*, directed by Shana Cooper; *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*, directed by Mark Rucker; *A Little Night Music*, directed by Mark Lamos; and *A Walk on the Moon*, directed by Sheryl Kaller. Each season students also understudy mainstage roles.

“I’ve been able to explore hidden talents and aspects of my own personality with people that I can call family. [The MFA Program has] opened my eyes to the power of theater and language by deepening my artistic being while engaging with the community, exploring thought-provoking topics about life and self, and having great fun at the same time.”

Beatriz Miranda | Class of ’18

*LEFT* Makenna Miller, class of ’21, in Sky Festival 2019 (photo by Jay Yamada)
NEW WORK MFA Program actors are frequently cast in readings and workshops of new plays, giving student actors a chance to become involved at every level in the play development process and to work with acclaimed actors, directors, and playwrights in an intimate workshop environment. At the 2019 New Strands Festival, a project involving new works from playwrights across the country, A.C.T.’s student actors worked alongside seasoned artists to create staged readings and productions for San Francisco audiences in The Strand Theater. Recent projects have included new works by Luis Alfaro, Jeremy Cohen, Vinny DePonto, Emily Feldman, Dipika Guha, Casey Lee Hurt, Don Nguyen, Robert O’Hara, Jiehae Park, Lachlan Philpott, Susan Soon He Stanton, Mfoniso Udofia, Lauren Yee, Byron Au Yong, and with the participation of such guest artists as Anne Kauffmann, Steven Anthony Jones, Brian Kulick, and Eric Ting.

(Clockwise from top left) Emma Van Lare (class of ’20), Summer Brown (class of ’20), Jerrie R. Johnson (class of ’19), and Ashley J. Hicks (class of ’21) in the 2019 Sky Festival (photo by Jay Yamada)
2018-19 MFA PROGRAM PRODUCTIONS

Dec 6–8 | First-Year Actors
MECHANICS OF LOVE
by Dipika Guha
Directed by Ken Savage
Performed in The Costume Shop Theater

Sep 17–29 | Third-Year Actors
THREE SISTERS
The Russian classic. . . reinvigorated.
by Anton Chekhov
New version by Libby Appel
Directed by Lavina Jadhwani
Performed at The Strand Theater

Oct 11–12 | First-Year Actors
CREATED MOVEMENT PROJECT
Directed by Lisa Townsend
Performed in The Costume Shop Theater

Dec 13–15 | Second-Year Actors
FASCINATING RHYTHMS
A music revue of jazz standards from the 1940s and 50s.
Directed by Darryl V. Jones
Music and Vocal Direction by Joel Chapman
Performed in The Costume Shop Theater

Nov 8–17 | Second-Year Actors
THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL
It’s fun to gossip. . . until the gossip becomes about you.
by Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Adapted and directed by Christine Adaire
Performed in The Rueff

Jan 21–Mar 2 | Third-Year Actors
BOTH YOUR HOUSES
On a production of Romeo and Juliet, the real drama is backstage.
by Susan Soon He Stanton
Directed by Mina Morita
Performed in The Rueff

Mar 11–25 | Second-Year Actors
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM
by William Shakespeare
Directed by Dawn Monique Williams
Will on Wheels Tour

March 22 in The Rueff
March 25–26 in New York City
April 1 in Los Angeles | Third-Year Actors
GRADUATE SHOWCASE
Directed by M. Graham Smith

April | Third-Year Actors
SOLO RECITALS
In-house performances in the 30 Grant Studios

May 8–12 | First- and Second-Year Actors
MEDEA
Vengeance is just the beginning.
by Robinson Jeffers
Freely adapted from Euripides
Directed by Peter J. Kuo
Performed in The Costume Shop Theater

May 9–11 | First- and Second-Year Actors
SENSE AND SENSIBILITY
Sisters before suitors.
by Kate Hamill, based on the novel by Jane Austen
Directed by Pirronne Yousefzadeh
Performed in The Rueff

Nov 8–17 | Second-Year Actors
GRADUATE SHOWCASE
Directed by M. Graham Smith

December | First-, Second-, and Third-Year Actors, associate artists, MFA faculty
SKY FESTIVAL
A festival of work proposed and generated by MFA faculty, MFA actors, and A.C.T. artists.
In-house performances in the 30 Grant Studios

Ashley J. Hicks, class of ’21, in the Created Movement Project (photo by Alessandra Melio)
Gabriel Romero in class (photo by Beryl Baker)
These faculty members provide the essential instruction for the MFA Program in Acting during the school year. In addition, adjunct faculty members teach courses within their areas of specialty. Guest artists, A.C.T. artistic staff, and other theater professionals are often engaged on a short-term basis for master classes, seminars, and workshops. Core faculty members are on staff throughout the school year to provide ongoing instruction in their disciplines; A.C.T.’s associate artists divide their time between A.C.T.’s mainstage productions and teaching in the MFA Program.

DIRECTORS

PAM MACKINNON (Artistic Director) is celebrating her second season as A.C.T.’s fourth artistic director. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie Award-winning director, having directed upwards of 70 productions around the country, off-Broadway, and on Broadway. Her Broadway credits include Beau Willimon’s *The Parisian Woman* (with Uma Thurman), *Amelie: A New Musical*, David Mamet’s *China Doll* (with Al Pacino), Wendy Wasserstein’s *The Heidi Chronicles* (with Elisabeth Moss), Edward Albee’s *A Delicate Balance* (with Glenn Close and John Lithgow), Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Tony and Drama Desk Awards; Outer Critics Circle Award nomination), and Bruce Norris’s *Clybourne Park* (Obie Award for Excellence in Direction; Tony and Lucille Lortel Award nominations). After five years as board chair of Clubbed Thumb, a downtown New York theater company dedicated to new American plays, she sits on its advisory board. She is an artistic associate of Roundabout Theatre Company, a Usual Suspect of New York Theatre Workshop, and an alum of the Drama League, Women’s Project, and Lincoln Center Theater’s Directors’ Labs. She is also the executive board president of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). She grew up in Toronto, Canada, and Buffalo, New York, acted through her teens but majored in economics and political science at the University of Toronto and briefly pursued a PhD at UC San Diego before returning to her true passion: theater.
MELISSA SMITH (Conservatory Director, Head of Acting) has served as conservatory director and head of acting in the MFA Program since 1995. During that time, she has overseen the expansion of the MFA Program from a two- to a three-year course of study and the integration of the faculty and student body with A.C.T.’s artistic wing. A primary acting teacher in the MFA Program, she has also taught for A.C.T.’s Summer Training Congress and Studio A.C.T. Prior to assuming leadership of the Conservatory, Smith was the director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught introductory, intermediate, and advanced acting. She has taught acting classes to students of all ages in 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 Theatre and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Smith holds a BA from Yale College and an MFA in acting from Yale School of Drama.

PETER J. KUO (Associate Conservatory Director) is a bi-coastal Los Angeles native. At A.C.T., he chairs the Staff EDI Committee and sits on the core faculty of the MFA Program. He earned his MFA in directing at The New School for Drama where he was the social justice programs coordinator. He is a theater director, producer, writer, educator, and social justice advocate focusing on raising the visibility of marginalized communities. He is a Round Three grantee of Theatre Communication Group’s Rising Leaders of Color Program and held a First Stage Residency at The Drama League. He is a co-founder of Artists at Play, an Asian American theater collective producing Los Angeles premieres. He has directed/assistant-directed at American Conservatory Theater, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Geffen Playhouse, East West Players, South Coast Repertory, The

**JACK F. SHARRAR (Director of Academic Affairs/Theater History/Accreditation Liaison Officer)** received A.C.T.’s Managing Director’s Award. He has served as a theater panelist for the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and is a member of Actors’ Equity Association and SAG-AFTRA. His credits include roles at Michigan Repertory Theater, Mountainside Theater, BoarsHead Theater, Theatre 40, Pioneer Theatre Company, A.C.T. (studio), numerous media roles, and direction of more than 50 plays and musicals. He is the author of *Avery Hopwood: His Life and Plays* (UMI); coeditor (with Craig Slaight) of numerous scene and monologue books for young actors (Smith & Kraus); adapter of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Debutante* and Hopwood’s *Fair and Warmer* (Playscripts); and author of an original play, *Up in Avery’s Room* (Theatre Rhinoceros). His play *Better Angels*, from the Civil War writings of Louisa May Alcott and Walt Whitman, was performed in A.C.T.’s Sky Festival. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan and holds a PhD in theater history and dramatic literature from the University of Utah.
Company, Court Theatre, American Players Theatre, Theatre for a New Audience, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, and Shakespeare & Company. She has coached the dialects for the Broadway production and first national tour of Mary Poppins. Adaire has taught at DePaul University, National Theatre School of Canada, University of Massachusetts–Amherst, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and Roosevelt University. She taught workshops in Shanghai, Barcelona, London, Australia, New Zealand, and Birmingham, England. Her current area of research and writing is transgender voice. She works with transgender individuals so that they can modify their voice to more fully express their gender identity.

DANYON DAVIS (Head of Movement) is the former head of movement at Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Davis has performed in classical, contemporary, and experimental plays throughout the US and Europe. A former associate with Bill T. Jones and with the SITI Company, Davis also performed, taught, and directed for many years with the Guthrie Theater. A decade ago, Davis was invited to return to his alma mater, the Juilliard Drama Division, by the late Jim Houghton to receive Moni Yakim’s movement/physical acting methodology. Davis has adapted Yakim’s approach while serving as a faculty member at the Neighborhood Playhouse, Circle in the Square Theatre School, and HB Studio’s one-year Hagen Core Training program. Davis has taught movement in many workshop intensive settings, including community and arts-in-education based work with Stephen DiMenna, as well as workshop intensives with the Bill Reed Voice Studio, Middlebury College, and The Public Theater.

JOY MEADS is A.C.T.’s Director of Dramaturgy and New Works, where her credits include Sweat, Men on Boats, Edward Albee’s Seascape, Her Portmanteau, The Great Leap, and Rhinoceros. Prior to A.C.T., she was the literary manager and artistic engagement strategist at Center Theatre Group, where her dramaturgy credits included the world premieres of Marco Ramirez’s The Royale, Jordan Harrison’s Marjorie Prime (2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist), and Forever by Dael Orlandersmith. Previously, she
was literary manager at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and associate artistic director at California Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, Meads has developed plays with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, New York Theatre Workshop, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Portland Center Stage, South Coast Repertory, and Campo Santo, among others. Meads has worked with playwrights Will Eno, Sheila Callaghan, Naomi Iizuka, Lucas Hnath, Paula Vogel, Rajiv Joseph, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Kimber Lee, Qui Nguyen, Jocelyn Bioh, David Adjmi, Universes, and many more. She is a proud co-founder of The Kilroys, a gang of playwrights and dramaturgs working for gender parity on American stages. A second anthology of monologues from plays on The Kilroys’ annual List was recently published by TCG books.

LISA ANNE PORTER (Head of Text and Dialects) has served on the faculties of UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Shakespeare & Company, Syracuse University’s Tepper Semester, Naropa University, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Prior to coming to A.C.T., she was an associate professor of voice, acting, and text in the BFA program at Syracuse University (2001–06), where she was awarded the Most Inspirational Faculty Award during her first year teaching. She has coached voice and dialect in more than 70 productions nationwide. As a professional actor, she has performed with numerous repertory companies and Shakespeare festivals throughout the country. Most recently, she has been seen in the Bay Area in Eureka Day at Aurora Theatre Company, The Eva Trilogy and Bright Half Life at Magic Theatre, and Twelfth Night at California Shakespeare Theater. She has an MFA from A.C.T., a BA in theater and American studies from Wesleyan University, and is certified in Linklater voice training.

ASSOCIATE FACULTY

MILISSA CAREY (Singing) is an educator, director, and actor working throughout the Bay Area. Her training includes a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from the San Francisco
Conservatory of Music, Master of Music from the University of Southern California, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and Studio A.C.T. She is also on the faculty of Foothill College in both the music and theater departments, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as an acting instructor and stage director in the opera department. Carey joined the MFA Program faculty in 2015. Other recent teaching engagements include teaching theater and musical theater at the University of London. A member of Actors’ Equity Association, Carey has performed with many Bay Area companies and toured the US and Canada with the 25th-anniversary Broadway national tour of Evita, under the direction of Harold Prince. Recent directing credits include Side Show; Shrek the Musical; She Loves Me; Kiss Me Kate; Sunday in the Park with George; Spring Awakening; Little Shop of Horrors; South Pacific; A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum; The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee; Almost, Maine; and It’s A Wonderful Life: A Radio Play.

KARI PRINDL (Alexander Technique) grew up around the world before graduating from Oberlin College with a degree in English and a concentration in theater. At Oberlin, she also took cello lessons at the conservatory and was extensively involved with the dance department. After college, she moved to San Francisco and trained with Frank Ottiwell at the Alexander Training Institute of San Francisco. Since her certification in 1992, Prindl has maintained a private practice in San Francisco and has taught at various institutions across the country, including San Francisco State University, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco Community Music Center, and Henderson State University, as well as in A.C.T.’s Young Conservatory, Summer Training Congress, and MFA Program.

ELYSE SHAFARMAN holds a master’s degree in physiological psychology and an Alexander Technique teacher certification from Frank Ottiwell. Shafarman is on the faculty of American Conservatory Theater’s MFA Program, Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, and San Francisco State University’s Institute of Holistic Health Studies. She maintains a private Alexander Technique practice in San Francisco.

Head of Text and Dialects Lisa Anne Porter (photo by Beryl Baker)
and Berkeley and teaches workshops around the country. Her background as a modern dancer and training in psychology, yoga (RYT 200hr), and mindfulness-based stress reduction influence her approach. Shafarman continues to expand her knowledge of the interplay between dance, healing, and consciousness through ongoing research, physical practice, and writing.

ADJUNCT FACULTY

MATT CHAPMAN (The Producing Artist) is a performer, teacher, and director of physical theater, movement, and clown. He is co-artistic director and co-founder of Under the Table Ensemble Theatre, a physical comedy ensemble now in its 18th year. Outside of A.C.T., he teaches at Stanford University (movement, commedia, mask, and clown) and the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre as a guest instructor. He spent three years on faculty at Dell’Arte and has taught at Marymount Manhattan College as well as leading workshops at such institutions as The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Actors Theatre of Louisville, New York University, Vassar College, Sarah Lawrence College, and many other universities and theaters. Chapman regularly works abroad as well; he has taught and performed in South Africa, Denmark, Colombia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Canada, and England. He’s a Round 9 recipient of Theatre Communications Group’s New Generations Future Leaders program and plays in Oakland-based punk band The Big Forgive.

ANDY CHAN DONALD is A.C.T.’s associate artistic director. His A.C.T. producing credits include The Great Leap, Edward Albee’s Seascape (directed by Pam MacKinnon), Vietgone, and the world premieres of A Walk on the Moon and A Thousand Splendid Suns, among others. Previously, he was the producer of artistic development and community programming at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, producing associate at The Public Theater and Second Stage Theatre, pilot development assistant at ABC and HBO, and artistic director of the Charlie B. Theater Company. Donald’s producing credits include The Hip Hop Nutcracker; Carefree: Dancin’ with Fred and Ginger; NJPAC Stage Exchange (new
play commissioning program); Jimmy Fallon in Conversation with Stephen Colbert; John Leguizamo’s Ghetto Klown (HBO); American Songbook (PBS); and Meredith Willson’s The Music Man (Two River Theater). Prior to NJPAC, he served as artistic director of Naked Angels, where he produced Next Fall (Tony Award nomination), This Wide Night (five Lucille Lortel Award nominations), Outside People, Naked Radio (weekly podcast), and Oh the Horror!, Armed and Naked in America. He also spearheaded the merger of Naked Angels with The New School for Drama, establishing it as the recipient of the Barbara Whitman Prize for Outstanding Leadership and Artistic Vision (Peabody, SONY, and Wincott awards), and “T” Is for Tom (Tom Stoppard radio plays, WNYC and WQXR). She also cast the podcasts LifeAfter (GE Theater) and Passenger List, featuring Patti LuPone.

JULIE DOUGLAS (Neutral Mask) is a Bay Area actor, devisor, clown, and teacher. She holds an MFA in ensemble based physical theater from the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre and a BA in theater from UC Santa Cruz. She received some of her early training at A.C.T.’s Young Conservatory and Summer Training Congress. Before getting her MFA and moving back to the Bay, Douglas made theater in Chicago as a member of Moving Dock Theatre Company as well as performing with various local companies. She has taught/teaches for a variety of organizations including A.C.T. (Studio A.C.T., SFS, MFA Program), Saint Mary’s College, We Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Cal Performances, Stanford Live, and more. Douglas is a certified instructor of the Michael Chekhov Technique and is training to be an Alexander Technique teacher. She has trained and performed internationally in Italy, Russia, and Bali. She has performed in the Bay Area with Cutting Ball Theater, Idiot String, We Players, Impact Theatre, SF Shakespeare Festival, Shotgun Players, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, Medical Clown Project, and more. She cast The Monogamist, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and The Orphan of Zhao, The Real Inspector Hound, The Imaginary Invalid; Medda Gabler, Travesties; The Rivals; The Voysey Inheritance; The Gamester; A Mother; Les Liaisons Dangereuses; The Three Sisters; Night and Day; The Room and Celebration; Enrico IV; The Misanthrope; and Edward II (A.C.T. debut). Other Bay Area credits include leading roles for California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, and Magic Theatre. On Broadway, he was in Tom Stoppard’s The Real Thing and The Real Inspector Hound. Fusco’s many off-Broadway credits include The Holy Terror, Cantorial, Danton’s Death, and A Life in the Theatre. He trained at Juilliard and The Barrow Group School.

ANTHONY FUSCO (Acting), former A.C.T. Core Company member, has appeared at A.C.T. in nearly 50 productions including A Christmas Carol; The Hard Problem; Ah, Wilderness!; Love and Information; Indian Ink; Napoleon!; Arcadia; Dead Metaphor; Elektra; Play; Race; The Homecoming; Clybourne Park; Round and Round the Garden; The Caucasian Chalk Circle; November; Edward Albee’s At Home at the Zoo; War Music; Rock ‘n’ Roll; ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore; The Government Inspector; The Rainmaker; The Imaginary Invalid; Medda Gabler; Travesties; The Rivals; The Voysey Inheritance; The Gamester; A Mother; Les Liaisons Dangereuses; The Three Sisters; Night and Day; The Room and Celebration; Enrico IV; The Misanthrope; and Edward II (A.C.T. debut). Other Bay Area credits include leading roles for California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, and Magic Theatre. On Broadway, he was in Tom Stoppard’s The Real Thing and The Real Inspector Hound. Fusco’s many off-Broadway credits include The Holy Terror, Cantorial, Danton’s Death, and A Life in the Theatre. He trained at Juilliard and The Barrow Group School.

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Audition) has cast for A.C.T. for seven seasons, including The Great Leap, Her Portmanteau, Edward Albee’s Seascape, Men on Boats, Sweat, Hamlet, A Thousand Splendid Suns, King Charles III, John, Arcadia, Stuck Elevator, The Orphan of Zhao, Napolli, and Endgame and Play. On Broadway, she cast The Light in the Piazza (Artios Award nomination), Lennon, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, and Taking Sides (cocast). Off-Broadway credits include True Love, Floyd Collins, A Cheever Evening, The Monogamist, and Later Life. Regionally, she has worked at Intiman Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Old Globe, and American Repertory Theater. Film, television, and radio credits include Cosby, Tracey Takes On New York, The Deal, Advice from a Caterpillar, The Day That Lehman Died (Peabody, SONY, and Wincott awards), and “T” Is for Tom (Tom Stoppard radio plays, WNYC and WQXR). She also cast the podcasts LifeAfter (GE Theater) and Passenger List, featuring Patti LuPone.

MARK JACKSON (Performance Making) is a maker, director, playwright, and performer. He was the founding artistic director of Art Street Theatre, San Francisco, from 1995 to 2004. Since then his range of work in theater, dance, and performance has been seen at venues throughout the San Francisco Bay Area; Nationally at The Catamounts (Denver),
Hunger & Thirst (NYC) and The Studio Theatre (Washington D.C.); Internationally at Arts International Festival IV (Japan), Bread & Roses Theatre and Edinburgh Festival Fringe (UK), and English Theatre Berlin and Deutsches Theater Berlin (Germany). His plays have been developed at American Conservatory Theater, Capital Stage, EXIT Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, Magic Theatre, and Z Space. He occasionally writes about theater for the likes of Howlround.com and Theatre Bay Area, as well as other print and online publications. His plays have been published by EXIT Press, which recently also published his book, Playing HAMLET Roulette: Failure, Expectation, Possibility & Democracy. In addition to his artistic work, Jackson is the Director of Studio A.C.T. and on faculty in the A.C.T. MFA, SFS, and STC programs. markjackson-theatermaker.com

Darryl V. Jones (Acting) is Chair of the Theater and Dance Department at California State University, East Bay. He directed the premieres of Dominique Morisseau’s Follow Me to Nellie’s and Nambi E. Kelley’s Xtígone. Before moving to the Bay Area, Jones was head of the University of Michigan’s BFA directing concentration and foundation advisor for their BFA acting program, as well as directing associate at Arena Stage and associate producer of PlayQuest. He is an active member of Actors’ Equity Association, performing at theater companies such as The Old Globe, Ford’s Theatre, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Jones’s directing work includes We Are Your Sisters (off-Broadway; AUDELCO Award for Outstanding Production), The Brothers Size (Theatre Rhinoceros), Gem of the Ocean (Sacramento Theatre Company), Spunk (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, African Continuum Theatre Company), The Royale (Aurora Theatre Company), and The Mineola Twins (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company). He collaborated with Arthur Miller on a Dominican-American production of A View from the Bridge, winning the Washington Theatre Lobby Award for Outstanding Direction. Jones holds a BM in vocal performance from The Catholic University of America and an MFA in directing from Boston University. He is certified in the Meisner Acting technique from Larry Silverberg’s True Acting Institute.

Philip Charles Mackenzie (On-Camera Acting) is an award-winning actor and director.
He is on the faculty at The Actors Center and A.C.T., and is a visiting professor at UCLA and California State University, Long Beach. After studying with such luminaries as Kristen Linklater, Olympia Dukakis, Lloyd Richards, Mel Shapiro, and Nora Dunphy at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, he worked as an actor in New York and regionally, as well as in films such as Dog Day Afternoon. After appearing in many popular tv shows—Cheers, Family Ties, Bosom Buddies, Three’s Company, Remington Steele, Newhart, St. Elsewhere, and as a regular cast member in nine pilots and several short-lived series—he landed the role of Remington Steele, Family Ties, St. Elsewhere, and California State University, Long Beach.

After studying with such luminaries as Kristen Linklater, Olympia Dukakis, Lloyd Richards, Mel Shapiro, and Nora Dunphy at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, he worked as a full-time director, directing for Best Actor in a Comedy Series. For his work, he won the CableACE Award for Best Actor in a Comedy Series. Brothers afforded Mackenzie the opportunity to move into the directing world, receiving a CableACE Award nomination in the process. From there, Mackenzie became a full-time director, directing such shows as Roseanne; Frasier; According to Jim; Dharma and Greg; Suddenly Susan; George Lopez; My Wife and Kids; Normal, Ohio; Just Shoot Me!; Ink; Living in Captivity; and many others.

HOPE MOHR (Dance) is a curator, writer, and choreographer who trained at the San Francisco Ballet School and Cunningham Dance Studio and performed in the companies of dance pioneers Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown. Passionate about community organizing, Mohr earned a JD from Columbia Law School, where she was a Human Rights LL.M. Fellow. In 2007, Mohr established Hope Mohr Dance to create, present, and foster art at the intersection of body and brain. HMD’s signature platform, The Bridge Project, approaches curating as community organizing to convene equity-driven cultural conversations. Her body of work features collaborations with visual artists Liam Everett, Ranu Mukherjee, Matthew Ritchie, and Danae Mattes. Her work has been presented by Highways Performance Space, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Moody Center for The Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, ODC Theater, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Montalvo Arts Center, among others. Mohr has held residencies at Stanford Arts Institute, National Center for Choreography, Petronio Residency Center, and the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance. Mohr writes regularly for her blog, the body is the brain. Her published writing includes Liam Everett: Without an Audience and “The Language of the Listening Body” in Women & Performance.

DANIELLE O’DEA (Stage Combat) has over fifteen years’ experience as a fight director and stage combat instructor. Having mentored under Society of American Fight Directors President J. David Brimmer, O’Dea brings a wide range of skills to the stage and screen, having taught at some of the most reputable institutions in New York City and the Bay Area. She has worked with everyone from Tony and Academy Award–winning actors to students in their first-ever stage combat experience. Due to her extensive training as an actor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, O’Dea takes a holistic approach to choreographing and teaching stage combat. She emphasizes safety, partnering, and communication, as well as the actor’s rights and responsibilities when performing choreographed violence. She collaborates with the director on actors’ intention, diaphragmatic breathing, rhythm, and weight of movements. She pulls from her diverse background of physical languages in martial arts, strength athletics, motion capture, and stunts to conceive and communicate her fights. She recently became the first woman and the youngest fight director to be nominated for a Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Fight Choreography (for Hand to God at Berkeley Repertory Theatre).

GABRIEL ROMERO (Social Dance and Latin Movement) is one of the premiere Latin Dance and Movement instructors in San Francisco. He has traveled extensively around the world with his dance company The Mambo Romero Dancers, teaching and performing at International Latin Dance events including the World Salsa Congress in San Juan Puerto Rico. Gabriel has studied dance and Choreography in New York City and Havana, Cuba and has created classic Salsa/Latin Dance Theatre choreographies that have merged the cultural, historical and theatrical aspects of music and dance. He has extensive training in Afro-Cuban Dance, Contemporary Dance, Ballroom Dancing, and Salsa/Mambo. Gabriel is currently the artistic director and lead instructor of Latin Dance at the Mambo Romero School of Latin Movement.
LEE STRAWN is a teacher of singing and active performer, performing throughout the country in musical theater and opera. He played the role of Monsieur Lefèvre in the first national company of *The Phantom of the Opera*, under the direction of Harold Prince and Gillian Lynne. He also created the leading role of John Muir in *Mountain Days: The John Muir Musical* (Shellie Award for Best Actor in a Musical) for Willows Theatre Company. Other recent roles include Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, and Major-General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance*. He joined A.C.T.’s MFA Program faculty in 2019, having also taught at Northern Illinois University (1982–91) and Notre Dame de Namur University (2003–19). He also currently teaches singing at City College of San Francisco and in his private studio. Strawn earned DMA and MM degrees in singing from Eastman School of Music, as well as performer’s certificates in voice and opera. He is a member of Actors’ Equity Association and the American Guild of Musical Artists.

LISA TOWNSEND (Director, *Created Movement Project*) is a choreographer, director, educator, and performer. She weaves dance, music, text, and design to create original performance works. Her company LTCo danceFracas has been presented in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and France. Theaters/festivals include Joyce SoHo, St. Marks Church, P.S. 122, Judson Church, L.A.T.C., La Chalibaude Festival, L.A. Women’s Theater Festival, S.F.’s tiny dance film festival, and WestWaveDance. Named “choreographer to watch” in balletanz magazine, she has been Resident Artist at ODC Theater, CounterPULSE, The Garage, CHIME, L.A.C.E., and Headlands Center for the Arts. Her collaborations as choreographer within A.C.T.’s MFA program include: *The Rocky Horror Show, Crazy for Country, CLICKSHARE, Sense & Sensibility, and Spring Awakening*. Other collaborations include The Wooster Group (Early Shaker Spirituals), *King Charles III* (A.C.T. premiere), Joanna Haigood (*HOME*), and ongoing with long-time partner, photographer/jazz bassist/composer, Piro Patton. She earned her MFA in Dance/Performance from CalArts and regularly teaches Contemporary Dance and Mind-Body practices.

STEPHANIE WILBORN (*Citizen Artistry*) has been involved in theater education and community arts organizing for over a decade creating after-school curricula for nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and homeless shelters throughout Southern California. Part of her focus is finding ways to implement safe and fun teaching strategies with marginalized communities. As the community programs manager and lead teaching artist in A.C.T., she works to create a space for diverse various communities to become members of the A.C.T. family. Recently she revamped *Every 28 Hours* into an annual Black arts festival for the Bay Area that is nationally recognized. She is now collaborating with Tenderloin’s Larkin Street Youth Services. She continues to work closely with partners in San Francisco’s Bayview and Tenderloin neighborhoods and in Oakland to ensure that diverse groups have access to theater outside and inside their communities. Her mission is to use theater and social justice as a platform to give voice to those who are often overlooked or underrepresented onstage.
SHINING STARS
PROMINENT A.C.T. ALUMNI

MFA Program class of ’20 in Fascinating Rhythms (photo by Alessandra Mello)
Celebrated alumni of A.C.T.’s training programs include Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Carlos Bernard, Benjamin Bratt, Nicolas Cage, Christopher Fitzgerald, Danny Glover, Harry Hamlin, Teri Hatcher, Amy Irving, Delroy Lindo, Camryn Manheim, Omar Metwally, Anika Noni Rose, Winona Ryder, Anna Deavere Smith, Milo Ventimiglia, Denzel Washington, and Sharr White. A.C.T. has also trained such rising talents as Heidi Armbruster (Younger), Daniel Beaty (Emergence-SEE! at The Public Theater), Anna Belknap (CSI: NY), Neil Hopkins (Lost, Big Love), Darren Criss (Hedwig and the Angry Inch on Broadway and American Crime Story), Morgan Spector (Incognito at Manhattan Theatre Club and The Mist), and Darby Stanchfield (Scandal).

A.C.T. is a vital talent resource for professional theaters, theatrical agents, and film and television casting directors—and A.C.T. graduates grace stages and screens all over the world. Current MFA Program actors also connect with and learn from alumni through A.C.T.’s annual alumni events in New York and Los Angeles. Recent acting, writing, and directing credits of A.C.T. alumni include work on these productions and with these companies:

**THEATER**
- 42nd Street Moon
- An Act of God (Broadway)
- Actors Theatre of Louisville
- Alley Theatre
- American Conservatory Theatre
- Arena Stage
- Atlantic Theater Company
- Aurora Theatre Company
- Baltimore Center Stage
- Berkeley Repertory Theatre
- Blue Man Group
- Brooklyn Academy of Music
- California Shakespeare Theater
- Center REPertory Company
- Clutch Productions
- Concrete Temple Theatre
- Cymbeline (off Broadway)
- Denver Center for the Performing Arts
- The Dodgers (LA)
- Dragon Theatre
- Edinburgh Festival Fringe
• Everything You Touch (off Broadway)
• Father Comes Home from the Wars (off Broadway)
• Frozen: Live at the Hyperion
• The Glass Menagerie (off Broadway)
• The Great Divorce (national tour)
• Great Lakes Theater
• Greek Theatre Festival
• Guthrie Theater
• Hollywood Fringe Festival
• The Humans (Broadway, off Broadway)
• Idaho Shakespeare Festival
• Incident at Vichy (off Broadway)
• Incognito (off Broadway)
• Indiana Repertory Theater
• Irish Repertory Theatre
• Joe’s Pub at The Public
• LaBute New Theater Festival
• Laguna Playhouse
• The Lion King (national tour)
• Machinal (Broadway)
• Magic Theatre
• Maples Repertory Theatre
• Mark Taper Forum
• Marin Theatre Company
• Marriott Theater
• McCarter Theatre Center
• Measure for Measure (off Broadway)
• Mile Square Theatre
• Mother Courage and Her Children (off Broadway)
• National Black Theatre
• National Music Festival
• New York Theatre Workshop
• newTACTics New Play Festival
• A Noise Within
• Of Mice and Men (Broadway)
• Oregon Shakespeare Festival
• Pasadena Playhouse
• The Pearl Theater
• Pericles, Prince of Tyre (off Broadway)
• Pioneer Theatre Company
• Playwright’s Realm
• Premiere Stages
• A Raisin in the Sun (Broadway)
• The Reenactors (off Broadway)
• The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis
• Romance Language (off Broadway)
• Roundabout Theatre Company
• The Ruins of Civilization (off Broadway)
• St. Louis Actors’ Studio
• San Francisco Playhouse
• Son of Semele Theater
• South Coast Repertory
• Stalking the Bogeyman
  (off Broadway)
• Tacoma Opera
• Taconic Opera
• Theater For A New Audience
• Theatre Rhinoceros
• TheatreWorks Silicon Valley
• Three Day Hangover
• Triad Stage
• Tribeca Film Festival
• The Unknown Artists
• Waitress (Broadway)
• Westport Country Playhouse
• The Winter’s Tale
  (off Broadway)
• Yale Repertory Theatre

FILM
• Bridge of Spies
• The Drop
• Every Secret Thing
• Grand Street
• The Hunger Games Series
• The LEGO Movie
• Little Accidents
• Loserville
• Love & Mercy
• Maggie’s Plan
• Magic Mike XXL
• A Midsummer Night’s Dream
  (directed by Julie Taymor)
• Non-Stop
• Other People
• Pitch Perfect 2
• The Seagull
• The Shells
• The Train (Vancouver
  International Film Festival,
  Carmel International Film
  Festival, Rhode Island
  International Film Festival)
• Two Night Stand
• Umbrella Man
• Walk of Shame

TELEVISION
• The Affair
• Allegiance
• Bates Motel
• The Big Leaf

RAFAEL JORDAN with Emily Radosevich in Detroit ’67 at
Aurora Theater Company (photo by David Allen)

REBEKAH BROCKMAN, class of ’13, and
VINCENT RANDAZZO, class of ’18 in A.C.T.’s
Vanity Fair (photo by Kevin Berne)
• Billions
• Broad City
• Blue Bloods
• Chicago Fire
• Criminal Minds
• Daredevil
• Dig
• Divorce
• Elementary
• The Family
• Feed the Beast
• Forever
• Friday Night Tykes
• The Get Down
• Getting On
• The Good Wife
• House of Cards
• Jessica Jones
• Justice
• Kevin from Work
• The Knick
• Law & Order: Special Victims Unit
• Love
• Madame Secretary
• Masters of Sex
• Maybe Sunshine
• Modern Family
• Moonbeam City
• Mozart in the Jungle
• The Muppets
• The Mysteries of Laura
• NCIS
• The Normal Heart
• No Tomorrow
• Person of Interest
• Phineas and Ferb
• Power
• Resident Advisors
• Review
• Roots
• Scandal
• The Slap
• Sublets (webseries)
• Transparent
• TURN: Washington’s Spies
• Veep
• Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp
• The Yard

The cast of A.C.T.’s Top Girls (photo by Beryl Baker)
PROGRAM ADMISSION

Monica Lin and Sarah Traisman, class of ’20, in The School for Scandal (photo by Alessandra Mello)
Enrollment in the MFA Program is by audition and interview only. Applicants must be high school graduates or equivalent. Applicants who hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university are eligible to receive a master of fine arts degree in acting upon successful completion of the three years of training. Applicants who do not hold an accredited bachelor’s degree receive a certificate in acting upon successful completion of the three years of training.

For the class of 2022, approximately 12 students will be selected. Approximately 90% of admitted first-year students receive some form of financial aid.

AUDITIONS A.C.T. holds auditions for the MFA Program each year during January and February. Auditions are held in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Final callback auditions for qualified applicants are held in San Francisco. Housing and travel stipends for the final callback weekend will be available to applicants who demonstrate need. To be considered for a travel/housing stipend, you MUST have your FAFSA uploaded on your application by January 30.

APPLICATION DEADLINE JANUARY 10, 2020

FINANCIAL AID DEADLINE FEBRUARY 13, 2020

AUDITION DATES
New York City | Jan 17-19, 2020
Chicago | Feb 4-5, 2020
San Francisco | Feb 8-10, 2020
Callbacks in San Francisco | Feb 28, 29, and Mar 1, 2020

Applicants must prepare two audition selections that provide a contrast in mood and tone (one from a classical verse play and one from a contemporary play). Sonnets, poems, songs, and other nondramatic materials are not acceptable. Please limit selections to a total of four minutes to allow time for an interview.

MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE REQUIREMENTS The master of fine arts in acting degree may be conferred upon a student who holds a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college and who successfully completes the three consecutive years of training.

CERTIFICATE OF ACTING REQUIREMENTS The certificate in acting is awarded to students who do not hold a degree from an accredited college, but who successfully complete the three-year MFA Program. Applicants for the certificate in acting must have graduated from high school prior to September 1, 2016. The admission requirements and training for the certificate are identical to those for the MFA degree. A student who receives a bachelor’s degree after being awarded the certificate in acting may have the certificate converted into an MFA degree upon submission of a certified transcript from the accredited institution awarding the baccalaureate. For gainful employment details about the certificate program, please visit the MFA Program’s “General Information” and “Student Right to Know” pages at act-sf.org/conservatory.

Jeff Wittekiend, class of ‘20, in The School for Scandal (photo by Alessandra Mello)
APPLICATION PROCEDURES
Applications may be submitted through our online application.

ONLINE APPLICATION PROCEDURES
• A nonrefundable, nonwaivable application fee, payable by credit card or PayPal
• A current résumé listing previous theater training and experience
• One head-and-shoulder, full-face photograph (8” x 10” is best, but a 5” x 7” snapshot is acceptable)
• Contact information for two references, including name, phone number, and email address—these individuals will automatically receive instructions on how to submit a letter of recommendation
• An up-to-date/current transcript of all college work if the applicant has attended college, or proof of high school graduation or equivalent if the applicant has not attended college
• An essay (no longer than one typewritten page) describing why the applicant is pursuing a career in theater. Please include your name at the top of your essay

Upon receipt of the above materials, the applicant will be emailed an acknowledgment from the Office of Academic Affairs. The applicant will be notified at the first opportunity of their audition date, time, and place.

REAPPLICATION PROCEDURES
Students who applied to A.C.T. last year but were not offered admission or who declined an offer of admission must submit a new application form with the application fee, an updated résumé, and one current letter of recommendation. Admission files are maintained for one year, and materials originally submitted will be reactivated upon reapplication. Another audition and interview will be required. Students who applied more than one year ago must submit all new materials. A student who withdraws or is dismissed must audition again for readmission. Readmission may occur only at the beginning of the school year.

TUITION AND FEES* Tuition for the 2019–20 school year is $30,235. Each Master of Fine Arts Program student will be cast in one (1) A.C.T. professional production in their third year of the program, either onstage or as

Avanthika Srinivasan and Ashley Malloy, class of ’19, in A Christmas Carol 2018 (photo by Kevin Berne)
an understudy, for which they will receive compensation in accordance with the then effective contract between A.C.T. and Actors’ Equity Association (AEA). Such compensation does not include AEA initiation fees or dues, for which the student will be solely and individually responsible. In addition, students may also be cast under A.C.T.’s concession agreement with AEA, for which there is no monetary compensation. Students are responsible for full tuition for each of their three years. Tuition and fees are due and payable at the beginning of each semester. A $40 fee will be assessed for late payment. Deferred payment plans may be arranged at A.C.T.’s discretion. Students are required to return a deposit of $500, applicable to tuition, with the letter of acceptance. Fees collected in the first year include a Cultural Landscape course fee of $350 for tickets to Bay Area arts programs, and a Stage Makeup course fee of $165 for materials. A $25 library fee is collected from all students each semester.

*The costs of tuition and fees are established annually and are subject to change.

**A FINAL WORD** The work undertaken in the MFA Program is intense. It is designed to stretch students emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Students who are thinking about applying for the program should consider their preparedness before making a commitment. The curriculum includes a wide range of physical activity, and students are expected to enroll in the program in good health. Each entering student is required to have had a complete medical checkup prior to admission and must submit a recent certificate of good health from their physician when returning the enrollment agreement.

**Visit ACT-SF.ORG/MFA for all application materials.**

Charlie O’Rourke, class of ’19, and YC student Jordan Paff in *Urinetown* (photo by Jay Yamada)
SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS

Intensive, comprehensive actor training in 2-week and 5-week sessions

Students in class (photo by Macie Davies)
This comprehensive program offers intensive professional actor training to students ages 19 and older with some prior theater training or experience. Every year the STC attracts applicants from throughout the United States and various foreign countries. The STC offers both intermediate actors and more seasoned performers an opportunity to take their training to the next level. Many STC students later pursue graduate degree programs in acting or begin their professional careers.

Each summer the STC curriculum includes a five-week session focusing on contemporary acting and a two-week Shakespeare intensive. The two sessions may be attended together or separately. STC sessions generally take place from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and culminate in class presentations for fellow students, faculty, and staff. The STC teaching staff consists of members of our regular conservatory faculty, A.C.T. staff, and Bay Area teaching artists, as well as distinguished guests. All instructors are theater professionals.

**Placement Interviews**

Interviews are held during registration week to place each student in an appropriate “company” of classmates. Applicants who are accepted must prepare one monologue from a contemporary play for the five-week session or one monologue from Shakespeare for the two-week intensive. Sonnets, poems, and other nondramatic materials are not acceptable. Please limit selection to no more than two minutes.

**Curriculum**

Upon satisfactory completion of the STC, students receive undergraduate credit. To receive full credit, students must complete the entire curriculum of their chosen session, including the final presentation. Go to [act-sf.org/stc](http://act-sf.org/stc) for complete course listings.

**Credits**

5-Week Curriculum:
- 303 Acting Technique (3 credits)
- 313 Movement (1 credit)
- 323 Voice and Speech Dynamics (1 credit)
  5 credits total

2-Week Curriculum:
- 373 Shakespeare Intensive (2 credits)
  2 credits total

**Fees**

$2,750 for the five-week session; $1,150 for the two-week Shakespeare intensive; and both sessions for $3,250.

**How to Apply**

Applications for the Summer 2020 session are due May 29, 2020. Students who are applying for scholarships must complete their admission and scholarship applications by April 17, 2019. Please visit [act-sf.org/stc](http://act-sf.org/stc) for complete application information and deadlines.
SAN FRANCISCO SEMESTER

An immersive and extensive 15-week actor training program
Are you ready for an artistic, intellectual, and personal transformation? Embark on a study-away program at one of the country’s most acclaimed professional theater companies in a culturally vibrant and diverse city.

THE SAN FRANCISCO SEMESTER Grounded in a rich academic curriculum, this dynamic program brings young theater artists into an active, ongoing engagement with a professional theater and the eclectic and energetic arts community of San Francisco and the Bay Area. Surrounded by theater students from all over the country and the world, you’ll expand your understanding of performance as you define yourself as an artist. In the classroom and at venues across the Bay Area, you’ll explore theater from a multitude of angles—from the page to the stage, as viewer and performer—and across a variety of artistic genres.

Through inspiring, experiential courses and wide-ranging artistic encounters, the San Francisco Semester will pull you into thrilling conversations about theater as an ever-evolving art form. Study in a professional setting while coming face to face with some of the boldest productions anywhere. From theater, opera, dance, and symphony performances to museum and music club outings, you’ll view and discuss a broad spectrum of cultural experiences.

By the end of the semester, you’ll know San Francisco like a local insider—not a tourist. As you immerse yourself in one of the country’s most thrilling cultural centers, you’ll expand your understanding of what theater can be. Students will also have opportunities to interact with Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Program actors while watching performances at A.C.T. and across San Francisco, observing rehearsals and performances, and attending workshops and readings.

CURRICULUM The 15-week program features a 17-credit core curriculum, including coursework in acting styles, physical theater, voice/dialects, cultural landscapes, and creating original work. The curriculum will be enhanced by numerous master classes with visiting artists, as well as meetings with professional directors, playwrights, designers, stage managers, and producers.

“The San Francisco Semester experience gave me extended exposure to A.C.T. faculty and an inside look into the MFA Program. The courses are diverse and geared towards your growth as an actor; you also get to rub shoulders with MFA students and alumni while seeing some great theater. I now have a powerful network to call upon, and a new excited energy to pursue my craft.”

Sanjar Taromi | SFS Spring 2017
ELIGIBILITY  Theater majors in their junior or senior year of college; theater minors and second-term sophomores with special recommendations from theater faculty; recent college graduates (after September 1, 2016) with a theater major or minor.

FEES  $15,000 for tuition; $400 Cultural Landscape course fee; $50 application fee; $25 non-refundable library fee.

HOW TO APPLY  Applications for the Spring 2020 session are due November 1, 2019. Applications for the Fall 2020 session are due Apr 17, 2020. Financial aid is available.

To learn more visit act-sf.org/sfsemester for course information, deadlines, and application materials.

PREVIOUS PAGE  Students in voice class (photo by Alessandra Mello)
LEFT  Students in acting class (photo by Alessandra Mello)