BLACKBIRD

by DAVID HARROWER

Directed by LORETTA GRECO

THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

A.C.T. encore

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About A.C.T.

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training in its conservatory, and an ongoing dialogue with its community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff and Executive Director Heather Kitchen, A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent its relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literature 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.

Founded in 1965 by William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season at the Geary Theater in 1967. In the 1970s, A.C.T. solidified its national and international reputation, winning a Tony Award for outstanding theater performance and training in 1979. During the past four decades, more than 300 A.C.T. productions have been performed to a combined audience of seven million people; today, A.C.T.’s performance, education, and outreach programs annually reach more than 125,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1996, A.C.T.’s efforts to develop creative talent for the theater were recognized with the prestigious Juicycorn Theater Award. In 2001, to celebrate A.C.T.’s 35th anniversary and Perloff’s 10th season, A.C.T. created a new core company of actors, who have become instrumental in every aspect of its work.

Today A.C.T. is recognized nationally for its groundbreaking productions of classical works and bold explorations of contemporary playwriting. Since the reopening of the Geary Theater (now the American Conservatory Theater) in 1996, A.C.T. has enjoyed a remarkable period of audience expansion and financial stability. In 2001, A.C.T. began producing alternative work at Zany Theater, which now serves as a venue for student productions and exciting new plays. The company continues to provide challenging theater in the rich context of symposia, audience discussions, and community interaction.

The conservatory, led by Melissa Smith and George Thompson, now serves 5,000 students every year. It was the first actor training program in the United States not affiliated with a college or university accredited to award a master of fine arts degree. Danny Glover, Annette Bening, Dwend Washington, and Elizabeth Banks are among the conservatory’s distinguished former students. With its commitment to excellence in actor training and to the relationship between training, performance, and the audience, A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program has moved to the forefront of America’s actor training programs, while serving as the creative engine of the company at large.

American Conservatory Theater

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A.C.T. Box Office
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A.C.T. Website
www.aact.org

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American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1965 by William Ball.

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Artistic Director 1986-1992

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Carey Perloff, Artistic Director • Heather Kitchen, Executive Director

American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1965 by William Ball.

Edward Hastings Artistic Director 1986-1992

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Elisabeth Bedrosian, Production Coordinator
Jessica Werner Zuck, Director
Margo Mekos, Publication Director
FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Every once in a while that rare thing happens in encountering a brand-new play: you carefully begin reading the first few lines, and then suddenly find yourself on the last page, breathless and overwhelmed, having been completely swept away by the power of the writing. Such was the case when I first read Blackbird. I knew David Harrower’s work from an earlier play of his, Kerivu or the Hidden, and from the enthused reports of fellow Glasgow-based Giles Havergal, but nothing prepared me for the eloquence and startling reversals I discovered as I began reading this script. The writing has the mysterious silences of Pinter, the sexual menace of Marot, and the lyrical ache of Beckett, yet Harrower’s world is also completely sui generis. In the wake of our landmark world premiere production of Philip Kan Gotanda’s After the War, it is a great honor and pleasure to introduce you to another major new work. We have assembled a remarkable team of artists as our collaborators on this West Coast premiere of Blackbird director Loretta Greco, with whom we welcome back to A.C.T. after her stunning work on Lochavanha Blues several seasons back; Stevens Culp, who blessed us with his talent for nearly a year as Joe Pitt in our legendary production of Angels in America; Jessi Campbell, who is making her A.C.T. debut; and the visionary design team of Robert Brill, Russ Tamblyn, Jake Rodrigues, and David Draper. We hope you will have an unforgettable experience as you encounter this major new writing talent.

And of course we hope very much that you have received the announcement of our spectacular 2007-08 season. I personally am thrilled about this upcoming season, because I finally have a chance to direct two of my absolutely favorite plays in the canon: Gogol’s The Government Inspector and Ford’s ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore. With each passing year at A.C.T., I try to commit more and more deeply to those projects that are uniquely true to the “A.C.T. experience”: multidisciplinary work with vigorous language, superb acting, and world-class production values, work from many cultures that challenges our assumptions, opens our minds, and asserts the real power of live theater in an age of passive viewing and media saturation. I recently returned from a week of intensive theater-going at the Golden Mask Festival in Moscow, and what impressed me most was how much theater matters to the Russians: audiences of every age and type flocked to each performance I saw, as if hungry for the experience of being with fellow Muscovites in a public space, experiencing something magical on the stage.

So my hope is that A.C.T. will continue to produce theater that matters to you; that the experience of being in the community that is embraced by this magical space will keep a dialogue going in your lives that is rich and meaningful. We begin next fall as the first stop on the national tour of John Doyle’s highly imaginative re-invention of Sondheim’s masterpiece Merrily We Roll Along, a production that will make you hear this great score in an entirely new way. We journey with A.C.T.’s extraordinary core acting company member Rene Augesen to a place where despair slowly transforms into hope in Richard Nash’s iconic American tale The Rainmaker. We get knocked sideways by the verbal pyrotechnics of David Mamet and his skewering of macho deal-making in his hip and hilarious Speed-the-Plow; and find our own perceptions about race and personal identity turned inside out by Athol Fugard’s searing sibling-rivalry play Blood Knot, featuring core company members Jack Willis and Steven Anthony Jones. Then comes a spring of hugely ambitious and pungent plays: The Government Inspector, Gogol’s wicked satire about small-town government bureaucracy and the womanizing mayor who tries to stay ahead of the fray; Sam Shepard’s prescient Western saga Curse of the Starving Class, in which one crazy family (complete with a live baby lamb) tries to stake a claim on the American dream; and finally, Ford’s magnificent story of a great love gone wrong in ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore, featuring one of the most glorious language of Jacobean drama in a tale of religious hypocrisy, sexual transgression, and political vendetta.

Our work at A.C.T. is enriched by the many extraordinary artists who work with us, including our core company of actors, which has been expanded next season to include our newest

“FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR” CONTINUED

Young Company member, Jud Williford (who received his M.F.A. from A.C.T. in 2001 and has already graced our stage with memorable performances in A Christmas Carol, The Rituals, The Time of Your Life, and Happy End), in addition to the invaluable Anthony Willis (who has many vivid roles at A.C.T. include Teisman in Hedda Gabler, Tienesch in The Three Sisters, Organte in The Misalliances, the outrageously comic Marquis de Fafnep in The Misanthropes, and delicious turns in Stoppard and Pinter), and the inestimable Jack Willis, whose Big Daddy, Judge Brack, Sammy Wuritzer, and Ben Hubbard are just the beginning of the cast of characters he is ready to share with A.C.T. The experience of watching transformative actors travel through a season in highly diverse repertoire is something A.C.T. embraces very strongly and we hope it is one of the things that keeps you connected to us over the years.

We are delighted that many of you have found your way over to A.C.T.’s “other space,” Zeuni Theater at Yerba Buena Gardens, to see some of the exciting work our Young Conservatory and Master of Fine Arts Program students have been producing there recently, as well as to explore our new works-in-progress. Next season at Zeuni we invite you to join us for the world premiere of Josef Rovna’s exotic Brainpeople, as well as the next showing of our innovative new movement-theater piece, The Tova Project, featuring a remarkable collaboration between SF Ballet dancers and major actors in a piece exploring San Francisco’s legendary Tova Café.

There is always something new happening at A.C.T., and we hope in the months to come you will deepen your involvement with us and find out how very much lies behind the gorgeous Art Deco façade of the American Conservatory Theater.

Welcome to Blackbird, and thank you for your support.

Yours,

Casey Perloff
Artistic Director

KORET VISITING ARTIST SERIES

In a generous new three-year partnership with A.C.T., Koret is now supporting our popular audience discussions. As part of its commitment to promoting organizations that contribute to the Bay Area’s diverse cultural landscape, Koret is sponsoring the following exciting new series of talks with acclaimed theater artists, as well as A.C.T. in regularly scheduled Audience Exchanges and Prologues.

NEW VOICES, NEW WORKS

Saturday, May 5, 11 a.m.

Groundbreaking playwrights discuss the process of developing new plays for the theater, from inspiration to final shaping to trimming.

Featuring: PHILIP KAN GOTAUNA (After the War, The Watch, Yearning) and LILLIAN GROG (Drag Queen, The Captain of the Camellia); STREET되면, SEULSA (Jason Hwang’s The Budget of a Tramp, Our Lady of 12th Street); and A.C.T. Associate Artistic Director JENIFER PHILLIPS.

KORET PROLOGUE

Tuesday, May 8, 7:30 p.m.

Get inside the artistic process—come early for a free pre-performance discussion with the director and artistic staff.

KORET AUDIENCE EXCHANGES

May 8, 7 p.m. / May 10 and 24, 2:30 p.m.

After the show, stick around for an intimate chat with actors and members of the artistic staff.

All evenings subject to change.

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“FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR” CONTINUED

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Prior to the main performance of Blackbird

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Featuring: PHILIP KAN GOTIONA After the War. The Wash. Yukiwo Davity You Don’t. LILIAN GREGO Maggie Far’s The Captain of the Columbus, Moscow. STEPHEN ADLY GUNN ANDREW Joss Whig. Hand. Train. Our Lady of 127 Street. In Arabic We All Be Kingdom of Heaven. A.C.T. Associate Artistic Director JENNIFER PAULZER

KORET PROLOGUE
Tuesday, May 8, 5:30 p.m.
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KORET VISITING ARTIST SERIES

KORET IS THRILLED TO PRESENT

Blackbird

7
ANNOUNCING THE
2007–08 SEASON!
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BLACKBIRD
by David Harrower (2005)
Directed by Loretta Greco

Robert Brill
David F. Draper
Russell H. Champa
Jake Rodriguez
Jorge Boehler
Michael Paller
Meryl Lind Shaw
Deborah Sussel
Erin Gilley

THE CAST
Peter/Ray
Steven Culp
Una
Jesi Campbell

UNDERSTUDIES
Peter/Ray—Rod Graup; Una—Anna Bullard

STAGE MANAGEMENT STAFF
Elisa Guthertz, Stage Manager
Karen Sappleton, Assistant Stage Manager
Danielle Callaghan, Cassandra Phillips, Interns

TIME AND PLACE
The present, England.

The play will be performed without an intermission.

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Laura Brueckner, Martin Schwartz, Connie Mack, DAFCO Vending Service, Ron Van Lieu, Ellen Novack, Erika Sellin

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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Carlie Wilmans

PRODUCERS
Chris and Leslie Johnson; Christine and Stan Mattison

Blackbird was first commissioned and presented by the Edinburgh International Festival at King’s Theatre, Edinburgh, in August 2005 and was subsequently presented at the Albany Theatre in London’s West End by Michael Edwards and Carole Winter for MJF Productions, opening February 13, 2006. The play was originally produced in the United States by Manhattan Theatre Club—Lynne Meadow, artistic director; Barry Grove, executive director.
announcing the 2007–08 season!

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directed by loretta greco

scene by robert brill
costumes by david f. draper
lighting by russell h. champa
sound by jake rodriguez
original music written and performed by jorge boehminger
music by michael palmer

the cast

peter/ray — steven culp
una — jessi campbell

understudies

peter/ray — rod grapp, una — anna bullard

stage management staff

elisa gutthertz, stage manager
karen segal, assistant stage manager
danielle callaghan, cassandra phillips, interns

time and place

the present, england.

the play will be performed without an intermission.

special thanks to

laura brueckner, martin schwartz, connie mack, daftco vending service, ron van lieu, ellen novack, erika sellin

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executive producers

carlie wilmans

producers

chris and leslie johnson; christine and stan martiszn

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YOU SAID WHY AREN'T YOU HAPPY?
YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY.

JUST YOU
YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE.
"WITH MYSTERIES INTACT"
AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT DAVID HARROWER
BY JESSICA WERNER ZACK

I n conversation, Scottish playwright David Harrower discusses his writing with a refreshing modernity and perceptible bewilderment at the mysteries rooted in his own creative process. He quickly debunks the myth of the omniscient writer, holding his characters' fates securely in his hand. Instead, Harrower admits to an astonishment that accompanies his success and an openness to letting his characters' lives and lives roam freely, into situations that can surprise even their creator.

Speaking just a week after Blackbird earned the British theater establishment's highest honor, the Olivier Award for Best New Play, Harrower said with a laugh, "I'm still not sure how the play actually works." That may be little comfort for the playwright looking for a quick summary of his plots and purpose, yet Harrower makes clear that the powerful emotional connection audiences feel with his work is inextricably connected to his own need to write dramas that "leave some mysteries intact, some questions left unanswered.

If I ever find I know what my plays are about, that's when I start worrying, because as soon as I start reducing it to knowing what's going on, I'm in trouble.

At age 40, Harrower is considered one of Scotland's most gifted playwrights and has already created a substantial body of dramatic work celebrated for its compelling ambiguities and densely poetic, even enigmatic, language. His first play, Krivex in Hens, first produced at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre in 1995, has become one of Scotland's biggest theatrical exports. Written in exceptionally sparse language, the play exerts a disquieting power as it charts a medieval peasant woman's journey from subservience to an adulterous husband to a mature, vengeful awareness. Translated for production in more than 20 countries, Krivex in Hens solidified Harrower's reputation worldwide as a writer whose plays haunt as well as entertain.

In the decade following his spectacular debut, Harrower wrote Kill the Old, Torture Their Young (1998) and Dark Earth (2003), as well as several adaptations and translations of European classics.

Each successive drama has been well received by audiences and critics alike, but he had yet to recapture the sheer beauty of his debut work—until Blackbird premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2005 and set the theatrical world buzzing even louder. The one-act, two-character play received the Scotland Critics' Award for best play prior to transferring to the West End in 2006. Productions have since been planned in 17 other countries, including this month's opening at Manhattan Theatre Club and Blackbird's West Coast premiere at A.C.T.

Harrower spoke to A.C.T. contributor Jessica Werner Zack in February, just before rehearsals for the A.C.T. production began in San Francisco.

YOU'VE SAID THAT YOUR INITIAL INSPIRATION FOR WRITING BLACKBIRD WAS A REAL-LIFE STORY YOU READ IN 2003 ABOUT A U.S. MARINE WHO HAD TAKEN OFF FOR EUROPE WITH A YOUNG GIRL. WHAT ABOUT THAT STORY INTRIGUED YOU ENOUGH TO EXPLORE IT IN THEATRICAL TERMS?

I wasn't exactly inspired by that story, but it inspired a series of thoughts that resulted in this play. I am wary of trying to dramatize real-life events. But I remember that story caught my eye and I started wondering about it. This image came to me of a man and a girl standing looking at the sea, and I just couldn't shake it. It was really that image that became [my primary inspiration].

YOU'VE MADE SURE NOTHING IN THE PLAY IS PORTRAYED IN BLACK OR WHITE TERMS. INSTEAD, YOU EXPLORE SOME OF THE DECIDEDLY GRAY AREAS THAT CAN EXIST IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR, IN RELATIONSHIPS.

Absolutely. The [relationship between Una and Ray] did happen, but to me there was no point in going over the argument [of whether it was morally wrong] and becoming a referee standing in judgment of these characters. People know [his kind of relationship] shouldn't happen, and there's no point in me confirming what people believe. It was very important to me to let these two characters in this room together say anything they want to each other without me censoring it. And they can say anything they want to each other because they are the only two persons who know exactly how they felt or what they wanted.

I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU CHOSE TO HAVE RAY AND UNA MEET 15 YEARS AFTER THEIR INITIAL ENCOUNTER SO THAT THEY ONLY FLASHBACK VERBALLY TO THE EVENTS IN THE PAST. When I had the realization that I could make them both adults now, struggling over the memory of what had happened between them, that's when it all sort of locked into place. For me, it's what we carry within us, how we believe we are made up, and what memories we hold on to that shape us. It's what makes us the people we are. We walk around at any given moment, the sum of what we carry with us. I wanted that tension between the memory or the picture they paint for themselves and what is possible between them now.

YOU READ SOME DANGEROUS TERRITORY PORTRAYING WHAT THEY HAD AS A LOVE AFFAIR OR EVEN A CONSENTING RELATIONSHIP. I knew it was dangerous ground and I thought I might get some flack for it, but, surprisingly, I got letters from women thanking me, congratulating me, standing firm that they had relationships when technically children, but that they knew exactly what they were doing. We can choose to query that if we want, but I'm not going to take that [certainty] away from them. I've talked to a few women who have been in relationships at this [very young] age with much older men and firmly believe that what they had was a love affair. That really surprised me.

It's very possible that the experience Una had with Ray may have come to represent one of the most important events in her life, for bad or for good. Probably mostly bad, I don't know. I'm not entirely sure what has happened to her, nor where she's left at the end. It's a mystery. It was a seismic experience for her and now, it's conceivable that she's reconnecting with all the resentment, desire, and fear she has harbored all these years.

IT'S INTERESTING TO HEAR YOU, THE PLAYWRIGHT, USE THE WORD "MYSTERIES." SO IT'S POSSIBLE TO WRITE A PLAY AND HAVE CERTAIN THINGS REMAIN MYSTERIOUS EVEN TO YOU?

I think the best way for me to come out of a play is with some mysteries intact, some questions left unanswered. My writing is such that there is a real ambiguity to it. There is mystery. It may be two things at the same time, and that is a quality I'm not entirely unpleased with.

BYE BYE BLACKBIRD
By Mort Dixon and Ray Henderson
Pack up all my care and woe
Here I go, singing low
Bye bye blackbird

Where somebody waits for me
Sugar's sweet, so is she
Bye bye blackbird

No one here can love or understand me
Oh what hard luck stories they all hand me
Make my bed and light the light
I'll arrive late tonight
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AN AUDIENCE WATCHING BLACKBIRD WILL SURELY QUESTION WHY UNA HAS GONE TO SEE RAY, WHETHER SHE'S SEEKING REVENGE, UNDERSTANDING, OR SOME KIND OF CLOSURE. DID YOU HAVE TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION FOR YOURSELF?

I didn't have an answer in the beginning, but I probably created an answer for myself during the writing. But I'm going to keep it to myself [laughs]. Sorry.

ONE BRITISH REVIEW OF BLACKBIRD CALLED THE PLAY "SURPRISINGLY COMPASSIONATE" GIVEN THE SUBJECT MATTER. WAS IT CHALLENGING FOR YOU TO ACHIEVE A DEGREE OF EMPATHY FOR RAY, WhOM IT'S EASY TO SEE AS HAVING PREYED UPON UNA?

American Conservatory Theater
“WITH MYSTERIES INTACT”
AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT DAVID HARROWER
BY JESSICA WERNER ZACK

I n conversation, Scottish playwright David Harrower discusses his writing with a refreshing modernity and perceptible bewilderment at the mysterious nature of his own creative process. He quickly debunks the myth of the omniscient writer, holding his characters’ fates securely in hand. Instead, Harrower admits to an astonishment that accompanies his success and an openness to letting his characters’ lives and lives roam freely, into situations that can surprise even their creator.

Speaking just a week after Blackbird earned the British theater establishment’s highest honor, the Olivier Award for best new play, Harrower said with a laugh, “I’m still not sure how the play actually works.” That may be little comfort for the playwright looking for an easy summation of his plots and purpose, yet Harrower makes clear that the powerful emotional connection audiences feel with his work is intricately connected to his own need to write dramas that “leave some mysteries intact, some questions left unanswered.”

“I’d ever find I know what my plays are about, that’s when I start worrying, because as soon as I start reducing it to knowing what’s going on, I’m in trouble.”

At age 40, Harrower is considered one of Scotland’s most gifted playwrights and has already created a substantial body of dramatic work celebrated for its compelling ambiguities and densely poetic, even emblematic, language. His first play, Kreises in Hens, first produced at Edinburgh’s Traverse Theatre in 1995, has become one of Scotland’s biggest theatrical exports. Written in exceptionally sparse language, the play exerts a disquieting power as it charts a medieval peasant woman’s journey from subservience to an adulterous husband to a mature, vengeful awareness. Translated for production in more than 20 countries, Kreises in Hens solidified Harrower’s reputation worldwide as a writer whose plays haunt as well as entertain.

In the decade following his spectacular debut, Harrower wrote Kill the Old, Torture Their Young (1998) and Dark Earth (2003), as well as several adaptations and translations of European classics. Each successive drama has been well received by audiences and critics alike, but he had yet to recapture the mature beauty of his debut work—until Blackbird premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2005 and set the theatrical world buzzing even louder. The one-act, two-character play received the Scotland Critics’ Award for best play before transferring to the West End in 2006. Productions have since been planned in 17 other countries, including this month’s opening at Manhattan Theatre Club and Blackbird’s West Coast premiere at A.C.T.

Harrower spoke to A.C.T. contributor Jessica Werner Zack in February, just before rehearsals for the A.C.T. production began in San Francisco."

YOU’VE SAID THAT YOUR INITIAL INSPIRATION FOR WRITING BLACKBIRD WAS A REAL-LIFE STORY YOU READ IN 2003 ABOUT A U.S. MARINE WHO HAD TAKEN OFF FOR EUROPE WITH A YOUNG GIRL. WHAT ABOUT THAT STORY TRIANGULATED YOU ENOUGH TO EXPLORE IT IN THEATRICAL TERMS? I wasn’t exactly inspired by that story, but it inspired a series of thoughts that resulted in this play. I am wary of trying to dramatize real-life events. But I remember that story caught my eye and I started wondering about it. This image came to me of a man and a girl standing looking at the sea, and I just couldn’t shake it. It was really that image that became [my primary inspiration].

YOU’VE MADE SURE NOTHING IN THE PLAY IS PORTRAYED IN BLACK OR WHITE TERMS. INSTEAD, YOU EXPLORE SOME OF THE DECIDEDLY GREY AREAS THAT CAN EXIST IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR, IN RELATIONSHIPS. Absolutely. The relationship between Una and Ray didn’t happen, but to me there was no point in going over the argument [of whether it was morally wrong] and becoming a referee standing in judgment of these characters. People know this kind of relationship shouldn’t happen, and there’s no point in me confirming what people believe. It was very important to me to let these two characters in this room together say anything they want to each other without me censoring it. And they can say anything they want to each other because they are the only two persons who knew exactly how they felt or what they wanted.

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PHOTOS OF JESS CAMPBELL, AND STEVEN CULP ON PRECEDING PAGE BY KEVIN BERNE

Bluebird

12 American Conservatory Theater

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I guess I had to. I couldn’t villain him or demonize him because he’s a character I have created, and he would stand no chance of being of interest if I were to take a moral view of him. When I wrote [Blackbird], I had no real idea about what sympathy would be created for this man, and I was kind of surprised there was actually more sympathy than I thought there would be. That said, we can’t turn away from the fact that there are real people much worse than him that actually seek children, and we as a society have to decide what we do with these people.

YOUR WRITING STYLE HAS GREAT CONCERN AND HEMS CLOSELY TO HOW PEOPLE SPEAK IN LIFE, IF NOT IN plays, IN TERMS OF ITS MANY INTERRUPTIONS AND BROKEN SENTENCES. DO YOU INITIALLY WRITE THIS CONSCIOUSLY, OR IS IT THE RESULT OF A LOT OF REVISING?

This play actually came out like that. I wrote this in about a month. Once I started, I just wrote and couldn’t stop writing. It came almost in one go. It was extraordinary. I was very conscious of wanting to write in a language that indicated these two characters’ mental state, so the language in effect reflects the fact that they are circling around something. They can’t finish sentences, they can’t be too definite, because if they’re definite about something they don’t know what effect it’s going to have on the other person. That’s something I’ve really taken from Shakespeare, the idea of language conveying its meaning in the actual words chosen by the characters themselves.

KNIVES IN HEAVEN, YOUR FIRST PRODUCED PLAY, WAS AN IMMEDIATE AND TREMENDOUS SUCCESS. WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU AS A YOUNG WRITER TO ACHIEVE SUCH ACCLAIM WITH YOUR FIRST GO?

It was an extraordinary thing to have happen. I wrote it when I was 27 and it was produced when I was 28. It ran in Germany for about three years, and it sent out these reverberations and then other countries picked it up on it. I don’t want to sound like an idiot savant here [laughs], but I had no idea why. It was quite an unusual, strange little story. It’s something to do with, I guess, the fact of creating a language to convey your thoughts, to convey your feelings about the world. I think if it hadn’t had that strand to it, it wouldn’t have gotten anywhere. But it really burrowed into why we use language, what we need it for, and it did get an extraordinary response from people. I had taken quite a risk with the language and it was quite dense, with a real cryptic quality to it as well. So, yes, it was fantastic for a young writer.

PINTER IS OFTEN MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE ROLE MODEL FOR YOU, STYLISTICALLY WHAT CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT YOUR THEATRICAL INFLUENCES?

I’ve got to say, I came to theater quite late. I wrote short stories for a while, as I was washing dishes in a restaurant and doing these cruddy jobs, and as I was writing the stories I found I couldn’t be bored writing the descriptive stuff, so they just came out with the dialogue. And this was even before I discovered Pinter, but I was thinking about what language could be used to do, what it could convey, how it could be used to hide things as well as reveal things.

I didn’t go to theater much. I had never shown much interest in it before, but I went to the library and I started reading what was there in the library. Some of the early stuff that really got hold of me was Brian Friel’s plays.

HAVE YOU BECOME THE KIND OF WRITER NOW WHO IMAGINES THE STAGE AS YOU’RE WRITING, HEARS YOUR WORK IN ACTORS’ MOUTHS? OR DO YOU STILL WRITE IN THE MORE LITERARY TRADITION, CREATING YOUR OWN WORLD IN YOUR HEAD?

The latter. I see this sort of film in my head, like these two people [in Blackbird]. One of the things I’ve found while writing plays is that I see the characters from a distance, and if I’m writing for film or TV I see them in close-up. It’s quite bizarre to think about.

MAYBE YOU’VE BEEN INFLUENCED BY YOUR OWN VIEWING OF FILMED MEDIA, SINCE THE CLOSE-UP ONLY EXISTS WITH A CAMERA.

Right, and absolutely not in theater. You’ve just got whole bodies on the stage, in the physical space, and how they approach or walk away or circle around each other. I’ve become just obsessed with theater and how it allows and encourages me to write language that can’t exist anywhere else. That’s really important to me.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLACKBIRD’S TITLE? DID IT COME TO YOU EASILY, OR AFTER YOU’VE COMPLETED THE PLAY?

It’s quite simple really. My memory is that I needed a title quite quickly and I had been listening to some music and it was John Coltrane, or was it Keith Jarrett, the pianist, playing the standard “Bye, Bye, Blackbird.” It was an improvised take on the standard. And this felt like an improvisation. You know, how long do I keep these two people in the room? I felt like a musician in many ways, sustaining what these two people could say and do to each other, improvising in a sense. And I also thought that maybe [“Blackbird”] was something he had called her, or maybe he was playing the Beatles’ “White Album” on the way to the coast. It wasn’t encapsulating, just more suggestive, to help me. But it turns out there is a tale about Saint Benedict, which I found out about afterwards. I love the story, this disguise as a blackbird. I wish I had known about it beforehand because I would have claimed it as my own [laughs].

YOU’VE SAID IN AN EARLIER INTERVIEW THAT YOU DON’T THINK THEATER SHOULD BE DIDACTIC OR EVEN TOO ENGAGED WITH THE EXTERNAL WORLD, BUT YOU ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN WRITING SOMETHING THAT RESPONDS TO CURRENT EVENTS. COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT A BIT?

That was sort of a rhetorical question to myself, asking how I should be responding to the world. I’m constantly caught between using my plays to explore current things within the world, and creating small dramas. I don’t know exactly how people see Blackbird in this sense; it just stands alone as a good, intriguing piece of theater. I know that when things get too didactic for me, I just switch off. Certain writers, certain voices, they just become too shallow for me. I’ve always preferred a quiet, more skewed look at something. There are lots of other writers writing about the state of Britain, race relations, sexual relations, identity issues. I’m not a writer who necessarily takes a subject and comments on it. I’ve got to find a different way of representing something, and in that way I’m kind of a contradiction. I would love to be a great sane political voice, but I can’t be because I am not that. I’ve got to be what I am, I can’t be quiet unsettling voice.

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THE GALLERY AT A.C.T.

ANNIE ABRASSIMICH: THE GARDEN

Find yourself with some extra time before a performance or during intermission? Want to expose yourself to more fine art, but don't make it to art galleries as often as you'd like? Now you need look no further than A.C.T. We invite you to visit the second floor of the theater (just outside the auditorium doors, along the north bank of windows, and by the elevator) to view original artwork by a diverse range of artists, presented in a series of rotating exhibits throughout the 2006-07 season.

Integrated mixed media pieces by Bay Area artist Annie Abrassimich are on view at A.C.T. April 27-July 8. Abrassimich creates original works of art by synthesizing nontraditional hand-pulled printmaking techniques, such as kaolin monotypes, with mixed-media painting techniques. "I'm interested in the auditory nature of color," she explains. "I am looking for a certain sound in the piece. When I find it, I know the piece is alive. When there is life in a work of art, it has the potential to affect the surrounding space and the viewer. My goal is to create art that has a specific positive vibration, like those found in nature."

Kaolin monotype is a technique that allows the artist to create one-of-a-kind images impossible with other methods. A printing plate of uninfused cornstarch is created. Then kaolin-based paint (made using white china clay, water, and permanent artist's pigments) is applied to the plate using a variety of tools and techniques. The resulting image is lifted onto an archival spun-flber matrix using small hand rollers and pressure tools. After the monotype is hand-rolled, the image is further worked to create more intense and layered textures and colors. "In this body of work, I have used color (vibration), batik textile stamps (storytelling), and clay and pigments (earth) to give the viewer an experience of The Garden."

Abrassimich graduated from the California Institute of Integral Studies after attending the Pacific Northwest College of Art. The artist will attend an opening reception at the theater on Thursday, May 3, 5:00-7:30 p.m. Each artwork purchase benefits A.C.T. For more information about Annie Abrassimich, please contact Kevin Simmers at 415.474.1066 / ksimmers@act san francisco Ca. com.

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A community’s commitment to arts and culture says a lot about the kind of place it is to work and live.

At Wells Fargo, we’re proud of the role we play in bringing artistic and cultural events to center stage.

**WHO’S WHO IN BLACKBIRD**

**STEVEN CULP**
(Peter Ray) received Drama-Logue awards for his performances in Angels in America (A.C.T.) and the West Coast premiere of Raised in Captivity (South Coast Repertory Theatre). Over the last two decades he has appeared in numerous theatrical premieres, among them Tony Kushner’s Slab! and Phyllis Nagy’s Trip’s Cinch (Humana Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville), Terrence McNally’s The Lisbon Traviata (Theatre Off Park), Neil Simon’s Actors and Actresses (Hartman Theatre), A.R. Gurney’s Jr. Sweet Sue (Williamstown Theatre Festival), Keith Redlich’s Highest Standard of Living (Playwrights Horizons), Jonathan Tolimieri’s Memory Serve (Pasadena Playhouse), and Lillian Grosh’s The White Rose (The Old Globe).

Other theater credits include Art (South Coast Rep), Coastal Disturbances (Circle in the Square, Broadway), Light Up the Sky (Ahmanson Theatre), Richard III (New York Shakespeare Festival), and many other plays at regional theaters across the country. Culp received Screen Actors’ Guild Awards in 2004 and 2005 (outstanding performance by an ensemble in a comedy series) as part of the cast of ABC’s “Desperate Housewives,” playing the role of the desperate husband Rex Van De Kamp.

Notable recurring television roles include CIA agent Clayton Webb in “JAG,” Speaker of the House Jeff Hathaway in “The West Wing,” Major Hayes in “Star Trek: Enterprise,” and Dr. Corday’s boyfriend Dave Spencer in ER.

Since making his primetime TV debut as John Hay in the Emmy Award-winning NBC miniseries of “Grover Cleveland’s Lincoln,” opposite Sam Waterson and Mary Tyler Moore, Culp has appeared in many series and TV movies, including “CSI,” “Breaking Bad,” “Num3rs,” “Crossing Jordan,” “The Practice,” “Ally McBeal,” “Chicago Hope,” “Provence,” and Norma Jean and Marilyn. In addition to his critically acclaimed performance as Robert F. Kennedy in Thirteen Days, he has appeared in the feature films The Emperor’s Club (with Kevin Kline), Spartan (written and directed by David Mamet), The Sisters, Nurse Betty, James and the Giant Peach, and the release Firehouse Dog, among others. He is one of the stars of the upcoming ABC series “Traveller.”

**JESSI CAMPBELL**
(Also makes her A.C.T. debut in Blackbird, New York credits include the title roles of Ingly and Victoria Martin: Math Tien Queen at the Women’s Project (both directed by Loretta Greco), the Girl Scout in Commedia dell’Arte at New Georges, Boy in Luscious Something at Cherry Lane Theater, and Shawn in The Cymbalists Stage (written and directed by Cobey Mandarino) at the 2006 New York International Fringe Festival. Film and television credits include the remake of The Amityville Horror, Spinning into Butter with Sarah Jessica Parker, “Rescue Me,” “Law & Order: SVU,” and “The Knights of Prosperity.” Campbell is a graduate of DePaul University.

**ANNA BULLARD**
(Understudy) includes among her recent Bay Area credits Ambition Facing West at TheatreWorks,

Killer Joe at Marin Theatre Company (and the extension at Magic Theatre), and the premiere of Mat Smart’s The Hopper Collection at Magic Theatre. Regional credits include the Humana Festival premieres of Kia Corrthorn’s Most the Messenger and Uncle Sam’s Satiric Spectacles at Actors Theatre of Louisville; Dracula and 2B (or not 2B) for Actors Theatre of Louisville; and The Mousetrap and Nonsense at the Dorset Theatre Festival. She received her B.A. in English and theater from Whitman College and trained as an acting apprentice at Actors Theatre of Louisville.

**ROD GNAPP**
(Understudy) most recently appeared at A.C.T. in Happy End and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. He has been acting in theaters around the Bay Area for the last 16 years. He has also been seen at A.C.T. in The Time of Your Life (also at Seattle Repertory Theatre), Glimmerglen Gem Rio, Juno and the Paycock, The Royal Family, and Dard Rapture and at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in numerous productions. He appeared as Neil Cassidy in Visions of Kerouac at Marin Theatre Company, where he also played John Proctor in The Crucible. Grapp appears in the world premiere production of Sam Shepard’s The Late Henry Moss and recently performed with San Jose Stage Company as Austin in Shepard’s True West.

**DAVID HARROWER** (Playwright) was born in Edinburgh and now lives in Glasgow, Scotland. His play Knives in Hens was first produced at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, in 1995 and has been seen in more than 20 countries worldwide. Other plays include Kill the Old, Torture Their Young (Traverse Theatre) and The Cymbalists (NT Connections, National Theatre, London). Presents, his third original
We’re Proud To Pony Up For Arts And Culture

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The Next Stage

Who’s Who in Blackbird

STEVEN CULP
(Peter Ray) received Drama-Logue awards for his performances in Angels in America (A.C.T.) and the West Coast premiere of Raised in Captivity (South Coast Repertory Theatre). Over the last two decades he has appeared in numerous theatrical premieres, among them Tony Kushner’s Slabies! and Phyllis Nagy’s Trip’s ‘Crunch (Humana Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville), Terrence McNally’s The Lisbon Traviata (Theatre Off-Park), Neil Simon’s Act and Misses (Hartman Theatre), A. R. Gurney, Jr.’s Sweet Sue (Williamstown Theatre Festival), Keith Reddick’s Highest Standard of Living (Playwrights Horizons), Jonathan Tollsino’s If Memory Serves (Pandana Playhouse), and Lillian Grosh’s White Rose (The Old Globe). Other theater credits include Art (South Coast Rep), Coastal Disturbances (Circle in the Square, Broadway), Light Up the Sky (Abravanel Theatre), Richard III (New York Shakespeare Festival), and many other plays at regional theaters across the country. Culp received Screen Actors’ Guild Awards in 2004 and 2005 (outstanding performance by an ensemble in a comedy series) as part of the cast of ABC’s “Desperate Housewives,” playing the role of the desperate husband Rex Van De Kamp. Notable recurring television roles include CIA agent Clayton Webb in “JAG,” Speaker of the House Jeff Jeffreys in “The West Wing,” Major Hayes in “Star Trek: Enterprise,” and Dr. Corday’s boyfriend Dave Spencer in “ER.” Since making his primetime TV debut as John Hay in the Emmy Award-winning NBC miniseries of “Grover Cleveland,” opposite Sam Waterston and Mary Tyler Moore, Culp has appeared in many series and TV movies, including “CSI,” “24,” “Numb3rs,” “Crossing Jordan,” “The Practice,” “Ally McBeal,” “Chicago Hope,” “Providence,” and Norma Jean and Marilyn. In addition to his critically acclaimed performance as Robert F. Kennedy in Thirteen Days, he has appeared in the feature films The Emperor’s Club (with Kevin Kline), Spartacus (written and directed by David Mamet), The Sisters, Nurse Betty, James and the Giant Peach, and the release Firehouse Dog, among others. He is one of the stars of the upcoming ABC series “Traveler.”

JESSI CAMPBELL
(Una) makes her A.C.T. debut in Blackbird.

ROD GNAPP
(Understudy) most recently appeared at A.C.T. in Happy End and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. He has been acting in theaters around the Bay Area for the last 16 years. He has also been seen at A.C.T. in The Time of Your Life (also at Seattle Repertory Theatre), Glenmary Glen Ross, June and the Paycock, The Royal Family, and Deathtrap and at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in numerous productions. He appeared as Neil Cassady in Visions of Kerouac at Marin Theatre Company, where he also played John Proctor in The Crucible. Gnapp appeared in the world premiere production of Sam Shepard’s The Late Henry Moss and recently performed with San Jose Stage Company as Austin in Shepard’s True West.

DAVID HARROWER
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Who’s Who

play, was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 2001. Hannoner has also adapted versions of Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author, first staged at the Young Vic in 2000, Chekhov’s Ivanov, performed at the National Theatre in 2002, and Bochner’s Wyzenkop, performed at the Edinburgh Lyceum in 2002. His play Dark Earth premiered at the Traverse in August 2003, and his new version of von Horvath’s Tales from the Viena Woods performed at the National Theatre later that year. Blackbird was commissioned by the Edinburgh International Festival and premiered there in August 2005. It subsequently transferred to London’s West End in February 2006 and was recently performed at Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. Blackbird was short-listed for the Saltire Society’s Scottish Book of the Year and won the Scotsman’s Critics’ Award for best play of 2006 and the Laurence Olivier Award in 2007.

LORETTA GRECO (Director) directed Ladusawanna Blues for A.C.T. after developing and directing its premiere at The Public Theater. Other New York premieres include Victoria Marten: Math Team Queen (Women’s Project), The Story (Public Theater); Touch (Women’s Project); Two Sisters and a Piano (Public Theater); Mouhyib (Naked Angels Theater Company); Mercy (Vineyard Theater); Gwo (Women’s Project); A Park in Our House (New York Theatre Workshop); and Under a Western Sky (INTAR/Women’s Project). Regional theater credits include Rumors andJuliet and Stiletto (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), Mortality/Mortality (Magic Theater), and productions at Long Wharf Theatre, South Coast Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Intiman Theatre, the Williamsport Theatre Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, the Coconut Grove Playhouse, Playmakers Repertory Company, and The Cleveland Play House. Greco also directed the national tour of Having Our Say, as well as the play’s international premiere at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has collaborated with a variety of distinguished contemporary writers, including Pulitzer Prize winner Nilo Cruz, Tracy Scott Wilson, Emily Mann, Raben Santiago-Hudson, Debra Margolin, Lois Alfaro, Joyce Carol Oates, and Jessica Hagedorn. Greco’s own play, Passage: Stories of the Cuban Balseros, premiered at Miami’s AREA Stage, where it ran for six months before transferring to the Coconut Grove Playhouse. From 2004 to 2006 Greco served as producing artistic director of New York City’s Women’s Project, where she produced the premiere of Antigone Project, written by Kate Hartman, Lynn Nottage, Tanya Barfield, Chiori Miyagawa, and Caridad Svich; the rhythm and blues musical Best of Both Worlds, created by Diane Paulus and Randy Weiner and composed by Diedre Murray, Ronnie Geoff’s Andy; Neena Beeber’s Jump/Out, directed by Leigh Silverman; and Lisa D’Amour’s The Cautious, directed by Katie Pearl. Greco received her M.F.A. from Catholic University and is the recipient of two Drama League Fellowships and a Princess Grace Award.

ROBERT BRILL (Scenic Design) has designed for A.C.T. The Grapes of Wrath and The First Picture Show. His designs for Broadway include Assassins (Tony Award nomination) and the set and club design for the critically acclaimed revival of Cabaret. Other Broadway credits include A Streetcar Named Desire, Laugh Whore, The Good Body, Anna in the Tropics, Design for Living, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Buried Child, The Rehearsal, and the upcoming revival of The Visit. His other credits include A Number, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Voysey Inheritance, and Waiting for Godot for A.C.T. Current and recent projects include Distraught at the Mark Taper Forum, Everything at Second Stage in New York and at Yale Repertory Theatre, The Fear of Us at The Old Globe, and The Pellegrino at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. On Broadway, Champa designed Julia Sweeney’s God Said ‘Ha!’ at the Lyceum Theatre. Other New York credits include designs for Manhattan Theatre Club, the Promenade Theater, the Union Square Theater, Classic Stage Company, New York Stage and Film, Primary Stages, and La MaMa E.T.C. Regionally, he has designed for William Theatres, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, McCarter Theatre, Long Wharf/Tearoom, Campo Santo, the Williamsstown Theatre Festival, The Actors’ Gang, and the Kennedy Centre.

JAKE RODRIGUEZ (Sound Designer) has carved out sound and music for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, A.C.T., California Shakespeare Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Marin Theatre Company, Shytop, Players and Art Street Theatre. Recent sound design credits include the world premiere of After the War and the new production of A Christmas Carol as A.C.T.; world premieres of Passing Strange, The People’s Temple, and Fits de la Nuit at Berkeley Rep; and The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby at Cal Shakes. Other credits include music and sound for Cal Shakes’ 2004 production of A Comedy of Errors; sound for Marin Theatre Company’s Life; 3, sound for Isen’s Ghosts at Berkeley Rep; and sound for Shytop Players’ and Studio Theatre’s productions of The Death of Me. Rodriguez won the 2003 Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award in sound design for The Death of Me. Russell H. Champa (Lighting Design) has designed The Little Fockers, The Four Seasons of the Body at A.C.T. in 1988.
Who’s Who

play, was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 2001. Hanower has also adapted versions of Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author, fir, first staged at the Young Vic in 2000, Chekhov’s Ivanov, performed at the National Theatre in 2002, and Böckner’s Woyzeck, performed at the Edinburgh Lyceum in 2002. His play Dark Earth premiered at the Traverse in August 2003, and his new version of von Horvath’s Tales from the Vienna Woods performed at the National Theatre later that year. Blackbird was commissioned by the Edinburgh International Festival and premiered there in August 2005. It subsequently transferred to London’s West End in February 2006 and was recently performed at Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. Blackbird was short-listed for the Saltire’s Scottish Book of the Year and won the Scotsman’s Critics’ Award for best play of 2006 and the Laurence Olivier Award in 2007.

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ROBERT BRILL (Scenic Design) has designed for A.C.T. The Great Leap and The First Picture Show. His designs for Broadway include Assasins (Tony Award nomination) and the set and club design for the critically acclaimed revival of Cabaret. Other Broadway credits include, A Streetcar Named Desire, Laugh Whore, The Good Body, Anna in the Tropics, Design for Living, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Buried Child, The Rehearsal, and the upcoming revival of The Visit. His other credits include A Number, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Voysey Inheritance, and Waiting for Godot for A.C.T. Current and recent projects include Distraction at the Mark Taper Forum, Everyday at Second Stage in New York and at Yale Repertory Theatre, The Fear of Us at The Old Globe, and The Pellegrini at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. On Broadway, Champa designed Julia Swann’s God Said ‘Halt!’ at the Lyceum Theatre. Other New York credits include designs for Manhattan Theatre Club, the Promenade Theatre, the Union Square Theatre, Classic Stage Company, New York Stage and Film, Primary Stages, and La MaMa E.T.C. Regionally, he has designed for Willma Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, McCarter Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Campo Santo, the Williamsport Theatre Festival, The Actors’ Gang, and the Kennedy Centre.

JAKE RODRIGUEZ (Costume Design) has carved out sound and music for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, A.C.T., California Shakespeare Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Marin Theatre Company, Mark Taper Forum, Shogun Players, and Art Street Theatre. Recent sound design credits include the world premiere of After the War and the new production of A Christmas Carol at A.C.T., world premieres of Passing Strange, The People’s Temple, and Fidus de la Nuit at Berkeley Rep and The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby at Cal Shakes. Other credits include music and sound for Cal Shakes’ 2004 production of A Comedy of Errors; sound for Marin Theatre Company’s Life’s; sound for Isen’s Ghosts at Berkeley Rep; and sound for Shogun Players’ and Studio Theatre’s productions of The Death of Maherbol. Rodriguez won the 2003 Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award in sound design for The Death of Meyerbol and a 2004 Princess Grace Award.
WHO’S WHO

JORGE BOEHRINGER (Composer) is an Oakland-based composer working in a diversity of media, ranging from the most basic (such as light or soundtracks) to exceedingly complex, even theoretical materials. Boehringer has produced many recordings, numerous musical works for large and small ensembles, solo works for himself and others to perform, video and film work, installations involving light, space, and sound, music for dance performances, experimental book projects and small publications, and hours of electronic music. Boehringer has also been active as a curator and consultant for the Mission Creek Music Festival, Lobby Gallery, the Lab, and The Music for People and Thingamajigs Festival, among other things. This summer Boehringer looks forward to a three-month European tour as his solo alter ego, Core of the Coolman.


MERYL LIND SHAW (Casting Director) joined the A.C.T. artistic staff as casting director in 1993. She has cast roles for the Huntington Theatre Company, Arizona Theatre Company, the San Francisco Symphony and Opera, and the San Francisco productions of White Christmas, Fiddler, and Picasso at the Lapin Agile, as well as for the first workshop of The Count of Monte Cristo and the CD-ROM game Ophidian. Before joining A.C.T. as casting director, she was the artistic associate for more than 60 productions in theaters throughout the Bay Area, including A.C.T.’s Creditors and Bon Appétit! She was resident stage manager at Berkeley Repertory Theatre for twelve years and production stage manager at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival for three seasons. She has served on the Bay Area advisory committee of Actors’ Equity Association, the negotiating committee for the LORT contract (1992 and 1993), and the board of trustees of the California Shakespeare Festival.

ELISA GUTHZER* (Stage Manager) most recently worked on The Little Prince at A.C.T. and on the A.C.T. production of Death in Venice at Zeum Theatre. Her numerous other productions for A.C.T. include A Number, Sexual Perversity in Chicago, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Good Bull, A Few Good Men, Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters, the Misbehaving, Long Day’s Journey into Night, Tartuffe, Mary Stuart, The Rose Tattoo, and A Streetcar Named Desire. She has also stage-managed The Asparagus, Vanya, and Sonia, Masha and Spike, The Threepenny Opera, Old Times, Aradia, The Rose Tattoo, Antigone, Credence, Home, and The Tempest. Her work at A.C.T. also includes the world premiere of Ron Kastner and Ed Macas’s Neon Tommy for an evening. David Lang/Mac Wellman’s The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, and the West Coast premiere of her own piece, Corpus of a Woman, (a study of Rhoda’s a feedback for the Susan Soto Blackburn Award). Her play Luminous Dance, which will premiere at the A.C.T.’s Next Wave Festival, was an annual past recipient of her own annual competition for director Style. Her writing has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle. At A.C.T., she is a member of A.C.T.’s First Look festival in January. She has collaborated with many notable contemporary writers, most recently Philip Kan Gotanda, on his new play after the War at the Sundance Institute in 2004 (an A.C.T. commission that will premiere in 2007), and Robert O’Hara, on On Acid for the 2003 O’Neill Playwrights Conference.

HEATHER KITCHEN (Executive Director) now in her 11th season with A.C.T., has strengthened the organization’s infrastructure and reputation, and recently expanded to include the performance and production of new work and the addition of a third year to A.C.T.’s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program. Her decision to undertake an M.B.A. degree from the Richard Ivey School of Business at The University of Western Ontario has been key to this leadership. A 15-year veteran in stage, tour, and production management ranging across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Kitchen credits the Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage Company, Charlottetown Festival, Theatre New Brunswick, New Play Centre, Vancouver, and Neptune Theatre in Halifax. As general manager of The Citadel Theatre, Kitchen managed a five-theater performing arts complex and school that annually produced over 16 productions, an International Children’s Festival, and a Ten Festival. As a member of the executive committee of the Canadian Performing Arts Consortium, Kitchen authored the benchmark study Economic Impact of the Performing Arts in Edmonton. An active community member, Kitchen serves on the boards and executive committees of the Commonwealth Club of California, as well as the board of the National Corporate Theatre Fund in New York. She is a past member of the San Francisco Leadership Board of the American Cancer Society and the Board of Brothers/Sisters, San Francisco and the Peninsula, and the Salvation Army Auxiliary in San Francisco. She serves on the executive of the League of Resident Theatres. She has also participated on peer review panels for Theatres Communications Group, Canada Council of the Arts, and Forbes magazine’s business and The Arts Awards. The San Francisco Business Times named Kitchen one of the most influential women in business in the Bay Area for the past three years.

WHAT TO WANT MORE ABOUT BLACKBIRD?

WORDS ON PLAYS, A.C.T.’s in-depth performance guide series, offers insights into the playwrights, and productions of the A.C.T. subscription season. Each entertaining and informative unit consists of a synopsis, advance program notes, and questions and additional background information about the historical and cultural context of the play.

Individual essays of Words on Plays for each production—including Blackbird—are available for purchase in the theater lobby, at A.C.T. Ticket Services (next to door at 405 Geary Street), and online at www.act.org. Subscriptions to Words on Plays are also available for the entire season. For information about subscribing to Words on Plays, call 415.749.2250.

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ACT PROFILES

CAREY PERLOFF is artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound’s Elzire, the American premiere of Pinter’s Mountain Language and The Birthday Party, and many classic works. Under Perloff’s leadership, Classic Stage won numerous OBIE Awards for acting, direction, design, and directorial excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s open The Giver at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Perloff received a B.A., Phi Beta Kappa in English and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tuoh 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. She is the proud mother of Leslie and Nicholas.

MELISSA SMITH (Conservatory Director) oversees the administration of the A.C.T. Conservatory’s Master of Fine Arts programs, Young Conservatory, Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T. in addition to serving as the master acting teacher of the M.F.A. Program. Before joining A.C.T. in 1995, Smith served as director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught acting for six years. She has worked with people of all ages in venues around the country, including teaching in Hawaii and in Philadelphia. Also a professional actor, she has performed in numerous off-off Broadway plays and at regional theaters. She received her B.A. in English and theater from the University of Puget Sound and an M.F.A. in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

JAMES HAIRE (Producing Director) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne’s Central Repertory Theatre as an actor and Stage Manager. He also stage-managed the Broadway productions of And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little and George (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), as well as the national tour of Woody Allen’s Don’t Drink the Water. Off Broadway he produced Dessen Little Eyes (directed by Marshall W. Mason) and Shaw’s Arms and the Man. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971. He and his department were awarded Theatre Communications Group’s卓越 award for the excellence in the theater in 1989, and in 1992 Haire was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle.

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American Conservatory Theater

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ELISA GUTHERTZ* (Stage Manager) most recently worked on The Little Foxes at A.C.T. and on the A.C.T. production of Death in Venice at Zeum Theatre. Her numerous other productions for A.C.T. include A Number, Sexual Perversity in Chicago, Can a Hat Be a Rifle?, A Mousetrap for the Miskatonic, Global V.Girl, Lovely James, Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters, Three Monologues from the Misbegotten, Ennui, The End of the Threepenny Opera, Old Times, Ardenia, The Rose Tattoo, Antigone, Creators, Home, and The Temporist. Her work with A.C.T. also includes the world premiere of Hong Kong, directed by Lee Teng, for an encore, David Lang/McCaw's The Dying Girl, and the West Coast Production of her full-length musical, Xanadu of Rhodos (a finalist for the Susan Sontag Blackbird Award). Her play Luminance Dancehall, which will be produced in the National Theatre in December (in a coproduction with A.C.T.), was developed under a grant from The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Kleban Foundation. Guthertz's first full-length play, The Last Summer, Rhinoceros, Big Love, Civil Sea, Collected Stories, and Cloud Tectonics at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other productions include Eve Ensler's The Good Body at the Booth Theatre on Broadway, Big Love at Brooklyn Academy of Music, and The Vagina Monologues at the Alcatraz Theatre.

M.E. CAREY PERLOFF (Artistic Director) is currently celebrating her 15th season as artistic director of A.C.T., where she most recently directed productions of Tom Stoppard's Travesties, Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill's Happy End (including a cast album recording), A Chorus Line (a new adaptation by Perloff with Paul Wilah), David Mamet's new adaptation of Grasshopper, The Party, and the world premiere of San Francisco's Richman's The Real Thing, Constance Conger's A Mother (an A.C.T.-commissioned adaptation of Goethe's Vater und Sohn), Ibsen's A Doll's House, Beckett's Waiting for Godot, Stoppard's No End and Daylight, and Cock's The Three Sisters. Her production of My Nana's Nightcap (a world premiere at A.C.T.) opened at the San Jose Stage in 2004. In 2003, Perloff directed the world premiere of Colin McCrath's The Rooms and is currently working on a new commission with A.C.T. commissioned, a comedy about the impact of the American Revolution on Irish culture. In 2002, Perloff directed the world premiere of The Little Foxes at A.C.T., directed by Michael Mayer. Her previous productions include the world premieres of David Mamet's Race and Richard Nelson's Camp Wilder at A.C.T. In 2001, Perloff directed the world premiere of The Dying Girl (co-produced with A.C.T.), directed by Lee Teng, for an encore, David Lang/McCaw's The Dying Girl, and the West Coast Production of her full-length musical, Xanadu of Rhodos (a finalist for the Susan Sontag Blackbird Award). Her play Luminance Dancehall, which will be produced in the National Theatre in December (in a coproduction with A.C.T.), was developed under a grant from The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Kleban Foundation. Guthertz's first full-length play, The Last Summer, Rhinoceros, Big Love, Civil Sea, Collected Stories, and Cloud Tectonics at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other productions include Eve Ensler's The Good Body at the Booth Theatre on Broadway, Big Love at Brooklyn Academy of Music, and The Vagina Monologues at the Alcatraz Theatre.
"DARE TO SUCk AND LET THE MAGIC HAPPEN."

"Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway are Alive with a capital A. Irresistibly full-bodied art and perversely showbiz genius, this is a magnified cabaret concert that has the heat and dazzle of great balls of fire."

"Veously funny...blurs the line between incoherent and brilliant."

Klage Keor

"TOP TEN LIST—Best of 2006"

Bus Broccoli, The New York Times

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"Veously funny...blurs the line between incoherent and brilliant."

Klage Keor
In addition to their annual gifts, the following individuals (and companies) have made generous commitments to A.C.T.’s 40th-anniversary celebration, The A.C.T. Ruby Jubilee, which will take place on April 22, 2007. A benefit in support of A.C.T.’s arts training and youth education programs, The Ruby Jubilee will offer Bay Area community leaders and philanthropists a celebration of 40帘 remodeling seasons of live theater in San Francisco. For information please contact Amalio Sotelo Jr. at 415.445.4207 or ssotelo@act-sf.org.

**HOST COMMITTEE**

**PRESENTING SPONSOR**

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**BENEFICIARIES**

**THEATRE EXECUTIVES**
SUMMER IN THE A.C.T. CONSERVATORY

A.C.T. SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS
Now Accepting Applications for 2007!

8-WEEK SESSION
Courses cover a broad range of subjects, including acting, voice and speech, and movement. Training days typically begin with physical classes like stage combat, movement, and audition technique. The day continues with more technical classes, such as voice and speech. Afternoons are spent in acting classes, scene work, and improvisation workshops. The A.C.T. Summer Training Congress prepares actors to succeed in all aspects of performance, but our primary focus is on acting for the theater.

Mandatory registration and orientation week:
June 11–15, 2007

CLASSES: June 18–August 10, 2007

GRADUATION: August 10, 2007

2-WEEK INTENSIVE
THE ACTOR AND THE AUDITION
This special two-week session focuses on the skills and materials actors need to audition and work in the theater. The training covers subjects ranging from audition techniques for classical and contemporary monologues to cold readings, headshots and résumés, marketing tools, business and rehearsal protocol, and a variety of other subjects. Some areas of on-camera audition will be covered, but the emphasis of this intensive session is primarily on auditioning for the theater.

Mandatory registration and orientation:
August 10 and 11, 2007

CLASSES: August 13–24, 2007

GRADUATION: August 24, 2007

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 415.439.2350 OR VISIT www.ACTactortraining.org

FIELDS OF GOLD: THE MUSIC OF STING
A collaboration with Bird
Directed by Craig Slaght
Musical Direction by Krista Wigle
Choreography by Christine Martisson
Musical arrangements by Robert Rutt
June 1–24, 2007 • Zeum Theater

From the overwhelming success of his rock band The Police to his breakout solo career, Gordon Matthew Sumner—known to the world as Sting—is one of the all-time greatest singer/songwriters in modern music history. An exploration of what it means to be young and grow up in the modern era, Fields of Gold: The Music of Sting is another installment in the Young Conservatory’s ongoing series of musical tributes to contemporary pop composers (which include the recent hit production Across the Universe: The Music of Lennon and McCartney).

For more information: 415.749.2ACT | www.act-sf.org

A.C.T. YOUNG CONSERVATORY
Summer sessions enrolling now!

4-week session: June 18–July 13
Two 2-week sessions: July 16–27 and July 30–August 10
Two 1-week sessions: August 13–17 and August 20–24

The Young Conservatory at A.C.T. is an internationally recognized professional theater-training program for young people between the ages of 8 and 19. Young actors from throughout the Bay Area come to the YC to develop their creative talent and to grow as young artists. The wide variety of classes and performance opportunities available includes acting, clowning, musical theater, play production, and improvisation.

For more information: 415.439.2444
www.ACTactortraining.org

STUDIO A.C.T.
Summer session enrolling now!

June 4–August 15, 2007
Whether you’re a beginner or a seasoned professional, Studio A.C.T. allows you to explore your imagination, your voice, and your intellect in a safe and rewarding environment. Classes are scheduled on nights and weekends to accommodate work and home commitments; teachers are working Bay Area professionals. Choose from classes in acting, improvisation, voice and speech, Meister technique, Shakespeare, and —this session only— a special musical theater movement class.

For more information: 415.439.2332
www.ACTactortraining.org

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THESE FREE EVENTS at American Conservatory Theater ...

Blackbird The Imaginary Invalid

KORET PROLOGUE
A conversation with the director before the 7 p.m. Tuesday preview (5:30–6 p.m.)
Tuesday 6/11

KORET AUDIENCE EXCHANGES
Free post-performance discussions with the actors and/or A.C.T. staff members.
Tuesday 6/8
Sunday 5/20
Wednesday 5/23*
Tuesday 6/19
Wednesday 6/27*
Sunday 7/1

OUT WITH A.C.T.
A gathering of gay and lesbian theatergoers, immediately following the 8 p.m. performance.
Wednesday 5/7
Wednesday 6/20

ACT ONE
ACT One convenes artists losers in their 20s and 30s to great theater, hot events and parties, and each other.
—

THEATER ON THE COUCH
An exciting collaboration between A.C.T. and The San Francisco Foundation for Psychoanalysis to generate lively dialogue among the audience and a panel of respected local psychoanalysts. After the show, the panel will discuss the psychological aspects of the play and take questions from the audience.
Friday 5/4

*Indicates mature performance

AND DON’T FORGET ...

KORET VISITING ARTIST SERIES
“New Voices, New Works”
Saturday, 5/5, A.C.T.
A.C.T. MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM CLASS OF 2007 GRADUATION
Monday, 5/7, A.C.T.
A.C.T. COMEDY NIGHT
Sunday, 5/20, A.C.T.
A.C.T. YOUNG CONSERVATORY PRESENTS
Fields of Gold: The Music of Sting
6/1–6/17, Zeum Theater

For more information, call 415.749.2ACT or visit www.act-sf.org.

Who’s Who CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

KAREN SZPALLER (Assistant Stage Manager) has worked with A.C.T. on A Christmas Carol and with the M.F.A. Program last season. Favorite past shows include Salinen at Aurora Theatre Company, Eurydice, Fêtes de la Nuit, The Glass Menagerie, Brandenburg, and Comedy on the Bridge at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Urinetown, The Musical at San Jose Stage Company, Striding 12 at TheatreWorks; and Ragtime and She Loves Me at Footlight Music Theatre. She most recently stage-managed The Secret Gardens at Willows Theatre Company. She is production coordinator at TheatreWorks in Menlo Park.

PORTIA JULIETTE was most recently seen in Adam Sandel’s San Francisco production of Gideon’s Dream, which will be remounted for two weeks in July 2007 at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center. She has appeared in North Bay Reperture productions of A Christmas Carol, Little Women, Footloose, and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. She has worked with Marin Shakespeare Company in scenes from The Merchant of Venice (Portia) and Romeo and Juliet (Juliet). She has been acting for many years and has studied at the A.C.T. Young Conservatory, Marin Shakespeare Company, Marin Theatre Company, and The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in Los Angeles.

HANNAH ROSE KORNFIELD makes her A.C.T. debut in Blackbird. She has enjoyed acting, singing, and dancing in professional and community productions throughout the Bay Area for the past three years. Recent roles include Mary Lennox in The Secret Garden (Willows Theatre Company), Alice in Alice in Wonderland (Marin Shakespeare Company), Young Joan in Far Away (Exit Theatre), Tina in Democracy in Rustless (Maqueys Playhouse), Guilia in Wuthering Heights (Ross Valley Players), Susan Waverly (understudied and performed) in Irving Berlin’s White Christmas (Curran Theatre), and featured performer in the cabaret show Simply Sundheim, a 75th Birthday Salute (Kabuk Hall).
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Monday, 5/14, A.C.T.
Sunday, 5/21, A.C.T.
Saturday, 5/28, A.C.T.

A.C.T. MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM CLASS OF 2007 GRADUATION
Sunday, 6/3, A.C.T.

A.C.T. COMEDY NIGHT
Sunday, 6/17, A.C.T.

A.C.T. YOUNG CONSERVATORY PRESENTS
Fields of Gold: The Music of Sting
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For Your Information

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
A.C.T.’s administrative and conservatory offices are located at 30 Granville Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108, 415.834.3300. On the Web: www.act.org

TICKET SERVICES INFORMATION
A.C.T. Ticket Services
Visit us at 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the theatre, one block west of Union Square. Hours are 12-8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 12-6 p.m. Sunday and Monday. During nonperformance weeks, business hours are 12-6 p.m. daily. Call 415.749.2225 and use American Express, Visa, or MasterCard. Or fax your ticket request with credit card information to 415.749.2291. Tickets are available also 24 hours/day on our website at www.aact.org. All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current subscribers enjoy performance re-sheduling privileges and lost-ticket insurance. Subscriptions available by calling 415.749.2225. A.C.T. gift certificates can be purchased in any amount online, by phone or fax, or in person.

Discounts
Half-price tickets are sometimes available one hour before performance at TIX ON THE SQUARE. Half-price student and senior rush tickets are available at the A.C.T. Ticket Services office two hours before curtain. Matinee senior rush tickets are available on noon of the day for the performance of $10. All math tickets purchased at least one ticket per valid ID. Student and senior subscriptions are also available. A.C.T. offers one Pay What You Wish performance during the regular run of each production.

Group Discounts
For groups of 15 or more, call Edward Buchwald at 415.749.2473.

A.C.T. Mergers
A.C.T.’s branded merchandise—clothing, jewelry, DVDs, mail, and other novelty items—as well as books, scripts, and Word on Plays—are on sale in the main lobby at the Ticket Services office, and online.

Refreshments
Full bar service, sweets, and savory items are available one hour before the performance in Fred’s Columbia Room on the lower level and the Sky Bar on the third floor. There is also a rimber in the main lobby. You can avoid the long lines of intermission by preordering food and beverages in the lower- and third-level bars. Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium.

Beepers
If you carry a pager, beeper, cellular phone, or watch with alarm, please make sure that it is set to the “beep” position while you are in the theater. Text messaging during the performance is very disruptive and not allowed.

Perfumes
The chemicals found in perfumes, colognes, and aerosol-after-shave lotions, even in small amounts, can cause severe physical reactions in some individuals. As a courtesy to fellow patrons, please use the avoidance of these products when you attend the theater.

Emergencies
Leave your seat location with those who may need to reach you and have them call 415.433.7080 or 6-9-11 if an emergency.

Latecomers
A.C.T. performances begin on time. Latecomers will be seated before the first intermission only if there is an appropriate interval.

Listening Systems
Headsets designed to provide clear, amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium are available for free of charge in the lobby before performances. Please turn off your hearing aid when using an A.C.T. headset, as it will affect the sound system to which the audience is listening.

Photographs and recordings of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

Rest rooms are located in Fred’s Columbia Room on the lower lobby level, the Lobby Bar, and the Garret on the uppermost level.

A wheelchair seating is available on all levels of the theater. Please call 415.749.2225 in advance to notify the house staff of any special needs.

A.C.T. is pleased to announce that an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) is now available on site.

Affiliations
A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theaters and Actors Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. A.C.T. is a member of the Community Theaters Association of California, the California State Arts Council, and the Union Square Association. A.C.T. is a member of the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

A.C.T.’s mission is to bring the magic of live performance to as broad an audience as possible. To do this, A.C.T. is an independent national labor union.

The scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers in LORT theater are represented by Local 79, United Scenic Artists, Local of IATSE.

A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from the Grants for the Arts/ San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund.

American Conservatory Theater Exits

American Conservatory Theater, Inc.
30 Granville Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 749-2225
Web: www.aact.org

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Make it Last.

Across market cycles. Over generations. Beyond expectations.
The Practice of Wealth Management.

Mellon

Wealth Planning • Investment Management • Private Banking • Family Office Services • Business Banking • Charitable Gift Services

Please contact John J. Cortis, President – Northern California, at 415-951-4153. mellonprivatewealth.com