the difficulty of crossing a field

a new opera in seven tellings

music by David Lang    libretto by Mac Wellman

directed by Carey Perloff
music direction by Peter Maleitzke
movement by Francine Landes
performed by Kronos Quartet

Theater Artaud • Mar 22–24, 2002

A.C.T.  american conservatory theater  carey perloff, artistic director  heather kitchen, managing director
A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 1913, a 71-year-old American satirist, abolitionist, and newspaperman from San Francisco walked into the Mexican desert and disappeared.

Years earlier, that writer, Ambrose Bierce, had written an extraordinary story entitled "The Difficulty of Crossing a Field" (first published in 1893), in which a slave owner in the antebellum South (Selma, Alabama, to be precise) walks into a field and disappears. This story was the catalyst for the new opera you are seeing today.

Few people remember that Bierce, in addition to creating the remarkable Devil's Dictionary, was the author of the story ("The Moonlit Road") that eventually, in its Japanese form, became the now-classic tale "Rashomon." In Bierce's crystalline, epigrammatic short stories, as in "Rashomon," what concerns the author is less the "truth" of what has occurred than the ripple effects of that occurrence upon a community at large. "Nothing is so improbable as what is true," wrote Bierce. "It is the unexpected that occurs; but that is not saying enough; it is also the unlikely—often no more than the impossible." Bierce's work is filled with ghosts, which he defined as "the outward and visible sign of an inward fear." His work resonates with the collision between the relentless logic of the mundane, everyday world and the terrifying seismic shifts that sometimes occur beneath the surface of that world.

Perhaps this is why Bierce's writing provides fertile ground for music-theater. Beneath the simple, declarative statements of the characters in this opera lies the horror of secrets and lies. Bierce's story is, in part, about the end of slavery, and about the huge fissure that opened up in American culture when the gap between reality and morality finally grew so wide that it cracked the country open. Mac Wellman's libretto is full of these images: "Then there is a gap, or a gulf, in the factual evidence, and, consequently, in the truth," says the Magistrate. "I think today would be the perfect day to drop into the hole of not talking," says the Williamson Girl. Into that gulf, into the "black hole of history," fall all our clichés, our rationalizations, our secret knowledge, our family stories. A man walks into a field and disappears. Everyone around him (his wife, his child, his slaves) has his or her own sharp view of what that disappearance means, of why it had to happen, and of what can happen now that there is a "hole" where a man used to be. No one knows the truth. Perhaps there is no truth. But there are infinite possible consequences.

—Carey Perloff, A.C.T. Artistic Director

THE DIFFICULTY of crossing a field

a new opera in seven tellings

music by David Lang
libretto by Mac Wellman
directed by Carey Perloff

performed by Kronos Quartet

THE CAST

Mrs. Williamson, wife of a Selma planter: Julia Migenes
Virginia Creaper: Anika Noni Rose*
Chorus of Slaves: Pamela Dillard*, Michelle E. Jordan*, Frederick Matthews, Anika Noni Rose, David Ryan Smith†, Fred Winthrop

Boy Sam, The Williamson Girl’s friend: Jacob Ming-Trent†
Preceding Magistrate: Marco Barcelli
Armour Wren, a Selma planter: Randall Gretlimon*
The Williamson Girl: Lianne Marie Dobbs
Mr. Williamson, a Selma planter: Marco Barcelli
Old Woman: Michelle E. Jordan
Andrew, the overseer and Mr. Williamson’s brother: Randall Gretlimon

STAGE MANAGEMENT STAFF

Kate Stewart*, Production Stage Manager
Katharine Reamann, Production Assistant
Kea Watson, Intern

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States
†Student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program

The world premiere of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field is made possible by the generous support of Phyllis C. Wattis.

The opening-night performance is dedicated to the memory of Dr. A. Jess Shemson.
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—Carey Perloff, A.C.T. Artistic Director
who’s who

DAVID LANG (Composer) work is being heard more and more by audiences around the globe: in performances by such organizations as the Santa Fe Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and Kronos Quartet; at Tanglewood, the BBC Proms, the Musiciens Biennale, the Settembre Musica Festival, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival, and the Almeida, Holland, Berlin, Strasbourg, and Huddersfield festivals; in theater productions in New York, San Francisco, and London; in the choreography of Twyla Tharp, La La Human Steps, Nederlands Dans Theater, and the Royal Ballet; and at Lincoln Center, the South Bank Centre, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Barbican Centre, and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Recent projects include the amplified orchestra piece The Passing Measures (named one of the best of 2001 by the New Yorker magazine); Grind to a Halt for the San Francisco Symphony; the opera Modern Painters; the evening-length piano solo Psalm Without Words; and the comic book opera The Carbon Copy Building, with cartoonist Ben Katchor, Bob McGrath and the Ridge Theater, and composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe (which won the 2006 OBIE Award for best new American work).

Lang has been honored with the Rome Prize, the BMI Music Theater Prize (Musica!); a Kennedy Center/Friedrich K Hand Award; the Residency Fellowship with the New York Philharmonic; and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1999 he received a Bessie Award for his music for choreographer Susan Marshall's The Most Dangerous Room in the House, performed live by the Bang on a Can All-Stars at BAM's Next Wave Festival.

Lang is co-founder and artistic director of New York’s legendary music festival, Bang on a Can; and co-president in residence at A.C.T. His work for A.C.T. has included scores for productions of Mary Stuart, Hedda, Singer’s Boy, Antigone, and the Tempest.

MAC WELLMAN (Librettist) recent plays: include Description Beggarized, the Allergies of Whiteness (commissioned by the Actors Theater of Louisville for its 2001 Humana Festival) and Jonnie Richter. He has received numerous honors, including National Endowment for the Arts and Guggenheim fellowships. In 1996 he received an OBIE Award (best new American play) for Bad Penny, Terminal Hip, and Crowbar. In 1991 he received another OBIE for Sincerely Forever. His most recent books are Cellographie, a collection of plays (P.A.U./Johns Hopkins University Press), and Miniature, a book of poems (Rooft Books). He is the Donald I. Fine Professor of Playwriting at Brooklyn College.

CAREY PELLOFF (Director) assumed artistic leadership of A.C.T. in June 1992. He is currently in his tenth season as artistic director.

KRONOS QUARTET—David Harrington, John Sherba, Hank Dutt, and Jennifer Culp—are a unique and striking voice for new work since its inception in 1973. Known for its unique artistic vision and fearless dedication to experimentation, Kronos has been commissioning new work since its earliest days. More than 450 pieces have been written or arranged for the group, whose extensive repertoire ranges from Alban Berg, Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Morton Feldman to Hildegard von Bingen, Charles Mingus, and Anthony Braxton. In addition to ongoing creative relationships with such composers as Terry Riley, Frank Zappa, and Osvaldo Golijov, Kronos has collaborated with countless artists from all over the globe. Kronos has recently premiered, or will soon premiere, works written for the group by Ellen Fullman, Philip Glass, Michael Gordon, Guo Wenjing, Melissa Hui, William Jeths, John King, David Lang, Matsumoto, Heimo Dehning, Gabriela Ortiz, P. Q. Pham, Stephen Prutsman, Steve Reich, Patric Vask, Alexeas Vatsis, and Julia Wolfe.

Kronos performs more than 100 concerts annually throughout the world in concert halls, clubs, and at jazz festivals. Recent tours have included appearances at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Kennedy Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival, Moscow’s Conservatory of Music, the Prague Spring International Music Festival, the Sydney Opera House, Southern California’s Escondido Orange Festival, London’s Royal Festival Hall, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, La Scala, the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, and Vancouver’s Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

The quartet records exclusively for Nonesuch Records, and the group’s recorded performances have been heard throughout the world on radio and television, in films, and in live dance and theater performances. Of Kronos’s nearly 30 recordings, six have received Grammy Award nominations.

PETER MAILEITZKE (Music Director) has served as music director for Geary Theater productions of A Christmas Carol, The First Picture Show, and The Threepenny Opera at A.C.T. as well as last fall’s A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program world premiere production of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer at Zeum Theater. Maileitzke made his concert piano debut in Paris’s Salon Pleyel in 1975. He completed a master’s degree at the University of Michigan, studying with Leon Fleisher. He has toured the United States and Europe as a pianist/ soloist; an active studio player, he has worked for all major television networks. Maileitzke has numerous other regional music direction credits, including Glyndebourne, A Little Night Music, Rapo, and The Most Happy Fella, and was conductor of San Francisco’s Phantom of the Opera. He studied conducting with George Meyer, worked as musical assistant to Michael Tilson Thomas, and was resident conductor of the Tuscan Music Festival, Italy. Maileitzke is on the A.C.T. Artistic Council and teaches in the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program. He is currently music director on the new musical The Count of Monte Cristo.

FRANCINE LANDES (Movement Coordinator) has staged the movement for A.C.T. Geary Theater productions of The Misanthrope, “Master Harold!”… and the Boys, and A Christmas Carol and for the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program world premiere of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer at Zeum Theater. She has been choreographing for the last 20 years throughout Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. She has choreographed for film, television, the New York Shakespeare Festival, and the New York Opera Company. Her professional performance career includes membership with the Louis Filler Dance Company, Marta Renzi and Dancers, Martha Clarke, and Susan Marshall and Dancers. She was in the original cast of The Mystery of Edwin Drood on Broadway and played the role of Eve in Martha Clarke’s The Garden of Earthly Delights. Landes has taught on the faculties of Princeton, Columbia, and Wesleyan universities. She has a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School and an M.A. from Columbia University and is on the faculty of the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program.

KATE EDMUNDS (Scenic Designer) has designed many productions for A.C.T., including Billete Spirit, The Misanthrope, The House of Mirth, Long Day’s Journey into Night, Juno and the Paycock, Hedda, Old Times, Antigone, Uncle Vanya, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Oedipus, Arcadia, and Of Thee I Drink. She has also designed many shows for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, including Twelfth Night, The Revenger, The Misanthrope, Endgame, Sight Unseen, The Winter’s Tale, Heartbreak House, Stalag!, and, most recently, The Heiress and How I Learned to Drive. She has also designed extensively throughout the United States at a wide range of regional, off-Broadway, and Broadway theaters, and her designs have garnered many local and national awards. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Edmunds teaches scenic design at UC Berkeley.

DAD F. DRAPER (Costume Designer) has designed A.C.T. productions of Hedda, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, The Cocktail Hour, Oleanna, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award), and served as costume design supervisor for A.C.T.’s A Christmas Carol. Bay Area credits also include May I Now and Breathe Normally (Ukiah Award nomination) for Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. Whisking for Godot at Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and independent productions of Song of Singapore, Hitting for the Cycle, Jane Loves Dick, and Babes in Arms (Theatre Critics’ Award). He has designed for the Children’s Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Annapolis Opera, Baltimore Ballet, Peabody Opera Theatre, and Baltimore Actors’ Theatre. He was resident designer at Baltimore School for the Arts before joining A.C.T. as costume director in 1998.

NANCY SCHERTLER (Lighting Designer) designed the Broadway productions of Abbey’s Song and Bill Irwin’s Fool Moon and Large/Large New York (for which she earned a Tony Award nomination). Off-Broadway credits include Texts for Nothing at Classic Stage Company, The Birds of the Moon at New York Theatre Workshop, and Falsehood at Playwrights Horizons. She has also worked extensively at regional theaters throughout the United States, including Fool Moon and Texts for Nothing at A.C.T., as well as productions at the Huntington Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre, and Arena Stage, where she is an associate artist. Her opera work includes Don Giovanni and The Daughter of the Regiment for the Bergen Lyric Opera and Cosi Fan Tutte for the Los Angeles Opera. She is in demand as a lighting consultant, at Wolf Trap Opera Company. Schertler has received numerous Helen Hayes Award nominations and an American Theatre Wing Design Award nomination.

GARTH HEMPHILL (Sound Designer) is in his fifth season as A.C.T.’s resident sound designer. He has designed more than 100 productions, including, for A.C.T., Billette Spirit, The Beard of Avon, Celebration and The Room, “Master Harold!… and the Boys,” Enron IV, Glangen Ross, The Misanthrope, Frank Loesser’s Hans Christian Andersen, Edward II, The House of Mirth, The Invention of Love, The Threepenny Opera, Insurrection: Holding History; A Christmas Carol, Mary Stuart, Old Times, and A Streetcar Named Desire (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award).
American production of Harold Pinter’s Celebration and The Room, new A.C.T.-commissioned translations of Heucsta, The Misanthrope, Ennio IV, Mary Stuart, and Uncle Vanya, the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian’s Singer’s Boy, acclaimed productions of The Threepenny Opera; Old Times, Arcadia, The Rose Tattoo, Antigone, Creators, Home, and The Tempest, and the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program’s world premiere production of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer. In May she will direct A.C.T.’s Geary Theater production of Michel Tremblay’s For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again, featuring Olympia Dukakis and Marco Bariocci. Last summer her play The Colosseus of Rhodes received its world premiere at Lucille Lortel’s White Bear Barn Theater and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Black委宣传 Award.

Before joining A.C.T., Perlman was artistic director of the Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiers of Ezra Pound’s Elektra, the American premier of Pinter’s Mountain Language and The Birthday Party, and many classic works. Under Perlman’s leadership, Classic Stage won numerous OBIE Awards for acting, direction, and design, as well as the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiers of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s opera The Cave at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Perlman received a B.A. in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program.

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MARCO BARRICHELLI (Mr. Williamson, Presiding Magistrate), an A.C.T. associate artist and core company member, has appeared in The Beard of Avon (as Edward de Vere), Celebration and The Room, Enrica V (title role; Dean Goodman Award), Dream酐s of Glory (Dean Goodman Award), The Invention of Love (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award; Dean Goodman Award), Long Days’ Journey into Night, Hedda, Mary Stuart, Insurrection, Holding A Hand, Streetcar Named Desire, and The Rose Tattoo (Drama-Lodge Award). Theater credits also include Tamara on Broadway, Silence with the Japanese theater company Suburub, the title role of Hamlet, Henry V, Richard III, and many other roles at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and productions at the Guthrie Theater, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, South Coast Repertory, Williamsstown Theatre Festival, Huntington Theatre Company, Missouri Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, and the Utah, California, and Illinois Shakespeare festivals, among others. Screen credits include “L.A. Law,” Romeo and Juliet, and The 11th Hour. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Barricelli teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program.

PAMELA DILLARD (Chorus), a mezzo-soprano, performed the title role of Carmen with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the title role of Offenbach’s La Belle Hélène with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She has performed major and supporting operatic roles with the San Francisco Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Columbus, and other regional houses. She has also sung with several major symphonies, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Colorado Symphony. She has worked with many renowned conductors, including Donald Runnicles, Seiji Ozawa, Keith Lockhart, John Williams, and Yoel Levi. Dillard can be heard on the CD’s Watch and Play: Spirituals and Art Songs by Black Women Composers (Koch International Classics) and Penteados Favoritos (Music for Little People) and on the soundtrack of Steven Spielberg’s Amistad (Sony Records).

LIANNE MARIE DOBBIS (The Williamson Girl) originated this role in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. Last fall at A.C.T. she was seen in James Joyce’s The Dead. Theater credits also include the concert performance of Polly Pan’s Her Lightness at San Jose Repertory Theatre; Evita with American Musical Theatre of San Jose; Funny Face, Babes in Arms, and Dear World with 42nd Street Moon; A Little Night Music at Lamplighters Music Theatre; Closer at Pacific Repertory Theatre; and The Night of the Iguana and The Wizard of Oz at Center Rep. She is completing her B.A. in theater arts at San Francisco State University; she has also studied with the British American Drama Academy and the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress.

RANDALL GREMLIION (Armour Wrong, Andrew) originated his roles in the concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. He has also been seen at A.C.T. in The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff) and A Christmas Carol. He spent five years performing in San Francisco and Philadelphia as The Phantom of the Opera. Other local theater credits include Big River and South Pacific (American Musical Theatre of San Jose) and Sunday in the Park with George (TheatreWorks). As a recitalist, he received the Jan de Gaetani Prize (Naumburg Awards).

MICHELLE E. JORDAN (Old Woman, Chorus), a Bay Area native, has performed in Ain’t Misbehavin’ at Oakland’s Ensemble Theater; Down Go Garvey, Hi Hat Hatti, and Dreamgirls (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award) at TheatreWorks; Colèt at Theatre on the Square; The Count the Grand Up (Drama-Lodge Award); and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. She was a featured vocalist with the New Traveling Voices, touring Europe in the 1980s, and is featured on the CD Triumph of the Human Spirit. Jordan has been the choir director for East Bay Church of Religious Science in Oakland, which has performed in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Accra ( Ghana), and New York (Carnegie Hall). She studied at Cal State Hayward and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and teaches in East Bay schools.

FREDERICK MATTHEWS (Chorus) has appeared to great acclaim in many concert and opera stages. A North Carolina native who recently relocated to the Bay Area, he has been seen in a variety of roles with the San Francisco Opera (where he serves as a tenured member of the Opera Chorus), including: the Corporal, opposite Kathleen Battle and Frank Lopardo, in Donizetti’s La Fille du régiment; Ein Dienner in Berg’s Lulu; the Official Registrar in Puccini’s Madame Butterfly; the Auction Buyer in Rake’s Progress; Marschallin Lackey in Der Rosenkavalier; and Inmate #5 in the world premiere of Dead Man Walking, which is now available on CD. Matthews is also featured in the Academy Award-winning documentary In the Shadow of the Stars, produced by Light-Safe Films.

JULIA MIGNEES (Mrs. Williamson) began her Broadway career in the original cast of Fiddler on the Roof (with Zero Mostel) and playing Maria in West Side Story. Her opera career was launched with her much-acclaimed performance as a substitute in the title role of Lucretia at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Mignees then appeared in Geneva in the title role of Mauric Béjart’s Salomé, followed by Béjart’s title character in Francesco Rosi’s film treatment of Carmen (Mignees received a Grammy Award for the soundtrack). She has appeared in the major opera houses of the world and recorded more than 20 albums. Among her most recent recordings are Vienna, conducted by Lalo Schifrin (a gold record six months after its release); Mann der Maenchen, conducted and arranged by Paul Gerringer; with Placido Domingo, Samuel Ramey, and Mandy Patinkin; Robert Stolz and the Music of Franz Lehár for BBC; and Donizetti’s Cuti. Mignees has performed her one-woman show, Diva on the Verge, in French throughout France and French-speaking countries and is preparing a Spanish version for a Latin American tour. She also interpreted The Seven Deadly Sins and Happy End at the Zanetra Theatre in Madrid. Last spring, she created Passions Latines, a choreographed recital of classical and traditional Latin music which she performed at the Paris Olympia and will present at the Royal Festival Hall in London this spring.

JACOB MING-TRENT (Boy Sam), a tenor, is a second-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, where he has performed in Mourning Becomes Electra and The King Stag. Before attending A.C.T., he performed in and around Pittsburgh and the New York area. Favorite productions and roles include Jesus Christ Superstar (Herod), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Thisebe), The Wo (Lion), and Godspell (Judas).

ANKA NONI ROSE (Virginia Creepor, Chorus) originated in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. She has also been seen at A.C.T. in productions of The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff), Tarantelli, and Susannah: Holding History (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award for best ensemble). She appeared on Broadway as Rusty in Footloose and received a 2001 OBIE Award for her performance in the world premiere of Ellis Cumm at Broadway’s New York Vineyard Theatre. She also received a 1998 Backstage West/Drama-Logue/Garland Award and a Dean Goodman Choice Award for Valley Song at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other local theater credits include Alphabetsoup’s Watermelon with Thespian Description of New Langton Arts and Hydropolis, or the Death of Dr. Browne at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Rose received her M.F.A. from the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. She guest-stars this month as Money on NBC’s “Third Watch.”

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FRED WINTHROP (Chorus) has performed leading roles in more than 50 operas, including Radames in Aïda, Don Josè in Carmen, Mannino in II Trovatore, Cavadorisso in Tosca, and Rodrigo in La Bohème, among many others. In 1987 he sang the role of Don Gherin in Berkeley Opera’s Manon Lescot and Turandot in Oakland Lyric Opera’s Cavalleria Rusticana. Recent performances also include L. Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly at Sonoma Community Center, Cavadorisso in San Francisco Lyric Opera’s Tosca, and Rodolfo in Berkeley Opera’s Lucrezia Miller. He has been a full-time member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus since 1995.

KATE STEWART (Stage Manager) has stage-managed numerous productions for A.C.T., including Barbet Child, Ray fever, A History of the American Film, Hotel Paradiso, Julius Caesar, Ottoello, and, most recently, Singer’s Boy. In New York, she worked as a stage manager, company manager, and production manager for many theaters, including Circle Repertory Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, the American Opera Center at the Juilliard School, and Lincoln Center Theater. Favorite productions include The House of Blue Leaves at Lincoln Center, Crimes of the Heart at Manhattan Theatre Club, and Scarcid, Michael Bennett’s final production. She was a stage manager for The Phantom of the Opera’s five-year run in San Francisco.

AMBROSE GWINNETT BIERCE (b. 1842, Meigs County, Ohio—d. 1914, Mexico?), an American newspaper columnist, satirist, essayist, and author of sardonic short stories and novels, settled in San Francisco after being injured fighting in the Civil War. A staunch critic (nicknamed “Bitter Bierce”) and an enigmatic figure, he soon developed a reputation as the West Coast’s literary arbiter. His “Platter” column for the San Francisco Examiner specialized in attacks on faddists of all kinds. He is perhaps best known for his numerous short stories, collected in Tales of Soldiers and Civilians (1891; revised as In the Midst of Life, 1892). Bierce’s death remains a mystery. Weary of American life, he went to Mexico during Pancho Villa’s revolution in 1913 and disappeared. He is presumed to have been killed during the siege of Ojinaga in January 1914.

LIAM NASH (Patrolman) is an Oakland-based actor and writer. He has appeared in numerous Bay Area theater productions and has been seen in the film Mean Streets and on television on ABC’s “NYPD Blue.” He is a frequent contributor to the Bay Area Literary Review and the San Francisco Bay Guardian. His recent plays include The Magnificent Seven, at the San Francisco Playhouse, and Edith Sitwell at the Bay Area Stage. His first novel, Ten Thousand Men, was published in 1998. His second, The Man Who Sold His Soul, was published in 1999.

LUCY BERKSHIRE (Lucy Berks) is a New York-based actress with credits on stage, film, and television, including Off-Broadway, The Birdcage, and the NBC mini-series of the same name. Berkeley is a 1999 graduate of UC Berkeley, where she received a bachelor of arts in English and a minor in theater. She has recently performed at the Magic Theatre and the San Francisco Playhouse. She is currently appearing in Berkeley Ensemble’s production of The Rose Tattoo. She is a former resident of Berkeley. She has also appeared in the film "The Fisher King" and on television on "Days of Our Lives."
He has earned Drama-Logue Awards for his work on Jar the Floor; A Christmas Carol (South Coast Repertory); The Things You Don’t Know; Blithe Spirit; New England, Lips Together, Teeth Apart, Fourthline, and the world premiere of Richard Greenberg’s Three Days of Rain; Hempfirth is a principal partner of GLV Design, Inc., a local design firm.

MARCO BARRICELLI (Mr. Williamson, Presiding Magistrate), an A.C.T. associate artist and core company member, has appeared in The Beard of Avian (as Edward de Vere), Celebration and The Room, Evita’s Voice (title role; Dean Goodman Award), Origin Removing (Glen Ross Goodman Award), The Invention of Love (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award; Dean Goodman Award), Long Days’ Journey into Night, Hedda, Mary Stuart, Insurrection, Holding A Hat, Streetcar Named Desire, and The Rose Tattoo (Drama-Logue Award). Theater credits also include Tamara on Broadway, Silence with the Japanese theater company Suburab; the title role of Hamlet, Henry V, Richard III, and many other plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and productions at the Guthrie Theater, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, South Coast Repertory, Williamstown Theater Festival, Huntingdon Theatre Company, Missouri Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, and the Utah, California, and Illinois Shakespeare festivals, among others. Screen credits include “L.A. Law,” Romeo and Juliet, and 17th Hour. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Barricelli teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program.

PAMELA DILLARD (Chorus, a mezzo-soprano), performed the title role of Carmen with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the title role of Offenbach’s La Belle Heirvee with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She has performed major and supporting operatic roles with the San Francisco Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Columbus, and other regional houses. She has also sung with several major symphonies, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Colorado Symphony. She has worked with many renowned conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Seiji Ozawa, Keith Lockhart, John Williams, and Yoel Levy. Dillard can be heard on the CDs Watch and Play: Spirituals and Art Songs by Black Women Composers (Koch International Classics) and Preacher Favorites (Music for Little People) and on the soundtrack of Steven Spielberg’s Amistad (Sony Records).

LIANNE MARIE DOBBS (The Williamson Girl) originated this role in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. Last fall at A.C.T. she was seen in James Joyce’s The Dead. Theater credits also include the concert performance of Polly Pan’s Her Lightness at San Jose Repertory Theatre; Evita with American Musical Theatre of San Jose; Funny Face, Babes in Arms, and Dear World with 42nd Street Moon. A Little Night Music at Lamplighters Music Theatre; Closer at Pacific Repertory Theatre; and The Night of the Iguana and The Wizard of Oz at Center Rep. She is completing her B.A. in theater arts at San Francisco State University; she has also studied with the British American Drama Academy and the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress.

RANDALL GREMILLION (Armour When, Andrew) originated his roles in the concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. He has also been seen at A.C.T. in The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff) and A Christmas Carol. He spent five years performing in the San Francisco production of The Phantom of the Opera. Other local theater credits include Big River and South Pacific (American Musical Theatre of San Jose) and Sunday in the Park with George (TheatreWorks). As a recitalist, he received the Jan de Gaetani Prize (Naumburg Awards).

MICHÉLLE E. JORDAN (Old Woman, Chorus), a Bay Area native, has performed in Ain’t Misbehavin’ at Oakland Asphalt Ensemble Theater; Down Go Garvey, High Hat Hattie, and Dreamgirls (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award) at TheatreWorks; Cole’ at Theatre on the Square; Tone the Grand Up (Drama-Logue Award); and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. She was a featured vocalist with the New Traveling Voices, touring Europe in the 1980s, and is featured on the CD Triumph of the Human Spirit. Jordan has been the choir director for East Bay Church of Religious Science in Oakland, which has performed in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Aczca (Ghana), and New York (Carnegie Hall). She studied at Cal State Hayward and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and teaches in East Bay schools.

FREDERICK MATTHEWS (Chorus) has appeared to great acclaim in many concert and opera staged. A North Carolina native who recently relocated to the Bay Area, he has been in a variety of roles with the San Francisco Opera (where he serves as a tenured member of the Opera chorus), including: the Corporal, opposite Kathleen Battle and Frank Lopardo, in Donizetti’s La Fille du régiment; Ein Eigner in Berg’s Lu’ly; the Official Registrar in Puccini’s Madame Butterfly; the Auction Buyer in Rakes’ Progress; Marschallin Lackey in Der Rosenkavalier; and Inmate #5 in the world premiere of Dead Man Walking, which is now available on CD. Matthews is also featured in the Academy Award-winning documentary In the Shadow of the Stars, produced by Light-Sail Films.

JULIA MIGENES (Mrs. Williamson) began her Broadway career in the original cast of Fiddler on the Roof (with Zero Mostel) and playing Maria in West Side Story. Her opera career was launched with her much-acclaimed performance as a substitute in the title role of Lucre at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Migenes then appeared in Geneva in the title role of Maurice Bejart’s Salome; followed by Bieito’s title character in Francesco Rosi’s film treatment of Carmen (Migenes received a Grammy Award for the album). She has appeared in the major opera houses of the world and recorded more than 20 albums. Among her most recent recordings are Vienna, conducted by Loth Sch filament (a gold record six months after its release); Man of La Mancha, conducted and arranged by Paul Gemignani, with Placido Domingo, Samuel Ramey, and Mandy Patinkin; Robert Stolz and the Music of Franz Lehar for BBC; and Donizetti’s Cattia Durman. Migenes has performed her one-woman show, Dive on the Vege, in French throughout France and French-speaking countries and is preparing a Spanish version for a Latin American tour. She also interpreted The Seven Deadly Sins and Happy End at the Zanzuela Theatre in Madrid. Last spring, she created Passions Latines, a choreographed recital of classical and traditional Latin music which she performed at the Paris Olympia and will present at the Royal Festival Hall in London this spring.

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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 Managing Director Heather Kitchen, A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent its relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of 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 three 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 150,000 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 Jujamcyn Theaters Award.

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 in 1996, A.C.T. has enjoyed a remarkable period of audience expansion and renewed financial stability. The company continues to produce challenging theater in the rich context of symposia, audience discussions, and community interaction.

The conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, now serves 3,000 students every year. It was the first 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, Denzel Washington, and Winona Ryder are among the conservatory's distinguished former students. With its commitment to excellence in actor training and to the relationship between training, performance, and audience, the 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.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Scene, construction and painting, properties, costumes, and wigs were provided by A.C.T.'s shops and staff.

Theater and Performance Crew

Master Carpenter: Tom Tischler
Stage Hand: Blake Manslip
Master Electrician: Jared O'Hirsch
Light Board Operator: Michael Ford
Audio Master/Sound Operator: Garth Hemphill
Audio Assistant: Andy Lipnick
Wardrobe/Wigs: Grace Lee, Janice Stephenson
Technicians: Philipp Trevino, Lisa Hori-Garcia, Dylan Mills, Lydia Baldwin, Cliff Caruthers, Alex Jimenez, Ralph Cutler
Rehearsal Pianist: Steve Sanders

A.C.T. Resident Associates

Producers: Jennifer Caleshu
Lighting Design: Kimberly J. Scott
Scenic Design: Dustin O'Neill

A.C.T. gratefully acknowledges the contributions of everyone on the A.C.T. staff who helped make this production possible.

Special Thanks to

Carrie Murphy—San Francisco Opera Center; Pam Fry—San Francisco Conservatory of Music; Pamela Hagenseng, Elizabeth Barlow, Jim Meyer—San Francisco Opera; Michael Bartlett—San Francisco Symphony; George Daugherty, Leslie Martinson and TheatreWorks; Stanley E. Williams—Lorraine Hansberry Theatre; Edwin Hawkins; Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir; Clark Sterling; Charles Randolph-Wright; Holzmuehler; Meyer Sound; Berkeley Repertory Theatre; Nelson Sound

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