

PlayNotes

SEASON | 47 ISSUE | 4

Bad Dates

by Theresa Rebeck



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Discussion Series

Due to Covid-19 our regularly scheduled discussions are moving online. Head to portlandstage.org/show/or/ to view our discussion schedule and Zoom links.

Curtain Call

These discussions offer a rare opportunity for audience members to talk about the production with the performers. Through this forum, the audience and cast explore topics that range from the process of rehearsing and producing the text to character development to issues raised by the work.

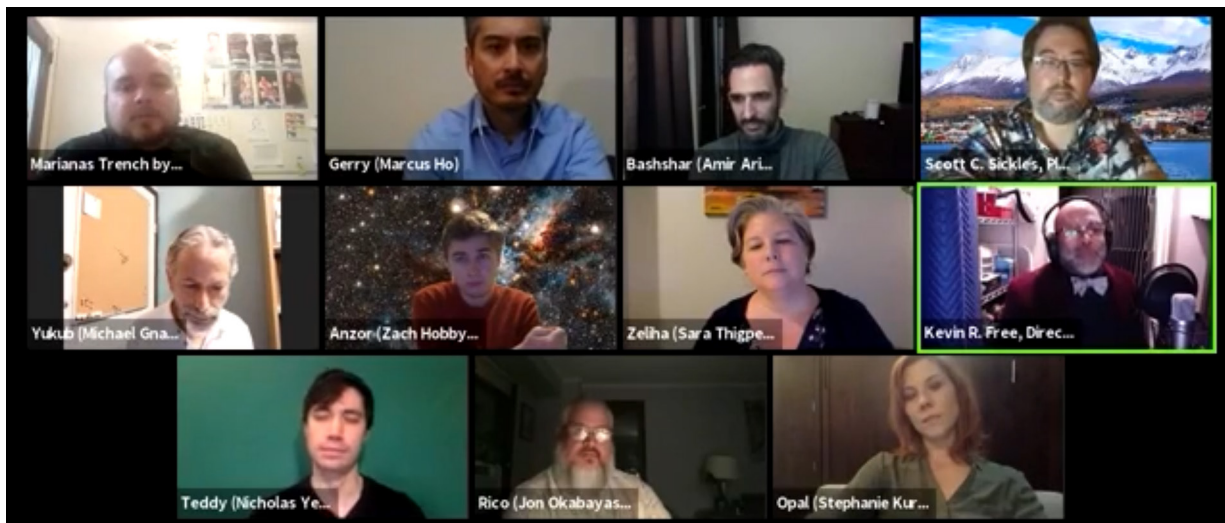
The Artistic Perspective

Hosted by Artistic Director Anita Stewart, is an opportunity for audience members to delve deeper into the themes of the show through conversation with special guests. A different scholar, visiting artist, playwright, or other expert will join the discussion each time.

All discussions are free and open to the public. Show attendance is not required.

Interested in additional discussions?

Portland Stage strives to be a forum for our community. While we can't currently gather in the same ways we're used to, we are adding some exciting new opportunities to connect to our community near and far. Stay tuned to portlandstage.org for more info, and if your group would like to discuss plays at Portland Stage feel free to email literary@portlandstage.org and we'll see what we can work out.



A TALKBACK WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR, AND CAST OF MARIANAS TRENCH BY SCOTT C. SICKLES
AS PART OF THE 2020 DIGITAL LITTLE FESTIVAL OF THE UNEXPECTED.

Bad Dates

by Theresa Rebeck

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Focus Questions

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells

1. In *Bad Dates*, Haley compares her life to the movie *Mildred Pierce*. What is a movie, book, or TV show that you can relate to and why?
2. Haley often makes assumptions about the men she goes on dates with. Do you think the assumptions that she has impact the way her dates go? Why or why not?
3. How did it make you feel to have Haley speak directly to you, the audience? Did you enjoy being involved in the story this way? Why or why not?
4. The clothes and shoes that Haley wears are important to her, and many of the items have stories and emotions attached to them. Is there an article of clothing or pair of shoes that have significance in your life? Why or why not?



JOAN CRAWFORD AND ANN BLYTH IN *MILDRED PIERCE*, 1945.

Pre-Show Activities

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells

1. In *Bad Dates*, the main character tells stories directly to the audience. Make a list of reasons that a playwright might choose to break the fourth wall and involve the audience in the play.
2. This play deals with the idea of first impressions. Write about a time someone made a lasting first impression on you, bad or good. Consider whether or not that impression was an accurate representation of that person, or if you had mischaracterized them.
3. Haley, the play's protagonist, talks about loving your job. She says, "There is nothing better in life than being allowed to do a job that you're good at.... A lot of people have to do without the work they love." Think about your skills, knowledge, interests, and experience. What kinds of jobs do you think you would be good at? What is a job that you would love to have? Are there any jobs that cover both those ideas?

Thoughts from the Editors: What is Your Favorite Rom Com?

As much as I love a classic rom-com, I'm a bigger fan of rom-coms with a twist—a dose of crime, mystery, action, or something else that makes it less cookie-cutter. My favorite rom-com is *Palm Springs*. It's a hilarious, heartwarming, and surprisingly profound science-fiction romantic comedy starring one of my favorite comedic actors (Andy Samberg). Thanks to the time-loop element to the movie, I find more details to enjoy and appreciate each time I watch it.

- Sophia B. Diaz, Education Intern



I have always loved the French romantic comedy *Amélie* (2001). Amélie is a shy waitress who has lived most of her life alone, causing her to develop an overactive imagination. After discovering an old memory box hidden in her apartment, tracking down its owner, and witnessing the joy it brought him, she decides to devote her life to bringing happiness to others. She eventually falls in love with Nino, a man who scrapbooks discarded ID photos. Amélie plays a cat-and-mouse game with him for a while and eventually accepts that she deserves happiness from others, too. I love how *Amélie* celebrates the little, everyday, serendipitous moments of life, and it always leaves me excited to go out and find meaning in little details.

- Macey Downs, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern

It's so hard to just pick one! But if I have to choose, I'd say my favorite romantic comedy is *Roman Holiday*. It's such a classic movie, and it makes me so happy every time I watch it. It was Audrey Hepburn's first big American film, and almost 75 years after its release, it is still as beautiful and funny as it was when it premiered.

- Zach Elton, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern

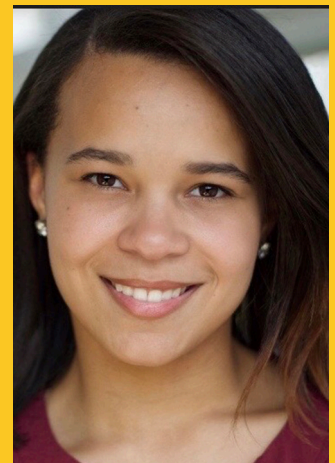


My favorite romantic comedy is the 2006 film *She's the Man*. I saw it for the first time when I was in high school, and I enjoyed its modern take on the Shakespearean classic *Twelfth Night*. The love triangles and mistaken identities worked perfectly in this modern adaptation. I think it was a great way to make Shakespeare more accessible to a younger audience.

- Meredith G. Healy, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern

My favorite rom-com is *Mamma Mia!* I really enjoy ABBA's music, and I think that the movie is just the right amount of campy to be really fun to watch. I also appreciate that the characters ultimately make the choices that are best for them and their relationships, as opposed to going for a more conventional happy ending.

- Jordan Wells, Education Intern



About the Play

by Zach Elton

Bad Dates is a funny and hopeful tale of a woman looking for Mr. Right. A one-woman comedy about a single mother, a slew of cute shoes, and even more horrible dates, the play follows Haley Walker, who moved from Texas to Manhattan with her teenage daughter and 600 pairs of designer shoes. She has spent the last 13 years raising her child and working in a restaurant that may or may not be a money-laundering front. Now, as Haley begins to reenter the dating scene, she recounts to the audience the awful experience she is having dating again. By the end, she has seen a handful of dreadful men, been investigated by the NYPD, and even had a skirmish with the Romanian mob. A hilarious, and sometimes depressing, critique of the dating world, this play is a love letter to lonely hearts everywhere.

Originally produced off-Broadway by Playwrights Horizons in 2003, *Bad Dates* has been a success with critics and audiences for nearly 20 years. Theresa Rebeck has been praised for her naturalistic dialogue and deeply human characters. When it first premiered, the *New York Times* said the play had a “cozy kind of familiarity.”

Since its premiere, the play has been regularly produced by theaters around the country, and this year it has gained new popularity. Due to the global pandemic, *Bad Dates* has been produced virtually by multiple theaters in recent months. Perhaps most notably, it was just filmed by George Street Playhouse in New Jersey. Andréa Burns (seen on Broadway in *On Your Feet!*, *The Nance*, and *In the Heights*) starred in their production with her husband, Peter Flynn, directing. This play, though 20 years old, is now seeing new life on screen. Portland Stage’s production will also be filmed and released for digital viewing.



JULIE WHITE IN *BAD DATES*, PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS, 2004. PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS.

About the Playwright: Theresa Rebeck

by Zach Elton



TERESA REBECK.

Theresa Rebeck is a playwright, film writer, television writer, and novelist. Her works have been produced on Broadway and off-Broadway to great acclaim. She has won and been nominated for numerous awards, and her play *Omnium Gatherum* was even a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2004.

Originally from Kenwood, Ohio, Rebeck attended high school in Cincinnati before receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame. She began writing plays there under the supervision of her professors before deciding to pursue it as a career. Following her graduation, she obtained three degrees from Brandeis University: an MA in English, an MFA in playwriting, and a PhD in Victorian-era melodrama.

Rebeck then signed with an agent who has helped her produce 22 one-act plays and 20 full-length plays. Her Broadway debut was a production of her play *Mauritius*, which was originally performed at the Manhattan Theater Club before moving to the Biltmore Theater in 2007. Additional Broadway credits include *Seminar*, which opened on Broadway in 2011; *Dead Accounts*, which premiered in 2012; and, most recently, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, which was on Broadway in 2018 and was nominated for two Tony Awards.

Though she has left her mark on Broadway, Rebeck's work is regularly seen off-Broadway in New York as well. She has strong ties to Playwrights Horizons, the original producers of her plays *Bad Dates* and *The Butterfly Collection*. Second Stage Theater has also presented five of her plays: *The Scene*, *The Water's Edge*, *Loose Knit*, *The Family Mann*, and *Spike Heels*. Additionally, her play *View of the Dome* was first seen at New York Theatre Workshop, and *Poor Behavior* made its New York premiere at Primary Stages in 2014.

In 2008, her play, *The Understudy*, was seen at Williamstown Theatre Festival before it moved to Roundabout Theatre Company in New York in 2009. The comedy was very well-received by audiences and critics and is now regularly produced by regional theaters around the country.

In addition to Rebeck's prolific career in theater, she has also been a writer on multiple television and films shows such as *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* and *NYPD Blue*. She was a creator and producer of the NBC series *Smash*, which followed a team of creatives in New York attempting to produce a new musical. Rebeck's first screenplay was *Harriet the Spy*, and she has since worked as a writer on films such as *Catwoman*, *Gossip*, and *Sunday on the Rocks*.

An Interview with the Director: Jade King Carroll

Edited for Length and Clarity by Zach Elton

Directing and Dramaturgy Intern Zach Elton spoke with Jade King Carroll, the director of *Bad Dates* at Portland Stage, about her relationship with directing, the play, and creating theater during a pandemic.



JADE KING CARROLL. PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON

Zach Elton (ZE): *This is not the first show you've directed at Portland Stage. Can you talk about the other projects you've done here?*

Jade King Carroll (JKC): Back in 2013, I directed *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* which was really just a magical experience. Then I came back and did *Whipping Man* a year or two later with a wonderful cast. Both casts, every project I've done here, I've had really wonderful actors. A couple of years later I directed *Skeleton Crew* which was great. And then last year I directed *Native Gardens* when the world shut down which was also a really great experience.

ZE: *Can you talk about your experience of having Native Gardens shut down at the start of the pandemic and then coming back here for Bad Dates?*

JKC: It definitely feels like a homecoming. It wasn't even a week after we opened that the world shut down. I hadn't even unpacked my bags from Portland yet. We opened on a Friday, I flew out on a Saturday because I had to fly out to do auditions for another show on Sunday, so I left my cat with my neighbor and I flew to Washington State to audition *Threepenny Opera* with Whitman College from Monday through Wednesday, and I flew back to New York on Thursday. While I was in the air I got the message that *Native Gardens* was going to close. That Thursday was the last live performance and they recorded the production on Friday afternoon. I really thought the shutdown was gonna be like 2 weeks, I didn't understand the gravity. It's been a really hard year for everybody, and for theater makers. Portland is lucky to have this theater because the entire industry throughout the country has been shuttered and devastated. It's been hard to not be able to create in normal ways, but also exciting to find new forms. I remained in contact with Anita, and was really excited to do this play. I've always liked *Bad Dates*, I feel like it's the perfect play for right now. Just kind of breathing into who you are, seeing yourself fully, and acknowledging all of the magic that may not seem so magical. It's been a gift to work on this play and to be able to create it. Fifteen years ago or so, I was the assistant director on the New York premier of *The Scene*, Theresa Rebeck's play, and got to know her as she was writing and working with actors, so this feels like coming home in a lot of ways. Doing this play here with all of the staff, crew, creatives, and the Portland community just feels right. It feels like a reset.

ZE: *I feel like you're exactly right. This play feels so perfect for right now.*

JKC: Right! It is lighthearted and life affirming, and connected and honest. Haley is talking right to us. It's for us. It's intimate in a theatrical

way. It feels right for right now, doesn't it? It is an unexpectedly layered play in a lighthearted way. It not only allows you, but it invites you to laugh. It just feels so familiar.

ZE: *Can you tell us about your relationship to the actor, Annie Henk?*

JKC: Annie is one of those actors who I have just so long admired in everything I've seen her in off-Broadway in New York. She has this ability to jump in and bring humanity and truth and eagerness to a show, even if the play is in development. The Lark and New Dramatist, which is where I feel like we know each other the most from, are places where anything is possible. It's not necessarily working towards production, it's working towards where the playwright wants the play to live, or it's about playing with form, and really investigating what's at the heart of a piece at whatever stage. I think the first time we've worked together was back in 2013, at Playground or Playtime, but I've also seen her in a bunch of stuff off-Broadway, and this fall Chisa Hutchinson, one of my favorite collaborators, wrote a play that takes place during a

pandemic called *The Bleeding Class*. We did a workshop of it and then the theater asked to do a radio play. The play was very visual, but Chisa of course brilliantly made it work. She really wanted Annie for a character, the protagonist's mother, who is only in a couple of scenes, but we were just in awe of her brilliance, and as soon as Anita asked me to do *Bad Dates* I knew if we could get Annie Henk to do this production it would up the energy and engagement so much. So I have long admired her and her work but we haven't had a full process together before now.

ZE: *Have you directed a one-woman show before?*

JKC: I have! Chisa Hutchinson's *Proof of Love* down at New York Theater Workshop and co-produced by Audible was an in-person show before being turned into an audio play. It was pretty good, Chisa is brilliant. And as an Artistic Associate I worked on Anna Deavere Smith's *Let Me Down Easy* while I was at Second Stage. I've done some small works too. I did a play at Joe's Pub called *Black Girl You've Been Gentrified*. I may have done some others, but it has to be a very specific one person show. *Bad Dates* fits



JADE KING CARROLL AND ANNIE HENK DURING A REHEARSAL FOR *BAD DATES*, PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY, 2021. PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.

what I like in a one person show. You don't really feel like it's a one person show. It feels like a really full play.

ZE: *What excited you about a one-woman show?*

JKC: Well this can be true of two person shows too, but it's that you feel like you're in the room with them. There is an immediate intimacy, if done right. I think you can only get that in theater. I also think technically speaking it is very challenging for the actor, but there is also a freedom in it for the actor because they are playing and breathing with the audience. There is a complete ownership in a one person show, not a shared ownership. There is a freedom in how the play moves and anything is possible. Specifically in this show, anything is possible because the audience is in the room with her. There is an unveiling, a peeking through the curtain, that is exciting. It takes you on a ride that makes you feel like you're experiencing it and not watching it. That's also something I look for in one person plays—that it's generous.

ZE: *Do you have any advice for young people pursuing a career in theater?*

JKC: Be present. Be open to all the different ways to figure something out and enter something. Be present in rooms, as many places, as many experiences, not only theatrically but in life as well. I would encourage people to turn their phones over, I would encourage people to search within the rooms and in the people breathing round them, rather than going off of what has worked in the past or what's verified from an internet search. Theater is still a living art. Just be present. And as far as my directing journey, that's the biggest gift I've given to myself—to continue to be present. I will still sit in, I love watching other people's process. There is always something to learn. I've sat in on a lot in my late 30's, I've sat in a lot of people's rooms, not to even ask questions or anything, just to observe. Just be present. You can have a lot figured out before you get somewhere, but where's the fun in having it all figured out? The collaboration and the discovery in theater is what keeps it exciting, for the people making it and for the audience.

About the Cast & Character

by Zach Elton



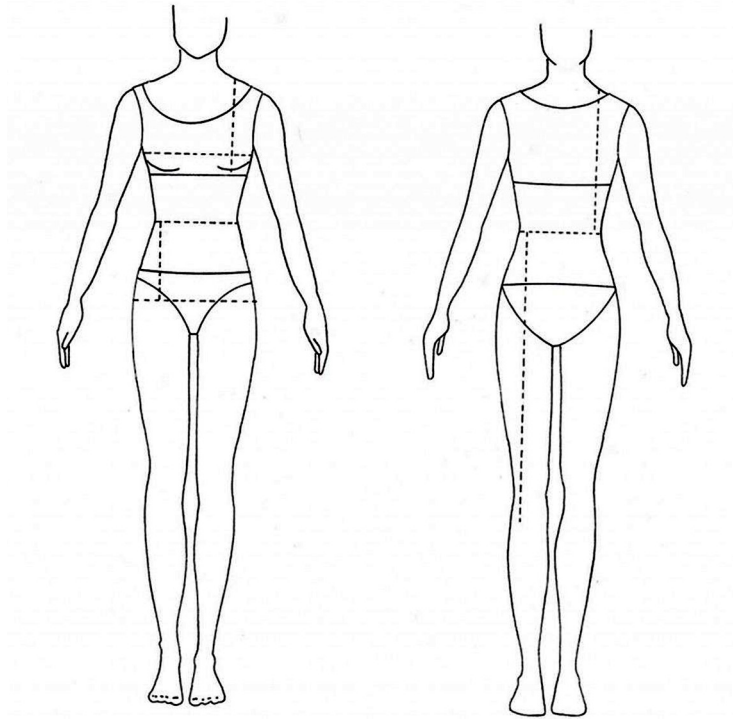
Name: Annie Henk

Character: Haley Walker. A restaurant manager and single mother in her late 30s searching for love.

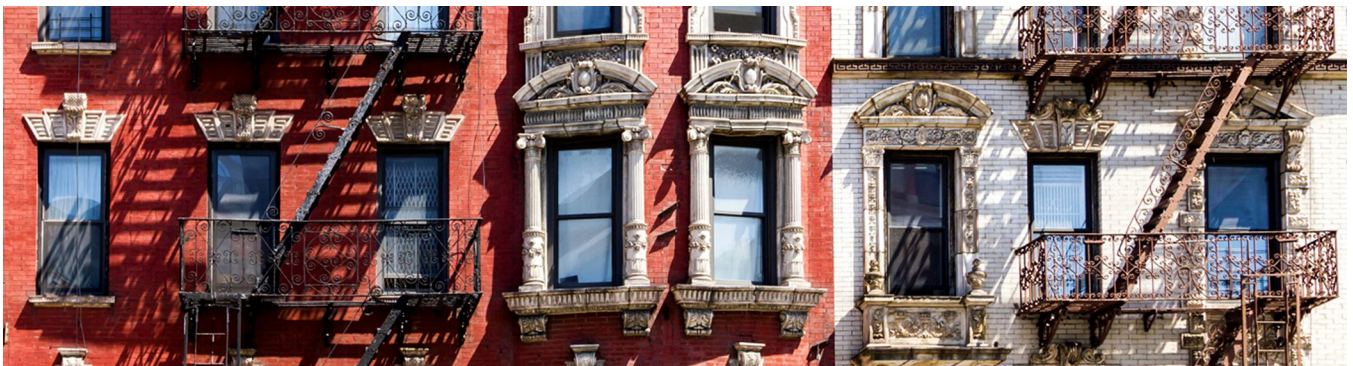
Post Show Activities

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells

1. In *Bad Dates*, Haley repeatedly talks about seeing her dates as “fellow travelers.” Think of a time you felt connected to someone you didn’t think you had a lot in common with and write a monologue retelling the event(s).
2. Haley puts a lot of effort into the outfits she wears. Create your own costume design for one (or more) of Haley’s dates.



3. The action of *Bad Dates* takes place in the bedroom of Haley’s New York City apartment. Design a set for a play that takes place in the bedroom of your future apartment. What does it look like? What makes it special? What objects or people in adjacent rooms could actors interact with?
4. With a partner or in a small group, talk about what you thought about the play’s ending. Were you surprised? What do you think will happen to Haley and Vera?



NEW YORK CITY APARTMENTS.

Glossary

by Zach Elton

Al Capone: An American gangster and businessman who became famous during the Prohibition era as the co-founder and boss of the Chicago Outfit, an Italian-American organized crime syndicate. After seven years of crime, he eventually went to prison at the age of 33.



AL CAPONE.

Amarone: A wine made with partially dried grapes in Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy.

Armani: An Italian luxury fashion house founded by Giorgio Armani that designs haute couture, ready-to-wear clothing, shoes, watches, jewelry, and home interiors.

Blue buckle shoes: A blue flat or pump with a buckle placed over the top of the foot.

Blind date: A date with a person one has not previously met.

Bistro: A bistro is a French-style establishment with food as well as hot and cold drinks that are reasonably priced. The atmosphere is more relaxed than a restaurant but still chic.

Bordeaux: A wine from Bordeaux, France. Over 86% of Bordeaux wines are red wines.

Cardinal: An officer of the Roman Catholic Church whose duties include electing the Pope and aiding in the government of the church throughout the world.

Chanel: A French fashion house that creates women's high fashion, luxury goods, and accessories.

Columbia: A private Ivy League research university in New York City that was established in 1754, making it the oldest institution of higher education in New York and the fifth-oldest in the United States.

Coquilles Saint-Jacques: Though this simply means "scallops" in French, in America the term is synonymous with a French dish of scallops poached in white wine, placed atop a purée of mushrooms in a scallop shell, covered with a sauce made of the scallop poaching liquid, and gratinéed under a broiler.

Crème brûlée: A dessert consisting of a rich custard base topped with a layer of hardened caramelized sugar.

George Stephanopoulos: An American television host, political commentator, and former Democratic advisor. He is a co-anchor with Robin Roberts and Michael Strahan on *Good Morning America*.

George Washington Bridge: A double-decked suspension bridge spanning the Hudson River, connecting the New York City borough of Manhattan with the New Jersey borough of Fort Lee.



GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE.

Gold lamé spikes: A gold pump decorated with spikes.



GOLD LAMÉ SPIKES.

Encephalitis: Inflammation of the brain. There are several causes, but the most common is a viral infection. Encephalitis often causes only mild flu-like signs and symptoms—such as a fever or headache—or no symptoms at all.

En fuego: Borrowed from the Spanish word for fire, it is used in English as a slang term for something that is excellent.

Half boots: A short boot with a top reaching above the ankle and ending below the knee.

Handicap: The number that represents a golfer's ability based on their previous golf round's scores.

Imelda Marcos: The former first lady of the Philippines who was said to own over 3,000 pairs of shoes from designers like Gucci and Dior.



IMELDA MARCOS AND HER SHOES.

Janet Leigh: An American actress, singer, dancer, and author, whose career spanned over five decades. She starred in movies such as *Psycho* and *Little Women*.

Jimmy Choo: A British high fashion house known for its women's shoes.

Joan and David: A shoe company started by Joan and David Helpert in 1967 that made fashionable flats for women.

Joan Crawford: An American film and television actress best known for her work in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* and *Mildred Pierce*.

Leonardo DiCaprio: An American film actor and producer best known for his work in *Titanic*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*.



LEONARDO DICAPRIO.

Lutèce: A French restaurant in Manhattan that operated for more than 40 years before closing in early 2004.

Merlot: A wine made from dark blue-colored grapes of the same name.

Mildred Pierce: A 1945 American film noir based on the 1941 novel by James M. Cain, directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Joan Crawford.

Money-laundering: The act of concealing illegally obtained money, typically by means of transferring the money to foreign banks or legitimate businesses.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

The New York Times: An American daily newspaper based in New York City with worldwide readership. Founded in 1851, the *Times* has since won 130 Pulitzer Prizes, and has often been regarded as a national "newspaper of record."

Perps: An abbreviation meaning the perpetrators of a crime.

Phil Jackson: A former professional basketball player, coach, and executive in the National Basketball Association. He has been labeled "the Zen Master" for years because of his cool demeanor during games.

To pull yourself up by your bootstraps: A colloquial phrase meaning to succeed only by one's own efforts or abilities.

Pumps: A type of women's shoes with a kitten or higher heel. Pumps can be made from any material, but are traditionally made with patent leather.

Richard Gere: An American actor and producer best known for his work in *American Gigolo*, *Pretty Woman*, and *An Officer and a Gentleman*.



RICHARD GERE AND JULIA ROBERTS IN *PRETTY WOMAN*.

Scratch golfer: A player who can score a handicap of zero on all rated golf courses.

Tax evasion: An illegal activity in which a person or entity deliberately avoids paying taxes.

Tax shelter: A financial arrangement made to avoid or minimize taxes.

Tibetan Buddhism: A religion combining the essential teachings of Mahayana Buddhism with tantric and shamanic practices, as well as materials from an ancient Tibetan religion called Bon. The best-known face of Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama.

TJ Maxx: An American department store chain that sells brand clothing at a generally low price.



TJ Maxx.

Toyota: A Japanese automobile manufacturer.

Union Square: Founded in 1985, Union Square Cafe showcases the best local ingredients in a casual dining room characterized by warmth and hospitality.

Venetian glass: Glass produced on the Venetian island of Murano since the 13th century. Murano was Europe's major glassmaking center from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance.



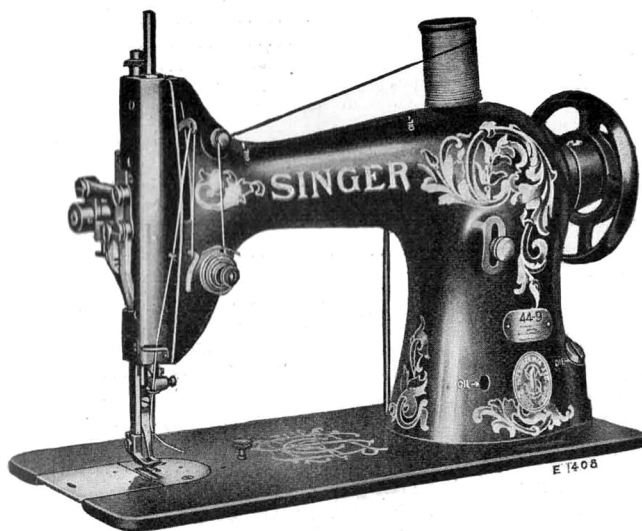
VENETIAN GLASS.

Zen: A slang term derived from Zen Buddhism for feeling peaceful and relaxed.

Fast Fashion vs. Slow Fashion

by Macey Downs

At the beginning of *Bad Dates*, we meet Haley in her New York City bedroom, which has “clothes thrown everywhere, and a lot of shoes, a very very lot of shoes.” Throughout the play, we see ourselves in Haley’s constant outfit changes and her funny admissions to buying new shoes based on her mood. This is because Haley partakes in a version of consumerism that has been normalized in the US since the 1990s—fast fashion. What is fast fashion, and how is it now being countered by the rise of a slow fashion movement?



MACHINE No. 44-9

ILLUSTRATION OF A SINGER SEWING MACHINE, 1851.

A Brief History of Clothing Production

Before discussing the characteristics of fast fashion, it’s important to understand the historical roots of today’s fast-paced clothing production. Before the 1800s, clothing was made slowly and by hand. Individuals would source their own materials, like wool or leather, and weave them to make clothes. However, the start of the Industrial Revolution in 1760 brought with it new inventions, like the sewing machine and the cotton gin, that allowed for textiles to be produced quickly and cheaply. The US had enough land to grow cotton on an enormous scale, which gave enslavers a new industry within which to profit from the labor

of enslaved Africans. Soon the US became the world’s leading exporter of cotton, which fed the textile revolution both within and outside of the country. Despite being supposedly “free” territory in the 1800s, New England’s economy was heavily reliant on producing textiles from cotton harvested by Black people enslaved in the South. By 1860, the US had a population of 4 million enslaved people, more than half of which were living in cotton-producing states.

Even after free Black Americans led the US to abolish slavery, clothing production continued relying on exploiting cheap labor. Production shifted into sweatshops, which were workplaces that had poverty-level wages, excessive hours of labor, and unsafe working conditions. One of the biggest sweatshop disasters in the US was the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, during which 146 preventable deaths were caused by neglected safety features. Most of those who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire were low-income Jewish and Italian immigrant teenage girls, revealing again the tendency for American clothing production to fall onto those with the least economic and political power. Finally, as labor rights increased in the US, clothing producers who desired greater profit margins moved their factories internationally to countries with fewer labor laws, where they could continue to pay garment workers low wages in unsafe working conditions. These international factories and communities bore the brunt of the dramatic uptick of production and consumerism heralded by the fast fashion movement in the 1990s.

Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is cheap clothing that samples ideas from celebrity and runway culture and turns them into garments. These garments are then put on the market as fast as possible so consumers can buy them while they’re still on-trend. Fast fashion combines accessibility, low costs, and a culture of scarcity to get people to buy a lot of clothing for very little



FOREVER21 IN A MALL.

money. Consumers can usually find fast fashion brands like H&M, Zara, or Forever21 at their local malls, where new and cheap clothing is shipped in every week to keep up with the latest trends. While inexpensive, this clothing is also lower quality because it's meant to be discarded after a few wears. Once that trend has passed, consumers are pressured to move to the next trend and buy more clothing in order to stay relevant.

Fast fashion companies are able to keep costs low not only by lowering quality, but also by outsourcing production to low-cost economies in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, and India. Garment workers in these factories are paid very low wages, and cannot advocate for higher pay and safer working conditions. If they do so, then the clothing company will move that factory somewhere else, leaving the workers unemployed. This exploitation of low-income South Asian women in particular is often likened to enslavement, showing that fast fashion has maintained its roots in US slavery by moving its mistreatment of people of color overseas.

In addition, fast fashion is one of the world's largest contributors to environmental degradation and climate change. Today, the world consumes 80 billion pieces of new clothing every year, which is 400% more than the amount being bought 25 years ago. Producing this much clothing so quickly requires using cheap toxic dyes and materials that make the fashion industry the second largest polluter of clean water after

agriculture. Fast fashion's culture of quantity over quality also leads to 92 million metric tons of textile waste each year. Even donated clothing often ends up overwhelming global communities with piles of unwanted clothes. By outsourcing its production, waste, and environmental impacts overseas, fast fashion hides its human rights violations from the average American consumer.

Slow Fashion

Even though workers had pointed out structural issues in the building long before, the Rana Plaza garment factory in Bangladesh collapsed in 2013, killing thousands of people. This tragedy shifted mainstream interest toward the slow fashion, or "eco-fashion," counter movement, which aims to shift the culture around clothing toward more sustainable and ethical practices. The slow fashion movement invokes the principles of "reduce, reuse, recycle" into the way that we consume and wear clothing. There is an emphasis on reducing the amount of clothing we buy—choosing quality over quantity by purchasing something well-made that will last a long time, rather than low-quality garments that will tear easily. The slow fashion movement also encourages consumers to reuse clothing. It advocates for wearing the same clothing items over and over again for years, mending clothing items if they form holes, and choosing to buy clothing secondhand at thrift shops or receiving hand-me-downs from friends rather than purchasing something new from a store.



2013 DHAKA GARMENT FACTORY COLLAPSE.



CLOTHING IN A LANDFILL.

Slow fashion follows the logic that if there is less demand for clothing from fast fashion companies, then these companies will not expend as many environmental resources to create that clothing.

Slow fashion companies that do create new clothing often implement recycling practices to ensure that they don't contribute to environmental degradation. They'll regularly use deadstock fabrics—those left over from fashion warehouses that overestimated their production needs—to create clothing from textiles that would have otherwise ended up in landfills, or sustainably harvest materials like organic cotton that don't pollute surrounding areas with pesticides or plastics. These companies also pay their workers living wages, maintain safe work environments, and ensure race and gender equity. These sustainable and ethical production practices cause the cost of new clothing to be much higher, making this clothing less accessible to the majority of Americans. Slow fashion brands are also smaller and more localized than fast fashion companies, making them harder to find, especially for rural and low-income communities. The slow fashion movement has tried to remedy its inaccessibility by creating a more positive culture around thrift shopping and establishing an online presence.

The rise of the slow fashion movement has led fast fashion brands to harness a tactic called "greenwashing." This is when a brand uses language or implements a program that seems environmentally friendly, but ultimately just distracts consumers from holding the brand accountable for the environmentally

degrading actions they continue to take. For example, H&M started recycling programs in which customers can drop off old clothing and receive coupons. However, less than 1% of the clothing collected actually gets repurposed. H&M's exploitation of the environment and garment workers far outweighs its efforts toward sustainability. Greenwashing makes it more difficult for consumers to figure out which brands are actually eco-friendly and which are fast fashion brands in disguise. Radical transparency about material-sourcing, wages, and factory conditions are key things to look for in a true slow fashion company.

In *Bad Dates*, Haley casually mentions partaking in fast fashion in ways that most Americans have. In catching the audience up on key points of her life up until the start of the play, she makes sure to mention: "The next thing I know I have six hundred pairs of shoes, a husband—Roger—and a kid." As it has for many Americans, purchasing shoes and clothes has become linked to Haley's emotional state. Consumerism pushes a narrative that if you're sad, buy new shoes to make you feel better; if you're happy, buy new shoes to celebrate; if you're angry at someone, buy new shoes to show them up! Fast fashion teaches us that we will never have enough clothing, and therefore we will never be enough—as long as we aren't satisfied with our wardrobe, we won't be satisfied with ourselves. Divorcing self-worth from clothing and consumerism is key if we want to move toward ethical and sustainable production practices.

Economics and Expectations in Motherhood

by Macey Downs

"It's not always easy for a single woman to be just capable without resorting to criminal behavior. I mean, I am not the first woman who stretched the legality of any given situation."
- Haley in *Bad Dates*



Bad Dates looks at Haley's relationship to single womanhood and single motherhood through a comedic lens. Yes, she is struggling to make ends meet as the head of a single-earner household, but she found a way to save for her daughter's college by partaking in some money laundering with the Romanian mob—and somehow managed to escape legal trouble! However, underneath the wittiness of *Bad Dates* lie restrictive expectations that all mothers are held to. Haley doesn't get much time to herself because when she's not home taking care of Vera, she's working, and when she's not working, she's preparing for dates with men. Haley is encountering a double bind that many mothers in America face—she is an independent, career-driven woman who also wants to have a family, causing her to work one shift at her job, and then come home to work a second, unpaid shift around the house, and yet she still isn't making enough money to support her family in the ways she wants to.

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild named this phenomenon "the second shift" in 1989, which are the household duties that follow the paid workday, like taking care of children, making dinner, washing dishes, or cleaning the house. In a two-parent heterosexual family, this

second shift typically falls onto the mother. At the beginning of the 20th century, many women in the US didn't work outside of the home, so housework was their full-time job. However, even then, women with less privilege had to work both for pay and at home to stay afloat. White single mothers had access to a form of welfare called the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which aimed to support traditional family values by taking the role of the breadwinner so single mothers wouldn't have to work. However, women of color were excluded from partaking in these benefits. Women of color had to take jobs in the workforce, despite there being no laws in place that protected them from discrimination based on race and gender. The work that was available to these women were low-paying jobs in factories or as domestic workers, and the conditions were usually dirty and unsafe.

In the 1960s, Congress passed several laws that ensured equal protections in the workforce. The Equal Pay Act promised equitable wages for the same work regardless of the worker's race, color, national origin, and sex. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was also passed to prohibit sex discrimination in employment. Around the same time, education was becoming more widely available to women, and new technologies created more opportunities for work as office assistants or customer service workers—cleaner and safer jobs that were more acceptable for white married women to take. Employed women were still expected to treat their careers as secondary to their home lives.

Starting in the 1970s, income instability and inequality began to rise, making two-earner households necessary for many middle- and lower-class families to stay afloat. This and the decreased stigma around women's employment led to a boom in women entering the labor force in the 1970s. Even though women were now working 30+-hour work weeks, the division of labor at home remained vastly unequal,

with many mothers working an equal or higher amount of unpaid hours at home as they were at work. Changing gender roles in the home and the unequal division of household labor generated more conflict and tension between couples; as women's employment rose, so did divorce rates. Now that women were able to financially support themselves, getting married and raising a family was more of a choice than an economic necessity.

In the 1990s, women in the workforce peaked at 76% of prime-age women being employed, and has declined over time since then. Unequal wages between men and women persist, and women are still expected to take a second shift of unpaid housework at home. This disproportionately impacts single mothers, who have the dual responsibilities of being the primary breadwinners and caregivers.

In 1996, welfare policies changed as well with the introduction of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reform. The TANF welfare program continues to be used in the US today, and includes new requirements for those involved such as cooperating with child support enforcement, frequent drug testing, involvement in the workforce, and agreeing to not become pregnant with another child. While welfare can no longer explicitly discriminate against women on the basis of race, TANF's eligibility requirements are far stricter than those for AFDC, which has barred a lot of people in need of welfare from taking part in the program. The stricter requirements of TANF are often viewed as punishments for women who are on welfare, but when AFDC was available to only white women, its benefits were viewed as a valid source of income for single mothers. Since welfare has started including women of color, it has also been used to justify their oppression--the stigma around welfare has increased significantly as it has started supporting more Black and Latina women.

This shift in welfare policies has made welfare less accessible and more dangerous to individuals in need. For example, to fulfill TANF's child support enforcement clause, single mothers are required to seek out child support from the fathers of their children, regardless of the circumstances and actual



THE NATIONAL WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION LEADS A PROTEST.

desires of the women. These women are then forced into situations that are, at best, uncomfortable or undesirable, and, at worst, life-threatening. Women who are lucky enough to successfully and safely demand money from the fathers will receive at most \$50 per month of the collected child support. The rest—or, in many cases, the entirety—of the child support goes to the state as a way to pay back the welfare benefits previously received by a recipient's children.

What we do not see in *Bad Dates* are the societal and economic binds that single mothers have always been kept under, especially women of color. In Portland Stage's *Bad Dates*, Haley is raising her daughter alone in the 1990s economy, which now requires families to have two earners to remain in the middle class. Welfare has become more restrictive and stigmatized, and often doesn't provide enough benefits to keep women above the poverty line. Haley's survival is dependent on money-laundering or remarrying. While Haley approaches her circumstances with humor, her story is a dramatized version of the constraints that many single mothers in America continue to face.

Setting the Scene: Life in the 90s

by Meredith G. Healy

Portland Stage's production of *Bad Dates* is set in New York during the 1990s, which was a unique time to be living in both the city and in the US. Our first glimpse into Haley's world shows us that she fits in with the ideals of American life that were established during this time. What defined this decade, and what shifts occurred to help usher in the changing cultural landscape?

The beginning of the 1990s was marked by an economic recession. This recession was primarily caused by the bursting of the real estate bubble, rising taxes, the Gulf War, and uncertainty in the stock market. The unemployment rate rose and peaked at about 8.1% in 1992. When Bill Clinton came into office in 1993, he worked to reduce the federal deficit and reverse the economy. By the end of the decade, unemployment was at 4%, the lowest it had been since the 1970s.

Women continued to find more of a place in the workforce, and this decade saw a greater number of women-owned businesses. However, despite the increase in representation, women were still denied more senior positions in companies, and earned, on average, 30% less than their male coworkers. During the 1990s, the US continued to make it difficult to balance a professional career and raise a family as the country did not guarantee any paid time off for new parents. This problem continues today and is particularly relevant for women as, traditionally, parenting and childcare responsibilities fall primarily on mothers.

Major technological advances occurred in the 1990s that we now take for granted. The most notable was the launch of the World Wide Web. The World Wide Web made the internet more user-friendly by allowing people to navigate between websites via hyperlinks. As a greater percentage of the population began using personal computers, the amount of work that could be completed outside of the office and outside of the

traditional work day increased. This resulted in email becoming a more popular mode of communication. Another major step forward in communication was the integration of the cell phone into everyday life. By 1995, more than 32 million Americans were using cell phones, which further increased connectivity.

Bad Dates is set in a New York City apartment where Haley lives with her teenage daughter Vera. The 1980s was a difficult time to live in New York City due to homelessness, rising crime rates, persistent drug problems, and the ongoing AIDS epidemic. The 1990s ushered in big changes with the election of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in 1994, who is largely credited with transforming the Big Apple, and more specifically Times Square, into the tourist hub that we think of today. During the recession that occurred in the early part of the decade, many people in the middle class left New York. This resulted in immigrants, and others from lower-income backgrounds, moving to the city for new opportunities. Haley's experience as a single mother who moves to NYC with her young daughter in the hopes of getting a fresh start is similar.

The 1990s was a decade defined by a shift in the ways in which we are able to communicate and interact. The middle class and the American economy experienced growth, and we saw a continued increase of women joining the workforce. Looking at *Bad Dates* in the context of the time period in which this production is set helps us better understand Haley's world.



TIMES SQUARE IN THE 1990s.

Designer Shoe Brands of the Early 2000s

by Zach Elton

Haute couture, or high-end fashion, has become increasingly popular in the last century. While the most extravagant looks are often kept on the runway and red carpet, many brands are also focused on creating beautiful pieces that are comfortable and functional as well. These fashion houses create dresses, suits, shoes, jewelry, perfume, handbags, and much more. In *Bad Dates*, Haley is a little obsessed with shoes—she claims to have about 600 pairs—and is even more in awe of their designer labels. Below is a list of the most popular fashion houses in the 1990s that would probably be found in Haley's closet.



YVES SAINT LAURENT SLING BACKS.

Name: Yves Saint Laurent

History: Yves Saint Laurent started working in the fashion industry as Christian Dior's design assistant. When Dior passed away unexpectedly in 1957, Saint Laurent took over Dior for a few years before moving on to form his own fashion company in 1961. Inspired by menswear, Saint Laurent shook the fashion industry by releasing a line of women's clothing that was gender fluid. He made suits for women that were stylish yet comfortable, and always business appropriate. Throughout his career, he continued to develop ready-to-wear fashion for women that constantly blurred the lines between chic and casual.

Claim to Fame: Saint Laurent is known for pioneering the power suit and taking functional pieces—like the safari jacket—and making them fashion-focused. He strove to celebrate female sexuality and empower the wearer.

Most Popular Shoes: Yves Saint Laurent's most popular shoes are their patent leather pumps with pointed tips, stiletto heels, and sling backs.



PRADA KITTEN HEELS.

Fashion House: Prada

History: In 1913, Mario Prada opened a store in Milan selling handbags, travel trunks, accessories, and jewelry that had sophisticated looks and used fine materials. Prada quickly rose to prominence and became a favorite brand of the European aristocracy, even becoming the official supplier to the Italian royal family in 1919. This allowed them to put the Italian coat of arms on their products. In the 1970s, the company expanded internationally, and became one of the top brands in the US. They released their first women's footwear collection in 1979, their first clothing collection in 1988, and their first men's clothing and footwear in 1993.

Claim to Fame: While they are primarily known for their handbags, Prada has also gained recognition for their shoes and clothes.

Most Popular Shoes: Though they only started making shoes in 1979, they were already popular throughout the 1980s. The first collections contained a lot of pumps, with kitten heels or stilettos; the shoes usually had pointed tips.



CLASSIC DIOR PUMPS.

Name: Dior

History: Christian Dior established his fashion house in 1946 at 30 Avenue Montaigne in Paris, and the company released its first collection in February of the next year to rave reviews. Harper's Bazaar called his dresses revolutionary and trend-setting. Contrasted to the generally straight, flat dress of the 1930s, Dior created dresses that were fitted to emphasize the female body by having a full skirt, a tight waist, and an accentuated bust. During World War II, Christian Dior had to make some troubling choices. It is known that he dressed wives of high-ranking Nazi officials, though it is unclear if this was his choice or if he was coerced. By any means, by the 1950s, Dior was a renowned brand, dressing people such as Marlene Dietrich and Ava Gardner. In the 1960s, Dior developed a ready-to-wear collection that was both practical and elegant. Through the following decades Dior would come to set the standard for female fashion.

Claim to Fame: Dior is best known for creating female fashion that is refined, sober, and precise.

Most Popular Shoes: Dior is known for creating pumps with small heels that are stylish and functional.



JIMMY CHOO STATEMENT HEELS.

Fashion House: Jimmy Choo

History: Though Jimmy Choo is a relatively young designer brand compared to some of the other fashion houses, it is nonetheless one of the most popular shoe brands in the world. The company was established in 1986 by designer Datuk Jimmy Choo Yeang Keat. At the age of 38, he opened his first store in an abandoned hospital building. After just two years, his designs were featured at London Fashion Week where he caught the eye of Vogue. Soon after, he was given an eight-page spread in Vogue and captured the attention of the world. In the coming decades Jimmy Choo would be worn by celebrities like Princess Diana, Renee Zellweger, and Reese Witherspoon.

Claim to Fame: Though the brand has ventured into handbags in more recent years to great public and critical acclaim, Jimmy Choo is still primarily known for their shoes.

Most Popular Shoes: Jimmy Choo has a wide selection of shoes ranging from everyday styles like mules and boots to more glamorous pumps and slingbacks. Their most popular shoes are probably their strappy sandals with beaded gems and unusual heels that make a statement.



VINTAGE CHANEL TWO-TONED PUMPS.

Fashion House: Chanel

History: The international fashion house, Chanel, has been established for over 100 years. At the age of 27, Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel opened her first hat boutique, Chanel Modes, in 1910. Her small business was a hit with the local clientele, and after a few years, she opened her first couture house in Biarritz, France, in 1915. After being wildly successful again, she had the courage and the money to open the now-iconic Chanel boutique at 31 Rue Cambon in Paris, which has remained the flagship store for Chanel ever since. Though one of the premiere designer brands in the world, not all of their history is so savory. During World War II, Coco Chanel was in a relationship with a German general, and was eventually outed as a spy against the Allied Forces. After the war, she fled to Switzerland, but soon she came back to France to resume her fashion career, where she began to revolutionize fashion by replacing the restricting corset and bodice looks of the early 1900s with clothing that was loose and functional.

Claim to Fame: Chanel is known as a leader in women’s fashion. Making clothing that is sleek and stylish, Chanel has been worn by celebrities from Marilyn Monroe to Keira Knightley. Chanel suits are still being produced with very little adjustments because, as Chanel proudly claims, the Chanel suit never goes out of style. Their perfume “Chanel No. 5” has become an iconic symbol of the company and was promoted by Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s. When an interviewer asked Monroe what she wore to bed, she responded, “Chanel No. 5.”

Most Popular Shoes: Chanel’s most famous shoes are probably the two-toned pumps originally created by Coco Chanel herself in the 1950s. The sides and back of the shoes were in a beige leather that helped elongate the legs, while the black tip made the foot look smaller. These two-toned shoes remained popular for a long time, and were eventually released in multiple colors, and in slingbacks.



GUCCI SNAFFLE BIT LOAFERS.

Fashion House: Gucci

History: In 1921, Guccio Gucci began his small business in Florence, Italy, where he made, sold, and repaired leather products. He soon rose to popularity when he developed a line of luggage that was stackable and easily stored in luggage racks. Due to the popularity he found with his luggage line, he decided to begin creating handbags and shoes. Eventually, he expanded his business to the US in the 1950s, and, with the help of his son, they began to brand their products with the green and red stripe trademark that is still used today. Gucci reached their highest popularity in the 1980s, when they were known for their clothing, jewelry, luggage, handbags, and shoes.

Claim to Fame: Today, Gucci is known for the sleek and sexy look of their products. In the 1990s, under the direction of designer Tom Ford, the company centered around the idea that “sex sells.” They began using risque advertisements, and they focused their products on flattering and accentuating the human form. While other fashion houses began making loud statement pieces with their designs, Gucci remained simple, promoting stiletto heels and slip dresses.

Most Popular Shoes: In the 1980s, their most popular shoes were snaffle bit loafers and leather pumps.

What is a Money-Laundering Front?

by Meredith G. Healy

When Haley Walker moves to New York City with her young daughter Vera, she finds herself working in a restaurant that is not exactly run by the books. Haley explains to the audience early on that her waitressing job is for a restaurant that is used as a money-laundering front for the Romanian mob. What exactly does this mean? How do money-laundering fronts work?

"[I]t turns out this restaurant I'm working at is some kind of front, some Romanian mob put all their money in it as a tax shelter or money laundering..."



AL CAPONE LEAVES A CHICAGO COURTROOM.

The US Financial Crimes Enforcement Network defines money laundering as "the process of making illegally-gained proceeds (i.e., 'dirty money') appear legal (i.e., 'clean')." Dirty money is acquired through crimes and illegal activity such as gambling, drug trafficking, and extortion. The term "money-laundering" comes from Al Capone, who used a chain of laundromats to hide his illegal assets. Criminals engage in money laundering for a variety of reasons that are interrelated. The illegally obtained money is critical for supporting the expenses incurred by the group, and it allows the members to live their often lavish lifestyles. For the money to be spent, it needs to appear to be

legitimately earned, thus it is necessary to obscure the fact that the money was illegally earned. Additionally, if the money is found out to be illegitimate, it becomes easier for the funds to be used as evidence if the group is prosecuted. Finally, if the scheme is discovered, this money has the potential to be seized by investigators, which would prohibit it from being used and would be of no benefit to the criminals.

Money-laundering schemes often involve a "shell" company that has a bank account and can take in the money that is earned legally from the business, as well as the money that is gained illegally. Some examples of commonly used shells are salons, plumbing services, bars, casinos, and, as is illustrated in *Bad Dates*, restaurants. Many of these shells accept cash only, as cash offers more anonymity for the customers and is more difficult to trace after it has been spent.

The process of money laundering involves three steps to ensure that any dirty money is appropriately concealed away from authorities and protected from any investigations. The first step is known as *placement*. This occurs when the shell company reports higher daily incomes than what is actually earned to hide the illegal cash. For instance, if a restaurant legitimately took in \$3,000, they might falsely report and deposit \$5,000 into their bank account. The \$2,000 difference is the illegal income that gets mixed up with the restaurant's actual earnings so that the bank deposit looks legitimate. The second step is known as *layering*; this is when the organization takes the money back out of the bank and invests it in other business ventures, or transfers it to an offshore bank account, which generally has fewer regulations around transactions. The purpose of this step is to further remove the cash from its association to illegal activity.

The final step is *integration*, which happens when the money is used to purchase goods, or to invest in additional business ventures. By the time the money is integrated it has gone through enough layering, deposits, and withdrawals that it is very difficult to trace back to its dirty origins.

In 2010, the annual amount of illicit proceeds in the US was estimated to be \$300 billion, which amounts to nearly 2% of the US economy. For this reason, prosecution of money laundering is taken very seriously. The mission of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, a branch of the US Treasury Department, is to "safeguard the financial system from the abuses of financial crime, including terrorist financing, money laundering, and other illicit activity." A major change to the prosecution of money laundering came in 1970 with the establishment of the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA). The BSA was responsible for establishing more requirements with respect to what must be reported by both banks and individuals. One of the most important elements of this new set of laws is the requirement that banks

must report all cash transactions of over \$10,000. Banks are also required to identify the person(s) responsible for the transaction and must keep detailed records of deposits to establish a paper trail of the activity. Another critical piece of legislation regarding the prosecution of money laundering is the Money Laundering Control Act, which was established in 1986 and designated money laundering as a federal crime in the US.

After the arrest of the Romanians and her promotion to manager, Haley decides to start paying taxes for the restaurant to avoid further suspicion and federal investigations. She also decides to take advantage of the cash-only establishment for her own personal gain. The bills tucked away in her shoeboxes are perhaps not as innocent as she would like the audience to believe. Haley is lucky that she is able to avoid detection, as getting convicted of money laundering can result in fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars and the potential for spending years in prison, both of which would impact the number of dates and shoes in Haley's life.



The Anatomy of a Rom Com

by Macey Downs

This article goes through plot points and themes of *Bad Dates* to see how they align with classic romantic comedies. There will be spoilers ahead, so it is recommended that you wait to read this article until after seeing *Bad Dates*!

When Theresa Rebeck wrote *Bad Dates* in 2004, the US was in the middle of a golden age of romantic comedies, or “rom-coms.” An appetite for romantic comedies had been growing since as early as the Elizabethan era in the late 1500s. Shakespeare released plays like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*, which root their humor in chaos and misfortune around finding love, until the protagonists are finally married and given a happy ending. Over the next several hundred years, novels, plays, movies, and television have continued to produce stories with relatable and imperfect main characters who miraculously find love.

The US was catapulted into the rom-com golden age with the release of *When Harry Met Sally* in 1989. *When Harry Met Sally* was critically acclaimed for its dramatization of two relatable characters’ internal struggles—like learning to believe in love, or learning to love yourself—keeping them apart. This movie sets up a narrative formula whereby the audience watches the love interests’ journeys toward growth, complete with lots of ups and downs until they finally reach a breakthrough that allows them to be together in the end. Through the 1990s and the early 2000s, rom-com after rom-com found box office success through adhering to this formula. Despite being a one-woman show, how does *Bad Dates* fit into the anatomy of the golden age rom-com?



BILLY CRYSTAL AND MEG RYAN IN *WHEN HARRY MET SALLY*, 1989.

Introducing a Heroine Just Like You and Me

Bad Dates begins like most romantic comedies do: by introducing the audience to an independent, spunky main character with lots of charming and relatable flaws, who is finding more success in her work life than her love life. Haley tells the unfiltered story of her life as she tries on outfit after outfit—something the average person has done countless times in the privacy of their own bedroom. She reveals a backstory that many audience members may relate to—getting married young, buying lots of shoes, becoming a single mother, and moving to a big city for a fresh start. However, she also admits to her accidental involvement in a money-laundering front, something that many audience members wouldn’t have much experience with. With this dichotomy, *Bad Dates* establishes that it will be simultaneously honoring the rom-com formula while also subverting audiences’ expectations.

Meet Cute(ish)

The rising action of a romantic comedy is propelled by a serendipitous “meet cute,” where the protagonist runs into a potential love interest and a connection is formed. Oftentimes this connection is riddled with tension, as the protagonist and their love interest are at odds with each other in some way—such as through a disagreement, an existing significant other, or an awkward social situation that leads to dislike or embarrassment. In *Bad Dates*, a meet cute happens without Haley or the audience initially realizing it: a coworker invites her to a fancy event where the guests get caught in the rain and remain outside with napkins on their heads. In this moment she meets Bug Guy, whom she finds cute, but she cannot tolerate how he only talks about bugs and causes her to embarrass herself. Haley’s inability to accept that she’s attracted to Bug Guy becomes a catalyst for the countless bad dates she goes on for the rest of the play.

Love Triangle Complications

Many romantic comedies include a love triangle, in which the protagonist has a love interest who is interested in someone else; two competing parties are interested in the protagonist and they must choose one; or someone is hopelessly in love with the protagonist but they're sidetracked by someone who isn't actually right for them. In *Bad Dates*, a nontraditional love triangle is used to complicate Haley's ongoing misfortune. While on a blind date with a man who she believes is actually gay, her attempt to get out of the date goes horribly wrong. She accidentally waves Bug Guy—whom she hasn't seen since their meet cute—over to their table. Her original date is now interested in Bug Guy, Bug Guy seems to be interested in Haley, and Haley at this point doesn't want anything to do with either of them. This second run-in with Bug Guy moves Haley's journey forward yet again, as she uses this disaster to reconnect with an old partner.

The Red Herring: When Mr. Right Becomes Mr. Wrong

When a meet cute goes wrong, and a love triangle becomes overwhelming, the protagonist is on the brink of giving up until they meet someone who appears to be what they were looking for. This person is usually called a "red herring" as they seem appealing, but actually lead the protagonist astray. Haley believes that she's taking a brave step in asking Lewis out, someone she was interested in years ago but tossed aside in favor of other potential partners. She becomes infatuated with Lewis as she finally goes on a good date. They appear to have mutual attraction to each other, and she feels like an excited teenager again when she's with him. However, Haley is forced to realize that she has outgrown Lewis when he stands her up and reveals that he has been using her to cheat on his girlfriend. This final failed encounter, along with the sudden crumbling of her restaurant's money-laundering front, sinks Haley to rock bottom.

An Epiphany Towards Self-Acceptance and Monogamy

Romantic comedies end with an epiphany, or an "aha!" moment, where the main character realizes their true feelings. Usually this epiphany leads to a declaration of love for a partner. By saying that they love this partner, the protagonist acknowledges they have officially outgrown the red herring, and are accepting the

truest version of themselves. This demonstrates the personal growth the protagonist has undergone throughout the narrative.

For Haley, hitting rock bottom at the end of the play forces her to reunite with Bug Guy, who's brought in as her lawyer in her restaurant's money-laundering case. Bug Guy sees parts of Haley's life that she kept secret from the other men she dated—her money-laundering and her daughter Vera—and wholeheartedly embraces them while also helping her out of a catastrophe. This causes Haley to realize this entire play could've been avoided if she had just accepted that she thought Bug Guy was cute when she first met him.

Bad Dates presents us with a rom-com completely through the eyes of the independent, quirky, perpetually single protagonist. In this way, *Bad Dates* differs from the traditional romantic comedy in that the audience never actually meets the men Haley describes. We don't see Haley's desirability through a male gaze, and instead are primed to enjoy her character based on the honest ramblings and chaotic outfit-changing she unapologetically shares with us.

Following the classic rom-com formula, Haley would be expected to end up in a monogamous relationship with Bug Guy, possibly get married, and be together forever. However, *Bad Dates's* smooth subversions of audience expectations open up the possibility that Haley and Bug Guy's happy ending may not extend past a first date. In many ways this more accurately reflects real-life dating. Most dates, good and bad, don't lead to a rom-com-style wedding, but they all create opportunities for us to learn more about ourselves and publicly accept who we really are.



HANEEFAH WOOD IN *BAD DATES*, HUNTINGTON THEATRE COMPANY, 2018. PHOTO BY T. CHARLES ERICSON.

A Brief History of Shoes and High Heels

by Meredith G. Healy

Much has been said about a woman's relationship with her footwear: from Marilyn Monroe posing that if you "[g]ive a girl the right shoes...she can conquer the world" to Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex and the City* stating, "The fact is, sometimes it's hard to walk in a single woman's shoes. That's why we need really special ones now and then—to make the walk a little more fun." When the audience first meets Haley Walker in *Bad Dates*, she is in the midst of getting ready for a date, which means that she needs to select the perfect set of heels from her collection to compliment her outfit.



ILLUSTRATION OF PERSIAN SOLDIERS WEARING EARLY HEELS.

High heels originally served a variety of very practical purposes in the different civilizations in which they were used. The first people who wore heels regularly were men. Early examples include Greek actors who used the added height to illustrate the differences in social status. Those portraying characters in a higher class wore taller shoes to make them tower over those portraying characters in a lower class. In ancient Egypt, platformed shoes were worn during religious ceremonies to bring the wearer closer to the sky and to the gods. Early heels were also worn by 15th century Persian soldiers to better secure their feet in stirrups. This helped stabilize the soldiers when they would stand to shoot an arrow.

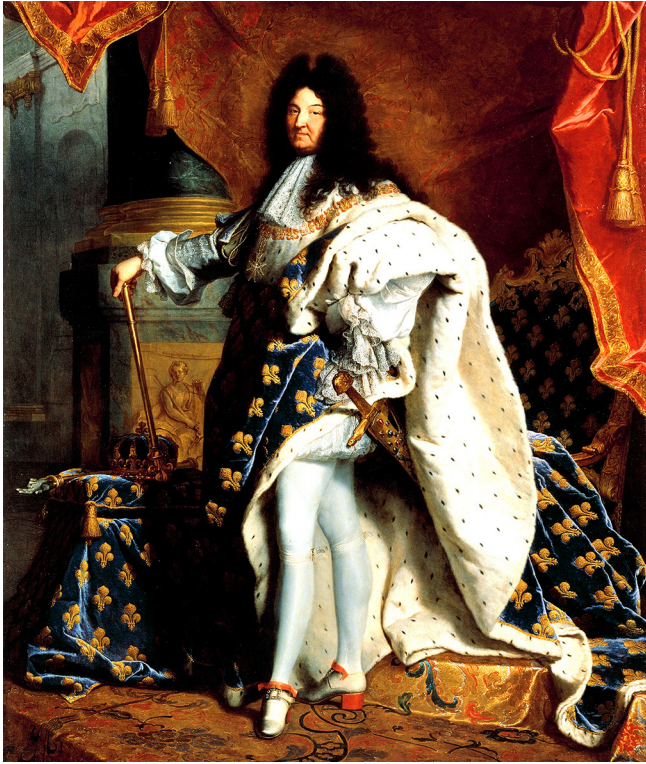


CHOPINES.

As Persians traveled to Europe, so did the popularity of heels, particularly amongst male aristocrats. Aristocrats appreciated the heel because it helped protect their garments from the waste found on streets during the Renaissance. Women in Venice also began wearing a type of platform shoe called a chopine during the 16th century. The shoes were often worn by courtesans, but aristocratic women also wore them to both keep their dresses clean and display wealth. The taller the platform, the more fabric was needed to make the skirt of the dress, which was an indication of wealth. This particular style of shoe could be up to 20 inches tall, and some women relied on the support of maids to ensure that they didn't fall while walking. In 1533, Catherine de Medici, who was only 4'9" tall, was the first woman to wear heels in order to boost her height on her wedding day.

During the 17th century, heels were once again more popular amongst men than they were amongst women. Louis XIV, known as the "Sun King" because of his belief that he was the center of the universe, wore heels as a way to flaunt his physique and his power. The now infamous red soles popularized by Christian Louboutin were first worn by Louis XIV and the members of his court. The red was an indication of power and only specific people were allowed to wear a red-bottomed shoe.

After the French Revolution in the late 18th century, heels fell out of style. This was largely due to the rejection of the excess displayed by Marie Antoinette and the French nobility of this era. Flats and boots became more fashionable, as it was no longer acceptable to flaunt your social status over others by literally towering above them.



Louis XIV.

Footwear in the US mimicked the styles in Europe during the 18th century. In 1760, the first shoe factory opened in Massachusetts and shoes were able to be manufactured in larger quantities. Another major development came with the invention of the modern sewing machine in the 1830s. This increased the speed of production and the variety of styles that were made available to more of the general public. It was around this time that heels became a marker of femininity. Suffragettes wore heels during their fight for women's rights as a way to illustrate that they could both be feminine and exercise the right to vote. Heels were seen as a marker of an ideal and fashionable woman, so suffragettes dressed the part to be taken seriously.

The modern stiletto, which got its name from an Italian knife, was developed using technology borrowed from the manufacturing of aircraft carriers during World War II. Using steel and aluminum in the heels allowed them to increase in height, while also becoming

more narrow. This technology also allowed more pressure to be placed on the arch of the foot opposed to on the toes or on the heel. Designers Salvatore Ferragamo, Roger Vivier, and André Perugia have all been credited with inventing the stiletto, and the stiletto became the shoe of choice for movie stars in the 1950s. As heels became more widespread for women outside of the Hollywood elite, styles were both refined and expanded upon. This allowed consumers to match their shoes to the occasion, and to make a statement with their footwear. Even though heels were not as popular in the 1970s during second-wave feminism, by the 1980s women reclaimed the heel as a symbol of power in the workplace. Today, heels are still seen as a marker of femininity, as the design of the shoe elongates the legs and accentuates the curves of the female body.

Upon the first introduction to Haley, the audience observes that shoes play an important role in her daily life as a business woman, a single lady, and a mother. Haley's vast and varied collection of heels could represent these different parts of her life and her personality. She has memories and stories for each pair, so perhaps there is something to be learned by the shoes one wears.



MARILYN MONROE.

Community Connections: Interview with Stella Hernandez

Edited for Length and Clarity by Zach Elton and Meredith G. Healy

In *Bad Dates* Haley is the manager of an Italian restaurant. To get an inside look at what it is like to have a similar career, *PlayNotes* interviewed Stella Hernandez, owner of Hilltop Coffee, about her experience in the food service industry, owning and managing a cafe, and operating a small business during the pandemic.



STELLA HERNANDEZ.

PlayNotes (PN): *Why did you decide to go into the food service industry? What has your career path in this field looked like? Is this something you have always wanted to do?*

Stella Hernandez (SH): As my husband—who is my business partner and a chef—has always said, we're not in the food business, we're in the hospitality business. Our best memories are of shared meals with friends and family. I think what attracted us both to this field is the potential to create an experience for the diner that makes them feel cared for—whatever the occasion. To us, service isn't just about food or wine, but about the entire experience from walking in the door, to the last sip of your coffee at the end of dessert, and the goodbye on the way out the door. One of the best compliments we ever received was from a gentleman who, as he was leaving the restaurant, said that he left with 'a great sense of well-being.'

We didn't start out in hospitality—we were both trained as architects. Guy, my husband, started cooking professionally when we moved to Maine about twenty years ago. We opened our first restaurant in 2006 and our second in 2014 with the coffee shop coming in the middle in 2010. Throughout these two decades, in addition helping establish the businesses and acting as a general manager, I have been focusing on wine and continuing my studies with the Wine & Spirit Education Trust where I am a diploma candidate. I am also a Certified Sommelier in the Court of Master Sommeliers. There's always an opportunity to learn more, and that's another appeal.

After 13 years of owning restaurants, in 2019, we scaled back to a quieter life and more time for our family, so it's just the coffee shop now. It's our little gem and we love it. I hope to do more wine events and wine writing in the future.

PN: *Can you tell me about your cafe and the food you serve?*

SH: We own Hilltop Coffee, a small coffee shop and café on Munjoy Hill. We have owned the shop for eleven years, having it purchased from the founders who opened it in 2002. In addition to local coffee and espresso from local roaster Coffee By Design, we also feature coffee from small roasters like Little Wolf, a husband and wife owned shop in Ipswich, MA. We have a vintage Italian La Cimbali espresso machine that's bright red. It's a work horse and we love it!

We bake almost everything we offer in-house, including muffins, scones, cakes, bars, etc. We even make our own sandwich bread and the brioche rolls for our breakfast sandwiches. We get our sourdough from Standard Baking because it's amazing and we can't quite bake all we need in the shop. In addition to baked goods, we offer breakfast and lunch sandwiches and daily specials.

PN: What is your favorite part about owning and managing a cafe?

SH: Coffee is a craft and I have always enjoyed knowing there's something more to learn. It's not a static thing—it's a continuous process. Our menu continues to evolve and that gives us a chance to experiment as well. But I think the best part is the relationships we have built with our staff and customers. There are lots of ways to run a business—we chose to focus on the relationship part. We've seen our customers and employees go through so many life experiences—buying a house, having a child, going through an illness, etc. We are a part of their daily lives and they of ours. It sounds trite, but in the end, it's that connection that makes us strive toward higher quality and good service.

PN: Could you talk a bit about how the pandemic has affected you and your business?

SH: Back in March of 2020, we closed the shop as many other business owners did. Until we could learn more and ensure that we could keep our employees safe, we felt that was the best plan. We stayed closed until Memorial Day weekend—about two and a half months. It was a time of great uncertainty—financially and emotionally. A good friend and talented woodworker built us a little take out window. We thought we'd use it for a few months and hope for the best. It's still there today! In the beginning, it was just my husband and I along with our teenage son working in the shop. We weren't letting anyone in the shop and working just out of the take out window. We had to re-think everything—the menu, our ordering processes, our technology, etc.

We tried it alone for six weeks to make sure it was safe and then slowly brought back employees as they were ready to return. In October, we allowed three customers inside at a time to place orders. We will not return to having people eat in the café until after the summer. We want to make sure all of our staff have a chance to get the vaccine—something that has not happened yet. The safety of our staff is the highest priority right now. We could not have made it through this without our mighty little team—they have been incredible.

It took a lot of trust to work in a public-facing job during a global pandemic and those bonds take priority.

As any business owner will tell you, it's been a stressful time. Our revenues are, of course, hugely impacted. However, the goal has been to make it through this to the other side and keep our staff employed, and we seem to be doing that so far. Fingers crossed!

Keeping everyone safe, making sure we made the right financial decisions, applying for grants and federal programs, and making sure if we did survive, we weren't buried in debt, has been a steep hill to climb.

PN: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

SH: I can't stress enough how important our team has been. I hope the public sees that hospitality workers have shown up during this pandemic. We have been working through this challenging time to provide a little bit of 'normal' life for our community while everything else was in flux. I am also always just gobsmacked by the loyalty of our customers. They have shown us grace, supported us, and given us all the love to keep on going.



HILLTOP COFFEE IS LOCATED AT 100 CONGRESS ST IN PORTLAND.
THE CAFE IS OPEN FROM 8AM - 1PM, MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY.

Recommended Resources

by Editors

Books

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding
Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan
The Devil Wears Prada by Lauren Weisberger
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Plays

As You Like It by William Shakespeare
Fleabag by Phoebe Waller-Bridge
Intimate Apparel by Lynn Nottage
Mauritius by Theresa Rebeck
Ominum Gatherum by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros
Seminar by Theresa Rebeck

TV

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend
Girlfriends
Insecure
Jane the Virgin
The Mindy Project
Sex and the City

Film

Amélie
Mamma Mia!
Mildred Pierce
Palm Springs
Roman Holiday
She's the Man
When Harry Met Sally



PHOEBE WALLER-BRIDGE IN *FLEABAG* AT WYNDHAM'S THEATRE, 2019.

Portland Stage Company

Education and Outreach

Join Portland Stage as we discuss, debate, and explore the plays on our stage and in the classroom! Portland Stage is dedicated to bringing exciting theater, inspiring conversation, interactive experiences, and thought-provoking literature to a wide audience of youth and adult learners. Whether you take part in a discussion, subscribe to PlayNotes, take a class in our Theater for Kids space, or bring a group of students to see a performance, there is something here for everyone. How would you like to participate?

Student Matinee Series

The Portland Stage Student Matinee Program annually provides more than 7,000 middle and high school students from Maine and New Hampshire with discounted tickets for student matinees. This season, we are offering this program digitally. Portland Stage can send you the video in a way that works best for your group. We would be happy to do a workshop with you too!

Play Me a Story

Experience the Fun & Magic of Theater on Saturday Mornings at 10:30am with Play Me a Story: in your living room! All ages can enjoy a free performance of children's stories on Facebook live. Ages 4-10 are welcome to participate in an interactive workshop over zoom for \$5. Build literacy, encourage creativity and spark dramatic dreams!

After School Classes

After school classes at Portland Stage produce a safe environment for young people to find a higher sense of play, stretch their imaginations, and gain valuable social skills such as listening, risk-taking, ensemble building, public speaking, and leadership through storytelling. These classes are wildly fun, creative, spontaneous, and begin to build skills for the young actor or non-actor's voice, body, and imagination. Visit our website for this year's offerings!

Vacation and Summer Camps

Our theater camps are fun, challenging, and enriching. We use stories of all kinds to fuel these active, educational and lively, process-based week-long school vacation and summer programs for youth. Theater for Kids works with professional actors, directors, artisans, and composers. Students are invited to think, speak, and act, and even sing imaginatively, critically, and creatively in an environment of inclusivity and safe play.

Virtual Portland Stage PLAY

An interactive dramatic reading and acting workshop for elementary school students in grades K – 5. Professional teaching artists perform children's literature and classic poetry for the entire school, and then work with select classrooms in workshops based on the stories. Actors actively engage students in small groups/workshops using their bodies, voices, and imaginations to build understanding of the text while bringing the stories and characters to life. PLAY helps develop literacy and reading fluency, character recall, understanding of themes, social emotional skills, physical storytelling, and vocal characterization. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and activities based on the books and poems.

Virtual Directors Lab

Schools get access to a 50 minute filmed production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed by professional actors/teaching artists. After the performance, students engage directly with the text in an interactive virtual workshop with the actors and creative team. In these workshops, students practice effective communication, creative collaboration, rhetoric, and critical analysis. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and resources about the play we are focusing on. Directors Lab puts Shakespeare's language into the hands and mouths of the students, empowering them to be the artists, directors, and ensemble with the power to interpret the text and produce meaning.

Portland Stage Company

2020–2021 Staff

Anita Stewart *Executive & Artistic Director*

Artistic & Production Staff

Meg Anderson *Props Master*
Todd Brian Backus *Literary Manager*
Daniel Brodhead *Production Manager, Lighting & Sound Supervisor*
Hannah Cordes *Education Director*
Doane Dorchester *General Manager*
Ted Gallant *Technical Director*
Myles C. Hatch *Stage Manager*
Julianne Shea *Education Administrator*
Susan Thomas *Costume Shop Manager*

Affiliate Artists

Ron Botting	Callie Kimball
Peter Brown	Daniel Noel
Daniel Burson	Ed Reichert
Maureen Butler	Hans Indigo Spencer
Ian Carlsen	Dustin Tucker
Hannah Cordes	Bess Welden
Moira Driscoll	Monica Wood
Abigail Killeen	Sally Wood

Administrative Staff

Paul Ainsworth *Business Manager*
Cody Brackett *Marketing Associate*
Chris DeFilipp *House Manager*
Nolan Ellsworth *Front of House Associate*
Marjorie Gallant *Graphic Design Associate*
Beth Given *Development Director*
Mical Hutson *Marketing Director*
Jennifer London *Company Manager*
Martin Lodish *Finance Director*
Renee Myhaver *Assistant Box Office Manager*
Donald Smith *Audience Services Manager*
Madeleine St. Germain *Front of House Associate*
Lauren Stockless *Development Assistant*
Nathan Sylvester *Front of House Associate*
Adam Thibodeau *House Manager*
Shannon Wade *Front of House Associate*

Intern Company

Sophia B. Diaz *Education*
Macey Downs *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Zach Elton *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Whitney Edmonds *Costumes*
Meredith G. Healy *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Audrey Kastner *Electrics*
Beth Koehler *Stage Management*
Mollie Lipkowitz *Costumes*
Lizzie Lotterer *Company Management*
Courtney Prentiss *Stage Management*
Jordan Wells *Education*