

PlayNotes

Season | 48 Issue | 5



LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI

Written by Greg Lam

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Discussion Series

Join us for a Book Club-style **Page to Stage** with the Portland Public Library. Check out your copy of the script and join us two weeks before previews of each Mainstage Production. Scripts are available at the reference desk at the Main Branch of the Portland Public Library. This year discussions will be held over Zoom at 6pm. Feel free to come and chat about the plays with Literary Manager, Todd Brian Backus; his Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentices, and special guests. Visit portlandlibrary.com/programs-events/ for more information.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Portland Stage is suspending in-person and online talkbacks for the **Artistic Perspective** and **Curtain Call**. At this time we are working to distribute interviews between Anita Stewart (Executive and Artistic Director), Todd Brian Backus (Literary Manager), and the Casts and Artistic Teams of each production. We hope as the Omicron wave recedes we can move back to in-person discussions and will do so as soon as seems safe and efficient.



MEREDITH G. HEALY LEADS A CONVERSATION WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR, AND CAST OF *Rx MACHINA* BY CAITY-SHEA VIOLETTE AS PART OF THE 2021 DIGITAL LITTLE FESTIVAL OF THE UNEXPECTED.

Last Ship to Proxima Centauri

by Greg Lam

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Table of Contents

Letter from the Editors	5
Portland Stage's <i>Last Ship to Proxima Centauri</i>	
About the Play	6
An Interview with the Playwright: Greg Lam	7
About the Cast and Characters	9
An Interview with the Director: Kevin R. Free	12
Putting it Together: An Interview with Scenic Designer, Germán Cárdenas-Alaminos	15
The World of <i>Last Ship to Proxima Centauri</i>	
Pop Culture References in The Last Ship to Proxima Centauri	18
TIMELINE: The World of The Last Ship to Proxima Centauri	21
The Real Proxima Centauri	22
The US and Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees	24
A Brief History of Affirmative Action in Academia	26
Glossary	28
Digging Deeper	
Science Fiction for Social Change	30
Community Connections: An Interview with Arnold Macdonald, ILAP	32
Extras	
Recommended Resources	36

Letter from the Editors

Dear *PlayNotes* Readers,

Welcome to our fifth issue of *PlayNotes* for the 2021-2022 Season!

In this issue, we explore the 2020 Clauder Competition-winning play, *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* by Greg Lam. This futuristic play introduces us to three Americans on a spaceship bound for a new planet, who encounter an unexpectedly cool welcome when they arrive at their new home. *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* uses the veil of science fiction to comment upon very real problems that the US, and the world, are experiencing today. We explore some of these real-world issues addressed in the script with the articles "The US and Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees" (p. 24) and "A Brief History of Affirmative Action in Academia" (p. 26). "Science Fiction for Social Change" (p. 30) delves into the tradition of using science fiction as a means to discuss social issues. We spoke with Arnold Macdonald from Portland's Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project about how his organization works with refugees and immigrants across the state (p. 32). There are also interviews with several members of the creative team: playwright Greg Lam (p. 7), director Kevin R. Free (p. 12), and scenic designer Germán Cárdenas-Alaminos (p. 15) to get insight into the creative development of this new play. We have also included a timeline of events predating the show (p. 21), an overview of popular culture references made by the characters (p. 18), and an article describing the real planet Proxima Centauri b (p. 22), which seek to deepen our understanding about the future world in which this play is positioned.

When compiling each issue of *PlayNotes*, we strive to provide articles and interviews that give you insight into what the process has been like behind the scenes (see articles in "Portland Stage's *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*"), contain pertinent information about the play's setting and major themes ("The World of *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*"), and provide deeper dives into specific subjects that compelled our literary department ("Digging Deeper"). We include a list of books, films, plays, and television shows that we hope audiences will access for more cultural content that relates to the play ("Recommended Resources").

We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to seeing you at the theater!

Sincerely yours,

The Portland Stage Literary Department
Macey Downs
Meredith G. Healy
Todd Brian Backus

About the Play

by Macey Downs

The year is 4240. We find ourselves aboard Arclight 27, one of 715 spaceships that fled Earth over 2,000 years ago in search of a new home on planet Proxima Centauri b. One hundred thousand Americans are in deep freeze onboard as Captain Adelaide Russell and Pilot Morris Emerson finally reach the orbit of the new Earth colony—165 years later than expected. While Russell and Emerson anticipate a warm welcome and smooth landing, their first contact with the people of this new planet, now called Yeni Dünya (Turkish for “New World”), puts them on the defensive—why are they demanding to know the racial demographics of Arclight 27? *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* asks audiences to interrogate America’s history of white supremacy by dramatizing a universe in which Americans are refugees arriving to an already established planet. Playwright Greg Lam turns the narrative of American power on its head by putting White characters Russell and Emerson in the positions of asylum seekers, asking for acceptance from six global nations that Europeans and Americans have colonized, oppressed, and closed borders to on Earth for centuries.

This play boldly incorporates the use of multiple languages with Yeni Dünya’s multilingual residents Paz and Tunde. In doing so, Lam puts audience members in the shoes of the Arclight 27 passengers, displaced into a foreign land where English is not the dominant language and American culture is archaic. Those of us who only speak English are forced to consider what American assimilation into a non-Western-centric world would look like. The play leaves us questioning what it will take for White Americans to cease their legacy of dominance and destruction.

Last Ship to Proxima Centauri was the Grand Prize winner of Portland Stage’s 2020 Clauder Competition. For the past 40 years, the Clauder Competition has been open for New England playwrights to submit their unproduced plays to Portland Stage, where every submission is then reviewed by multiple readers and given thorough feedback. The top three plays receive a workshop in the Little Festival of the Unexpected, and Portland Stage commits to fully producing the Grand Prize winner the following season. *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* received its digital world premiere at Kitchen Dog Theater in Dallas, TX, in March 2021. Portland Stage’s production will be the play’s theatrical world premiere.



TOM FORD, MOIRA DRISCOLL, AND GALEN SHO SATO IN *LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI*,
PORTLAND STAGE'S LITTLE FESTIVAL OF THE UNEXPECTED, 2021.

An Interview with the Playwright: Greg Lam

Edited for Length and Clarity by Macey Downs



GREG LAM.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Macey Downs spoke with playwright Greg Lam about his career and the creation of *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*.

Macey Downs (MD): What has your career journey looked like?

Greg Lam (GL): I lived in Boston for the longest time, and 2002 was the first time I had a short play done in Boston as part of the Boston Theater Marathon. For quite a while I didn't know how to get my work out in many places, other than entering into the occasional thing—I was in the Boston Theater Marathon four or five times over the years, sometimes getting in, sometimes not—but I wasn't figuring out how to connect with other companies. I did development work, and I did creative stuff in different avenues. For about a decade I self-published a line of board games; I got into the *Games* magazine "Games 100" list. I tried to do some screenwriting things; I wrote a web series around the time my daughter was being born.

2016 was when I started figuring out things in the playwriting world. The Company One Theatre has a development lab that I got into, and that was where I really started to focus my view of myself on being a career playwright. I figured out how to submit my work to a broader range of different people, and get more connections, and get out there more.

MD: I feel really lucky to have gotten to see this play grow from the draft you submitted for the Clauder Competition to the near-final piece that we've been working with in rehearsals. Could you talk about your journey with the play, from submitting it to the Clauder Competition to now being in rehearsals for a full-length production?

GL: First I developed it as part of Company One; I was the first recipient of a fellowship with them and the Pao Arts Center, which supported the work of Asian American artists around Boston. When I brought the play to them, it was probably half of the first act and the general idea of the play. They fostered the creation of the first act, and we had a reading there. Later on, I got another reading with the Kitchen Dog Theater in Dallas, TX. When the pandemic hit, they were trying to figure out how to do it without live audiences, so they called me and put together a virtual production that was streamed, and that was wonderful as well. There was another reading at Orlando Shakespeare, and a reading here at Portland Stage as well as part of the Little Festival of the Unexpected. The major component that has changed at Portland Stage is that they commissioned full translations of the non-English text. There are sections of the play that have characters speaking different languages. Previously, I had written that the characters would start speaking the language and then designate a shift so that the audience understands that they're speaking a different language while hearing them speaking English. *Hunt for Red October* does that: a character starts speaking Russian, and then a shift

PORTLAND STAGE'S LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI



MOIRA DRISCOLL, SOL MARINA CRESPO, BROOKS BRANTLY, AND GALEN SHO SATO IN LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI, PORTLAND STAGE'S LITTLE FESTIVAL OF THE UNEXPECTED, 2021.

happens and they start speaking English, but we know they're still speaking Russian in their world. Portland Stage was interested in going with the more ambitious option of translating everything. And there will be supertitles over the stage with almost all of the English translations.

MD: I know you have stipulations written for, for example, Zoom productions of the play, as well as for a version of this play where there are no supertitles and audiences will just hear all of the languages being spoken without translation. Do you see a world in which one day this play would be presented in front of a multilingual audience, and different people would walk away with different experiences?

GL: The dream version of sitting in the crowd for this play is having some people who speak Mandarin Chinese and some people who speak Spanish, and then a joke or a reference comes by in Chinese or Spanish and the people who understand that just laugh out loud, and everyone else has to look at them and say to themselves, "What are they getting?" I am Chinese American, but I don't speak much Chinese at all, and what I do speak is Cantonese. The translation here is in Mandarin. I myself am not able to understand the thing I'm writing! I've had to hire a couple of translators to help me put that into place.

Growing up, I was often in the experience of being in a room with people who I didn't understand what they're saying. Like my uncles, aunts, and parents around the dinner table talking, and sometimes I knew they were talking about me, but I didn't understand

exactly what. It's an uneasy thing, even when it's just your family gossiping about you. In this play we deal with life-and-death power dynamics, and the people in charge are sometimes talking amongst themselves about you in a language you don't understand, and that's just a place I wanted to put characters.

MD: It has now been a few years since your first draft of the play. Has the relationship between the content of the play and what's going on in the world changed for you at all?

GL: All these things kept happening in the world, which increased resonance in the play. Police brutality is one of those things—the George Floyd protests put a sharp relief to that. The place where we started with the immigration debate—and that certainly hasn't gone away—it's not daily news now, but the flashpoint of the child separation policy in the Trump era was something that inspired the play to begin with. And being of Chinese heritage since the rise of COVID, the anti-Asian sentiment that that has brought about is certainly something that was not as present when I started writing. It's less fun being a Chinese American now than it was a couple of years ago. Suspicion of someone just because of their race is a large part of what I'm examining, and that has obviously been a major theme of events in the past few years. All that is making the play incredibly timely—a lot of headlines are converging with the theme of the play, which is good for the play, but bad for the world.

MD: It's wild how much content in the play feels like it's about our world in the past 1-2 years, and yet you conceptualized it even before that. Which also points to the ways in which all of those processes have been happening for a really long time, but have had more mainstream attention brought to them over the past few years.

GL: Just random stuff like, I decided to have some of the characters come from Seattle, which then became such a flashpoint during the George Floyd protests that summer. Among other things, I've been thinking about how that random choice has become a lot more relevant since then.

MD: Is there a specific scene, moment, or idea from the play that you are most excited for people to see or experience?

GL: The initial impetus of the play was the immigration crisis and how we treated refugees, which might not be your first impulse when you see the play—you might think, “Oh, he just set out to make a *Star Trek* parody.” But it’s just how my mind works; to use sci-fi to speak to the issues of today. So I’m interested in seeing Americans putting themselves in the mindset of refugees and needing help, or needing fair treatment from powerful people who aren’t inclined to give you fair treatment. I’m interested in seeing how audiences respond morally to the characters in the play. I want there to be one person coming out of the play and saying, “Oh, don’t you think this character was right?” And then the person they’re with will say, “What the heck do you mean? That character was awful!” I want there to be this conflict of: one minute you totally agree with this person, and the next minute they’re doing something you can’t agree with. I’m trying to put the characters, and thus the audience, in a difficult moral position, and just

play with how that shifts and can change. I’m interested in seeing what people come away with, and if they have a new perspective on anything than they had before.

Beyond that, I’m excited to see science fiction onstage. Being here I’ve seen how theater designers have been waiting all their lives to build a spaceship! That enthusiasm from the Portland Stage brings a smile to my face (under my mask).

MD: Is there anything else you want to add?

GL: I want to give due credit to the incredible actors we have, particularly Octavia and Jamal, who are having to take a crash course in Mandarin. Part of the play is having people that you don’t expect to speak Chinese speaking Chinese. They’re doing wonderfully with that. It’s definitely a challenging play in every regard—technically, having to learn these new things, mixing the comedy and tragedy, and having each character feel within their point of view that they are acting correctly even when they’re opposed to other characters.



GREG LAM DOES A READING WITH THE BOSTON PODCAST PLAYERS, 2019.

About the Cast and Characters

by Macey Downs



Tom Ford

Morris Emerson - The pilot of the ship. Gregarious. Pretty good at his job. Loves America, dammit.



Marcy McGuigan

Adelaide "Addie" Russell - The captain of the ship, Emerson's superior. Calm and calculating. Wears her responsibility well.



Kennedy Kanagawa

Henry Hirano - A graduate student of law. He gets along with most anyone, or at least he tries to.



Octavia Chavez-Richmond
Control 1 - A stern voice of the control room on Proxima Centauri.
Paz - A security officer. Native of Proxima Centauri. Fearful of newcomers, specifically Whites and males, and feels no compunction to moderate her feelings toward them. Impatient. Always on guard.

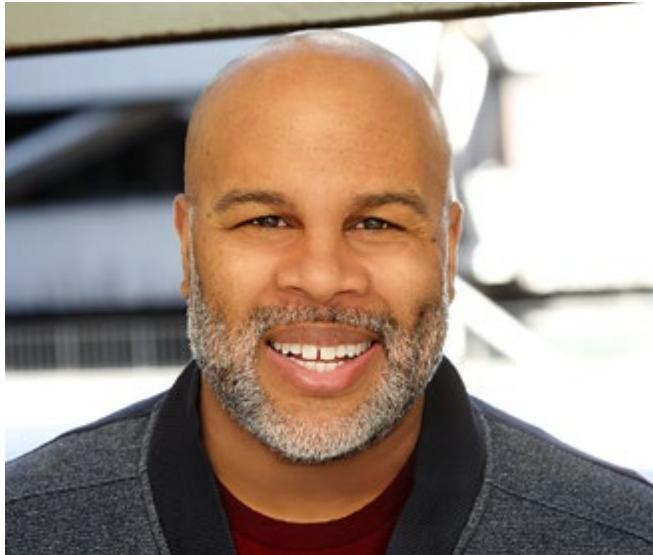


Jamal James
Control 2 - A more friendly voice of the control room on Proxima Centauri.
Tunde - A security officer. Native of Proxima Centauri. Enthusiastic admirer of American culture but does not let that cloud his judgment.



An Interview with the Director: Kevin R. Free

Edited for Length and Clarity by Macey Downs



KEVIN R. FREE.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Macey Downs spoke with director Kevin R. Free about how he has changed as a director over the years and what excites him about this play.

Macey Downs (MD): How did you become involved with this play, and was there something in particular that drew you into this script?

Kevin R. Free (KRF): I became involved because Anita [Stewart] reached out and said, "We're producing a play that I think you might really like, and we'd love if you would read it and let us know if you're interested." So I read it and I really loved it, and said, "Please introduce me to the playwright." So she did, and Greg Lam and I had a nice, lively conversation about the play, and how we feel about sci-fi. And Anita said via email when the job was offered, "I think you'd be really great for this play, Kevin." And I thought that was really nice, and I was really grateful because it's a world premiere play.

Everything that is great is deceptively simple. I think of a lot of things in colors and this play is very bright colors to me. Its darkness is obscured by how bright and funny it is. I love doing work that is socially relevant, and if it's

funny I know I can excel at doing it. So this play I was really excited about. I was drawn in just by what it is. Science fiction? I'm in. Comedy? I'm in. Has a message about the world that we live in? I'm all the way in. Everything about it drew me in.

MD: You've worked with Portland Stage a lot! Would you say that your approach/style as a director has changed since you first started working at this theater?

KRF: My style has changed, but changed in a way that's more about what I've always set out to do. Putting people first, and leading with compassion, and taking into account every person's humanity was really helpful coming into this experience. Also leading with transparency is important to me, too. I like for everybody to have input about what we're doing. I feel like I've done better with my casting on this play than ever before. And this is the biggest play I've directed onstage at Portland Stage: I've been here twice to do solo shows, and then did a two-person musical. So having five people onstage in a very tiny spaceship has been a beautiful and really great challenge. I think I've grown a lot. Not last time during *Where We Stand*, but the times before that, coming here I felt a little bit afraid to be confident as a leader. And since sometime last year I haven't been afraid to express that I know what I'm doing. There have been times as a collaborator where I think a thing, and when someone disagrees, I feel bad for not having been right. But now I don't care about right or wrong, I just want us to make a good piece of theater. So I'm not afraid to be a confident collaborator anymore. I'm not afraid to speak up for my vision, and if my vision is about having a world in which everybody can say their opinions about a moment, then it's okay! People can express themselves and then we'll just have a discussion about it. I'm less afraid of not being employed. There's always a time where you're like, "If I don't do well, if I don't mind my p's

and q's, I'll never work again." That whole thing. I'm no longer concerned about having creative discussions that turn into major disagreements.

MD: Could you talk a bit about your feelings on collaboration as a director, and how that has manifested with the *Last Ship* team?

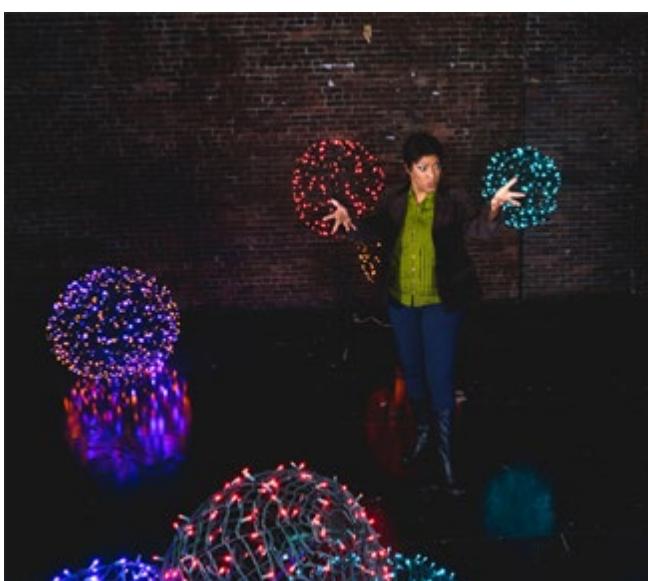
KRF: One of the great things about working with Tracey Conyer Lee [who previously performed at Portland Stage in *Lady Day...* (2017) and *Where We Stand* (2020)] so much is that she focuses on details, and I can focus on having an overarching vision of a piece. From working with her, and from my directing practice in general, I've learned that it's okay to be a vision person, it's okay to not know all of the details—and it's not that I don't know them, it's that I'm not focusing on them in the same way that other people who are doing more granular things or designing their pieces are. It's just a different focus. I feel at the height of my powers when I'm allowing myself to just have that big vision. Because I'm not afraid to hear somebody say, "Oh, here's this detail that you're missing." Because it's probably true! There used to be times where I would feel bad that I didn't think about one detail in a thing, but now I feel very excited that I understand that details are not my thing. And I rely on my collaborators to help me with those things. Now there are times that I catch details, and I think with this play I've done better with that because it's a world premiere and there are so many specific things about it that are brand

new. And the thing that I planned upfront was to get it all staged early so that we could really look at it. That's really my goal with everything that I do. And now we can look at that staging and see where it doesn't work and change it while we're still learning lines and still learning the play. And that's the way I always would like to work—to get it up and see what the entire picture is, and think, "Okay, here's where I can shade it here, and here's where we can shave it here, and here's a color I can paint right here that is missing."

I think that the rest of my career is going to be trying to figure out what my practice is. And how does it change as I get older, and how does it change based on where I go, and how does it change based on what my experiences were at the last job. When I was acting full time, just acting in plays, I didn't hang out with my director that much. And I often would think about the director as this solitary person who leaves rehearsal and goes home and does all of this work at home, and then comes back and has these insights into the play. And I think with this process I feel more like that director than I ever have in my life. That's partly just because these actors have such difficult and specific things that they have to do that I'm also trying to really care for them in the rehearsal process by giving them time to think and that kind of thing. And that's new for me, feeling like I need to separate myself to a certain extent from the actors in the room.

MD: You mentioned in rehearsal the goal and challenge we face with this play of telling the stories of marginalized people without making anyone in the room feel marginalized. How are you approaching that with the actors?

KRF: I think I'm just doing it. Tracey sent me a message the other day that just said "You're a great leader, and I know you know that, but I think you need to be reminded that it's true." And so as a person who is thoughtful, I'm trying to remain thoughtful while in the room. I'm trying to give the time that people ask for, and I'm also trying to give my time in the room to be there to help them figure out whatever needs to be done. When you get to discussions about the world, you don't know—I'm not gonna know if you feel marginalized unless you tell me



TRACEY CONYER LEE IN PORTLAND STAGE'S *WHERE WE STAND*, 2021.

you do. And while I can be a bulldozer, talking about myself and my experiences, I kinda expect other people to be bulldozers with talking about themselves and their experiences. So I hope that that's happening, and I hope that nobody feels alienated, and I hope that it's a really good time for all of us to be listening to one another about where we're coming from. One of the things I say all the time, especially to White actors in Black plays, is "I can hold space for you as we figure this out, and as you figure this out, but I can't hold your hand through it." Because that makes me feel bad about me, if I have to hold your hand to walk you through why a White person in history might have done this or that. So I don't think there's been any hand holding. And while there has been a lot of fear around some of the topics that have come up, those fears have worked themselves out in an interesting way. One of the ways that I hope that I'm helping is by pushing people to say what they mean and what they think. So we can get past that fearful place, and they can just act the piece in a way that shows that they know what they're talking about. At the end of the day it's just listening, and allowing what people are feeling to be expressed. It's about reading the room and being a human, and recognizing other people's humanity.

What's more difficult is knowing where I am emotionally and spiritually in it. That's the hardest part, is where am I in this, and what am I doing as a leader that might make them happy that I was transparent, or what might make them not happy that I was transparent.

MD: And you also made sure to work with Intimacy Director Hannah Cordes at the very beginning of our rehearsal process. Why did you choose to do that and how have the language/techniques she workshopped with us allowed the actors to do their jobs with this script?

KRF: The actors check in with each other about where they can touch each other and where they can't, and what that means. It gets them thinking about what their boundaries are. In many ways the play is about boundaries. The reason I wanted to do it is because it was offered, and I have some experience with intimacy direction. There's not "love making" in this play, but all of the relationships are intimate relationships. They're all very close to each other

on stage all the time. It was an opportunity for me to see how intimacy direction can help any process. It was really helpful to me to watch and be a part of that, and I'm sure I'll use what we learned in my own practice later.

MD: Is there a specific scene, moment, or idea from the play that you are most excited for people to see or experience?

KRF: I've never seen a play happen on a spaceship before, so I'm just excited about that. Seeing a play happen on a spaceship, that's really cool! There are a few times at the beginning of the play that I think "Oh! That's a good picture. Look at that! That's gonna be great." It's partly because there's just no space—it's a tiny little spaceship—and so sometimes when they hit on a picture that I sort of guided them to, they make these little tableaus that they don't even know that they're making that, to me, look like iconic spaceship tableaus. There are moments when they're looking outside the windows of the spaceship that just seem really real to me, I love that as well.

One of the things I love about this play is that everything takes place in real time. All of the events of the play unfold because of other events in the play. And it just snowballs. It snowballs in act one, and then the snowball melts in act two. The snowball rolls down the hill, picks up, and becomes this crazy avalanche; and then in act two it melts.

MD: Why is it important to do this play here, in Maine, and now in 2022?

KRF: Even though it addresses some issues that are "important," it's just a lot of fun. The thing I should really just say is: why not? Why shouldn't we produce this play. It's a good play! It's exciting and it presents issues in a really interesting way without making a point, without being didactic, without saying "This is how it needs to be," without instructing us on how to live our lives. It just says: "This is the thing. This is it. Here it is." And that's why I love it.

Putting it Together: An Interview with Scenic Designer, Germán Cárdenas-Alaminos

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy



GERMÁN CÁRDENAS-ALAMINOS.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Meredith G. Healy spoke with Germán Cárdenas-Alaminos, the scenic designer for *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*, about science fiction in theater, the collaboration between the design team for this production, and his path as a scenic designer.

Meredith G. Healy (MGH): What are you most excited about with regard to the set for *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*?

Germán Cárdenas-Alaminos (GCA): I am excited to work on building a spaceship! I think that's the main purpose and the main focus. I also teach scenic design at Bowdoin College, and one of the topics that has been on my mind since I read the script, and this relates to some of the design exercises that I do in class, was how we envision our society as the ideal one. How does one define the world of *Proxima Centauri*, or a strange star or planet? What does that look like? Is it a paradise?

What is that paradise arranged by? So, I think on one side it is building the spaceship and getting ourselves immersed in that, and at the same time we're building the environment around the spaceship for when we enter the strange new world.

MGH: Speaking of the spaceship, what were your inspirations for the design of the ship? Did you draw from popular works of science fiction, like *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, or was it based on NASA space shuttles?

GCA: I started with everything! I looked at the most famous science fiction starship references, and this included both *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*. I felt when I read the play that *Star Trek* was too sleek. The technology didn't match with what my instinct was telling me about these characters. There's something about the dialogue of these two pilots, Emerson and Russell, that feels as if they're still on planet Earth in their own world. What's attractive is to translate a little bit of that. So yes, we looked at *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, but we also saw *Battlestar Galactica* and *Aliens*. There's a lot of great resources there that show the distress of these spaceships. We even took a look at *Spaceballs*. This let us see the extreme of *Star Trek* on one side to the camper navigating through space. We ended up abandoning those two extremes, but something that was attractive about *Battlestar Galactica* was the military look and the roughness of the craft. We also looked at the cockpits of B-52s and other real military crafts and other science fiction movies that illustrated a more simplistic interior look. But we still want fun elements to look at, like the lights or handles to account for zero gravity. There are tactile things in the script that make it a combination of a real space station, but also has pieces of the military aircraft.

MGH: You mentioned being excited about exploring the world of *Proxima Centauri* after the landing. Can you talk a little about what you imagine that transformation will look like?

GCA: The first thing I imagined when I read the play for the first time was a Caribbean sea, very calm, pristine, beautiful, endless, empty sky. That was my first impulse. After talking with Kevin [R. Free, director], we had more ideas about bringing in color. It's either a beautiful magic, pristine, empty landscape, or it's full of saturated colors. We ended up exploring the idea of the saturated colors and were inspired by the works of Yayoi Kusama, who is a great sculptor and graphic artist that combines not only color, but also very organic shapes. This makes a sharp contrast between the stark darkness or void in the first act versus the second act which is a much more saturated colorful environment.

MGH: My understanding of this scenic design is that it requires lots of collaboration between you (as the scenic designer), and lights and props. What has this experience been like? Do you feel like this interdisciplinary approach is something you encounter often as a scenic designer?

GCA: I am so excited about this. It's wonderful! It so happens that we are all fans of science fiction, some more than others, but we are all fans. What this means is that we can engage in conversations about trying to solve and figure out what pieces we need to attach to the walls of this spaceship. It involves everyone's input, including Seth [Asa Sengel] with sound and Jamie [Grant] with lighting. Then Ted [Gallant, technical director], Meg [Anderson, properties master], and myself will make sure that the set dressing captures the aesthetic of the spaceship from our research. We have to be careful with the balance of not overcomplicating, but being able to see the weird latches and equipment that would be inside the spaceship. There's something funny though—there will be set dressing around the spaceship that will be familiar to the audience. There is a very domestic side to the spaceship. I think the play hinges on this recognition of this layer of the spaceship in terms of how it has been used.



CONVERSATIONS IN HEAVEN, YAYOI KUSAMA, 2012.

MGH: Have you also been collaborating closely with costumes?

GCA: Haydee [Zelideth, costume designer] and I had a great conversation. We spoke about the texture and color for the second part of the play. The interior of the spaceship is being kept very neutral, with different shades of gray. The uniforms of the US pilots come from a more military world, there's a sense of unity there. While [on the planet], the environment has more color and there is also more texture on the fabric that comes from the new society. We want to find a good contrast between each act, and want to make sure we're on the same page so that things aren't blending into the background.

MGH: Is designing for a new work different from designing for a play that has been produced many times?

GCA: Yes, it gives you some sort of freedom! This is especially true of this show as we've been trying to invent a place that nobody has ever gone to. It has been great to collaborate with Kevin and the other designers to make up the rules of the world and to see what that world sounds and looks like. It feels like I have more room to be inventive.

MGH: What has your journey been like as a set designer?

GCA: I studied architecture in Mexico City. I was attracted to scenic design because of a production I saw of *The Tempest* in Mexico City. I loved how the characters, who were wearing period costumes, moved around a very contemporary thrust stage with a shiny floor and abstract background. It transported me. I happened to make connections with that scenic designer, Mónica Raya, and she was the first person who told me about grad school in the US and pursuing that career. I decided I wanted to give it a try. It opened a path to me that was fresh and exciting. I loved opening my mind and sharing my ideas with other artists. I graduated with my master's degree in 2007, and then I started teaching in a college in New Jersey. I built a technical theater program which was all-consuming with blood and sweat, but I'm very happy for that. Destiny opened another opportunity to move to Brunswick, Maine, with my family and I started teaching at Bowdoin College in 2019. As a scenic designer, I like doing research on very different topics and exploring different aesthetics. I like immersing myself in different worlds.

MGH: Do you have any advice for young people pursuing a career in the theater, or more specifically in scenic design?

GCA: Be patient with it, opportunities will come and present themselves to you. Have a lot of passion about it, that's the driving end of things. I've been lucky enough to have the

time and flexibility to be able to invest time and passion in this craft. I also have been patient with my opportunities, which has let me work with people who I respect and admire, and that inspire me. More specifically, you must practice your craft and be an advocate for theater and the performing arts.

MGH: What are you hoping audiences will take away from this production? Why do you feel like it is important to produce this play right now?

GCA: I think the play flips the coin in a way. My hope is that the audience has a different perspective about what it means to become an outsider in a strange world. That was something that spoke to me directly. I love science fiction, and I think science fiction puts that mirror in front of us of "What would happen if..." Science fiction is a great vehicle to explore that both philosophically and aesthetically. The other part is, if we have the opportunity to rebuild humankind, what does that look like? What's the ideal of a society? What do we aim for? It's a big question that I don't have the answer to! The last point I want to make is, if we go back to something that looks like planet Earth like the situation that happens in the play, do we still have to build walls to respect borders? Is there a different way to recognize our differences, our richness, our diversity? I also would love to see more science fiction on stage! I am so lucky that this show fell into my hands, and I'd like to see more theater like this!



GERMÁN CÁRDENAS-ALAMINOS's MODEL FOR *LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI*, 2022.

Pop Culture References in *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*

by Macey Downs



Based on the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin, *Game of Thrones* is a fantasy drama series that aired for eight seasons on HBO from 2011 to 2019. *Game of Thrones* features dragons, magic, and a large ensemble cast with many interconnected storylines against the backdrop of the warring fictional continents of Westeros and Essos. The show's most central plots are around a war of succession for the Iron Throne (which rules over Westeros's Seven Kingdoms), noble families fighting for their communities' independence, and how the kingdoms grapple with the world's changing and freezing climate. The series was critically acclaimed for the majority of its run, and centered around themes of the relationship between good and evil, the pursuit and corruption of power, and identity.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is a science fiction TV show that aired from 1987 until 1994. It was the third series in the *Star Trek* franchise. Starring Patrick Stewart as Captain Jean-Luc Picard, *The Next Generation* follows the starship Enterprise and her crew as they travel the galaxy in the 24th century. While the show's primary focus was the exploration of alien worlds and the lifeforms that inhabited them, it often touched on philosophical issues of what it meant to be human and how to be respectful of other cultures and civilizations.



Friends is an American sitcom that aired for ten seasons from 1994 to 2004. The show centers around a cast of six young adult friends who live in Manhattan apartments, hang out at the Central Perk coffeehouse, and look for love (which they sometimes find with each other) in New York City. As these characters grow and learn in both their personal lives and careers, *Friends* explores the theme of chosen family and adds both humor and depth around the struggles people face in their mid-twenties.

Named after one of its creators and its leading actor, Jerry Seinfeld, *Seinfeld* is a sitcom that aired from 1989 until 1998. *Seinfeld* plays a fictionalized version of himself, and the show follows his personal life with his three friends, with scenes often taking place in his Manhattan apartment. *Seinfeld* focuses on the characters' day-to-day lives, and has often been described as a "show about nothing." The show chose to break the often formulaic conventions of mainstream television from its time, instead opting to subvert audience expectations and reject sentimentality.



The Simpsons is an animated sitcom about the dysfunctional Simpson family, set in the fictional town of Springfield. The show debuted in 1989 and has run for 33 seasons, making it the longest-running American animated series, sitcom, and scripted primetime TV series. It uses a floating timeline, meaning its plot takes place in the year that the episodes aired, but the characters never age and appear the same as they did when the series began. *The Simpsons* is a satirical depiction of American life that parodies American culture and society, television, and the human condition.

Frasier is a sitcom that originated as a spinoff of the TV show *Cheers*, and was broadcast from 1993 to 2004. The show is set in Seattle, Washington—the hometown of the psychiatrist Frasier Crane (a character from *Cheers*), who has moved back to Seattle to become a radio host. The show follows Frasier as he reconnects with his father and brother, and is faced with class and familial conflicts. A revival of *Frasier* is expected to premiere in 2022.





Quentin Tarantino is an American filmmaker, most notably known for *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003), *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (2004), *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), *Django Unchained* (2012), and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019). His films are characterized by dark humor, nonlinear storylines, and stylized violence, but have also been criticized for their depictions of violence against women and use of racial slurs.



Joss Whedon is an American filmmaker, comic book writer, and composer known for his contributions to the sci-fi canon. He created TV shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly*, and wrote movies including *Serenity* (2005), *The Cabin in the Woods* (2011), and *The Avengers* (2012). His works explore themes of existentialism, free will, power, sexuality, and adulthood. However, the #MeToo Movement put a spotlight on Whedon's inappropriate, abusive, and hostile treatment particularly of women on the sets of his projects.



Jordan Peele is an American director, writer, producer, comedian, and actor known for his film and television work in comedy and horror. He frequently collaborates with Keegan-Michael Key, such as in their comedy sketch series *Key & Peele*. His horror films *Get Out* (2017) and *Us* (2019) were critically acclaimed and helped bring attention to an emerging subgenre of horror, focusing on race and racial trauma.



Ryan Murphy is a television creator best known for his series *Glee* and *American Horror Story*. His work is cited as helping incite a shift in mainstream television toward being more inclusive in its storytelling by calling for more marginalized voices and stories to be centered in popular media.



Shonda Rhimes is an American television producer and writer. She's known for being the creator, head writer, and executive producer for the TV shows *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*, *Scandal*, *How to Get Away With Murder*, and *Bridgerton*. Her shows feature strong female characters as leads and were early examples of the addition of color-conscious casting and LGBT romances in mainstream television.

TIMELINE: The World of *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*

By Macey Downs



<p>~2100s</p> <p>Arclight 27 is stuck in Neptune's orbit for 165 years. This is likely early in their 2,000-year journey because Neptune is only four light-hours away from Earth.</p>	<p>4085</p> <p>Ten years into the Yeni Dünyans' arrival, more than 90% of settlers have died due to the planet's hostile animals, deadly disease, and poisonous atmosphere, as well as conflict between the communities of the six ships. The 10% of settlers who remain have no choice but to work together to survive, and begin passing laws that force people to do so, such as requiring people to marry outside their own race.</p>	<p>4215</p> <p>Arclight 27's previous captain and pilot, Schwartz and Johannson, die on a spacewalk mishap. Captain Russell and Pilot Emerson are awakened from stasis to take their shift, and immediately have to repair the ship's engine.</p>	<p>2047</p> <p>The approximate year of the Departure and Great Abandonment of Earth, based on the number of years Henry Hirano has been in stasis (2,193).</p>
			<p>4075</p> <p>The planned Arrival date for the 715 Arclights from Earth to finish their journey of 4.5 light-years to Proxima Centauri b. Only six Arclights actually land as planned: Arclight 7 from Beijing, China; Arclight 53 from Lagos, Nigeria; Arclight 93 from Salvador de Bahia, Brazil; Arclight 146 from Bangalore, India; Arclight 282 from Mexico City, Mexico; and Arclight 455 from Istanbul, Turkey. The settlers name the planet Yeni Dünya, which is Turkish for "New World."</p>
			<p>~4100</p> <p>The Yeni Dünyans successfully terraform the planet's atmosphere, and create major settlements in the northern hemisphere.</p>

The Real Proxima Centauri

by Macey Downs

Last Ship to Proxima Centauri tells the story of one percent of Earth's population fleeing to the nearest habitable planet as our home faces irreversible destruction. As the climate crisis has loomed continuously larger, and we have exploited more and more of Earth's resources, the narrative of needing to escape our current planet for the next one has been discussed in both science and media for decades.

What We Know About Proxima Centauri b
 Proxima Centauri b (also called Proxima b) is a real exoplanet (a planet outside of our solar system) that scientists discovered on August 24, 2016. Proxima b is in its star's "habitable zone," meaning it orbits at a distance that allows for comfortable temperatures and the possibility for liquid water—both necessary for supporting life from Earth. Proxima b orbits the red dwarf (the smallest and coolest kind of star) Proxima Centauri, which is part of the triple star system Alpha Centauri. Our Sun is a yellow dwarf, meaning it is larger, brighter, and hotter than Proxima Centauri, but still small compared to "giant" stars. Since Proxima Centauri is a red dwarf, a planet could orbit closer to it than Earth does to the Sun and still have the possibility of supporting life.

Proxima b's proximity to Earth has made it an exoplanet of special interest to scientists. At 4.2 light-years away, it is one of the two closest exoplanets to our solar system. Proxima b is also Earth-like in size, with a mass of 1.17 Earth masses. Because of its closeness to its star, and the dwarfed size of its star, it only takes Proxima b 11.2 Earth-days to revolve around Proxima Centauri.

What Could Living on Proxima Centauri b Be Like?

Scientists believe that Proxima b is a rocky planet, which could lead to a very textured and mountainous surface. Its gravity is likely very similar to Earth, with a slightly higher gravitational pull that could cause wear and tear on human bones over the course of their lives.

Despite the star Proxima Centauri being smaller than our Sun, its proximity would cause it to appear much larger in the sky than our Sun does, but likely dimmer to the eye than our Sun is from Earth. The other two stars in the Alpha Centauri system would also appear in the sky, smaller than our Sun does but larger and brighter than the stars we are used to seeing on Earth.

Time would also move differently on Proxima b than it does on Earth. A year on Proxima b is only 11.2 Earth days, so inhabitants would either continue to conceptualize years with Earth-time and make time irrelevant to the orbiting of the planet, or would reconceptualize what a year is altogether. It's unclear what days would look like on Proxima b—the planet could spin at a different rate than Earth, making days longer or shorter. The planet might also be tidally locked to its star in the same way that the Moon is to Earth, meaning that one side of the planet would always be facing the star (and therefore it would always be "day") and the other side would always be in darkness, making half of the planet uninhabitable. We also don't know if the planet has a tilt like Earth does, which is what causes Earth's seasons. Without a tilt, and because of its only 11-day-long orbit around its star, seasons could be nonexistent on Proxima b, with the temperatures and climates on different parts of the planet remaining stagnant year-round.

Scientists don't know yet if Proxima b has a viable atmosphere that would protect it from solar winds and radiation from its star, allowing for water and life to form. If Proxima b does have an atmosphere, it would need to protect its planet from frequent flares that emit off of the star Proxima Centauri—dramatic and unpredictable increases in brightness for a few minutes. This would be visible from the surface of the planet, where light from the star would intensify and make life hotter and brighter for a few minutes at random times. Proxima b's atmosphere would also need to protect the

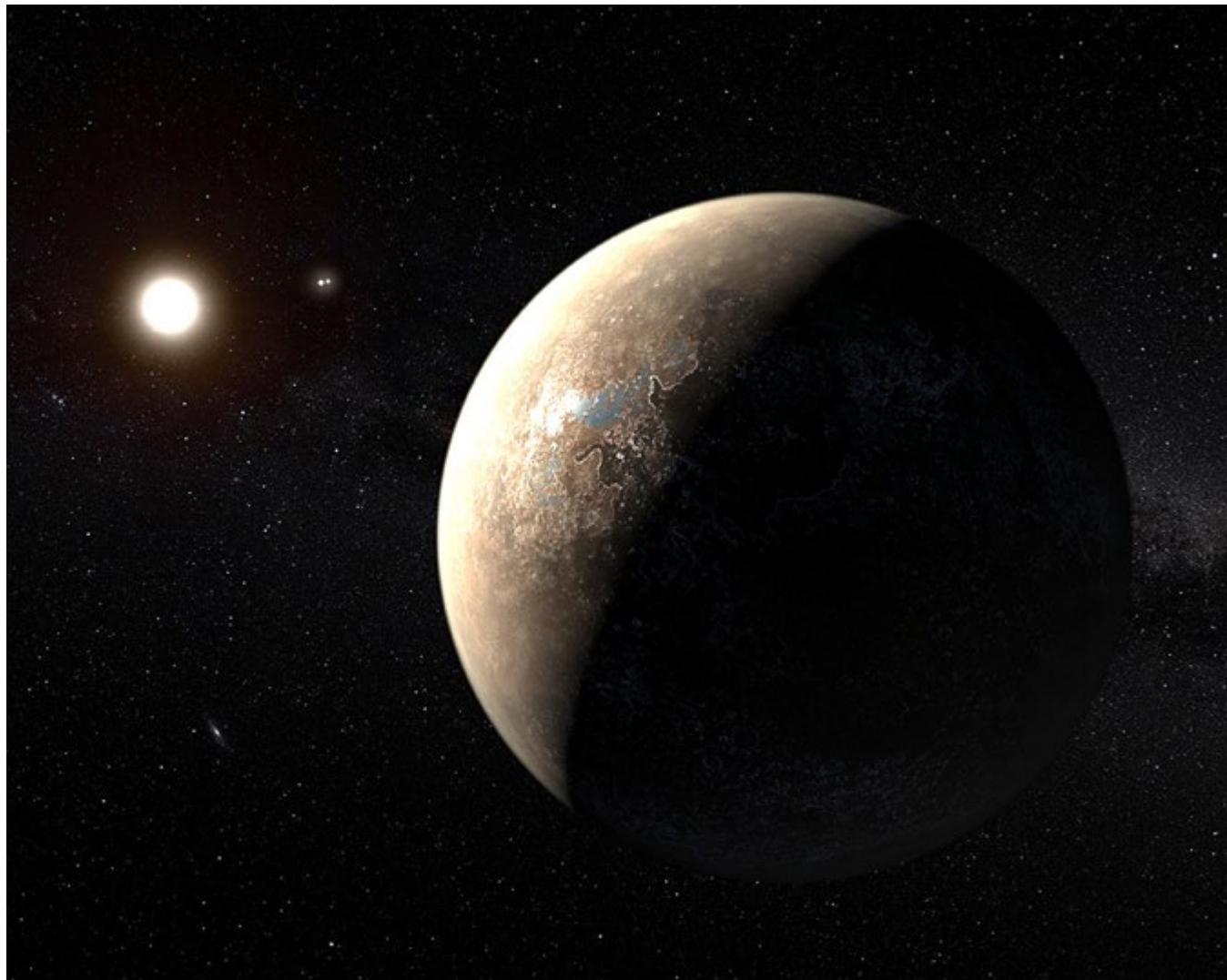
THE WORLD OF LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI

exoplanet from radiation that emits from its red dwarf star at a higher rate than it does from the Sun. Even with atmosphere, radiation could evaporate water, making it more scarce than water on Earth. This is one of the largest of the many uncertainties scientists have about Proxima b: if this Earth-like planet truly has the capabilities to support any forms of life, let alone life from Earth.

Many of the things we take for granted on Earth would be just different enough on Proxima b, despite its Earth-like-ness, that extreme adaptation would be at the core of humans' survival. Even descendants of the first inhabitants who would be born on the planet would constantly need to recalibrate: both in terms of their physical bodies, which evolved on Earth to function complementarily to Earth's

characteristics; and in terms of human culture and society, which developed in communication with Earth's relationship to our Sun, Moon, and position in the universe. *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* contributes to the narrative of what it would mean to leave Earth behind, rather than embracing the societal and economic changes necessary to save our home planet from our destruction. The play posits that, if we don't fix our problems here on Earth, they will always follow us, even across the universe.

Discovery of Proxima Centauri d
On February 10, 2022 during the rehearsal process for *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*, astronomers announced the discovery of Proxima d. It only takes this tiny planet five days to orbit Proxima Centauri and it is one-quarter the mass of Earth.



AN ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE REAL PROXIMA CENTAURI B. THE ACTUAL APPEARANCE OF THE PLANET IS UNKNOWN.

The US and Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees

by Meredith G. Healy

CONTROL #1

What gives you the right to the 165 years of hard-won progress in our taming of this world? You who have contributed nothing but you want to reap the rewards? You now expect equal voice in our decisions?

RUSSELL

Can we land and then discuss this?

CONTROL #1

You are to return to the orbit that we specified for you. Any unauthorized attempt to land will result in further defensive measures taken against your vessel.

RUSSELL

We are seeking asylum!

CONTROL #1

Asylum has not been granted.

The US prides itself on being a "melting pot" of people with origins from across the globe. However, the country has had a complicated history with accepting immigrants and refugees since the nation's founding in 1776. The first explicit law to dictate citizenship, the Naturalization Act of 1790, limited citizenship to free Whites who had lived in the US for at least two years and were of "good moral character." It was not until the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868 that citizenship was granted to all those "born or naturalized in the United States."

However, the path to citizenship for those not born on US soil remained difficult for the next century. The Naturalization Act of 1870 extended naturalization rights to all "aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent," but did not include other races, notably Asians. This population was the subject of many restrictive laws that limited the number of people able to enter the US, the first of which was the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). This law was motivated by a

growing fear that immigrants were taking job opportunities away from American citizens and signaled a shift in the US's immigration policy becoming more restrictive.

Over the following 70 years, the US passed additional laws and acts that placed annual quotas on the number of immigrants from specific countries who could enter the US, imposed literacy requirements, and stripped women who married immigrants of their US citizenship. Following the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, the Cable Act (1922) restored citizenship to women married to immigrants. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 finally established a path to citizenship for immigrants of any race and ethnicity. A decade later, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was responsible for establishing the guiding principles for modern US immigration, which include prioritizing the reunification of families, employment, and providing a safe haven for refugees. Today, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) is responsible for regulating US immigration and can grant up to 675,000 permanent immigrant visas each year.

In 1980, the Refugee Act gave the president of the US, in conjunction with Congress, the ability to determine the number of refugees that the US will accept in a year. This number can be adjusted annually to better account for global events. For example, George W. Bush reduced the number of refugees from 90,000 to 70,000 following September 11. The political agenda and platform of the president also can greatly impact the ceiling for refugee admissions. Over his eight years in office, Barack Obama brought the ceiling back to 85,000 annual admissions; however by 2020 (prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic), Trump had reduced annual admission to a historic low of 18,000. President Joe Biden has worked to show that the US welcomes refugees by raising the cap to 125,000 for 2022.

In 2014, the US began to see a shift in the

people seeking to enter the country via the southern border with Mexico: from single adults from Mexico to families and children from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador who were trying to escape violence and poverty. Many of these people are asylum seekers, meaning that they are at risk and seeking protection due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, but have not yet been legally recognized as a refugee. Anyone arriving in the US under these conditions may apply for asylum.

However, in recent years the process of being granted asylum has become increasingly difficult due to restrictions established by the Trump administration and continued by the Biden administration. The crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which allowed the Trump administration to invoke Section 265 of US Code Title 42. Title 42 states that:

[w]henever the Surgeon General determines that by reason of the existence of any communicable disease in a foreign country there is serious danger of the introduction of such disease into the United States, and that this danger is so increased by the introduction of persons or property from such country that a suspension of the right to introduce such persons and property is required in the interest of the public health, the Surgeon General, in accordance with regulations approved by the President, shall have the power to prohibit, in whole or in part, the introduction of persons and property from such countries or places as he shall designate in order to avert such danger, and for such period of time as he may deem necessary for such purpose.'

Despite his efforts to make the US more open to receiving refugees, President Joe Biden continues to use this controversial piece of legislation to deny entry to those seeking asylum in the US, many of whom are children. Early in his presidency, Biden reversed a Trump-era policy of turning away unaccompanied minors at the border, and instead minors are now processed and placed with relatives or American sponsor families. The problem is that this processing takes time, and during the waiting period the youth are



MIGRANTS AT THE US/MEXICO BORDER, MARCH 2021.

still held in detention centers. In March 2021, the number of migrant teens and children in Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) shelters or Border Patrol stations reached an all-time high of 12,000. The 8,500 in DHHS shelters was over three times higher than the peak during the Trump administration. The living conditions of these centers, aptly described as "cages" by the media, have also not been significantly improved by the Biden administration. The areas are separated by sheets of plastic, and thin mats are placed directly on the concrete floors. Migrants arriving at the US border are under the impression that Biden has made entry into the country more accessible. Biden officials blame the current immigration problems on the system they inherited from the last administration, but it is now the responsibility of his administration to offer and implement solutions to the decades-old problem.

In *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*, Americans Adelaide Russell, Morris Emerson, and Henry Hirano attempt to gain entry and acceptance to the new world, Yeni Dünya, by seeking asylum. During negotiations, Tunde offers that the Committee might consider letting the children stay with foster families before potentially reviving the adults at a later date. The Americans are distraught by this compromise and can't understand the country's reluctance to accept their ship and passengers. However, the Committee's actions should not shock an American audience: similar actions have been taken by the US government for generations and continue to this day.

A Brief History of Affirmative Action in Academia

by Meredith G. Healy

HENRY

Quota! That's it! Oh my God. "Adelaide Russell."

Now I remember where I've heard your name before!

RUSSELL

Do you?

HENRY

We studied your case in Law School. Russell v. Stanford University. That was you, right? You're "Addie on the Waitlist"!

In the midst of negotiating to be accepted to join the nation of Yeni Dünya, Henry Hirano and Adelaide Russell devolve into an argument based in the "us vs. them" mentality. This culminates with Henry's realization that as a college student, Addie brought a case to the Supreme Court alleging that Stanford University was using affirmative action to discriminate against prospective White students. Although this particular case is fictional, affirmative action has been consistently challenged since its establishment, and is currently being challenged by lawsuits. What is the history of the implementation of this policy?

Affirmative action is defined as "an active effort to improve the employment or educational opportunities of members of minority groups and women; also: a similar effort to promote the rights or progress of other disadvantaged persons." The first president to use the term in an effort to promote racial equality was President John F. Kennedy in 1961 when he instructed government contractors to "...take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin" (Executive Order 10925). The Civil Rights Act, which was proposed by President Kennedy in 1963 and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, officially prohibited



PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON SIGNS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, 1964.

discrimination based on the traits stated in Kennedy's Executive Order. This act also gave the US Justice Department and Civil Rights Commission the power to legally enforce claims of racial and sexual discrimination. In 1968, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* dictated that all school boards had to provide a plan to end segregation.

The 1970s brought the first bout of challenges to affirmative action's place in academia, and the notion that it is a form of "reverse discrimination" gained popularity among White students and job applicants. After being denied admission to University of California (UC) Davis's medical school despite having a higher GPA and MCAT scores than admitted applicants, White applicant Allan Bakke filed a lawsuit against the school. At the time, the university held 16 of the 100 spots for students of color. In 1978, the Supreme Court ruled that quotas like this were unconstitutional, but that race could be used as one factor, of

many, when making admissions decisions. The Regents of the University of California voted to end the use of affirmative action, and thus race, gender, ethnicity, or national origin as a factor in admissions for all of the University of California campuses. This went into effect in 1998, upon which the schools experienced drops in the admission rates of Black, Latinx, and Native American students. University of California Los Angeles had a 36% decline and UC Berkeley had a 61% decline. Over the past decade, affirmative action has continued to be scrutinized and more cases have been argued in front of the Supreme Court. After Abigail Fisher got rejected from the University of Texas at Austin, she filed a case stating that using race as a factor in admissions decisions violated her rights. In 2016, the Supreme Court ruled (4-3) in defense of the University of Texas at Austin's use of affirmative action to increase racial and ethnic diversity.

Affirmative action policies will face another challenge later this year. In January 2022, the Supreme Court agreed to hear whether or not racially conscious programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill are unconstitutional. The case against Harvard argues that the university is discriminating against prospective Asian American students, whereas the case against UNC Chapel Hill argues that prospective White students are being denied admission in favor of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. Both universities maintain that

race-conscious admissions policies are lawful, as long as race is considered among other criteria for admission. The cases will likely be heard in October and many are concerned that affirmative action might be overturned due to the more conservative breakdown of the Supreme Court. Interestingly, even though 58% of Americans believe that having greater racial and ethnic diversity makes the US a better place to live, a 2019 survey from the Pew Research Center found that 73% of all American adults think that race and ethnicity should not factor into college admissions decisions. Amongst White Americans, this number jumps to 78%.

As Henry breaks down Addie's past, he highlights the immense privilege that she benefited from in the United States. Not only was she able to get a case heard in front of the US Supreme Court, but she also was accepted into the extremely competitive Arclight space pilot program, which guaranteed her a spot on the ship and saved her from dying with the billions of people left behind on Earth. Henry notes that her case overturned programs in place to encourage diversity in higher education, and in our world the cases being brought to the Supreme Court this year could have a similar impact. This would negatively affect the diversity of classrooms across the US, and would have far-reaching consequences in a multitude of other aspects of American life.



ABIGAIL FISHER IN FRONT OF THE US SUPREME COURT, 2015.

Glossary

by Macey Downs

Airlock: An intermediate chamber with two airtight doors or openings to permit passage between two dissimilar spaces (such as two places of unequal atmospheric pressure).



ASTRONAUT IN AN AIRLOCK.

Ameliorate: To make (something, such as a problem) better, less painful.

Atrophied: Having wasted away or decreased in size.

Bogey: An unidentified aircraft, especially one assumed to be hostile.

Comm System: A system capable of providing communication and information transfer between persons and equipment. The system usually relies on the compatibility of multiple different technologies (personal communication devices, computer systems, and connections between different ships/control stations) that must operate in unison in order to pass along the information or communique.

Contract Theory: A theory in law and economics; the study of how people and organizations construct and develop legal agreements.

Deep Freeze/Stasis: A slowing or stoppage of the normal flow of a bodily fluid or semifluid—such as a slowing of the current of circulating blood—in order to elongate the lifespan of an organism.

Envoy: A person delegated to represent one government in its dealings with another.

Featurette: A short film.

Barney Fife: A fictional small-town deputy sheriff in *The Andy Griffith Show*, known for being smug and self-important.



BARNEY FIFE.

Hull: The main body of a usually large or heavy craft or vehicle (such as an airship).

Ingrate: An ungrateful person.

Internment Camp: Used to imprison large groups of people indefinitely without charges or the intent to file charges—often imprisoning innocent people on the grounds of “preventing” them from committing a crime. Japanese internment camps were established during WWII by Franklin D. Roosevelt, making it policy that anyone of Japanese descent would be incarcerated—a culmination of the federal government’s long racist and violent history toward Asian Americans.

Kamikaze: From the Japanese (literally “divine wind”) referencing an airplane to be flown in a suicide crash on a target.

Latitude: Freedom to choose how to act or what to do.

THE WORLD OF LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI

Manifest: A list of passengers or an invoice of cargo for a vehicle (such as a ship or plane).

Miscreant: One who behaves criminally or viciously.

Nonviable: Not capable of living, growing, developing, or functioning successfully.

Payload: The load carried by an aircraft or spacecraft consisting of things (such as passengers or instruments) necessary to the operation of the flight.

Plateau: A large, flat area of land that is higher than other areas of land that surround it.

Referendum: The principle or practice of submitting to popular vote a measure passed on or proposed by a legislative body, or a measure introduced by a popular initiative.

ROTC: Reserve Officer Training Corps, a college-to-military program that trains students to become commissioned officers while also earning their academic degrees; often accompanied by a scholarship that covers their tuition.



ROTC STUDENTS.

Sandbagging: Concealing or misrepresenting one's true position, potential, or intent, especially in order to gain an advantage over or treat unfairly.

Seahawks: Refers to the American football team the Seattle Seahawks; they are the only professional football team located in the Pacific Northwest.

Spacewalk: Any time an astronaut gets out of a spacecraft while in space.

Stanford: An elite private research university in Stanford, California.



STANFORD UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

Strafed: To have fired at a target at close range, especially with machine-gun fire from low-flying aircraft.

Thinktank: An institute, corporation, or group organized to study a particular subject (such as a policy issue or a scientific problem) and provide information, ideas, and advice.

U-Dub: University of Washington; a public research university in Seattle, Washington.

Vacuum System: A system which maintains the pressure inside a chamber under the value of the atmospheric pressure. Vacuum toilets are often used on aircrafts, which suck waste into a tank or garbage bag.

Science Fiction for Social Change

by Meredith G. Healy

The first lines that the audience hears during *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri* echo the iconic opening words of Jean-Luc Picard's introduction to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Pilot Morris Emerson then goes on to recite the rest of the monologue. Emerson's ability to recall the entirety of this speech might be a result of his 25 years spent watching old episodes in the cockpit, but there are many people on Earth in 2022 who could achieve the same feat. *Star Trek*, and the larger genre of science fiction, have impacted generations of viewers and the population as a whole.

Since *Star Trek: The Original Series (TOS)* premiered in 1966, it has commented upon contemporary social, and social justice, issues. Creator Gene Roddenberry once said in an interview that "I have no belief that *Star Trek* depicts the actual future, it depicts us, now, things we need to understand about that." Many episodes use the premise of space travel and the future to explore deeper themes, and to make those themes more palatable to the audience. For instance, there are numerous episodes in *TOS* in which, instead of talking overtly about anti-war sentiments, the main characters found themselves on an alien planet where unfamiliar species use violence as a means to solve disputes. *TOS* aired during the Vietnam War and Roddenberry used the series as a way to illustrate alternative options to violence. Other themes that were explored in a similar manner include sexuality, abortion, and racism.

The franchise as a whole, across its many iterations and subsequent spinoffs, is also known for achieving many firsts for network television, including the first interracial kiss (*TOS*, 1968) and same-sex kiss (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, 1995). When the show was being developed in the 1960s, Roddenberry pushed for gender and racial representation, which was uncommon at the time. Initially he had hoped to have half of the crew of the USS Enterprise be women, but the network



FIRST SAME-SEX KISS, STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, 1995.

executives at NBC did not think that audiences would accept this gender breakdown. Roddenberry also encouraged racial diversity in the cast. Most notable was the inclusion of Nichelle Nichols, who portrayed Lieutenant Nyota Uhura in the three seasons of *TOS*. Martin Luther King Jr., who was a *Star Trek* fan, encouraged Nichols to continue working on the show because of the positive impact her role had on the Black community during the Civil Rights Movement. Mae Jemison, the first Black woman in space, grew up watching Nichelle Nichols as Lieutenant Nyota Uhura, and Nichols worked directly with NASA to recruit women and marginalized people to work for the space agency. In addition to Uhura, Pavel Chekhov (portrayed by Walter Koenig in *TOS*) and Hikaru Sulu (portrayed by George Takei in *TOS*) hold the roles of commander and helmsman, respectively, on the Enterprise. During a time when the US had a negative relationship with Russia due to the Cold War, and were still working to rectify the atrocities of World War II's Japanese internment camps, this representation is noteworthy and likely responsible for positively impacting the public perception of these nationalities to a subset of the American people.

Star Trek is far from the only work of sci-fi to comment on social justice issues of the moment. Another artist who explicitly used science fiction as a medium to express her progressive social and political views was writer Octavia Butler, who published novels from 1971 until her death in 2006. Butler's protagonists were almost always young BIPOC women, and she tackled issues like climate change, the pharmaceutical industry, police brutality and corruption, and religious fundamentalism in her books. During the 2016 presidential election, fans drew comparisons from the real-world consequences of electing Donald Trump to Butler's version of 2032 in her novel *Parable of the Talents* (1998), where fictional US presidential candidate Andrew Steele Jarret co-opts the slogan "Make America Great Again."

In her essay "The Lost Races of Science Fiction," Butler expounds upon the necessity of including different voices in the sci-fi genre:

"Science fiction reaches into the future, the past, the human mind. It reaches out to other worlds and into other dimensions. Is it really so limited, then, that it cannot reach into the lives of ordinary everyday humans who happen not to be white?"

Butler became an early force in the subgenre known as Afrofuturism, which sociologist and Professor Alondra Nelson describes as "visions of the future—including science, technology, and its cultures in the laboratory, in social theory, and in aesthetics—through the experience and perspective of African

diasporic communities." Butler, along with fellow science fiction writer Samuel R. Delany and jazz musician Sun Ra, are often credited as conceptualizing the subgenre. *Black Panther* (2018) is in the Afrofuturist subgenre, as Wakanda is presented as a technically advanced society within African culture. Additionally, the blockbuster helped encourage representation because it featured African and African American actors as leads for the first time for a new generation of superhero fans. This enthusiasm for culturally specific art has likely been key in the recent development of additional subgenres for other cultures, including Latinofuturism and Roma Futurism.

The effects of this representation in pop culture and media are far-reaching and influential. In 2010, Sigma Xi, a national collegiate honor society that is devoted to science and engineering, asked members a simple question: "Did science fiction influence you?" The resounding answer was yes! Members shared that these stories were responsible not only for inspiring an interest in STEM (Science, Technology, English and Math)-related careers, but also for inspiring a curiosity about the world in which we inhabit. Perhaps if *Last Ship to Proxima Centauri*'s Morris and Russell had spent a bit more time considering the larger implications and questions explored in *Star Trek*, they would have had more luck negotiating and finding a compromise with people who don't look and think exactly like them.



CHADWICK BOSEMAN IN BLACK PANTHER, 2018.

Community Connections: An Interview with Arnold Macdonald, ILAP

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy



ARNOLD MACDONALD.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Meredith G. Healy spoke with Arnold Macdonald, who is an attorney at Bernstein Shur and volunteers and serves on the board of the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP). The two spoke about the mission and goals of ILAP, Macdonald's role with the organization, and what the average Mainer should know about our refugee community.

Meredith G. Healy (MGH): Can you tell me about the history of ILAP? When was the organization founded and what are its goals?

Arnold Macdonald (AM): I've known about ILAP the whole time it's been around. I have been a volunteer for less than half of its existence, but I've always been a cheerleader. Now I'm also on the board. The organization was founded in 1993, and at the time was essentially a referral service. It organized and supported a panel

of lawyers who would take referrals to handle asylum cases. Its only staff member was an executive director. ILAP's focus and mission is to improve the legal status of low-income immigrants. So the focal point for ILAP is legal advice, and its work is law-based.

My perception is that, at the start, most of the asylum seekers coming to Portland fit within the same category in our immigration laws, so ILAP could train lawyers to handle those cases within that narrow band of asylum law without needing people who were lifelong immigration experts. Volunteer lawyers could figure out the legal standard that applied to those cases and prepare the applications.

The way the asylum process works for these kinds of applicants, which technically speaking would be people that arrived legally into the US and then asked for asylum once they got here, is that, after preparing a detailed application, the asylum seeker would have an interview with an asylum officer. The officer would ask questions and would try to understand the applicant's circumstances. During the interview the lawyer was very passive, but very active in preparing the application so it was well supported. The officer would understand the asylum seeker's story from the filings. In those days, ILAP and its volunteer panel was close to 100% successful during that interview stage, with the government interviewer granting asylum to the refugee. If the interviewer does not grant asylum, then you have a hearing which is like an informal trial. They set the trial for four- or five-hour chunks of time, so you try to get it done within that amount of time. It is contested, meaning that there is a prosecutor on the other side. I've heard people describe it as like "trying capital cases in traffic court," because the stakes are so high, the time is so short, and the rules are so vague. At some point, and it's not clear to anybody



ILAP PRO BONO ATTORNEYS CELEBRATE A GRANT OF ASYLUM WITH THEIR CLIENTS IN BOSTON IMMIGRATION COURT, 2019.

whether this ties into the Trump administration or is the result of a change of staffing in the Boston asylum office (where new Mainers' cases are heard), the grant rate for asylum cases at that interview stage has gone to lower than 20%. There seems to be very little rhyme or reason about who wins and who doesn't. The cases and appeals now also take much longer because with all the problems at the border, USCIS [US Citizenship and Immigration Services] is overwhelmed there and understaffed everywhere. When I started, you'd get one of these cases and receive a hearing within six months to a year, and you'd win. Now, I've got a client who filed in 2013, and she lost at the interview, and she doesn't even have a trial date.

MGH: So she's been in this system for almost a decade?

AM: Correct, and, again, she doesn't even have a trial date. Now, that's probably the worst example of delay I am aware of, but that's how bad it can be. I spent between 50 and 100 hours in each of the first two asylum cases I had, both of which I won. Now, when I have to go to immigration court, I spend at least 300 hours getting ready for the trial, and need much more support from ILAP.

Between these changes in asylum cases and an explosion of other kinds of legal needs in the immigrant community, the nature of what ILAP does has changed from just being a referral organization. When you're spending 300 hours on a case, you need much more supervision, help, and advice because the cases have gotten more complicated. Much of the recent influx of immigrants are people that have arrived at the border without visas or similar documentation, and the government is moving them around from place to place. They are under a slightly different set of rules where they don't start with an interview, they go straight to trial.

I wasn't blaming President Trump for the changes in Boston, because I don't know the facts around that, but certainly under the Trump administration there were many changes made to the asylum laws that are just plain cruel to our refugees. Even before President Trump, ILAP was taking a systemic approach in trying to improve the laws that affect immigrants in addition to its pro bono referrals and direct legal support. I came onto the board a couple of years ago still thinking of it as a referral agency, but it's really gone way beyond that. The volunteers are still taking the referrals, but my guess is that because there is so much more time involved for a case now compared to what it used to be, ILAP is handling more cases with the in-house staff. There is more legal work in children's clinics that volunteers can be trained to handle, but much more work that only full-time experts can handle, including helping Afghans in Maine trying to help relatives still stuck over there, work in rural Maine helping migrant farmworkers, and systemic advocacy trying to undo the worst of what the Trump administration did and improve conditions for new Mainers. This is a huge part of what ILAP does now. The nature of the work that ILAP does has really expanded since 1993. It has about 20 staff now and is able to reach a huge number of people with what is still a very small staff, relative to the size of the problems.

MGH: So in your role with ILAP, you receive a referral and you then work with that individual through the duration of their case?

AM: Correct.

DIGGING DEEPER

MGH: This is a volunteer position, so this is outside of the scope of your role as a practicing attorney at a law firm?

AM: Correct. However, the rules of professional conduct strongly suggest that, as part of their professional responsibility, lawyers should do pro bono legal work for the betterment of the community. It's an aspirational goal, so some people take it more seriously than others. The deeper that I've gotten into my career the more of this work I've done. Now I have a deal with my law firm, Bernstein Shur, that allows me to focus primarily on pro bono work. My pay is adjusted accordingly, and I get to use its resources to take cases.

MGH: How did you originally hear about ILAP? What was it about the organization that made you want to be involved?

AM: Other lawyers at Bernstein Shur were taking ILAP referrals and said that these were the most moving and meaningful cases that they were involved with. Period. You are literally saving people's lives when you take one of these cases on, assuming you win it. It was intimidating because it was way out of my practice area, although you can certainly do it with help and coaching. And the need was huge.

On top of that professional interest, on a more personal level, after I got out of law school I traveled to Africa. A guy who was a year ahead of me in college was from Kenya and I had an opportunity to stay with him and his family. I figured that soon I'd be a stuffy old lawyer, and that after I started practicing law I might not get another chance to go sleep on someone's couch and really experience another culture. So I went over and spent a month in Kenya and loved every second of it. I always wanted to go back, but different things intervened. I hoped that at some point in my career I might step back from my commercial practice and do Peace Corps or something similar. It didn't work out that way, but I still had built in this love for Africa and, having been an exchange student in high school, a love for the French language. Portland was getting many French-speaking refugees from Africa; what could be better? So, it was a combination of personal fascination and interest, and the opportunity to do some really meaningful work.

MGH: What countries of origin do your clients arrive from?

AM: Because of my interest in French, and taking French cases, I've taken mostly clients from Burundi and Rwanda. I've also taken two cases of people from the Democratic Republic of Congo. To understand why the person is threatened you have to understand the country. It is efficient for volunteers to represent clients from the same country. So, once I was taking cases from Rwanda and Burundi, I started to know more about the Hutu, Tutsi, and the repressive regimes that are exploiting their tensions. More recently, there have been more Congolese and Afghan refugees. They can be from anywhere; there's a Russian case in my office now. For a long time, the cases coming from the southern border weren't making it to Maine, but now the government is moving some of those people up here. We have Congolese clients who escaped to South America, and made their way up to the border from there... truly amazing stories. So, they're southern border cases although they're not people who are from South America.



ILAP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SUE ROCHE WITH THE HABONIMANA FAMILY WHO ARE BURUNDIAN REFUGEES, 2016. PHOTO BY ERIN LITTLE

MGH: As is noted on the ILAP website, the organization has “identified a clear link between social justice for immigrants and economic, demographic, and cultural revitalization for Maine.” As Maine is 94% White, what would you want the average White Mainer to know about Maine’s immigrant/refugee community?

AM: There is so much about the people in this community that embody the American ideal. If you take a look at somebody who has lived in poverty, some of my clients do come from more privileged backgrounds but all of them have gone through incredible hardships, it’s unimaginable to just about anyone living in Maine. Two clients in particular have come from relative poverty in the poorest countries in the world, and are accustomed to going days without eating with no complaints. They can do it. With almost no resources, they have figured out a way to get from the middle of Africa to Portland, Maine. They’re the most resilient people I’ve ever met. And resourceful. The ability to figure out things and overcome all kinds of hurdles.

Another thing that I would say is that, I don’t think I’ve ever had an asylum client who spoke fewer than three languages. The first client I was helping with couldn’t speak English, but was fluent in five languages! They’re doctors and lawyers coming from other places, many of them have been in really interesting and challenging positions. They have the intelligence and resilience and optimism and competitiveness to contribute in a big way. They work so hard to get to this country because they really believe in the “American Dream” in a way that many Americans are too cynical to believe anymore. They are fueled in their journeys by a deep belief that your hard work is going to be rewarded in America more so than any other country in the world. You can work hard and get anywhere. Most are idealistic and want careers where they help others; many focus on health care and are taking the longest and most difficult shifts.

The sad thing to watch is that we don’t always live up to those ideals. A classic example is that a person who comes into the country legally and then seeks asylum has to wait 180 days before they can apply for a work permit.



FAMILIES BELONG TOGETHER RALLY, PORTLAND CITY HALL, 2018.

President Trump tried to change it into a year. I have a client who had the right to work, but because of a really cruel loophole in our system, lost it and has only recently gotten it back. To try to explain to somebody who sees America as this great city on a hill why she is barred from getting a job is hard. Or trying to explain why it takes ten years to get a hearing date. I won an asylum case for a woman who has been separated from her children for six years. She should have won during her interview, but was heard during the time that Boston was not granting asylum at interviews. So, she won, but it took six years to get asylum. Now it’s supposed to almost be a rubber stamp to get her kids over, but there is a big backlog and the asylum offices are focused on the borders. Explaining to her that we’ve been fighting this for six years together, but it could still take another year or two for you to see your kids is not a happy conversation. These people have looked at our country as the greatest in the world, and then you have to tell them that we can’t be bothered to process your application for a year or two, and you can’t see your children even though you’ve proven your case on the merits.

The big point is that refugees really want to work and contribute. They’ve got really strong resilience and really strong talents. Freud said, “to love and to work.” It’s a fundamental need for people to go out and be productive. Especially if you’ve been through some extreme hardships. It’s nice to have something to do with your hands and your brain, and to contribute so you don’t have to sit in your apartment and live with past traumas all the time.

Recommended Resources

by Editors

Books

1984 by George Orwell
2001: A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke
Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
The Broken Earth Trilogy by N. K. Jemisin
Dune by Frank Herbert
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
The Giver by Lois Lowry
Lilith's Brood Trilogy by Octavia Butler
Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice edited by Walidah Imarisha and Adrienne Maree Brown

Plays

The Absentee by Julia Doolittle
Admissions by Joshua Harmon
Marjorie Prime by Jordan Harrison
Mr. Burns, a post-electric play by Anne Washburn
Sanctuary City by Martyna Majok
Wellesley Girl by Brendan Pelsue

TV

Battlestar Galactica
Black Mirror
The Expanse
Dr. Who
Firefly
Foundation
Lost in Space
Lovecraft Country
Raised by Wolves
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, The Next Generation, The Original Series
Westworld

Film

Alien, Aliens, Alien 3
Arrival
Gravity
Hunt for Red October
Interstellar
The Mars Generation
The Martian
Serenity

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

2021-2022 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*

Ted Gallant *Technical Director*

Nate Genrich *Carpenter*

Myles C. Hatch *Stage Manager*

Meg Lydon *Stage Manager*

Julianne Shea *Education Administrator*

Susan Thomas *Costume Shop Manager*

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Peter Brown Daniel Noel

Daniel Burson Ed Reichert

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Ian Carlsen Dustin Tucker

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Moira Driscoll Monica Wood

Abigail Killeen Sally Wood

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Nolan Ellsworth *Front of House Associate*

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Macey Downs *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*

Savanna Genskow *Props Apprentice*

Meredith G. Healy *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*

Audrey Kastner *Electrics Apprentice*

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Katie Ludlam *Company Management Intern*

Jessica Mount *Education Intern*

Mallory Topel *Stage Management Intern*

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