

# PlayNotes

Season | 48 Issue | 2



## SEARCHING FOR MR. MOON

Written by Richard Topol & Willy Holtzman

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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.

# Searching for Mr. Moon

Written by Richard Topol & Willy Holtzman

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# Letter from the Editors

Dear *PlayNotes* Readers,

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

In this issue, we explore the world of Richard Topol and Willy Holtzman's new play *Searching for Mr. Moon*. This autobiographical one-person show addresses universal themes of finding a balance between work and life, pondering mortality, and feeling comfortable in the different personal and professional roles that one occupies in a lifetime. These themes are explored within the specific lens of Rich Topol's life, as he navigates fatherhood and tries to fill the hole his own father left behind. We have tried to give context to Topol's life while also relating it more generally to the human experience and theatrical canon. There are articles that flesh out Topol's story by sharing information on the famous people he encounters (p. 14), as well as detailing Jewish American assimilation in the 20th century when members of his family were settling in the US (p. 17). We also spoke with several of the artists involved, including writers Rich Topol and Willy Holtzman (p. 7), director Julia Gibson (p. 10), and projection designer Michael Commendatore (p. 12). We examine the history of one-person plays that paved the way for *Searching for Mr. Moon* in "One-Person Shows and Solo Performance" (p. 24). Articles like "Music and Movement Disorders" (p. 21) and "How Masculinity Inhibits Fatherhood" (p. 22) connect aspects of Topol's relationship with Lukas Foss to larger phenomena in our society.

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 *Searching for Mr. Moon*"), contain pertinent information about the play's setting and major themes ("The World of *Searching for Mr. Moon*"), and provide deeper dives into specific subjects that compelled our literary department ("Digging Deeper"). We include a list of books, films, plays, television shows, and, for this show, music 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

# About the Play

by Meredith G. Healy

*"I wonder if I should grab him to ask, 'How do you do this?' Because at this moment I'm really wondering about the little person who will soon enter the world – will I know what to say, what to do, will I really be there for the first steps and the high school heartbreak and the perfect wedding and the cyclical return to the Mount Sinai maternity ward with plans to plant another maple sapling fertilized with my grandchild's placenta?... 'Sabina.' I should say something profound, but instead all I can think is, 'Where's the dad to help? Oh shit, there is no dad. Wait, wait, wait, I'm the dad!'" - Richard Topol, Searching for Mr. Moon*

On the day his daughter is born, Rich Topol finds himself searching for guidance about how to be a father. He lost his own father at a young age, and feels wholly unprepared to embark on his own journey in raising a child. At this all-important moment, Topol finds himself reflecting on the surrogate father figures that he has been searching for since childhood.

The action of the play spans the course of Topol's life as he reminisces about the people who have influenced him, and the lessons he has learned along the way. In this one-person show, Topol portrays himself, his family, and the famous men he hopes will teach him how to be a father. By engaging directly with the audience, Topol invites us to examine our own familial relationships, and consider how our work impacts our time with friends and family. The play winds through Topol's memories, from the birth of his daughter, to the death of his father-in-law, and numerous other places before and between. *Searching for Mr. Moon* is a play for anyone who has contemplated the mysteries of parenthood, the sacrifices an artist makes to create, and mortality. The production at Portland Stage will be the world premiere of the play, following a reading in the spring of 2021.

*Searching for Mr. Moon* is Topol's playwriting debut. He has twice appeared on our stage in *Loot* (1990-1991 season) and *Scapin* (1996-1997 season). Topol has worked at major regional theaters like the Huntington (Boston, MA), Yale Rep (New Haven, CT), and the McCarter (Princeton, NJ), as well as on Broadway where he has shared the stage with prominent actors including Al Pacino, Denzel Washington, Frances McDormand, and Morgan Freeman. He has been nominated for an Outer Critics Circle Award and has received two Drama Desk Awards.

# About the Cast & Characters

by Meredith G. Healy



**Richard Topol** - In this one-man show, Richard Topol inhabits a number of real individuals, ranging from himself, his wife, and his mother, to his famous father-in-law Lukas Foss, actor Al Pacino, and many more.



# An Interview with the Playwrights: Richard Topol & Willy Holtzman

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy



RICHARD TOPOL AND WILLY HOLTZMAN. PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Meredith G. Healy spoke with Richard Topol and Willy Holtzman, the playwrights of *Searching for Mr. Moon*, during the second week of rehearsals about the creation of the play and their experience as co-writers.

**Meredith G. Healy (MGH):** What was the genesis for creating this piece? How long have you been working on it?

**Richard Topol (RT):** I was hired the day before the first preview of the Off-Broadway play *Bronx Bombers* to replace a famous television star who was playing the lead role. I had done a workshop of the play, and got a call to ask if I could come in. I replaced the actor in the play, and it got good reviews, but when the play moved to Broadway I was replaced by a different television star. So, I was really heartbroken. I had been on Broadway a bunch of times before, but this was the lead in a play on Broadway. A regular guy like me doesn't get a chance to play the lead in a show on Broadway. It was then that Willy approached me about writing a one-man show for me, because he said if he wrote a one-man show for me, I couldn't be replaced. It would be my

show. My initial response was that, first of all, I don't like seeing one-man shows. Second of all, as an actor I like to act with people, not alone. Third of all, what would it be about because it can't be about me, I'm not that interesting. So, we talked about what could be interesting, and I said, "These are the things that I'm interested in: mortality and how we deal with it, making art and what that means and if that is worthwhile, and then also how I have spent my life on this crazy quest for a father." So, you can see how we got to the play from those points.

**Willy Holtzman (WH):** We've known each other for 30 years, since Rich was in graduate school. We've had near misses of working together, and have always wanted to work together. I'm very sensitive to how actors get used during the development of new plays, and then don't end up getting cast in the first major productions. So we started talking about creating a play together that was Rich's. I believe in creating theater for specific actors, and protecting them and that work. Once we hit on the general idea, we started talking about what it could be and looking around for subject matter. I suggested writing something about his famous father-in-law, Lukas Foss. Initially we thought about writing a biographical play about Lukas, and it didn't quite come together. I was going to abandon it for an adaptation of a Melville story, but Rich didn't like that idea. So, then Rich sent me a text about one of his heart episodes in his own voice, and I read it and said, "Well, that's the play." Rich in relation to his father and his father-in-law, but Rich at the core.

**RT:** But that was six years ago. So, we spent a year or two conducting interviews. First we interviewed the people connected to Lukas.

**WH:** Mercurio really cracked it open for us!

**RT:** When we interviewed him we realized we had something, because he's such a great character. We also interviewed Lukas's immediate family, Cornelia, Eliza, and Christopher. Willy did an incredible amount of research. He found great interviews, speeches, and documentation of Lukas's life.

Almost everything that Lukas says in this play is culled from something that Lukas said or wrote in his life.

**MGH:** So, Lukas's real voice is featured in this show?

**RT:** I'd approximate that most of his words in this play are things that he actually said.

**WH:** Or very much inspired by his wisdom and observations.

**RT:** Or something that someone we interviewed said that he said, like, the family loves telling the story about how he said, "It's all a lot of 'Foss' about nothing!"

**WH:** The musicians we spoke with, especially Fred Sherry the successful cellist who told the priceless story of Lukas adopting his cat from the animal rescue, gave us great anecdotes too.

**RT:** The turning point of writing for us did come with the realization that the play couldn't just be about Lukas, it had to be about me somehow. I started being willing to share some stories and the piece became more about me. So then we interviewed my mom and Chuck Bachrach.

**WH:** One of the wonderful things about theater is finding collaborators who will give you the gift of their art, with no expectation of receiving anything in return. We went to dinner with Daniella Topol, who is a friend of both of ours, to talk about the play.

**RT:** Daniella is a great director and dramaturg, and it was so helpful to talk with someone who knows how to find the play, which is exactly what we were trying to do.

**WH:** When we had a draft we got together at my apartment, and she was so generous with her feedback. She suggested we include Eliza more in the show, and gave so many other great suggestions.

**RT:** But every time either of us was working on another show, we'd let it sit for many months. Then the pandemic hit and all of a sudden we had time. I went to dinner with Broadway producer Daryl Roth. She told me she was looking for one or two person shows and asked me if I knew of any. I told her that I was working on the show, and she said she wanted to read it. That was the real spark that got us going.

**WH:** Peregrine Whittlesey, a former literary manager, was the person who told me that Anita was looking for one-person shows. Rich told me that he had worked at Portland Stage and was in a show with Anita's husband Ron.

**RT:** That was 25 years ago during her first season! So, we invited her to a Zoom reading with other dramaturgs, directors, and producers to get some outside eyes. Anita was really supportive.

**WH:** I think we shared with her our dream that the design would really help tell the story.

**RT:** We knew that music was really the third major character in this show.

**WH:** So, all of the elements began to fall into place.

**MGH:** Can you talk about your experience as co-writers and how exactly you have worked together?

**RT:** I've never written a play. Willy calls me a "talking writer." I spent a good deal of my life writing other things in a stream of consciousness style. Just putting my voice out there. I wrote a stream of consciousness essay to get into Brown University. It ended with the last lines of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, "yes I said yes I will Yes." I've always known how to write like that. So, we did the interviews, and then once it came time for me to become more central to the story, I poured out a bunch of content. Willy crafted and structured the show, and found a way to piece it together the way that it is.

**WH:** He also gave me license to invent within the play. We also don't waste much time on manners with each other. We respect each other and have a sturdy, longtime friendship so we're not afraid to have conflict or profess our love when we need to.

**RT:** We've known each other for almost 30 years. We admire each other. Willy has seen me act, I've seen many of his plays, and I've acted in many readings and workshops of his plays. So, we feel connected through our art. Also, since it is a story about me and my family, it is easy to say, "I wouldn't say that, we've got to find a way to put it in my voice." The same is true for the other characters, like my wife and my mother-in-law.



**WH:** It's also about finding the person who tells the best version of the story. For instance, when we were looking for the best way to open the show, Rich started to describe the childbirth, but realized that Eliza could tell the story better. She came to New Dramatists, where I was working, and described almost in its entirety the opening of the play. It was a fun way to work!

**RT:** I do feel a little bit guilty, because I feel like Willy did lots of the heavy lifting. I don't feel like I have the skills to craft a scene, but he does. I told him what I responded to.

**MGH:** While writing the script did you seek inspiration from other one-person autobiographical shows?

**RT:** We did get inspiration from Simon McBurney's *The Encounter*, for seeing what the piece could be like. It felt like the piece could be more than just me. The one-person shows that I've enjoyed are those by Spalding Gray and Eric Bogosian. They were able to portray different characters, which was interesting to me as a character actor.

**MGH:** Is this your first time acting in a one-person show?

**RT:** Oh, yes!

**MGH:** How has it been so far?



SIMON MCBURNEY IN *THE ENCOUNTER*.

**RT:** Well, we just did our first run-thru and it was really exhausting. When there's nobody to turn to but yourself, it's kind of fun and exciting, but it's also super daunting. I think the thing that will be the most satisfying, will be the fact that I'm able to communicate with the audience. It will complete the sense of what it means to do a one-person show. So, I'm hoping that the audience is my scene partner, and I will be able to interact with them.

**WH:** What I want for Rich is ownership. This is his play. Any time he wants to do the show he can, which I think is really empowering for an actor.

**RT:** I also need to say that it's such a blessing to have Willy—who I've known for 30 years—and Julia [Gibson, Director]—who I've known for 37 years—and David [Van Tieghem, Sound Designer]—who I've known for almost 30 years—as the central players in the process of making the show. It's been really helpful to have these people, so I can be brave enough to do this. But they've also been helpful in steering me clear of my bad habits as an actor. I've really been able to fly with their support.

**MGH:** What are you hoping audiences will take away from this production?

**RT:** If the experience of watching this play makes people realize that, "Time is short. I should have that dinner with my mom. I should call my daughter. I should listen to the stories of my family and friends." Then I feel like that's one of the best things that can come out of this show. It's also turned me into a fan of classical music. I also hope people leave feeling like they want to learn more about Lukas and his music. In the script Lukas says, "I hope my music remains when I'm gone," and I can do my small part in making sure people listen to his music and are inspired by it. I'll feel good about that too.

**WT:** Last week one of my oldest friends from St. Louis was visiting, and he lost both of his parents by the time he was 13. The intersection of his story with Rich is so pronounced. The friend had to go back home, but is desperate to stream this when it's available. There are universals in this story. Even for people who haven't had the tragedy of losing a parent early. We do lose our parents, it's the natural order of things. We never hear all their stories. We need to make a better effort. I'm certain that will connect with audiences.

**RT:** No matter what relationship we have with our parents, or our children, we always feel that there's something that's not quite right, some connection that wasn't made, something that was different. I feel like in this play we've touched on that universal sense of, "God, I wish I could" or "God, if only."

**WH:** That conversation we give Rich and Lukas at the end is probably one that a lot of people have experienced with absent parents and

loved ones. When my daughter and her friend came to the workshop in June, they connected with the story as new parents.

**RT:** It's a hopeful wish to parents. To remind them that what they do, or what they don't do with their children has reverberations that will go on well beyond their existence.

## An Interview with the Director: Julia Gibson

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy



JULIA GIBSON.

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Meredith G. Healy spoke with Julia Gibson, the director of *Searching for Mr. Moon*, during the first week of rehearsals about the play and about her time working in the theater.

**Meredith G. Healy (MGH):** Talk to me a little bit about your relationship with Rich. How did you meet?

**Julia Gibson (JG):** I've known Rich for over half of my life. We were in the graduate acting program at New York University (NYU) together, and became very good friends right from the start, have remained good friends, and we enjoy working together.

**MGH:** What was it about the story and the play that first attracted you to the project when he approached you to direct it?

**JG:** One-person shows are often quite personal. They tell a piece of a story that you don't otherwise get. As long as I've known Rich and as much as I know about his life (I know many of the people in the script and I've been present for many of the events), I did not know anything about the core of this story. We've hardly ever talked about his dad. So I was drawn into how courageous and important it is for him to share it.

**MGH:** What elements of the script are you most excited to continue exploring with Rich and the creative team?

**JG:** The story is very purposefully told in a fragmented way that is out of order and jumps around. It doesn't establish patterns to how it is being told, which is unusual. I love that—



yet, we want to be sure the threads holding everything together are sturdy and clear. I'm also looking forward to adding the design elements. They're important, but won't be with us until the last minute.

**MGH: What is it like to direct someone in a play about their life?**

**JG:** It is proving to be helpful to have a pre-existing relationship with Richard. Not just that I know about his life, but that we trust each other. I could imagine that if you don't know someone very well, it might be awkward to give them a note about how to play themselves. Someone might get their feathers ruffled. Rich and I like working together because we trust each other. It's intimate material, and we respect that, but we also both recognize that we're at work. We're making a play.

**MGH: What has your journey been like as a theater practitioner?**

**JG:** After graduating from the acting program at NYU, I was an actor for many years based in New York. I worked predominantly in

theater in NYC, and out of town. At a certain point, I accidentally discovered directing. It flexes a completely different creative muscle than acting, which excites me. I had the great pleasure of doing both for a while. For the past eight years, I've been based in North Carolina at UNC Chapel Hill where I run the graduate acting program and am a company member of their professional theater, Playmakers Repertory Company.

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

**JG:** It's a marathon, not a sprint. This profession takes patience and perseverance. Stay involved with what interests you and what drew you to theater in the first place. You can drown in trying to do what you're "supposed to do" to succeed, but if you lose your connection to what you're passionate about, none of it matters. Stay curious about what draws you to theater. Read scripts, see plays. Take note of what interests you. Explore your ideas about creating new work and doing things that have never been seen before. Keep connected to that passion in your core.



SEARCHING FOR MR. MOON'S REHEARSAL TEAM. PHOTO BY MICAL HUTSON.

# Putting it Together: An Interview with Projection Designer, Michael Commendatore

Edited for Length and Clarity by Macey Downs

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Macey Downs spoke with Michael Commendatore, projection designer for *Searching for Mr. Moon*, during rehearsals about his career as a projection designer, how he uses projection to tell stories, and what about this play excites him most.

**Macey Downs (MD): What inspired you to get into projection design and what has your journey been like?**

**Michael Commendatore (MC):** In undergrad I decided my first year that I wanted to study film media and I went for my BA in that. But the program was really short, and they suggested that I double major, so I decided that theater was probably the next best thing for me because I wanted to be a director someday. So I went for a BFA in directing in theater. Within a couple of years, I worked at a TV studio on my video side, and then I would be doing scenes in class in the theater school. And then I thought: what if I combined these two? I honestly thought that I had created a new art form! Little did I know that it's been happening for hundreds of years now. It was just something that I tried in the theater, and people either reacted like, "Wow, that was incredible" or "Get this video out of my theater." And I thought,

wow, if it can cause this much passion from people, maybe I should continue exploring this. From then on, the first big production I directed was *The Pillowman* at school, and I filmed an intermediary scene that I would show as the character Katurian did his monologues in front of it. That's where it started, and then I realized, "Oh wow, this is something that people do, and maybe I should try and do this! This could be my way in to direct in the future." I think it's an awesome technology, so why not try new things and see what happens.

**MD: I feel like there aren't really other design aspects of theater that have the same strong reaction to them that projection design does.**

**MC:** Right, like drones are another one of those things. I just did a show that had drones in it, and it was quite an interesting choice. It's a very cool effect the first time you see it, like, wow, it's spectacle, it's incredible. And then you're like: "Okay, where can we go with this though?" With projections, the sky's the limit—you can literally put anything up on the wall, and there can be very large gestures. There's a lot of directors that I've talked to who have been wary of using projection because they've used it in the past not so well. And they're like, "Well, it's easier to not do it." But we're in the theater, we should be expanding the art form, evolving with the times, experimenting as much as we can—to tell the best possible story that we can.

**MD: Talk to me about the projection design for this play. Is there something unique about it or that you're most excited for?**

**MC:** I am most excited about the non-projections, and that's Richard [Topol]. I'm most excited to see how Richard tells the story! And how I can assist him in that storytelling. Because if people say "Wow, the projections



MICHAEL COMMENDATORE'S PROJECTION DESIGN IN FREAKY FRIDAY.



were awesome" without saying "Richard was incredible" first, then I have failed at my job. The concept that we're going for is—because Richard is talking about his memories and his life with Lukas Foss's history—that the projections are kinda blurring between these abstract images. Specifically we're using Kandinsky paintings as a place to start from, and we're also working with some of Cornelia Foss's paintings as well, and trying to figure out a way to merge this chaotic hard-line—Lukas's music, really—and then the soft in the paintings that Cornelia has done. Blurring between these things and his memories, so if he talks about something, the imagery comes out of the background into the foreground. But really, seeing Richard do it. That's what I'm most excited about. And whatever I can do to help him tell that story.

**MD: Are there any particular challenges you're coming up against in the design for this play?**

**MC:** The biggest challenge is always not knowing exactly what it's gonna be like until you get into the room. We can do all the storyboarding, and all the prepping, and show images, and create things, but until you're in the space for the real thing, I really have no clue what's gonna work and not gonna work. The most exciting thing for me—especially coming back from the pandemic—is getting back into the tech room with all of the collaborators and just trying things, making choices that we've planned on, and then discovering new ones as they arrive. Tech is definitely the most exciting part of the process for me. That's when all the stuff happens.

**MD: A lot of the time the design elements will feel like another character in the play.**

**MC:** Projections is really this middle ground between scenery—which are these hard objects, and you have to make choices and adjustments very early on, and then that's it—and lighting on the other end of the spectrum—which sets itself up for an incredible amount of possibilities to create ideas, and they're able to change them pretty quickly on the fly. Projections are in the middle ground of: sometimes you can change things

immediately on the fly, and other times you need to go and re-render and it takes time to make it again. But ultimately, there's this flexibility to change something. It would be so sad if I create something that then I can't change ever again, and it's just wrong, and it ruins the show—ultimately, that's what I'm trying not to do. I'm trying not to ruin the show!

**MD: This is also a new play, so there's the added element that nobody has ever seen this play before. Is your design process any different for a new play like this one than it is for a previously premiered play?**

**MC:** Not particularly, because even older plays that have been established didn't always have projections in them. Like, how do you approach Shakespeare doing projections? They didn't have the capabilities that we have. Maybe they did shadow stuff, which is another form of projection. So I think the approach is very similar, the only thing that's different is the script changing a week before you get there. So we're still going through script changes, which is always a little tough to keep track of. For me, getting in and seeing the designer run and what it is that Julia [Gibson] and Richard have created over the past two weeks is what's gonna inform my decisions from then on out.

**MD: What do you enjoy most about aiding in telling stories through projection?**

**MC:** It's the endless possibilities of what it can be. The ephemeral nature that projections have, and it's very similar to life: it's there, it's not there, you can see it but you can't touch it (I guess technically if you project onto a surface you can touch the surface). That's the biggest draw, the ability for it to be whatever it needs to be whenever it needs to be. And the emotional impact that it can provide.

# Notable Real-Life Figures in *Searching for Mr. Moon*

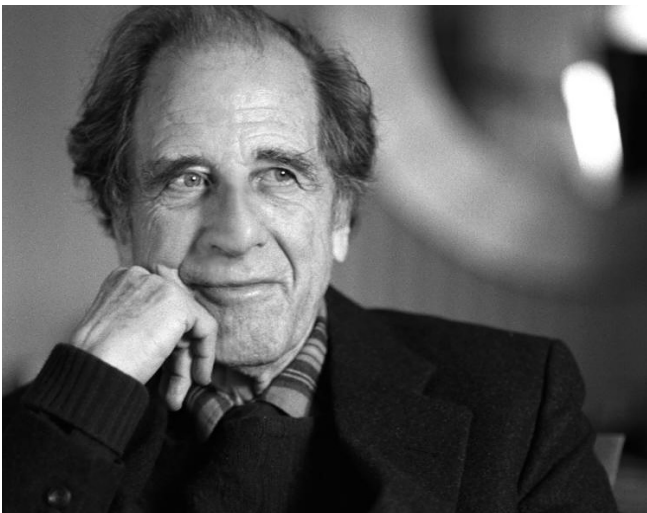
by Meredith G. Healy



**Leonard Bernstein** (August 25, 1918–October 14, 1990) was an American conductor, composer, and pianist. He was known for his exuberance while conducting, which was particularly evident during his Young People's Concerts. Bernstein was the music director for Tanglewood, the New York Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. A composer of both classical and popular music, some of Bernstein's most famous works are the score for *West Side Story*, three symphonies (*Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety*, and *Kaddish*), and the original score for the film *On the Waterfront*.



**Cornelia (Brendel) Foss** (born 1931) is a German-born American painter. Foss moved to the US in 1939 with her family to escape Nazi Germany. Foss's style is known as "painterly realism," which is illustrated in her ability to capture the detail and the reality of the scene, while still using bold brushstrokes to make the painting look like a painting. Foss's work is part of the permanent collections of many museums, including the National Portrait Gallery (Washington, DC), the Houston Museum of Art (Houston, TX), and the Brooklyn Museum (NYC). She was married to composer Lukas Foss from 1951 until his death in 2009.



**Lukas Foss** (August 15, 1922–February 1, 2009) was a German-born American composer, pianist, and conductor. Foss moved to the US in 1937, and published his first work that same year. He was best known for his experiments with improvisation and aleatory music. Aleatoric compositions include elements of random chance during composition or performance. For instance, a piece might allow performers to reorder the structure of the composition or choose to play certain parts simultaneously. Amongst his most famous compositions are *Echoi*, *Time Cycle*, and *Baroque Variations*. He was married to artist Cornelia (Brendel) Foss from 1951 until his death in 2009.

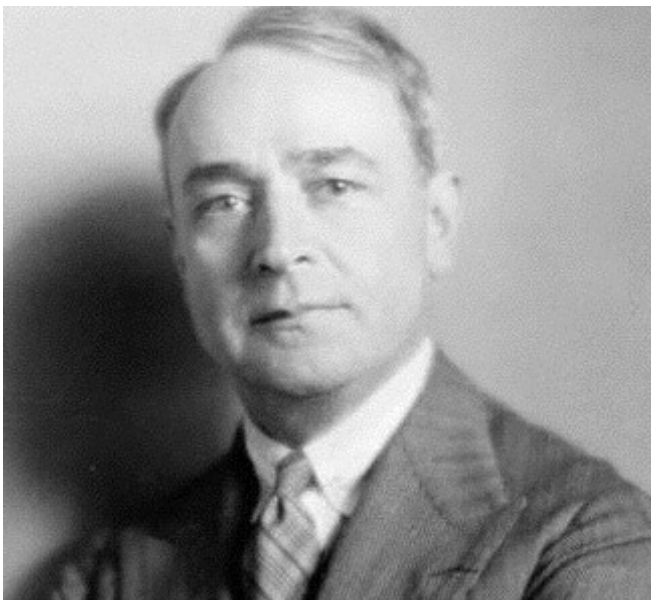




**Glenn Gould** (September 25, 1932-October 4, 1982) was a Canadian pianist recognized for his frenetic style. He is best known for his recordings of pieces by Bach and Beethoven. Gould started playing piano at the age of 3 and entered the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto at age 10. He earned his associate's degree in 1946 at age 14. He is known for his eccentric style of dress, posture, and behavior during performances. Later in his life, Gould was a contributor to musical journals, in which he discussed music theory and outlined his musical philosophy.



**The Grateful Dead** was an American rock band from 1965-1995. Despite not having radio hits, the band was known for their tours and devoted fans called "Deadheads," some of whom followed the band across the country. The band produced psychedelic music, blending rock instrumentation with the improvisation style of jazz. The members who performed at the concert in Buffalo with Lukas Foss were Mickey Hart (drummer), Billy Kreutzmann (drummer), Phil Lesh (bassist), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (singer), and Bob Weir (singer and guitarist).



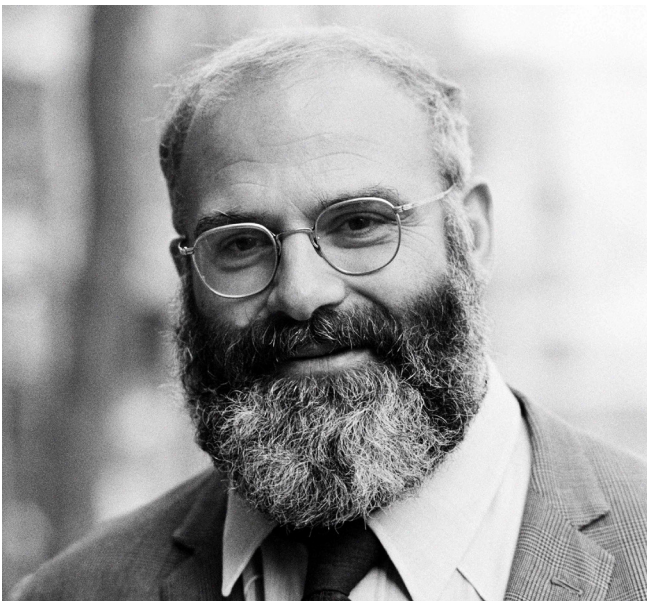
**Serge Koussevitsky** (July 14, 1874-June 4, 1951) was a Russian-born American conductor and publisher. He commissioned and performed many important new works, including Aaron Copland's *Ode* and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, and was the music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) from 1924 to 1949. During his tenure with the BSO, Koussevitsky was instrumental in the development of Tanglewood's summer concert series and educational programs, where his students included Leonard Bernstein and Lukas Foss.



**Steven Mercurio** (born January 1, 1956) is an American composer, conductor, and arranger, best known for his work conducting operas and symphonic concerts. After Mercurio graduated with his Master in Music from Julliard, he worked as the associate conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic with Lukas Foss from 1986 to 1989. Since 2019, he has been the music director of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra in Prague.



**Al Pacino** (born April 25, 1940) is an American actor. Pacino grew up in East Harlem and the Bronx, and began his career on Off-Broadway stages. In 1969, he made his Broadway debut and won a Tony Award for *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* Two years later, he starred in the film *The Panic in Needle Park*, his first leading role on film. Pacino is perhaps best known for his portrayals of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* films and Tony Montana in *Scarface*.



**Oliver Sacks** (July 9, 1933-August 30, 2015) was a British neurologist and author. He spent his childhood in London and attended Oxford. In 1961, he moved to the US for his medical internship and residency. Sacks is best known for his books in which he presented sympathetic case studies of different patients he had encountered in his work. His most famous works are *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* and *Awakenings*, the latter of which was adapted into a film starring Robin Williams as Sacks.



# Jewish American Assimilation

by Macey Downs

*Eliza Topol: My father [Lukas Foss] loves to play Christmas carols. Really fast.*

*Rich Topol: He's Jewish, right?*

*Eliza Topol: 100%. Mom's half. But her mother was Jewish so according to the Jews and Hitler she's Jewish. They both escaped the Nazis but they don't talk about it much and don't ever call my mother Jewish.*

Rich Topol reconstructs this conversation about his wife's parents' Jewish ancestry onstage during *Searching for Mr. Moon*. He later alludes to his own Jewish ancestry when mentioning his dad's immigrant parents, Morris and Pearl, and how they sparked the Topol family's love for the arts by buying cheap seats at the Met. Eliza's parents, Lukas and Cornelia Foss, were born in Berlin and survived the Holocaust by immigrating to the US. While Eliza describes Cornelia as refuting her Jewish heritage in her adult life, Lukas was more vocal about his Jewish American identity, once stating, "I am very much conscious of my place in the world as [a] Jew, but I never ask myself whether or not I write 'as a Jew.'" Both families used their artistic endeavors to assimilate into American culture, and demonstrate a fraction of the millions of experiences of Jewish people who immigrated to the US in the early 1900s.

In 1900, the US was home to one million Jewish people, which was the third-largest Jewish population in the world, following Russia and Austria-Hungary. Half of all Jewish people in the US lived in New York City, making it the world's most populous Jewish community. Forty percent of Jewish Americans at this time were newcomers, having been in the US for ten years or less, but the wave of Jewish immigration had only just begun. From 1900 to 1924, another 1.75 million Jewish people immigrated to America, mostly from Eastern Europe, changing the demographic makeup of the US from 1% to 3% Jewish.

American nationalism was high during this time, especially following the end of World War I in 1918. At the same time, many young Jewish Americans held assimilationist sentiments, and looked to American movies and media as models for blending into the dominant American culture. Some assimilationists went on to create key works of art in the American imagination such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (directed by Michael Curtiz), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (written by Sidney Buchman), and *A Farewell to Arms* (written by Benjamin Glazer). Cartoonist and writer Jules Feiffer has described this process as Jewish immigrants and the



A JEWISH AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE CIRCA 1898

children of immigrants having “invented the America they wanted to be a part of.”



MICHAEL CURTIZ, DIRECTOR OF *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*.

Sociologists and historians have criticized the American idealization of the “melting pot” that asks cultures to fit into the myth of American conformity. Philosopher Horace Kallen saw pressures to assimilate as a failure of American values and politics, which should provide for different groups optimal conditions for further developing their cultures. This is especially pertinent when considering the rise in antisemitism in the US during the 1930s, which coincided with increased racism, nativism, and xenophobia. White Protestant Americans used the high immigration rates of the previous decades, the Great Depression, and the rise of World War II to misleadingly direct blame onto these underprivileged groups. In doing so, they aimed to resurrect glorified white Protestantism of the 19th century—a white supremacist ideology that equated “true” American citizenship to being white and Protestant. American antisemitism included poor conditions or restrictions against Jewish Americans in places of employment, as well as public verbal and physical attacks. Refugees seeking asylum from the impending Holocaust were turned back once they reached American shores; many of the refugees were then murdered in Nazi Germany. Jewish Americans were forced to bury their culture and stress the normative “American” aspects of their identity in order to remain safe.

Following the purposeful and irreversible destruction of countless European Jewish communities during the Holocaust and World War II, the US emerged as home to the largest Jewish communities in the world. This attracted thousands of Jewish refugees to the US, coinciding with a decline in American antisemitism after 1945. Jewish American communities became more diversified, with Hungarian and Hasidic Jewish folks in particular contributing to a postwar revitalization of Orthodox Judaism. Many Jewish folks’ desire to assimilate into mainstream American society remained strong, both as a means of safety and a want to be firmly seen as “American.” They leaned into arts and media—the film industry in particular—as paths of bringing their Jewish and American outlooks together. In doing so, they continued to shape American culture, constructing and validating the American Dream.

The late 1940s decline in antisemitism allowed for geographic movement of Jewish Americans to suburbs and more cities across the country, as well as for greater feelings of optimism regarding the future of Jewish communities in the US. Cornelia and Lukas Foss, who were coming of age and entering adulthood during the Holocaust, were beginning to navigate their Jewish American identities during this time. Cornelia chose a stricter assimilationist approach—not wanting to be identified as Jewish at all. Similarly, Rich Topol’s immigrant grandparents used music and art to push their Eastern European Ashkanazi Jewish shtetl “further into the past as the Topols inch[ed] their way up the Assimilation Ladder.” Lukas’s experience, however, contained both aspects of assimilation and cultural pluralism. He is described by the Milken Archive of Jewish Music as wearing his Jewish and his American identities as a “twin badge of honor.” No matter their approach, the voices of millions of Jewish Americans are intertwined with American culture and values as we know it today. The Topol and Foss families were far from alone in creating art that shaped the America they were asked to assimilate into.



# Glossary

by Meredith G. Healy

**Actors Studio:** A membership organization for professional actors in New York City that has become renowned worldwide as “the home of method acting.”



DIRECTOR ELIA KAZAN OUTSIDE THE ACTORS STUDIO IN 1955.

**The Age of Anxiety:** Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, *The Age of Anxiety*, is a piece for orchestra and solo piano which was composed from 1948-1949. The piece is titled after W. H. Auden's poem of the same name and masterfully mirrors the moods and events of the poem.

**Albany:** A character in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The husband of Lear's eldest daughter, Goneril, who becomes ruler of half of England when Lear passes on the government of the realm to his daughters and their husbands.

**Aleatory:** Relating to or denoting music or other forms of art involving elements of random choice during their composition, production, or performance.

**Angiogram:** An X-ray photograph of blood or lymph vessels.

**Bach: The Goldberg Variations:** The 1955 debut album of Canadian classical pianist Glenn Gould, which launched his career as a renowned international pianist.

**Bacterial endocarditis:** A bacterial infection of the inner layer of the heart or the heart valves, which forces the heart to work harder to get blood out to the body.

**Brie en croûte:** Brie wrapped in puff pastry, typically served as an appetizer.

**The Broadhurst:** A 1,163-seat Broadway theater located in midtown Manhattan.

**Capriccio:** A lively piece of music, typically one that is short and free in form.

**Curtis Institute of Music:** A private, coeducational conservatory of music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**The Delacorte:** A 1,800-seat open-air theater in New York City's Central Park. It is home to the Public Theater's free Shakespeare in the Park productions.



SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK AT THE DELACORTE.

**Echoi:** A 1963 experimental work composed by Lukas Foss, which received the prestigious New York Music Critics Award in 1964.

**Étude:** A short musical composition, typically for one instrument, designed as an exercise to improve the technique or demonstrate the skill of the player.

**Joseph Goebbels** (October 29, 1897-May 1, 1945): The minister of propaganda for the German Third Reich under Adolf Hitler. A master orator and propagandist, he was responsible for presenting a favorable image of the Nazi regime to the German people.

**John Guare** (born February 5, 1938): An American playwright known for his innovative and often absurdist dramas.

**Kleinhans Hall:** A concert venue located on Symphony Circle in Buffalo, New York, which is currently the home of the Buffalo Philharmonic.

**Kristallnacht:** The occasion of concerted violence against Jewish people and their property conducted by Nazis throughout Germany and Austria on the night of November 9, 1938.

**Zubin Mehta** (born April 29, 1936): An Indian orchestral conductor and musical director known for his expressiveness on the podium and for his interpretation of the operatic repertoire.

**Gian Carlo Menotti** (July 7, 1911-February 1, 2007): An Italian composer whose operas represent a successful combination of 20th-century dramatic situations with the traditional form of Italian opera.

**Method acting:** A technique of acting in which an actor aspires to complete emotional identification with a part.

**Thelonious Monk** (October 10, 1917-February 17, 1982): An American pianist and composer who was among the first creators of modern jazz.



THELONIOUS MONK.

**Mount Sinai Hospital:** A hospital founded in 1852 and located in Manhattan. It is one of the nation's largest and most respected hospitals, and is acclaimed internationally for excellence in clinical care.

**Next Wave Festival:** An annual event produced by Brooklyn Academy of Music which spotlights exciting new works and cross-disciplinary collaborations by promising young artists.

**New Rochelle:** A city in southeastern New York, northeast of New York City, on Long Island Sound; population 74,115.

**Ogilvy & Mather:** A New York City-based British advertising, marketing, and public relations agency.

**Parkinson's disease:** A progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement.

**The Public Theater:** A New York City theater that showcases the works of up-and-coming playwrights and performers.

**Domenico Scarlatti** (October 26, 1685-July 23, 1757): An Italian composer noted for his 555 keyboard sonatas, which substantially expanded the technical and musical possibilities of the harpsichord.

**Shtetl:** A small Jewish town or village formerly found in Eastern Europe.

**Lee Strasberg** (November 17, 1901-February 17, 1982): A Russian-born American theater director, teacher, and actor. He was best known for his work teaching "method acting," and was the artistic director of the Actors Studio from 1948 until his death.

**Stent:** A tubular support placed temporarily inside a blood vessel, canal, or duct to aid healing or relieve an obstruction.

**Stress test:** A test of cardiovascular capacity made by monitoring the heart rate during a period of increasingly strenuous exercise.

**Summer stock:** Theatrical productions by a repertory company organized for the summer season, especially at vacation resorts or in a suburban area.

**Tanglewood Music Festival:** A music festival held every summer on the Tanglewood estate in Stockbridge and Lenox in the Berkshire Hills in western Massachusetts.

**Time Cycle:** A piece composed by Lukas Foss from 1959-1960. In the piece, Foss probes and questions the ideas of tonality, notation, and fixed form.

**Tubal:** A character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*; a wealthy Jew of Venice who lends Shylock enough to make up the full 3,000 ducats the latter lends to Antonio.

**Underpainting:** A first layer of paint applied to a canvas or board which functions as a base for other layers of paint.



# Music and Motor Disorders

by Macey Downs

*Searching for Mr. Moon* details much of composer Lukas Foss's life, including his development of Parkinson's disease toward the end of his life. While portraying Oliver Sacks, playwright-performer Rich Topol mentions how music can be therapeutic for people with Parkinson's, and expresses reverence for the ways in which Lukas Foss continued to play piano while living with the movement disorder.

Parkinson's disease is a well-known neurodegenerative disorder with movement-related symptoms that nearly 1 million people in the US and 10 million people worldwide are currently living with. Parkinson's reduces dopamine by causing cell loss in a specific region of the brain called the substantia nigra. Most people with Parkinson's are diagnosed after age 50, and experience motor symptoms that gradually intensify over time. These include tremors in their hands, slowness of movement, gait and balance problems, and limb rigidity. The cause of Parkinson's is unknown but is heavily researched, and there's currently no known cure. Medication, surgery, and different types of therapy are used to manage the symptoms of Parkinson's.

When Lukas Foss was diagnosed with Parkinson's at age 78, Topol describes the amazement other composers felt when watching Foss "play a Chopin nocturne with exquisite control and timing and grace" despite his motor symptoms. Much of this was due to Foss's creativity—after his diagnosis, he would spend hours at his piano meticulously changing his fingering on pieces to make up for losing control over specific fingers. However, those who study music therapy are continuing to uncover the effects that listening to music and playing instruments can have on motor symptoms.

Studies have been conducted to better understand the relationship between music and motor function, with many pointing

to a coupling of the auditory and motor systems in the brain. For decades, research has shown that children who have spent three or more years playing an instrument demonstrate more advanced motor and reasoning skills compared to those who have not learned how to play an instrument. One study also found that using music with the right tempo for a walking-pace improved the walking ability of patients with Parkinson's disease, as they could synchronize their movements to a rhythmic beat. If patients practiced walking with music, over time they no longer needed music to regulate their movements. Professor and researcher Michael Thaut argues that "the auditory system [in the brain] can actually make up for some of the deficiencies in a motor system, and it gives additional information that helps the brain program movement and...control the movement better." Similar to how Foss reworked his piano fingerings to make up for a faltering finger, scientists are learning how to shift the programming of the brain to cover for degeneration in places that control our movements.



Lukas Foss.

Music therapy has had success with managing Parkinson's motor symptoms, and some people living with Parkinson's have even credited learning and playing the piano with slowing the disease's effects on their bodies. However, therapy and music are not enough to "cure" Parkinson's disease, and symptoms will still continue to progress over time. Lukas Foss was able to continue

playing piano with Parkinson's for six years after his diagnosis, but his symptoms were too intense to continue to adapt music to play through during the last year and a half of his life. Scientists are still researching the healing effects that music can have on the body in hopes of strengthening its ability to improve the quality of life of those living with Parkinson's and other movement disorders.



A "DANCE FOR PD" CLASS USES MUSIC TO GET PARKINSON'S PATIENTS MOVING.

## How Masculinity Inhibits Fatherhood

by Macey Downs

*"I know how to DO with Sabina. But I don't know how to just BE. That wise being there-ness of fatherhood — well, I'll never have that kind of game." - Rich Topol*

*Searching for Mr. Moon* centers around playwright-performer Rich Topol's journey toward being the kind of father he wants to be for his daughter, Sabina. Topol lost his own dad during open-heart surgery at age 12, and has spent much of his life since then trying to fill in the "father" hole left behind with other older men in his life—musicians, the dads of girlfriends, and finally his father-in-law, Lukas Foss. Topol has at this point in his life achieved career success through acting in several critically-acclaimed plays, but faces a mental block when it comes to being a father. Men generally aren't taught how to be caretakers or father figures until after they have children of their own. Dominant ideas about masculinity in the US encourage men to prioritize their

careers over fatherhood, while discouraging them from the emotional vulnerability necessary for parenting.

US society maintains patriarchal ideals through instilling "hegemonic," or dominant, gendered power relations in its citizens. Hegemony is a sociological concept first introduced by philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It describes how a society's ruling class disseminates their worldview in ways that are hard to challenge. Hegemonic conceptions of gender maintain the economic relationship in which men are breadwinners, and women need to rely on men for financial support. This in turn boxes all individuals into limited ideas about masculinity and femininity, and doesn't leave space for people to define those ideas for themselves.

Hegemonic ideologies seep into society disguised as "common knowledge." This means that those with power in a society



spread particular views of the world that maintain their ruling position, and in doing so must convince people that those worldviews are natural and inarguable. Sociologist Raewyn Connell applies these ideas to “hegemonic masculinity,” which legitimizes patriarchal power. Dominant forms of masculinity in the US include characteristics that are rooted in colonialist ideals: providing for the family, lacking emotional expression, and displaying authority, which are associated with control and power. This dually validates men’s dominance over women while also restricting men to exhibiting these normative expressions of masculinity.

Men face shame around being vulnerable, such as through the commonly spread belief that “men don’t cry” that stigmatizes a normal human emotion. Growing up, boys who demonstrate stereotypically feminized characteristics, like caretaking or expressing emotions, risk bullying and humiliation. Those who respond to the call to “man up” by shaping their gender expression around hegemonic masculinity later struggle with connecting to others in their relationships, or being able to ask for help.

American ideas around parenting have been changing over recent decades, creating incongruence between hegemonic masculine norms and new ideals for fatherhood. Traditionally, stereotypes positioned mothers as caretakers and homekeepers, while fathers were expected to be breadwinners and disciplinarians. These ideals were also constructed along race and class lines—all men and women were held to these stereotypes, but only White middle- and upper-class people had the means and social position to consistently and “successfully” fulfill these roles.

In *Searching for Mr. Moon*, Rich Topol alludes to this gender disparity while embodying his wife Eliza, who shares with the audience, “I put my career on hold here for our daughter because I want to be there for her. Because... my parents weren’t there for me. My Dad especially...” For women, putting their “career on hold” or leaving their careers altogether fits into hegemonic norms that place women into the private sphere of the home as mothers. Rich Topol’s continuation of his career corresponds with ideals of hegemonic masculinity that place men as strong authority figures in the public economic sphere.

Recent fatherhood ideals emphasize more active engagement in children’s lives, and shifting gender dynamics encourage men to share the role of the caretaker with their partners. Because hegemonic masculinity reflects negatively on these new standards, fathers who strive to be more of a presence in their children’s lives run into outside stigma, internal struggles to reject masculine characteristics that are seen as “common sense” or “natural,” and a lack of father figures who can model these ideals for them.

Rich Topol grapples with this himself in *Searching for Mr. Moon*, as he expresses, “My dad left before he could tell me all the Dad Things I need to know,” or yearns to ask his father-in-law, “How does the artistic life/fatherhood thing work out?” Topol is coming up against ideals around masculinity that may have prevented men in the previous generation from demonstrating the “Dadness” he would like to express, or that taught men to prioritize their careers above all else. Topol ends the play reflecting on how he is striving to define fatherhood for himself, as he balances his career with reading his daughter a nightly bedtime story.



*“Skip to the part where the princess climbs to the top of the corporate ladder.”*

ART BY CHRISTOPHER WEYANT.

# One-Person Shows and Solo Performances

by Meredith G. Healy

*Searching for Mr. Moon* is about Richard Topol's experience navigating fatherhood and balancing a career in the theater with a life at home. The autobiographical one-person show provides a unique opportunity for audience members to gain an intimate knowledge about the playwright-performer's life and experiences. This style of play is not new, even though it has become an increasingly popular genre over the past couple of decades. How has the solo show developed over time? What makes the autobiographical solo show distinct from other one-person performances?

Solo shows have existed for thousands of years. The earliest versions of this style of performance can be traced back to oral storytelling during which early humans passed down information to the next generation. Over time, the role of the storyteller became more akin to a job. Early shamans were responsible for holding and retelling the histories of their tribes, and, as early as the first century CE, bards in Wales, Britain, and Ireland incorporated music and portrayed different characters in their performances. Ancient Greece and Rome are credited for developing many of the characteristics that define modern theater, including the monologue which was used to both give the audience historical context and to entertain. In the 1800s, famous writers of the time, such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain, staged solo performances of their works. After publishing *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens toured through England performing the story as a one-man show.

The most critical aspect of a solo theater performance that distinguishes it from other one-person productions, such as a stand-up routine or slam poetry, is the incorporation of a unifying plotline. Solo theatrical shows also often incorporate multimedia production elements, such as projections, to make the performance more dynamic since the



CHARLES DICKENS READS A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

acting is limited to a single performer. Last year, audiences at Portland Stage had an opportunity to see three different solo performances (*A Christmas Carol*, *Bad Dates*, and *Where We Stand*) as the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated small cast sizes for shows to be safely produced. However, before the pandemic, one-person shows were sought after because they are relatively low cost in terms of both production and cast size. Artistic directors note that producing a solo show can be both a daunting and exhilarating endeavor. Douglas Aibel, Artistic Director at the Vineyard (a new works company in NYC), said that "there has to be something special for me to want to be in a room for 90 minutes with a sole person." James C. Nicola, Artistic Director at New York Theater Workshop, agreed: "I sense audience fatigue with the idea of solo work, but I balance that with the unique rewards of solo performance. When they work, there is an energy in the room of authentic experience being conveyed that is not like anything else."



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

The energy and connection to the audience is something that unites all solo shows, but the scripts and performances vary in the types of stories that are told. Some pieces are completely fictional--the playwright creates the characters and circumstances. This is the case for Theresa Rebeck's *Bad Dates*. In *Where We Stand*, playwright Donnetta Lavinia Grays drew from the traditions of oral storytelling to tell a modern-day version of the "deal with the devil" folklore motif. Portland Stage's one-man version of *A Christmas Carol* was adapted by actor Joel Leffert from Dickens's novella.

Solo theater shows can also be autobiographical, as is the case with *Searching for Mr. Moon*. Eric Trules, who taught about solo performance at the University of Southern California, notes that when creating an autobiographical one-person show, "Your vulnerability is your greatest strength." Many famous actors have embraced this in the development of their own autobiographical shows. For example, in her piece *Wishful Drinking*, Carrie Fisher reflected on the more challenging aspects of her fame, including divorce, substance addiction, and mental illness. *Wishful Drinking* was produced on Broadway in 2009, and in a review published in the *New York Times*, Ben Brantley spoke to the vulnerability and the audience connection that made the show a success.

"Whether or not you are the audience member anointed to model the Leia hairdo, you will by now have started to see the world through the self-dissociating eyes of the woman who first wore it. Ms. Fisher, daughter of the movie star Debbie Reynolds and the crooner Eddie Fisher, cannot be said to have had an Everywoman's life. Yet *Wishful Drinking* makes you believe, for a couple of hours, that Carrie Fisher is you."

In *Searching for Mr. Moon*, Rich Topol takes his lived experience of feeling underprepared for fatherhood, and makes it accessible to an audience that has likely suffered from their own insecurities and feelings of inferiority within their lifetimes. This shared experience is the key element to crafting a piece that will truly resonate with audiences. An autobiographical one-person show invites you to connect with someone whose life might appear dissimilar or foreign on the surface. Even though the specifics of the scenarios might be different, a skilled performer is able to not only invite the audience into their life, but is also able to find moments of kinship that define the universal human experience.

CARRIE FISHER IN *WISHPFUL DRINKING*.

# Recommended Resources

by The Editors

## Books

*Gratitude* by Oliver Sacks

*Paris to the Moon* by Adam Gopnik

## Plays

*Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer

*A Bronx Tale* by Chazz Palminteri

*The Morini Strad* by Willy Holtzman

*Words By: Ira Gershwin and the Great American Songbook* by Joseph Vass

*33 Variations* by Moisés Kaufman

## TV

*Mozart in the Jungle*

*This is Us*

## Film

*Whiplash*

*Wishful Drinking*

## Music

*Baroque Variations* by Lukas Foss

*Echoi* by Lukas Foss

*Time Cycle* by Lukas Foss



MILES TELLER AND J.K. SIMMONS IN WHIPLASH, 2014.



# 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*

### **Affiliate Artists**

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

### **Administrative Staff**

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

### **Intern/Apprentice Company**

Julian Bencze *Costumes Intern*  
Casey Boriskie *Stage Management Intern*  
Sophia B. Diaz *Education Apprentice*  
Macey Downs *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*  
Savanna Genskow *Props Apprentice*  
Meredith G. Healy *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*  
Audrey Kastner *Electrics Apprentice*  
Taylor Kibbler *Sets Intern*  
Katie Ludlam *Company Management Intern*  
Jessica Mount *Education Intern*  
Mallory Topel *Stage Management Intern*  
Kelly Yamahiro *Costumes Intern*