

23rd Annual



PACIFIC  
PLAYWRIGHTS  
FESTIVAL

PART OF THE LAB@SCR



South Coast Repertory



# South Coast Repertory

David Ivers  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Paula Tomei  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

David Emmes & Martin Benson  
FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

presents the 23rd Annual

# Pacific Playwrights Festival

April, May and June 2021

The Honorary Producers of the Pacific Playwrights Festival are  
Sally Anderson & Tom Rogers • Laurie & Steve Duncan  
Kristen & Adrian Griggs • Samuel & Tammy Tang  
Tod & Linda White

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Major support for SCR's new-play program comes from  
The Shubert Foundation  
The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust  
The National Endowment for the Arts  
The Elizabeth George Foundation

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The long-term success of the Pacific Playwrights Festival is greatly assisted  
by the establishment of endowment funds. We are deeply grateful to the following  
donors who have honored us with gifts:

The Cripe Eberhard Drachman Family Endowment  
The Yvonne and Damien Jordan Endowment  
The Jean and Tim Weiss Next Generation Endowment  
The Tod and Linda White Pacific Playwrights Festival Endowment

# FESTIVAL READINGS

## **COVENANT**

by York Walker

Director: Tamilla Woodard • Dramaturg: John Glore

Streaming April 26-May 2, 2021

## **COLEMAN '72**

by Charlie Oh

Director: David Ivers • Dramaturg: Andy Knight

Streaming May 10-16, 2021

## **PARK-E LALEH**

by Shayan Lotfi

Director: Mike Donahue • Dramaturg: Andy Knight

Streaming May 24-30, 2021

## **CLEAN**

by Christine Quintana

Director: Lisa Portes • Translations by: Paula Zelaya Cervantes

Dramaturg: Anna Jennings

Streaming May 31-June 6, 2021

## **HAROLD & LILLIAN**

book & lyrics by Dan Collins music by Julianne Wick Davis  
based on the documentary film by Daniel Raim

Director: Michael Greif • Music Director: Matt Deitchman • Dramaturg: Jerry Patch

Streaming June 21-27, 2021

# WELCOME



To All You Fans of New American Playwriting,

Welcome to the 2021 Pacific Playwrights Festival!

After having been forced by the coronavirus scourge to cancel the 2020 festival, we're thrilled to be able to pick up where we left off two years ago—albeit with a festival that looks quite different from the first 22 iterations. This year, we offer five staged readings of new American plays, each of which has undergone at least four days of rehearsal prior to being presented on one of SCR's stages and professionally filmed using a three-camera set-up. It may not quite be a live theatre event shared among several hundred friends and colleagues, but it's as close as we can get under the present circumstances—and we hope you'll find it a refreshing change from the typical Zoom play-readings we've all gotten used to over the past year.

The 2021 festival includes a folk-horror tale set in the American South of the 1930s, a road-trip across the U.S. in the company of a Korean American family, a story of an Iranian refugee trying to make a new home in London, an encounter between two women—one Canadian, one Mexican—who have more in common than they might expect (and less than they might hope for) and a musical about a 60-year Hollywood romance between two people you may never have heard of but who made important contributions to a lot of movies you've probably seen. It's a thrilling and multifaceted lineup of plays, with both homegrown and international stories, reflecting South Coast Repertory's commitment to celebrating our community and the world around us in all their multiplicity.

So we invite you to sit back—wherever you find yourselves this spring—and enjoy these five examples of American playwriting at its best!

The Pacific Playwrights Festival Team



IN REHEARSAL (clockwise from top left): Amanda Naughton, Scott Waara, Karole Foreman, Manna Nichols and Rustin Cole Sailors in *Prelude to a Kiss, the Musical*; Jon Tenney and Laura Heisler in *Mr. Wolf*; Assaf Cohen and Anjali Bhimani in *Orange*; Dinara Walcott and Michael Weston in *I Get Restless*; Brooke Ishibashi and Raymond Lee in *Cambodian Rock Band*; Chauntae Pink and Giovanni Adams in *Little Black Shadows*. Photos by Debora Robinson.



# South Coast Repertory

## 23RD ANNUAL PACIFIC PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

David Ivers  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Paula Tomei  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

David Emmes & Martin Benson  
FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

presents a reading of

# PARK-E LALEH

by Shayan Lotfi

John Glore & Andy Knight  
FESTIVAL CO-DIRECTORS

Andy Knight  
DRAMATURG

Joanne DeNaut, CSA  
CASTING DIRECTOR

Kathryn Davies\*  
STAGE MANAGER

Anna Jennings  
FESTIVAL COORDINATOR

Justin Krumb  
FILM PRODUCER

Directed by  
**Mike Donahue**

**PARK-E LALEH streams May 24-30, 2021**

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

Amir .....	<i>Nima Rakhshanifar*</i>
Interviewer/Sister Mary .....	<i>Joy DeMichelle*</i>
Chris/Marco .....	<i>Colin Bates*</i>
Noor/Veiled Passenger .....	<i>Pooya Mohseni*</i>
Vera/Zofia .....	<i>Linda Gebringer*</i>
Hussein .....	<i>Nima Jafari*</i>
Stage Directions Reader .....	<i>Heather Lee Echeverria</i>

### SETTING:

2010-2020

London and Tehran.

### LENGTH:

Approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes  
with one intermission.

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Dialect Consultant .....	<i>Nike Doukas</i>
Production Manager .....	<i>Matthew E. Chandler</i>
Infection Control Specialist .....	<i>Leanne Convis</i>
Lighting Supervisor .....	<i>Kara Ramlow</i>
Sound and Video Supervisor .....	<i>Michael Ritchey</i>
Light Board Operator .....	<i>Sean Deuel</i>
Sound Board Operator/Audio Support .....	<i>Jim Busker</i>

### FILM PRODUCED AND EDITED BY JKRUMB STUDIOS

Technical Director .....	<i>Joe Abreu</i>
Director of Photography .....	<i>Troy Page</i>
Camera .....	<i>Carly Stone</i>

### SPECIAL THANKS

Azita Ghanizada of MENA Arts Advocacy.

Maia Directors, consulting group for artists and organizations engaging  
with stories from the Middle East and beyond.

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association,  
the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.

# ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES



**SHAYAN LOTFI** (*Playwright*) has written a few plays and, thankfully, still wants to write. He has been fortunate enough that some really cool institutions—like South Coast Repertory, The Lark, Roundabout Theatre Company and Boston Court Pasadena—have helped develop his work and that some really cool residencies—like SPACE at Ryder Farm and The Millay Colony for the Arts—have fed and housed him as he tried desperately to be productive. When he's not writing, he works as an urban policy consultant, splitting his time between New York and Los Angeles.



**MIKE DONAHUE** (*Director*) has New York City credits that include world premieres of Matthew Lopez's *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (MCC, Geffen Playhouse and Denver Center for the Performing Arts Theatre Company); Jen Silverman's *Collective Rage* (MCC, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), *The Moors* (Playwrights Realm, New York City premiere), *Phoebe in Winter* (Clubbed Thumb); Jordan Seavey's *Homos, or Everyone in America* (LAByrnth Theater Company); and Ethan Lipton's *Red-Handed Otter* (Playwrights Realm). His regional credits include *Little Shop of Horrors* with MJ Rodriguez, George Salazar and Amber Riley (Pasadena Playhouse), world premieres of Jen Silverman's *The Roommate* (Humana Festival of New American Plays, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Long Wharf Theatre) and *Wink* (Marin Theatre Company); Rachel Bonds' *Curve of Departure* (South Coast Repertory, Studio Theatre) and *The Wolfe Twins* (Studio Theatre); Matthew Lopez's *Zoey's Perfect Wedding* and Lauren Feldman's *Grace, or The Art of Climbing* (Denver Center); Kate Cortesi's *Love* (Marin Theatre); and Shostakovich's *Moscow, Cheryomushki* in a new libretto by Meg Miroshnik (Chicago Opera Theatre). He is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship to Berlin, the Drama League Fall Fellowship and The Boris Sagal Fellowship at Williamstown, and was the artistic director of the Yale Summer Cabaret for two seasons. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Yale School of Drama. His upcoming work includes Anne Carson's adaptation of Euripides' *The Bakkhai* with new music by Diana Oh (Baltimore Center Stage) and the world premiere of Matt Schatz's *A Wicked Soul in Cherry Hill* (Geffen).



**COLIN BATES** (*Chris/Marco*) is making his SCR debut. He started his career at the age of 13 on the national tour of *Oliver!*, then made his film debut in Robert DeNiro's *The Good Shepherd*. By age 15, he was on London's West End playing the title role in Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot the Musical*. Most recently, he appeared on Showtime's upcoming series "Rust" (by Adam Rapp), FX's "Mayans M.C." and CBS's "FBI: Most Wanted." In the theatre world, his notable credits include Conor McPherson's *Girl from The North Country*

(West End, Gielgud Theatre) and David Cromer's *The Effect* (off-Broadway, Barrow Street Theatre). Since graduating from The Juilliard School, he also has appeared in numerous French films including, *La Prière*, which won the Silver Bear at The Berlinale, in the Amazon Prime hit, "Sneaky Pete" and in numerous American independent feature films. @batesland



**JOY DEMICHELLE** (*Interviewer/Sister Mary*) is thrilled to return to SCR after appearing in *Aubergine*. Her theatrical credits include *Sweat* (Mark Taper Forum); Stonewall Jackson's *House* (off-Broadway, American Place Theatre); *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Water Hole* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Seven Guitars* and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Denver Center Theatre); *The Piano Lesson*, *Spirit North* and a one-women piece entitled *Harriet's Return* (Crossroads Theatre); and *Darker Face of the Earth* (Fountain Theatre). A few select television and film credits include "Snowfall," "I Think You Should Leave," "The L-Word: Generation Q," "For the People," "Criminal Minds," "Parenthood," "Lie to Me," "Outlaw," *American Gun*, *Taking Back Our Town* (with the late Ruby Dee), "Judging Amy," "King Pin," and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." She earned her BFA at North Carolina A&T State University and her MFA from Rutgers University (Mason Gross School of the Arts), where she received the prestigious Bettendorf Outstanding Performance Award. DeMichelle is one of the co-hosts of "Live at the Lortel" podcast, lifting up the voice of the BIPOC and LGBTQ community and their allies.



**LINDA GEHRINGER** (*Vera/Zofia*) appeared at SCR previously in *The Canadians*, *The Roommate*, *Going to a Place where you Already Are* and *How to Write a New Book for the Bible*, for which she received a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle nomination. She also appeared in the world premieres of *The Parisian Woman*; *The Language Archive*; *The Piano Teacher*; *A Naked Girl on the Appian Way*; *Getting Frankie Married—and Afterwards*; *Hold Please; But Not for Me*; and *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow*, a role she repeated in its New York premiere at the Atlantic Theatre Company. Her other SCR credits include *Circle Mirror Transformation*; *Doubt, a parable*; *Hamlet*; *The Retreat from Moscow*; *A Delicate Balance*; *All My Sons*; *Relatively Speaking*; *The Last Night of Ballyboob*; *Arcadia*; and *Good as New*. She has played leading roles in theatres across the country including the world premiere of the one-woman show, *Lady in Denmark*, at Chicago's Goodman Theatre; the world premieres of *Vicuña* at Kirk Douglas Theatre and *The Comparables* at Seattle Repertory Theatre; *I Saw My Neighbor on the Train and I Didn't Even Smile* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* at Berkshire Theatre Festival; *Surf Report* at La Jolla Playhouse; *The Women and Since Africa* at The Old Globe; and *The Crowd You're In With* (Jeff Award nomination) at Goodman Theatre. Her recent television credits include "S.W.A.T.," "Fear the Walking Dead," "Grey's Anatomy," "Perry Mason" (HBO) and recurring roles on "Touch" and "Justified." Her other television work



includes “NCIS,” “Raising Hope,” “Weeds,” “Gilmore Girls,” “Without a Trace,” “Cold Case,” “Ally McBeal,” “Frasier” and “The West Wing” and the films *Into the Storm*, *Kreep* and *As Good As It Gets*.



**NIMA JAFARI** (*Hussein*) comes from a rich village called “Hamedan”—cold n wet heart of Iran—and he is proud to be a part of this ensemble. A Theatre68 bandit, as well as a recent “honorary knight” from Will Geer’s Theatricum Botanicum, who had ferociously missed being in service on stage in the spotlight... you can see him in his next special: “turn it down, it’s too hot” coming out after he eventually passes on to Hell itself; Nima is now so lucky and honored to be working so closely with such groundbreaking agent-provocateurs.

Simplicity, Compassion and Patience...and the Rest, is Silence.



**POOYA MOHSENI** (*Noor/Veiled Passenger*) is an Iranian-American actor, writer and Transgender activist. Her newest film, *See You Then* by Mari Walker, premiered at SXSW this past March to great reviews and continues to make the festival rounds. Her stage performances include *She, He, Me* for National Queer Theater (directed by Sivan Battat), *Our Town* in Pride Plays (directed by Jenna Worsham), *Hamlet* in Play On Shakespeare Festival (directed by Ellen McLaughlin), an award-winning one-person show, *One Woman*, in United Solo

at The Theatre Row (directed by Joan Kane), *Galatea* for the WP Pipeline Festival (directed by Mo Zhou) and the Audible production of *Chonburi Hotel & The Butterfly Club* for Williamstown Theater Festival (directed by Laura Savia). She has guest-starred on “Law & Order: SVU,” “Falling Water” (USA), “Madam Secretary” and is a recurring guest star on the drama “Big Dogs” (Amazon Prime). She is represented by Headline Talent Agency. On twitter/IG : Pooyaland.



**NIMA RAKHSHANIFAR** (*Amir*) is excited to be telling a queer, Iranian story in their debut at South Coast Repertory. They are a classically trained actor, singer and musician from the Bay Area. Rakhshanifar started learning traditional Iranian instruments at an early age and performed in the Iranian Youth Orchestra with santur, zarb, daf, qanun and piano. They graduated from PCPA’s Acting Conservatory with credits in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Freaky Friday* and *Coriolanus*. They have worked regionally at Milwaukee Repertory

Theater (*Junk*, *A Christmas Carol*, RepLab), Chicago Shakespeare Theater (*Comedy of Errors*), Victory Gardens Theater (*Waiting for Godot*) and TheatreWorks Silicon Valley (*Something to Say: New Plays by Women*). Rakhshanifar is looking to expand artistically by writing and directing projects in the future. There are so many unique stories to be told, and Rakhshanifar would like to add their voice to the mix.

**KATHRYN DAVIES** (*Stage Manager*) previously stage-managed *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Poor Yella Rednecks*, *Sugar Plum Fairy*, *Orange*, *The Roommate*, *All the Way*, *Future Thinking*, *Red*, *Vietgone*, *The Whipping Man*, *Tartuffe*, *Reunion*, *Trudy and Max in Love*, *The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat*, *How to Write a New Book for the Bible*, *Sight Unseen*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *In the Next Room or the vibrator play*, *Doctor Cerberus*, *Ordinary Days*, *Our Mother's Brief Affair* and *The Injured Party*—all at SCR. Her favorite credits include *The Wars* at the Grand Theatre; *Dividing the Estate* at Dallas Theater Center; *La Bohème* at Tulsa Opera; *The Mystery of Irma Vep* at The Old Globe; *Les Contes D'Hoffmann* at Hawaii Opera Theatre; *Of Mice and Men* at Neptune Theatre; *The Dresser* at Manitoba Theatre Centre; *Skylight* at Tarragon Theatre; *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Citadel Theatre; and *The Designated Mourner* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Davies also worked as head theatre manager at the Toronto International, Dubai International, AFI, TCM and Los Angeles Film festivals.

**ANDY KNIGHT** (*Dramaturg/Festival Co-Director*) is South Coast Repertory's literary manager and co-director of the Pacific Playwrights Festival. At SCR, his dramaturgy credits include the world premieres of Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band*, Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone*, Adam Bock's *The Canadians*, Catherine Trieschmann's Theatre for Young Audiences play, *OZ 2.5*, and the West Coast premieres of Karen Zacarias' *Destiny of Desire* and Sarah Burgess' *Kings*. His other dramaturgy credits include the world premiere of Carla Ching's *The Two Kids That Blow Sh\*t Up* with Artists at Play. Before SCR, Knight worked at Chicago's Goodman Theatre.

**JUSTIN KRUMB** (*Film Producer*) has roots that run deep within SCR. Since graduating with his BA from CSU-Long Beach, he has immersed himself in the evolving world of video and film production. Focusing his efforts on feature documentary (*Minds in the Water*), broadcast television (*First Hand*, *The Surfer's Journal*) and live productions (*Love Loud*, *Imagine Dragons*, *ReCode*) has allowed Krumb to see all sides of producing



Brooke Ishibashi, Joe Ngo, Jane Lui, Raymond Lee and Abraham Kim in the world premiere of *Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee (2018), photo by Jordan Kubat.

digital media. Spanning multiple decades, he has worked on a variety of documentary and commercial projects, in countries around the globe that range in subject matter from travel, music, sports, and culture. Krumb earned the honor of an Emmy Award for Best Documentary (*Next Wave*) and film festival awards that included Best Environmental Film, Best Original Score, Audience Appreciation and a Top Emerging Directors designation from AmDocs Film Festival (*Transparentsea*). He recently reconnected with SCR to produce film works of plays (*Outside Mullingar*, *A Shot Rang Out* and *Red Riding Hood*). The opportunity to bring the Pacific Playwrights Festival plays and a musical to the screen in a new and inclusive way, and to share the talents of these amazing artists, continues to add to the rewarding career path he has taken.

**DAVID IVERS** (*Artistic Director*) is responsible for the overall artistic operation of Tony Award-winning South Coast Repertory, where he started in 2018. In addition to artistic leadership, he is active as a director at the theatre. In April 2019, he directed a concert reading of the new musical, *Prelude to a Kiss*, during the Pacific Playwrights Festival, a national showcase of new works, and in 2021, directed the PPF reading of *Coleman '72* by Charlie Oh. In 2020, he directed *She Loves Me*, his production directorial debut as artistic director. He spearheaded the re-branding of SCR's renowned new-play development programs in 2020, as The Lab@SCR, which enhanced and expanded the theatre's commitment to a more rigorous development of new American musicals, commissions for playwrights at various stages of their careers, playwright residencies and additional in-house readings and workshops. The Lab@SCR includes the new Pinnacle Commission, a grant to a major U.S. playwright. The Pinnacle's \$60,000 inaugural commission was given in partnership with Playwrights Horizons (New York City) and is among the largest in the U.S. from a theatre to a playwright. 2020 also saw the creation of SCR CommUNITY, a new digital platform dedicated to amplifying regional artists and narratives by producing stories inspired by or about the rich diversity of people living in Southern California. Announced for 2021 is *Outside SCR*, featuring repertory performances under the stars in different outdoor locations in Orange County, Calif. No stranger to SCR, in 2015, he directed the SCR-Berkeley Repertory Theatre co-production of *One Man*,



John de Lancie and Emily James in the world premiere of *Mr. Wolf* by Rajiv Joseph (2015), photo by Debora Robinson; Pia Shah, Karthik Srinivasan and Anjali Bhimani in the world premiere of *Orange* by Aditi Brennan Kapil (2017), photo by Debora Robinson.

*Two Gunners.* Prior to SCR, Ivers served as artistic director for Arizona Theatre Company. Before that, he served more than 20 years as an actor and director at Utah Shakespeare Festival, with the last six as artistic director. For a decade, he was a resident artist at Denver Center Theatre Company, acting in and/or directing more than 40 plays and has helmed productions at many of the nation's leading regional theatres including the Guthrie Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and South Coast Repertory. He taught at the University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Southern Utah University and Southern Oregon University. Ivers earned his BA from Southern Oregon University and his MFA from the University of Minnesota.



Corey Brill and Daniel Chung in the world premiere production of *The Canadians* by Adam Bock (2019). Photo by Jordan Kubat.

**PAULA TOMEI** (*Managing Director*) is responsible for the overall administration of SCR. She has been managing director since 1994 and a member of SCR's staff since 1979. She is a past president of the board of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for theatre. In addition, she served as treasurer of TCG, vice president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and as a member of the LORT Negotiating Committee for industry-wide union agreements. She represents SCR at national conferences of TCG and LORT and served as a theatre panelist and site visitor for the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. Her teaching background includes a graduate class in non-profit management at UC-Irvine (UCI) and as a guest lecturer in the graduate school of business at Stanford. She was appointed by the chancellor to UCI's Community Arts Council and serves on the Dean's Leadership Society Executive Committee for the School of Social Sciences at UCI. She is also on the board of Arts Orange County, the county-wide arts council, and the board of the Nicholas Endowment. She graduated from UCI with a degree in economics and pursued an additional course of study in theatre and dance. In March 2017, she received the Mayor's Award from the City of Costa Mesa for her contributions to the arts community. In 2018, she received the Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award from Arts Orange County. In 2019, she was awarded UCI's Distinguished Alumna in the School of Social Sciences at the Lauds & Laurels Celebration.

**JOHN GLORE** (*Associate Artistic Director/Festival Co-Director*) has been SCR's associate artistic director since 2005, following five years as resident dramaturg for LA's Center Theatre Group. He previously served as SCR's literary manager from 1985 to

2000. He has worked as dramaturg on more than 100 SCR productions, workshops and readings including the Pacific Playwrights Festival world premieres of *Mr. Wolf* by Rajiv Joseph and *Office Hour* by Julia Cho. His ongoing collaboration with Culture Clash has included co-writing new adaptations of two plays by Aristophanes, *The Birds* (co-produced by SCR and Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 1998) and *Peace* (Getty Villa, 2009) and serving as dramaturg on five other Culture Clash productions. His own plays have been produced at SCR, Arena Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and other theatres across the country.

**MARTIN BENSON** (*Founding Artistic Director*), co-founder of SCR, has directed nearly one-fourth of SCR's productions. In 2008, he and David Emmes received the Margo Jones Award for their lifetime commitment to theatre excellence and fostering the art and craft of American playwriting. They also accepted SCR's 1988 Tony Award for Outstanding Resident Professional Theatre and won the 1995 Theatre LA Ovation Award for Lifetime Achievement. Benson has received the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for Distinguished Achievement in Directing an unparalleled seven times for George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, *Misalliance* and *Heart-break House*; John Millington Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*; Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*; Sally Nemeth's *Holy Days*; and the world premiere of Margaret Edson's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Wit*, which he also directed at Seattle Repertory Theatre and Houston's Alley Theatre. He has directed American classics such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and has distinguished himself in staging contemporary work including the critically acclaimed California premiere of William Nicholson's *Shadowlands*. He directed revivals of Beth Henley's *Abundance* and Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*; and Samuel D. Hunter's *The Whale and Rest* (world premiere); *The Whipping Man* by Matthew Lopez; and *The Roommate* by Jen Silverman (west coast premiere). Benson received his BA in theatre from San Francisco State University.

**DAVID EMMES** (*Founding Artistic Director*) is co-founder of South Coast Repertory. He received the Margo Jones Award for his lifetime commitment to theatre excellence and to fostering the art of American playwriting. In addition, he has received numerous awards for productions he has directed during his SCR career. He directed the world premieres of Amy Freed's *Safe in Hell*, *The Beard of Avon* and *Freedomland*; Thomas Babe's *Great Day in the Morning*; Keith Reddin's *Rum and Coke* and *But Not for Me*; and Neal Bell's *Cold Sweat*; the American premieres of Terry Johnson's *Unsuitable for Adults*; and Joe Penhall's *Dumb Show*; and the Southland premiere of *Top Girls* (at SCR and the Westwood Playhouse). Other productions he has directed include *Red*, *New England*, *Arcadia*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Woman in Mind* and *You Never Can Tell*, which he restaged for the Singapore Festival of Arts. He has served as a theatre panelist and onsite evaluator for the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a panelist for the California Arts Council. After attending Orange Coast College, he received his BA and MA from San Francisco State University and his PhD from USC.

# INTRODUCING THE ELIZABETH GEORGE PLAYWRIGHTS

2021 marks the 20th year that the Elizabeth George Foundation has partnered with SCR in supporting emerging playwrights. These commissions have been awarded to a number of the American theatre's most-celebrated playwrights at the outset of their careers including Julia Cho, Noah Haidle, Quiara Alegría Hudes and Rajiv Joseph. We're thrilled to announce the recipients of the 2020 and 2021 Elizabeth George commissions: Spenser Davis, Shayan Lotfi and Charly Evon Simpson (2020) and Aurora de Asua, Benjamin Benne and Bleu Beckford-Burrell (2021).

## 2020



### SPENSER DAVIS

is a Chicago-based, Arkansas-born writer-director. He's a longtime member of Broken Nose Theatre, an ensemble member of The Factory and current Michael Maggio Directing

Fellow at The Goodman Theatre. His play *Plainclothes* won the 2019 M. Elizabeth Osborn New Play Award and was a finalist for the Harold & Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award. Last year, his critically acclaimed virtual play *The Spin* was called "my favorite online production since theatres began shuttering last March" (*Stage & Cinema*). His short plays have been produced around the world and have been published by Smith & Kraus. As a director, he has been nominated three times for the Joseph Jefferson Best Director Award, winning once. His production of *At the Table* was named "One of the Best of the Year" by *Chicago Tribune's* Chris Jones and "One of the 25 Best Shows of the Decade" by *Storefront Rebellion*. He's a series writer and director of "Squid," a short-form comedy series now available on Amazon Prime.

He's proud to be represented by Luke Virkstis at William Morris Endeavor.



### SHAYAN LOTFI

has written a few plays and thankfully still wants to write. He has been fortunate enough that some really cool institutions—like

South Coast Repertory, The Lark, Roundabout, and Boston Court—have helped develop his work, and that some really cool residencies—like SPACE at Ryder Farm and the Millay Colony—have fed and housed him as he tried desperately to be productive. When he's not writing, he works as an urban policy consultant, splitting his time between New York and Los Angeles.



### CHARLY EVON SIMPSON

is a playwright, TV writer and teacher based in Brooklyn. Her plays include *Behind the Sheet*, *Jump*, *form of a girl unknown* and

*it's not a trip it's a journey.* Her work has been seen and/or developed with Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Lark, P73, The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Chautauqua Theater Company, Salt Lake Acting Company and others. She is a recipient of the Vineyard Theatre's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award and the Dramatists Guild's Lanford Wilson Award. This fall, she will begin a seven-year residency with New Dramatists.

Right now, she has theatre commissions with MTC/Sloan, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Cleveland Play House and PlayMakers Repertory Company. She's also currently working on TV shows for HBO and teaching playwriting at State University of New York at Purchase. Simpson has a BA from Brown University, an MA in women's studies from University of Oxford, New College, and her MFA in playwriting from Hunter College.

## 2021



### **AURORA DE ASUA**

is a California-born playwright and actor based in Chicago. Her plays have been workshopped at Chicago theatres such as Victory Gardens Theater, Sideshow Theatre Company, Rivendell Theater, Greenhouse Theater Center and The Story Theatre. As an actor, she has worked with The Goodman, Court Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, The Hypocrites and Victory Gardens, among others. She has a BA in theatre from Northwestern University. [auroradeasua.com](http://auroradeasua.com)



### **BLEU BECKFORD-BURRELL**

is a first-generation Jamaican-American actor/playwright. Born and raised in New York City, she works for non-profit organizations where she teaches acting to teens, as well as writes and directs plays.

Her plays include *P.S.365* (2019 O'Neill finalist) showcased at EST (Youngblood Workshop Series) and The National Black Theatre (Keep the Soul Alive reading series). Her play *Lyons Pride* (2020 Burman New Play Award finalist, 2019 The Kilroys Honorable Mention, and Yale Drama Series Award runner-up, 2018 BAPF, Princess Grace Award finalist) was showcased at Playwrights Realm (Ink'd Festival of New Plays) and EST (Bloodwork Reading Series). Her play *La Race* (2020 Normal Ave finalist and Theatre503 International Playwright Award, O'Neill, Bay Area Playwright Foundation semi-finalist) is currently being showcased at Faultline Theatre (upcoming at Irons in the Fire) and Page 73 (Virtual Residency). She is a Page 73 Fellow (2021), Playwrights Realm Fellow (2018), Playwrights' Center New Voices Fellowship (2018, finalist), NYTW/2050 Fellowship (2019, finalist) as well as an Interstate 73 playwright (2020), Colt Coeur resident (2021), PWC Core Writer (2020, finalist), WP Lab (2020, finalist) and Working Farm (2019, semi-finalist). She received the 2020 Playwrights Horizons Jody Falco & Jeffrey Steinman Commission for Emerging Play-

it organizations where she teaches acting to teens, as well as writes and directs plays.

wrights. MFA Rutgers University Blue-Beckford.com



**BENJAMIN BENNE** was born and raised in Los Angeles County and completed a BA in theatre arts at Cal State Fullerton. Benne has lived in the Pacific Northwest, Midwest and currently resides on the East Coast, where he is a Yale School of Drama MFA candidate in playwriting. His plays, including *at the very bottom of a body of water*, *Alma* and *In His Hands*, have been seen and developed coast to coast—and a few points in between—including The Old Globe, Boston Court Pasadena, Teatro Milagro, Seattle

Repertory Theatre, Theatre Battery, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Texas Tech University, The Playwrights' Center, Pillsbury House Theatre, American Blues Theater, Two River Theater, The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, The Playwrights Realm, The Lark and Roundabout Theatre Company. He is a recipient of Portland Stage's 2020 Clauder Competition Gold Prize, Arizona Theatre Company's 2019 National Latinx Playwriting Award, American Blues Theater's 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award, the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's 2019 Latinx Playwriting Award and a 2017 Robert Chesley/Victor Bumbalo Playwriting Award. He is a Playwrights' Center Affiliated Writer and member of Primary Stages' Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group. [benjaminbenne.com](http://benjaminbenne.com)



Natasha Roi and Don Reilly in the world premiere of *Emilie: La Marquise Du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* by Lauren Gunderson, an Elizabeth George commissioned playwright (2009), photo by Henry DiRocco.



## #PPFPLAYWRIGHTS

The Pacific Playwrights Festival is all about the writers. #PPFPlaywrights, an off-shoot of SCR's #Commissioned video series, features conversations with the five wordsmiths and one composer who contributed the work included in the 23rd festival.

### PARK-E LALEH

Shayan Lotfi interviewed by Mike Donahue

[Streaming here](#)



Mike Donahue, director for the staged reading of *Park-e Laleh*, chats with playwright Shayan Lotfi. Be aware that they'll be talking about the play and there may be some spoilers along the way ... so if you don't want any of the play's secrets revealed before you see it, you may want to wait to watch this interview until after you've screened the reading.

## PPF PLAYLIST

Listen to a collection of songs that inspired our PPF playwrights including a group of songs for *Park-e Laleh*.

[Listen here](#)



Giovanni Adams and Chauntae Pink in the world premiere of *Little Black Shadows* by Kemp Powers (2018), photo by Jordan Kubat.

# SCR STAFF

David Ivers, *Artistic Director* • Paula Tomei, *Managing Director*  
David Emmes & Martin Benson, *Founding Artistic Directors*

John Glore, *Associate Artistic Director*

Hisa Takakuwa, *Conservatory & Educational Programs Director*

Bil Schroeder, *Marketing & Communications Director* • Lori Monnier, *General Manager*

Matthew E. Chandler, *Production Manager* • Alex Wang, *Director of Development*

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H. Adam Harris, *Artistic/Audience Engagement Associate*

Nancy Levy, *Artistic Assistant/Company Manager*

Anna Jennings, *Artistic Coordinator*

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Jerry Patch, *Resident Dramaturg*

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Matthew Arkin, *Acting Intensive Program Director*

Nick Slimmer, *Conservatory and Educational Programs Associate*

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Dean Lissner, *Information Technology Manager*

Kimberly Uhlman, *Assistant General Manager/  
Human Resources Coordinator*

Ashleigh Hector, *Front of House Manager*

Kim Fleming, *Assistant to the Managing Director*

Cathi Moore, *Lead Accountant*

Martha Ruiz, *Payables Accountant*

Jack Mills, Kathie Kuehn, *Front Office Assistants*

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Domenick Ietto, *Grants Manager*

Steven Garry, *Development Coordinator*

Emily Gutowsky, *Development Operations &  
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Katie Carrasco, *Associate Ticket Services Director*

Amber N. Sanders, *Associate Ticket Services Director*

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Darryl Johns, *Facilities/Operations Manager*

Javier Estrada, *Assistant Operations Manager*

Jerome Anello, *Operations Assistant*

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Leanne Convis, *Production Office Manager*

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Jon Lagerquist, *Technical Director*

John Gaddis IV, *Assistant Technical Director*

Elizabeth Lung, *Master Carpenter*

Javier Ruiz, *Scenic Carpenter*

Eric Crider, *Scenic Carpenter*

Ben Morrow, *Automation Carpenter*

## PAINTS

Jen Stringfellow, *Scenic Charge Artist*

Saskia Martinez, *Scenic Artist*

## PROPS

Cat V Kerr, *Props Supervisor*

Byron Bacon, *Props Buyer*

## COSTUMES

Amy L. Hutto, *Costume Shop Manager*

Laurie Donati, *Full Charge Costumer*

Catherine J. Esera, *Cutter/Draper*

## WIGS

Allison Lowery, *Hair & Makeup Supervisor*

## ELECTRICS

Kara Ramlow, *Lighting Supervisor*

Sean Deuel, *Electrician/Board Operator*

## SOUND AND VIDEO

Michael Ritchey, *Sound and Video Supervisor*

Jim Busker, *Sound Engineer/Board Operator*

## STAGE MANAGEMENT

Kathryn Davies

## OTHER

Haskell & White LLP, *Auditors*

Jones Day, *Legal Services*

Jadtec Computer Group, *Consultants*



Sandra Oh and Raymond Lee in the world premiere of *Office Hour* by Julia Cho (2016), photo by Ben Horak; Bill Geisslinger and Shannon Cochran in the world premiere of *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath (2017), photo by Debora Robinson; Kim Staunton and Larry Powell in the world premiere of *Curve of Departure* by Rachel Bonds (2017), photo by Debora Robinson.



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