WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY NILAJA SUN

DIRECTED BY RON RUSSELL

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HARTFORDSTAGE.ORG/GALA
Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

As a new decade begins we cannot think of a more extraordinary artist to bring to our stage to kick off the year than Nilaja Sun.

Hartford Stage audiences should be accustomed to solo performance by now, having welcomed many other extraordinary solo artists over the past few years including Sharon Washington, Mona Golabek, James Lecesne and Hershey Felder. The skill, craft, and fearlessness of an artist to command a stage on their own is no small task—but the payoff can be incredibly rewarding for both audience and artist alike. Nilaja Sun is no exception. Tonight she brings to life three generations of a Puerto Rican family, as well as various friends and neighbors “with a radiant grace that makes her virtuosity seem as natural as breathing,” as the *New York Times* pointed out.

Many audience members may not know that Nilaja is also a renowned teaching artist and her original solo work, *No Child...* (which has received over 20 accolades, including an Obie, Lucille Lortel Award, and two Outer Critics Circle Awards), was focused on her experience as a teaching artist in NYC public schools.

This fall, thirteen high school students in Connecticut were lucky enough to work with Nilaja on *Project Transform* (one of Hartford Stage's many education programs). Over several weeks, students had the opportunity to create a piece of theatre, guided by Nilaja, about the change they wish to see in their neighborhood, community, and the world.

We hope that *Pike St.* and Nilaja's performance tonight will provide you the same opportunity to imagine the transformations you wish to see in your neighborhood, community and world in the coming decade.

Enjoy the show!

Melia Bensussen  
*Artistic Director*

Cynthia Rider  
*Managing Director*
Robinson+Cole is proud to support Hartford Stage and productions such as Pike St., which recognize and celebrate the diverse cultures that enrich our community.

Contact:
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75 Great Pond Road
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PIKEST.

Written & Performed By NILAJA SUN

Directed by RON RUSSELL

Originally commissioned, developed and produced by Epic Theatre Ensemble (Ron Russell, Melissa Friedman and James Wallert, Co-Founders & Robert Chelimsky, Managing Director) with the support of the New York State Council on the Arts.
WELCOME & ENJOY THE SHOW!

Please turn off your cell phones before the show.

For your eating and drinking pleasure, snacks, soda, wine, beer, and mixed drinks are available at our concessions bar on both levels.

Photography or video recording of any kind is prohibited without prior written permission.

You are welcome to bring drinks with you to your seat, but please, no drinks with ice. The servers at concessions will be happy to remove ice from your drinks if you do not finish before it is time to go into the theatre.

Accessible seating for patrons with mobility requirements available in the front row of sections B & F.

HARTFORD STAGE ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES

If you are using a Hartford Stage Listening Device, please remove your own personal hearing aid or make sure you turn it off if you leave it in your ear. When you remove the Hartford Stage device from your head, please make sure the volume is turned off on the device. Taking these steps will reduce the amount of static feedback from the listening system.

MAT GARAGE PARKING

There is an automated parking system for the MAT Garage, which is adjacent to Hartford Stage. Please note the procedure below and see the Box Office with any questions.

1. Retain the Parking Ticket you receive as you enter the MAT Garage adjacent to Hartford Stage.

2. Visit the Hartford Stage Box Office to purchase a Parking Voucher/Validation Ticket for only $6.50.

3. When exiting the MAT Garage, INSERT your Parking Ticket, then SCAN your Parking Voucher/Validation Ticket when prompted.

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The MAT Garage is owned and operated by the Hartford Parking Authority.

OPEN CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES

For patrons who are deaf or have hearing loss. Free with admission.

Pike St.  Jan. 26, 2:00 & 7:30 pm
Jane Eyre  Mar. 1, 2:00 & 7:30 pm
The King’s Speech  Apr. 5, 2:00 & 7:30 pm
Ah, Wilderness!  May 24, 2:00 & 7:30 pm

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES

For patrons who are blind or have low vision. Free with admission.

Pike St.  Feb. 1, 2:00 pm
Jane Eyre  Mar. 7, 2:00 pm
The King’s Speech  Apr. 11, 2:00 pm
Ah, Wilderness!  May 30, 2:00 pm

OUR NEW BABYSITTING INITIATIVE!

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PLAYDATE

Pike St.  Jan. 18, 2:00 pm
Jane Eyre  Feb. 22, 2:00 pm
The King’s Speech  Mar. 28, 2:00 pm
Ah, Wilderness!  May 16, 2:00 pm
The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

The Scenic, Costume, Lighting and Sound Designers in LORT theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.

The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

Artists subject to change.

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**THE CAST**

Performer ......................................................................................................................... Nilaja Sun

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**THERE WILL BE NO INTERMISSION.**

Assistant Director ............................................................................................... Jasmine B. Gunter

Associate Scenic Designer .................................................................................. Joo Hyun Kim

Production Assistant ............................................................................................ Lizzy Gordon

Supporting Production Assistant ........................................................................ Rachel Canowitz

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Sarah Rose Leonard:
What led you to create your first solo piece? Why did that feel like the form for you?

Nilaja Sun:
I went to a college called Franklin and Marshall College, and I wound up studying theatre there. In my senior year I took a playwriting course. We had to have actors perform our plays, and all of my characters happened to be either Black or Latino. I went to a predominantly white school so I said, “you know what, I’ll just go ahead and perform all the characters!” Something about that was very true to how I like to tell stories, in that I just like to dive into them and have a good time telling the truth within every soul. And so, even though in the past say 25 years that I’ve been doing solo work I also work on other people’s plays, solo work seems to me to be the closest thing to my childhood. I remember moments of being asked like, what school looked like that day and just diving into everyone’s character and everyone’s voice, and going into them physically as a child. So, when I do perform solo work, it’s like I’m a child again. It makes me feel like the audience is just my parents in the living room on the Lower East Side again.
You’ve acted in various plays and TV shows in between your tour of No Child… and Pike St. I’m curious about how you found your way to creating this new solo show.

Hurricane Sandy happened, and Hurricane Sandy was one of those hurricanes that really devastated some parts of the Northeast, including parts of New York City, including the Lower East Side, this neighborhood in Manhattan that I’m from. I don’t live there anymore, but it still holds a very special place in my heart. In all of the neighborhoods on the small island of Manhattan, the Lower East Side was one of those neighborhoods that just could not recover their electricity and their running water. Having lived there for so long, and having been raised on the twentieth floor of an apartment building, I know many either elderly or disabled folks who can’t walk down twenty flights during a storm, who can’t run to a shelter before Mother Nature goes on the attack, or even afterwards.

After the Lower East Side regained any kind of semblance of what it used to be like and feel like, I felt like, as an artist, wouldn’t it be interesting to create a piece that is fun to watch, and also deep? To create a piece that, when you see it, the next time there is either a Hurricane or some kind of disaster – either man-made or Mother Nature-made – you think about those who can’t necessarily either run out of their apartment. You think about those who are really in need of services. Or just in need of a knock on the door, of a “hey, how’re you doing? I’m upstairs if you need me.” It’s a kind of neighbor-helping-neighbor culture that I got a chance to witness after Hurricane Sandy. It’s a bit of a love letter to the places where people really help each other out in those dire circumstances. It’s also a warning, in a way: we will continue to have these weather-related situations in America and around the world. And wouldn’t it be great if we could have plans in place for those who are most vulnerable – physically, mentally, emotionally, and economically as well.

How do you move those ideas to the page and then to your feet?

I actually start the opposite way. I don’t start sitting and writing. I’m listening to people talking, I’m listening to family members, friends, strangers on the street, on the subway, at the bodega, and church. In all kinds of situations. And I have been listening for my entire life. So when you watch Pike St., what you’ll find is – I want to say characters – but these are really people who I have known all of my life. Particularly people who you may find, even now in 2018, still living in the Lower East Side. They have been a part of my heart, almost a part of my DNA, for this entire time.

I was commissioned by Epic Theatre Ensemble to write anything I wanted to, and I wanted to write a piece about something related to the hurricane. When I’m writing about something I care about, I go deep into my soul and my cellular level. I think about all of those folks who really touched me, almost to the point where I’m in tears thinking about them – I’m in tears now just thinking about them! – and wanting to honor them by saying words that they have said, or by striking poses that I remember they struck, or walking in the way they walked, or rolling in the way they rolled, or speaking languages that they spoke. If I can do that, 7 show a week, all over the world, then that to me is how I honor them.
I go ahead and kind of, I don't even want to say the word vomit, but it's basically all of these words kind of coming out, out, out, out, out. Whether it's in the mirror or I'm recording it and writing, but I rarely sit down and write. I'm keeping it in my body since I'm such a physical actor. Then the editing process becomes the kind of sedentary, looking through it mathematically, particularly looking at the comedy of it, looking at repetition, and finding the spaces for silence. Then, of course, I find a tremendous director like Ron Russell, who can see outside of me to make sure that it's clear and that I'm not just talking to myself. And then with lights and sound and tremendous theatres housing this story, it just like all beautifully comes together. In magic! Theatre magic!

This play continuously walks the line between humor and tragedy. How do you calibrate that balance, especially given how personal the piece is?

I knew that I wanted it to be a day in the life of a Hurricane. Any time you have a natural disaster that is not like a sudden disaster – but you know it’s coming and you’ve got several days warning, and the weather folks are scaring everyone to death – everyone hunkers down with their provisions. It’s always on those days that the oddest beautiful moments happen. Those are the moments that I really record. Even when I am in any kind of crisis mode I am recording for the “odd,” the humor, the moments when everyone wants to strangle each other, the moments when we’re crying and laughing at such inappropriate times. I think that’s what keeps seventy-seven minutes rolling along. Because we’re all breathing and we’re all having these uncomfortable moments where the jokes come out because we’re all stuck in this suffocating situation where we don’t know what may or may not happen, particularly when you don’t have the funds to go to a shelter or don’t have the funds to get in a car and go travelling outside of the weather pattern. I think that’s one of the reasons why there is humor, because I have been, like I mentioned, recording throughout my life these moments where the comedy just comes out. Because truly that’s the humanity of both the people and the situation that’s trying to emerge in that moment.

How did you decide to focus on those who stay at home during a hurricane?

After hurricanes happen and sometimes pass, there is this negative reporting of their lives as if like, “Well they stayed home, and they stayed in their house.” But some people have pets like cats and animals, and some people cannot travel, they just don’t have the means to maybe even want to travel to a shelter because of maybe a million things. I don’t think they should be demonized for choosing to stay in their homes. Especially after they’ve passed, they shouldn’t be demonized for it.

We usually swallow the narrative that this is the consequence of their choices…

Right, the “they didn’t listen to the rules…” Yeah! First of all, the rules are skewed depending on where you live, where you come from. When it comes to the Vega household in Pike St., one of the reasons why Evelyn does not choose to go to a shelter – she is the mother of a child who lives much of her life in a chair that assists her breathing – is simply because they live in a five story tenement. They tried that whole shelter thing before during the last
superstorm and there was just so much attention on Candi (that’s her daughter). There was so much negative attention and that’s why she chooses to wait it out. I think we could really stand to have a little more respect for folks who make that choice, and move on from there.

**Since you started performing this show in 2015 Hurricane Maria has caused devastation in Puerto Rico. Has the storm changed the way you see Pike St.?**

In 2014 when I was writing it and when the Epic Theatre Ensemble first produced it, I thought to myself, okay, folks are watching this and they’re understanding because they had dealt with Hurricane Sandy. But when I travel, like when I travel to Australia and Scotland, will folks get it? Then Maria happened, as well as Rita and Harvey, and it’s almost like folks are like, “wait, when did you write this?”

The weather is not getting any better and we can’t always depend on our government, our state, our local authorities, to always have our backs in those moments. It’s a blessing when they do, but…

Perhaps we need to be thinking now, when we’re blessed to have a calm time, “what is my plan for dot dot dot.” When those conversations happen, I just think “YES! This is exactly why I wrote this!”

My heart broke for Puerto Rico, and it is heart breaking knowing that there are still people in darkness. And at the same time, my goodness, I am so glad that people are finally talking about post-, during, pre-hurricane, what to do. This is definitely a discussion we needed to have many years ago. So I’m ready for it.
NILAJA SUN  
**AUTHOR | PERFORMER**

**Hartford Stage** Reading of Quiara Alegría Hudes’ *Water by the Spoonful*. Theatre Nilaja Sun is an actor, solo performer and teaching artist most known for her Obie Award-winning solo piece *No Child...* which was directed by Hal Brooks and originally commissioned and produced by Epic Theatre Ensemble. For her creation and performance of *No Child...* and its subsequent international tour, Nilaja garnered 21 awards including: an Obie Award, a Lucille Lortel Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards including the John Gassner Playwriting Award for Outstanding New American Play, a Theatre World Award, the Helen Hayes Award, two NAACP Theatre Awards, and was awarded the soloNOVA Award for Artist of the Year by terraNOVA Collective. Her latest solo piece *Pike St.*, directed by Ron Russell and originally commissioned and produced by Epic, had its world premiere at the Abrons Arts Center in the Lower East Side, which was followed by an international tour at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Pillsbury House, Detroit Public Theatre, Northampton’s Academy of Music and Berkeley Repertory Theatre, as well as Melbourne, Australia, Dublin, Ireland and Edinburgh, Scotland where it won the Edinburgh Award. **Other theatre credits include** *The Cook* (Intar), *The Commons of Pensacola* (Manhattan Theatre Club) and *Public Enemy* (Pearl Theatre). **TV/FILM** *Madam Secretary*, *The Good Wife*, *BrainDead*, *30 Rock*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Unforgettable*, *Louie*, *The International*, *Youth in Oregon*, and *Rubicon*. **Other** A native of the Lower East Side, she is a Princess Grace Award recipient, and has taught drama, playwriting and solo performance in high schools and colleges in New York, New Jersey, Hartford and Bridgeport, CT, Detroit, MI, Washington D.C, Oakland, CA, and Tanzania, Africa for 20 years.

RON RUSSELL  
**DIRECTOR | SOUND DESIGN**

**Hartford Stage** Debut. Off-Broadway (selected, both direction and sound design) *Time and the Conways, Hannah and Martin* (World Premiere w/David Strathairn and Melissa Friedman), *Little Eyolf*, *Einstein’s Gift* (U.S. Premiere w/Aasif Mandvi), *Widower’s Houses* (WP of new adaptation co-written with Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.), *Dispatches from (A)Mended America* (WP), *No Child...* (WP w/Nilaja Sun, sound design only), *Pike St.*, *The Winning Side* (WP w/Sullivan Jones and Melissa Friedman), *Motherstruck* (Culture Project, co-directed with Cynthia Nixon). **Upcoming** *The Truth Has Changed* (Public) co-directed and designed with Josh Fox. **National Tours** *Pike St.*, originally commissioned and produced in NYC by Epic; Epic NEXT’s 10467, *Overdrive*. **Upcoming Perfect Circle. Regional** Woolly Mammoth (D.C.), San Diego Rep, Old Globe + USD, Greenhouse (Chicago), Berkeley Rep, Lookingglass (Chicago), Long Wharf. **Professional** Co-Founder and Executive Director of nationally-recognized and award-winning Epic Theatre Ensemble, NYC, leading 22 Off-Broadway productions, hundreds of new play development workshops, and education programs reaching over 30,000 young people in Title I high schools since 2001. **Awards** OBIE for Epic’s Education Programs; OBIE for Sound Design; Municipal Arts Society Citizenship Award.

MIKIKO SUZUKI MACADAMS  
**SCENIC DESIGN**

**Hartford Stage** Debut. Broadway as an associate set design selected credits includes *My Fair Lady, Fiddler on the Roof*, and *The King and I*. Off-Broadway the Primary Stages, Working Theater, Epic Theater Ensemble, INTAR, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and the NAATCO. **National Tours** *Dirty Dancing*. **Regional** Guthrie Theatre, Arena Stage, Barkley Repertory Theatre, the Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare festival, Long Wharf, Seattle Rep., Actors Theatre of Louisville, Cleveland Playhouse, Playmakers Repertory Company, ACT, Yale Rep., Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Boston Lyric Opera among
others. International Universal Studio Japan, Shinbashi Enbujyo, the Umeda Arts, Nissay Opera, Nikikai Opera, Suntory Hall, Aichi Triennale, Kanagawa Prefectural Hall and Biwako Hall. Education MFA Yale School of Drama. Teaching Yale School of Drama.

CLINT RAMOS
COSTUME DESIGN
Hartford Stage Debut. Broadway Notable set/costume designs on Broadway include Once on This Island (Tony, Outer Critics, Drama Desk Awards nominations), Sunday in the Park with George, Six Degrees of Separation, In Transit, Eclipsed (Tony Award), The Elephant Man (Broadway and West End), and Violet. Off-Broadway credits include Familiar, The True, Here Lies Love (New York and London), Sweet Charity, Bella, and Booty Candy. Regional & International Clint has over 200 regional and international credits and is the principal designer for Encores! Off-Center. Awards include the Tony Award, Obie Award for Sustained Excellence, three Lucille Lortel Awards, tdf Sharaff Award, two American Theatre Wing Henry Hewes Awards, and the Helen Hayes Award.

TYLER MICOLEAU
LIGHTING DESIGN
Hartford Stage Debut. Broadway American Buffalo (upcoming), Be More Chill, The Band’s Visit. Recent Off-Broadway Bella, Bella (Manhattan Theatre Club), Hercules (Public Theater Public Works), Dying City (Second Stage Theater), Socrates (Public Theater). National Tours The Band’s Visit. Regional Center Theatre Group, Huntington Theatre, Alley Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse, Trinity Repertory Company, Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theater, Kansas City Rep, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Wilma Theater, Pig Iron Theatre, Folger Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre and many others. Education BA Bowdoin College. Visiting-Artist and Faculty positions Yale College, Dartmouth College, Bates College, Sarah Lawrence College Dept. of Dance. Awards 2018 Tony Award for Best Lighting Design of a Musical (The Band’s Visit), two OBIE awards including one for sustained excellence, two Lucille Lortel awards, and two Connecticut Critics Circle awards (Elevada at Yale Rep, Shipwrecked! at Long Wharf Theatre).

MOLLY MINOR EUSTIS
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
Hartford Stage Debut. Off-Broadway Nilaja Sun’s Pike St. (world premiere); Atlantic Theatre Company: Between Riverside and Crazy, Bluebird, Dusk Rings a Bell; Epic Theatre Ensemble: Measure For Measure, Born With Teeth, Macbeth, Dispatches, Othello, Mahida’s Extra Key to Heaven. Dan Hoyle’s Each and Every Thing, The Real Americans, and Tings Dey Happen; Colin Quinn: Unconstitutional (Cherry Lane & tour); Mike Albo’s The Junket; Najla Said’s Palestine (NYTW/Twilight); The Insurgents (LAByrinth); Chairs and a Long Table (Ma-Yi); Orlando (Classic Stage); Telephone (Foundry Theatre); The Language of Trees (Roundabout); Hell House (Les Freres Corbusier). Other World Science Festival, Voices of A People’s History, DanceAfrica, and 20 productions with Epic’s Shakespeare Remix after-school program. Education B.A., College of Charleston; M.F.A., Columbia University; New Orleans native.

NICOLE WIEGERT
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Hartford Stage Detroit ‘67, Henry V, A Lesson from Aloes, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Regional Passing Through (Goodspeed Musicals); Shakespeare In Love (CT Rep); Million Dollar Quartet, The Flood (Mountain Playhouse); Grease, A Chorus Line (Ivoryton Playhouse); Beauty and the Beast, Beehive the 60’s Musical (Theatre by the Sea); James and the Giant Peach, Big Fish, Our Town, Anatole (First Stage Milwaukee); Hall of Final Ruin, The Griots (Renaissance Theatreworks); Swan Lake (Milwaukee Ballet). Television House Hunters, Extreme Cheapskates, Biggest Loser. Other Love to LC, WW and CW.
ABOUT HARTFORD STAGE

MELIA BENSUSSEN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Melia Bensussen joined Hartford Stage in the summer of 2019 as the sixth Artistic Director of the organization. A homecoming of sorts, her first professional theatre experience was assisting Emily Mann on Hartford Stage’s production of *A Doll’s House*. She then returned to Hartford Stage in 2003 to direct Edwin Sanchez’s production of *Diosa*. Since then she has directed extensively at leading theatres throughout the country, including productions at the Huntington Theatre Company, Sleeping Weazel, Shakespeare & Company, Actors’ Shakespeare Project, La Jolla Playhouse, Baltimore Center Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the New York Shakespeare Festival, Manhattan Class Company, Primary Stages, Long Wharf Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, People’s Light and Theatre Company, Bay Street Theatre and Playwrights Horizons, among others. Raised in Mexico City, Melia is fluent in Spanish and has translated and adapted a variety of texts, including her edition of the Langston Hughes translation of Federico Garcia Lorca’s *Blood Wedding*, published by Theatre Communications Group. She has received an Obie Award for Best Director (Off-Broadway’s top honor), as well as receiving several awards from the Princess Grace Foundation, including their Statue Award for Sustained Excellence in Directing. A graduate of Brown University, Melia previously served as the Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Emerson College, and currently serves as the Chair of the Arts Advisory Board for the Princess Grace Foundation. She also serves on the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). Melia loves directing new works as well as classics, viewing every production as an opportunity to introduce an audience to a new story and a different perspective. She is thrilled to be a part of this great theatre, and a new resident of Hartford.

CYNTHIA RIDER
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Cynthia Rider joined Hartford Stage in the summer of 2019 as the eighth Managing Director of the organization. Previously, she served as the executive director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). While at OSF, she successfully worked with the board in the creation of a ten-year strategic plan, oversaw an increase in contributed income of more than 20 percent, and participated in artistic initiatives that resulted in three OSF-commissioned plays moving to Broadway, with one winning the Tony Award for Best Play (*All The Way*) and another winning the Pulitzer Prize (*Sweat*). Additional highlights of Rider’s successful tenure at OSF include the creation of the Access for All campaign, which renovated the courtyard in front of OSF’s theatres and added an elevator and wheelchair seating to the Bowmer Theatre, and the opening of the new Hay-Patton Rehearsal Center—all while producing a repertory season of eleven productions in three theatres, managing an annual operating budget of $40 million and offering a number of educational and community engagement programs for audiences and students. Prior to joining OSF, Cynthia Rider spent nine years at Kansas City Repertory Theatre as Managing Director and, earlier, as Associate Director for Advancement and Administration. Her experience also includes six years as Executive Director of the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Alley. She served as Associate Director, later promoted to Acting Director, of the Massachusetts Manufacturing Partnership, which worked to strengthen small and medium-sized manufacturers across the state.
ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Williamson is in her eighth season at Hartford Stage. In addition to serving as Associate Artistic Director, she also leads new play development for the company. HartfordStage as Dramaturg: The Flamingo Kid, The Engagement Party, Make Believe, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Heartbreak House, Romeo and Juliet, Anastasia, The Body of an American, Rear Window, An Opening in Time, Hamlet, Reverberation, Macbeth, Somewhere, A Song at Twilight, Twelfth Night, Man in a Case, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder and others; as Director: Cloud 9, Seder, Henry V; as Translator/Adapter: La Dispute. Broadway as Dramaturg: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (Tony Award for Best Musical), Anastasia, The Inheritance. London's West End as Dramaturg: The Inheritance (Olivier Award for Best Play). Off-Broadway/Regional as Dramaturg: The Body of an American (Primary Stages), A Song at Twilight (Westport Country Playhouse), Touch(ed), In, Find and Sign, The Tempest and others (Pioneer Theatre Company), M. Proust (Steppenwolf), Mefistofele (Theatre de la Jeune Lune); as Director: The Life and Death of Pier Paolo Pasolini (Act French Festival, Abingdon), The Floating World (HERE), Rare Bird (Babcock Theatre), Owners (Alter), The Second Amendment Club (AMS), The Maids (FringeNYC). Education BA Theatre and Comparative Literature, Bennington College; MST European Literature, Oxford University; trained at the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq. Awards NEA Fellowship in Literary Translation.

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From casual bites, to delicious entrées, to exemplary service,
Hartford Stage enters its 56th season beginning an exciting new chapter. Newly-appointed Artistic Director Melia Bensussen and Managing Director Cynthia Rider will continue the theatre’s legacy of artistic excellence by creating theatrical works that enlighten, entertain, and educate.

Renowned for producing innovative revivals of classics, as well as provocative new plays and musicals, Hartford Stage has earned many of the nation’s most prestigious awards, including the 1989 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Additional national recognition includes honors from the Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, American Theatre Wing (OBIE), and the New York Critics Circle.

Hartford Stage has produced over 80 world and North American premieres, including the new musical Anastasia, which enjoyed a two-year run on Broadway; A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder, winner of four 2014 Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Direction of a Musical; and Quiara Alegría Hudes’ Water by the Spoonful, winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Other notable premieres include The Engagement Party by Samuel Baum; Make Believe by Bess Wohl; The Age of Innocence by Douglas McGrath; Seder by Sarah Gancher; Rear Window, adapted by Keith Reddin, and starring Kevin Bacon; An Opening in Time by Christopher Shinn; Reverberation by Matthew Lopez; Big Dance Theatre’s Man in a Case with Mikhail Baryshnikov; and Breath & Imagination by Daniel Beaty. Nationally-renowned titles include the New York transfers of Enchanted April; The Orphans’ Home Cycle; Resurrection (later retitled Through the Night); The Carpetbagger’s Children; and Tea at Five.

The leading provider of theatre education programs in Connecticut, Education @ Hartford Stage offers student matinees, in-school theatre residencies, teen performance opportunities, theatre classes for students (ages 3-18) and adults, after school programs and professional development courses. Education @ Hartford Stage programming reaches approximately 21,000 Connecticut students annually.
The Hartt School/Hartford Stage Partnership in Training

Now in its sixteenth year, The Hartt School/Hartford Stage Partnership in Training offers a unique alliance of an undergraduate acting conservatory program and a respected professional theatre—one of only two such collaborations in the country. This partnership helps ensure that acting students at the Hartt School receive rigorous training and bring their skills, imagination and intellect to the demands of a professional theatre setting. Hartford Stage staff and guest artists lead classes and workshops and faculty and students appear in Hartford Stage productions. Hartt students have been seen in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, A Christmas Carol, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Noises Off!, To Kill a Mockingbird, Antony & Cleopatra, Snow Falling on Cedars, The Crucible, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Anastasia, The Comedy of Errors, The Age of Innocence, Henry V, The Flamingo Kid* and *Quixote Nuevo*.

The University of Massachusetts Graduate Internships at Hartford Stage

Linking one of the most respected graduate programs in theatre with the Tony Award winning Hartford Stage, the University of Massachusetts Graduate Internships give Master of Fine Arts students in design, directing and dramaturgy the opportunity to work alongside the country’s most exciting artists. The Graduate Internships provide a valuable professional testing ground for students and are a natural complement to the practical, hands-on approach of UMass’ graduate program. In turn, Hartford Stage is enriched by the participation of the next generation of theatre artists. UMass students have worked on *Boeing-Boeing, Zerline’s Tale, Gee’s Bend, Motherhood Out Loud, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Snow Falling on Cedars, The 39 Steps, Macbeth, Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, Hedda Gabler, Reverberation and Cry It Out*.

Capital Community College

This season will mark the ninth season of the One Play Program—a partnership between Hartford Stage and Capital Community College, designed to give the entire college community the opportunity to come together around one play each semester. In addition to offering discounted tickets for students and faculty, the program also brings members of each production’s creative team to the College to interact with students. Last season, 601 Capital students saw a performance at Hartford Stage, many reporting it was their first time at the theatre. This season’s One Play productions are *Cry It Out* and *Jane Eyre*. During the 2017-2018 academic year, in partnership with Hartford Stage and other Hartford theatre companies, Capital began to offer a new associate’s degree in theatre.

Hartt School students as The Ghostly Apparitions in *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.
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SHORT TAKES: NEWS FROM HARTFORD STAGE

A LOOK AT OUR LOBBY
Hartford Stage is excited to partner with the Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library to present an upper lobby exhibit illuminating the cultural, industrial, and neighborhood life of the Puerto Rican community in Hartford during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Audiences will see how the community took on discrimination and challenges around housing, education, employment, and politics, and made huge cultural and social impacts on their neighborhoods in order to make Hartford their home. Curated by the Hartford History Center (HHC) team, the exhibit will feature a selection of photographs from the HHC’s *Hartford Times* photograph collection.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE
Hartford Stage staff, volunteers and patrons generously donated over 600 pounds of non-perishable food items on behalf of Hands On Hartford’s MANNA Community Pantry to assist local residents in need this holiday season. We’re grateful to the community for helping to make our fifth annual food drive a success!

COMMUNITY READING: A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN SPANISH
On Saturday, December 14, community members from the Greater Hartford Area gathered in the theatre to read selections from *A Christmas Carol* in Spanish. Together, family and friends performed readings of the translated script, playing notable characters such as Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim. The program was helmed by Hartford Stage Artistic Director Melia Bensussen and produced/directed by Artistic Apprentice Jasmine B. Gunter, with a script translation from Education Apprentice Malena Gordo, who is originally from Argentina.

NEW! SUMMER SHOW ANNOUNCED:
THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF COMEDY (ABRIDGED)
If you enjoyed the zany humor of *The Comedy of Errors*, you’ll love *The Complete History of Comedy (abridged)*. From the highbrow to lowbrow, and everything in between, The Reduced Shakespeare Company in *The Complete History of Comedy (abridged)* covers comedy through the ages. Enjoy fast and furious funny from such sources as Aristophanes and Shakespeare and Molière to Vaudeville and Charlie Chaplin to *The Daily Show* and *Drunk History*. Limited Engagement: June 11-21, 2020.

UP NEXT: JANE EYRE
Fans of *The Age of Innocence* will enjoy this new adaptation of the Charlotte Brontë classic by Elizabeth Williamson, who also directs. Orphaned as a child, Jane takes a position working as governess at Thornfield Hall for the brooding Edward Rochester. The strong-willed Jane falls in love with her mysterious employer, but the discovery of a dark secret and its devastating aftermath forces the young governess to make a heart-wrenching decision that changes their lives forever. On stage: February 13 – March 14, 2020.
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