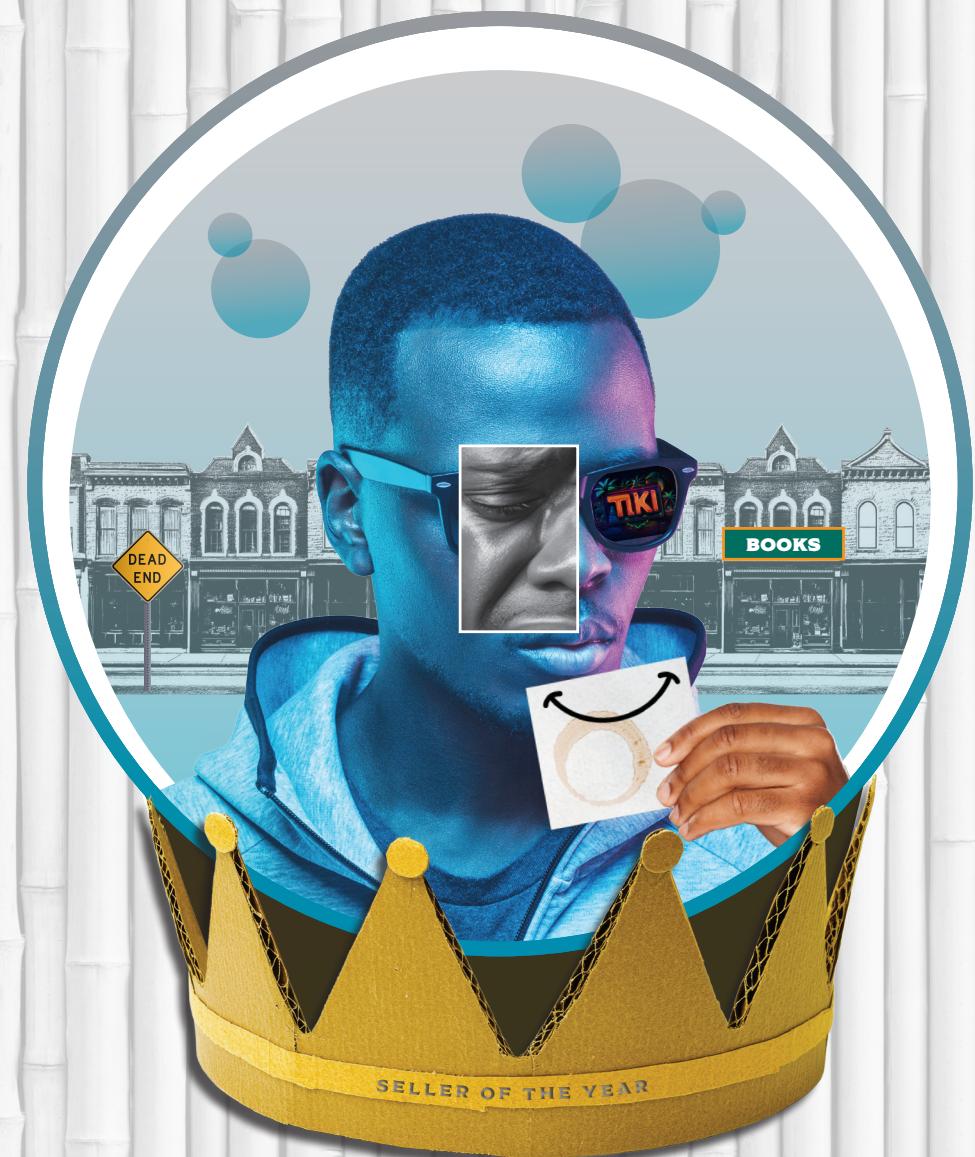


ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

ASOLO rep

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2026

PRIMARY TRUST



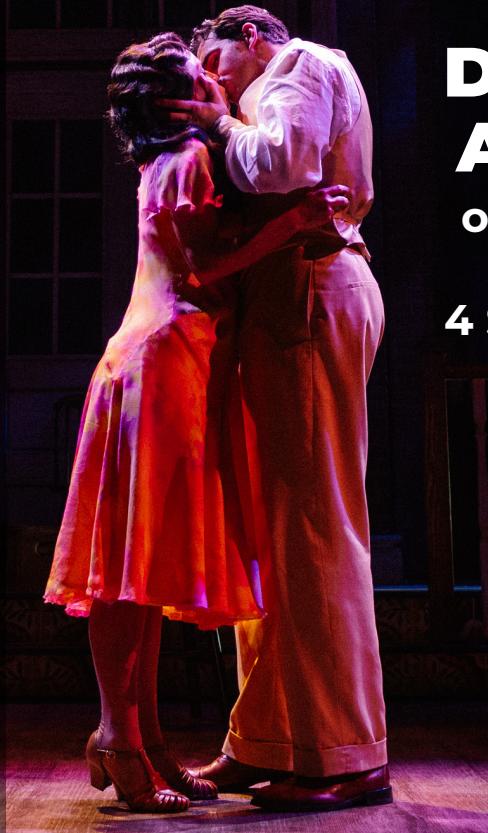
PRIMARY TRUST
Written by EBONI BOOTH
Directed by CHARI ARESPACOCHAGA

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PRIMARY TRUST

PRIMARY TRUST

By EBONI BOOTH

Directed by CHARI ARESPACOCHAGA

Scenic Design
JOEY MENDOZA

Costume Design
JEN GILLETTE

Lighting Design
ALAN C. EDWARDS

Sound Design
MATTHEW PARKER

Hair, Makeup,
and Wig Design
MICHELLE HART

Casting
MURNANE CASTING
AMBER SNEAD, CSA
& CHAD ERIC MURNANE, CSA

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SAM ALLEN*

Original Compositions
PETER VITALE

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MATTHEW ROHAN*

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† in Memoriam

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PRIMARY TRUST was developed at the 2021 Ojai Playwrights Conference: Robert Egan, Artistic Director/Producer.

Developed by
Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, Illinois
Ken-Matt Martin, Artistic Director
Roxanna Conner, Acting Managing Director,
as part of IGNITE CHICAGO Festival of New Plays 2021.

Originally Produced in New York City by Roundabout Theatre Company
at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre/Laura Pels Theatre on May 4th, 2023.

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Nancy Woodruff and Mark Lancaster

Nancy Woodruff and Mark Lancaster are avid theatre enthusiasts. Having lived in both New York and London, they've very nearly seen it all.

In their daylight hours, Mark owns and runs a financial services company, while Nancy teaches writing at NYU. But in this family, theatre is always at top of mind, with their son Reed Lancaster now pursuing his own career on stage, and with Nancy's service on the board of the storied Irish Repertory Theatre in New York. A published author, Nancy even wrote a novel centered on the Irish actor Dora Jordan who rose to fame in the late 18th century. The novel, *My Wife's Affair*, tells the story of Georgie, an actor in the present day whose commitment to playing the role of Dora Jordan on stage is so intense that it erodes her commitments elsewhere. When Mark's work brought them to London, they became frequent fliers at the West End's finest stages and front-row audience members at the crowded pubs of the Edinburgh Fringe. Asolo Repertory Theatre takes it as an extraordinary compliment that these bona fide connoisseurs have endorsed *Primary Trust* as Co-Producers.

Thank you, Mark and Nancy, for bringing your brilliance and enthusiasm to your support of Asolo Rep this season!

AFFILIATIONS

Asolo Repertory Theatre is a member of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT), Florida Professional Theatre Association (FPTA), the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County and the Manatee County Cultural Alliance.



CAST IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

KAMAL BOLDEN*	Bert
ANTHONY CASON*	Kenneth
LUKE CHOI f	Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson
MATT DECARO*	Sam, Clay, Le Pousselet Bartender
KAYLAND JORDAN*	Corinna, Wally's Waiter, Bank Customer
ANGELLE MISHON f	Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson
PETER VITALE	Musician
WILL WESTRAY f	Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

f - FSU/Asolo Conservatory Students

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UNDERSTUDIES NEVER SUBSTITUTE FOR LISTED PLAYERS UNLESS
A SPECIFIC ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE APPEARANCE IS MADE AT THE TIME OF THE PERFORMANCE.

For Corinna, Wally's Waiter, Bank Customer: ANGELLE MISHON

For Sam, Clay: FRANK ODEN

For Bert: BERNELL J. LASSAI III

For Kenneth: WILL WESTRAY

For Waiters, Bankers, Townspersons: MYA BARBER, D'ZYRE JONES, CHARLIE LAVARONI,
ARMANDO GONZÁLEZ, LIA RODRIGUEZ

ANY VIDEO AND/OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

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www.concordtheatricals.com



THE CAST



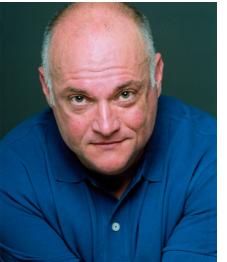
KAMAL BOLDEN (Bert) Off-Broadway: *Hang Time* (The Apollo/The Flea), *Reparations* (Billie Holiday Theatre), *Hands Up* (National Black Theatre), *The Opponent* (59E59St). Regional: *Troy* in *Fences* (American Blues Theater), The Scottish King in *Macbeth* (A Noise Within), Hero in *Father Comes Home From The Wars...* (Goodman Theatre), *Immediate Family* (Taper Forum), *The Misanthrope*, *Jitney*, and *Home* (Court Theatre). Television: *The Endgame* (series regular), *61st Street*, *Chicago Fire*, *Insecure*, *The Resident*, *Law & Order*, *Rosewood*, *NCIS*, *Major Crimes*, *Betrayal*, *Low Winter Sun*, *Boss*, *Lights Out*. Film: *The Night Before*, *Ravers*, *Keys to the City*, *Elvis & Nixon*, *Consumed*, *Vacation Friends*.



ANTHONY CASON (Kenneth) is ecstatic to finally step into Kenneth's shoes! His credits include Daniel Fish's *Oklahoma!* (Broadway, St. Ann's Warehouse); *Is God Is* (Soho Rep); *Peerless* (Primary Stages); *A Case for the Existence of God* (Williamston Theatre); *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC); *Jessica Jones* (Netflix); *The Breaks* (VH1); *Power Book II: Ghost* (Starz). He would like to thank the love of his life, Dara, for her unwavering love and support.



HOONMIN LUKE CHOI (Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is a New York City based actor who was born in Seoul, Korea. He is honored to be participating in the Asolo Repertory Theatre production. Luke performed with FSU/Asolo conservatory productions as Jeffery in *The Curious Savage*, Atung in *The Chinese Lady*, Judge and Shepherd in *The Winter's Tale*, and Rhode in *The Three Sisters*. Also was in various seasons of tour production at his theater company M.A.T. (Meta Artist Troupe)



MATT DECARO (Sam, Clay, Le Pousselet Bartender) Asolo Repertory Theatre audiences may remember Matt as LBJ in *The Great Society*, Oscar in *The Little Foxes*, Judge Danforth in *The Crucible*, Stan in *Sweat*, and Gene in Frank Galati's *Rhinoceros*, among several others. He has been seen most recently in Chicago in *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Audience*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Joseph Jefferson award). Matt has been fortunate to play in theatres across the country including: Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theater Club, The Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, The Old Globe, San Francisco's A.C.T. and internationally at Festivals in Dublin, Toronto, and China. His TV and Film credits include: *The Wise Kids*, *Eagle Eye*, *House*, *The Office*, *Prison Break*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, among many others.



KAYLAND JORDAN (Corrina, Wally's Waiter, and Bank Customer) is a NYC based actor. She is excited for her Asolo Repertory Theatre debut as Corrina. Kayland holds a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Acting from Pace University. Her theatrical credits include: *A Raisin in the Sun*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Antony & Cleopatra* (Utah Shakespeare Festival), *The Book Club Play* (Theatre SiCo); *The Mountaintop*, *The Figs*, *This Girl Laughs...* (American Stage); *Poor Clare* (Stage West); and *Intimate Apparel* (MainStage Irving). TV credits include: *Betty* (HBO), *Emergence* (ABC), and *Entitled* (Amazon).



ANGELLE MISHON (Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson, Understudy Corrina) Angelle is a third-year conservatory student from New Orleans. Most recently performing with the Asolo Rep on Tour in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Shakespeare 45*. Previous credits include Asolo Rep's productions of *Inherit the Wind* and *Intimate Apparel* and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory productions of *The Winter's Tale*, *John Proctor is the Villain*, and *The Curious Savage*. Angelle would like to thank her colleagues, family and friends, and Azula for providing her support throughout her journey in the conservatory. IG: @angellemishon



PETER VITALE (Musician) Peter is excited to be making his debut with Asolo Repertory Theatre! He was the Resident Composer/Music Director for Ten Thousand Things Theater in Minneapolis for over twenty-five years before relocating to Hatteras Island, NC. Recent credits include *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Playmakers Rep). He

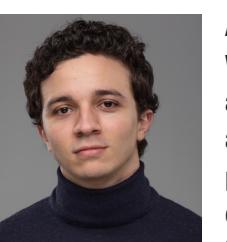
holds an AB in music from Duke University, and an MM in vocal performance from UNC-Greensboro. Peter is the creator of the new musical, *Island Time*, about a small, scrappy community theater on the Outer Banks reopening their doors after the pandemic.



WILL WESTRAY (Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) was previously in the cast of *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *Inherit the Wind*, *Born with Teeth*, and *Twelve Angry Men: A New Musical* at Asolo Repertory Theatre. He holds a degree in Musical Theatre from Shenandoah Conservatory. Shoutout to the DMV.



MYA BARBER (Understudy Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is thrilled to make her Asolo Repertory Theatre debut. A Tallahassee native, she earned dual degrees in Theatre and Human Communication from the University of Kentucky, along with a Musical Theatre certificate. Mya starred in Voices Amplified Production of *Make Them Hear You*. She thanks her mom for endless support and God for His unwavering love and guidance. www.iammyabarber.com



ARMANDO GONZÁLEZ (Understudy Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is a Costa Rican actor and MFA candidate at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. He has performed in theatre productions in downtown San José and trained in the Meisner technique at the Costa Rican

British Cultural Center. With a background in high-performance swimming and dance, he brings discipline and physicality to his craft. Passionate about storytelling, he aims to amplify Central American voices in theatre and film with authenticity and heart.



D'ZYRE JONES (Understudy Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is a first-year MFA student at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. A Syracuse native and Howard University alumna, she also trained with the British American Drama Academy. Her journey—from grassroots America— informs her purpose-driven artistry. Guided by faith and community, she sees theatre as sacred ground. Previous roles include Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and Mary in *The Laughing Stock*



BERNELL J. LASSAI III (Understudy Bert) – is ecstatic to make their Asolo Repertory debut in this beautiful play. Credits: *Ain't Too Proud* (Nat'l Tour), *Man of La Mancha* (Riverside Theatre), *Kinky Boots*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *The Producers* (Paramount Theatre), *The Tempest* (Oak Park Theatre Festival), *Memphis*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Billy Elliot* (Porchlight Music Theatre), *Antony & Cleopatra* (St. Louis Shakespeare Festival). Graduate of Webster Conservatory. Represented by Gray Talent Group. @Lassai_.



CHARLIE LAVARONI (Understudy Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is a first-year MFA at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. As a bi-coastal actor, they have proudly worked with: Shakespeare & Co., SFBATCO, Livermore Shakespeare (SPARC), Pacific Repertory Theatre, and the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. Some of their favorite recent credits include Puck (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Clown (*The 39 Steps*), Nell Gwyn (*Charlie and Nell*), and Touchstone (*As You Like It*). www.charlielavaroni.com



FRANK ODÉN (Understudy Sam, Clay) is a multi-discipline theater artist with a career spanning more than five decades. Recent acting appearances include the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Arvada Center Black Box Rep, and Shakespeare in the Wild. He has written the book, music and lyrics for six long-running musical comedies and created multiple “concert theater” productions which he tours to perform as a solo guest artist with symphony orchestras nationwide. www.frankoden.com.

THE CAST



LIA RODRIGUEZ (Understudy Waiter, Bank Customer, Townsperson) is incredibly excited to make her Asolo Repertory Theatre debut. She has been in productions of *Clybourne Park*, *The Mousetrap*, *Necessary Targets*, *Passage*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. She

has done voice work in the animated film *Anpanman: Twinkle Princess Vanilla of the Land of Ice Cream* and has received her BFA at Florida International University.

UNION CREDITS

Asolo Rep operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, and the United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE Local 412 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Pictures Machine Operators of the United States and Canada.



UNITED SCENIC ARTISTS

THE CREATIVES

SAM ALLEN (Stage Manager) is currently based in Los Angeles. They have had the privilege to work Off-Broadway: *The Brothers Size* (The Shed), Regional: *Not About Nightingales* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Table 17, Furlough's Paradise*, *Noises Off*, *The Brothers Size* (Geffen Playhouse); *La Cage aux Folles* (Pasadena Playhouse); *Hell Yeah!*, *Fat Ham*, *King James*, *Pleasant*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *All Day* (The Old Globe); *Animals Out of Paper*, *Flowers of Hawaii* (Chautauqua Theater Company). Education: BFA in Stage Management and Directing from Westminster University (2020), M.F.A. in Stage Management from University of California-Irvine (2024).

CHARI ARESPACOCHAGA (Director) Chari is a director for theatre, film, special events, and concerts and an Associate Professor at Florida State University where she heads the MFA Directing Program. As a Director her credits include: *Sweeney Todd*, Theatre Group Asia's *Into the Woods*, *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*, *Kinky Boots*, *Rent*, *In The Heights*, *The Motherf**ker With The Hat*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, among others. Chari has led the world premiere readings of *Shame Bomb* (29 Hour Ventures and New York Rep), *Fumiko Enchi's Restless Night in Late Spring* and *A Hell of Her Own* (Abingdon Theatre Company). She worked with Susan Stroman on *Dot* (Vineyard Theatre), with Jeff Whiting on *Single Wide* (NYMF) and is a member of the Roundabout Theatre Company's Director's Group. www.chariarespacochaga.com

EBONI BOOTH (Playwright) is a writer and actor from New

York City. Her play *Paris* had its premiere at the Atlantic Theater Company. Eboni is a resident playwright at New Dramatists and a recipient of a Steinberg Playwright Award, a Helen Merrill Award for Playwriting, and a John Gassner award. She is a graduate of Juilliard's playwriting program and the University of Vermont.

ALAN C. EDWARDS (Lighting Design) Asolo Repertory Theatre: *Beautiful*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Chad Deity*. Broadway: Associate to Jennifer Tipton on *The Testament of Mary*. West End: *Harry Clarke* (Ambassador Theatre Group). Off-Broadway: *Kill Move Paradise* (National Black Theatre); *Harry Clarke* (Vineyard Theatre, Berkeley Rep); *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Signature NYC & A.R.T.); *Fires in the Mirror*, *The Hot Wing King*, *Sunset Baby* (Signature NYC); *Memnon*, *Twelfth Night* (Classical Theatre of Harlem); *Sally & Tom* (The Public). Regional: *Gatsby: An American Myth* (A.R.T.); *Appropriate* (The Old Globe); *Paradise Blue* (Geffen Playhouse). Dance: *Chasing Magic* and *Where We Dwell* by Ayodele Casel; *In the Same Tongue* by Dianne McIntyre; *Lifted* by Christopher Rudd for American Ballet Theatre. Awards: Lucille Lortel and Audelco Awards, Drama Desk nomination. He is a graduate of Yale School of Drama where he is also an assistant professor of lighting. www.alancedwards.com.

ROSS EGAN (Managing Director) began his arts administration career in Chicago where he was a co-founder of Jeff award-winning Refuge Theatre Project. Ross has served as Managing Director at Barter Theatre, the nation's longest-running professional theatre, and as Director of Marketing & Operations at Illinois Shakespeare Festival.

THE CREATIVES

ROSS EGAN holds a BFA in acting from Michigan State University and an MBA from Illinois State University. He lives with his family in Lakewood Ranch and proudly serves as a den leader for Scouting America.

JEN GILLETTE (Costume Design) designs costumes nationally for musical theatre, theatre, and opera. Notable productions include: *Bud Not Buddy* (Kennedy Center), *Cunning Little Vixen* (Manhattan School of Music), *Porgy and Bess* (Hattiloo Theatre), *Guys and Dolls* (Ohio Light Opera), *Our Black Death* (Taffety Punk), *Gypsy* (McLeod Summer Playhouse), and *Young Frankenstein* (Florida State University). She is the author of *Digital Painting and Rendering for Theatrical Design* and a proud member of USA 829. Jen holds an MFA in costume design from University of North Carolina School of the Arts and serves as assistant professor of Costume Design at Florida State University. IG @jengillettedesign

MICHELLE HART (Resident Hair, Wig, & Makeup Designer) designs for Asolo Repertory Theatre and FSU/Asolo Conservatory. Other credits: Sarasota Ballet, Palm Beach Drama Works, freeFall Theatre, Urbanite Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, Banyan Theatre, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Venice Theatre, Dorset Theatre, Barrington Stage and Open Stage Theatre. She has also done hair and/or make-up for Joan Rivers, Doris Roberts, Martin Short, Jane Russell, Arlene Dahl, Soledad Villamil, Jane Pauley, Richard Dreyfuss, Castille Langdon, Christopher Higgins, Justin Long, Paul Downs. Music videos "Second Chance" by Shinedown, "Reverse Cowgirl" by T-Pain. Film and television: "The Loyalists," "Lady of the Manor," "Paradise, FL," and "The Real Stephen Blatt."

JOEY MENDOZA (Scenic Design) is a freelance scenic and event designer based in New York City. He designed, mentored, and taught at Fordham University's Theatre Program at Lincoln Center from 2011 to 2020. His scenic design work has been seen on the stages of HERE Arts Center, The New Ohio, Tanghalang Pilipino, Northern Stage, Repertory Philippines, Ma-Yi Theatre Company, INTAR, La Mama ETC, The Flea, and others. Recent work includes: *Jane Anger* (with Michael Urie), *Export Quality*, *Constellations*, *Kisapmata*, and *We Aren't Kids Anymore*. He is a recipient of two Phil Stage Gawad Buhay awards (*Agnes of God* (2017) and *The Last Five Years* (2024) for Excellence in Scenic Design in his native Philippines. www.JMDesignNY.com

MATTHEW PARKER (Sound Design) received his BFA in Theatre Production Design and Technology from Ohio University. He was the resident sound designer at Monomoy Theatre in 1990. He has worked sound and special effects at The Flat Rock Theatre in North

Carolina on shows including: *I Hate Hamlet*, the world premiere of *Gilligan's Island: The Musical* and others in the 1992 season. Since 1993, Matthew has designed sound for many of Asolo Repertory Theatre's productions. In addition, he wrote and performed the musical scores for *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Outside the theatre world, he has designed and programmed the show control system for Livingston's Amusements Bazooka Ball arena and produced virtual exhibitions for the National Watercolor Society.

MATTHEW ROHAN (Assistant Stage Manager) Previously at Asolo Repertory Theatre: *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Ken Ludwig's The Three Musketeers*, *Chicken & Biscuits*, *Looking for Ithaca: An Odyssey* (TYA Tour). Other regional credits include productions at Arizona Theatre Company, American Players Theatre, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Goodman Theatre, and Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre. Matthew is a proud member of AEA and graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

MURNANE CASTING (Casting) casts for Broadway, tours, and regional theatre. Current and recent projects include: *TINA-The Tina Turner Musical*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *The Sound of Music*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *Kinky Boots*. Developmental work includes: *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Boy Who Loved Batman*, and *Fremont Ave*. Murnane Casting regularly collaborates with major theatres nationwide, including: Arena Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Bay Street, Denver Center, Goodspeed, and The Hollywood Bowl. Learn more at www.MurnaneCasting.com.

PETER ROTHSTEIN (Producing Artistic Director) directed *Come from Away*, *Ken Ludwig's Lady Molly of Scotland Yard* (World Premiere), *Twelve Angry Men: A New Musical*, *Inherit The Wind*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Ragtime* at Asolo Repertory Theatre. He works extensively as a director of theater, musicals, opera, and new work development. For 25 years, Rothstein served as the Founding Artistic Director of Theater Latté Da, a Minneapolis-based company dedicated to new and adventurous music-theater. Other collaborations include: the Guthrie Theater, Children's Theatre Company, Ten Thousand Things, and Seattle's 5th Avenue, as well as the Minnesota Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater. Rothstein served on the board of directors for the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, Alive and Kickin', and the Twin Cities' Ivey Awards. He has been a panelist and evaluator for the Playwrights' Center, the McKnight Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's Festival of New Musicals. He holds degrees in music and theater from St. John's University

THE QUIET HOPE OF PRIMARY TRUST

An interview with Director Chari Arespacochaga

BY JAMES MONAGHAN

1. How did you first encounter this story and what were some of your initial reactions?

I first encountered *Primary Trust* in its New York Premiere. I remember most how quiet and introspective the show felt and the wallop of emotion that emerged out of that quiet. I will never forget the image of Kenneth sitting at his table in Wally's after the incident at his new job, then the shadow of his boss appearing. By the time he walked in and greeted Kenneth, I was already crying. The thought of not only being found but being intentionally looked for after such a traumatic incident is just one example of the 'touchstones of hope' the play so quietly and effectively holds up for us.



Chari Arespacochaga

2. Eboni Booth is both specific and general about when this play is set: "Before Smartphones." How does this contribute to the specificity of the characters and the general world of the play?

I think it was so smart of her to set this in that period because the sense of isolation is more palpable without information at our fingertips — connection and getting what you need requires more embodied acts. And yet that palpable sense of isolation is somehow more relatable given our present relationships with smartphones — somehow it makes us aware of so many ways we are yearning for connection. On a human level, I think some things to reckon with are:



Nighthawks by Edward Hopper

- How to be with yourself — no browsing, no doomsscrolling, no games or social media apps to distract you from having to just sit with yourself.
- How to get information — Kenneth has to find out about a job opening through another person, and by chance.

3. Could you say a little about how the design of the show came together and how it has shaped your thinking about the play?

In our very early meetings, Scenic designer Joey Mendoza and I were both very drawn to sharing images with each other that captured Kenneth's loneliness, isolation, and point of view of Cranberry, New York. It led us to very abstract images that captured qualities of emotion, mood, and states of mind. A sense of urban isolation and survival was also important to us and after many exchanges, we both latched on to a lot of images from Edward Hopper and James Turrell. We wanted the flow from his thoughts being shared with the audience into his real time experiences to reflect how the mind processes memory almost cinematically. This has all trickled into the conversations about music. We wanted to use the space nontraditionally and we are also playing with the idea of music as a representative of the town and being in the atmosphere throughout, while also cueing us into the inner workings of Kenneth's mind and memories.

4. *Primary Trust* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2024. The jurors for the prize consider how the work is 'distinguished,' delivers a 'strong message,' as well as overall 'originality' and 'impact.' In what ways do you feel *Primary Trust* exemplifies these qualities?

Primary Trust's genius resides in celebrating unity through truthful interactions and relationships among real people trying to survive and cope and deal with life. It captures moments we can all relate to, but resists telling us that there is only one way to deal with those moments. As such, its impact comes as a surprise — in the quietest of ways, it slowly washes over you. In the end we are reminded of our humanity and given a sliver of hope for going forward.

I will steal from Eboni Booth's words to explain this. Towards the end of the show, as he processes the loss of Bert and his mother, Kenneth remembers something he has learned from a new friend, "... even though it hurts, Love is very good..." and that "even though we will lose everything in the end, it is the finding that is important...." Kenneth hopes that maybe "one day" what is lost can be found again and he discovers the gift of "right now." This play reminds us of the precious right now — bad things are only for right now as are good things and what we do in our 'right-nows' may help determine what the next moments can become for ourselves, for other people, for our communities.

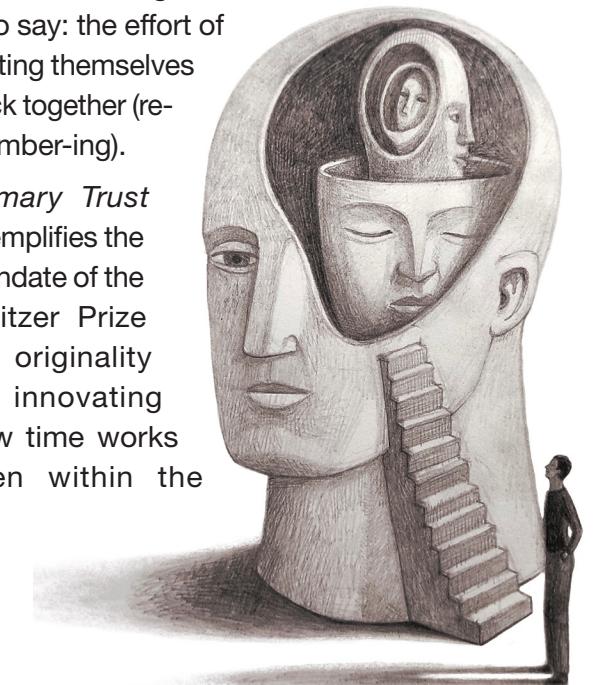
WELCOME TO YOUR LIFE

BY JAMES MONAGHAN

Eboni Booth's *Primary Trust*, winner of the 2024 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, is a memory play—a well-loved and powerful storytelling device in the American Theater and amongst past Pulitzer winners. Plays like Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* (1998) or Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1999) come readily to mind, but if you reach further back to Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman* (1949) or to the quintessential memory play *The Glass Menagerie*¹ (1945) by Tennessee Williams, you begin to get a sense of the remarkable playwrights who have deployed a version of this structure to tell some of our most celebrated stories on stage.

These plays rely on a neat theatrical trick of condensing time as we know it: not only in the sense of portraying a whole lifetime in the span of a few hours – after all, there are many plays that do this – but also in the sense of making ephemeral time so dense that it is almost a location of its

¹ NOTE: While *The Glass Menagerie* did not win the Pulitzer Prize, it has had an undeniable impact on plays that utilize this memory structure, so much so that any list that did not include the work felt incomplete. Incidentally, the play that did win the Pulitzer Prize in 1945, the year ...*Menagerie* would've been considered, was *Harvey* by Mary Chase, which has its own imaginative ties to *Primary Trust*.



Primary Trust exemplifies the mandate of the Pulitzer Prize for originality by innovating how time works even within the

own. The space of memory. Memory plays compel their main characters to step in and out of this space, where they have varying degrees of agency over the events. Must they be reenacted in strict accordance with truth? Can they be replayed or manipulated? Sometimes a character can step out of the memory at will to give us context or qualify something they've done. And still others might be trapped, overwhelmed by the emotional weight of remembering, which is to say: the effort of putting themselves back together (remember-ing).

memory itself. Unlike the plays listed here where flashbacks tend to be presented in longish, linear chunks, time seems to slip past and away from *Primary Trust*'s main character, Kenneth, as he attempts to tell his story. It's not immediately clear if he is consciously editing for our benefit or is perhaps unwilling/unable to go from A to Z without skipping a few letters. The script is littered with asterisks, which Booth tells us "indicate the passage of time." Here's one example from early in the play:

WALLY'S WAITER. Welcome to Wally's. My name is Paul. Today is Coconut Tuesday. We have two-for-one mai tais and \$3 Reggae Shrimp.

KENNETH. I'll have a mai tai.

{*}

One more.

{*}

Another round.

{*}

One more, por favor, and an order of those fancy shrimp.

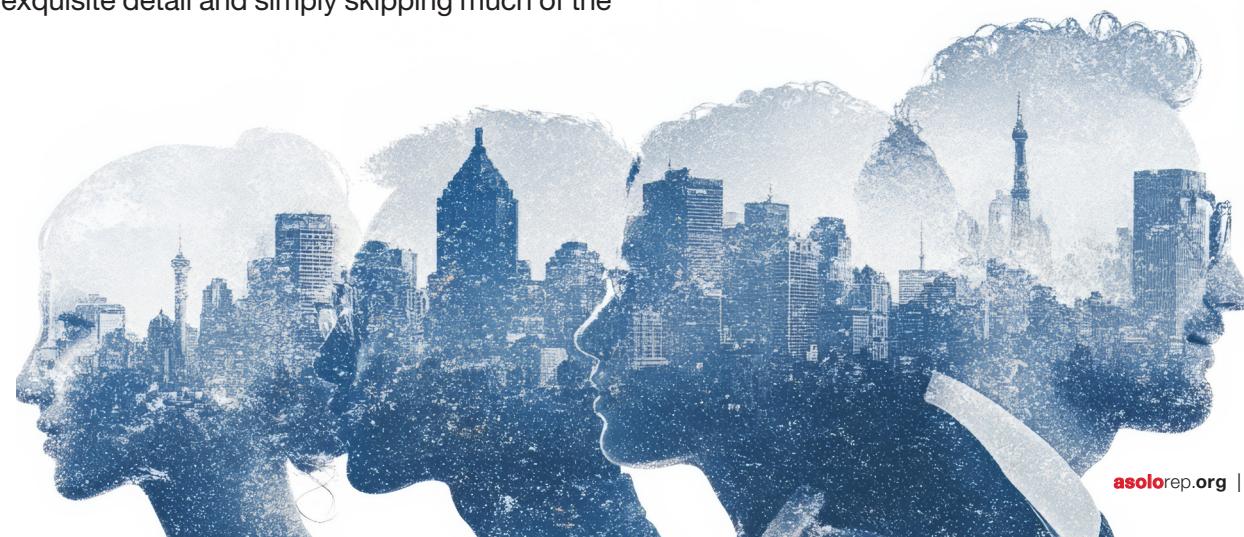
{*}

This is a fascinating and perhaps more authentic way to render the way our minds recall past experiences: etching specific moments in exquisite detail and simply skipping much of the

rest. Or as research in cognitive psychology on memory seems to suggest, filling in the gaps with information that could be less than absolute fact, like a puzzle with key pieces missing. Kenneth's own reporting on time is a good example of this constructive process, with the sequence of events in a coherent order but the dates only a ballpark recollection.

Primary Trust has taken the convention of time in memory plays and found a unique way to manipulate it, revealing a deeper sense not only of how we generally process memories, but how this character contemplates himself. In a similar vein, Booth's use of music builds on a legacy of plays where music has the power to encapsulate a complex moment in the present and instantly transport us to the past. Listen closely, and you may hear tunes like "The Girl from Ipanema," "She's Not There," by the Zombies, and "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," by Tears for Fears. All songs from bygone eras, it's tempting to write them off as background muzak, they are even framed this way: "...there's always a man in a Hawaiian shirt playing the keyboard next to the salad bar." But nothing in this intimate play, being constructed before our very eyes by Kenneth, happens by accident.

Framed as the play is by a direct address to the audience, in fact the same direct address on both ends, it's almost as if – in an instant – Kenneth is looking back on his life and discovering who he really is just as we endeavor to do the same. In the words of Tears for Fears, "Welcome to your life."



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