

DIALOGUE

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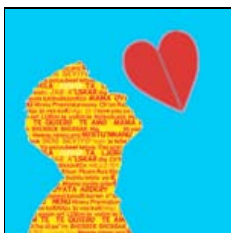
Hot Off the Pen

Ah, spring, when a theatre-goer's thoughts turn to...new plays. This year's Pacific Playwrights Festival takes place April 23-25 and features staged readings of new plays by Amy Freed, Itamar Moses, Bathsbeba Doran, David West Read and Sofia Alvarez as well as full productions of two plays read during last year's festival: Julia Cho's *The Language Archive* and Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's *Doctor Cerberus*. Get the scoop on these hot-off-the-pen new works and get to know their talented creators.



The Star of His Own Personal Horror Movie

Meet Franklin Robertson, the wonderfully sweet and awkward central character of *Doctor Cerberus*. In this coming-of-age comedy with a twist of terror, poor Franklin is just trying to survive. He's 13, chubby and friendless. His parents don't understand him. His older, jock brother torments him. His great comfort comes from the horror movies he watches on a black-and-white TV set in his basement during "Nightmare Theatre," introduced by the enigmatic Doctor Cerberus. At the moment, he feels like the victim in his own personal horror movie, but he may yet go on to become the hero of his own life.



The Language of Love

If only George could find the right words, he could keep his wife from leaving him. But mastering the language of love isn't easy, even for a linguist like George. His assistant, Emma, is also at a loss for words when it comes to matters of the heart. And the adorably cantankerous old couple Alta and Resten—whose dying language George and Emma are supposed to be chronicling—have communication issues of their own. *The Language Archive* spins a sort-of fable—buoyant and melancholy, funny and heart-breaking—about the deep human need to be understood.



Caught in a Global Game

It's 1989 and hotshot young architect Andrew Hackett, who's got a full slate of international projects in the works, is just about to hit it big. But a simple commission from the Minister of Culture in a fictional Middle Eastern country turns out to be more complicated than it appears. Howard Korder's new play takes place in a region rich in art and architecture and sets complex questions about the process of creation and the ephemeral nature of art against the harsh realities of war and political intrigue.

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LOVE, FAMILY DOMINATE 2010 PPF LINEUP

by Soyia Ellison

Ah, spring, when a theatre-goer's thoughts turn to...new plays.

This year's **Pacific Playwrights Festival** takes place April 23-25 and features staged readings of new plays by Amy Freed, Itamar Moses, Bathsheba Doran, David West Read and Sofia Alvarez and full productions of two plays that were read during last year's festival: Julia Cho's *The Language Archive* and Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's *Dr. Cerberus*.

Three of the plays—Moses' *Completeness*, Doran's *Kin* and Cho's *Language Archive* – have love on their minds.

Do we just keep making the same romantic mistakes again and again?

Can we move past our parents' failings to forge a healthy relationship of our own?

Is it too much to ask for a partner who really listens to us when we talk?

These playwrights want answers.

Kin, as you might imagine, also deals with family, as does Read's *Happy Face*, in which a 20-year-old spitfire cares for her depressed, disfigured younger brother after the death of their parents. (Don't worry—it's funnier than it sounds.)

Doctor Cerberus gives us the very funny Robertson family, as seen from the perspective of 13-year-old Franklin, a horror-film-loving geek tormented by his older brother and dominated by his well-meaning but clueless parents.

And then there is Alvarez's *Between Us Chickens*, in which a sort-of family—twenty-something best friends Meagan and Sarah, newly arrived in L.A. from small-town Pa.,—is threatened by the intrusion of a stranger who challenges the roles the girls have always played in each other's lives.

Amy Freed's play, meanwhile, sets its satirical sights on architecture and ruthless ambition.

Since its creation in 1998, PPF has grown into one of the most important festivals of new scripts in the United States. SCR's previous festivals have introduced 83 new plays to the national stage, including Amy Freed's *The Beard of Avon*, Donald Margulies' *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment*, Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel*, Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*, Rolin Jones' *The*

The Plays

COMPLETENESS

by Itamar Moses

Friday, April 23, at 1 p.m.

How does a computer scientist hook up with a molecular biologist? He uses the algorithm method, of course. But when Elliot offers to build a computer program to help Molly with her latest research project, they discover that megabytes and microbes might not be compatible – and even the most sophisticated algorithm may freeze in the face of life's infinite possibilities. From the author of *Bach at Leipzig*, a 21st-century romantic comedy about the timeless confusions of love.

HAPPY FACE

by David West Read

Friday, April 23, at 3:30 p.m.

Wendy has a lot on her plate. A force of nature in the form of a 20-year-old karate-chopping gamine, she has been the sole provider for her troubled younger brother, Poots, ever since their parents died in a tragic canoeing accident. While Wendy lives in the family house, Poots lives out back in a refrigerator box and wears a *Phantom of the Opera* mask to hide his disfigured face. Now their funds are dwindling and prospects are bleak, but the indefatigable Wendy has a plan – and no one should bet against her.

BETWEEN US CHICKENS

by Sofia Alvarez

Friday, April 23, at 8 p.m. and

Saturday, April 24, at 2:30 and 8 p.m.

Meagan and Sarah are small-town girls new to L.A. Meagan's all about the retail, the scene and the celebrities; Sarah's a computer-surfing homebody. When a smooth-talking opportunist named Charles crashes on their couch and takes Sarah out on the town, he threatens to upset the balance of a lifelong friendship – especially when Sarah's secret life comes to light. This smart, savvy comedy by a promising new playwright surprises turn-by-turn as it asks how well you really know your friends.

Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow and David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Rabbit Hole*.

For 12 years the Pacific Playwrights Festival has served as an exceptional incubator of new work, offering playwrights an opportunity to hear their words read by professional actors while they are still in the process of shaping their final drafts. PPF also gives playwrights a chance to get feedback on what they've written from theatre lovers and industry professionals.

"To me, there are few better places in the country to launch a new play than the PPF," said playwright Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. "Last year, I wrote a play (*Doctor Cerberus*) on commission for South Coast, turned it in, and had the play accepted into the festival... hearing the play aloud, with a fabulous group of actors, in front of an audience as smart and theatre-savvy as South Coast's, was invaluable."

SCR's literary team is particularly happy with the mix of new and established writers represented at this year's festival.

"Itamar Moses and Amy Freed, two SCR favorites, have written some of the funniest, sharpest plays in recent American theatre, so it's great to have both of them contributing plays to this year's festival," said PPF Co-Director John Glore. "And Bathsheba Doran, who has gotten the attention of a lot of theatre people with the subtle truthfulness and layered complexity of her writing, brings a very different sensibility to the mix."

Added Co-Director Kelly Miller: "We're very pleased to introduce PPF audiences to two exciting, distinctive new dramatic voices in Sofia Alvarez and David West Read, who've written extraordinary plays about young people in a markedly contemporary world."

RIGHT TO THE TOP

by Amy Freed

Saturday, April 24, at 10:30 a.m.

He's a giant of the architecture world: Gregor Zubrovsky, whose buildings rise like post-post-modern megaliths out of the center of the earth. So why has he decided to take on a project to remodel a decaying boathouse in a remote backwater? That's what up-and-coming architects Dieter and Rita want to know – especially since that project was supposed to be theirs. But nothing prepares them for the truth about Gregor, whose past is far more checkered than anyone might have imagined. Another outrageous outing from the author of *The Beard of Avon* and *You, Nero*.

KIN

by Bathsheba Doran

Sunday, April 25, at 10:30 a.m.

Anna is a quietly ambitious, Ivy League-educated New Yorker with an emotionally distant father. Sean is an Irish personal trainer with an emotional wreck of a mother. When Anna and Sean fall in love, their parents get involved, along with a tangled web of friends and family on both sides of the Atlantic. So before they can begin a future together, the couple must reconcile with their past in this wonderfully wry drama about the inevitable influence of kin.

The Playwrights



Sofia Alvarez is currently a Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellow at The Juilliard School. She is an alumna of the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writer's Program in London, where she developed her play *Life Drawing*. She was recently awarded Lincoln Center Theater's Lecomte du Nouy Prize. She received her BA in Drama from Bennington College, where she directed a production of Maria Irene Fornes's *Mud*. In New York she directed Jeff Tabnick's *Dissatisfaction # 4* (Impact Theatre One Act Play Festival) and Keith Hendershot's *Po-Mo Sex Romp* (Foglight Production at the Abington Theatre). She has worked as an assistant to Christopher

Hampton, Adam Guettel and in the theatre department at Creative Artists Agency (CAA). A native of Baltimore, Maryland, she now lives in Brooklyn.



David West Read is currently pursuing his MFA in Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts on a full departmental fellowship. His plays have been produced at numerous festivals, including the Toronto Fringe, SummerWorks, the North Jersey New Found Theatre Festival (Winner-Best Play) and NYU's Festival of New Works. His short play *Double Penetration* was selected as a finalist at the 2009 Samuel French Off-Off-Broadway Short Play Festival, and his full-length play *The Dream of the Burning Boy* will be produced at the Roundabout Theater Underground as part of their 2010-2011 season. *Happy Face* was first developed as a

playwriting thesis project at NYU under the guidance of Marsha Norman.



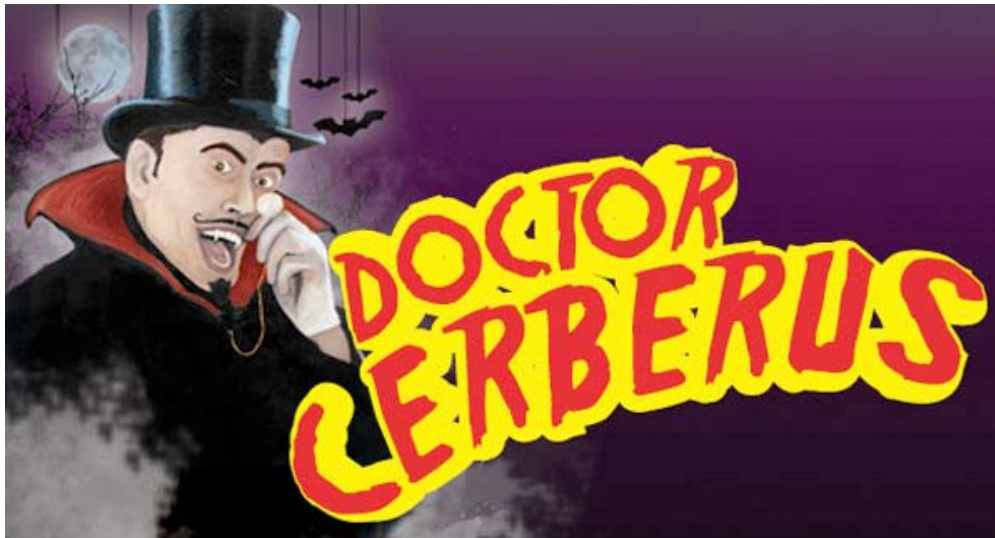
Bathsheba Doran's play *Parents Evening* will receive its world premiere at The Flea Theater in April, directed by Jim Simpson. Her play *Ben and The Magic Paintbrush* will receive its world premiere at South Coast Repertory in May. Other plays include *Living Room in Africa* (produced Off-Broadway by the award winning Edge Theater), *Nest* (commissioned and produced by Signature Theater in D.C.), *Until Morning* (BBC Radio 4) and adaptations of Dickens' *Great Expectations* (starring Kathleen Chalfant at The Lucille Lortel), Maeterlinck's *The Blind* (Classic Stage Company) and *Peer Gynt* (directed by Andre Serban at the Theater of the Riverside Church). She is a 2009 recipient of the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award and three Lincoln Center Theater Lecomte du Nouy Prizes. She is a Cherry Lane Mentor Project Fellow and a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist. Ms. Doran's work has been developed by Manhattan Theatre Club, O'Neill Theatre Center, Lincoln Center, Sundance Theater Lab, Almeida Theatre (London) and Playwrights Horizons, among others. Ms. Doran's first play, *Feminine Wash*, was produced at the Edinburgh Fringe festival while she was a student at Cambridge University, from which she holds a BA and an MA. She then went on to Oxford University, where she received an MA before working as a television comedy writer with the BBC. Ms. Doran moved to the United States on a Fulbright Scholarship in 2000, received her MFA from Columbia University and went on to become a Playwriting Fellow of The Juilliard School. She is currently under commission from Atlantic Theater and Playwrights Horizons in New York City and Schtanhaus in London. Her work is available from Samuel French and Playscripts Inc. She lives in New York City.



Itamar Moses is the author of the full-length plays *Outrage*, *Bach at Leipzig* (produced at SCR in 2006), *Celebrity Row*, *The Four of Us*, *Yellowjackets*, *Back Back Back* and *The Den*, a collection of short plays titled *Love/Stories (or But You Will Get Used to It)*, as well as various one-acts. He is presently adapting Jonathan Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude* for the stage with composer Michael Friedman and director Daniel Aukin. His work has appeared Off-Broadway and at regional theatres across the country, in Canada, France and Brazil; has been published by Faber & Faber, Heinemann Press, Playscripts Inc., Samuel French and Vintage. He has received new play commissions from The McCarter Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Berkeley Repertory theatre, The Wilma Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, South Coast Repertory and Lincoln Center Theater. He holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU and has taught playwriting at Yale and NYU. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, The MCC Theater Playwriting Coalition, Naked Angels Mag 7, and is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect. He was born in Berkeley and now lives in Brooklyn.



Amy Freed is the author of *You, Nero*, *Safe in Hell* and *The Beard of Avon*, which were commissioned by and had their world premieres at SCR, and *Restoration Comedy*, among others. Her play *Freedomland*, also commissioned and premiered by SCR, was a Pulitzer Prize finalist. *The Psychic Life of Savages* was the recipient of the Joseph Kesselring Award, and was also the winner of the Charles MacArthur Award. An earlier version of the play was first developed and performed in San Francisco under the title *Poetomachia* and received a Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Outstanding Achievement Award for an Original Script. In its earlier version, it was also a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Ms. Freed is currently an Artist-in-Residence at Stanford University.



FRIGHTS OF PASSAGE

by Kelly Miller

On the first day of rehearsal for Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's new play, *Doctor Cerberus*, director Bart DeLorenzo quoted the first line from Charles Dickens' classic novel *David Copperfield*:

"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show."

Meet Franklin Robertson, the wonderfully sweet, awkward teenage hero of *Doctor Cerberus*. A coming-of-age comedy with a twist of terror, the play takes place in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., in the mid-1980s. Thirteen-year-old Franklin is trying to survive in a world that feels increasingly like his own personal horror movie. His parents, Lawrence and Lydia, don't understand him. His older, jock brother, Rodney, torments him, and Franklin would rather write stories than go out with friends. (That is, if he had any friends.) His greatest comfort comes from the horror movies he watches on a black-and-white TV set in his basement during "Nightmare Theatre," introduced by the enigmatic Doctor Cerberus. Franklin feels certain that Doctor Cerberus can save his misfit life—if only he can get on the show.

With *Doctor Cerberus*, playwright Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa has crafted a poignant play about the universal travails of adolescence—and the lovingly dysfunctional family that influences one boy's dream of becoming a writer. He has structured the play around Franklin, a charming narrator who breaks the fourth wall repeatedly to tell the audience stories of his passion for horror movies and writing, his adolescent obesity, and his secret love for boys. Franklin is a sweet, smart, thoroughly identifiable character—an Every Teenager, who defies easy classification. When his Uncle Jack, a TV writer, comes to live with his family, Franklin begins to learn what it means to really use your imagination to tell stories.

SCR presented a staged reading of *Doctor Cerberus* as part of last season's Pacific Playwrights Festival, where it was a great success. Local audiences and industry guests were riveted by Aguirre-Sacasa's insightful familial comedy. DeLorenzo (*Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment*), directed that reading and now returns to direct the production, along with actors Brett Ryback, as Franklin, and Steven Culp, as his father, Lawrence Robertson.

Brett Ryback appeared at SCR in our Theatre for Young Audiences production of *Imagine*. Steven Culp performed in both *Raised in Captivity* and *Art* at SCR. They're joined by SCR newcomer Candy Buckley (as Lydia Franklin), whose Broadway credits include *After the Fall*, *Cabaret* and

JULIANNE ARGYROS STAGE

Doctor Cerberus

by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
directed by Bart DeLorenzo
April 11 - May 2, 2010

Dr. Cerberus rises from the mists
in "Nightmare Theatre,"
and 13-year-old Franklin emerges as
the season's most appealing anti-hero.

Approximately two hours with one intermission.

Laurie Smits Staude and
The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation,
Honorary Producers

KCRW, Media Partner

Thoroughly Modern Millie. Jarrett Sleeper (Rodney Robertson) has worked extensively in the Chicago theatre scene and recently had a recurring role on "The Secret Life of the American Teenager." Jamison Jones (Doctor Cerberus) has worked in theater, film and television in L.A., and had a recurring role on "24."



SCR commissioned playwright Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa to write *Doctor Cerberus* in 2007, after presenting a staged reading of his play *King of Shadows*. An accomplished writer for theatre, television and comic books, Aguirre-Sacasa is a playwright with an epic imagination and an original dramatic voice. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, he continues to push the stylistic form of new plays, fusing dramatic storytelling with a lifelong love of pop culture and the horror/fantasy genres.

Roberto's other plays include *Good Boys and True*, *Based on a Totally True Story*, *The Muckle Man* and *The Mystery Plays*. His comedies *Golden Age* and *Say You Love Satan* were both nominated for GLAAD Media Awards and have been produced around the country. He's currently writing a new book for the classic Charles Strouse/Lee Adams musical *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's SUPERMAN!* and adapting the novel *American Psycho* for the stage with musician Duncan Sheik. Roberto is a writer for HBO's acclaimed television series "Big Love" and the Harvey award-winning writer of *The Stand* for Marvel Comics.

Franklin Robertson may have grown up in the 1980s, but he's a universally recognizable character and hero. His journey and his dream—to follow his own artistic passion and someday become a writer—speaks to all of us, young and old, who still remember the thrill-ride of our own adolescence, who remember how to dream, and who see a little bit of themselves in Franklin Robertson.

LEFT UNSPOKEN

by John Glore

George, the central character in Julia Cho's *The Language Archive*, is a man of many languages, but lately he's had a communication problem. A linguist by trade, George knows how to say "I love you" in dozens of tongues, but he can't seem to figure out how to say it effectively to his own wife, Mary. Somehow George has forgotten how to speak Mary's language.

Which is part of the reason she has decided to leave him. Mary does give George one last chance to express his feelings for her before she walks out the door. Sadly, although his mind is overflowing with words of desperate longing, the best he can manage to say out loud is "...Don't...Go...?"—and those two lonely syllables don't add up to "I love you" as far as Mary is concerned.

Later George will learn that the way to say "I love you" in a near-dead language called Elloway is "Mir ni glessalla"—which literally means "Don't leave me." But since Mary isn't Ellowan, George's two-syllable plea fails to leap the gap between his heart and hers. So as the first scene comes to its miscommunicative end, Mary follows through on her intention ... and George's world begins to crumble.

Fortunately for George, losing Mary doesn't leave him alone in the world. His devoted assistant Emma stays by his side, helping him with his work while nursing a secret ardor for the man who taught her to love language. As the two of them interview the last two living speakers of Elloway—an adorably cantankerous old couple named Alta and Resten—Emma wishes she could find a way to tell George how she feels about him. So she decides to learn how to speak Esperanto, the universal language of which George is a devotee, hoping that will somehow spark a connection.

"There are sixty-five hundred languages in the world. More than half are expected to die within the next century. In fact, it's estimated that every two weeks, a language dies.

"I don't know about you, but this statistic moves me far more than any statistic on how many animals die or people die in a given time, in a given place. Because when we say a language dies, we are talking about a whole world, a whole way of life. It is the death of imagination, of memory."

– George, in *The Language Archive*

that it doesn't always serve the needs of the heart. But as George sees it, love is a language unto itself. And as Mary might add, it's an active culture, like yeast, alive in the air around us, waiting to be captured by the right two hearts.

SEGERSTROM STAGE

The Language Archive

by Julia Cho
directed by Mark Brokaw
March 26 - April 25, 2010

George is a linguist who knows many, many languages: but when his marriage starts to unravel, he suddenly finds himself utterly at a loss for the right words.

Approximately two hours with one intermission.

The Playwrights Circle, Honorary Producers

KOCE-TV, Segerstrom Stage Season Media Partner

Riviera Magazine, Media Partner

Meanwhile, on her own for the first time in many years, Mary has set out to create a new life for herself, something that will give authentic expression to a yearning she can't articulate. Quite by accident she meets a man—a baker named Baker—who holds the answer to her quest inside a mysterious little box. In short order Mary has found the perfect means to express herself to the world, to commune without words. And when Emma happens upon Mary in her new life, Julia Cho's yeasty romantic tale begins to rise and spread in surprising ways.

Cho's previous SCR world premiere, *The Piano Teacher*, was a dark mystery about humanity's capacity for both beauty and cruelty. *The Language Archive* couldn't be more different in story and tone, as it spins a sort of fable—buoyant and melancholy, funny and heart-breaking—about the deep human need to be understood. Language is an invention of human minds, so it shouldn't be surprising

Speak the Speech

The Language Archive was introduced in last year's Pacific Playwrights Festival, in a staged

reading directed by Mark Brokaw. Brokaw, one of the leading directors in the American theatre, returns to stage SCR's world premiere production, presented by special arrangement with New York's Roundabout Theatre Company, which commissioned the play. Brokaw's credits include productions on Broadway and Off-Broadway, and at some of the country's finest regional theatres, including the Guthrie, Steppenwolf and Seattle Rep.

The role of George will be played by Leo Marks, whose last SCR production was *Major Barbara*, in which he played Bill Walker. Betsy Brandt (*Ridiculous Fraud*) will play his wife, Mary. Emma will be played by SCR newcomer, Laura Heisler, a New Yorker who was recently named by *The Village Voice* as one of six "singular sensations," in an article about "actors who approach perfection [and] consistently demonstrate passion, vivacity, and innovation."

Two SCR favorites will round out the cast, with Linda Gehringer (*Doubt, The Piano Teacher* and many others) playing Alta and Tony Amendola (SCR's *The Heiress*, and a familiar face from film and television) appearing as Resten. Both actors play multiple roles, popping up as a cab driver, a German teacher and assorted other characters who guide Mary, George and Emma toward their respective fates.



The History of Esperanto

by Kimberly Colburn

Esperanto is an invented language, the brainchild of Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof. Zamenhof, born in 1859, was not the first (or the last) to attempt to construct a language to address the perceived failure of words in our society, but unlike many others, Esperanto gained a foothold to become a living language—with original literature, native speakers (children taught Esperanto at birth), and a dedicated following.



Polish doctor L.L. Zamenhof, inventor of Esperanto, poses in an undated picture. Photograph courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

Zamenhof made several attempts at forming a universal language. He first developed a lexicon of one-syllable words but found he would forget the meanings he assigned them. He knew a universal language needed to be as easy as possible to learn in order to gain widespread use. Eventually, he developed Esperanto, which relies on phonetic spelling and a system of root words familiar to anyone with a working knowledge of Romance or Germanic languages.

In 1887 Zamenhof gathered together the resources to publish a pamphlet he titled *Lingvo internacia. Antaŭparolo kaj plena lernolibro* (International Language. Foreword And Complete Textbook). It was published under the pseudonym *Doktoro Esperanto* (Doctor Hopeful), from which the name of the language is derived. His goal was to unify the world. He believed that if people could overcome language barriers, they could live in harmony.

When asked how he came to his beliefs, he explained: "I was educated to be an idealist. I was taught that all men are brothers; and yet on the street and in the marketplace everything caused me to feel 'people'

did not exist, that they were only Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews, etc." He felt that a

language that was neutral and didn't belong to a particular culture would put people on equal footing and promote understanding among nationalities.

Unlike the inventors of other constructed languages such as Universalglot or Volopük, Zamenhof didn't seek control of development and wanted his language to adapt through usage. He rejected motions for official overhaul and allowed changes to happen organically as Esperanto spread.

The idealistic philosophy behind Esperanto helped his language attract a large following. The World Esperanto Congress first occurred in 1905 and has been happening annually since, with brief hiatuses during WWI and WWII. Estimates of the number of Esperanto speakers today range from 50,000 to two million, spread worldwide, with chapters of the Universal Esperanto Association (UAE) in over 100 countries.

Speakers of Esperanto have developed a culture of openness and tolerance, wherein they celebrate every native background through their shared universal language. The UAE has a list of Esperanto speakers through the world who have offered their homes to traveling Esperanto speakers. The World Esperanto Congress is a colorful and lively affair, with performances, music, and seminars of all varieties—all in the uniting voice of Esperanto.

Fun Facts

Zamenhof has an asteroid named after him.

His birthday, December 15th, is celebrated as Esperanto Day. Last year, Google honored his birthday with a Google doodle. Google also has a portal for internet searching in Esperanto.

Political activist and Hungarian businessman George Soros is one of the rare native speakers of Esperanto, having been taught the language from birth, though he is no longer active in furthering the cause of Esperanto.

See also:

Than, Ker. "L.L. Zamenhof: Who He Was, Why He's on Google" *National Geographic Daily News*, Dec 15, 2009.

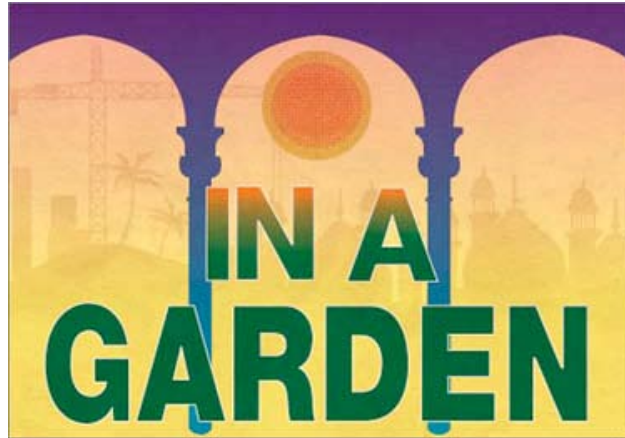
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CAUGHT IN A GLOBAL GAME

by Kimberly Colburn

It's 1989 and hotshot young architect Andrew Hackett is just about to hit it big. A few years ago he was featured in a major book about promising young architects, and he has a full slate of international projects in the works. He's taking meetings in Dubai already, so an invitation to meet with the Minister of Culture in neighboring Aqaat is easy to accept. Howard Korder's *In a Garden* opens at this initial meeting between the hopeful architect and the enigmatic Othman, Minister of Culture of the fictional nation of Aqaat. Othman dangles ideas for various major commissions in front of the ambitious Hackett, launching them into a battle of wills that will last far longer than Hackett expects.



After making him wait for three days, Othman finally reveals that he's not offering Hackett a commission for an airport or a museum, but a private summerhouse for the Minister of Culture. Hackett is eager to actually get one of his designs built, and he grasps at this chance to see his dreams realized. Othman, on the other hand, sees himself as a patron of the arts and wants the process to be languorously thorough.

SEGERSTROM STAGE

In A Garden
by Howard Korder
directed by David Warren
March 7 - 28, 2010

**The Culture Minister of Aqaat skirmishes
with an American architect over
plans for a summerhouse—
as the world closes in.**

Approximately two hours with one intermission.

Tom and Marilyn Sutton, Honorary Producers

KPCC 89.3, Media Partner

Swirling around them are hints of the tumultuous Middle Eastern world outside their meeting space. Hackett seemingly ignores the complicated political landscape and focuses on the small commission. Without tipping his hand, Othman subtly tries to guide Hackett toward Othman's idea of collaboration and artistry. Othman is also navigating his own political minefield under the oppressive regime of Brother Najid. When Brother Najid makes an appearance, Hackett is forced to finally recognize the depth of the politics he has gotten himself into.

Korder is clear that the fictional Aqaat is more an amalgamation of Middle Eastern nations than a clear reference to any specific country. Although the tyrannical regime of Brother Najid naturally brings to mind Saddam Hussein, the play is about more than the conflicts of the region. Korder's decision to set the play in the Middle East, an area with a rich history in art and architecture in addition to its political turmoil adds many layers of complexity to the play's questions about the process of creation and the ephemeral nature

of art. Hackett's unrealized ambitions, Othman's machinations, and the search for legacy drive this deceptively simple tale.

Last year, SCR presented a staged reading of *In A Garden* as part of the Pacific Playwrights Festival. The audience responded enthusiastically; for although *In A Garden* first engages the intellect, the play ultimately connects to our deepest fears and delivers a surprisingly emotional journey. Is it Hackett's dreams that motivate him? Or is it his fear of failure? Othman's mysterious methods push Hackett to collaborate in a way he never imagined.

A Tangled Web of Artists

The artists involved in Howard Korder's *In A Garden* have histories that intertwine—both with each other and with SCR.

Korder has a long history with SCR, stretching back to his play *Boys' Life*, which inaugurated SCR's NewSCRipts reading series in 1985. Among his other work, SCR produced the world premiere of his play *Search and Destroy*, which went on to a Broadway production and was made into a feature film. *Search and Destroy* featured two *In A Garden* actors—Mark Harelik and Jarion Monroe. The set designer from *Search and Destroy*, Chris Barreca, designed the set for *In a Garden*. Harelik was also featured in SCR's world premiere of Korder's *The Hollow Lands*, and performed in last year's PPF reading of *In A Garden*. Director David Warren helmed the PPF reading of *In A Garden* and has returned to direct the production. The last SCR production he directed was *Hurrah at Last* in 1998.



Last seen on SCR stages in the PPF reading for *The Language Archive* and the production of *What They Have*, actor Matt Letscher joins Korder veterans Harelik and Monroe. Rounding out the cast is Phillip Vaden, a graduate of SCR's Professional Conservatory who has appeared in several SCR productions, most recently *Habeas Corpus*. Lighting Designer Lap Chi Chu and Sound Designer Vincent Olivieri have both been involved in multiple SCR productions. Costume designer David Kay Mickelson is new to SCR audiences, but has designed more than 250 productions at theatres around the country.

Like the play itself, the relationships of the cast and creative team have a long history and are filled with complicated connections. Unlike the play, there are no hidden agendas—they're all here to create the best production possible of this mesmerizing new work.

Developing Theatre One Commission at a Time

03/19/10 • New York. Boston. Seattle. L.A.: Lately, our commissioned plays are turning up everywhere! Since 1985, SCR has awarded more than 241 commissions to 153 playwrights. We commission between 8 and 12 plays each year, which is, to our knowledge, higher than any other theatre company in the U.S. For those not familiar with the term, a "commission" means that we pay a writer to create a play for us. We then get the right to produce it first, which we sometimes do and sometimes don't.



Adam Arkin and Ari Graynor in the world premiere of Donald Margulies *Brooklyn Boy*.

Over the years, scores of SCR commissions, including Richard Greenberg's *Three Days of Rain* (1997) and David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer-Prize winning *Rabbit Hole* (1997), went on to be produced at other theatres. Now, these four are making headlines:

- *Lascivious Something* was first commissioned by SCR in 2002. It centers around an American and his young Greek bride who escape to an island and plant a small vineyard. Since 2002, Sheila Callaghan's play has been workshopped at the Bay Area Playwright's Festival and was developed with Soho Rep. Circle X Theatre Co. in L.A. will begin performances on March 27. A little more than a month later, The Women's Project and Cherry Lane Theater in New York will begin performances on May 2.
- *Brooklyn Boy* first premiered at SCR in September 2004. It was co-produced with Manhattan Theatre Club and performed at its Biltmore Theatre in February 2005. Taproot Theatre Company in Seattle will now continue its 34th season in March with *Brooklyn Boy*. The playwright, Donald Margulies, was also commissioned to write SCR's *Time Stands Still* (2009), *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment* (2007), *Sight Unseen* (1991) and *Collected Stories* (1996). *Sight Unseen* and *Collected Stories* were both finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.
- *The Luck of the Irish* was first commissioned by SCR in 2006. The playwright, Kirsten Greenidge, decided she was going to write at the age of 12 after seeing August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. August Wilson also wrote *Fences*, which was on the Segerstrom Stage this season. *The Luck of the Irish* is now being performed at Huntington Theatre Company in Boston. It is about two sisters who invite a long time friend of the family's to a memorial picnic for their grandmother. They learn that the deed to the house their family has called home for decades is being mysteriously "reclaimed."

[Read a recent interview with Kristen Greenidge](#)

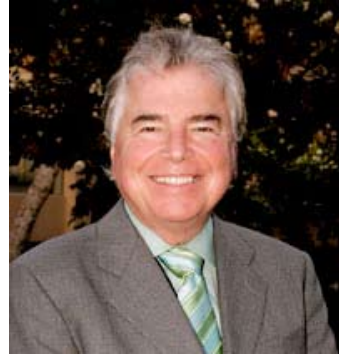
- *Sunlight* was also commissioned by SCR in 2006. Written by Sharr White, this play just ended its run at the Phoenix Theatre in Indianapolis and will continue its run at the ArtsWest Playhouse in Seattle until April. New Jersey Repertory Co. will begin performances in July. It is about Matthew Gibbon, a liberal lion and a university president, who may have gone too far in his battle against the conservative dean of the law school—his son-in-law and former protégé.

[Read a recent interview with Orange County native Sharr White](#)

SCR board president appointed to Arts Council

03/10/10 • Wylie Aitken, president of SCR's Board of Trustees, will soon join the California Arts Council. He was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on March 4.

Here's an article about his appointment from *News Blaze*: "Wylie Aitken, 68, of Anaheim, has been appointed to the California Arts Council. Aitken has been a founding partner of Aitken, Aitken, Cohn Law Corporation since 1971. He is a trustee and board president of the South Coast Repertory Theater and Orange County Performing Arts. Aitken is chair for the Board of Visitors of Chapman University Law School and a trustee of Chapman University. This position requires Senate confirmation and the compensation is \$100 per diem. Aitken is a Democrat."



Wylie Aitken

SCR's Founders Begin Search for New Artistic Director

COSTA MESA, Calif. (Feb. 4, 2010) — Forty-six years after founding South Coast Repertory, David Emmes and Martin Benson have decided it is time to begin the search for their successor. They have greenlighted a detailed leadership transition plan that is set to culminate later in the year with the naming of a new Artistic Director to join the leadership team.

This does not mean, however, that Emmes, the Producing Artistic Director, and Benson, the Artistic Director, are retiring. They will continue to serve in their current capacities until a new Artistic Director is in place, at which point they will assume the titles of Founding Directors. In their new roles they will serve as counselors and advisers to their successor. They will continue to play an active role in assisting the new Artistic Director in the finding and development of plays, and they will continue to direct productions.

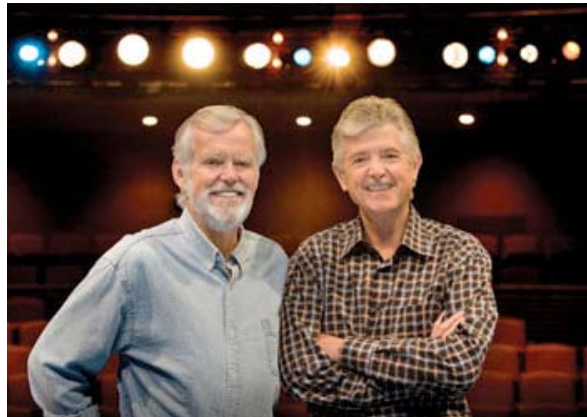
"We're stepping back, but not away," said Emmes. "We think it's incredibly important that SCR not lose artistic momentum. We believe we can help the next leader through the transition period as he or she becomes familiar with the particular needs of such a large and complex organization."

Though Benson and Emmes will be involved in the hiring process, SCR's Board of Trustees will choose the new leader: "We know that in order to keep growing, the theatre needs new ideas, new blood, new chemistry," Benson said. "SCR will need someone who is responsive to changing times and circumstances."

SCR has always taken a deliberate, evolutionary approach to change, and the succession plan is no exception. It began to take shape at a board retreat in March of 2008 and has been continuously refined until the founders felt that it—and they—were ready to move forward.

"David and Martin are visionaries," said Wylie Aitken, president of SCR's Board of Trustees. "They transformed SCR from a company with \$17 and a station wagon into a three-theatre complex with a \$9 million annual budget and numerous awards, including a Tony. Together with the Orange County community, they've created one of the most successful and stable arts institutions in the country. We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate that they have led a process to ensure the continuity of SCR's future artistic leadership. We are also grateful that they are willing to stay on to share their wisdom and insight as we identify a strong artistic leader to partner with our Managing Director, Paula Tomei, to carry on SCR's long history of service to Orange County and the national theatre community."

[For more details read a Q&A with David Emmes and Martin Benson.](#)



Martin Benson and David Emmes

EDUCATION STATION - MARCH 2010

Junior Players Present a Classic

SCR's Junior Players will present *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the beloved classic by Margery Williams, adapted for the stage by Thomas Olson, in the Nicholas Studio March 27-28.

Who are the Junior Players? They're students in the Theatre Conservatory's Kids and Teen Acting Program, who attend class twice a week during the school year. In the fall, they spend classroom time in actor training, just like other students in the Conservatory—except the Players train at a more advanced level, preparing for the day when rehearsals begin for their spring show.



SCR's Junior Player's in *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

story by Margery Williams
adapted for the stage by Thomas Olson

Is there a child anywhere who hasn't been touched by this classic story that brings toys to life? Now, they'll **really** come to life—the horse, the bear, the clown and all the rest—in this play about a boy named James and the toy rabbit he got for Christmas and immediately put away. But as all children know, if a toy is loved for a long time it will become real, which is what finally happens to the velveteen rabbit in this story of love, loss, and then—a little bit of magic.

How do they get to be Junior Players? They are chosen through the audition process, but only after two years as Conservatory students, combined with a strong commitment to hard work and the ability to work well within an ensemble. They have spent class time on rehearsing their roles in *The Velveteen Rabbit*, under the direction of Mercy Vasquez.

Junior Players are Brooke Boukather, Rachel Charny, Chelsea Davis, Ally Hickok, William Hopper, Christopher Huntley, Jaclyn Martin, Grace O'Brien, Jamie Ostmann, Karoline Ribak, Demie Santone and Juliet Weaver.



Sofya Ogunseitani with Larry Bates in *Fences*.

ACTING WITH HISTORY Young Actors 'Meet' August Wilson

August Wilson's plays influenced several generations of theatre-goers, but two budding young actors from SCR's Kids and Teen Acting Program, who shared a role in *Fences*, had never seen a Wilson play. After all, Wilson documented the black experience in America during the 20th century. Skye Whitebear and Sofya Ogunseitani, who alternate in the role of Troy Maxson's daughter Raynell, are eleven-year-old children of the 21st

century.

But now that the show is over and their lives are back to normal, the girls recalled the experience, starting with the playwright...

Q: What did the experience of acting in one of his plays teach you about August Wilson?

Sofya: It tells me that he really enjoyed telling stories, and he really put a lot of details into his stories.

Skye: I think his play *Fences* is very emotional, and it gives me an understanding of how things were totally different back then than from now. I would love to see more of his plays, so I can see his different reactions to segregation and racism. To me, August Wilson is a very honest man who speaks the truth in his plays.

What did you enjoy most/least about rehearsing?

Sofya: I liked watching my favorite parts of the play being rehearsed. I also liked doing my part in the rehearsal because it is fun to perform. I didn't like it when I didn't get feedback on my performance in rehearsal. I wanted more feedback.

Skye: The least thing I enjoyed about rehearsing was performing in front of the other actors,

since it was new to me and this was my first professional play. The thing I enjoyed most was learning and singing the "Blue" song with Larry [Bates]. That was so much fun!

What do you enjoy most/least about performing?

Sofya: I really like being on stage because it's really fun to perform in front of an audience. I like doing a performance that others are watching....putting on a show. There is NOTHING I don't like about performing. I like it all.

Skye: The thing I enjoyed least about performing was becoming nervous knowing that everyone's attention was on me. The thing I enjoyed most was seeing the audience give us a standing ovation!

What have you learned in SCR's acting program that has helped you in your performance?

Sofya: I learned how to focus when performing, how to lead with a body part and how to project my voice.

Skye: I learned how to speak loudly and pronounce my words clearly, and also how to work in an ensemble.

What did you learn from the director, Seret Scott?

Sofya: I learned the importance of blocking, especially how to position myself on stage so that the audience can see what is happening.

Skye: I learned how to animate my lines more and how to work with the whole cast more.

From the Conservatory director, Hisa Takakuwa?

Sofya: I learned how to make my performance more realistic and how to fit my character better.

Skye: Hisa taught me how to take on the role, because she told me that I was a 7-year-old in the play, and I had to just think back four years ago to what that was like and act that way.

Do you have a favorite backstage memory?

Sofya: Whenever I was backstage, Charlie Robinson would give me a kiss on the cheek before he walked out on stage.

Skye: When Troy and Cory were onstage fighting, I was always sitting there backstage talking to Baron [Kelly], and then I would start saying their lines, and it was the funniest thing ever.

What do you girls want to be when you grow up?

Sofya: If acting doesn't work out, I'll probably join the World Cup soccer team. And if that doesn't work, then I want to be an ophthalmologist.

Skye: If my fashion and modeling careers don't go the way I hope, and acting doesn't work out, I'll probably try singing.



Skye Whitebear with Larry Bates in Fences.

IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME A Full Slate of Acting Classes at SCR

In the theatre world, most stages are “dark” during the summer, as artists and staff take a short break before gearing up for the fall season. But at SCR, summertime is one of the busiest times for the Theatre Conservatory, where acting classes are in full swing, and students fill the classrooms from morning until night.



Having fun in Improv.

“The summer program is exciting for us,” says Conservatory Director Hisa Takakuwa, “because this is the time of year when we offer classes for everyone. Beginners get their first taste of theatre in the Summer Acting Workshop, which is open only to kids new to SCR. On the other hand, our Professional Actor Training program is open only to experienced students, who must audition to be accepted. In between, evening Adult Acting and Playwriting classes run the gamut from new students to pros. And, there’s a Summer Musical Theatre for kids at all levels of experience. So, when we say there’s something for everyone in the summer at SCR,

we really mean it!”

SUMMER ACTING WORKSHOP

July 26-August 7 OR August 9-21

This is where it all begins! Kids from third grade through high school get their first taste of theatre in a camp setting, where they explore voice, movement, character development and more, led by a faculty of enthusiastic theatre professionals.

ADULT ACTING AND PLAYWRITING

June 14-August 3

Are you shy, afraid to speak in public? Are you outgoing and love to be the center of attention? Either way (and in between) there’s an evening class for you at SCR, where first-timers get into the spirit of acting and move along at their own pace—all the way to Actors Workshop, a real “workout” for serious students. Plus, playwriting at all levels!



Teens on a break.

PROFESSIONAL ACTOR TRAINING

June 7-July 31

This is the place to complete your actor training. In eight weeks of highly concentrated study, you’ll emerge with a focused plan of action for a future in theatre, film and television. Applicants must be 18 years of age or over and qualify through an audition/interview.

SUMMER MUSICAL THEATRE

August 9-21

From third grade through high school—whether beginners or young pros, students learn how to audition and prepare for a musical role. Instructor Erin McNally teaches what it means to “act” a song and “sing” a scene!



Kids warm up in the Summer Acting Workshop.



Director Karen Hensel, left, works with a student.

PHILANTHROPY - MARCH, 2010

Staide Supports *Cerberus*



Laurie Smits Staude and playwright John Kolvenbach at the opening of *Goldfish*.

Throughout her years as a theatre-goer, Laurie Smits Staude, Honorary Producer of *Doctor Cerberus*, has been enthusiastic about new work developed and produced at SCR. Besides being a subscriber to both stages, she also subscribes to the NewSCRipts series of play readings and attends the Pacific Playwrights Festival (PPF), where new plays are introduced to audiences through staged readings.

In 2004, she joined the Playwrights Circle, comprised of avid playgoers who get together to help underwrite a world premiere on the Segerstrom Stage. During her three-year membership, the Playwrights Circle was Honorary Producer of *A Naked Girl on the Appian Way*, *The Studio* and *My Wandering Boy*.

More recently, Laurie became an individual Honorary Producer but still chose new plays to underwrite: *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment* in 2007 and *Goldfish* last season. She will be acknowledged for her support on First Night of *Doctor Cerberus*, April 16.

Suttons Are Steadfast Supporters

When it comes to SCR supporters, Tom and Marilyn Sutton (Honorary Producers of *In a Garden*) are among the most steadfast, having worked hand in hand with the theatre in every field of endeavor.

Tom was president of the SCR Board of Trustees during the 1992-93 season, energizing the theatre through a difficult financial climate, was re-elected to serve a second term and proved to be an inspiring leader for the landmark 30th season. During that time—and since—he and Marilyn have been major contributors to all of SCR's fundraising campaigns.

They also have been subscribers to both stages and members of every Circle of donors (Silver, Gold, Platinum and Producers). In 2008, Tom and Marilyn added production underwriting to their list of generous support, as Honorary Producers of *Taking Steps*. The Suttons were saluted for all that—and for their second stint as Honorary Producers—on First Night of *In a Garden* on March 12.



Actor Mark Harelik, right, with Honorary Producers Tom and Marilyn Sutton at the opening of *In a Garden*.

Laurie Foundation Donates \$50,000

In the last 16 years, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation has donated more than \$52 million to nonprofit organizations across the country, supporting programs in the arts, education health care and social services.

This year their generosity extends to South Coast Repertory and *Doctor Cerberus*. In December, the Foundation named *Doctor Cerberus* the winner of its annual Theatre Visions Program grant.

Half of the \$50,000 grant, which goes to just one production a year, helps pay for the production itself; \$10,000 goes to the playwright (Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa) and the rest goes to fund two new commissions of SCR's choosing.

This is the second time the Laurie Foundation has given SCR this grant – the first time was in 1999, for *On the Jump*.

The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation was established in 1983 by philanthropist Irving Laurie, who founded the Laurie Rubber Reclaiming Company in East Millstone, N.J. Its 2009-2010 donations have also helped fund the Kennedy Center's revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the Signature Theatre Company's presentation of Horton Foote's *The Orphans' Home Cycle* and the Vineyard Theatre's *The Scottsboro Boys*.

Gathering Together for SCR

Much of SCR's underwriting comes from individuals who band together to support the new work that is a major part of the theatre's mission. The 2009-10 season is no exception, with two groups of underwriters showing their strong support for emerging and established playwrights: the Honorary Producers of the **Pacific Playwrights Festival** and the Honorary Producers of *The Language Archive*.

Producing PPF

For the third season, teams of individual underwriters will help produce the Pacific Playwrights Festival (PPF), SCR's nationally renowned forum for new play development. The *teams* are in fact dedicated *couples* who have chosen to put their support behind PPF. Three-year PPF supporters Linda and Tod White, two-year supporters Sophie and Larry Cripe, Yvonne and Damien Jordan and Sue and John Murphy are all back as underwriters of the spring event. This season they are joined by Thomas B. Rogers and Sarah J. Anderson.



Banner from the 2008-09 Festival.

Besides their PPF support, this group has some powerful credentials. The Whites were Honorary Producers of *Dumb Show* in 2005 and *Ridiculous Fraud* in 2006. Tod is Vice President, Development, of the SCR Board of Trustees. The Cripes were members of the 2007-08 Playwrights Circle, helping underwrite *What They Have*. Sophie is an SCR Trustee and will chair the 2010 Gala Ball. The Jordans were members of last year's Playwrights Circle, helping produce *Our Mother's Brief Affair*, and Damien is a Vice President/Finance, of the SCR Board. As members of the 2006-07 and 2007-08 Playwrights Circle, the Murphys helped underwrite *My Wandering Boy* and *What They Have*, and John is an SCR Trustee. Rogers and Anderson were four-year members of the Playwrights Circle, and Tom is Vice President, Advancement, of the SCR Board.

These five couples will enjoy numerous benefits, including attending a PPF rehearsal and dining with the playwrights during PPF week.



Brenda Wehle and Tony Amendola in rehearsal for the 2009 PPF reading of *The Language Archive*.

Playwrights Circle

A longtime staple in the Honorary Producers' field, the Playwrights Circle has a membership that changes over the seasons and this year includes seven members, including "Anonymous," and two first-time couples, Bill and Carolyn Klein and John and Carolina Prichard (John is a new SCR Trustee), who will underwrite the world premiere of *The Language Archive*.

They are: Steve and Toni Berlinger (six-time members of the Circle; Toni is an SCR Trustee; the Berlingers were Patron Party

hosts for this season's "Nothing But Blue Skies" Gala); Linda and Robert A. Hovee (three-time Circle members; Linda is Vice President, Community Relations of the SCR Board); and Barbara and Bill Roberts (two-time members; eight-time Honorary Producers of classic plays and musicals; Barbara is an Emeritus Trustee and a former Gala Chair).

Linda and Tod White are first-time Circle members but have many other producing credentials, including this season's PPF (see above). All six couples will have the opportunity to meet the playwright, director and cast at a design presentation on the first day of rehearsal and enjoy dinner together on First Night of *The Language Archive*.



Sophie Cripe.

Sophie Cripe to Chair SCR Gala Ball

"I guess I watched too many Andy Hardy movies in my youth, as all of my life I've been waiting for someone to say to me, 'Let's put on a show!'"

Those are the words of the incredible SCR Trustee Sophie Cripe, spoken just after she was invited by South Coast Repertory to chair the theatre's 2010 Gala Ball. And, with her leadership, the Gala Committee will put on a show unlike any other, a celebration of SCR's contribution to theatre on the world's stage, aptly titled "The Play's the Thing."

"The Play's the Thing" will be held on September 11, 2010, at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa. As Sophie begins putting together a committee, volunteers are rushing to her side, attracted by her enthusiasm.

"You can almost see the glow of excitement that surrounds her," said SCR Managing Director Paula Tomei. "She's going to make an awesome chair!"

She certainly has the experience, going back to her own eighth birthday party, an event that garnered a full-page spread in the local paper. Since that auspicious beginning, Sophie has chaired conferences, fund-raisers, galas, weddings, breakfasts, luncheons, receptions and teas. Now, with the help of her committee, she is going to put on a "show."

According to Sophie, the excitement comes from working together. "I love the creative collaboration and facilitation of other people's great ideas—especially when they are enormously talented, as the members of SCR's Gala committee always are. And I'm looking forward to working with the great SCR staff and all its creative resources."

She knows whereof she speaks, because Sophie and her husband, Larry, have worked closely with SCR as major supporters since 1995. Some of their contributions are listed in this issue's *Dialogue* story, "Producing PPF," which highlights the Honorary Producers of the upcoming Pacific Playwrights Festival. But that's not all. Sophie was one of five board members whose leadership gifts launched last year's successful challenge campaign, Act Now for SCR. She and Larry are First Nights subscribers to the Segerstrom and Argyros Stages as well as the NewSCRipts series of play readings, and they frequently participate in SCR activities.

But for now, Sophie has her sights set on the first meeting of the Gala Committee, which will take place at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach on March 24. "I think the theme 'The Play's the Thing' is wonderful on so many levels," Sophie said, "because it's all about the transformative effect of theatre on our lives." Which happens in part thanks to leaders like Sophie Cripe.