

# DIALOGUE

The Online Magazine of South Coast Repertory

October 2009



Graham Michael Hamilton, Kristen Bush, director David Emmes, Conor O'Farrell and seated, Nick Ullet.  
Photo by Henry DiRocco/SCR.

## YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

Gustin is an 88-year-old retired radiologist. Thirty years ago, he lived with his daughter. Thirty years before that, he lived with his wife. Now a new woman has come into his life, a young nurse who stirs up the ghosts of the women Gustin once lived with and loved. Noah Haidle's darkly funny memory play is grounded in reality but inspired by astrology.



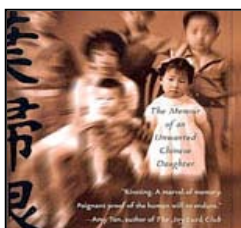
### Monkeying Around with Junie B. Jones

Her name is Junie B. Jones. The "B" stands for Beatrice. Except she doesn't like Beatrice. She just likes "B" and that's all. "B" stands for something else, too, the B-A-B-Y her mom is about to have, not a thrilling prospect for this stubborn, sassy kindergartener heading to the SCR stage.



### Scrooge Turns 30

Twenty-nine years. Two off-stage marriages. Two broken toes. And one near-striptease. To celebrate *A Christmas Carol's* 30th anniversary, we've collected memories of some of the best and worst moments you did and didn't see during SCR's nearly 1,000 performances of a beloved holiday classic.



### From NYT Best-Seller List to SCR Stage

Amazon.com's reviewer called Adeline Yen Mah's million-selling memoir, *Falling Leaves*, "an Asian Mommie Dearest." But the story of her unhappy childhood in China has a happy ending: Mah became a successful physician, married and had two children. The Huntington Beach resident has now rewritten her memoir in dramatic form, and it will have its first reading at SCR on Nov. 17.

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**Noah Haidle (above) returns to Costa Mesa for his third production at SCR.**

## HAIDLE RETURNS

by Kelly L. Miller

William Faulkner once said: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Echoes of the past are ever-present for Gustin Novak, the protagonist of *Saturn Returns*, Noah Haidle's newest play. A retired radiologist, Gustin is haunted by memories of his life and the women he loved at 28, 58 and now 88 – ages marked by the return of the planet Saturn, an astrological phenomenon of intense change that occurs every thirty years.

As the play opens, 88-year-old Gustin is so lonely that he has resorted to paying people for companionship.

He's tried everyone: a plumber, a computer technician, an au pair, an escort, and finally Suzanne, an assisted-living professional who looks uncannily like his daughter and who grudgingly agrees to make him breakfast and keep him company.

Noah Haidle's darkly funny memory play explores the nature of love, loss, and the passing of time, alternating between three pivotal days in Gustin's life over the course of 60 years. We see his love for his young wife, Loretta, at 28, his relationship with daughter, Zephyr, at 58, and his newly formed friendship with Suzanne at 88.

With *Saturn Returns*, Haidle has created an elegant casting scheme, in which a single actress plays all three women in Gustin's life – and three different actors play Gustin at ages 28, 58 and 88. This overlapping dramatic structure not only heightens the play's poetry and adds to its theatricality, it also reinforces the thematic passage of time and how memories echo and reverberate through Gustin's life.

When *Saturn Returns* premiered at Lincoln Center Theater in New York last season, critics lauded it as "an intimate reflection on grief and loneliness." (*Variety*). Charles Isherwood of the *New York Times* called the play "a muted study in the constancy of loneliness and need" with a "time-bending structure [that] is formally elegant."

With this production, playwright Noah Haidle returns to SCR, where he received his first professional production while studying playwriting at Juilliard. His dark comedy *Mr.*

*Marmalade* premiered at SCR in 2004, followed by *Princess Marjorie* in 2005. *Mr. Marmalade* went on to a production at The Roundabout Theatre in New York. Since then, Noah has written several plays that have been produced

SEGERSTROM STAGE

### Saturn Returns

by Noah Haidle  
directed by David Emmes  
October 23 - November 22, 2009

Endearingly grumpy, 88-year-old Gustin steps back—into the echoes of his life—bending time and surprising at every turn.

Approximately eighty minutes with no intermission.

Bette and Wylie Aitken, Honorary Producers

KOCE-TV, Segerstrom Stage Season Media Partner

Orange County Business Journal, Media Partner

at theaters across the country, including *Rag and Bone* at Long Wharf Theatre, *Vigils* at Chicago's Goodman Theatre and Washington D.C.'s Woolly Mammoth Theatre, and *Persephone* at Boston's Huntington Theatre.

SCR Producing Artistic Director David Emmes directs the West Coast premiere of *Saturn Returns* on the Segerstrom stage. His stellar cast includes Nick Ullett (Gustin at 88) who delighted SCR audiences in *Noises Off* last season, Conor O'Farrell (Gustin at 58) who played Leo in the world premiere of John Kolvenbach's *Goldfish*, and Graham Michael Hamilton (Gustin at 28) who played Laertes in SCR's recent production of *Hamlet*. Actress Kristen Bush (Suzanne/Zephyr/Loretta) recently starred in Richard Greenberg's *The Violet Hour* at The Old Globe.

Emmes relishes the opportunity to share this "theatrically evocative play" with SCR audiences. "Noah's written this moving, poetic play," he says, "about the universality of memory and loss that connects us all in a wonderfully theatrical way."



**Conor O'Farrell, Nick Ullett, Kristen Bush and Graham Michael Hamilton in *Saturn Returns*. Photo by Henry DiRocco.**

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## MONKEYING AROUND WITH JUNIE B. AND FRIENDS



by Linda Sullivan Baity

Her name is Junie B. Jones. The B stands for Beatrice. Except she doesn't like Beatrice. She just likes B and that's all.

B stands for something else, too. B-A-B-Y, which is not exactly a thrilling prospect for this stubborn, sassy kindergartner who hates stewed tomatoes and already knows all she needs to know about babies, thank you very much.

"I smelled one at my friend Grace's house. It had some spit-up on its front. And so I held my nose and hollered, 'P.U.! WHAT A STINK BOMB!' Then Grace made me go home."

Of course, when her mother promises that she can have her very own air freshener to spray all by herself whenever she likes, Junie B decides that putting up with that dumb bunny baby might not be so bad after all. Especially when her two bestest friends in the whole wide world are ready to give her their most prized possessions and their snack tickets in order to catch a glimpse of the "cutest little monkey"

anybody ever saw. But as for those stewie pewie tomatoes—never!

*Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* is a funny, fast-paced musical romp based on one of America's most popular children's book series. Author Barbara Park has penned more than 25 titles since 1992 featuring the antics of Junie B. and her pint-sized entourage. The books are favorites of girls and boys, moms and dads, teachers and librarians alike.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/juniebanda/author/author.html>

ARGYROS STAGE

Barbara Park's

### Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business

book, lyrics and music by Joan Cushing  
adapted from the book "Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business" by Barbara Park  
illustrated by Denise Brunkus,  
Copyright ©2003 by Barbara Park  
directed by Casey Stangl  
November 6 - 22, 2009

The world's funniest kindergartner  
steals the show and your heart in this  
musical treat!

OC Family Magazine,  
Media Partner



JAMEY HOOD

Park believes that her books are so beloved because of their headstrong six-year-old narrator, who is both very real and very funny. "Junie's not perfect so kids identify with her," Park explains. "Kids are eager to laugh, and they don't care whether they're laughing at her or with her. They can look at her mistakes and laugh at them, because then they are sort of elevated. 'Oh, I made that mistake when I was a kid, and I'm grown up now.' All of Junie's mistakes make her more real."



DAWN-LYEN GARDNER

*Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* premiered at Imagination Stage, Bethesda, Maryland, in 2003 and since then has been playing before enthusiastic young audiences all over the country. The task of adapting Parks' book for the stage was undertaken by playwright, composer and cabaret performer Joan Cushing, who was commissioned by Imagination Stage to supply not only the script, but also music and lyrics. She has adapted six other popular children's books as musicals, including *Miss Nelson Is Missing*, *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Little Red Riding Hood* and *Brave Irene*. According to *TYA Magazine*, Cushing is "the most produced playwright in children's theatre."

[www.joancushing.com](http://www.joancushing.com)



BRIAN HOSTENSKE

The cast of SCR's production is being headed by Jamey Hood in the title role of Junie B. Jones, and Dawn-Lyen Gardner, who portrays Junie B.'s bestest friend, "That Grace." Four actors will create multiple characters: Brian Hostenske takes on the roles of Principal, Junie B.'s father and Crybaby William; Nicholas Mongiardo-Cooper plays Grampa Miller and Meanie Jim; Jennifer Parsons is Grandma Miller and Junie B.'s Kindergarten teacher, known simply as "Mrs."; and Erika Whalen plays Junie B.'s mother and "Princess" Lucille.



NICHOLAS MONGIARDO-COOPER

Directing *Junie B. Jones* is Casey Stangl, who, in addition to her award-winning work in opera and film, has directed on many Southern California stages, including the Falcon Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, Pacific Resident Theatre and Ensemble Studio Theatre. She has directed nationally at the Guthrie, Denver Center Theater Company and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. For twelve years, she served as Artistic Director for Eye of the Storm Theatre Company in Minneapolis, and was named "Artist of the Year" by the Minneapolis/St. Paul *Star Tribune*.



JENNIFER PARSONS

Musical Director Deborah Wicks La Puma orchestrated Cushing's score for the original production of *Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* and has created all-new arrangements for SCR's production. In addition to her previous musical direction at SCR of *The Only Child*, *Imagine* and *A Year With Frog and Toad*, her work has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Chicago's Goodman Theatre, Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, Palo Alto's TheatreWorks, Interlochen Center for the Arts and The White House. Wicks La Puma is a recipient of the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, the Robert M. Golden Award, an NEA New American Works Grant, two Helen Hayes nominations and two Parents' Choice Awards. <http://www.crunchynotes.com/index.html>



ERIKA WHALEN

Rounding out the production's creative ensemble are Set Designer Keith Mitchell <http://www.kmitchellart.com>, Lighting Designer Jaymi Smith <http://jaymismith.com>, Costume Designer Sara Ryung Clement and Sound Designer Kim Egan.

Previews for *Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* begin Friday, November 6, 2009, and the show continues through Sunday, November 22, on the Argyros Stage. In addition to public performances for families, twelve weekday matinees are available for school field trips. All third-graders in Newport-Mesa USD are being invited to attend *Junie B. Jones* free of charge, thanks to the generous support of the Nicholas Endowment and the Segerstrom Foundation. Private and home school groups may attend on Wednesday, November 18th, for only \$5 per student. The 9:30am performance is sold out, but tickets still remain for the second show at 11:15am. For reservations, please call the Box Office at (714) 708-5555.

## WELL KNOWN (AND LESSER KNOWN) FACTS FROM 29 YEARS OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL



by Madeline Porter

As *A Christmas Carol* approaches its 30th anniversary, Orange County's favorite (and longest-running) holiday show has delighted audiences just under 1,000 times. That comes to approximately 450,000 people whose holiday fare has included *A Christmas Carol*. In honor of this milestone, we've compiled some historical tidbits:

### Key Players

- SCR Founding Artists have appeared a total of 133 seasons: Hal Landon Jr. – 29, Art Koustik – 28, Richard Doyle – 25, Don Took – 22, Martha McFarland – 21, Ron Boussem – 8. Hal, Richard and Art will all be back this season.
- Director John-David Keller has staged the show every season. Of course, he'll be back for the 30th.
- The original set was designed by Cliff Faulkner, with costumes by Richard Odle. The set has evolved over time, with the current design by Tom Buderwitz. Donna and Tom Ruzika have designed the lighting every season.
- Hal has missed only three shows. In 1997, he was cast in a pivotal role in *Sidney Bechet Killed a Man*, which didn't close until Sunday, November 30. Hal stepped back into the role of Scrooge on December 2, missing one matinee and two evening previews. Director John-David Keller went on for him, and those who were

SEGERSTROM STAGE

## A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens  
adapted by Jerry Patch  
directed by John-David Keller  
November 28 - December 26, 2009

19th century London comes to life with all the familiar Dickens characters when your family joins SCR's family for the holidays.

Approximately two hours with one intermission.

Nancy and Kim Kelley, Honorary Producers

KOCE-TV, Segerstrom Stage Season Media Partner

Orange County Register, Media Partner

there say he did a bang-up job. (No one demanded a refund!)

- Speaking of missing things, Hal missed one “hat trick” (when Scrooge—finally displaying the Christmas spirit—turns a somersault on the bed and comes up wearing his top hat). He stopped the show long enough to try again—and succeed.
- Richard Doyle has played The Spirit of Christmas Past too many times to count. He guesses 20. At one time or another, he has also played Solicitor, Joe, Mr. Fezziwig and Scrooge’s nephew, Fred.



**Long-time members of *A Christmas Carol* cast (l. to r.) Don Took, John-David Keller, Hal Landon Jr., Martha McFarland, Richard Doyle, Art Koustik and Howard Shangraw.**

## Accidents and Near-Misses

- Don Took had a near-striptease exit once during his 22-year run as the Ghost of Jacob Marley. When the stage crew wheeled him out the window (for his ghostly disappearance), his rotting shroud caught on the window latch. The crew rightly chose to save the set, leaving Don gyrating and screaming on the platform while his costume peeled away from his arm and down his torso until crew members managed to rip the material loose and close the window. It was the longest exit in history, which Don still wishes he had seen.
- Art Koustik missed only one season, because of a motorcycle accident that left him incapacitated for the entire run and longer, but he bounced back and hasn’t missed a performance since.
- Hal’s battle scars include two broken toes—the little toe on his left foot four years ago when (in stocking feet) he ran into furniture backstage, the little toe on his right foot the next year when he ran into the foot of Scrooge’s bed.

## All in the Family

- Hal’s youngest daughter, Caroline, joined the cast in 1996-97 as Young Girl About Town.
- Richard Doyle never portrayed Bob Cratchit. But he married one of Bob’s wives (the actress Jennifer Parsons, who has played Mrs. Cratchit since 2004). By the way, Richard’s daughter, Sarah, also joined her father onstage in 1996 as Martha Cratchit.
- Howard Shangraw appeared the first season as Young Ebenezer and later (as he grew older) as Scrooge’s nephew Fred, a role he played through 2006. Other adult roles that have necessitated cast changes as the actors grew up are Fred’s wife, Sally, and Young Eb’s sweetheart, Belle. Hisa Takakuwa and Richard Soto played Sally and Young Eb for over a decade, and although they never got together on the stage, they were married in real life last year.
- Those Cratchits (Bob and “Mrs.”) are characters whom actors can play from their 20s into their 40s. Three actors have had very successful and long-running stints as Bob Cratchit—John Ellington from the first season until 1998, when he left the acting profession to become a minister; David Whalen took over for four years; and since then, Bob has been played by SCR stalwart Daniel Blinkoff.



**Hal Landon Jr. and Richard Doyle.**



**Director/actor John-David Keller and Martha McFarland.**

## Casting Children

- Children from SCR's Theatre Conservatory audition each November for eight coveted roles, including the young Cratchits—Belinda, Peter, Martha and Tiny Tim—as well as Boy on the Street, known affectionately as "Turkey Boy" because he's singled out by Scrooge to deliver the Christmas turkey, and the Christmas joy.
- The children are double cast (eight kids on the "red" team and eight on the "green team"), alternating shows so they can share other holiday events with their families. These sixteen young actors audition for their roles after completing at least one year of

actor training in the Theatre Conservatory.

- Because the child actors change every year, the old-timers find great joy in helping them adapt during early rehearsals. It's not unusual for a girl's bloomers to come loose and fall around her legs during the dance scene at the Fezziwig's party. Her first inclination is to run—blushing—offstage, but John-David and the cast are there to urge, "Pick them up, dear, just pick them up."
- The children's parents often spread cheer by supplying the cast with baked goods, a generous gesture that can add an extra 10 pounds during the run.
- From their "half hour" call until their parents take them home after the show, the kids are never alone backstage. SCR supplies a fun-loving staff member with the western-sounding title of "wrangler" to serve as baby-sitter, friend, mentor and sounding board. SCR Theatre Conservatory grad Lisa Ackerman has "wrangled" for the past four years, and knows the territory well, having also played Martha Cratchit as a child.

## Welcome to the Party

- The young actors made the party scenes a real joy for Art Koustik during his years playing Fezziwig, and he continues to have a great time during the "scavenger" scene in which he and the other old-timers ad-lib and then watch new cast members try to adjust. The scene is not Shakespeare, he has to remind them, but something near the other end of the acting spectrum!
- Thousands of stories have been written about SCR's production of *A Christmas Carol*, but the first behind-the-scenes "blog" entry ran in the *Orange County Register* last season, when actor Louis Lotorto joined the cast and reported his experiences, beginning on November 18 with a phone call offering him the role of Fred and ending with the first audience on November 24. Louis will be back this season. He's only the fourth actor to play Fred.



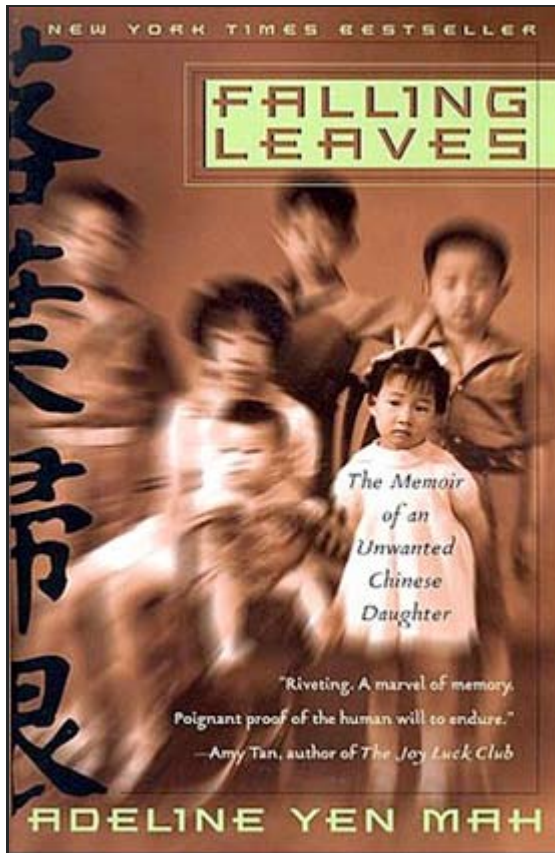
**Art Koustik and Madison Dunaway.**

## Christmas in July

- And, oh, yes, lest we forget—former SCR Dramaturg Jerry Patch adapted the Charles Dickens story for the stage. Even though he's now at New York's Manhattan Theatre Club, we expect he'll be back to have a look at the 30th production. Jerry wrote the script one summer in July, getting up at 5 a.m. to work on it while his kids were still asleep. That was an especially difficult task given that he had to conjure up mid-winter London while sitting in a mostly glassed-in room half a mile from the water in Huntington Beach.

We'll update these facts throughout the run, if you'll add stories about your own family's experiences at *A Christmas Carol*. Just email us at [theatre@scr.org](mailto:theatre@scr.org).

## FROM NYT BEST-SELLER LIST TO SCR STAGE



by Soyia Ellison

**Adeline Yen Mah's best-selling book *Falling Leaves* is coming to SCR.**

Mah has turned her inspiring memoir into a play, which will have its first staged reading Tuesday, Nov. 17, at 7:30pm as part of the Philharmonic Society of Orange County's *Ancient Paths, Modern Voices: A Festival Celebrating Chinese Culture*.

Mah was born into a wealthy Chinese family in 1937. Her mother died two weeks after giving birth to her, leaving her to be raised by her father's beautiful and cruel new wife. After winning a playwriting competition at age 14, she went to study in England. Eventually, she became a doctor and established a thriving medical practice in Southern California.

Mah's memoir is a compelling, heartrending, and ultimately triumphant story of a girl's journey into adulthood, and a testament to the most basic of human needs: acceptance, love and understanding. Or as Amazon.com's reviewer called it "an Asian *Mommy Dearest*," with a happy ending.

The book proved so popular—selling more than one million copies—that Mah quit medicine to devote more time to writing. She has since published *Chinese Cinderella*; *China: Land of Dragons and Emperors* and *Watching the Tree*.

SCR's staged reading is part of the Philharmonic Society's six-week festival, presented in partnership with Carnegie Hall, which celebrates China's diverse culture and influence. It includes musical and theatrical performances, art exhibits and film screenings.

The reading takes place at 7:30pm, Tuesday, Nov. 17, on the Argyros Stage. Tickets are \$15 and are available online [here](#) or by calling the box office at (714) 708-5555.

For more information about the Philharmonic's *Ancient Paths, Modern Voices: A Festival Celebrating Chinese Culture*, including a complete schedule of events, visit [www.philharmonicsociety.org/chinafestival](http://www.philharmonicsociety.org/chinafestival).

## PHILANTHROPY - OCTOBER, 2009

### Aitkens Return as Honorary Producers for *Saturn Returns*

Bette and Wylie Aitken, who are among South Coast Repertory's most devoted and generous supporters, are serving as individual underwriters of their fourth SCR production with support for Noah Haidle's *Saturn Returns*.

Wylie is currently serving his second year as President of the Board of Trustees, and Bette was chair of the highly successful 2009 Gala Ball, "Nothing But Blue Skies." That was Bette's *second* time as leader of an SCR Gala, which is the theatre's major fundraising event. In 2006, she chaired "All Aboard the Orient Express."

The Aitkens are major contributors to SCR's Next Stage and Legacy Campaigns, and their leadership gift helped kick off the successful matching campaign, Act Now for SCR Challenge. In addition, they are First Nights subscribers, Gala underwriters and have been Platinum Circle members since 1998.

The Aitkens were Honorary Producers for the world premiere of *Emilie*, as well as Honorary Producers for the 2009 Pacific Playwrights Festival, and before that for *Nostalgia* and *My Wandering Boy* (as members of The Playwrights Circle). Among the benefits of being Honorary Producers are invitations to attend rehearsals and being feted at an opening night dinner, often with the director and playwright. Bette said that these benefits have opened up a new and special world for her and Wylie. "The personal relationships with the director, the playwright and the actors are inspiring and lead to lasting friendships," she said. "In a small way you become part of the creative fiber of the American theatre."

Wylie described their passion for theatre this way: "If you love theatre as so many of us do, then what better joy than to hang out with the talent assembled by the finest theatre in America?"

### Kelleys Continue the Spirit of Giving with *A Christmas Carol*



**Kim and Nancy Kelley**

SCR Trustee Nancy Kelley and her husband Hayward "Kim" Kelley III (who was an SCR Trustee for nine years) are the Honorary Producers of SCR's 30th anniversary production of *A Christmas Carol*. This will be their inaugural stint as Honorary Producers, and they jumped at the opportunity to be underwriters for this production, in particular.

"It's the 30th anniversary for Hal Landon Jr., who has played Scrooge every year, which is amazing. We're excited to be a part of that," said Nancy Kelley. "We're also excited about partnering with U.S. Bank, which is the Honorary Corporate Producer."

The Kelleys are generous contributors to SCR, having supported the Gala Ball, as well as the Legacy and Next Stage Campaigns. Last year, as members of the Playwrights Circle, they helped to underwrite the world premiere of Richard



**Wylie and Bette Aitken**

Greenberg's *Our Mother's Brief Affair*. They subscribe to First Nights on both stages and have been actively involved with the theatre since the early 1990s.

Said Nancy: "We love everything SCR does, but we really love the classics. I was an English major at college and its all about the classics for me. We can take our children and grandchildren to *A Christmas Carol*. It's a whole family thing for us."

### **Four for U.S. Bank**

As Corporate Honorary Producer of *A Christmas Carol*, U.S. Bank adds a long-running holiday show to its history of underwriting for SCR, which includes the Theatre for Young Audiences production of *The Stinky Cheese Man*, Beth Henley's gothic comedy *Ridiculous Fraud* and the Stephen Sondheim classic *A Little Night Music*.

"U.S. Bank is thrilled to be an Honorary Producer of the 30th annual production of *A Christmas Carol*," said William R. Cave, Market President. "SCR plays a big role in bringing the highest caliber theatre to Orange County, and we are proud and pleased to offer our support."

U.S. Bank is the sixth largest commercial bank in the United States, with 559 California branches, over 300 of them in Southern California. U.S. Bank connects with its communities through affordable housing, economic opportunity, education, arts and culture and community service.



**Bill and Christy Cave with actor Damon Kirshe at *A Little Night Music*.**

## SCR Gala Kicks Off 46th Season with a Smash Hit

South Coast Repertory's 2009 Gala Ball, "Nothing But Blue Skies," chaired by Bette Aitken on September 12 at the Balboa Bay Club & Resort, was a huge success! This year's event sold out and surpassed its fundraising goal, netting more than \$560,000 for the theatre's annual fund.

The "Nothing But Blue Skies" theme was chosen to "reflect the mood of those wonderful films of Hollywood's Golden Age when spirits were lifted by the prospect of good times ahead," Bette said.

The 340 attendees were wowed by a surprise guest: Douglas Sills, the Broadway star of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, who appeared in three SCR productions in the mid-1990s. Sills entertained with four songs, including one from *Cyrano de Bergerac - The Musical*, which was written especially for him. Between songs, he extolled SCR's qualities, especially its commitment to fostering new plays.

The Gala guests danced the night away to the swinging sounds of the Bruce Garnitz Band, confident that the 2009-2010 season—which began that week—would have a solid foundation for a fantastic year.



**David Emmes, Wylie and Bette Aitken and Martin Benson.**

[See more photos here.](#)  
[Learn more about SCR's Gala Ball.](#)

## Donor Profile: Judy and Greg Zaret

Members of SCR's Silver Circle, the Zarets got married in 1964, the same year David Emmes and Martin Benson co-founded South Coast Repertory. So the joke around the Zaret's Mission Viejo home is they got "started" the same year that SCR did.

The Zarets didn't see any of the early productions—they were living in West Los Angeles back then—but they became devoted subscribers in the early 1980s. Theater has been important to both of their lives; Judy performed in school and community theater. Her first date with Greg was at a cast party for *Dark of the Moon*. Judy said her two grown sons, daughters-in-law and grandson are continuing the theater-going experience, too.



**Greg and Judy Zaret.**

Friends introduced the couple to SCR, and they began by subscribing to the Mainstage (now Segerstrom Stage) season. They added a Julianne Argyros Stage subscription after seeing Richard Greenberg's play about the Collyer brothers, *The Dazzle*. "We looked at each other afterward and said, 'We have to see some of these productions,'" Judy said. "I guess (the shows we had been seeing) were kind of at a comfort level, and then we realized that this new theatre was really exciting to see. That's when we started going to Second Stage (now the Argyros Stage)."

Now they attend NewSCRipts, the Pacific Playwrights Festival and Circle events. It's all part of what Judy calls "a more complete theater experience," and she and Greg find it deeply rewarding.

### Zaret Thumbnail:

**Judy:** Raised in Westchester, California. Former teacher and retired travel agency owner.

**Greg:** Raised in Culver City, California. Retired banker with Security Pacific, for 30 years.

**Children:** Two sons

**Favorite SCR productions:** *Collected Stories* (both productions) and *All My Sons*

**Not so much:** "I don't particularly like it when they take a classic and tweak it to a different time period."

### Judy on why she likes NewSCRipts:

"The first time we went, we were blown out of the theatre. This is a whole other level of theatre experience. It's like when you read a novel and you create the characters in your head. When you go to a reading, they have no props and you have phenomenal actors who totally make you see it. I think that's an awesome experience for an audience to participate in. I would encourage everyone to go to NewSCRipts."

**Why they donate to SCR:** "It's because I think we have a treasure here in Orange County in SCR. I think we are so blessed to have something so close that offers so much of the theatre experience. We love the seminars and the discussion groups and the behind-the-scenes opportunities with the Circle membership. We get to feel we really know the directors and the cast and the dramaturgs."

"My feeling is that we have to save this treasure and do whatever we can do to make sure it will be there for as long as we want to go, and hopefully for our children and grandchildren. I think we need to save the theatre for not just our generation but for those to come."

### On the excitement of seeing a new play:

"It's like going to Disneyland for the very first time."

## SCR Receives Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award

South Coast Repertory has received two grants totaling \$28,000 from the Edgerton Foundation, which will be used for one extra week of rehearsals each for *The Happy Ones* and *In A Garden*. Founded by Dr. Brad Edgerton and his wife Louise, the foundation has supported the development of new American plays since 2006. This program began with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles, and was extended to theatres nationwide in 2007. The Edgertons have funded more than 46 plays and 17 of those have had subsequent productions after the plays' premieres.

Having an extra week of rehearsal is no small matter when it comes to getting a brand new play ready for production, and SCR is thrilled to be a recipient of this award. Having an extended rehearsal period gives the actors, director and designers a "creative boost." Actors are able to "live" longer, and more fully, in their parts, with additional rehearsal time, and the entire process of going from written word to stage is less hectic.

*The Happy Ones* is Julie Marie Myatt's second play commissioned by SCR, after the premiere of her 2007 piece, *My Wandering Boy*. Myatt wrote *The Happy Ones* to explore the cross-cultural relationship between a Vietnamese emigrant and Anglo business owner following a tragedy. It runs on the Julianne Argyros Stage through October 18.

Howard Korder's *In A Garden* will also benefit from the Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award. *In A Garden* will begin rehearsals in early February and will open with a March 7, 2010 preview and close on March 28, 2010.



**Greg Watanabe and Raphael Sbarge in *The Happy Ones*.**

## EDUCATION STATION - OCTOBER, 2009

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### Theatre Discovery Project

Teachers: Fight the winter blues with a field trip to see *Fences*. August Wilson's Pulitzer-Prize-winning play is this year's 2010 Theatre Discovery Project. Your students get affordable tickets to see a professional production of an important literary work; you get free tickets, a study guide and a classroom workshop. Reserve your space now for one of these designated performances:



Tuesday, January 26 @ 7:30pm  
Wednesday, January 27 @ 7:30pm  
Thursday, January 28 @ 8:00pm  
Tuesday, February 2 @ 7:30pm  
Wednesday, February 3 @ 7:30pm  
Thursday, February 4 @ 8:00pm

In addition to \$10 student group tickets (1 free chaperone ticket per every 15 students purchased), teachers participating in Theatre Discovery Project also receive:

- A comprehensive study guide designed to meet 9-12 English-Language Arts and VAPA standards
- 2 free tickets to the Educator's Preview of *Fences* on Friday, January 22, 2010 @ 8:00pm
- 45-minute in-class presentation by SCR staff to prepare students to see the production
- Pre-show event on performance night featuring SCR staff and company members (as available)

Group reservations for *Fences* can be made by calling the Box Office, (714) 708-5555.

For more information about Theatre Discovery Project, please contact Linda Sullivan Baity, School and Community Programs Director, [lindas@scr.orgpl](mailto:lindas@scr.orgpl)



## SCR Players Selected

As the 2009-10 season gets underway at South Coast Repertory, professional actors, who have been cast in current and upcoming plays, can be seen rehearsing and performing on the Segerstrom and Argyros Stages, the Nicholas Studio and rehearsal halls night and day.

But they aren't the only actors in town. Besides the students who attend SCR's Adult Acting classes, nearly 400 youngsters are enrolled in Acting for Kids and Teens after school and on Saturdays.

Twenty-three of those students have auditioned and been selected for the SCR Junior and Teen Players. Soon, these talented and enthusiastic young performers will begin the most exciting part of their year: rehearsals!

Theatre Conservatory Director Hisa Takakuwa is busy reading scripts for the spring productions, which Junior Players will perform March 20-21 and 27-28 and Teen Players May 29-30 and June 5-6. According to Takakuwa, "Because these students are serious actors, they work hard in class, but I have to admit that once the plays are selected, the excitement really begins!"

There's special excitement this season because there are many new Players. "It's sort of like school sports—every season, the coaches look forward to seeing who will be in the rookie class. We're especially pleased with our rookies this year!"

Newcomers to the Junior Players are Brooke Boukather, Rachel Charny, Chelsea Davis, Ally Hickok, William Hopper, Christopher Huntley, Grace O'Brien, Jamie Ostman and Juliet Weaver. They are joined by returning pros Jaclyn Martin, Karoline Ribak and Demie Santone.

Teen newcomers are Connor Dugard, Julia Jech, Nick Slimmer, Max Weinberg and Elizabeth Wilson. Returning are Ellis Beardsley, Lauren Gardner, Julia Ostmann, Akshay Sharma, Valentina Gehley and Rachel Teague.

Watch *Dialogue* for announcement of the Junior and Teen play titles—coming soon.

For dates and more information, visit the [SCR Players page](#).

[Read more about SCR's classes for kids and teens.](#)



## **BOB is Born: In White Castle and On Stage**

10/14/09 • Meet Bob. Born in a White Castle bathroom on Valentine's Day, Bob is immediately abandoned by his mother. Luckily, he is taken in by Jeanine, a White Castle employee who once opened a fortune cookie that told her she would be mother to a great man. Thus begins a most unconventional childhood, followed by an equally unconventional adulthood.

Bob is the star of *BOB*, a play by Peter Sinn Nachtrieb that will kick off SCR's 2009-2010 NewSCRipts readings series at 7:30pm on Oct. 26.

This offbeat, epic story follows Bob over 50-plus years as he tries to fulfill his adopted mother's dream for him. His quest takes him from job to job and town to town, always in search of a place where he belongs. Sometimes sad, sometimes funny, the play raises interesting questions about destiny, family and contentment. Happiness, Bob discovers, is elusive, but not out of reach.

The annual NewSCRipts series of three Monday evening play readings was launched in 1985 as a way to bring the audience into the process of creating new work. After each reading, audience members engage in lively exchanges with the playwright and become active participants in the play's development, providing invaluable feedback for the writer. Plays selected for the NewSCRipts series have earned six Pulitzer Prize nominations, with Margaret Edson's *Wit* winning the prize in 1999.

Nachtrieb is a San Francisco-based playwright whose works include *boom*, *Hunter Gatherers*, *Colorado*, *T.I.C. (Trenchcoat In Common)* and *Multiplex*. *Hunter Gatherers* received the 2007 American Theatre Critics Association/Steinberg New Play Award for best new play to premiere outside of New York and the 2007 Will Glickman Prize for best new play in the Bay Area. He is a resident playwright at the Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco, and holds a degree in theater and biology from Brown and an MFA in creative writing from San Francisco State University.

SCR commissioned Nachtrieb to write *BOB*.

Tickets to the reading, which will take place Oct. 26 at 7:30pm on the Argyros Stage, are \$12, and can be purchased online at [www.scr.org](http://www.scr.org), by phone at (714) 708-5555 or in person at the SCR box



**Playwright Amy Freed.**

## Freed Working on a New Play

10/14/09 • SCR has chosen Amy Freed, the playwright behind last year's hilarious *You, Nero*, as the recipient of its 2009 Steinberg Commission.

A commission, in the art world, means paying an artist to create something especially for you. In this particular case, it means Freed is writing a new play just for SCR, with money provided by a grant from the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust.

Freed's plays most often take the form of dark comedy. They are ambitiously epic and smartly mine history for laughs.

Why comedy?

"Life is kind of surreal," she says, "and the collisions of absurdity and grief and silliness are what laughter comes from and what tears come from."

SCR's Steinberg Commissions are specifically designed for mid-career playwrights, because other commissioning groups often overlook these writers in favor of either emerging or well-known playwrights.

Many a mid-career playwright has dedicated years to writing for the theatre only to find that he or she can't make a living that way. Often, the theatre loses those writers to the higher-paying worlds of television or film. SCR and the Steinberg Trust want to keep that from happening.

Past commission recipients include Jose Rivera, who used the grant to develop *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, and Tracy Letts, who received his commission just before vaulting to the top of the American theatre world with his Pulitzer- and Tony-winning *August: Osage County*. SCR is first in line for Letts' next play, thanks to the Steinberg Commission.

Amy Freed has been writing plays since 1991, when she turned to writing after an unfulfilling acting career. She gained a national reputation when her play *The Psychic Life of Savages* won the Charles MacArthur Award for outstanding new play in 1995.



**John Vickery and Danny Scheie in *You, Nero*.**

In 1998, her play *Freedomland*, an SCR commission and world premiere, became a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and went on to play at many regional theatres. She followed *Freedomland* with her most successful play to date, *The Beard of Avon* (also commissioned and premiered by SCR), a tongue-in-cheek look at the Shakespeare authorship controversy.

Freed's other plays include *Safe in Hell*, *Still Warm*, *Claustrophilia* and *The Ghoul of Amherst*. When she's not penning plays, Freed teaches playwriting and acting at Stanford University.

## PINOT PROVENCE OFFERS SUBSCRIBER SPECIAL



With the assistance of our area restaurant partners, we are pleased to be able to offer our season ticket holders a variety of discounts and special offers at some of the best local eateries.

This issue's "Reason to Subscribe" is Pinot Provence's generous 20% discount. Pinot's delectable menu of classic and contemporary French favorites can be viewed online and—at the time this is being written—features seafood, lamb, duck and beef.

But it's the "truffle mac 'n' cheese" that intrigues us the

most. Located in the Westin South Coast Plaza, Pinot Provence is only steps away from SCR's front doors – now that's convenient!

[Check here](#) for information on this and other fabulous subscriber discounts. The list grows as the season progresses, so be sure to check back often.

[Pinot Provence website.](#)

## DIALOGUE STAFF - OCTOBER 2009

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**Photographers** - Henry DiRocco, Debora Robinson, SCR Staff

### Front Page Photo Credits:

Left side, top to bottom:

- (l. to r.) Graham Michael Hamilton, Kristen Bush, director David Emmes, Conor O'Farrell and seated, Nick Ullett appear in *Saturn Returns*. Photo by Henry DiRocco.
- *Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business* logo.
- Hal Landon Jr. in *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Henry DiRocco.
- The cover of Adeline Yen Mah's book "Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter"

Right side, top to bottom:

- Doug Sills sings at the Gala Ball. Photo by SCR.
- Valentina Gehley in SCR's Teen Players production of Charles Dicken's *Hard Times*. Photo by SCR.
- Danuta Schenke and Betty Huang at the opening of *The Happy Ones*. Photo by SCR.
- An empty chair on the Segerstrom Stage. Photo by SCR
- Food from Pinot Provence.
- Bob Cratchit (Daniel Blinkoff) with Tiny Tim (Parker Cohn) in *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Henry DiRocco.
- Heather and Holly Van Holt in the 1970s.

**SOUTH COAST REPERTORY** is a professional, non-profit, tax-exempt corporation partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and members of the community. SCR is a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for non-profit professional theatres, Arts Orange County, the official local arts agency for the county and the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a national collective bargaining association. It operates under an agreement between LORT and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers; SSDC, the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union; and United Scenic Artists, the union of Scenic, Costume, Lighting and Sound Designers.

