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ARTISTS REP ANNOUNCES ART: MERCURY COMPANY

From audio dramas to short films, and plays written for post-pandemic production, a repertory company of over 50 artists were hired with PPP Funds to create 12 projects in June 2020

PORTLAND, OREGON – June 30, 2020 For the month of June, over 50 writers, directors, educators, actors, technicians, designers, and producers (including several ART staff) were hired to collaboratively create theatre-inspired work that moves beyond the traditional form in response to shelter-in-place orders and public assembly restrictions. Individuals were involved in a multitude of projects, forming a rapidly assembled repertory company dubbed the **ART: Mercury Company**. Projects were developed independently, or via collaborative meetings in Zoom and in-person recording and filming sessions under strict physically distanced work protocols. Artists Rep will begin releasing its Mercury created content during Summer and Fall of 2020. The theatre seeks funding to continue this method of collaboration and content creation throughout the duration of the pandemic, and beyond.

See the trailer by Shuttersky Pictures for ART: Mercury Company [HERE](#) and the Mercury Company website page for all the projects [HERE](#).

*"The pandemic has forced the disruption of our operating assumptions. Rather than waiting it out, we are testing new ideas for pursuing our mission and are re-imagining what ART will be whenever it is safe for audiences and artists to gather again. Thanks to the nimble work of our team--who wrote dozens of contracts, purchased equipment, made and remade schedules while quickly learning new ways of working online and in person--we were able to use Payroll Protection funds to hire artists on mostly full-time salaries comparable to our mainstage programming," said **ART Artistic Director, Dámaso Rodríguez**. "We called this rapidly assembled group of artists and projects, ART: Mercury Company. It has been a transformative experience during a time of unprecedented uncertainty, and we may have found a model that we can employ with confidence even as the pandemic timeline continues to shift."*

"In quickly pulling together artists for the ART: Mercury Company, we looked first to the playwrights among our company of Resident Artists, along with writers whose work we were

*developing or planning to produce before the pandemic struck,” said **Luan Schooler, Director of the New Play Development and Dramaturgy.** “As the number and scope of projects became clear, we were able to invite more and more artists from the wider local community into the process. Knowing that we’d have multiple projects developing at once, we needed a group of highly versatile, imaginative, energetic people who could contribute in many ways. We were able to bring together a rich multiplicity of voices and perspectives, and the resulting collaborations were infinitely inspiring and rewarding.”*

*“I love the scientific metaphors at work in this collaboration. Chemically, mercury is highly reactive,” said **Kisha Jarrett, Director of the Oxygen devising group, Co-Director of Better Maybe, and ART’s Director of Development and Marketing.** “Mercury reacts best with groups of elements or compounds (which I see as the collective of artists). Mercury reacts with oxygen (Oxygen being the name for the group of Black artists devising together during the pressure of both the pandemic and protests) at high temperatures or pressure to create toxic mercury oxide (in this case I hope “toxic” to white supremacy) but also reacts well with oxidizing acids because they contain oxygen.”*

*“The ART: Mercury Company name was initially inspired by the legendary 1930s The Mercury Theater of the Air,” said **Managing Director, J.S. May.** “The Mercury Theater (founded by Orson Welles and John Houseman) was funded during the Great Depression in part through the Federal Theatre Project and WPA (Works Progress Administration) and created ambitious plays and radio dramas like *The War of the Worlds* (1938). We have used PPP (Payroll Protection Program) funding during the COVID-19 pandemic to harness the transformative energy of this similarly tumultuous moment in history, and as an opportunity to explore different mediums and create new ways of working.”*

ART: MERCURY COMPANY PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

MAGELLANICA AUDIO DRAMA

A five-part audio drama, adapted from Mellon Playwright-in-Residence and Steinberg Award winning playwright, E.M. Lewis’ epic play [Magellanica](#) that Artists Rep premiered in 2018. An additional sixth part on the science behind the hole in the ozone layer and climate change will be co-produced with Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), all parts to be released to ART audiences prior to broader distribution. The audio drama is directed by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and features award-winning composition and sound design of Rodolfo Ortega.

THE BERLIN DIARIES AUDIO DRAMA

Lacroute Playwright-in-Residence and three-time Oregon Book Award winning playwright **Andrea Stolowitz’s *The Berlin Diaries*, the autobiographical story of Andrea’s quest to untangle her family’s history using her German-Jewish great-grandfather’s real life diary, to be released to ART audiences prior to broader distribution. The audio drama is directed by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez. The play is scheduled to premiere off-Broadway in NYC in March 2021.**

OXYGEN

A devising group named OXYGEN, made up of nine Black artists in the company. The name OXYGEN is in honor of the many Black people whose final words were, “I can’t breathe” before being killed by police. Produced by ART Development & Marketing Director, Kisha Jarrett, and created by collaborating artists Vin Shambry, Josie Seid, Lava Alapai, Jeff George, Ayanna Berkshire, Andrea Vernae, Pancho Savery (ART Board Vice-Chair), and Kristen Mun (Line Producer). The group’s first project will be a short film called *See Me*, which is a slice of life of seven black people interwoven with animated fantastical dreamscapes, and will be filmed in September 2020. This group will expand to include BIPOC artists and will continue to devise works beyond June 2020.

UNTITLED SITE SPECIFIC PROJECT

An untitled outdoor site-specific piece (in which the audience moves through a series of staging locations) featuring the work of playwrights Lava Alapai, Linda Alper, Dan Kitrosser, Josie Seid, Susannah Mars, and Anthony Hudson, directed by ART Director of New Play Development & Dramaturgy, Luan Schooler.

BETTER MAYBE

A video project of Obie Award winner Caridad Svich’s short play *Better Maybe* that will be shared this summer and features the entire company. Originally commissioned by the [Play At Home](#) project, the piece is a choral poem and features music, movement, and home-filmed performances; directed by ART Development & Marketing Director, Kisha Jarrett, and ART Producing Director, Shawn Lee.

THE CHINESE LADY

Pre-rehearsal work for a production of Lloyd Suh’s *The Chinese Lady*, which ART will produce in the 2020/21 season either in person or as a filmed performance starring Resident Artist Barbie Wu and directed by Resident Artist Lava Alapai. Playwright Lloyd Suh worked with the director and actor during this pre-rehearsal process.

WHY THIS NIGHT

Written by award-winning screenwriter ([We the Animals](#)) and playwright, Dan Kitrosser, *Why This Night* is a new play based on his screenplay, a screwball murder-mystery comedy set in a Russian shtetl in the 1880s.

FLOWER JOY

Written by Resident Artist, Vin Shambry, *Flower Joy*, is one in a series of four storytelling works following Shambry’s journey on the road to wholeness, with a goal to inspire audience members to connect with the “human-ness” of one another by sharing personal stories of joy and heartache and shame and family.

THE CARLALOGUES

Written by Anthony Hudson, *The Carlalogues* is an audio play featuring Anthony’s famed drag-clown persona, Carla Rossi, an immortal trickster whose attempts at realness almost always result in fantastic failure.

UNTITLED VIDEO PROJECT

Conceived and written by Resident Artist, Chris Harder, *Untitled* is a Portland-set piece of online theatre crafted through improvisation and interweaving a vast network of characters.

FORGET ME NOT, AMERICA

Written by Resident Artist, Josie Seid, *Forget Me Not, America* is an audio recording of a living poem that goes on an emotional ride through American history and centers on Black Americans. From Seid, “*It is a journey that travels through pain and strength, frustration and hope, as it crafts a map of the African American experience in this country.*”

LOOKING FOR TIGER LILY PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

Completion of set and costumes for the [Table|Room|Stage](#) World Premiere production (dates TBA) of *Looking for Tiger Lily* by Anthony Hudson, which was postponed three weeks before the beginning of rehearsals by the pandemic.

The ART: Mercury Company members are:

Lava Alapai, Linda Alper, Patricia Alvitez, Naiya Amilcar, Ayanna Berkshire, Gavin Burgess, Charlie Capps, Leslie Crandell Dawes, Nathan Crone, Blanca Forzán, Sarah Gahagan, Jeff George, Karl Hanover, Chris Harder, Sara Hennessy, Karen M. Hill, Anthony Hudson (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Kisha Jarrett, Sarah Kindler Crone, Dan Kitrosser, Val Landrum, Shawn Lee, E.M. Lewis, Sarah Lucht, Susannah Mars, Vonessa Martin, Michael Mendelson, Kristen Mun, Allen Nause, Rodolfo Ortega, Eric Pargac, Sharath Patel, Dave Peterson (in memoriam), Gregory Pulver, Dámaso Rodríguez, John San Nicolas, Alex Rameriz de Cruz, Edward Rivera, Marissa Sanchez, Aubrey Saverino, Pancho Savery, Luan Schooler, Miriam Schwartz, Josie Seid, Vin Shambry, Avital Shira, Jamie Lynne Simons, Andrea Stolowitz, Lloyd Suh, Caridad Svich, Sean Roberts, Andrea Vernae, Joshua J. Weinstein, Alana Wight, Kristeen Willis, Carol Ann Wohlmüt, Rick Woodford, Barbie Wu, and Julia Zazhigina.

ART: MERCURY COMPANY PROJECT CASTS & CREATIVE TEAMS

Mercury Company Production Team

Artistic Director | [Dámaso Rodríguez](#)^{^^}

Managing Director | J.S. May

Producing Director | [Shawn Lee](#)*

Producer & Dramaturg | [Luan Schooler](#)

Associate Producer & Production Manager | [Kristeen Willis](#)

General Manager & Casting Director | [Vonessa Martin](#)*

Development & Marketing Director | [Kisha Jarrett](#)

Assistant Production Manager | [Jamie Lynne Simons](#)

Assistant Production Manager | [Karen M. Hill](#)

Assistant Production Manager | Kristen Mun

Magellanica Audio Drama

By [E.M. Lewis](#)[^]

Directed by [Dámaso Rodríguez](#)^{^^}

Magellanica Audio Drama Cast

[Vin Shambry](#)^{^*} as Captain Adam Burrell

[John San Nicolas](#)^{^*} as Freddie de la Rosa

[Sara Hennessy](#)^{^*} as Dr. Morgan Halsted

[Michael Mendelson](#)^{^*} as Dr. Vadik Chapayev

[Allen Nause](#)^{^*} as Dr. Todor Kozlek

[Barbie Wu](#)[^] as Dr. May Zhou

[Eric Pargac](#)^{*} as Dr. Lars Brotten

[Joshua J. Weinstein](#)[^] as Dr. William Huffington

Magellanica Audio Drama Creative Team

Producer & Dramaturg | [Luan Schooler](#)

Producer | [Kristeen Willis](#)

Sound Designer & Composer | [Rodolfo Ortega](#)^{^#}

Line Producer | [Jamie Lynne Simons](#)

Dialect Coach & Voice Over Actor | Karl Hanover^{*}

Russian Dialect Advisor & Voice Over Actor | Julia Zazhigina

Auxiliary Magellanica Content Producer | [Avital Shira](#)

The Berlin Diaries Audio Drama

By [Andrea Stolowitz](#)[^]

Directed by [Dámaso Rodríguez](#)^{^^}

The Berlin Diaries Audio Drama Cast

[Michael Mendelson](#)^{^*} as Ensemble

[Miriam Schwartz](#) | as Ensemble

The Berlin Diaries Audio Drama Creative Team

Associate Director | [Avital Shira](#)

Producer & Dramaturg | [Luan Schooler](#)

Producer | [Kristeen Willis](#)

Sound Designer & Composer | [Rodolfo Ortega](#)[^]

Line Producer | [Karen M. Hill](#)

Dialect Coach | Karl Hanover^{*}

Better Maybe

By [Caridad Svich](#)

Directed by [Kisha Jarrett](#) and [Shawn Lee](#)^{*}

Better Maybe Cast Ensemble

Lava Alapai [^]	Linda Alper ^{^*}	Patricia Alvitez
Naiya Amilcar	Ayanna Berkshire ^{^*}	Leslie Crandell Dawes
Blanca Forzán	Sarah Gahagan [^]	Jeff George
Karl Hanover [*]	Chris Harder ^{^*}	Sara Hennessy ^{^*}
Karen M. Hill	Anthony Hudson	Kisha Jarrett
Dan Kitrosser	Val Landrum ^{^*}	Shawn Lee [*]
E.M. Lewis [^]	Sarah Lucht ^{^*}	Susannah Mars ^{^*}
Venessa Martin [*]	Michael Mendelson ^{^*}	Kristen Mun
Allen Nause ^{^*}	Rody Ortega [^]	Eric Pargac [*]
Sharath Patel [^]	Gregory Pulver [^]	John San Nicolas ^{^*}
Alex Ramirez de Cruz	Dámaso Rodríguez ^{^^}	Marissa Sanchez
Aubrey Saverino [*]	Luan Schooler	Miriam Schwartz
Josie Seid [^]	Vin Shambry ^{^*}	Avital Shira
Jamie Lynne Simons	Andrea Vernae [^]	Joshua J. Weinstein [^]
Kristeen Willis	Carol Ann Wohlmuth [^]	Rick Woodford
Barbie Wu [^]		

Better Maybe Creative Team

Choreographer | [Jeff George](#)
Line Producer | [Kristeen Willis](#)
Sound Producer | [Sharath Patel](#)[^]
Costume Consultant | [Sarah Gahagan](#)[^]

Oxygen

Devised by Oxygen

Oxygen Cast Ensemble

Lava Alapai [^]	Ayanna Berkshire ^{^*}	Jeff George
Kisha Jarrett	Josie Seid [^]	Vin Shambry ^{^*}
Andrea Vernae [^]		

Oxygen Creative Team

Producer | [Kisha Jarrett](#)
Dramaturg/Advisor | [Pancho Savery](#)
Line Producer | Kristen Mun^{*}

Untitled Site Specific Project

Devised by Untitled Site Specific Project Writing Group
Conceived and directed by [Luan Schooler](#)

Untitled Site Specific Project Writing Group

Writer | [Lava Alapai](#)[^]
Writer | [Linda Alper](#)^{^*}
Writer | [Anthony Hudson](#)
Writer | [Dan Kitrosser](#)
Writer | [Susannah Mars](#)^{^*}
Writer | [Josie Seid](#)[^]

The Chinese Lady

By [Lloyd Suh](#)

Directed by [Lava Alapai](#)[^]

The Chinese Lady Cast

[Barbie Wu](#)[^] | as Afong Moy

TBA | Atung

The Chinese Lady Creative Team

Dramaturg | [Luan Schooler](#)

Writers Room

Twelve playwrights wrote, developed and refined eleven distinct projects.

[Lava Alapai](#)[^] | *Untitled Site Specific Project*

[Linda Alper](#)^{^*} | *Untitled Site Specific Project*

[Chris Harder](#)^{^*} | *Untitled Video Project*

[Anthony Hudson](#) | *The Carlalogues, Untitled Site Specific Project*

[Dan Kitrosser](#) | *Why This Night, Untitled Site Specific Project*

[E.M. Lewis](#)[^] | *Magellanica*

[Susannah Mars](#)^{^*} | *Untitled Site Specific Project*

[Josie Seid](#)[^] | *Forget Me Not, America, Untitled Site Specific Project*

[Vin Shambry](#)^{^*} | *Flower Joy*

[Andrea Stolowitz](#)[^] | *The Berlin Diaries*

[Lloyd Suh](#) | *The Chinese Lady*

[Caridad Svich](#) | *Better Maybe*

Education Programs

[Sarah Lucht](#)^{^*}

[Aubrey Saverino](#)^{*}

* Member SAG/AFTRA

^^ Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

^ Artists Rep Resident Artist

ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE'S \(ART\)](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for a diverse community of artists and audiences to take creative risks.

Artists Rep believes that stories help us make sense of the world, however, it is hard to make any sense of the violent murders and unjust racist actions in this country. Our anger rises due to the inhuman disregard for Black lives and the persistence of systemic racism and we will work with urgency towards an organization in which safety and justice are a right for everyone and not default to what has always been done.

ART gratefully acknowledges our theatre rests on the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and Managing Director J.S. May, ART (est. 1982) is Portland's oldest professional theatre company and has become a significant presence in the U.S. regional theatre with a legacy of world, national, and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. In 2016, ART became the 72nd member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Plays developed by ART have subsequently been produced in New York, Chicago, London, and throughout the country. Recognition for ART commissioned plays includes the Dramatists Guild Foundation Award, the Edgerton New Play Award, NEA Funding, the Mellon Foundation National Playwright Residency Program, American Theatre Magazine's Most-Produced Plays, and coverage in the New Yorker and the New York Times.

Information about Artists Rep's 2020/21 season is [HERE](#).

[TABLE|ROOM|STAGE \(T|R|S\)](#), established in 2015, is Artists Rep's new play program. The T|R|S mission is to develop and produce new work that vividly expresses Artists Rep's [aesthetic values](#). Focused on work by BIPOC writers, women, LGBTQIA+ and gender nonconforming writers, and offer an environment where these playwrights can create provocative, intimate new theatre pieces that challenge, illuminate, and inspire.

T|R|S has produced the following commissions: *The Talented Ones* by Yussef El Guindi (April 2017), *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) (April 2018), the NNPN Rolling World Premiere *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung (March 2019), and the upcoming *Looking for Tiger Lily* by Anthony Hudson (Spring 2021).

T|R|S is home to Mellon Playwright-In-Residence and Steinberg Award Winner, E.M. Lewis, and Lacroute Playwright-In-Residence, Andrea Stolowitz. Playwrights under commission presently include Linda Alper, Anthony Hudson, Steve Rathje, Andrea Stolowitz, and E.M. Lewis, whose play *The Great Divide* is co-commissioned with ART and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. New projects are also being developed with Susannah Mars and Vin Shambry.

T|R|S *At the Apex* has a hand in shaping World Premieres and vital second productions by some of the nation's most exciting playwrights. *At the Apex* productions are: *La Ruta* by Isaac Gomez (November 2019), *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew (January 2019), *Magellanica* by E.M. Lewis (January 2018), and *Cuba Libre* by Carlos Lacámara (Book) and Jorge Gómez (Music & Lyrics).

Through T|R|S, Artists Rep is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

[RESIDENT ARTISTS](#) have an ongoing history of working on stage and behind-the-scenes of Artists Rep's mainstage productions. They collaborate with administrative staff on education, community engagement, new play development, and fundraising efforts. The Resident Artist title is offered by the Artistic Director in appreciation of each artist's achievements with ART and in the spirit of continued collaboration. These multidisciplinary theatre makers are deeply committed to ART's success, share organizational values, and participate in decision-making processes that impact the theatre's mission and its future. Through the Resident Artists program, a diverse community of Portland-based artists are at the center of the day-to-day life of the theatre and play a vital part in creating the culture at ART.

[EDUCATION](#) is dedicated to developing life-long learners at every ability, interest, and level of expertise. Opportunities focus on engaging with our community by offering professional-level classes, coaching, and workshops with our teaching artists. Programs like these serve artists and others seeking professional development, students seeking to engage in the transformative power of the arts, and life-long learners who can take classes in subjects such as dramaturgy, script-writing, and communication for non-actors. With the Student Ambassador Program, students learn about the inner-workings of a major nonprofit professional theatre, meet once per month, see shows for free, and participate in discussions with leading theatre artists and professionals. Access and enrichment are available for educators who enjoy ticket discounts, school programming, and workshops. Enhanced viewing experiences include post-show discussions with the cast, panel discussions with experts, and a dedicated conversation with production designers.

[ARTSHUB](#) is Artists Rep's resource sharing and community-building initiative supporting Portland theatre makers, arts and education nonprofits, and community groups. The mission of the ArtsHub is to create a cultural center by supporting Portland's rich artistic ecosystem. Programs and services include below market rates for rehearsal, performance, and meeting space; shared administrative work space for individuals and organizations; and production services such as set construction, scenic painting, and professional technical support from design through performance. We prioritize artists and organizations that support ART's values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and seek to provide a home for artists and audiences to take creative risks.

While the program's origin seven years ago was in response to an opportunity to share underutilized performance space, we have found that the most vital and lasting impact of the ArtsHub is the bustling community that has been formed, and the myriad ways it has led to the empowerment of local artists and the accelerated growth of participating organizations. Our new facility is being designed so that the ARTSHUB can include even more organizations than it currently serves.

[RISE: The Campaign for Artists Repertory Theatre](#) is the capital funding drive that will make possible the reinvention of ART's building at 1515 SW Morrison. Originally an Elks Lodge health club, the Artists Rep building has reached the end of its useful life. A major gift in 2018 paid off the outstanding mortgage on the entire downtown block catalyzing the 2019 sale of the north half of the building. ART received \$9 million in the sale, which is now the lead investment for the reimagining of the remaining building. The roof and two massive wood beams will rise to create a modern multiuse performing arts center with two theatres, four rehearsal halls, and collaborative spaces that will give space to the many new stories waiting to be shared.

Artists Repertory Theatre receives generous support from our community of patrons, including significant leadership gifts from: The Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation; Ronni Lacroute; The Oregon Community Foundation; Regional Arts & Culture Council; The Shubert Foundation; David & Christine Vernier; The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; and Wood Partners. Additional Corporate and Foundation support comes from: Colliers International; The Kinsman Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; Oregon Cultural Trust; Rafati's Catering; and Howard S. Wright/Balfour Beatty.

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