

Mjima's Tale

BY LYNN NOTTAGE

DIRECTED BY SHARIFFA CHELIMO ALI

MAY 28—JUL 11



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MAY 28–JULY 11

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Photo by Cheshire Isaacs



I am over the moon to welcome you home after more than a year away from the theatre. We have missed you—we have missed sharing stories with you, we have missed conversing with you in the lobby, we have missed celebrating auspicious occasions with you and comforting each other in difficult times. Perhaps most of all we have missed the magical moment of sitting together in the theatre, house lights dimming, as we take a collective inhale in anticipation of magic about to unfold on stage.

When I originally selected *Mlima's Tale* by Pulitzer Prize-winner Lynn Nottage for The Rep's 2020-21 Studio season, I could never have imagined how supremely relevant the story would feel one year later. Nottage's powerful interpretation of Mlima's story highlights the global human, environmental and spiritual impact of greed. The lyrical journey makes a case for each of us to consider more carefully how our consumption of our world's resources affects us and one another—a question that has been thrown into stark relief over the past year.

The unprecedented challenges of this time have also given rise to a period of deep reflection. As we have reflected on The Rep's history, mission and future, our profound gratitude for you, our community of patrons, donors, volunteers and artists, grows ever deeper. To The Rep's subscribers, whether you have engaged with us through our virtual programming or whether you have been waiting in the wings, eager to sit in the theatre in-person, thank you for sticking with us. If this is your first visit to The Rep, we welcome you with open arms and hope that The Rep will become one of your artistic homes.

It is my fundamental belief that sharing in the collective experience of theatre elevates our humanity and makes our society a better, more empathetic and loving place to live. Thank you for joining us in this sacred practice, and please enjoy the show.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hana S. Sharif'.

Hana S. Sharif

AUGUSTIN FAMILY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A CONVERSATION WITH

Lynn Nottage


Excerpted from A Conversation With Lynn Nottage and Mark Lamos, Artistic Director of Westport Country Playhouse, held on September 29, 2019, just prior to the Playhouse's 2019 production of Mlima's Tale. Westport Country Playhouse | Westport, Connecticut | westportplayhouse.org

MARK:

Thank you so much for being here today. It's a great pleasure for us to have Miss Nottage with us... *Mlima's Tale* is about the ivory trade, among other things from Africa to China... It has been just thrilling to work on and still is thrilling to work on, I have to say. And I guess you got the idea from Kathryn Bigelow, or Kathryn Bigelow had suggested this to you?

LYNN:

Yes, so director Kathryn Bigelow, she had come to me and she said, "I'm so profoundly upset about what's going on with elephants and I want to do something immediately. And I want to do something that's visceral. And something that's going to move audiences." And she's a filmmaker; she'd never done a play. And we began talking about it and I said, "Let's make a piece of theater!" She sent me just reams and reams of research, and in particular, an article by Damon Tabor, who is a journalist, called "The Ivory Highway." And that sparked my interest, because it really is about the journey of a tusk, from an elephant to the marketplace. It traces all of the hands that touch that piece of ivory before it ends up as this shiny, bright thing in a glass case in China. And I thought, how do I take that story and put it on stage? And that's how *Mlima's Tale* came about. But then I began doing research and discovering just how smart and beautiful elephants are. I thought, I have to put the elephant on the stage because it's not just about the ivory. It's really about a soul, this beautiful soul that's



been commodified. And that's rare. And at the time we began working on the play, elephants were very, very much in jeopardy. I think there was one statistic that said if the ivory trade wasn't stopped within 25 years, elephants would be extinct. That was not hyperbole at the moment. Since the play was produced, thankfully, China has stopped the import of ivory and the sale of ivory, unless it's "antique." But as we know, it's very easy to age ivory, and to forge papers. But since many of these countries have ceased the ivory trade and ivory sale, we see that the elephant populations are beginning to come back. But at the moment, we felt like it was, you know, it's like climate change. Like, this is the moment—if we don't do anything, right now, there is no going back. And in fact, and this is a real statistic... right now, in Africa, there are only 25 big tuskers left. And most of them are in Kenya. And those elephants are in jeopardy because they have these large, immensely beautiful tusks that are greatly valued.

MARK:

It's extraordinary, [*Mlima's Tale*] is played by four actors, one of whom plays Mlima. And then he plays the Tusk. And really the spirit of the Spirit. I was so intrigued by the play, partially because I share the very personal feelings about the tragedy of these animals, but also what it says about globalization and also, it has made me rethink about the soul of things. Yes, he's in the ivory. But you look at the David. And then you look at the Michelangelo... slaves in stone.

LYNN:

That was everything. When I was working on *Ruined* it made me hyper aware of the fact that this war is raging because of coltan, which is this very conductive metal that's only produced in Congo and Poland. And it's used to generate our cell phones in our computers. And so inadvertently, all of us were complicit in this war, unwittingly, and I do think we have to, and that's in part why I wrote a play about mindfulness, is that I think we have to be much more mindful and intentional in the way in which we think about our world. Think about how we consume, how we move on a day-to-day basis through life.

MARK:

That's wonderful. I agree.

Full interview can be found [here](#).

“What price are you willing to pay for beauty?”

Elephant ivory has been considered a valued luxury material across continents for millennia, with artifacts found in Africa, Asia and Europe dating back 35,000 years. Prized for its beauty and its durability, ivory can be carved, engraved, sawed, polished, bleached, stained with dyes and paints, and shaped in a multitude of forms. Ivory is beautiful, malleable, but has come with high costs—to more than just the elephants it comes from.

The ivory trade between Africa and Asia is one of the most enduring trade partnerships between the two continents. Although Asian elephant tusks are used for crafting and trading, the longer, stronger tusks of the African elephant are more desirable, prompting these two continents to trade this mutually valued, prized material with cultural and religious significance.

As European colonization began to expand across Africa in the 17th century, so too did ivory trading expand across the oceans. The Portuguese started as the largest patrons of the ivory trade, with native African hunting tribes providing ivory to them. Organized European hunters began supplanting native African ones in killing elephants for ivory, and they did so on a much larger scale. Big game hunting by European colonists also became popular, further diminishing the elephant population.

Soon, an undeniable connection between the ivory trade and slavery developed; both ivory and enslaved people were sold through essentially the same distribution routes. In the 19th century as their populations depleted, elephants retreated from the coastal areas and into the forests of East Africa, unreachable through traditional modes of conveyance. Arab traders in turn led caravans farther into the African interior in pursuit of both enslaved people and ivory, which were then traded to Americans.

It became a cruel cycle—Americans would receive newly enslaved people and ivory, and then force the enslaved to carry the ivory from the dense forests back to the coasts. It is estimated that 1 in 4 of the enslaved forced to carry ivory died while on the journey. Indeed, ivory was considered among the most valuable resources, hence the moniker “white gold.” Ironically, enslaved people were known as “black ivory,” solidifying the parallel lives of these two most trafficked and traded cargo in the world. For the entire 19th century, ivory had the highest export value of anything from East Africa, including enslaved people.

In Europe and the US, ivory was used for piano keys, pool balls and many ornate carvings, but by the 20th century, movies, the phonograph and other modern amusements led to ivory's decline.

Starting in the 20th century, the ivory trade started to gradually change from being about craftsmanship and commerce into a conservation issue. The elephant population had declined from an estimated 26 million in 1800 to 10 million in 1900, and was still dropping. Eventually, world governments from mostly Western countries decided to intervene.

One such intervention was The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), created to regulate trade of animal products and protect at-risk species. Officially implemented in 1975, it was in 1977 that CITES added a quota system whereby countries needed to regulate the amount of ivory allowed to be exported to member countries. Occasionally CITES also allowed certain countries to make one-time mass purchases in hopes of flooding the market with cheap, legal ivory and undercut the black market and therefore, cut poaching. These solutions have rarely panned out as intended, but conservation organizations have only intensified their demands for governments to crack down on illegal ivory trading and implement bans.

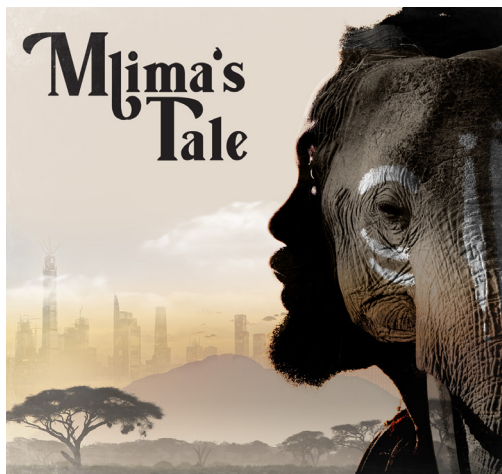
It is ironic that mainly Western countries—who for centuries were the primary killers of elephants for ivory—are now making demands for how African countries should regulate their ivory trade. Countries such as Kenya and Tanzania argued that a small, but highly regulated system of ivory trading would ultimately be more beneficial than an outright ban to curb poaching, preserve the value of ivory to the countries' economics, and regulate the wild elephant population that encroach upon farmers. In many ways, the price of ivory has been the loss of autonomy for the people who are most affected by it.

—Aria Velz, Assistant Director



THE REPERTORY THEATRE OF ST. LOUIS

PRESENTS



BY LYNN NOTTAGE

DIRECTED BY SHARIFFA CHELIMO ALI

CHOREOGRAPHER	Kirven Douthit-Boyd
SCENIC DESIGNER	You-Shin Chen
COSTUME DESIGNER	Helen Q. Huang
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Jasmine Lesane
COMPOSER AND SOUND DESIGNER	Avi Amon
DIALECT COACH (VIETNAMESE, CHINESE)	Julie Foh
DIALECT COACH (KENYAN, SOMALIAN, TANZANIAN)	Barbara Rubin
CASTING BY	X Casting, Victor Vazquez, CSA
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Aria Velz
ASSOCIATE COSTUME DESIGNER	Madison Booth
ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER	Natali Arco
STAGE MANAGER	Shannon B. Sturgis*
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	R. Christopher Maxwell*
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Sammie Haas

CAST

MLIMA Kambi Gathesha*

**MUMBI, RAHMAN, WAMWARA, PATIENCE,
HASSAN ABDULLA, CHIEF MATE, ELEPHANT #1,
HUA HUYNH, CARVER, ALICE**

Ezioma Asonye*

**LONG EARS, GEEDI, ANDREW, WAITER,
AZIZ MUHAMMED, ELEPHANT #2, CUSTOMERS AGENT,
ANGIE, MASTER YEE, HONG FENG**

Will Mann*

**KOKO MKIMBIAJI, GITHINJI, GUOXI,
CAPTAIN RAMAAKER, ELEPHANT #3, THUY FAN,
MR. CHEUNG, LI JUN**

Joe Ngo*

The play will be presented without intermission.

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EMERSON

Based on the article "The Ivory Highway" by Damon Tabor

Originally developed and produced by The Public Theater

(Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Patrick Willingham, Executive Director)

MLIMA'S TALE is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

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

As artists, we are often tasked with examining our shared human experiences to help others imagine, dream and heal during a time of global crisis. Directing this show allowed me to dig deep into my own personal history, where as a child I would listen to the stories of my grandmother and other village elders throughout Kenya's Nandi Hills. My community planted the seed of storytelling in my soul, and I am so grateful to everyone who has helped that seed blossom.

The Rep's cast and crew – from all over the world – has created a production that brings to life the majestic gestures and expressive faces of my Motherland and beyond, as it boldly exposes the social issues that come with the greed of human desire in our global economy.

This is *Mlima's Tale*: a ghost story, but one that is neither phantasmal nor transient. "Mlima" is the Kenyan-Kiswahili word for mountain. The set before you reconstructs this haunting world, our shared world, as a mountainous infrastructure of power.

To re-engage with Nottage's work amid contemporary manifestations of anti-Black white supremacy is to recognize that racial capitalism is a globalized, neo-colonial formation. This mountain incentivizes human cruelty and predatory transactions from its base to peak.

The summit may at times appear "beautiful" and "pristine," but let us be clear – it is no accident that the egregious brutalization of the natural world occurs exactly where societies all over have historically hunted and exploited Black people.

It is easy to particularize Mlima's tragedy to individual bad actors in Africa and Asia. But the reality of our current world order, formed from the implementation and derivation of anti-Black chattel slavery, implicates all of us. The animalization of Blackness is a common parasitic relationship throughout our diverse ecosystems of globalized white supremacy, one that feeds off unsustainable extraction and outsourced exploitation.

Nottage, with Brechtian elegance, defamiliarizes us from the dehumanizing costs of our sanitized, aspirational desires. I revel in her nuanced and multidimensional portrayals and encourage you to laugh, smile, and celebrate whenever possible. We are so blessed to be able share this space with you and commune over Nottage's incisive writing.

Ultimately, *Mlima's Tale* challenges us to imagine what else our world could be. What kind of mountain do you wish to summit? How do we design and build infrastructures that truly empower everyone to climb? Should altitude even factor into the barometer of human dignity?

Welcome and Karibu! Thank you for taking this time to learn and reflect with us.
Shariffa Chelimo Ali, *Director*

CAST



EZIUMA ASONYE

is excited to be making theatre at a time like this. She is a recent graduate of The New School for Drama's

MFA Acting program in NYC and has appeared in *Love Life* (HBO Max), *School Girls; or The African Mean Girls Play* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), *Human Again* (Auburn Public Theater), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Ovalhouse Theater, London), *Plain Brown Box*, *Nine Folds Make a Paper Swan*, *A & Z's Escapades in Moonstruck City*, *Henry IV Part 1* (The New School), and others. As a first-generation Nigerian American, she is honored to be a part of telling this poignant and impactful story.



KAMBI GATHESHA

is a Brooklyn-based actor, choreographer and director. Born in Nairobi, Kenya and raised in Jeddah, Saudi

Arabia and Rockville, Maryland, Kambi's work focuses on African and Diaspora history and culture. He studied Acting at Juilliard and African History at Columbia University. His Off-Broadway credits include *What To Send Up When it Goes Down* (NY premiere; ARTNY; The Public); *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Signature Theatre Center, world premiere) and *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream (Classical Theater of Harlem). Regionally, he has appeared in *Big Love* (Williamstown Theatre Festival) and *What To Send up When it Goes Down* (Woolly Mammoth;ART). He has a recurring role in the Amazon prime series *Big Dogs* (Choice Films) and is the 2019 recipient of the Jerome Robbins Foundation's Project Springboard Fellowship for his original musical *A Nation Grooves: A People's History of Hip Hop*. He thanks his team at HCKR, his family and his partner, Julia. Finally, he dedicates this run to the memory of his father Captain Patrick Gathesha.



WILL MANN is so grateful to be on stage again. His last time on stage was the Tony Award-winning and Grammy Award-nominated

revival of *Oklahoma!* on Broadway. Other Broadway and touring credits include *Memphis* (Bobby), *Billy Elliot* (Mr. Braithwaite), *Joseph...* (Judah, dir/chor by Andy Blankenbuehler), *Elf* and *Wonderful Town*. He appeared in the film *Ricki and the Flash* (starring Meryl Streep). Voiceover work includes Aflac, Chase, Doritos and Square Terminal. Thank you to CLA! @UUILLMANN



JOE NGO is elated to be making his debut at The Rep. As an actor, he is most notable for originating/developing the role of Chum in

Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band*, with productions at South Coast Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Off-Broadway at the Signature Theatre in NYC for which he received an Obie Award for his performance. Other notable regional credits include *White Snake* (Baltimore Center Stage), *King of the Yeas* (ACT/Seattle, Baltimore Center Stage) and *Vietgone* (Studio Theatre, DC). On television, he appeared in *Crashing* (HBO) and voiceover credits include *Funan* (GKids/Netflix). As a writer, his work is primarily geared towards solo performance/devised theatre and includes *Words, Words...* (Leviathan Labs, BarnArts/BarnFest NYC). Education: MFA (UW Seattle) www.Joe-Ngo.com

DIRECTION & DESIGN



SHARIFFA CHELIMO ALI

(Director) is an international creative leader committed to working with an open heart at the intersection

of the performing arts and humanitarianism. She works across disciplines directing films, virtual reality experiences and plays. Originally from Kenya and raised in South Africa, Shariffa has been a New York resident since 2013, working primarily as a director, educator and administrator at The Public Theater and The New Group, among others. She has lectured and directed at NYU, Brooklyn College, Yale University and Princeton University, where her productions include *Eclipsed*, *Detroit '67*, *Intimate Apparel* and *We Are Proud to Present* and an original new musical, *We Were Everywhere*. Shariffa is an artist in residence at the Center of Creative Arts at the University of Miami and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) where she directed the critically acclaimed short film *Ash Land*. Off-Broadway credits include *Mies Julie* (Classic Stage Company), and regional credits include *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre) and *The Copper Children* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). She was honored as a New Frontier Fellow at Sundance Institute Lab and the Royal National Theater (UK); and received the POV/PBS Spark Grant.

Education: BA with honors, Theatre and Performance, University of Cape Town. South Africa www.shariffa.com



KIRVEN DOUTHIT-BOYD

(Choreographer) is the Co-Artistic Director of Dance at the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) in St. Louis, Missouri. He

earned his MFA in Dance from Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia. He began his formal dance training at the Boston Arts Academy in 1998 and joined Boston Youth Moves in 1999. He has also trained on scholarship at The Boston Conservatory and The Alvin Ailey School prior to performing with Battleworks Dance Company, Ailey II, and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 2004-2015.



YOU-SHIN CHEN

(Scenic Designer) is a New York based Taiwanese designer who is committed to diversity and humanity.

Trained as a theatre designer, she centers the human experience in the process of creating a three dimensional space. Her scenic design for *Eclipsed* (Lewis Center for the Arts) is part of USA exhibition at 2019 Prague Quadrennial. She is the recipient of the 2019 Daryl Roth Creative Spirit Award at The Lilly Awards and Lucille Lortel Awards for Outstanding Scenic

Design in 2020. Recent theatre credits include *SKiNFoLK* (the Bushwick Starr and National Black Theatre); *Ugly* (the feath3r theory and the Bushwick Starr, Washington Ensemble Theatre); *Mrs. Murray's Menagerie* (ArsNova); *Monsoon Season* (AFO Theatre); *Man of God* (InterAct Theatre Company); *Messiah* (LaMama, Stonewall 50); *Rock-A-Bye* (BalletX) and *Jazz Singer* (Abrons Arts Center). She was associate scenic designer for *Moby Dick* (A.R.T., Des. Mimi Lien). You-Shin is a member of Local USA829, IASTE. www.youshinchen.com



HELEN HUANG

(Costume Designer) has designed Off-Broadway for Classic Stage Company and regionally at Oregon

Shakespeare Festival, Guthrie Theater, Children's Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Philadelphia Theatre Company, George Street Playhouse, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Studio Theatre, The Roundhouse Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Signature Theatre Company and Disney Entertainment. Ballet and opera credits include The Washington Ballet and Boston Lyric Opera. International work

includes set and costume design for National Opera House of China and the Central Television of China. She is the recipient of the Helen Hayes Award and Ivey Award. Her work is featured in the exhibition “Curtain Call: Celebrating a Century of Women Designing for Live Performance,” New York Public Library, Lincoln Center and the Prague Quadrennial; “Costume Design at the Turn of the Century,” A. A. Bakhrushin Museum, Moscow. She is Professor of MFA Costume Design Program, University of Maryland, College Park. *Character Sketch: A Drawing Course for Costume Designers* is available on Amazon.com. www.helenquang.com



JASMINE LESANE

(Lighting Designer) is thrilled to be making her debut at The Rep with *Mlima’s Tale*. After graduating from

Carnegie Mellon’s School of Drama, Jasmine was awarded the 2020 USITT Barbizon Lighting Company Jonathan Resnick Award. Now based in Los Angeles, Jasmine is fortunate enough to design and assist in theatre, dance, film and live television. Her credits include designing *School Girls; Or, African Mean Girls Play* at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, *The Octoroon* at the New Hazlett Theater and assisting on *America’s Got Talent: The Champions* at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. www.jasminelesane.com



AVI AMON (Composer and Sound Designer) is a Turkish-American composer, sound artist and educator. Recent credits include *The*

Copper Children (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Stew* (Soho Rep), *The Fisherman* (HBO Films), *The Black History Museum* (HERE Arts), *Salonika* (Berkeley Rep), and several sound installations in a 100-year-old grain silo in Buffalo, New York (Torn Space Theater and Prague Quadrennial). Work in development includes *Heroine’s Guide* with Claire Kiechel (Spotify/Gimlet), *Cupids* with Zoey Martinson (Tribeca Films), *Rated Black* with Kareem Lucas (Woolly Mammoth) and *Inshallah/Mashallah*: a 3-D-audio opera re-imagining of the 1,001 Nights (Target Margin Theater). He is a Jonathan Larson Grant and New Music USA Grant winner, a Dramatists Guild Fellow, and has been an Artist-in-Residence with Rhinebeck Writers Retreat, THEatre ACCELERATOR, Goodspeed Musicals, Princeton, Exploring the Metropolis at JCAL, Hi-ARTS, Judson, New Dramatists and Weston Playhouse. Avi is the resident composer at the 52nd Street Project and teaches at NYU Tisch. www.aviamon.com



JULIE FOH (Dialect Coach: Vietnamese, Chinese) is a CT-based voice, speech and dialect specialist.

Previous coaching

credits include *Sleuth* (McCarter Theatre Center), *Mlima's Tale* (Westport Country Playhouse), *Wolverine: The Lost Trail* (Marvel podcast), *As You Like It* and *King Charles III* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), *Sherwood* (Cleveland Play House), *Pygmalion* (BEDLAM), *Familiar* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), *Trans Scripts* and *Cardenio* (American Repertory Theater), *The Tallest Tree in the Forest* (Tectonic Theater Project), *Charley's Aunt* and *Shakespeare in Love* (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ), *Eurydice* and *An Ideal Husband* (American Players Theatre), and others. She is currently on faculty at the University of Connecticut. MFA, ART Institute at Harvard University.



BARBARA RUBIN

(Dialect Coach: Kenyan, Somalian, Tanzanian) is thrilled to collaborate with Shariffa Ali again and honored to lend

her ears to the cast of *Mlima's Tale*. Broadway credits include *The Road to Mecca*, and Off-Broadway credits include *Mies Julie* (CSC); *Boesman and Lena*, *Master Harold...and the Boys*, *The Painted Rocks* at *Revolver Creek*, *The Train Driver*, *My Children!*

My Africa!, *The Blood Knot* (Signature Theatre) and *My Name is Asher Lev* (Westside). Regional credits include *Photograph 51*, *Chonburi International Hotel* and *Butterfly Club* (Audible/Williamstown); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *A Human Being of a Sort*, *Dangerous House* (Williamstown); *Going to St. Ives* (Barrington Stage); *Born Yesterday* (Pittsburgh Public) and *Judgement Day* (Bard SummerScape). Film and television credits include *Escape from Pretoria* (Daniel Radcliffe), *Official Secrets* (Adam Bakri), *Winnie* (Jennifer Hudson, Terrence Howard), *Inventing Anna* (Julia Garner), *Chicago Med*, *The Americans* and *Blindspot*. She is on faculty at American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Education: BADA (Hons), University of the Witwatersrand, School of Drama, Johannesburg.
barbararubin.net

X CASTING, VICTOR VAZQUEZ, CSA (he/him/his) is the founder and lead Casting Director of X Casting (www.xcastingnyc.com), a member of the Casting Society of America and a 2020 Theater Communications Group (TCG) Rising Leader of Color.



ARIA VELZ

(Assistant Director) is a DC-area based director, dramaturg and teaching artist.

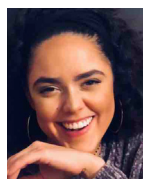
Her directing work has been seen throughout DC at Theater Alliance, Keegan Theatre, Imagination Stage, Spooky Action, Flying V Theater and Mosaic Theater Company of DC, among others. Most recently, she was associate writer for the episodic video game *Dark City*, now available on PC and Mac. Aria was an Allen Lee Hughes Fellow at Arena Stage.



MADISON BOOTH

(Associate Costume Designer) recently earned her master's degree in costume design at the University

of Maryland, College Park. Since living in the DC, Maryland, Virginia area she has assisted with companies such as Studio Theatre, Roundhouse Theatre, Ford's Theatre, and Wolf Trap Opera. Her professional design credits include *Spy Academy and the Lost Treasure of Atlantis*, *Thumbelina*, *Zomo the Hip Hop Rabbit* (Imagination Stage); *Or* (Theatre Prometheus); *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *42nd Street* and *Matilda* (Weathervane Playhouse). Her academic credits include *The Revolutionists* (2021), *Machinal* (2021), and *The Heidi Chronicles* (2019) at the University of Maryland, College Park.



NATALI ARCO

(Associate Lighting Designer) is a proud Cuban-American lighting designer, associate and

programmer based in New York City. She has experience designing and assisting for opera, theatre, modern dance, site-specific venues, concerts, trade shows and award ceremonies nationwide. She is the Lighting Director for Samsung's flagship store in New York, Samsung 837. She is also an Organizing Member of La Gente: The Latinx Theatre Design Network, lagentenetwork.com. As an alumni of the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University, she is excited to be in St. Louis working with The Rep once again. nataliarco.com



SHANNON B. STURGIS'

(Stage Manager) favorite theatrical experiences include Atlantic Theater Company, *Shear*

Madness (Off-Broadway) and *Altar Boyz* (Off-Broadway and in The Rep's Off-Ramp series). Other regional favorites include Westport Country Playhouse, Adirondack Theatre Festival, Totem Pole Playhouse, Victoria Theatre, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Phoenix Theatre (in New York) and the Gretna Playhouse.



R. CHRISTOPHER MAXWELL

(Assistant Stage Manager) hails from the bustling southern metropolis of Little Rock, Arkansas and currently

resides in Harlem, New York. He received a Master's of Fine Arts in Stage Management from Columbia University's School of the Arts. He aspires to use his education and experience to center the voices of marginalized communities and advance the work of other queer artists and the diaspora of colored people. Recently Christopher joined the adjunct faculty at Pace University and the University at Albany, SUNY. He is the Co-Founder of the Black Theatre Caucus and a third year Stage Manager at Actor's Equity Association for which he serves as an Eastern Regional Delegate. He also serves as New York Metro Regional Representative for the Stage Manager's Association. Off-Broadway credits include (ASM) *Eco Village*, *Safeword*—EBP Productions and *American Moor*—Red Bull Theater. Regional credits include (ASM) *Mojada*, *Dreaming Zenzile* and *Black Like Me* (PSM) at The Rep and *Iron John: An American Ghost Story* (PSM) at Manhattan School of Music. He gives honor to God, his parents and his ancestors. His work is made available by the love of his partner Don and his furry goblins.

LYNN NOTTAGE (Playwright) is the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of *Ruined*, which also received an Obie, the Lucille Lortel Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Play (Manhattan Theatre Club, Goodman Theatre). Other plays include *Intimate Apparel* (New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play; Roundabout Theatre, Centerstage, South Coast Repertory); *Fabulation, or the Re-education of Undine* (Obie Award; Playwrights Horizons, London's Tricycle Theatre); *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'Knockers* and *Poof!* Nottage is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2007 MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," the National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award, the 2004 PEN/Laura Pels Award for Drama and the 2005 Guggenheim Grant for Playwriting, as well as fellowships from the Lucille Lortel Foundation, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Dramatists and New York Foundation for the Arts. She is a member of The Dramatists Guild, an alumna of New Dramatists and a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama, where she is a visiting lecturer. www.lynnnottage.net



HANA SHARIF

(Augustin Family Artistic Director) has enjoyed a multi-faceted theatre career, including roles as an artistic leader,

director, playwright and producer with a specialty in strategic and cross-functional leadership. She served for five years as Associate Artistic Director at Baltimore Center Stage, where she oversaw the day-to-day execution of all of the mainstage and studio productions, and was the architect of the innovative CS Digital program: a platform that pushes the boundaries of traditional theatre and looks at the nexus point between art and technology. Her other achievements at Baltimore Center Stage include prototyping the Mobile Unit, strengthening community engagement, producing multiple world and regional premieres and helping to guide the theatre through a multi-million dollar building renovation and rebranding effort. In 2012, Hana served as the inaugural Program Manager of the ArtsEmerson Ambassador Program and launched ArtsEmerson Artist-In-Residency program featuring playwright Daniel Beaty. In addition to her work at ArtsEmerson, Hana leveraged her regional theatre experience to freelance produce for smaller theatre companies, looking to expand and restructure their administrative teams. Hana served as developmental producer and program manager for Progress Theatre in Houston, where she consulted with the Artistic Director on redefining the artistic vision and subsequent recasting of the ensemble company and lead strategic

organizational planning focused on LORT market entry. During her decade-long tenure at Hartford Stage, Hana served as the Associate Artistic Director, Director of New Play Development, and Artistic Producer. Hana launched the new play development program, expanded the community engagement and civic discourse initiatives, and developed and produced Tony, Grammy, Pulitzer and Obie Award-winning shows. From 1997–2003, Hana served as the co-founder and Artistic Director of Nasir Productions, a theatre dedicated underrepresented voices to challenge traditional structure. Her guest lecturer credits include Spelman College, Sewanee University, UT Austin, UCSD, Prairie View A&M, Emerson College, Maggie Flanigan Studio, Towson University, UMD, UConn, UMass and University of Hartford, among others. Additionally, Hana has directed acclaimed productions of *Porgy & Bess*, *The Who & The What*, *Fun Home*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Christians*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Pride and Prejudice* (DCArts: Best Director/Best New Play), *The Whipping Man*, *Gem of the Ocean* (six CCC nominations), *Gee's Bend* (CCC Award Best Ensemble, two nominations), *Next Stop Africa*, *Cassie*, *The Drum* and *IFidentity*. Her plays include *All the Women I Used to Be*, *The Rise and Fall of Day* and *The Sprott Cycle Trilogy*. Hana holds a BA from Spelman College and an MFA from the University of Houston. She is the recipient of the 2009–10 Aetna New Voices Fellowship, EMC Arts Working Open Fellowship, Theatre Communications Group (TCG) New

Generations Fellowship, and is a founding member of The Black Theatre Commons (BTC). She serves on the board of directors for the TCG, BTC, and the Sprott Foundation.



MARK BERNSTEIN

(Managing Director) is a graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and has managed nonprofit

professional theatres since 1982. He has led The Rep since 1987, a period characterized by growth and stability, strong community support, and responsible financial management. New programming initiatives have included The Rep's Off-Ramp series (produced from 2005 through 2008), the Ignite! New Play Festival (begun in 2012) and various educational programs. Favorite shows from 30 seasons at The Rep include *Candide*, *The Voice of the Prairie*, *Terra Nova*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Young Rube*, *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, *Arcadia*, *Sweeney Todd*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Into the Woods*, *Inherit the Wind*, *The Crucible*, *Take Me Out*, *The Little Dog Laughed*, *Souvenir*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Cabaret*, *One Man Two Guvnors*, *Follies* and the great Shaw plays: *Saint Joan*, *Pygmalion* and *Man and Superman*. In addition to work at The Rep, he teaches in Webster University's Arts Leadership Program. He has been active in the leadership of the League of Resident Theatres for many years, having served as vice president, an executive committee member and as a member of numerous national negotiating

committees. Before coming to St. Louis, he spent six years at the Philadelphia Drama Guild and taught financial management for nonprofit arts institutions at Drexel University. He is a Sondheim fanatic, and travels the world in search of the perfect *Sweeney Todd*, the best goat cheese tarts and the best chocolate desserts.



AMELIA ACOSTA POWELL

(Associate Artistic Director) is a producer and director originally from Denver. Before she joined Hana S. Sharif's

team in St. Louis, Amelia was the Line Producer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and prior to that, the Artistic Associate and Casting Director at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. She also has various credits as a freelance producer, director and casting director. She is a proud alumna of the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship, a steering committee member of the Latinx Theatre Commons, a member of the Casting Society of America, a founding member of Closer Look Arts Collective, and an inaugural grantee of Theatre Communication Group's Rising Leaders of Color. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts and has taught master classes at The Growing Studio NYC, Brown University/Trinity Rep, The Catholic University of America, Howard University, The George Washington University, American University, The Actors' Center, Creative Acts and more. She holds her bachelor's and her master's degrees from Georgetown University.

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One of the most treasured and dedicated resources, The Rep's Volunteer Board provides amazing support each season with donations of time, talent and skill throughout all facets of the organization. In the 2019-20 season, The Rep Volunteer Board donated a total of 3,100 hours to the theatre. Whether they are providing actor transportation, organizing community events or trekking to Jefferson City to lobby for government funding, this group of individuals is irreplaceable to The Rep. We are so grateful to the Volunteer Board for their continued dedication as integral members of The Rep family. If you are interested in serving on The Rep Volunteer Board, please contact Lori Moore-McMullen at Imoore-mcmullen@repstl.org or (314) 687-4028.

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ABOUT THE REP

The Rep produces work year-round in both live and virtual series, all sharing the same high production values and commitment to presenting exciting live, professional theatre.

MAINSTAGE

Each season we produce six plays in the Mainstage series, which draws The Rep's largest audience. Performances are given in both the Virginia Jackson Browning Theatre of the Loretto-Hilton Center and the Catherine B. Berges Theatre at COCA. The work presented in the Mainstage series is eclectic, ranging from modern to classics to musicals, and benefits from the large space afforded by the Browning and Berges Theatres.

STUDIO THEATRE

Three productions are mounted in the Studio series. Performances are given in the Emerson Studio, a 125-seat "black box" theatre on the lower level of the Loretto-Hilton Center. Studio productions may be new plays, radical interpretations of older works or experimental works. The performance space and seating configuration changes with each production, allowing the director, designers and actors to craft work which requires a more intimate environment.

IMAGINARY THEATRE COMPANY

Imaginary Theatre Company is The Rep's touring ensemble for children. Bringing theatre for young audiences to schools and community centers throughout the bi-state area, ITC's productions value a well-told story while supporting state learning standards and nurturing a respect and love for the arts. In addition to touring, ITC presents select public performances each season.

ABOUT THIS VENUE

As the fourth largest community arts center in the country, COCA connects the St. Louis region to the arts through programs that emphasize social and artistic diversity, economic and cultural accessibility, hands-on experience of the artistic process, and the highest quality faculty. COCA annually serves more than 50,000 area residents of all ages through multidisciplinary, multi-cultural arts programs that include educational classes, camps and workshops, both on-site and in community venues; COCAbiz; COCAedu; COCA Presents; and exhibitions of contemporary art in the Millstone Gallery.

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Norm Moenkhaus	Ann Petlin	Drs. Phil & Mary Schenkenberg

HONOR ROLL

Carol Schepers	Lou Stemmler & Sarah Wilson	Mr. & Mrs. James Wellman
Catherine Schindler	Marilyn & Layton Stewart	Mr. & Mrs. Fletcher Wells II
Jackie Schirm	Daniel Stokes	Paul & K. Wentzien
Bob & Sharon Schleinat	Dr. Cary & Helen Stolar	Ellen White
Mark Schmelzel	Marilyn Stroh	S. William & Marcia Whitson
Toni Schmidt	Timothy Stroop	Robert Wiegert
Karen Schneider	Julie Stuckmeyer	Mr. & Mrs. William R. Wiese
Perry & Sally Schoenecker	Michael Sullivan	Robert & Jacqueline Wills
Bill & Harriet Scholle	Martha Sumner	Marilyn Wilton
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Schroy	Mary Taylor	Ronald & Dianne Winney
Bill & Diane Schwab	Kenneth Teasdale	Dan Winters
Benjamin Schwartz	Liz Teasedale	Wendy Wirkus
Anne Marie Schweiss	Linda Techner	Jean M. Wood
Robert Semon	Jeff Teckman	Thomas Wood
Janette Seper	Elaine & Marc Tenzer	Scott Woods
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Shaw	Katherine Thomas	Jason Wos
Daniel Shelton	W. Scott & Blair Thompson	Diana Wubbena
Diane Sher	Lana Thompson	Dr. Judy Yordon
Rob & Maggie Sherwood	Nancy Tongren	Betsy & Stuart Zimbalist
Barbara Shrauner	Barbara Toumayan	Peter Zimmerman
Jaye Shyken	Stephen Trampe	*In memorium
Kathy Siebert	William Tucker	
Helene Siegfried	John Tuley	(Listings 6/1/20 – 5/24/21)
Pat & Paul Simons	Karen Tye	
David Singer	Don Ulrich	
Stephen Singer	Richard & Gail Updegraff	
Brenda & David Skillman	Barbara C. Valdes	
Donald & Kristie Skor	Cheryl Van Hee	
Michael & Frances Slusher	Debra Victor	
Kim Smith	Margaret Cohen Voss	
Lawrence Smith	Charlene Wall	
John & Nancy Solodar	Bob & Julie Wallace	
Carol Sosa	Patricia & Richard Walters	
Lawrence Sosna	James & Patricia Wamhoff	
Lee & Diana Speicher	George & Rose Wamser	
Cindy Spence	Barbara & David Ware	
Terry J. Springmeyer	Anita Waxman	
Janet Stacy	Mark Weaver	
Kendall Stallings	Marian Webb	
Patricia Stanton	Sue Webb	
David Steinberg	Grace T. Weber	
Paul Steinmann	Joseph Weber	

LEVELS OF GIVING

\$1,000–1,499	Playwright
\$600–999	Producer
\$300–599	Director
\$175–299	Star
\$100–174	Performer

Every effort has been made to include accurate, up-to-date information in these listings. To report an error or omission call (314) 687-4031.



Mlima's Tale

by Lynn Nottage

JOIN THE REP IN SPONSORING THE PUBLICATION OF MLIMA'S TALE

The Rep takes pride in its world-class productions of timely thought-provoking stories and is thrilled to premiere Lynn Nottage's *Mlima's Tale* here in St. Louis. We believe the haunting story of this majestic elephant is one of hope that elevates our humanity and ultimately connects us all. It is a story that should be shared beyond the stage, so when The Rep was approached by Theatre Communications Group (TCG) to help share *Mlima's Tale* by becoming a publishing sponsor of the play, we jumped at the opportunity.

TCG is the leading publisher of new work printed for mass distribution, and a partnership with TCG will provide exciting benefits including printed credit on the copyright page of the book, a playwright signed copy for each donor/publisher and other perks. **Our publishing sponsorship goal is \$25,000.**

If you would like to be recognized as a supporter of quality theatre art/written word from one of the most dynamic voices in contemporary theatre, we invite you to join us in this unique opportunity. To learn more about sponsor opportunities starting at \$2,500, please contact Lori Moore-McMullen at 314-687-4028 or lmoore-mcmullen@repstl.org.

