



MERCHANT

Merchant to speak on value of arts education

ROCCO PRIOLETTI
STAFF WRITER

At 10:45 a.m., Natalie Merchant will speak on the importance of arts education during today’s morning lecture in the Amphitheater.

Merchant’s musical career began in 1981 as the lead vocalist and songwriter of the alternative rock band 10,000 Maniacs.

In 1993, Merchant left the band at the height of their popularity, releasing her debut album *Tigerlily* subsequently in 1995. Since then, the Chautauqua County native has released nine solo records.

Beyond her career as a recording musician, Merchant is an active participant in arts education initiatives. Merchant previously volunteered at a Head Start in Troy, New York, as its artist-in-residence, teaching music, poetry and theater to low-income preschool-age children.

“It’s a very direct kind of exchange. It’s very powerful, very fulfilling, but it’s also a very visceral kind of education for me about what children need and what needs aren’t being met for so many children,” Merchant said in an interview with *Forbes*. “It feels like I’m dealing with a microcosm of the world, of the entire world, in these children.”

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SAM HUFFMAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chautauqua School of Dance alumni Colin Canavan, Sajal Janaswamy and Aram Hengen rehearse for Chautauqua School of Dance’s production of “Wuthering Heights” Monday in the Amphitheater.

School of Dance to present ‘Wuthering Heights’ ballet adaptation

NORA SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Many Chautauquans are undoubtedly familiar with Emily Brontë’s famed novel *Wuthering Heights*, and perhaps also with film adaptations of the book; fewer, perhaps, have witnessed a ballet adaptation of the tale — until tonight.

At 8 p.m. tonight in the Amphitheater, Chautauqua School of Dance will transport audience members into the tragic story via Bonnefoux McBride Artistic Director of Chautauqua School of Dance Sa-

sha Janes’ balletic rendition.

Having originally premiered on Charlotte Ballet’s stage in 2017, Janes’ “Wuthering Heights” will now take on the Amphitheater stage for a performance Janes said he encourages audience members to stay for until the last second.

“I don’t enjoy going to a dance and coming away from it not feeling emotionally involved or emotionally moved,” Janes said. “So, I’m hoping that’s what the audience feels by the end of this. I’m hoping there won’t be a dry eye in the audience by the time we finish.”

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“I’m hoping there won’t be a dry eye in the audience by the time we finish.”

—SASHA JANES
Bonnefoux McBride Artistic Director of Chautauqua School of Dance

Wigg-Stevenson to discuss engaging viewers in theology as an art

LILY RESLINK
STAFF WRITER

Within the Week Five theme of “The Creative Spirit: Art, Resilience and the Soulful Work of Making,” Natalie Wigg-Stevenson said her lecture, “Stop, Do Nothing, Receive: Attending to Art of the Common Good,” will extend the focus from art makers to art viewers.

“I think art viewing — the way we give art our attention to let it transform us — is itself a spiritual practice,

and for some of us, an act of prayer,” Wigg-Stevenson said.

Wigg-Stevenson suggested Chautauquans bring a participatory, and maybe even playful, spirit to her 2 p.m. lecture today in the Hall of Philosophy; she said her lecture will present a more engaged role for artwork viewers, as she said viewers typically become peripheral to the artist when telling the story of art.

“I want to think with the audience about more

responsible, more ethical, more engaged ways of attending to art for the common good,” Wigg-Stevenson said.

Wigg-Stevenson is a minister, professor of theology at Emmanuel College in Toronto, creative non-fiction writer and author of *Transgressive Devotion: Theology as Performance Art*. She noted the significance in distinguishing that she is not looking at the “theology of performance art,” but

“theology as performance art.”

“I get kind of bored by theology that reflects on art. I’m much more interested in theology as an art form,” she said.

Wigg-Stevenson said she is passionate about transformative education, particularly about art and spirituality. She said performance art has continuously played a large role in her life, faith, ethics and spirituality.

Though she is a Christian

theologian, she said she is not approaching the lecture from a particularly Christian perspective. In her lecture, she said she will discuss the work of Simone Weil, a Christian convert during World War II who was shaped by Judaism.

“[Weil] talks about practices of attention being a spiritual practice, being actually the foundation and the heart of prayer,” Wigg-Stevenson said.

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WIGG-STEVENSON

IN TODAY’S DAILY



LIGHTING UP THE STAGE

School of Dance Production Manager Propst brings magic, story of dance to life.

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ALL IN THE PURSUIT OF ART

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CREATING AN ONSTAGE WORLD

Chautauqua Theater Company props team decorates onstage world of ‘Best for Baby.’

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THE ARTS



BRIEFLY

NEWS FROM THE GROUNDS

The **Briefly** column appears on page 2 daily and is intended to provide space for announcements from Institution-related organizations. If a meeting or activity is featured that day in a story, it should not be repeated in the **Briefly** column. Submit information to Gracie Szablewski in the Daily's editorial office. Please provide the name of the organization, time and place of meeting and one contact person's name with a phone number. Deadline is 5 p.m. four days before publication.

Johnson to present free masterclass as part of Miami partnership

At 12:30 p.m. today in Smith Wilkes Hall, Katie N. Johnson will present a free masterclass titled “Theatre Against the Odds,” with examples of how theater has intervened to heal the nation, fostering dialogue, catharsis and empathy. Johnson is a professor of English and an affiliate of film and women's gender and sexuality studies at Miami University of Ohio and a 2026 Miami-Chautauqua Faculty Fellow.

You're invited to join the Chautauqua Choir

Do you love to sing and have some choral experience? The Chautauqua Choir sings for the Sunday morning worship service and the Sunday evening Sacred Song service. A basic ability to read music is needed. Attendance at one (but preferably two or three) of the weeknight rehearsals is required. Rehearsals are 6:15–7:45 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in Fletcher Music Center. No audition is required. New singers should arrive at 6 p.m. to register and be assigned a music folder. Questions? Email choir@chq.org or call 716-357-6321.

Learn lifesaving skills at Fire House Hall

A free “Stop the Bleed” and hands-only CPR course will be offered from 9 to 9:45 a.m. Wednesdays at Fire House Hall throughout the season. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information, contact Sid Holec, M.D., FACS, at 941-716-1729.

Library news

At 9:15 a.m. Wednesdays in Smith Memorial Library, join Carrie Jacobus and friends for a Fiber Arts Get-together. Bring your projects! At 12:30 p.m. today, join authors Iris November (*Goodnight, Shoebox*) and the Rev. Rachel Hollander (*From There to Here*) for a discussion of their books on the United Methodist House Porch. At noon Thursdays, join Friends of the Chautauqua Writers' Center for “Locals at The Library!” — this week featuring authors Marjorie Maddox (*A Man Named Branch*) and E. L. Werbitsky (*The Marsh Keeper*).

Women's Club news

The Flea Boutique will be open from noon to 2 p.m. behind the Colonnade. The Chautauqua Women's Club will host Language Hour from 1 to 2 p.m. at the CWC House.

Chautauqua Theater Company news

After the 2 p.m. performance today of *Best for Baby* in Bratton Theater, join the production's Assistant Director Liz Fisher for a special post-show discussion with David Michaels, Ph.D., MPH, about the complex and still-ongoing Johnson & Johnson talc litigation.

Correction

In the July 25 and 26 edition of *The Chautauquan Daily*, in a story titled “‘Best for Baby’ matinee to offer live audio descriptions, improved accessibility,” the name of extern Holly Kasbar was incorrectly listed as Holly Fasbar. A correction has been appended to the web version of the article. The Daily apologizes for the error.

Propst brings magic, story of dance to life

NORA SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Long before audience members trickle into the Amphitheater, music commences and lights begin to glow, Jenni Propst, lighting designer and production manager for Chautauqua School of Dance, ensures the magic and story come to life beyond the dancers' movement.

Propst not only oversees lighting, but props, costumes and anything else that can help bring a story to life.

“Even though lighting is really my strength and emphasis, here I'm usually the only one, so if somebody needs weird props, I figure out the weird props and those types of things,” Propst said. “It's just fun to get my hands in other areas of it and to collaborate with our phenomenal people here.”

When Propst began working for Charlotte Ballet right out of college, she said she knew nothing of dance. Now, having worked in dance for more than 25 years and at Chautauqua Institution for 11 seasons, Propst admires how movement and musicality tell a story; to her, that is what makes dance so magical.

“That's what's so fun about lighting and about dance — you get to be part of that story, and you get to help tell that story,” Propst said. “Dance is so powerful and so emotional. I just love being a part of it, and as a technician, I love that the lighting is sometimes the most important technical element.”

As Propst begins to coordinate lighting for a performance, she speaks with choreographers to understand what story they are trying to tell so that she can help tell it.

“With dance lighting, so much of it is, ‘How much

of the dancer do you want to see?’” Propst said. “Do you want to see their faces? Do you want to see the emotions on their face, or do you not want to see the emotions? Do you want to see the sculptural elements of the dancer's bodies, the muscle tone, or the flow of the skirts, the wrinkles in the costumes?”

For “Wuthering Heights” at 8 p.m. tonight in the Amphitheater, Propst has been at work since January, as it is the first full-length performance and story ballet Chautauqua School of Dance has ever done.

Propst said usually, for full-length story ballets, companies have a full production staff with a technical director, stage manager, lighting designer, costume shop, props person and sometimes even personal directors.

“Here at Chautauqua, we have a fully staffed, amazing costume shop, and then we have me for everything else,” Propst said. “We don't have a stage manager or a technical director; we have Jenni, who can dabble in all of these areas and make things happen.”

Because of this, Propst has learned to produce shows with limited resources compared to the Charlotte Ballet premieres she was involved with. For example, Propst hired a production assistant and a wardrobe supervisor, in addition to renting props and costumes from Charlotte Ballet and many other tasks.

“These are things that I do all of the time in my work as a lighting supervisor,” Propst said. “But I don't usually pay as much attention to props and costumes and scenery because it's not something I need to, but with ‘Wuthering Heights,’ I really had to know everything about everything.”



SKYLAR SEAVEY / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jenni Propst, shown Tuesday outside Carnahan-Jackson Dance Studios, is the lighting designer and production manager for Chautauqua School of Dance.

“

That's what's so fun about lighting and about dance — you get to be part of that story, and you get to help tell that story. Dance is so powerful and so emotional. I just love being a part of it, and as a technician, I love that the lighting is sometimes the most important technical element.”

—JENNI PROPST

Lighting Designer and Production Manager, Chautauqua School of Dance

Although there have been many sleepless nights, Propst said she is excited to see the ballet come to life on the stage.

“It is one of the most stunning ballets I've ever

seen,” Propst said. “The choreography is just gorgeous; the music is haunting and powerful and eerie and hopeful and just every emotion across the board — kind of like the actual novel.”

Chautauqua Opera Company, CVA to collaborate for recital

JENELL TAYLOR
STAFF WRITER

At 6:30 p.m. today in Elizabeth S. Lenna Hall, the School of Art and the Chautauqua Opera Company and Conservatory will join forces in a new Visual Arts-Opera collaborative event.

Working in groups consisting of two to four people, 15 resident artists from the SOA have been paired with operatic performers to create visual art pieces in response to the singers' art songs,

which are vocal performances inspired by poems.

Pianists from the School of Music Piano Program will provide the singers with a backdrop for their musical poetry, featuring pieces from renowned composers such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Jean Sibelius and Richard Strauss.

As the singers perform their art songs, the accompanying visual pieces will be projected behind them, offering attendees

a multi-sensory artistic experience that reflects upon the intersections of the literary, musical and visual arts.

This collaboration is the culmination of conversations between Director of Chautauqua Opera Conservatory Jonathan Beyer and Erika B. Hess, the Sydelle Sonkin and Herb Siegel artistic director of the Visual Arts. Hess and Beyers said they envisioned a joint collaboration with the schools because of their shared values: teamwork, community building and a fierce dedication to the artistic world of Chautauqua.

“Join us for an evening where song inspires art — and art inspires new ways of hearing,” Beyer said.

“

Join us for an evening where song inspires art — and art inspires new ways of hearing.”

—JONATHAN BEYER

Director,
Chautauqua Opera Conservatory

In a joint anticipatory statement shared by Chautauqua Visual Arts, Hess and Beyer said they are excited for Chautauquans to experience the new fusion and that the schools “hope to continue collaborating for future seasons.”

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POT YOUR SOUL ON
YOUR HAND AND
WALK - 1:45 Iranian director
Sepideh Farsi offers an intimate,
first-hand perspective on
daily life under siege in Gaza,
captured through video calls
between herself and 25-year-
old Palestinian photojournalist
and poet, Fatma Hassona. (NR,
112m. In Arabic with subtitles.)

WE'RE ALL PLASTIC
PEOPLE NOW - 4:30 Climate
Change Initiative - Special
Filmmaker Event - Free Admis-
sion This groundbreaking film,
for the first time ever, tests the
producer's blood and four gen-
erations of family members for
chemicals derived from plastic.
The results are alarming. Direc-
tor Rory Fielding will host dis-
cussion to follow. (NR, 59m)

FACKHAM HALL - 7:00
Directed by Jim O'Hanlon, this
comedy spoof on *Downton Ab-
bey* stars Katherine Waterston
and Damian Lewis as Lady and
Lord of the house."Deliciously
silly, stupid and hilarious, and I
guarantee you'll leave the cinema
with a smile on your face." -Nikki
Gemmell, *The Australian* (R, 97m)

THE CHQ DAILY

LETTERS POLICY

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LECTURE

Griest shares stories from female artists across the globe, her own journey with art

ARIANNA NEVAREZ
STAFF WRITER

From India to Rwanda to New Zealand, Stephanie Elizondo Griest traveled the globe to ask the question “Is art enough?” and recorded stories of women who have found their spark through dance or theatre as she navigated her own journey of centering art in her life.

“My goal is to show you that you are not alone in this radical decision you have made by placing art at the core of your existence — a little reckless, maybe, but you are not alone,” Griest said.

At 10:45 a.m. Tuesday in the Amphitheater, Griest shared stories of female artists and her own journey as an artist with the audience. Griest is an author from the Texas-Mexico borderlands and is currently a professor of creative nonfiction at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Each artist has their own moment where they find their “initial spark to create,” according to Griest. Hers happened in her father’s garage, where his drumming transported her and turned her into “a rocket blasting through the cosmos.” As an artist, Griest said the power of imagination transports her.

“That became my talent and ambition,” Griest said. “I, too, wanted to make art that transported. I just had to find my form.”

She told a story about her grandmother, Madge, who kept every letter Griest had written her. The idea that her writing kept her grandmother company motivated Griest as she went to college and began authoring books.

Three of Griest’s books,

All the Agents and Saints: Dispatches from the U.S. Borderlands, Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlines and Around the Bloc: My Life in Moscow, Beijing, and Havana, took up her 20s and 30s, but she said it was the “purpose of [her] life to write these three books.”

Though they were “the joy of [her] life,” Griest said they were also “the nightmare of [her] life.” All the years she was writing, she didn’t have financial or personal stability, but she was doing the thing she loved.

“There was an inverse relationship between how hard I worked on my art and how responsibly, economically, I managed all the other aspects of my life,” Griest said. “And as more and more of my friends started getting married, having children, a question really started haunting me: Is art enough to justify all of these sacrifices?”

In 2014, Griest began asking women from around the world if the sacrifices were worth the pursuit of art. From dancers to musicians to writers, she found each story so “revelatory” that she kept seeking them out.

“Listening to these women reflect on their own internal strife in art, their insecurities, their jealousies, their disappointments felt deeply cathartic,” Griest said. “But what truly moved me was hearing how their art had enabled their survival of externally imposed trauma, like racism, like misogyny, like genocide, like war. As the United States began its descent into authoritarian rule, their stories became a guide for how to power the group.”

Griest then transported the Amp across the world by sharing women’s stories about their relationship with art.

In India, Griest talked to revered classical Indian dancer Surupa Sen. Sen practices for 9 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is not paid a dime. Instead, the money goes back to her village to fund the teaching of the next generation of dancers.

When Griest asked Sen if art was enough, Sen said when one dances, they “don’t feel any difference between who is watching [them] and who [they] are. That balance is what [artists] live for.”

Griest’s next stop was Rwanda, where she met Hope Azeda, a playwright who was raised as a refugee in Uganda. Azeda composed a play to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, which created an emotional response for audiences watching it; yet, she turned this into a moment of community support.

Griest then met Māmā Mihirangi in New Zealand, whose ancestors, Griest explained, were deprived of a role in the economy that British colonizers established. Now, Mihirangi advocates for Indigenous women’s equality by using music as a platform.

“Meeting women like these helped me realize that by passing on the wisdom gained from my own teachers via my books, via my students, I, too, was upholding a lineage — the lineage of art,” Griest said.

Though she was upholding this lineage, Griest said amid her research, she still hadn’t decided if she want-



SKYLAR SEAVEY /STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Stephanie Elizondo Griest shares her journey learning the stories of female artists around the world Tuesday in the Amphitheater.

ed to have a child or not; her body made the decision for her. Two weeks into her book tour, she said she realized something was wrong, went to the doctor and found out she had a cancerous tumor in her ovaries.

As this was happening, Griest said she was mainly concerned about her hair, which she said was a feature that was “the most Mexican thing about [her].” She said she did “not feel part of [her] lineage without it.” Through this time of hardship, she reflected on the things she’d done throughout her life, knowing the statistic that fewer than half of the women diagnosed with ovarian cancer survive even five years.

“The shock I sustained was visceral, but when it wore off, an even more powerful emotion replaced it — a galactic shock of euphoria,” Gri-

est said. “Because all I have ever wanted to do in this life is travel the world and write about the people I encountered along the way, and that is exactly what I have done. I realized in this moment, art is enough because all we will ever have is this moment. If art is where we find the most meaning, the most joy, art is how we must feel it.”

Following her cancer treatment, Griest started belly dancing, where she felt she could reconnect to her body. She said belly dancing was a place where “being surrounded by so much visible beauty makes [her] forget the diminishment of [her] own.”

Griest closed with a reflection on her father and his relationship with drumming. Soon after she was cancer-free, her father was hospitalized. As he lost his ability to do

things like brush his teeth or slip on his shoes, he still knew how to play music with his drumsticks. Now, his granddaughter, Analina, plays the drums, and Griest said her father is “actively channeling his art through his granddaughter.”

Griest said that the passing down of art is not only inheritance, it is “immortality.”

“This all brings us back to the question of the moment: Is art enough?” Griest said. “Yes, because as these women around the world have shown, art is inheritance. Art is reconciliation. Art is dissent. Art is revenge. Art is medicine. Art is unzipping your body for a spiritual orgasm in the palace of the moon. Art is self-actualization. Art is lineage. Art is love. Art is immortality. Which now brings the question: What is art to you?”

Strautmanis highlights art, inspiration, connection at Obama Presidential Center

LAYLA VINSON
STAFF WRITER

In his Interfaith Lecture at 2 p.m. Tuesday in the Hall of Philosophy, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of the Obama Foundation Michael Strautmanis highlighted the importance of art, inspiration and connection. Honoring the legacy and impact of the Foundation reflected in the new Obama Presidential Center in Chicago, Strautmanis urged the audience to visit the Center and further uphold its values of community and connection — values he said Chautauqua Institution shares with the Center.

“I learned something last month when we opened the Center: It actually isn’t just the buildings and the park and the art that makes the Obama Presidential Center a special place. It’s the people,” Strautmanis said.

He said he has watched the Center, located in the South Side of Chicago in Jackson Park, come alive with diverse groups of people that join together for events ranging from family reunions to morning yoga. “The magic arrived as people started to come and make it their own.”

Strautmanis related the Center to Chautauqua because of their common purpose of creating a third space designed for community and gathering. Strautmanis jokingly deemed his presentation a “40-minute commercial,” hoping to convince listeners to visit the Center, and he spotlighted the impact of numerous artists who have collaborated to turn ideas to reality.

“Art is essential to democracy because democracy is based on the idea that everyone has the opportunity — the responsibility — to come together to create the world that they want to see,” Strautmanis said. “And in order to do that, you’ve got to be inspired. You’ve got to be inspired to dream outside of

your circumstances and to envision that better world.”

Tying into the Week Five Theme: “The Creative Spirit: Art, Resilience and the Soulful Work of Making,” Strautmanis referred to themes from *The Artist’s Way* by Julia Cameron. Noting the routine tendency of those who speak in spiritual terms to refer to God as creator yet seldom see creator as a literal term for artists, Cameron suggests readers take the term quite literally.

“We are made in the image of God,” Stautmanis followed. “And if we are made in the image of God, and we are image bearers, then we are creators, and we have that spark inside of us. Indeed, the story of Genesis tells us ... our first task in the garden — to cultivate, to create, to nurture and build the world the God bestowed upon us.”

Strautmanis underlined prominent creators and their innovations, such as Maya Lin, Martin Puryear, Marie Watt, Nick Cave, Mark Bradford, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and praised their works not only as inspirational, but crucial in designing spaces that can “ennoble and enable” connection and conversation on account of its campus-like structure overflowing with creativity. Many of the artworks these artists have made throughout their careers have been commissioned based on concepts and values rooted in pluralism, according to Strautmanis.

“[Art is] designed to pull you into a conversation.

That conversation might make you feel seen, known. That conversation might make you feel really uncomfortable and have you thinking about truths that you might rather ignore at that moment,” Strautmanis said.

Strautmanis referenced a simplistic explanation from a friend equating pluralism to an American potluck dinner and stressed the necessity of welcoming differing stories, traditions and beliefs to our own table.

Explaining why the center includes 28 original commissions of public art, 18 acres of parkland, a playground and more facilities that foster a welcoming third space for the community, Stautmanis deemed the expansive artwork as reflective of “the responsibility of people to build and create our future” and the Obama legacy.

Pursuing that future through work grounded in joy and grace, both values learned from his collaboration with Michelle and Barack Obama, Strautmanis highlighted the endeavors of three of young civic leaders: Neel McNeill, Legacy Russell and Chris Burton. Using creative mediums such as theater, contemporary art and education, each leader has worked to foster spaces of opportunity and drive forward community change across the nation.

“What do we train these leaders in? Values,” Strautmanis said. “We call our values ‘hope to action,’ and that is really the work of



GABRIEL MILBY /STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Michael Strautmanis, chief Corporate Affairs officer at the Obama Foundation, speaks Tuesday in the Hall of Philosophy.

the Obama Foundation. We start with hope, that inspiration, that idea sparked by creativity, sparked by beauty, sparked by anger at the world that we want to see but don’t yet live in today. But we don’t want people just to stay in hope; we’ve got to move to action.”

Citing the foundation’s involvement across countries, languages, disciplines, perspectives and some sources of action, Strautmanis urged the audience to be intentional

in their own lives as well.

While acknowledging that current issues can feel too big to tackle at an individual level, Strautmanis encouraged individuals to step outside of the small ecosystems that form on social media and seek out catalytic forms of collaboration and conversation.

“There are no easy answers in the world we see today, but I believe that there is only one choice, that is, to be inspired. That is, to have hope. That is, to

find and experience things that stir the soul. That is, to invest in art. That is, to see the divine in your world and in yourself, and to find others in a potluck nation; not asking them to place their beliefs on the side and only believe what you believe and see the world that you see — but with shared values and a spirit that invokes the very columns that we stand in today. That we do the work to create a better tomorrow,” Strautmanis concluded.



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On the hidden magic of festivals that have endured for over 100 years

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FROM PAGE ONE

DANCE

FROM PAGE 1

Returning to Chautauqua Institution to take the audience on this journey are five dancers, all of whom are previous School of Dance students and are either alumni of or current students at Indiana University.

“The dancing is very athletic,” Janes said. He said the roles of Heathcliff and Catherine are particularly demanding and “completely exhausting” for the dancers who assume these roles.

“They truly are like Olympic athletes,” he said.

Rehearsals originally began in early June in Indiana and then resumed two weeks before the performance, welcoming dancers Emily Hain, Sejal Janaswamy, Aaron Anker, Colin Canavan and Aram Hengen back to Chautauqua. The production will feature current students as well.

“I think it’s really cool that a group of dancers who previously were at the School of Dance here are now back to perform with the School of Dance,” Anker said. “I hope it’s inspiring for the kids in the School of Dance.”

Canavan said, despite it being four years since last working with Janes, it feels like no time has passed at

all. Further, Canavan said the music Janes selected for the ballet fits each scene wonderfully, while matching the energy and motion of the storyline.

“It’s essentially trying to portray that text into movement and still make it comprehensible to the audience, which is very complicated,” Janes said, adding that music is a driving force of the narrative.

The performance includes numerous English composers and also electronic music that enhances an edgy and compelling effect. In addition, throughout the ballet, there’s an underscore of wind blowing in the background, something Janes included to maintain the “cold, stark, grayish feeling” of the story.

“Sasha took the most important parts of the book and then tied it all together into a cut action type of ballet instead of it being a regular stream-of-consciousness ballet,” Hengen said.

Hain said working with Janes has been enjoyable. She said she sees him as a mentor because, although he expects a lot from the dancers during rehearsals, he’s very accommodating when welcoming new dancers into roles they’ve

never performed before and allowing them to take on the characters and choreography in ways that suit them best.

In addition to transforming the written storyline of *Wuthering Heights* into one of movement and passing the choreography and characters onto new dancers, the production itself had to be transformed to fit the limits of the Amphitheater.

Janes said the original production for Charlotte Ballet had large sets, including two 18-foot-tall walls that would move around the stage for scene changes. However, due to safety reasons and other technical concerns, the production is carrying on without major sets, which has created obstacles to set transitions.

“Hopefully their storytelling and the choreography stands on its own without the sets ...” Janes said. “There are things that you can hide when you’re setting scenes up, but everything’s just out in the open at Chautauqua. I had to really rethink technically how to get everything on and off the stage, how the performers enter and exit the stage.”

Jenni Propst, lighting designer and production manager, said these technical transformations have



SAM HUFFMAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chautauqua School of Dance alumni Aram Hengen and Sajal Janaswamy rehearse for the upcoming production of “Wuthering Heights” Monday in the Amphitheater.

been difficult, but she’s thrilled to see the story come to life, especially from dancers she once knew as students.

“Watching these professionals that I once knew as students, it’s so cool,” Propst said. “They are so phenomenal. I was distracted by how amazing they were during rehearsal yesterday, because they’re so gorgeous that I’m like, ‘Wait, I have to pay attention to my cues and not be enthralled with their dancing.’”



Anjali Paul, pre-professional dancer, Aaron Anker, alumnus, and Rebecca Janes, School of Dance faculty member, rehearse Monday.

MERCHANT

FROM PAGE 1

Merchant reflected on the importance of educational arts programs. When prompted on how such programs are primarily affected during public school budget cuts in an interview with *The New Yorker*.

“We’re killing our culture. I believe early child-

hood and elementary school are the most deeply rooted, character-forming experiences. And it’s not just what the children are learning; it’s what teachers can learn about the children, through watching them be creative. All of that is lost when the arts are removed from the daily lives of children,” Merchant said in the interview with *The New Yorker*.

In 2025, the National Head Start Association partnered with Merchant to deliver her “Cabinet of Wonder” program to classrooms all around the country. Encompassing 17 original songs inspired by the children’s poetry of Mother Goose, the Cabinet of Wonder curriculum offers children an art-centered early learning experience. Through music videos and interactive classroom activities, the multimedia project will educate nearly 750,000 students in classrooms and educational settings throughout the country.

The inception of “Cabi-

net of Wonder” arose nearly eight years ago, during Merchant’s initial time volunteering at Head Start. There, she held an original musical for students titled *Happy Birthday, Mother Goose!*

Soon, Merchant will bring the “Cabinet of Wonder” repertoire out of the classroom and into the Amphitheater during a free admission, all-ages concert. On Aug. 2, Merchant will be backed by the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra for “Cabinet of Wonder Live!” Conducted by Principal Pops Conductor Stuart Chafetz, the concert highlights music from Merchant’s forthcoming album of the same name, *Cabinet of*

“

We’re killing our culture. I believe early childhood and elementary school are the most deeply rooted, character-forming experiences. And it’s not just what the children are learning; it’s what teachers can learn about the children, through watching them be creative.”

—NATALIE MERCHANT

Musician, Art Educator

Wonder, set to release Aug. 21. Thursday, Merchant will be joined by Senior Vice President and Chief Program Officer Deborah Sunya Moore for the 4 p.m.

Masters Series Masterclass in Norton Hall. During their conversation, Merchant will reflect on using artistic mediums as a means to promote societal change.

THEOLOGY

FROM PAGE 1

Wigg-Stevenson said she is excited for the opportunity to spark thought in her audience about why art matters for the common good and how the artworks they love have transformed them. She said she has wanted to speak at Chautauqua Institution ever

since her husband, Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, delivered a lecture at the Institution in 2010.

Although not explicitly mentioned in her talk, Wigg-Stevenson said her scholarly lens and pedagogical approach are based on an interest in decolonizing higher education. She also said her teaching is rooted in her affinity for

connecting with people, which applies to the Chautauquan lecture audience.

Teaching as merely “an information dump” is something that Wigg-Stevenson said she fundamentally disagrees with.

“To me, teaching is about the relational connection, about helping them discover something inside themselves,” she said.

To the Chautauquan audience, Wigg-Stevenson suggested that individuals who feel creative may wish to come equipped with supplies — paper, pens, pencils or crayons — as an outlet for creative expression. She said when humans reimagine theology as a performance art, it becomes more playful, generative and transformative.

Hanesworth returns to Chautauqua for reading, Masterclass

NORA SMITH

STAFF WRITER

Emmy Award-winning poet and founding Poet Laureate Emerita of Buffalo Jillian Hanesworth will return to Chautauqua Institution for a reading and Masters Series Masterclass after serving as a guest judge for the 2026 Chautauqua Prize.

“I’ve gotten to work alongside Chautauqua in a few different capacities over the past few years,” Hanesworth said. “I’m just really grateful for what I’ve been able to learn from that community and for opportunities that Chautauqua gives me to grow as an artist.”

Hanesworth was first invited to Chautauqua in 2022 as part of the Interfaith Lecture Series, where she was scheduled to speak on the same day as Salman Rushdie, but her lecture was canceled following the attack on Rushdie. In 2023,

she was invited back to the Institution through the Department of Religion and later returned that season for the Kwame Alexander Writers’ Retreat and as a speaker for the 2025 Forum on Democracy.

“They just keep inviting me, and I keep coming back, and I love it,” Hanesworth said. “I try to get there at least once every summer. I’m just glad to be a small part of that community now.”

Hanesworth will return to Chautauqua for a reading of “The People’s Poet” at 12:15 p.m. today on the porch of Alumni Hall, in addition to teaching a Master Series Masterclass “Write On: Writing for a Revolution with Jillian Hanesworth” from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Thursday in the Alumni Hall Ballroom with a registration fee of \$45.

Interim Michael I. Rudell, Director of Literary Arts, Stephine Hunt said during

the reading, Hanesworth will talk about growing up in Buffalo, New York, and her journey in becoming a writer and the Inaugural Poet Laureate Emerita of Buffalo, in addition to reading her poem, “The People’s Poet.”

“She’s going to be talking about revolutionary writers like James Baldwin, and how she uses [revolutionary writers’] influence to write and how other people can use influential writers of revolutions and become revolutionary writers themselves,” Hunt said.

Hanesworth’s workshop description reads: “This workshop will offer participants the opportunity to grapple with the social and political climate we face as a nation and write poetry that encourages hope, truth and change.”

Hunt said audience members should come ready to learn about numerous things.



HANESWORTH

“I would say come ready to learn both about some of the historical revolutionary writers that we celebrate in the United States, that are both canonical and that they may not have heard of, and to be willing to dive into an understanding of how poetry itself lends itself to revolutionary ideas,” Hunt said.



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RELIGION

‘We have to know where we stand and on what we stand,’ says Jacque

When was the last time you were challenged — not just influenced, but the ground shifted under your feet and you had to decide what you would not yield, the Rev. Zina Jacque asked the congregation at the 9:15 a.m. Tuesday morning worship service in the Amphitheater. Jacque’s sermon title was “Put to the Test,” and the scripture readings were Mark 7:24–30 and Philippians 1:6.

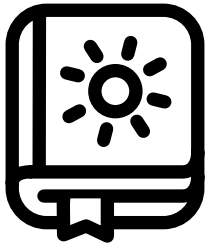
“Tests get your attention. All that keeps us comfortable goes away, and tests strip us of our support, our ability to stand up straight,” Jacque said. “We are reduced to what we really believe, what we would not trade or deal away. Tests define us, and in this time and place, we have to know where we stand and on what we stand.”

Jacque shared a photo of a painting by artist Amy Sherald titled “Trans Forming Liberty.” Sherald painted the official portrait of Michelle Obama for the National Portrait Gallery. In 2025 she was set to have a retrospective, “American Sublime,” at the Smithsonian Institution, and the show was to include “Trans Forming Liberty.” Jacque said, “Sherald has a gaze that the world did not know it needed.”

The Smithsonian wanted to remove the painting to appease the current administration. They proposed replacing the painting with a video of people reacting to the painting and discussing transgender issues, an idea Sherald rejected. The Baltimore Museum of Art stepped in to host “American Sublime” as the artist envisioned it.

The painting is of a transgender Black woman posed as the Statue of Liberty. Sherald knew what she would not make a deal on. Jacque said, “Sherald stood on the words of Emma Lazaraus at the bottom of the statue. She refused to show liberty for only some; she did not yield, and she rewrote the test.”

Jacque continued, “Another woman put to the test was



MORNING WORSHIP

COLUMN BY MARY LEE TALBOT

the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7:24–30. “She faced a test of institutional arrogance by Jesus.”

Jesus had gone into the territory of Tyre; he was tired and he thought he could hide. The woman who approached him “stood on the wrong side of everything — gender, ethnicity and religion,” said Jacque. Her daughter was sick and the test got her attention; she needed Jesus’ help, and she knew that what she stood for was her daughter’s healing.

“She begs, and this is where the test got real. The disciples in the gospel of Matthew tell Jesus to send her away, that she is a distraction. ‘Not here, not her, not now,’ they say,” Jacque said. “Jesus tells her, ‘it’s not right to give food to dogs.’ Jesus sounds like he needs a Snickers bar. He makes her the other. This is a new test with no grace.”

Jacque continued, “She takes Jesus’ framing of the question and answers in a way the test administrator never expected. She drew on what she knew to be true. Jesus responded in Matthew that her faith had made her daughter well, but in Mark he says her words have made her daughter well.

Sherald and the woman in Mark faced the test. “We are

being tested. You, I, we, are tested to choose the truth over misinformation, to find leaders who lead or who just spin courage, an Earth we treat as entrusted to us or an Earth we think is owed to us,” Jacque said. “Do we rise up and be living ancestors or spend down the inheritance and call it progress? Do we trade someone else’s dignity for our own ease? Are we compassionate only to those who live and love like we do?”

She continued, “Do you know on what you will not yield, what you stand for, what you stand on? We can’t stand strong if we don’t know what we stand for. We need to be prepared.”

The spiritual practice Jacque gave the congregation was a fill-in-the-blank statement: I stand for ____ and will not yield.

Jacque said, “It is simple to speak and simple to read, but is it simple to live? Thanks be to God, that when we leave this place we are not responsible to hold on to our statements with our own power. As Paul said, God who began good works in us will bring us to completion. The only power to fail is you. Pencils down, the test is done.”

The Rev. George Wirth, long time Chautauquan and retired Presbyterian minister, presided. The Rev. Tracy Hartman, host at the Baptist Headquarters with her husband and a pastor in Richmond, Virginia, read the scripture. “Sicilienne” by Gabriel Fauré was the prelude, played by Sonya Subbayya Sutton, interim director of music, on the piano and Owen Reyda, organ scholar, on the Massey Memorial Organ. The Motet Choir, under the direction of Sutton, and singing a capella, performed “The 23rd Psalm” by Bobby McFerrin. Sutton played “Postlude on ‘Aberystwyth,’” by Brenda Portman. Support for this week’s preaching and chaplaincy is provided by The Robert D. Campbell Memorial Chaplaincy and The Jackson-Carnahan Memorial Chaplaincy.

Reyda to perform second Massey Organ recital of the season

MARY LEE TALBOT
STAFF WRITER

The second of three recitals on the Massey Memorial Organ will feature organ scholar Owen Reyda at 12:15 p.m. today in the Amphitheater.

Reyda is in his third summer as an organ scholar. “Working at Chautauqua in this position has taught me efficiency, organization, skills for working with people and confidence. I am more willing to try things,

to be more open-minded and flexible.”

A rising senior at Oberlin College, Reyda said he tries to take advantage of academic opportunities as well as outside church music. He has a position as organist with a local church and plays a voluntary even song program. Academically, he is taking conducting classes and studies the continuo and harpsichord.

Reyda’s program will include Trio Sonata No. 1

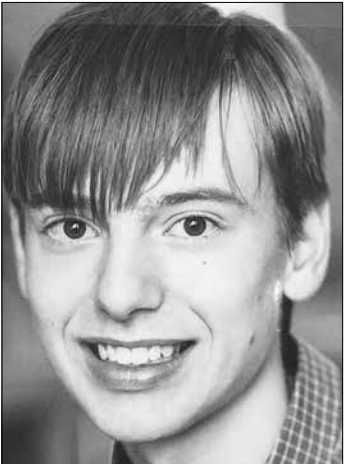
in E-flat major, BWV 525 by Johann Sebastian Bach; 6 Studien in kanonischer Form, Op. 56: No. 2, Mit innigem Ausdruck by Robert Schumann; 4 Skizzen für den Pedalflügel, Op. 58, No. 3: Lebhaft, also by Schumann; and Organ Symphony No. 6, Op. 59, IV. Adagio and V. Final by Louis Vierne.

“I am delighted to offer an organ recital on the Massey Organ during Week Five of the Summer Sea-

son,” Reyda said. “My recital will feature works from the German canon by Bach and Schumann, followed by movements from a work in the French canon by Vierende. I am sure that the remarkable versatility and expressivity of the Massey Organ will enable me to bring these works to life.”

He continued, “As organ scholar at Chautauqua, I have the privilege of playing this wonderful instrument nearly every day, and

I find that each time I play it, I discover something new about it — whether that is a colorful combination of stops or a detail I hadn’t noticed before. I have come to understand the deep appreciation the Chautauqua community holds for the Massey Organ. I am honored to help foster that appreciation and contribute to this rich Sacred Music tradition here at Chautauqua.”



REYDA

Morning worship services for Thursday, Friday

MARY LEE TALBOT
STAFF WRITER

Thursday’s worship in the Hall of Philosophy includes a conversation between the Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque and Chautauqua’s Senior Pastor, the Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton. Music is offered by piano duo Arlene Hajinlian and Sonya Subbayya Sutton, playing “Prelude, Cortege, et Air de Danse” as arranged by Claude Debussy from his opera *L’enfant Prodigue*, which was performed Monday evening in the Amphitheater. They will also play Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Arioso” and George Gershwin’s own arrangement of “I Got Rhythm.” As always, there is congregational singing throughout the service.

Friday’s preacher will

be the Rev. Sarah Griffith Lund, pastor of First Congregational Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, and author of *Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family, and Church*. She will speak on caring for those with mental disabilities. Music includes a piano work, “Hijaz Prelude” by Michael Harrison, as well as a hymn variation on “When Morning Gilds the Skies” by Joseph Barnby, arranged by Victoria Jicha, and “Vivace” from Telemann’s Sonata in F Major, both performed by flutist Barbara Hois and pianist Joseph Musser. The Motet Choir will sing René Clausen’s “Set Me as a Seal” and lead the congregation in singing music from around the world.

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CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Goes by taxi
- 7 Rotisserie part
- 11 Incite
- 12 Washed out
- 13 Arc unit
- 14 Land in the sea
- 15 Uses a foil
- 17 Waiting rewards
- 20 First letter
- 23 Math-ematician Lovelace
- 24 Faint
- 26 — amis (my friends)
- 27 Have debts
- 28 Apt. ad abbr.
- 29 Master opener
- 31 Suit accessory
- 32 “Sea-scape” playwright
- 33 Meat-rating org.
- 34 Starts
- 37 Singer
- 39 Leave base, perhaps
- 43 Came to
- 44 Baltimore player
- 45 Red-ink amount
- 46 Shake-speare poem
- DOWN
- 1 Bounder
- 2 Is for two
- 3 Marsh
- 4 Rides the waves
- 5 “Got it”
- 6 New driver, often
- 7 Sales pitches
- 8 Travel needs
- 9 Suffering
- 10 Casual shirt
- 16 Batter of verse
- 17 Lightning home
- 18 Perfect
- 19 Onetime banking items
- 21 Muggy
- 22 Be-wildered
- 24 Jabs
- 25 Reverent wonder
- 30 Detects
- 33 Bolt on a track
- 35 They may be inflated
- 36 Bull, in Barcelona
- 37 Cobbler’s tool
- 38 Pasture sound
- 40 Took the title
- 41 Flamenco cry
- 42 Rent out

P	A	R	K	A			O	B	J	E	T
E	Q	U	A	L			N	U	E	V	O
R	U	B	Y	T	U	E	S	D	A	Y	
M	A	E		A	F	T		I	N	S	
				B	R	O	W	N			
B	O	Z	O	S		O	A	S	I	S	
U	N	I	X						D	U	M
T	O	T	E	M		W	I	M	P	Y	
				S	U	G	A	R			
D	I	E		T	R	I		C	A	B	
A	S	T	E	A	R	S		G	O	B	Y
F	L	O	W	N			T	O	L	E	T
T	E	N	E	T			S	T	A	T	E

Yesterday’s answer

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11							12			
13							14			
			15			16				
17	18	19				20			21	22
23				24	25					
26				27				28		
29			30					31		
32							33			
					35	36				
37	38				39			40	41	42
43					44					
45					46					

7-29

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L’s, X for the two O’s, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-29 CRYPTOQUOTE

GZGAILR G WGSU LUB, GJJ

MJCTQSL JCCU JAUQ

MASQTCSUL. — ZAJHQS R U.

PXQLRQSRCI
Yesterday’s Cryptoquote: I GREW UP POOR, BUT I DIDN’T HAVE POOR DREAMS. — MAGIC JOHNSON

SUDOKU

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

		1			6			
	4			3	5	9	1	
6				7			4	
		9			7	4	6	
	3	8						
			3	2		7		8
	1	2		6		5		7
9	8			5		1		
					4		8	

Difficulty: ★★★ 7/29

1	9	5	3	7	2	4	8	6
8	6	2	4	9	1	5	7	3
7	3	4	8	5	6	1	2	9
4	5	9	1	2	8	3	6	7
3	7	8	9	6	5	2	1	4
6	2	1	7	3	4	8	9	5
2	1	6	5	4	9	7	3	8
5	8	7	6	1	3	9	4	2
9	4	3	2	8	7	6	5	1

Difficulty: ★★ 7/28

Miriam S. Reading/Richard H. Miller Fund supports Merchant

The Miriam S. Reading/Richard H. Miller Fund supports the lecture featuring Natalie Merchant at 10:45 a.m. today in Amphitheater.

Today’s lecture reflects the lasting vision of Miriam S. Reading and Richard H. Miller, whose philanthropy has strengthened Chautauqua Institution’s commitment to education, literature and public dialogue. Their endowment

supports two of the Institution’s signature program areas — the Chautauqua Lecture Series and performances by the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra — ensuring continued access to enriching cultural and intellectual experiences for generations to come.

Richard H. Miller’s connection to Chautauqua spans generations. A historic property owner and legacy donor,

his family has been part of the Institution’s story since its founding through his ancestor and co-founder, Lewis Miller. Richard carried that legacy forward through his own service as a longtime trustee and as vice president for Education during the 1970s. His wife, Miriam S. Reading, also played a vital leadership role as a member of the Chautauqua Foundation Board of Direc-

tors, demonstrating her deep commitment to the Institution’s philanthropic mission.

Together, Richard and Miriam exemplified a life-long dedication to Chautauqua through their leadership, generosity and vision. Chautauqua is deeply grateful for the enduring legacy they have created, one that continues to enrich the cultural and intellectual life of the Institution.

Greene Family Fund supports Chautauqua School of Dance

The Craig and Catherine Greene Family Fund generously supports the performance today, featuring the Chautauqua School of Dance: “Wuthering Heights,” directed by Bonnefoux McBride Artistic Director Sasha Janes, at 7:30 p.m. in the Amphitheater.

Established in 2014, The Greene Family Fund provides general support for the presentation of dance at Chautauqua Institution, including visiting companies and the School of Dance.

Dance has long been an essential part of Chautauqua’s artistic identity,

bringing together movement, storytelling and human expression in ways that inspire audiences of all ages. The generosity of the Greene Family Fund helps sustain a vibrant dance program that celebrates artistic excellence while nurturing the next genera-

tion of dancers.

Chautauqua is deeply grateful for the Greene family’s commitment to advancing the performing arts and for the lasting impact their support has on artists, students and audiences throughout the season.

Campbell Department of Religion Endowment supports Wigg-Stevenson

The Joan Brown Campbell Department of Religion Endowment supports the lecture by Natalie Wigg-Stevenson at 2 p.m. today in the Hall of Philosophy. Wigg-Stevenson is a theologian, minister, author and associate professor of contextual education at

Emmanuel College (Victoria University, University of Toronto).

Campbell was a trailblazer who broke barriers as the first woman to lead the Department of Religion and the first woman to serve on the Institution’s senior staff. She also

became the first ordained woman to serve as general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

A lifelong advocate for social justice, interfaith cooperation and compassionate dialogue, Campbell’s work with leaders including Mar-

tin Luther King Jr., and Carl Sagan reflected her commitment to building understanding across communities. Following her passing on March 28, 2025, at age 93, her legacy continues to inspire Chautauqua’s mission and future generations.

Fausnaugh, Moe and Bellowe Funds for Theater support ‘Best for Baby’

The Agnes H. and Hal A. Fausnaugh Fund for Theater Programming, The Helen Moe Fund for Theater and The Arnold and Jill Bellowe Fund for Theater proudly support this week’s performances of *Best for Baby*.

The Fausnaugh Fund honors the couple’s deep commitment to Chautauqua Theater Company. Hal served as a member of the Institution’s

Board of Trustees and the Chautauqua Foundation Board of Directors. In celebration of the Fausnaughs’ 50th wedding anniversary, members of the Friends of Chautauqua Theater established the fund, with Aggie and Hal also making a significant contribution. They played an integral role in founding the Friends organization, serving as its first secretary and treasurer.

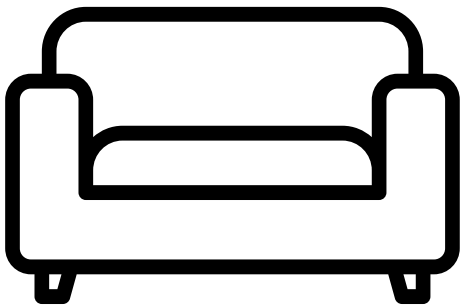
The Helen Moe Fund for Theater was established to provide vital support for Chautauqua Theater Company and its programming, honoring Helen Moe’s lasting dedication to the arts and the continued vitality of theater at Chautauqua.

Established in 1998, The Arnold and Jill Bellowe Fund for Theater reflects the Bellowes’ multigenerational

commitment to Chautauqua. Arnie served on the Board of Trustees from 1997 to 2005 and chaired the Theater Team during the Challenge and Renewal Campaigns. Jill served on the Board from 2007 to 2015, chaired the Program Policy Committee and was a founding member and former president of the Friends of Chautauqua Theater.



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THEATER

CTC props team decorates onstage world of ‘Best for Baby’

SOPHIA ROOKSBERRY
STAFF WRITER

In the northwest corner of Chautauqua Institution, hidden in the sea of practice shacks next to Roe Green Theater Center, Chautauqua Theater Company’s props shop houses a four-person team and decades of creations. Hyla Sue Stellhorn has served as CTC’s props supervisor since 2013 and is currently working on one of the most intensive productions of her Chautauqua career.

As with any show, the props design of *Best for Baby* began with reading the script. Before the season took off, Stellhorn and her team read through Sharyn Rothstein’s play and identified all of the items they were responsible for, factoring in conversations with the set designer and director.

“We take our list and we try to find everything we have in stock that will work for the show, and then we can assess what we need to make and what we need to buy,” Stellhorn said. “Then, we do a huge shopping trip at the top of the season while we have a little bit of breathing room.”

The decision to build or buy an object depends on a number of factors. For mainstage productions in Bratton Theater, an important consideration is the size of the prop and its distance from the audience.

“Because we have such a small house, usually we try to buy something because the audience sees it up close and we want it to look realistic,” Stellhorn said. “When it comes to something that doesn’t exist, like a giant baby boombox, then it’s definitely a build.”

The boombox in question was made out of a large tool case and adorned with knobs from an old stove, coffee creamer lids and wooden beads. Halfway through the building process, Head Prop Artisan Sebastian Tingle had already constructed a convincingly infantile prop.

Another piece Tingle worked on was the baby

walker for the play’s narrator, a personified corporation and man-child named Johnson (Brian Owen). The walker was constructed out of chair racks, a thrifted tray and industrial car straps, strong enough to hold an adult-sized baby and stimulating enough for any toddler.

While props like a toy boombox and triple-sized baby walker were built out of necessity, other prop pieces were built to preserve the historical accuracy of the play.

“This show goes ... ’70s, ’80s, 1800s,” Stellhorn said. “We have like four different styles of Johnson’s baby powder from these different eras.”

These bottles of asbestos-riddled baby powder were designed by Prop Artisan Catherine Rouselle. While Rouselle was challenged by the extensive research her objects required, others were tasked to make props with a specific function through some trial and error. One of these objects was a breakable plastic jar full of baby toys, designed by Assistant Prop Supervisor Donnie Woodard.

“[Owen] has to be able to carry it ... but then it also has to break on cue, and so it’s kind of a combination of stage trickery in terms of distance ... and stage light,” Woodard said. “... It’s actually held together with two sets of magnets that snap together, and then selective pieces of scotch tape that hold it together.”

Although lots of work was done during the rehearsal process, the props team’s responsibilities do not end when the final object is placed on the table backstage.

“In tech week, we’re seeing everything on stage with costumes,” Stellhorn said. “We had ... a yellow tablecloth that looked great in the rehearsal room, but now that we’re on stage, [the actress]’ dress has yellow in it, you have two white actors, so the director is like, ‘We need something with more contrast.’ ... We’re really just reacting



SKYLAR SEAVEY / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Prop Supervisor Hyla Sue Stellhorn and Head Prop Artisan Sebastian Tingle inspect a boom box prop they created for the Chautauqua Theater Company’s production of *Best for Baby* Monday outside of Bratton Theater Studios.

to stuff as we see it under stage light for the first time and seeing what works and what doesn’t work.”

Despite the heavy lift of *Best for Baby* — described by Stellhorn as the equivalent of “a musical without music” — the team members managed to find their fun, whether by dressing as babies during load-in or entertaining each other on road trips to pick up pieces out of state. No matter the level of challenge, Stellhorn continued to enjoy the props designing process with the same outlook as when she worked on her first show in college.

“As soon as I started, I was hooked and I didn’t want to do anything else but props,” Stellhorn said. “It’s never boring. It’s always something different and we always have new challenges.”

The next challenge for the team is to relocate the props shop to the newly constructed Roe Green Theater Center. The next mainstage production of the summer bears a much lighter load for the props team, and Stellhorn is hopeful progress will be made as the season winds down and baby Johnson will be able to store his blocks and bottles in a new home.



From left, Tingle, Prop Artisan Catherine Rouselle, Stellhorn and Assistant Prop Supervisor Donnie Woodard hold their favorite props from *Best for Baby* Monday in Bratton Theater.



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*

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2:00 INTERFAITH LECTURE SERIES. Micah Hendler. Hall of Philosophy and online

2:00 (2–4:30) THEATER. New Play Workshop 2: *The Motions* by Zora Howard. Bratton Theater

3:20 Cinema Film Screening. “Fackham Hall.” Fee. Chautauqua Cinema

3:30 Chautauqua Dialogues. (Programmed by the Department of Religion and IDEA Office). Baptist House

3:30 Chautauqua Dialogues. (Programmed by the Department of Religion and IDEA Office). United Methodist House

3:30 Creating an Inclusive Chautauqua & Beyond. Registration at chq.org/ally. Alumni Hall Prose Room

3:30 Creating an Inclusive Chautauqua & Beyond. Skill-Building Workshop. Alumni Hall Prose Room

4:00 School of Music: Chamber Music Concert #4. Fletcher Music Hall

4:00 School of Music: Piano Faculty Masterclass. Sara Davis Buechner. Sherwood-Marsh 101

4:00 (4–6) Play CHQ. (Programmed by Youth and Family Programs). Juggling with Zach Fish. Heinz Beach

4:00 Masters Series Masterclass. “Art as a Tool for Social Change.” Natalie Merchant. Fee. Norton Hall

4:30 Airband. Amphitheater

4:30 Masters Series Masterclass: Write On: Writing for a Revolution with Jillian Hanesworth. Fee. Alumni Hall Ballroom

5:30 Cocktails and Cole Porter - The Album (Ticketed event). CWC House. 30 South Lake

6:00 Cinema Film Screening. “Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk.” Fee. Chautauqua Cinema

6:15 Chautauqua Choir rehearsal. Elizabeth S. Lenna Hall

6:30 School of Music: Chamber Music Concert #5. Fletcher Music Hall

6:30 Chautauqua Dialogues. (Programmed by the Department of Religion and IDEA Office). Disciples of Christ House

6:30 Pre-Concert Lecture with David Levy. Ida A. Vanderbeck Chapel

7:00 “Art as Faith Formation, an Introduction to the St. John’s Bible.” The Rev. Dr. Tracy Hartman, chaplain. Baptist House 35 Clark

7:00 Pastor in the Parlor Program. The Rev. Castillo will reflect on the Theme of the week, “Art and Artists Against the Odds.” UM House

7:00 Vespers. Lutheran House. 25 Peck

7:00 Vespers. Presbyterian House Chapel

7:30 THEATER. Best for Baby. Fee. Bratton Theater

8:00 AMPHITHEATER SPECIAL. Sounds of Strauss. Rossen Milanov, conductor

- Richard Strauss. Also sprach Zarathustra, op. 30
- Richard Strauss. Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transfiguration), op. 24

8:50 Cinema Film Screening. “Fackham Hall.” Fee. Chautauqua Cinema

10:00 THEATER. Sally Love & Friends: Sleep is the New Sex. Fee. Roe Green Theater Center

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potter; we are all the
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beyond measure,
Lord; do not
remember our
sins forever.”**

Isaiah 64: 8-9



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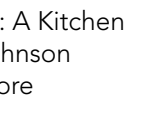
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