

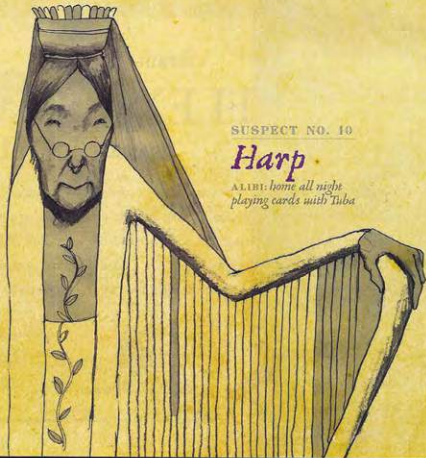


THE BERKELEY REP MAGAZINE
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LEMONY SNICKET'S

THE
COMPOSER
IS DEAD



SUSPECT NO. 10

Harp

ALIBI: home all night
playing cards with Tuba

encore
arts programs


 A MISSIVE FROM

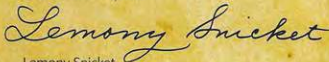
LEMONY SNICKET

Dear Friend of Berkeley Rep,

IF YOU WERE TO STAND ON A STREET CORNER AND ASK RANDOM PEOPLE what they thought about the importance of theatre, these people would ask you to please leave them alone. If you persisted, these people would call the police and report that someone was harassing strangers on the street, and before long you would find yourself first in a courthouse and then in prison. It would be a difficult adjustment for you, but eventually you would manage to avoid complete emotional collapse by taking up stone carving. Your little sculptures of squirrels and accountants would charm the warden, and after your early release you would find a more or less everlasting joy and peace by marrying someone in the snake-charming profession.

This is why theatre is important: because it presents a reflective vision of the world that is vastly more fascinating and alluring than the one in which we're stuck. Again and again, Berkeley Repertory Theatre has found a way to bring the dreams and ideas of a staggering spectrum of artists to dazzling and giddy life onstage. Despite occasional lapses—for instance, the current show *The Composer is Dead*, which promises to be as distressing and upsetting as anything else I have written—Tony Taccone, Susie Medak, and all the other successful and dynamic impresarios at Berkeley Repertory Theatre deserve our robust support, a phrase which here means “money.” Please give some to them. Otherwise they might find themselves wandering the streets, talking of theatre, and we all know what happens then.

With all due respect,


 Lemony Snicket

Lemony Snicket

Make your gift today.

Click berkeleyrep.org/give
or call 510 647-2907.

Double your support!

Throughout the run of *Lemony Snicket's The Composer is Dead*, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar by our sponsors Bank of America and Target. Make your gift today and double your impact on great theatre.

A different kind of mystery Just what do you call this type of show, anyway?

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS BY PAULINE LUPPERT

SO WHAT IS LEMONY SNICKET'S *THE COMPOSER IS DEAD*? IS IT A MUSICAL? A play? A puppet show? How about a movie? To get some answers, Pauline Luppert, Berkeley Rep's multimedia producer, interrogated Artistic Director Tony Taccone.

So, what is Lemony Snicket's *The Composer Is Dead*?

[Tony laughs.] *The Composer Is Dead* is probably the most ambitious show I've ever really worked on, from a variety of angles. The show is based on Lemony Snicket's book *The Composer Is Dead*—a deceptively slim little volume, which chronicles the fact that a composer has been murdered. Lemony Snicket wanted to teach children what orchestras do and build appreciation for the classical music that he loved. He went out and collared his friend Nathaniel Stookey, who is a living composer, and the two of them dreamed up this story and symphonic landscape. It was published with a recording of the music by the San Francisco Symphony. Then these guys said to us, "Let's make a theatre piece based on this book."

By that time they had already partnered with Phantom Limb—who are these expert puppeteers and designers—to create the characters that were going to be in this world. I think Jessica is a kind of genius and Erik Sanko is a brilliant puppeteer.

When we first talked about producing a play, the script only lasted a half an hour. We said, "Well, we have to have a piece that lasts an evening," which is at least an hour. So, we came up with this idea for an interactive film. Please, don't ask me how or why.

An interactive film? How? Why?

[Tony laughs.] It seemed like a totally inspired choice. In order to introduce you to a live event—the magic of living, breathing theatre—we're going to show you a movie. Right? It makes absolutely no sense, except it absolutely does make sense in the world of Lemony Snicket, who is completely eccentric, wildly imaginative and clever, and hysterically funny.

As a director, how was it different working on a film from working on stage?

Being on a film set is like being in tech—for what feels like the rest of your life [laughing]. Tech is usually the most odious part of theatre rehearsal. It's like five days of drudgery. Film is essentially a much more technical medium—driven by lights, sound, and editing. It's a question of getting shots—the right shot and the right take.

The amount of work that goes into a short, little movie is phenomenal. There's a different pressure and there's a different kind of exhilaration that comes from meeting that pressure.

It was a sort of an on-the-job learning experience for me. Because I'd never made a movie, I talked to you, and I talked to my son Jorma and the first thing Jorma said was, "Yo!"



scenes from the movie set of *The Magic of Living, Breathing Theatre*, the film that opens the performance.

Top The view through the camera monitor

Mbove Puppeteer Erik Sanko manipulates a puppet for the camera

Opposite page Director of Photography Martin Rosenberg works out a shot



should get a really good DP, a director of photography, because the DP is your right hand, your conduit into the technical world." It was really good advice. I needed help — of an expert kind.

Where did you find expert help for the film shoot?

Our producer, Lisa Cook from Pixar, found Martin Rosenberg, our venerable and distinguished DP. The thing that attracted me to Marty's work is that he'd had a tremendous amount of experience shooting in miniature, which is a totally unique skill set. I had talked to a lot of people, but based just on the questions Marty asked in the first three minutes of our conversation, I knew this was our guy. He knew what we were after and what he was going to do to get it.

We shot at the Kerner Studios in San Rafael, which was formerly ILM, George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic. That in itself was an honor — and trippy because so many great movies have been shot there! You're following in the hallowed footsteps of some of the great masters of film.

The guys on the crew, they knew I was sort of wide-eyed, so they would bring me in the next room and say, "Hey let me show you the big aquarium we built for *Pirates of the Caribbean*." I was like a kid in a candy store.

What was the best part of working on such a complex project?

All the artists involved are super talented. It was really joyful to try and match my imagination with theirs. It's a marriage of some really interesting artists, in a setting where I don't think we've ever done anything like this.



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Berkeley Rep School of Theatre students in two of the many classes offered each quarter

Lemony Snicket and the School of Theatre make beautiful music together

BY CARI TURLEY

HOW DO YOU TURN AN EVENING at the theatre into a full-blown, immersive experience? That's the challenge Berkeley Rep undertakes every time we bring a new production to the stage. It's the reason behind all those extras we provide for our patrons: docent presentations, Page to Stage discussions with playwrights and other artists, theatre classes and workshops, and interactive lobby displays like the graffiti wall at last year's *American Idiot*. We do it because we think the theatregoing experience doesn't begin and end with the curtain—we believe that good theatre leaves you wanting more, whether it's a deeper understanding of the material or just to linger in the world of the play a little longer.

After 43 seasons, we've gotten pretty good at doing these events for adults (if we do say so ourselves), but we found ourselves facing a new challenge when we considered the family audience for *Lemony Snicket's The Composer is Dead*. How do we design an experience that appeals to all ages? Fortunately, we happen to know some people who are experts at engaging both children and adults with the world of drama: the folks next door at Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre.

The staff at our School of Theatre devised a series of activities to immerse

children in the eccentric world of Lemony Snicket, including hands-on workshops, video contests, a study guide, and captivating pre- and post-show activities that put kids in the director's (or, in this case, composer's) seat.

"We wanted to expand the theatregoing experience along the lines of what we already offer," says Rachel Fink, director of the School of Theatre. "This was an opportunity to add value and make a deeper connection to our audience."

Many of the programs are really larger-scale versions of the School's existing ones. "We wanted to take programs that have proven to be very successful and modify them to this particular project," Rachel notes. "For example, we have a great children's program called Target® Story Builders—a classroom program that helps promote literacy and communication skills—that provided some early inspiration for the post-show events."

School Administrator Emika Abe is quick to point out that the School isn't just for kids: "This show presents a unique opportunity to reach the young and young at heart," she says. "Every day, we serve students from 3 to 93. That's really our core constituency—lifelong learners of every age."

Suspicious (yet free) activities

Saturday Sock Puppet Palooza!

Arrive an hour before the matinee and become a puppeteer. Bring a sock—or purchase one on site—and craft a beloved puppet. Create your own original character that dances to the beat of its own drum.

Sunday Sound Symphony!

Stay after the matinee to create a symphony of sounds—without instruments. Berkeley Rep's teaching artists conduct members of the audience as if they were sections of the orchestra, from strings to percussion.

In your classroom!

Bring the *Composer* to life in your elementary school. Target® Story Builders introduces students to theatre and helps develop literacy and communication skills. Turn the classroom into a living, breathing theatre! Call the School of Theatre at 510 647-2972.

For information about more events, click berkeleyrep.org.

The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre offers classes for youth, teens, and adults. If you're interested in learning more, click berkeleyrep.org/school.

BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE
TONY TACCONI, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
SUSAN MEDAK, MANAGING DIRECTOR

presents
the world premiere of

LEMONY SNICKET'S THE COMPOSER IS DEAD
MUSIC BY NATHANIEL STOOKEY

PRESENTED WITH
THE MAGIC OF LIVING, BREATHING THEATER

CONCEIVED FOR THE STAGE BY
LEMONY SNICKET **PHANTOM LIMB**
JESSICA GRINDSTAFF & ERIK SANKO
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

TONY TACCONI & GEOFF HOYLE

**THE MAGIC OF LIVING,
BREATHING THEATER**

WRITTEN BY
LEMONY SNICKET

FILM PRODUCED BY
LISA COOK

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
MARTIN ROSENBERG

UNDERSCORING BY
MATTHEW COMPTON & ASA TACCONI

**THE COMPOSER
IS DEAD**

WRITTEN BY
LEMONY SNICKET

MUSIC BY
NATHANIEL STOOKEY

RECORDED MUSIC ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED AND PERFORMED BY
THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

CONDUCTED BY
EDWIN OUTWATER

SET, COSTUME DESIGN, AND PUPPETRY
JESSICA GRINDSTAFF AND ERIK SANKO

LIGHTING & PROJECTION DESIGN
ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS

SOUND DESIGN
JAMES LEBRECHT

STAGE MANAGER
MICHAEL SUENKEL

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
KIMBERLY MARK WEBB

DIRECTED BY
TONY TACCONI

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LEMONY SNICKET'S THE COMPOSER IS DEAD

FEATURING
THE COMPOSER IS DEAD
AND
THE MAGIC OF LIVING, BREATHING THEATER

WITH
GEOFF HOYLE

PUPPETEERS
JENNY CAMPBELL
FRANKIE CORDERO
MARTA MOZELLE MACROSTIE
EDOUARD SANKO
RONNY WASSERSTROM

ADDITIONAL VOICES
Bettina Devin, Roger L. Jackson, Jarion Monroe, Asher Terra, and Erin-Kate Whitcomb

The Composer is Dead and The Magic of Living, Breathing Theater
are performed together without an intermission.

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Geoff Hoyle*

**YOUR CHARMING HOST
AND THE INSPECTOR**



Geoff has played a squirrel in *Wind in the Willows*, a bird on Broadway (the original Zazu in *The Lion King*, Drama Desk nomination), and a dog off-Broadway (The Dog in Tony Taccone's production of Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's

opera, *Brundibar*, which began at Berkeley Rep). An accomplished mime, he clownes as Mr. Sniff alongside Bill Irwin and Larry Pisoni in San Francisco's Pickle Family Circus, and with Circus Flora and Cirque du Soleil. Geoff created the award-winning solo shows *Boomer!* and *Feast of Fools* and later wrote *The Convict's Return*, *The First Hundred Years*, and *Geni(us)*, all commissioned by Berkeley Rep. He has also appeared at Berkeley Rep in *The Alchemist*, *Endgame*, *Rhinoceros*, and *Volpone*, among others. Geoff has received a number of National Endowment for the Arts mime grants and a National Theatre Artist Residency Program/Pew Fellowship to translate and perform the plays of Feydeau. He has played at many regional theatres and appears regularly with Teatro ZinZanni as the Chef. His film appearances include *Smooth Talk* and Robert Altman's *Poppye*. His latest original solo show, *Geezer*, opens at The Marsh in San Francisco in March 2011.

Jenny Campbell

PUPPETEER



Jenny is a New York City-based puppet theatre artist and teacher. Her recent puppeteering credits include *The Devil You Know* with Phantom Limb Company at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York City

and Basil Twist's *Hansel and Gretel* at Houston Grand Opera. She will be performing in Basil Twist's *Petrushka* in Philadelphia this spring.

Frankie Cordeiro

PUPPETEER



Frankie grew up in Chicago and Oak Park, Illinois, where his magician/clown father and supportive mother nurtured an early love of puppetry and vhs filmmaking. For the past 10 years, he has worked as a freelance puppeteer, designer, builder, and director in New York City. His theatre credits include

The Adding Machine with Hystopolis Productions in Chicago, *Bride with Lone Wolf Tribe* at Performance Space 122, *Ko'blou* at La MaMa ETC with Tom Lee, *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Walking with Dinosaurs* (national tour), and Blair Thomas & Company's touring production of *Pierrot Lunaire*, a staging of Arnold Schoenberg's 1912 composition. His TV credits include *It's a Big Big World*, *Jack's Big Music Show*, *Oobi*, and *Sesame Street*. He has also directed and produced several films and music videos, including "The Whole World and You" by Tally Hall (Atlantic Records). For more information, visit frankiecordero.com.

Marta Mozelle MacRostie

PUPPETEER



Marta is a New York City-based puppeteer, puppet builder, theatre educator, and jazz vocalist. Her off-Broadway credits include ensemble puppeteer in *Puss in Boots* at The New Victory Theater, directed by Moisés

Kaufman, and puppet creation for Handcart Ensemble's production of *Homer's Odyssey*. Her other New York City credits include marionettes in *The Devil You Know*, directed by Ping Chong & Company in collaboration with Phantom Limb, and ongoing appearances with Chinese Theatre Works. Marta's own short-form puppet works have been performed at HERE Arts Center and The Tank in New York City; the 2009 National Puppetry Festival in Atlanta, GA; The O'Neill National Theatre Institute in Waterford, CT; Perishable Theatre in Providence, RI; and The Puppet Showplace Theatre in Boston, MA. Marta holds a degree in puppetry and music from the University of Massachusetts. While a student, she interned with the puppet company Los Títeres de Binéfar in Spain, and studied at the University of Connecticut's Puppetry Arts Program.

Edouard Sanko

PUPPETEER



Having lived over 16 years in France, Edouard decided to return to his home country and settle in New York in November 2009. After working for Phantom Limb in the fall and winter of 2009, he worked on the marionette play *The Devil You Know* at La MaMa ETC, directed by Ping Chong with marionettes, set design, and score by Phantom Limb. In August 2010, he acted in the short film *Between Ethyl and Regular*, directed by Adrien Cotlier. He is very much looking forward to working on *Lemony*

Snicket's The Composer is Dead, a new and challenging theatrical production of which he is proud to be a part.

Ronny Wasserstrom

PUPPETEER



Ronny pulled Daniel Webster's strings to critical acclaim in Phantom Limb/Ping Chong's *The Devil You Know*. He is a longtime marionettist for Puppetworks in Brooklyn and an actor/puppeteer/singer/dancer for the Czechoslovak

American Marionette Theatre, where he will be the lead in *Mr. M* next April. Ronny founded Playdate Puppets, which performs for parties and at major parks nationwide. Check out the fan page on Facebook or contact Ronny at Warsh29@hotmail.com.

Bettina Devin*

VOICE-OVER

Bettina's work includes roles for Disney/Pixar, LeapFrog, MGM, Paramount, and major network sitcoms. Best known as Idina Menzel's mom in the film version of *Rent*, she recently shot starring and principal roles in seven features, including a starring role as a Cruella de Ville-like villainess in *Doggie Boogie* (which will be released in fall 2011). For *Film Noir*, which was shown at Cannes Film Festival 2007, she voiced five characters in addition to the female lead. Her CD, *Dangerous Type*, is continually played on jazz radio stations in the United States. Bettina's triumph over the voice-crippling spasmodic dysphonia has made her a natural to coach people on pursuing their dreams.

Roger L. Jackson

VOICE-OVER

Best known as the voice of Ghostface in Wes Craven's *Scream* films and the villainous Mojo Jojo on *The Powerpuff Girls* cartoon show, Roger studied acting at the Academy Theatre in Atlanta. His most noted stage roles have been Caliban in *The Tempest*, Lalo in *The Criminals*, Peter in *The Zoo Story*, and Smirnov in *The Bear*. He is also an award-winning director and a member of the Puppeteers of America.

Asher Terra

VOICE-OVER

Asher Terra is thrilled to be joining Berkeley Rep for the first time. She graduated from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 2009, where she received her BFA in dance and choreography. She is a native of the Bay Area, where she trained in dance for nine years with Marin Dance Theatre and in voice with San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Asher began her voice-over career at the age of 10, working

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