



SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

JUNE 25 – JULY 19

FISHER CENTER LAB CIVIS HOPE
COMMISSION/WORLD PREMIERE

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Bard

Dear Friends,

Welcome to SummerScape 2026! The festival opens with two performances from Fisher Center LAB, our residency and commissioning program: the world premiere of ***Suddenly Last Summer***, an operatic setting of Tennessee Williams's taut thriller by renowned composer Courtney Bryan; and ***Lucinda Childs: Momentary Reprieve***—a one-of-a-kind evening of new and iconic dances by Lucinda Childs, one of the leading choreographers of our time.

Both productions exemplify LAB's commitment to realizing the highest dreams of great artists, and to bringing you—our audiences—daring and glorious performances that you can only experience at the Fisher Center.

I first met Courtney Bryan almost two decades ago when she was a student in a collaboration course I taught at Columbia University, and I've been in awe of the range and humanity of her musical voice ever since. When director Daniel Fish (whose many LAB productions include *Aquanetta*, *Most Happy*, and his legendary *Oklahoma!*) sent me the original play of *Suddenly Last Summer*, I was struck by the musicality and intensity of Williams's writing, and had a sense it needed to be not just spoken but *sung*. Courtney's vocal music is peerless, and we were thrilled when she agreed to transform the play with a ravishing score that straddles opera, theater, and melodrama.

The production—the first of our Civic Hope Commissions—unites many longstanding Fisher Center LAB artists, including soprano Mikaela Bennett (for whom Courtney wrote the role of Catherine), designers Marsha Ginsberg, Terese Wadden, Garth MacAleavey, and Joshua Thorson (with Tony Award-nominated lighting designer Stacey Derosier joining the team), music director Nathan Koci, movement director Beth Gill, casting director Taylor Williams, and associate director Mikhaela Mahony. It's a delight to welcome the great actors Tina Benko and Brandon Lindsay, both making their LAB debuts, and for us to be partnering with Opera Philadelphia, where *Suddenly Last Summer* will perform in October.

SummerScape is a vast operation, and I'd like to salute all my colleagues in the Fisher Center's production, producing, and administrative departments, as well as our summer seasonal teams, for their tireless work in bringing the festival to you. Above all, thanks to you for joining us today. We wish you a wonderful time in the theater, and hope you will return again this summer, for another LAB production, or the SummerScape Opera, the Bard Music Festival, or in the Spiegel tent.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gideon Lester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gideon" being more prominent and the last name "Lester" following in a similar style.

Gideon Lester

Artistic Director and Chief Executive

Fisher Center at Bard

Chair Jeanne Donovan Fisher

Artistic Director and Chief Executive Gideon Lester

Executive Producer and Chief Operating Officer Aaron Mattocks

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

Fisher Center LAB Civic Hope Commission/World Premiere

Music by Courtney Bryan

Libretto by Gideon Lester and Daniel Fish based on the play by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Daniel Fish

Music Direction and Supervision by Nathan Koci

June 25 at 7:30 pm

June 27 at 7:30 pm

June 28 at 3 pm

June 30 at 7:30 pm

July 1 at 3 pm

July 3 at 3 pm

July 5 at 3 pm

July 8 at 3 pm

July 9 at 7:30 pm

July 11 at 3 pm

July 12 at 3 pm

July 15 at 3 pm

July 16 at 7:30 pm

July 18 at 3 pm

July 19 at 3 pm

LUMA Theater

Presented by special arrangement with The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

COMPANY

Catherine Holly	Mikaela Bennett
Mrs. Venable	Tina Benko
Dr. Cukrowicz	Branden Lindsay
Mrs. Holly	Miriam Silverman*
George	Nick Westrate*
Choral Ensemble	Young People's Chorus of New York City
Painter	Lucy Tarquinio
Catherine Holly (Cover)	Amanda Sheriff

*The performances of George and Mrs. Holly have been pre-recorded.

ORCHESTRA

Piano and Associate Music Director	Sean Forte
Tenor Trombone	Freddie Frederickson
Bass	Eleonore Oppenheim
Cello	Leah Coloff
Flute I	Isabel Lepanto Gleicher
Flute II	Alice Jones
Percussion	Clara Warnaar
Saxophone	Ken Thomson
Viola	Sunjay Jayaram
Violin I	Sarah Goldfeather
Violin II	Darian Donovan Thomas

CREATIVE TEAM

Associate Director	Mikhaela Mahony
Scenic Design	Marsha Ginsberg
Costume Design	Terese Wadden
Lighting Design	Stacey Derosier
Projection Design	Joshua Thorson
Audio Design and Mixing	Garth MacAleavey
Movement Direction	Beth Gill
Hair and Wig Design	Bobbie Zlotnik, Anne Ford-Coates
Makeup Design	Anne Ford-Coates
Producer	Carter Edwards
Casting Director	Taylor Williams, CSA
Assistant Director	Danica Selem
Stage Manager	Jason Kaiser
Assistant Stage Manager	Sam Forrest
Literary Consultant	Thomas Keith
Speech Consultant	Gigi Buffington
Dialect Consultant	Sam Lilja
Assistant Scenic Designer	Michael Lewis

Assistant Scenic Designer	Erica Zhang
Assistant Costume Designer	Adeline Santello
Assistant Lighting Designer	Tyler Dubuc
Assistant Lighting Designer	Manny Delgado
Music Assistant	Jenia Marquez
Company Manager	Madie Reilly

CHORAL ENSEMBLE

Young People's Chorus of New York City

Artistic Director and Founder	Francisco J. Núñez
Conductor	Ahra Cho
Conductor	Emma Sway
Assistant Conductor	Jiabao Guo

CHORISTERS

Avery Bayani, Leo Bravo, Landon Chen, Chaitanya Dhall, Julien Jobson-Larkin, Suisei Nakamura, Omario Napiza, Ugenio Napiza, Loic Nguyen, Maximilian Richert-Wang, Aarav Thum, William Xu

Funding

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Additional commissioning support was provided by the Howard & Sarah D. Solomon Foundation and the Henry L. Kimelman Family Foundation. The commissioning of Courtney Bryan received funding from OPERA America's Opera Grants for Women Composers program, supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Suddenly Last Summer was developed with residency support from the Camargo Foundation and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM).

Special Thanks

Jason Baruch, Francois Battiste, Sonya Belaya, Jordan Bellow, Elizabeth Blaufox, Steven Bradshaw, Julie Chénot and the Camargo Foundation, Laura Cocks, Rashard Deleston, Joel Dyson, Amy Garapic, Massimo Greco, John Habich, Daniela Hart, Nick Hawrylko, Ethan Helm, Clara Kennedy, Alex Koi, Morgan Mastrangelo, Dami Park, Liz Perlman, Jacob Pooler, Michael Rudko, Andrew Solomon, Joshua Stewart, and Uptown Works; Amy Cassello, John Hoobyar, Jenifer Leeson, Brian Sciarra, Bofang Zhou and everyone at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM); Nancy Bloom, Lindsay Bogaty, Francisco Nunez, and the staff of Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

SYNOPSIS

Suddenly Last Summer takes place in Mrs. Violet Venable's grand home in the Garden District of New Orleans. Mrs. Venable is showing a young brain surgeon, Dr. Cukrowicz, around the tropical garden created by her late son, Sebastian. Sebastian died last summer while traveling with his cousin, Catherine Holly. Since Catherine returned to New Orleans, she has been obsessively recounting the events that led to Sebastian's death and has been committed to a private mental asylum, St. Mary's, at her aunt's expense.

Mrs. Venable tells the doctor of her close relationship with her late son, a poet who wrote just one poem a year. She recalls a trip that she and Sebastian took to the Galapagos Islands, where they observed birds of prey devouring sea turtles on a beach.

The doctor tells Mrs. Venable of his pioneering work in brain surgery at Lion's View, a state asylum. He has developed an experimental lobotomy procedure, for which he needs funding. Mrs. Venable offers to support his research—if he agrees to perform a lobotomy on Catherine that will prevent her from telling the story that threatens to destabilize the Venable family. She has brought him to the house to evaluate Catherine and to persuade him to undertake the operation.

Catherine arrives at the house, in the care of nuns from St Mary's. As she waits to meet her aunt and the doctor, she again begins the story of Sebastian's death in the beach town of Cabeza de Lobo, as the nuns attempt to restrain her. Catherine reveals that Sebastian was homosexual, and that she—like his mother before her—was procuring young men for him when he died.

Catherine's mother and brother, George, arrive and try to silence Catherine. Their reason is in part financial; Sebastian's will contains a substantial provision for Catherine and George, which Mrs. Venable is planning to contest if Catherine continues telling her story.

Mrs. Venable and the doctor return. Catherine realizes that he is from Lion's View, the State Asylum, and understands what her aunt is planning to do to her. Catherine confides in the doctor that Sebastian rescued her and took her to Europe last year, after a stranger had tried to assault her during a Mardi Gras ball.

The doctor prepares to examine Catherine. He injects her with a truth serum, and she recounts the entire story of Sebastian's demise in Cabeza de Lobo.

WRITING THE VOICE OF TRUTH: AN INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER COURTNEY BRYAN

This interview with Courtney Bryan is reprinted courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes, the composer's publisher.

Can you describe the conceptual ideas behind the piece and how they shaped the decision to create a hybrid opera-play format, where singers and actors share the stage?

CB: The drama centers on uncovering the truth of what happened to Sebastian—a character we never actually meet since he dies before the play begins. The only person who knows what really happened to Sebastian is his cousin Catherine, whom the rest of the characters are trying to silence.

We began exploring a conceptual idea that director Daniel Fish suggested: Catherine, as the “voice of truth,” would be the only character who sings, while the other characters are speaking roles. In this way, the piece was developed through a collaborative process with the creative team, drawing on a music-theater model of development.

In addition to Catherine singing, the work includes a boys' choir. We chose to specifically include the voices of preteen boys, which are integral to the story, at times representing the group of boys Sebastian exploited, and who ultimately bring about his demise.

What's the dramatic impact of combining speech and singing in performance?

CB: I wrote the score knowing I needed to balance the music and acting happening onstage simultaneously, without one form taking precedence over the other. It's like you're watching two scenes at the same time.

For example, Catherine—who is being held in a mental institution—is onstage while her aunt describes her as babbling and incoherent. As the other actors speak, Catherine sings these long notes that don't form complete, intelligible phrases. The audience sees and hears her, but her presence feels abstract because you don't understand what she's saying. The speech and singing exist in different universes, and that juxtaposition makes Catherine feel both present and removed.

Timing was also a very important consideration—like, how to balance the pace of spoken text with sung text. Speech moves more quickly, while singing, even at a fast tempo, is musical and spread out. I had to create a score with flexibility built in for the different types of performance being layered.

How did you approach writing music for Catherine, the “voice of truth”?

CB: Over the course of the opera, Catherine goes from singing really stretched-out, unintelligible phrases to, ultimately, speaking her truth. After being given a truth serum, she begins to deliver text more quickly and clearly, almost as if speaking (though she's singing throughout). It's a gradual progression that builds to a climax in Scene 4.

As she begins singing her truth, the music becomes very dramatic. I loved the idea of exploring the full range of her voice. There are moments when she's sharing some very disturbing details, and the music moves into her low register, giving her a grounded, controlled quality. At these

big moments in the opera, I wanted Catherine to move between different modes of expression—something between babbling and shouting out her truth.

What's the significance of birdsong in this opera?

CB: Birds are referenced throughout Tennessee Williams's play. In his notes, he includes specific descriptions of which birds are heard and the kinds of sounds they make. While they aren't main characters, they form a presence in the world of the play. At the end, the boys are described as transforming into black birds that devour Sebastian.

I knew early on that I wanted to incorporate birdsong into the musical language of the opera. Williams mentions sweet-singing birds and flesh-eating ones, which led me to research different types, like the yellow warbler, red cardinal, and vultures, as well as birds native to uptown New Orleans, where the story is set. I created a chart of bird song transcriptions for the ensemble players, with instructions for how to follow the general shape of the bird call while also improvising, so the effect feels natural. Some passages feature notated bird calls, while others suggest the sound of wind or flapping wings.

In Scene 2, there's a Choral Feature written for the boys' choir that explores two types of writing. Some of the choral writing features harmonies inspired by Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington, sung on open vowels. And then there's writing for the choir that goes into improvised birdsong.

As a New Orleans native, what drew you to this play, and what did you want to capture through this drama?

CB: It was a great challenge to take on a play set in New Orleans. When I first read the script, I could hear the accents and the pacing of the voices immediately. But it represents a very different place than *my* New Orleans. The play is about a very rich white family in the 1950s Garden District—what someone from New Orleans would recognize as “old money.” So it was interesting to engage with a different side of New Orleans than I know.

What drew me most to the project was the emotional intensity of Tennessee Williams's writing. As a composer who thinks about capturing a lot of different types of emotions in music, I knew his text could push me in new musical directions.

For example, in the closing aria, Catherine describes Sebastian's final moments as he runs and the boys transform into birds and devour him. Setting that scene to music was a particular challenge. I'm used to dealing with difficult topics in my music, but oftentimes I bring an element of hope. Here, the only sense of hope we found was in Catherine finally speaking her truth—but there's so much gruesomeness in that last image.

Ultimately, it was the intensity of Tennessee Williams's storytelling—how his stories haunt you and stick with you—that drew me to this project the most.

“THE WORK OF A POET IS THE LIFE OF A POET”: THE SOURCES OF SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

by Teagan Walsh

Tennessee Williams often incorporated aspects of his own life and personal experiences into his plays, and *Suddenly Last Summer* is no exception. Here are some of the most prominent autobiographical elements of the play:

Lobotomy

Williams's beloved sister Rose underwent a lobotomy in 1943. The procedure was seen as a last resort for her, after years of being shuffled between various psychiatric institutions and convalescence homes in an attempt to cure her psychological torment, eventually diagnosed as schizophrenia. Williams was very close with Rose, who was three years his senior, and though he hated her outbursts, which were often violent and sexual in nature, what he hated more was the idea of turning his beloved sister into a shell of her former self. In a 1936 letter to his grandparents, following one of Rose's many hospital stays, Williams said that Rose was “not normal and probably has not been for a long time, but is not ranting around like she was before.” His parents' decision to approve the lobotomy—then a relatively new and experimental procedure, first performed just 8 years earlier—caused anguish for Williams, and created a significant rift in the family. In July of 1943, just a few months after the lobotomy, Williams told his parents in a letter that “It is obvious that [Rose] still has her delusions, and I don't see how she could live outside an institution of some kind.”

The Venable House

The distinctive Venable house where the play takes place, with its grand central elevator and lush, tropical gardens, also has a real-world counterpart. In 1958, as he wrote *Suddenly Last Summer*, Williams was staying in the Freret-Bultman House, a historic home in the Garden District of New Orleans owned by his friend Muriel Bultman-Francis. The house, built in 1859 in the Greek revival style, includes a large indoor garden which still exists, and which, as Williams describes in the opening stage directions, looks “more like a tropical jungle, or forest in the prehistoric age.” Bultman-Francis, an art collector and public-relations agent, is described by her obituary as helping “a struggling playwright named Tennessee Williams. She found Mr. Williams a place to live, which turned out to be the setting for a play later made into the film *Suddenly Last Summer*.”

Cannibalism

Williams often returned to the theme of cannibalism in his writing. As he noted in an interview in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “Someone is always eating at someone else for position, gain, triumph, greed, whatever. The human individual is a cannibal in the worst way.” He explored the subject in two short stories in the collection *One Arm and Other Stories*, published in 1948, a decade before *Suddenly Last Summer*. In “The Poet,” he describes a nameless artist who captivates a group of children with his stories. Upon his death, they find and surround his skeleton. The poet closely resembles Sebastian Venable: an attractive writer who wanders the beaches like

the Pied Piper, a gaggle of local children at his heels. In “Desire and the Black Masseur,” he tells the story of Anthony Burns, a wholesale clerk who enters into a violent sexual relationship with a masseur, who eventually eats him. For Burns, the purpose of the consumption is twofold: it fulfills a lifelong desire to be “swallowed up,” to attain a sort of suffocating sense of inclusion, and serves as atonement for his perceived moral wrongdoing. Cannibalism, for Williams, always seems to be accompanied by or the result of some sort of sexual impropriety; Sebastian’s homosexuality, the Poet’s promiscuity, Anthony Burns’s masochism.

Psychotherapy

As the theater critic John Lahr notes in his biography of Williams, “*Suddenly Last Summer*...was a direct product of Williams’s turmoil on the analyst’s couch.” Williams underwent extensive psychoanalysis in 1957 with the psychiatrist Lawrence Kubie, who was famed for his ability to “cure” homosexuality. This period of outside pressure, combined with the forced introspection of analysis, led to both the shift in Williams’s view of his familial dynamics and also a renewed motivation to create something from the experience. As part of his treatment, Williams was confined to the Austen Riggs Center in Massachusetts and was cut off from all of his “addictions,” writing being one. Despite this, his time spent under analysis would provide ample material to be dramatized: the mental institution, the clinical but curious psychoanalyst, and a renewed fixation on atoning for his own homosexuality. Of course, there was no keeping him from his work, and less than a year later, *Suddenly Last Summer* reached the stage.

Teagan Walsh '28 is a student in Bard's Theater & Performance Program.

A MORE ACCESSIBLE TRUTH—THE EXPERIMENTAL IMPULSES OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

by Thomas Keith

“Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation . . .”

— Tennessee Williams, 1945

In 1974, Tennessee Williams told an interviewer: “The truth is more accessible when you ignore realism.” Williams considered himself an experimental writer from the time he began writing plays in the mid-1930s until the end of his life. Most critics disagreed with him, and many still do. Yet his first commercial success, *The Glass Menagerie*, was met with some consternation because it did not fit the formulas of content and structure that were prevalent in 1945. Arthur Miller described *Menagerie* as “[a] play utterly at odds with standard Broadway fare. Seeing it was like stumbling on a flower in a junkyard.” Miller observed that playwriting then was akin to engineering, “structure and its problems taking first place in the art. *Menagerie* appeared to have no structure or, at best, the structure of a lyric.”

Chicago critic Ashton Stevens, who had been reviewing plays since 1894, was hard pressed to classify *Menagerie*, calling it a “mystically vivid play . . . a lovely thing and an original thing,” “true poetry couched in colloquial prose,” “eerie and earthy in the same breath,” with “a sustained atmosphere of other-worldliness.” After briefly recounting the action and addressing the ambiguity of *Menagerie*’s non-traditional ending (i.e., Laura does not get married), Stevens wrote, “The play leaves you in the air. But I like this air. It is rare, rich.”

Influenced by Chekhov, Strindberg, O’Neill, Elmer Rice, Erwin Piscator (mentor to Brecht), and others, Williams wrote dozens of short plays throughout his career, many that are well beyond the boundaries of what was, or is, considered realism. From the German Abstract Expressionist painter Hans Hofmann, whom he met in Provincetown, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1940, Williams adopted the word “plastic” to describe visual composition and cinematic techniques applied to playwriting. Hofmann believed that space and opposing colors as formal contrasts, a “push and pull” he called it, could sculpt depth and evoke feeling on canvas. After seeing the Russian film *Alexander Nevsky* by Sergei Eisenstein in September 1943, Williams wrote, “The influence of modern music and surreal art, both present in this film masterpiece, could be used as powerfully in a poetic stage play. . . nearly everything I have written for the stage has been overburdened with dialogue . . . I am now determined to think in more plastic or visual terms.” He further pledged to write a more epic and symbolic kind of play that could be understood as poetic tragedy.

In a preface to his detailed production notes regarding slide projections, music, and lighting for *Menagerie*, Williams puts forward the idea of a “plastic theatre,” by which he meant the *playwright*’s use of non-literary elements—space, light, sound, music, movement, projected imagery, or film—to create meaning, mood, and subtext. Williams then proposes, “These remarks

are not meant as a preface only to this play. They have to do with a conception of a new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions." In the original production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Elia Kazan maintained all the sound effects Williams indicated in his script that are meant for the audience to experience as part of Blanche's interior life: the voices, music, gunshots, jungle sounds, distortions, and echoes. Toward the end of the scene in which Stanley ultimately rapes Blanche, there are "lurid shapes" and shadows of "grotesque and menacing form" moving "sinuously as flames along the wall spaces." Not the stuff of kitchen sink realism.

After reading a draft of what later became *The Rose Tattoo*, Irene Mayer Selznick, who had triumphed with *A Streetcar Named Desire* only three years earlier, declined to produce the play. Her note to Williams read, in part, "This is not a play but rather a libretto—far more than either, it is a ballet. As presently, it cries out to be danced or sung, or both, in its entirety. It could be painted, but not played. It is all mood and movement—a violent, colorful pattern for emotion and lustfulness." Selznick was not off the mark; Williams was continuing to experiment with unconventional style and language. *The Rose Tattoo* still contains long stretches during which the action is told visually, described in stage directions rather than driven by dialogue.

In a similar way, the longer dramatic monologues in Tennessee Williams's plays do not always adhere to realistic conventions and have been referred to by actors, directors, and Williams himself as arias. This is fitting when one considers the soaring emotional stakes characters like Blanche, Amanda, Maggie, Big Daddy, Serafina, Violet, Catherine, and Lady Torrance reach in their long speeches.

In an undated document titled "Notes for Staging," Williams describes *Suddenly Last Summer* as comprised primarily of two monologues that are dramatic opposites. He identifies the style of the play as "epic," which meant to him that "realistic conventions should not prevail." Citing the dynamics of the script as being mostly verbal, Williams cautions that the cadence and emotional pitch of the lines must be interpreted with "precision and vitality, all the way through."

On the one hand, this makes complete sense: Williams always maintained that the story of *Suddenly Last Summer* should *not* be taken literally because it is a poetic allegory. If that's the case, it would follow that the character's words and feelings reach a highly theatrical pitch. On the other, because the story is grounded in characters and feelings that bear the semblance of truth, the experience does not necessarily invite an audience to step back and consciously consider what the metaphor or allegory might be. Sometimes, *Suddenly Last Summer* plays more like a horror movie than a poem—an early title for the play was *A Play for the Grand Guignol*. The playwright appears to have wanted it both ways. This opposition in Williams's plays can turn out to be quite a challenge—how to honor the poetic, plastic, or expressionistic elements Williams demands while maintaining the truth of a complex, psychologically believable story. A good example of this is *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Take away the sounds of the lamenting winds and the scenes projected in real time onto a gigantic screen, eliminate the arias spoken by Chance and The Princess, remove their relationships with the audience via direct address, and the play is in danger of becoming merely melodrama. Williams's stage works require a balance in the tension between what is fairly thought of as character-driven psychological realism and the sometimes self-consciously theatrical flourishes.

Playwrights and directors now employ all kinds of non-realistic storytelling, mix theatrical styles, or blend naturalistic dialogue with presentational elements, and it doesn't usually attract special notice, except when the choices don't work or are especially powerful. But for the first twenty-five years of Williams's professional life, commercial and experimental theatre were separated by a canyon. Seemingly aware that his idiomatic dialogue combined with a heavy hand might not produce the atmospheric moods he envisioned, William's words his inclusions of sculptural elements carefully, often with implicit invitations to collaborate: "with the help of a gifted designer . . ."; "I will leave the set description to the designer . . ."; "an imaginative director may invent . . ." The often contradictory fusion of style and content, Williams constructs cannot best be understood in the blueprint of the script but rather in the live event, based on the collaboration among directors, designers, and composers.

Frequently, Williams suggests paintings and painters—Van Gogh, de Chirico, Picasso, Pollock, O'Keeffe, Ben Shahn, and others—for understanding spatial relationships, tone, and mood. Williams will evoke a particular painter to help describe his vision for light, sky, and depth—he tends to place a play's immediate setting within a larger, more expansive landscape. The legendary Jo Mielziner created designs for nine of Williams's original Broadway productions, and later wrote of the playwright: "Even as an inexperienced young writer, Williams revealed a strong instinct for the visual qualities of the theatre. If he had written plays in the days before the technical development of translucent and transparent scenery, I believe he would have invented it."

In his stage directions, Williams consistently specifies that the settings for his plays are to be "nonrealistic," "fragmented," "transparent," "romantic," "spectral," or "dreamlike," and the selective use of abstract elements found in all of his plays belies the notion of a realistic style. In spite of what choices directors made, what critics wrote, or how audiences responded, Williams regularly asserted he was an experimental writer and that his plays were not realistic; he conceded only that they were lyrical metaphors about human suffering.

Thomas Keith has edited the Tennessee Williams titles for New Directions since 2002, including four volumes of previously unpublished one-act plays. Keith teaches theater at Pace University and works as a dramaturg and consultant.

WHO'S WHO



©Taylor Hunter

Courtney Bryan (Composer)

Courtney Bryan is a Steinway Artist and 2023 MacArthur Fellow, who currently serves as composer-in-residence with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.

Recent works include *DREAMING (Freedom Sounds)*, performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble at New York's Kaufman Music Center; *Visual Rhythms*, a new art-inspired orchestral piece for Jacksonville Symphony; *House of Pianos*, which Bryan premiered in 2023 with the LA Phil New Music Group (chamber ensemble version) and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (full orchestra version); and *Gathering Song* (libretto by Tazewell Thompson), composed for bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green and the New York Philharmonic.

Bryan's compositions have been performed by Opera Philadelphia (Composer in Residence, 2022–2024), the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (Creative Partner, 2020–2023), Jacksonville Symphony (Mary Carr Patton Composer-In-Residence, 2018–2020), London Sinfonietta, LA Phil, Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Chicago Sinfonietta in a wide range of renowned venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Walt Disney Concert Hall, and Blue Note Jazz Club.

Recent accolades include the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts (2018), Samuel Barber Rome Prize in Music Composition (2019–2020), United States Artists Fellowship (2020), and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation Fellowship (2020–2021). She is the Albert and Linda Mintz Professor of Music at Newcomb College in the School of Liberal Arts at Tulane University. Her music is published by Boosey & Hawkes.



©Tei Blow

Daniel Fish (Librettist & Director)

Daniel Fish is a New York-based director who makes work across the boundaries of theater, film, and opera. He draws on a broad range of forms and subject matter, including plays, film scripts, contemporary fiction, essays, and found audio. His acclaimed 2019 production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* transferred to Broadway from St. Ann's Warehouse, following its premiere at the Fisher Center at Bard, and won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. The production then transferred to London's West End, where it won the Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival.

Other recent work includes *White Noise*, inspired by the novel by Don DeLillo (Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, Theater Freiburg, NYU Skirball Center), Michael Gordon's opera *Acquanetta* (Prototype, and also a Fisher Center premiere), *Who Left This Fork Here* (Baryshnikov Arts Center, Onassis Stegi), and Ted Hearn's *The Source* (BAM Next Wave, LA Opera, San Francisco Opera).

His work has been seen at theaters and festivals throughout the U.S. and Europe, including the Walker Art Center, PuSh, Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, Lisbon & Estoril Film Festival, Vooruit, Festival TransAmériques, Noorderzon Festival, The Chocolate Factory Theater, The Public Theater's Under The Radar, Opera Philadelphia/Curtis Opera Theatre, American Repertory Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Signature Theatre, The Shakespeare Theater Company, Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, Staatstheater Braunschweig, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Residencies and commissions include MacDowell, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Mass MoCA, The Chocolate Factory Theater, and LMCC/Governors Island. He is a graduate of Northwestern University's Department of Performance Studies and has taught at The Juilliard School, Bard College, Princeton University, and the Department of Design for Stage and Film at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. He is the recipient of the 2017 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts for the Theater, as well as an Obie Award and a Tony nomination.



©Erik Tanner

Gideon Lester (Librettist and Artistic Director)

Gideon Lester's previous translations and adaptations for Fisher Center LAB include Molière's *Dom Juan* and Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, and at the American Repertory Theatre, Marivaux's *Island of Slaves* and *The Dispute*, Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Brecht's *Mother Courage*, and stage adaptations of Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (with Toneelgroep Amsterdam) and Kafka's *Amerika* (with Theatre de la Jeune Lune). The Fisher Center's Artistic Director and Chief Executive, he is a Tony and Olivier award-winning creative producer, festival director, and dramaturg, and has collaborated with and commissioned a broad range of American and international artists

across disciplines. A professor of Theater and Performance at Bard College, he has also taught at Columbia University's School of the Arts and at Harvard. He was co-curator of Crossing the Line Festival, and Acting Artistic Director and Dramaturg at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA.

Tennessee Williams (Playwright) Tennessee Williams was born in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi, where his grandfather was an Episcopal clergyman. When his father, a travelling salesman, moved with his family to St. Louis some years later, both he and his sister found it impossible to settle down to city life. He entered college during the Depression and left after a couple of years to take a clerical job in a shoe company. He stayed there for two years, spending the evenings writing. He entered the University of Iowa in 1938 and completed his course, at the same time holding a large number of part-time jobs of great diversity. He received a Rockefeller fellowship in 1940 for his play *Battle of Angels*, and he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948 for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and in 1955 for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Other plays include *Summer and Smoke*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Camino Real*, *Baby Doll*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *The Two-Character Play*. Tennessee Williams died in 1983.

Nathan Koci (Music Direction and Supervision) is a collaborative performer and music director working across disciplines, including theater, folk music, jazz, contemporary classical music,

dance, and karaoke singing. His music direction credits include *The Seat of Our Pants* (Ethan Lipton); *Illinoise* (Justin Peck/Sufjan Stevens); *Hadestown* (Nat'l Tour; Anais Mitchel/Rachel Chavkin); Daniel Fish's *Oklahoma!* (Broadway, West End); *Most Happy in Concert* (Williamstown Theater Festival, Bard SummerScape); and Ted Hearne's *The Source* (SF Opera, LA Opera, BAM). Performance credits include William Kentridge's *The Great Yes The Great No*, and *The Head and The Load*; Guy Klucsevsek's *Bellows Brigade*; Maira Kalman and John Heginbotham's *The Principles of Uncertainty*; *The Solomon Diaries*; a multi-volume duo project with composer/clarinetist Sam Sadigursky; chamber-improv-folk quartet *The Hands Free*, with Caroline Shaw, Eleonore Oppenheim, and James Moore; *And Friends*, a collaborative oral history and music project with Elena Moon Park and Brett Parnell; and The Wildebeest Wind Quintet featuring Jeff Lederer, with an upcoming release of music by Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, and Oliver Nelson.



©Jenny Anderson

Mikaela Bennett (Catherine Holly) is a celebrated singer and actress praised for her artistic versatility on stage and in concert halls around the world. She has premiered new compositions by leading composers, including Sarah Kirkland Snider, Derek Bermel, Michael Gordon, and Michael Tilson Thomas. Additional career highlights include her New York City solo recital debut at Alice Tully Hall, her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut in *West Side Story* (Maria), Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* (Rosasharn) with MasterVoices at Carnegie Hall, and Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall. Mikaela is a recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists and was also named one of WQXR's "40 Under 40: A New Generation of Superb Opera Singers."

In the 25/26 season, Mikaela made her LA Opera debut in the world premiere of Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Hildegard* (Richardis von Stade), followed by a return to the Prototype Festival in the same production. She also returns to Bard SummerScape for the world premiere of Courtney Bryan's *Suddenly Last Summer* (Catherine), an opera written for her. On the concert stage, she debuted at Emerald City Music in a solo recital featuring the premiere of a new Molly Joyce song cycle, and appeared with MasterVoices in Fauré's *Requiem* and the world premiere of *Sins and Grace* at Alice Tully Hall. In December 2025, she appeared in Holiday Pops programs with the Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Toronto, and Edmonton Symphony Orchestras.

In the 24/25 season, Mikaela made her debut at Festival Musica Strasbourg in Ted Hearne's contemporary oratorio *The Source*. Additional concert appearances included debuts with the Orlando Philharmonic for Mahler's Symphony No. 4 under Eric Jacobsen; Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra in an all-Gershwin program; Kansas City Symphony for their Memorial Day concert; and the Baltimore and Nashville Symphony Orchestras in Mary Lou Williams's *Zodiac Suite* with the Aaron Diehl Trio. Operatic engagements included her debut at the Prototype Festival in Christopher Cerrone's *In a Grove* (Leona Raines/Leona's Mother) and a return to The Glimmerglass Festival for the world premiere of Derek Bermel and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (Esperanza), written with her voice in mind.

Mikaela is a native of Ottawa, Canada, and a graduate of The Juilliard School.



Courtesy of Artist

Tina Benko (Mrs. Venable) recently performed on Broadway in Noel Coward's *Fallen Angels* and Branden Jacobs Jenkins's *Appropriate*. Other credits include the premieres of David Ives's *Pamela Palmer* at Williamstown Theatre Festival; Emily Mann's adaptation of *The Pianist* at George Street Playhouse; and Claudia Rankin's *Help* at The Shed. Other Broadway includes: *The Rose Tattoo*; *The Crucible*; *Macbeth*; *The Cherry Orchard*; and *Not About Nightingales*. Off Broadway includes: *Becky Nurse of Salem* and *Nantucket Sleighride* at Lincoln Center; *SpindleShuttleNeedle* at Clubbed Thumb; *Scenes From a Marriage* and *The Little Foxes*, both directed by Ivo Van Hove for NY Theatre Workshop; Jonathan Spector's *Eureka Day*;

Rajiv Joseph's *Describe The Night*; and Daniel Fish's *Who Left This Fork Here* at Baryshnikov Arts, as well Desdemona/Othella in the international tour of Toni Morrison's play *Desdemona* directed by Peter Sellars. Film and TV credits include: *Elsbeth* (recurring); *And Just Like That*; *The Betrayers*; *Worldbuilding*; *The Rehearsal* (Emmy Award/best supporting actress/digital series); *Kaleidoscope*; *Mother May I Have a Kidney*; *Mapplethorpe*; *Life After You*; *The Sound of Silence*; *Can You Ever Forgive Me*; *The Scottish Play*; *Fair Market Value*; *Turn: Washington Spies*; *The Other Two*; *FBI*; *Raising Kanan*; and *Nobody Wants to Shoot a Woman*. She is certified in PEM and has taught at Columbia University, Fordham College, HB Studios, Carnegie Mellon, and OnCamJam.



©Leo Moon

Branden Lindsay (Dr. Cukrowicz) most recently appeared in the Best Picture-nominated *Train Dreams*. His other film credits include *The Greatest Beer Run Ever* (dir. Peter Farrelly). Television credits include guest-starring roles on *Awkwafina Is Nora from Queens*, *Blue Bloods*, and *Evil*. On stage, he starred on the national tour of *A Soldier's Play* (dir. Kenny Leon). New York stage credits include The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park production of *Merry Wives* (dir. Saheem Ali). Regional credits include *Mother Road* by Octavio Solis at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Branden holds an MFA from New York University and is a native of South Carolina.



©Justin Patterson

Miriam Silverman (Mrs. Holly) won the 2023 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Play for her critically acclaimed performance as 'Mavis' in the Broadway production of *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, as well as winning the 2023 Drama Desk Award for the same role at BAM. Silverman can currently be seen recurring on the Apple+ hit series *Your Friends and Neighbors*, as well as *Landman* on Paramount+ and the Netflix limited series *Vladimir* opposite Rachel Weisz. Other television and film include *The Night Agent* (Netflix), *Dead Ringers* (Amazon), *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Amazon), *Fleishman is in Trouble* (Hulu), *The Blacklist* (NBC), *Blue Bloods* (CBS), the independent feature *Motherland*, *Breaking*, and the upcoming

Sacrifice for Romain Gavras. Silverman recently starred in *The Disappear* for Audible Theater at Minetta Lane Theatre. Silverman's other Broadway/New York Theater credits include *Junk* (Lincoln

Center), *Anatomy of a Suicide* (Atlantic Theater Company), *You Got Older* (Page 73), as well as Clubbed Thumb productions of *Deep Blue Sound*, *Plano* and *Find Me Here*. Next up, she will star in *The Verge* at The Public Theater this fall. Miriam holds a BA and MFA from Brown University.



©Walls Trimble

Nick Westrate (George) is a theater and film artist based in New York City. His credits on Broadway as an actor include: *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *Casa Valentina* & *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. Recently: Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* directed by Simon Godwin at Theatre for a New Audience (NYC) and The Shakespeare Theater (DC), Victor Frankenstein in Emily Burns' new version of *Frankenstein* (Shakespeare Theater) and Prior Walter in *Angels in America* for director János Szász. Off-Broadway, he has starred in *Tribes* at The Barrow Street Theater, *A Delicate Ship* for Playwrights Realm, *Galileo* and *Unnatural Acts* for Classic Stage Company, *Love's Labor's Lost* at the Public, Ivo Van Hove's *The Little Foxes* for NYTW, and *The Boys in the Band* (Drama

Desk nomination, 2010) for Transport Group. On television, he is best known as Robert Townsend on AMC's *Turn: Washington's Spies*, and also for Todd Haynes' HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce* and Bruno Barreto's HBO miniseries *The American Guest*. Currently, he can be seen as Edwin Booth in the Apple TV+ miniseries *Manhunt*. On film, he stars in the feature *American Insurrection* and in Jonathan Demme's *Ricki & the Flash* opposite Meryl Streep. He is the recipient of his own special Drama Desk Award for his versatility in performance Off-Broadway, is a graduate of the Juilliard School, and is the director, designer, and producer of The Streetcar Project, which tours Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* to found spaces around the country. This summer, he will be playing Iago in *Othello* for The Classical Theatre of Harlem in New York City.



©Frankie Tyska

Lucy Tarquinio (Painter) is a New York-based artist. She obtained her BFA from Cooper Union in 2021. Her process-based practice explores the relationship between abstraction and real space. Her primary interest is making site-specific and layered oil paintings for experimental and difficult spaces, with the intention of avoiding traditional methods of viewership.

Prior recent shows include *Winter Painting* presented by Entrance Gallery in Spring 2026, and a solo exhibition in October 2025, *Cave Paintings*, held as a one-day exhibition inside the Dover Stone Church Cave, in Dover Plains, NY.



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Amanda Sheriff (Catherine Holly Cover) recently completed her second year as a Studio Artist with The Atlanta Opera, where she performed and covered multiple roles. Most recently, she returned to Atlanta as Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, made her debut as Sarah in *Ragtime* with Opera Montana, and returned to Opera Baltimore as Yniold in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Last season featured Musetta in *La Bohème* at Opera Montana, Satirino/L'Eternità in *La Calisto* at the Glimmerglass Festival, and Jess in *The Listeners* with Opera Philadelphia. She also joined the Greenville Symphony as soprano

soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and closed the year as Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* with The Atlanta Opera. Other highlights include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Philadelphia and the world premiere of *Steele Roots* for Atlanta Opera's 96-Hour Opera Project. In 2022, Sheriff won first prize in the prestigious Lotte Lenya Competition and appeared with Opera Delaware and Opera Baltimore. Additional credits include performances with Des Moines Metro Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Seagle Music Colony, where she was acclaimed for her Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Marsha Ginsberg (Scenic Design) is an Obie Award-winning designer celebrated for bold, interdisciplinary work in theatre and opera presented at theaters and museums in the U.S. and Europe. Broadway credits include *English*, for which she received a Tony nomination. Previously, for Bard SummerScape, she created the scenic design for Leonard Bernstein's *Peter Pan* (directed by Christopher Alden) and *Love in the Wars* (an adaptation of Kleist's *Penthesilea*). Recent highlights include Britten's *Midsummer's Night Dream* directed by Ted Huffman, currently being revised at Deutsche Opera Berlin and travelling to Volksoper Vienna; *Data* (world premiere, Lortel Theatre/Arena Stage), *Primary Trust* (world premiere, Roundabout Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Center Theater Group, Los Angeles), *English* (world premiere, Atlantic Theater Company/Roundabout), *The Lehman Trilogy* (Guthrie Theater, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Milwaukee Rep), *Don Pasquale*, *Treemonisha* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis), and *Letters from Max* (world premiere, Signature Theatre). She is a Rome Prize recipient from the American Academy in Rome and has held residencies at MacDowell and Robert Wilson's Watermill Center. She is an Associate Arts Professor at NYU Abu Dhabi.

Terese Wadden (Costume Design) is a Hudson Valley-based costume designer. Recent credits include *Kramer/Fauci* (Skirball), directed by Daniel Fish, Korngold's *Die stumme Serenade* (Mannes Opera), *Die Zauberflöte* (Shepard School of Music), *Vanessa* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), and *Giulio Cesare* (Hudson Hall). She designed costumes for Kate Soper's opera *The Hunt* (Miller Theatre), *Candide* (Opera de Lyon), *Most Happy* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Così fan Tutte* (Santa Fe Opera), and the Tony Award-winning production of *Oklahoma!* (Broadway, West End, Touring, and St. Ann's Warehouse), *Peter Pan* (Bard SummerScape), and Michael Gordon's *Acquanetta* (Bard SummerScape and Prototype Festival). Her work has been seen at the Canadian Opera Company, Glimmerglass Festival, Tanglewood, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, New York City Opera, Opera Colorado, Central City Opera, Portland Opera, Baryshnikov Arts Center, the Mark Taper Forum, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and National Sawdust. She was awarded a Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome in 2020-2021.

Stacey Derosier (Lighting Design). *Mother Russia & Grangeville* (Signature Theatre), *Teeth* (Playwrights Horizons), *The Counter & The Refuge Plays* (Roundabout Theatre), *The Welkin* (Atlantic Theater), *All the Devils Are Here* (DR2), *The Half-God of Rainfall* (NYTW), *Uncle Vanya* (O'Henry), *On Set with Theda Bara* (Exponential Festival). Obie Design Award 2023, 2018 Lilly Award Daryl Roth Prize.

Garth MacAleavey (Audio Design and Sound Mixing) is a theatrical and concert sound designer based in New York. Recent design credits include: *What to Wear* by Richard Foreman/Michael Gordon at BAM; *Primero Sueño*, a touring processional opera by Paola Prestini; *The Gospel at*

Colonus at Little Island by Lee Breur/Bob Telson; *Illinoise* on Broadway/Park Ave Armory/Bard SummerScape by Sufjan Stevens/Justin Peck; *Black Lodge*, a touring metal opera by David T. Little; Vail Dance Festival; *Song of Songs* by David Lang/Pam Tanowitz at Bard SummerScape/The Barbican; *Sensorium Ex*, an AI and technology based opera about accessibility by Paola Prestini; *The Let Go* by Nick Cave at the Park Avenue Armory; and he is a touring sound designer with the Kronos Quartet. MacAleavey is an expert in modular acoustics, spatial sound, and speaker systems design in conjunction with Meyer Sound's Constellation and Space Map systems. He is the acting Director of Sound and Technical Design at Brooklyn's National Sawdust.

Josh Thorson (Projection Design) is a New York-based artist and writer. His recent video work for theater includes the St. Ann's Warehouse and Tony Award-winning Broadway productions of *Oklahoma!*, which were recognized with an Obie Award and a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Projection Design, and his work on the Young Vic and East End productions in London was honored with a What's on Stage Award for Best Video Design in 2023. Thorson has a BA in Cultural Studies and Film Studies from the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities (2001), an MFA in Film/Video from Bard College (2006), and a Ph.D. in Electronic Art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (2013). He is an Associate Professor of Photography at RIT, where he teaches concepts, theories, and practices of photography and related media. In 2020, he received the Richard & Virginia Eisenhart Provost's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Beth Gill (Movement Direction) is an award-winning choreographer working in dance, theater, and fashion, and has been based in New York City since 2005. Her own multidisciplinary works are captivating, cinematic timescapes, the product of long-term collaborations with celebrated artists. Gill is the proud recipient of the Herb Alpert, Doris Duke Impact, Foundation for Contemporary Art, and two "Bessie" awards. She has toured nationally and internationally and been honored with (among others): Guggenheim Fellowship, NEFA's National Dance Project grant, Princeton's Hodder Fellowship, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Extended Life Artist in Residence.

Bobbie Zlotnik (Hair and Wig Designer) Off-Broadway; *Emojiland* (Drama Desk Nom.), *Ibsen's Ghost*, *Richard II*, *Gatsby Immersive*, *Fairycakes*, and many more. National Tours: *On Your Feet*, *Here You Come Again*, *Emojiland*, *Cocomelon LIVE*. Regional: Bucks County Playhouse, Cape Playhouse, Drury Lane, George Street Playhouse, Gulfshore Playhouse, The Lexington Theatre Company, Pittsburgh CLO, The Ordway, Syracuse Stage, Theatre Aspen, Tuacahn, Williamstown, and many more. Film/TV: *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *The Gilded Age*, *A Holiday Spectacular*, *Halston*, *Getting Curious With Jonathan Van Ness*. BobbieZlotnik.com

Anne Ford-Coates (Makeup Designer/Pre-recorded segment Hair Designer) has designed hundreds of theater and opera productions across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and North America, and is an IATSE Local 798 makeup artist for film and television. Broadway credits: Hair & Makeup Designer for *Becky Shaw*, *Oklahoma!*, and *The Nap*, Makeup Designer for *Frozen*, *A Bronx Tale*, *On Your Feet!*, *Disaster!*, *It Shoulda Been You*, and *On the Twentieth Century*. Selected career highlights: Hair & Makeup Designer for Wagner's complete *Ring Cycle* (Washington National Opera), *The Music Man* (Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman), *The Crucible* (MezzoTV opera competition in Hungary), *The Wolves* (Lincoln Center), *Lost in the Stars* (Glimmerglass Festival); Makeup Artist for the *Metropolitan Opera Live in HD* and *The Gilded Age* (HBO); and Makeup

Designer for *Frozen* the musical streaming on Disney+. During the pandemic theater closures, Anne studied sociology online at CUNY's School of Professional Studies, graduating summa cum laude in 2023. In 2025, she earned a master's degree at the University of Chicago, conducting original research on post-pandemic creative gig-economy labor markets. Anne is continuing her research this fall as a PhD student in sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

Taylor Williams, CSA (Casting Director) Film: *Via Negativa, Union County, Good One, Omni Loop*. Broadway: *Death of a Salesman, John Proctor is the Villain, All In, Romeo and Juliet, Stereophonic, Illinoise, An Enemy of the People, The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window, POTUS...*, *Slave Play, What the Constitution Means to Me*. Upcoming: *The Chaperones, Ancient History, Thumb*. TaylorWilliamsCasting.com

Mikhaela Mahony (Associate Director) Mikhaela Mahony is a Brooklyn-based director working at the intersection of theatre, opera, and film. This past season, she made her directorial debut at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Alice Tully Hall, in addition to continuing collaborations with the award-winning musical artists Aaron Jafferis, Dahlak Brathwaite, and Daniel Bernard Roumain; the playwrights at EST/Youngblood; and as a member of the WP Lab 2024-2026. She has developed work with the Ensemble Studio Theatre, where she most recently directed Brittany K. Allen's *Redwood* and Abby Rosebrock's *Dido of Idaho*; the Bushwick Starr, Primary Stages, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Little Island, Boston Lyric Opera, the Chautauqua Institution, Fisher Center at Bard College, New York City Opera, Columbia University, and Detroit Opera, among others. In 2023, she co-founded Double Feature, a project dedicated to staging reimagined classics in intimate locations all over New York. She serves on the faculty of Mannes School of Music at The New School, mentors with the Playwrights Horizons School at NYU, and volunteers with The 52nd Street Project. Select credits include: Director: *Redwood* (Ensemble Studio Theatre, nominated for 3 Audelco Awards including Best Play), *Hippolytus* (Fisher Center at Bard College), *Macbeth* (Double Feature), *Dear Erich* (New York City Opera), *Dido of Idaho* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), *Miss Mitchell* (Little Island), *The Medium* (City Lyric Opera), *Rigoletto* (Chautauqua Institution), *The Listeners* (Revival Director, Lyric Opera of Chicago). Associate Director: *Oklahoma!* (London's West End, US National Tour; dir. Daniel Fish), *The Listeners* (Opera Philadelphia, dir. Lileana Blain Cruz), *The Handmaid's Tale* (Boston Lyric Opera, dir. Anne Bogart). Training: MFA from Columbia University School of the Arts, BA from Barnard College.

Jason Kaiser (Stage Manager): At Fisher Center at Bard: *Jubilee*, Urban Bush Women's *SCAT!*, *Most Happy in Concert*, *The Gauntlet*, and many others. *What To Wear* (BAM); *CATS: the Jellicle Ball* (Perelman); *Grenfell: in the words of survivors* (St. Ann's); *Bark of Millions* (Sydney Opera House, tour); *Kiki and Herb SLEIGH* (BAM); *Oklahoma!* (Broadway, St. Ann's); Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (St. Ann's, tour); *Available Light* with Lucinda Childs Dance Company; *Einstein on the Beach* (BAM, tour); three world-premiere plays by Athol Fugard. Up next: *Bark of Millions* at the Delacorte; *Music for 18 Musicians* at Park Ave Armory; *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* with the Philharmonia Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall, London.

Thomas Keith (Literary Consultant) has served as a dramaturg or consultant for Mabou Mines, Sundance Institute Theater Lab, La MaMa E.T.C., New Ohio Theatre, Southern Repertory Theatre, on London's West End, and for various productions as the resident dramaturg at

Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival since 2006. Consulting editor for New Directions Publishing, he has edited over twenty Tennessee Williams titles since 2002, including previously unpublished plays, stories, poems, essays, and four volumes of one-act plays. Keith edited *Love, Christopher Street*—original LGBTQ essays about New York City by Jewelle Gomez, Christopher Bram, Ocean Vuong, Val McDermid, Felice Picano, and many others; he is co-editor of *The Luck of Friendship: Letters of Tennessee Williams and James Laughlin*; and his writing has appeared in *American Theatre*, *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, *Early Stories by Tennessee Williams*, *Oxford Handbook of Robert Burns*, and *Provincetown Arts*, among others. Keith is an Associate Adjunct Professor at Pace University in New York City.

The University of the South, a nationally ranked liberal arts college and Episcopal seminary, is the beneficiary of Tennessee Williams's estate, including the copyrights to all his works. This gift was made as a memorial to Williams' grandfather, the Reverend Walter E. Dakin, who studied at the University's seminary in 1895. The Walter E. Dakin Memorial Fund is used to support the Sewanee Writers' Conference, the Sewanee Young Writers' Conference, and the School of Letters. The Fund also supports scholarships for students who wish to pursue creative writing and fellowships, which are granted annually to budding playwrights or authors. Those fellows include Ann Patchett, Claire Messud, Tony Early, and Mark Richard. The Tennessee Williams Center houses the University's theater department, and a portion of the Fund supports the department and its theatrical productions. For more information.



FISHER CENTER PERFORMING ARTS LAB

A new building designed by Maya Lin

Situated in meadows to the west of its landmark Gehry-designed building and overlooking woodlands and the Catskill mountains, a new 23,500-square-foot studio building now expands Bard College's cultural campus, housing rehearsal and teaching facilities, and providing an artistic home for artists at all stages of their careers, including students from Bard's undergraduate programs in Dance and Theater & Performance. The Performing Arts Lab, opening this fall, will also serve as the home for Fisher Center LAB, the center's acclaimed residency and commissioning program for professional artists.

Fisher Center LAB

Since its launch in 2012, LAB has supported residencies, workshops, and performances for hundreds of artists, incubating new projects and engaging audiences, students, faculty, and staff in the process of creating contemporary performance. Productions developed by Fisher Center LAB, such as Tony Award-winning *Illinoise* and a re-imagined version of *Oklahoma!*, often premiere in the annual Bard SummerScape festival and frequently tour nationally and internationally. Last year, Fisher Center LAB received a landmark gift from the Civis Foundation to establish the Civis Hope Commissions. The gift creates an endowed commissioning fund that will support, in perpetuity, the development and production of major new works in the performing arts that explore the subject of hope.

For more information on Fisher Center LAB or to pledge your support, please contact Alessandra Larson, Director of Institutional Advancement and Strategy, Fisher Center, 845-758-7990 or alarson@bard.edu.

FISHER CENTER

The Fisher Center is a premier professional performing arts center and a hub for research and education that demonstrates Bard College's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity. To support artists, students, and audiences in the examination of artistic ideas, the Fisher Center develops, produces, and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs that challenge and inspire.

Home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley. This world-class theater building will soon be complemented by a new studio building designed by Maya Lin, scheduled to open in October 2026. More than 200 events and 50,000 visitors are hosted at the Fisher Center each year, and over 300 professional artists are employed annually. As a powerful catalyst of art-making regionally, nationally, and worldwide, the Fisher Center produces 8 to 10 major new works in various disciplines every year. The Fisher Center offers outstanding programs to many communities, including the students and faculty of Bard College, and audiences in the Hudson Valley, New York City, across the country, and around the world. Building on a 166-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders.

The Fisher Center was born from the Bard Music Festival, founded in 1990, which, for the first 13 years of its existence, occupied several spaces on campus, including a large tent. Each summer, the Music Festival focuses on the life, work, and influences of one composer, promoting new ways of understanding and presenting the history of music to a contemporary audience. When the Fisher Center and its two theaters opened in 2003, the summer festival expanded to include a fully staged opera, as well as theater and dance performances. The highly acclaimed opera program brings unjustly neglected works to the stage in major productions—often making their U.S. debuts.

Through Fisher Center LAB, the Center's acclaimed residency and commissioning program, artists are provided with custom-made support toward their innovative projects, and their work has been seen in over 100 communities around the world. Resident choreographer Pam Tanowitz's 2018 *Four Quartets* was recognized as "the greatest creation of dance theater so far this century" by *The New York Times*. In 2019, the Fisher Center won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical for Daniel Fish's production of *Oklahoma!*, which began life in 2007 as an undergraduate production at Bard and was produced professionally by the Fisher Center in 2015 before transferring to New York City. *Illinoise*, a 2023 Fisher Center world premiere from artists Sufjan Stevens, Justin Peck, and Jackie Sibbles Drury, was recognized with a Tony Award for Best Choreography following its tour and transfer to Broadway.

The Fisher Center is home to several of Bard's academic programs in the performing arts. Year-round, it hosts performances by the undergraduate Dance Program and Theater and Performance Program; the US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music; The Orchestra Now (TÖN), a Bard graduate program that is training the next generation of classical-music ambassadors; and students at the Bard Conservatory, the first (and so far only) conservatory to require all its students to pursue a bachelor of arts degree in a field other than music in addition to their specialized music studies. As a hybrid institution, the Fisher Center brings together professional and academic art-making of the highest caliber, where student and professional artists work side by side, learning from each other and informing one another's practices.

BARD COLLEGE

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place and Massena properties, Bard's campus consists of more than 1,200 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; advanced degrees through 14 graduate programs; 10 early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 166-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal arts education. The undergraduate program at the main campus in upstate New York has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit bard.edu.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR BARD COLLEGE IN ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON

Developed in Cooperation with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors, past and present, as well as to future generations, and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgement requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all. For more information about the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, please visit mohican.com.

For over two decades, the Fisher Center at Bard has created exceptional performing arts experiences that challenge and inspire. We thank the following donors for joining our founders, including the late Richard B. Fisher, with their generosity and partnership.

Special thanks to those who have supported our programs with their commitments to the Bard College Endowment Challenge. Thank you for ensuring Bard's continuity as a beacon for higher education, bolstering the development of innovative programs that offer access to rigorous, high-quality education for new populations around the world.

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SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER

Composed by Courtney Bryan

Libretto by Daniel Fish and Gideon Lester

Based on the Play by Tennessee Williams

Presented by special arrangement with The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

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CHARACTERS

Catherine Holly — soprano

Mrs. Venable (Catherine's aunt) — spoken role

Dr. Cukrowicz — spoken role

Mrs. Holly (Catherine's mother) — spoken role

George Holly (Catherine's brother) — spoken role

Chorus of young men

SCENE ONE

Mrs. Venable

Yes, this was Sebastian's garden.

The Latin names of the plants

Were printed on tags attached to them

But the print's fading out.

Those ones there— *[She draws a deep breath]*

Are the oldest plants on earth,

Survivors from the age of the giant fern-forests.

Of course in this semi tropical climate—

Some of the rarest plants,

Such at the Venus flytrap—

You know what this is, Doctor?

The Venus flytrap?

Doctor

An insectivorous plant?

Mrs. Venable

Yes, it feeds on insects.

It has to be kept under glass

From early fall to late spring

And when it went under glass,

My son, Sebastian,

Had to provide it with fruit flies

Flown in at great expense from a Florida laboratory.
Well, I can't do that, Doctor.
[She takes a deep breath.]
I can't, I just can't do it!
It's not the expense but the—

Doctor

Effort.

Mrs. Venable

Yes. So goodbye, Venus flytrap!— like so much else . . .
Whew! . . .

Catherine *(offstage)*

When...

Mrs. Venable

I don't know why,
But—I already feel I can lean on your shoulder,
Doctor— Cu? — Cu?

Doctor

Cu-kro-wicz.
It's a Polish word that means sugar.

Mrs. Venable

Well, now, Doctor Sugar
You've seen Sebastian's garden.

Doctor

A well-groomed jungle.

Mrs. Venable

Nothing accidental,
Everything planned and designed
In Sebastian's life and his...

Catherine

Can...

Mrs. Venable

Work.
His *life* was his occupation.
Sebastian was a poet.
The work of a poet is the life of a poet

The life of a poet is the work of a poet
A poet's life is his work and his work is his life....

Catherine

I...

Mrs. Venable

Oh...

Doctor

Mrs. Venable.

Did your **Doctor** okay this?
Meeting this girl
You think is responsible
For your son's death?

Mrs. Venable

I've waited months to face her.
I won't collapse! She'll collapse!
I mean her lies will collapse
Not my truth

Catherine

When...

Mrs. Venable

Not the truth
Sebastian had no public name as a poet
Didn't want one
Refused to have one.
"Violet? Mother?
You're going to live longer than me.
When I'm gone,
It will be yours, in your hands."
Well here is my son's work, Doctor!
Here's his life going on!

Doctor

"Poem of Summer"?

Catherine

Can....

Mrs. Venable

"Poem of Summer."

Date of the summer.
There are twenty-five of them.
He wrote one poem a year
Which he printed himself
On an eighteenth-century hand-press
At his—atelier in the—French—Quarter—
So no one but he could see it...

Doctor

He wrote one poem a year?

Mrs. Venable

One for each summer we traveled together.
The other nine months...

Catherine

I....

Mrs. Venable

...were only preparation.

Doctor

Nine months?

Mrs. Venable

The length of a pregnancy, yes.

Doctor

The poem was hard to deliver?

Mrs. Venable

Yes, even with me.
Without me, impossible.
He wrote no poem last summer.

Doctor

He died last summer?

Mrs. Venable

Without me he died last summer.
His last summer's poem.
One long-ago summer
My son Sebastian said:

Mrs. Venable

"Mother listen to this:
The Encantadas"

Chorus (*offstage*)

The Encantadas
Galapagos Islands
Five and twenty heaps
Of cinders dumped
Some of them magnified
Mountains
Vacant lot
The Sea
The Encantadas
Enchanted islands

Mrs. Venable

He said we had to go there
So we did, that summer
Chartered a boat
Four-masted schooner

Catherine

When....

Chorus

Extinct volcanoes

Catherine

Can....

Mrs. Venable

The Encantadas
Great sea-turtles crawl
Once a year the female
Crawls up out of the equatorial sea
Blazing sand beach

Catherine

Blazing...I
Stop....running..

Mrs. Venable

Dig a pit in the sand
Deposit their eggs
Their annual egg-laying

Long and dreadful thing
Depositing of the eggs
Sand pits
Finished, exhausted female turtles
Crawl back to the sea, half-dead.
Never see their offspring.
We did. The hatching of the sea-turtles
Their desperate flight to the sea!

Chorus

Narrow beach
Color of caviar
All in motion.
The sky in motion, too...

Mrs. Venable

Flesh-eating birds
The noise of the birds
Horrible savage cries
Carnivorous birds

Catherine

When can I stop....
When can I stop...stop...
Running down...

Mrs. Venable

The narrow black beach
Just-hatched sea turtles
Flesh-eating birds made the sky
Black as the beach

Chorus

The Encantadas
The Encantadas

Catherine

That steep....
White....

Mrs. Venable

Sand all alive, all alive,
Hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea
Birds hovered and swooped to attack

Chorus

And hovered and swooped
Attack and hovered
Swooped to attack!

Catherine

Hill....

Mrs. Venable

Diving down on the sea-turtles
Turning them over
Tearing the undersides open
Rending and eating their flesh.

Doctor

This fascinated your son?

Catherine

When can I stop

Mrs. Venable

My son was looking for...
Let's just say he was interested in sea-turtles.

Catherine

Running down
That steep white hill
In Cabeza de Lobo...

Doctor

That isn't what you started to say.
Say what you started to say.

Catherine

When can I stop
Running down
That steep white hill
In Cabeza de Lobo?

Mrs. Venable

I started to say that my son was looking for God.

Doctor

Mrs. Venable,
Doctors look for God, too.

Some do. I do.
The first operation at Lion's View
How anxious, nervous I was.
The patient a young girl
Hopeless, put in the Drum,
the violent ward at Lion's View
Like the inside of a drum....
Very bright lights, burning all day, all night...
After the operation I stayed with the girl
As if I'd delivered a child.
I stayed with her
Walked along by the rolling table
Holding onto her hand, my heart in my throat...
Nice afternoon, as fair as this one.
Wheeled her outside,
She whispered, she whispered,
"Oh how blue the sky!"

Catherine

Cousin Sabastian
Said he was famished for blonds

Doctor

Till then her speech,
Everything babbled

Catherine

Fed up with the dark ones

Doctor

A torrent of obscenities!

Mrs. Venable

My son was looking for God.

Catherine

Famished for blonds

Mrs. Venable

He spent the whole blazing equatorial day
In the crows-nest of the schooner
Watching this thing on the beach
And when he came down from the rigging
He said:
"Well now I've seen Him!"

And he meant God.
From then on we still lived in a world of light and shadow
Shadow almost as luminous as light.
You would have liked my son
He would have been charmed by you.
He insisted upon good looks in people around him
A perfect little court

Catherine

That's how he talked about people

Mrs. Venable

A little entourage

Catherine

As if items on a menu

Mrs. Venable

The beautiful, the talented, the young.

Doctor

Your son was young, Mrs. Venable?

Mrs. Venable

Both of us were young, and stayed young, Doctor.

Doctor

Could I see a photograph of your son, Mrs. Venable?

Mrs. Venable

Yes, you could indeed, Doctor.
I'm going to show you not one photograph but two.
Here. Here is my son Sebastian
In a Renaissance pageboy's costume
At a masked ball in Cannes.
Here is my son Sebastian
In the same costume
At a masked ball in Venice.
These two pictures were taken twenty years apart.
Now which is the older one, Doctor?

Doctor

This photograph looks older.

Mrs. Venable

The photograph looks older but not the subject.
It takes character to refuse to grow old, Doctor.
Discipline, abstention.
One cocktail before dinner, not two, four, six...
A single lean chop
And lime juice on a salad.

Catherine

"That one's delicious
That one is appetizing"

Mrs. Holly *[offstage]*

Violet, dear, we're here.

Mrs. Venable

Wait upstairs in my upstairs living room for me.

Doctor

Mrs. Venable —
Did your son have a...well...
What kind of a *personal*, well, *private* life did...

Catherine

He liked me
And so I loved him...

Mrs. Venable

Listen to me
Before you hear from the girl:
My son, Sebastian, was chaste.
Not c-h-a-s-e-d —
Oh he was chased in that way of spelling it too.

Catherine

If he'd kept hold of my hand

Mrs. Venable

I meant he was c-h-a-s-t-e! Chaste.

Catherine

I could have saved him.

Mrs. Venable

I was the only one in his life

That satisfied him...
We were a famous couple.
"Sebastian and Violet
Violet and Sebastian"

Chorus

Violet and Sebastian
Sebastian and Violet,
Violet and Sebastian

Catherine

Sebastian suddenly said to me last summer

Mrs. Venable

Every appearance, every time we appeared

Catherine

Let's fly north little bird

Mrs. Venable

Attention was centered on us!

Catherine

I want to walk under
Those radiant cold northern lights

Mrs. Venable

Everyone else – Eclipsed!

Catherine

I've never seen
The Aurora Borealis

Mrs. Venable

Most people's lives...

Catherine

We're all of us children

Mrs. Venable

What are they but trails of debris

Catherine

In a vast kindergarten

Mrs. Venable

Every day more debris, more debris

Catherine

Trying to spell God's name

Mrs. Venable

Long trails of debris with nothing to clean it up

Catherine

With the wrong alphabet blocks

Mrs. Venable

But, finally, death...

My son, Sebastian, and I constructed our days

Each day

Like a piece of sculpture.

We left behind us a trail of days

A gallery of sculpture!

But...last summer...

I can't forgive him for it

Catherine

Cabeza de Lobo

Mrs. Venable

He let in this...*vandal*...

Mrs. Venable

We put bread in her mouth

And clothes on her back.

Catherine

Big city beach

Mrs. Venable

The role of benefactor is worse than thankless.

The role of a victim, Doctor

Catherine

The harbor

Mrs. Venable

A sacrificial victim, yes

They want your blood, Doctor

Catherine

Grabbed my hand

Mrs. Venable

They want your blood on the altar steps

They can't shut her up at St Mary's

Catherine

Dragged me in

Mrs. Venable

She *babbles*!

They couldn't shut her up

In Cabeza de Lobo

Or at the clinic in Paris

She babbled

Catherine

In the water

Mrs. Venable

Babbled, babbled

Catherine

All the way in

Mrs. Venable

Smashing my son's reputation.

Catherine

Cabeza de Lobo

Mrs. Venable

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world,"

Doctor—Sugar...

Doctor

Mrs. Venable

In your letter last week

You made some reference to a...

To a...fund of some kind...

An endowment fund of...

Mrs. Venable

My lawyers and bankers and accountants

Are setting up
The Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation
To subsidize the work of young people like you
That are pushing out the frontiers of art and science
But you have a financial problem.
You have a financial problem, don't you, Doctor?

Doctor

We need a separate ward for my patients
I need trained assistants
I'd like to marry a girl I can't afford to marry.
I don't want to turn you against my work at Lion's View
But I have to be honest with you,
There is a good deal of risk in my operation.
Whenever you enter the brain with a foreign object...

Mrs. Venable

Yes.

Chorus

Yes...

Doctor

Even a needle-thin knife...

Mrs. Venable

Yes.

Chorus

Yes...

Doctor

In a skilled surgeon's fingers...

Mrs. Venable

Yes.

Chorus

Yes...

Doctor

There is a good deal of risk involved in...
The operation...

Mrs. Venable

You said it pacifies them
It quiets them down
It suddenly makes them peaceful.

Doctor

Yes, but...

Mrs. Venable

What?

Doctor

It may be the person will always be limited afterwards

Relieved of acute disturbances

But—*limited*, Mrs. Venable...

Mrs. Venable

What a blessing to them

To be just peaceful

To be just suddenly peaceful...

Mrs. Venable

After all that horror

After those nightmares

Just to be able to lift up their eyes and see

A sky not as black with savage, devouring birds

As the sky we saw in the Encantadas, Doctor.

Doctor

I can't guarantee that a lobotomy

Would stop her—*babbling*!

Mrs. Venable

That may be, maybe not

But after the operation

Who would believe her, Doctor?

Doctor

My God...

Suppose that after meeting the girl

I feel that non-surgical treatment

Insulin shock...Electrical shock...

Mrs. Venable

SHE'S HAD ALL THAT AT SAINT MARY'S!!

Nothing else is left for her.

Doctor

But if I disagreed with you?

Mrs. Venable

That's just part of a question.

Finish the question, **Doctor**.

Doctor

Would you still be interested in my work at Lion's View?

Mrs. Venable

Aren't we always more interested

In a thing that concerns us personally, Doctor?

Doctor

You're such an innocent person

It obviously doesn't occur to you

That anybody less innocent than you

Could interpret this offer of a subsidy

As, well, as sort of a *bribe*...?

Mrs. Venable

Name it that—I don't care—

She's a destroyer.

My son was a *creator*!

Now if my honesty's shocked you

Pick up your little black bag

Without the subsidy in it

And run away from this garden!

Nobody's heard our conversation

But you and I, Doctor Sugar...

I'm not ready to face her.

I have to have my five o'clock cocktail

To fortify me.

Catherine

Five o'clock!

Mrs. Venable

Doctor? Sugar?

You may stay in the garden if you wish to

Catherine

Five o'clock

Time to meet him

Outside the bath houses

Mrs. Venable

Or run out of the garden if you wish to

Catherine

That five o'clock lunch

At one of those fish places

Mrs. Venable

Or go in this way if you wish to

Catherine

Five o'clock, Along the harbor

Mrs. Venable

Or do anything that you wish to

Catherine

of Cabeza de Lobo

Mrs. Venable

Or do anything that you wish to

But I'm going to have my five o'clock daiquiri—*Frozen!*

Before I face her.

Catherine

Hot blazing white. Five o'clock in the afternoon.

[Catherine enters and sees the Doctor]

Catherine

Do you want to bore a hole in my skull

And turn a knife in my brain?

Everything else was done to me!

SCENE TWO

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Sit down.

Be still.

[Chorus vocalizes throughout the scene]

Catherine

When...

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Put it back.

Catherine

Can I stop...

Too late!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give it here.

Catherine

When can I stop....

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give it here.

Catherine

Running....

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give it here.

Catherine

Let me smoke!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Catherine, give it here.

Catherine

This is an afternoon out.

Don't be a bully!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give me that cigarette.

The violent ward.

Catherine

When can I stop

Running down that steep white hill...

I'm not being violent.

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give me that cigarette!

Catherine

In Cabeza de Lobo...

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Give me that cigarette!

Catherine

All right, take it, here!

Take it, here! Take it, here!

Take it, here! Take it, here!

Take it, here!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

You burned me!

Catherine

When can I stop

Running down that steep white hill

In Cabeza de Lobo

I didn't mean to.

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

You deliberately burned me!

Catherine

I'm *sick*

I'm *sick*—of being *bossed* and *bullied*!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Sit down!

Catherine

There goes the Waring Mixer

Aunt Violet's five o'clock frozen daiquiri

You could set a watch by it!

We're in Sebastian's garden.

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Did you have any medication?

Catherine

No. Give me some?

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

The **Doctor** will.

Catherine

I knew I was being watched!

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Sit down.

Be still.

Catherine

Lion's View, is it, Doctor?

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Sit down, dear.

Catherine

Is it Lion's View, **Doctor**?

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Be still....

Catherine

When can I stop running down

That steep white hill in Cabeza de Lobo?

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Catherine dear, sit down.

Catherine

I loved him!

Why wouldn't he let me save him?

I tried to hold onto his hand

He struck me away

And ran, ran, ran in the wrong direction!

If they give me an injection

I won't have any choice

But to tell the truth

It makes you tell the truth

Everything comes out

Decent or *not* decent

You have no control

But always

Always the truth!

I didn't invent it

It's hideous

A true story of our time

What did truly happen

To Cousin Sebastian

In Cabeza de Lobo...

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Catherine dear, be still.

Catherine

The Doctor's still at the window

He's too blond to hide

He catches the light

He shines.

We were going to blonds

Blonds were next on the menu.

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Be still now. Quiet, dear.

Catherine

He was famished for blonds

Fed up with the dark ones

Famished for blonds.

Copenhagen...Stockholm.

Fed up with dark ones

Famished for light ones:

That's how he talked about people

Items on a menu.

"That one's delicious, that one appetizing"

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Catherine, be still.

Mrs. Venable (As Sister Felicity)

Catherine, be still.

Catherine

He liked me so I loved him...

If he'd kept hold of my hand

I could have saved him!

Sebastian suddenly said to me last summer:

Chorus

"Let's fly north, little bird

I want to walk under those

Radiant, cold, northern lights,

I've never seen

The Aurora Borealis."

Mrs. Venable

We're all of us children

In a vast kindergarten
Trying to spell God's name
With the wrong alphabet blocks!

—Choral Interlude—

SCENE THREE

Mrs. Holly

Catherine, dear! Catherine—

George

Jesus! What are you up to? Huh? Sister?
Are you trying to RUIN us?

Mrs. Holly

GAWGE! WILL YOU BE QUIET.
George inherited Cousin Sebastian's wardrobe
But everything else is in probate!
And Violet can keep it in probate as long as she wants.
The horrible death of Sebastian
Just about *killed* her!
Dear...
I'm sure you understand
Why we haven't been out to see you at Saint Mary's.
They said you were too disturbed...
Not a soul even knows that you've come back from Europe.
When people enquire we just say you've stayed abroad.
[She catches her breath.]
Be *very* careful what you say to Aunt Violet
About what happened to Sebastian
In Cabeza de Lobo.
Just don't repeat that same fantastic story!
For my sake
And George's sake
The sake of your brother and mother
Don't repeat that horrible story again!

George

You were the only witness to it, Cathie.

Mrs. Holly

Sebastian has BEQUEATHED! —
To you an' Gawge in his *will* —

George

To each of us

Fifty

Grand

Each!

AFTER! TAXES! — GET IT?

Cathie, Cathie

You got to forget that story! Can'tcha?

For *your* fifty grand?

Mrs. Holly

If Aunt Vi contests the will, and we know she'll contest it,

She'll keep it in the courts forever! We'll be—

George

It's in PROBATE NOW!

And'll never get out of probate

Until you drop that story.

We can't afford to hire lawyers

Good enough to contest it!

So if you don't stop telling that crazy story

We won't have a pot to—cook *greens* in!

Catherine laughs wildly.

Mrs. Holly

Don't laugh like that

It scares me.

George

She's crazy like a coyote!

We won't get a single damn penny, honest t'God.

Mrs. Holly

Cathie, why, why, why!

George

Lose us a hundred thousand! Cathie?

You are a BITCH!

Mrs. Holly

GAWGE!

George

A bitch!

She isn't crazy, Mama, she's just perverse!

Mrs. Holly

Gawge, Gawge

This is no way to talk to your sister.

You tell your sweet little sister

You're sorry you spoke like that.

George

I'm sorry, Cathie

But you know we NEED that money!

I got *ambitions*!

And, Cathie, I'm YOUNG!

I *want* things, I *need* them, Cathie!

Will you please think about ME?

Us?

Mrs. Holly

Catherine, Gawge put it very badly but you know that it's TRUE!

WE DO HAVE GET WHAT SEBASTIAN HAS LEFT US

IN HIS WILL, DEAREST!

AND YOU WON'T LET US DOWN?

PROMISE?

YOU WON'T? LET US DOWN?

George

[fiercely shouting]

HERE COMES AUNT VI!

Mama, Cathie, Aunt Violet's...

Here is Aunt Vi!

SCENE FOUR

Mrs. Venable ENTERS

Mrs. Venable

She sees me and I see her.

Mrs. Holly

Gawge, tell Aunt Violet

How grateful you are for...

George

Aunt Vi? About the will?

I was just wondering

If we can't figure out some way to...to...

Mrs. Holly

To EXPEDITE it!

To get through the red tape quicker?

Mrs. Venable

Get the **Doctor**.

Doctor

He had to answer an urgent call

From Lion's View.

Mrs. Holly

Not Lion's View!

Mrs. Venable

Are you all prepared

To put out a thousand a month

To keep the girl at St Mary's?

I'm paying to keep her in a private asylum.

Your mother's dependent on me —

All of you are! — financially...

Mrs. Holly

Cathie, Cathie dear

Tell Aunt Violet how grateful you are

For makin' it possible for you to rest an' recuperate

At such a sweet, sweet place as St. Mary's!

Catherine

No place for lunatics is a sweet, sweet place.

Mrs. Venable

Doctor, I thought you'd left us

With just that little black bag to remember you by.

This is Dr. Cukrowicz.

He says it means "sugar"

We can call him "Sugar" —

Mrs. Venable

He's a specialist from Lion's View.

Catherine

WHAT DOES HE SPECIALIZE IN?

Mrs. Venable

Something new.

When other treatments have failed.

Catherine

Do you want to bore a hole in my skull

And turn a knife in my brain?

Everything else was done to me!

Doctor

A quiet atmosphere will get us the best results.

Your niece seems to be disturbed.

Mrs. Venable

She has every reason.

She took my son from me.

Catherine

You couldn't travel. You'd had a—

[She stops short.]

Mrs. Venable

Go on!

She meant that I had a stroke.

I DID NOT HAVE A STROKE!

I had a slight aneurysm.

A little vascular convulsion!

Not a hemorrhage

Just a little convulsion of a blood-vessel.

She was trying to take my son away from me.

A little temporary—muscular—contraction—

I was disgusted, sickened.

She'd lost her head over a young married man

Made a scandalous scene at a Mardi Gras ball

My son Sebastian felt sorry for her

And took her with him last summer instead of me.

Catherine

I can't change truth, I'm not God!

Mrs. Venable

She was in love with my son!

Catherine

Cabeza de Lobo

Mrs. Venable

All right, *Lion's View*!

Mrs. Holly

Catherine! Catherine!

Doctor

I'd like to be left alone with Miss Catherine.

George

Cathie can't go to *Lion's View*.

Everyone in the Garden District

Would know you'd put your niece in a state asylum.

Mrs. Venable

Get me away from these people!

Let me go or I'll strike you!

Catherine

Sebastian couldn't use her.

Doctor

Use her?

Mrs. Venable

We all use each other

And that's what we think of as love

And not being able to use each other

Is *hate*.

Doctor

What was your feeling for your cousin Sebastian?

Catherine

The feelings you have in a dream.

Last winter...

Suddenly last winter...

Doctor

Something happened last winter?

Catherine

Last winter, a Mardi Gras ball,

Boy that took me

Got too drunk to stand up.

I wanted to go home.
Somebody took my arm:

Chorus

"I'll drive you home"

Catherine

Don't think I'd ever seen him before.
Took me another place first
The Dueling Oaks

Chorus

The Dueling Oaks

Catherine

Stopped...
What for?
Didn't answer
Struck a match
In the car
Light a cigarette
In the car

Chorus

[*whispered*]
In the car

Catherine

Looked at him
In the car
I knew what for.
I got out
Of the car
Walked through the wet grass
To the great misty oaks
As if somebody was calling us for help there
Help!
I lost him.
He took me home
Said an awful thing
I sat there thinking a little
Went right back to the Roosevelt Hotel
Ball still going on
Gone back to make a scene
On the ballroom floor

I spotted him on the floor
Ran up to him
Beat him as hard as I could
Cousin Sebastian took me away
Couldn't go out any more
Couldn't go out any more.

Mrs. Venable

One morning Sebastian
Said: "Get up!
Mother can't go abroad with me
This summer.
You're going to go with me
This summer
Instead of Mother."

Catherine

If you're still alive after dying,
Well then, you're obedient, Doctor.

Doctor

Miss Catherine, let me give you something.

Mrs. Venable

What is she going to be stuck with this time, Doctor?

Doctor

Miss Catherine?
I want you to give me the truth.

Catherine

One hundred! Ninety-nine!
Ninety-eight! Ninety seven!
Ninety-six! Ninety-five!

Mrs. Venable

They say truth is at the bottom of a bottomless well.

Chorus

Ninety-four! Ninety-three!

Doctor

Relax.

Catherine

Truth.

Doctor

Give me all your resistance. See
I'm holding my hand out
I want you to put yours in mine
And give me all your resistance.
Pass all your resistance
Out of your hand into mine.

Catherine AND Mrs. Venable

Let me! Let! Let! Let me! Let me, let me, oh, let me!
I've been so lonely.
It's lonelier than death
If I've gone mad it's lonelier than death!

Doctor

Now, Miss Catherine
You're going to tell the true story.
Last summer...?

Catherine

Last summer. Oh last summer.

Doctor

About last summer: How did it begin?

Catherine

With his kindness
And six days at sea
So far from the Dueling Oaks.
He was affectionate
So sweet and attentive
People took us for a honeymoon couple
Till they noticed we had separate staterooms.
And then in Paris
He bought me so many new clothes
I turned into a peacock!
Of course, so was *he*...
Responding too much to his kindness
Taking hold of his hand, his arm
Leaning on his shoulder
His kindness...

Mrs. Venable

A poet's vocation, **Doctor...**

Catherine

And suddenly...

Mrs. Venable

rests on something...

Catherine

Last summer...

Mrs. Venable

As thin and fine as the web of a spider.

Catherine

He began to be restless...and—oh!

I failed him.

I wasn't able to keep the web from—breaking.

Mrs. Venable

Now the truth's coming out.

We had a covenant between us

Which he broke last summer

When he took her with him!

When he was frightened his hands would shake

And his eyes looked in, not out

I'd touch his hands with my hand

Until his hands stopped shaking

And his eyes looked out, not in.

In the morning the poem would be continued

Continued until it was finished!

He was *mine*! I knew how to help him!

You didn't, you couldn't!

I would say, "You *will*" and he *would*.

Catherine

Something had broken

That string of pearls

Old mothers hold their sons by.

An umbilical cord...

Mrs. Venable

She means I held him back

From destruction.

Catherine

Last summer
Cabeza de Lobo
And suddenly, last summer
Cabeza de Lobo
A big city beach near the harbor
He bought me a swimsuit
White
A one-piece suit
Made of white lisle
He'd grab my hand and drag me into the water
All the way in
I'd come out looking naked!
I was PROCURING for him!
She used to do it, too.
In nice places, decent ways.
She used to do it too.

Mrs. Holly

Oh, Cathie! Sister...

Doctor

Hush!

Mrs. Venable

Sebastian was lonely, Doctor.
I knew what I was doing.

Catherine

When the weather got warmer
And the beach so crowded
He didn't need me anymore;
The ones on the free beach
Began to climb over the fence
Or swim around it
Bands of homeless young people
That lived on the free beach
Like scavenger dogs
Hungry children...
I'd go to a faraway empty end of the beach
Write postcards and letters
Till it was five o'clock
Time to meet him
Outside the bathhouses
On the street.

He would come out, *followed*.
The homeless, hungry people.
He'd pass out tips among them
As if they'd shined his shoes
Each day the crowd
Bigger, noisier, greedier!
Sebastian began to be frightened.
We stopped going out there.
One day
One of those blazing
White days
In Cabeza de Lobo
An open-air restaurant on the sea
Sebastian was white
As the weather
Spotless
White silk Shantung suit

Chorus

White...

Catherine

White silk tie
White Panama
White shoes
White-white lizard skin pumps!
Kept touching his face and his throat
White silk handkerchief
Popping little white pills
Bad time with his heart
Frightened.

Chorus

"We ought to go north"

Doctor

"We ought to go north"

Catherine

He said.

Chorus

"We've done Cabeza de Lobo,"

Mrs. Venable

"We've done Cabeza de Lobo,"

Catherine

He said.

Chorus

I think we've done it, don't
you?"

Doctor

"I think we've done it, don't you?"

Catherine

I thought we'd done it.
Where was I?
Oh yes
That five o'clock lunch
At one of those fish-places
Along the harbor of Cabeza de Lobo
Naked children along the beach
A band
Of frightfully thin
Dark naked children
Like a flock of plucked birds
Blown there by the wind
The hot white wind from the sea
Cousin Sebastian
Popping those little white pills said:

Doctor

"Don't look at those little monsters.
Beggars are a social disease in this country."

Catherine

The band of children
Began to—serenade us.

Chorus

OOM PAH OOMPAH!!

Catherine

On Instruments!
Make music!
If you could call it music..

Doctor

Your Cousin Sebastian was entertained by this—*concert*?

Catherine

He was *terrified*!

He recognized some of the boys
Between childhood and—older...
He said:

Doctor

"They've got to stop that!"

Mrs. Venable

"Waiter, make them stop that!"

George

"I'm not a well man"

Mrs. HollyY

"I have a heart condition"

George

"It's making me sick!"

Catherine

The waiters charged the barbed wire
Beat the little musicians away with
Clubs and skillets, anything hard
They could snatch from the kitchen!
Cousin Sebastian left the table
Stalked out of the restaurant
Throwing a handful of money on the table
Fled from the place.
I followed.
White outside
White hot
Blazing white hot
Hot blazing white
Five o'clock in the afternoon
In the city of Cabeza de Lobo.
It looked as if...

Doctor

It looked as if...?

Catherine

A huge white bone
Had caught on fire in the sky

And blazed so bright
It was white
And turned the sky and everything under the sky
White!
Cousin Sebastian seemed to be paralyzed
Near the entrance of the café
I said, "Let's go!"
He started up the steep street
Hand stuck in his jacket
Pain in his chest
Palpitations...
Walked faster and faster in panic,
The faster he walked the louder and closer it got
The oompa of the following band.
They'd gotten through the barbed wire
Out onto the street
Following, following up
The blazing white street.
The band of naked children
Pursued us up the steep white street
Sebastian started to run
They all screamed at once
And seemed to fly in the air
Outran him
I screamed
I heard Sebastian scream
He screamed just once before this flock of
Black plucked little birds
Pursued him and overtook him
Halfway up
The white hill.
I ran down
Down, down, down, down
The hot, white, blazing street
Screaming, "Help!"
Cousin Sebastian had disappeared
In the flock of
Featherless little black sparrows
He was lying naked
Against a white wall
And this you won't believe
Nobody *has* believed
Nobody *could* believe
Nobody, nobody on earth
Could possibly believe—

They had *devoured*
Parts of him.
Torn, cut
Parts of him
Away with their hands
Torn bits of him away
Stuffed them
Into those gobbling
Fierce little empty black mouths.
Not a sound anymore
Nothing to see but Sebastian
What was left of him
Like a big white-paper-wrapped bunch of red roses
Torn, thrown, crushed!—
Against that blazing
White wall...

Mrs. Venable

Lion's View! State asylum!
Cut this hideous story out of her brain!

George

Mom, I'll quit school, I'll get a job, I'll...

Mrs. Holly

Hush, son!
Doctor, can't you say something?

Doctor

[Pause. Comes downstage. After a while, reflectively, into space]

I think we ought at least
To consider the possibility
That the girl's story
Could be true...

END