

**ACTORS'
THEATRE**



2026



OUR 2026 SEASON



MAR 6-APR 5

THE *Spittfire* GRILL

Music and Book by James Valcq
Lyrics and Book by Fred Alley
Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff
Co-Directed by Greg Fritsch and Cathy D. Warner

MAY 15-JUN 7

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

Written by Edward Albee
Directed by Peter Gelblum

SEP 18-OCT 11

RUMORS

Written by Neil Simon
Directed by MarNae Taylor

NOV 20-DEC 13

Coney Island Christmas

Written by Donald Margulies
Based on the story "The Loudest Voice"
by Grace Paley
Directed by Daria E. Troxell

NEW WORKS WEEKEND

AUG 14-16

Produced by Hannah Eckstein

MCTSHOWS.ORG



Since 1982 - the longest
running theater in
Santa Cruz county!

Santa Cruz County Actors' Theatre

presents



Co-Artistic Coordinators

Kathie Kratochvil & Buff McKinley

Lighting Design

Josephine Czarnecki

Projections Design

Joshua Porter

Stage Manager

Lyndsey Gould

Technical Advisor

Ward Willats

Set Design

Larry Cuprys

Sound Design

Davis Banta

Deck Crew

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Aspen Petersen

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Tickets at the door
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Ward Willats * Spike Wong

Save your Monday nights next summer!!



36North, a Santa Cruz-based
playwrights' collective, will be back
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2026

*

Performances of original work on five
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*

Actors: If interested in performing
with us please contact:
wilmakchandl@gmail.com

FROM ACTORS' THEATRE

Welcome back to the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival!

Each year, Actors' Theatre unveils a fresh, new and compelling anthology of short stories, brought to life through the 10-minute play format. The plays are exciting to produce—they encompass a wide range of differing “worlds” within the human experience and explore a variety of settings, themes, and social contexts, all examined through an economy of words and only limited by the playwright’s imagination.

This year, as if touched by holiday magic, the plays that were chosen seem to converge (albeit loosely) around a dual theme; exploring our place in the world and how we integrate into our environments (Part 1), as well as the ways we eventually move on from them (Part 2). This unique relationship guided our approach to this year’s Festival and the visual design of the show.

The 8 Ten @ 8 Festival requires a large team of collaborators. The care and effort displayed by every Reader, Director, Actor, Designer, and Crew Member are a tribute to what makes our production a perennial favorite. We are also deeply grateful for the invaluable leadership of Suzanne Schrag, and offer our deepest appreciation to the many talented volunteers who have contributed to make the festival a success—it takes a village!

We’ve loved putting this Festival together for you! Your support of live theatre means the world to us. Thank you for being here. Enjoy every moment!

--Buff McKinley & Kathie Kratochvil, 8 Tens @ 8 Co-Artistic Coordinators

THE ACTORS' THEATRE TEAM

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Santa Cruz County Actors' Theatre
PO Box 7084, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
831-431-8666 . sccactorstheatre@gmail.com

PART 1 – ACT I

Pronouns

by James P. Flores

Directed by Helene Simkin Jara

Setting: Around the corner from Mount Sinai

Avondina Wills Zadok

Gino Danna Moses

Susy Parker God

Small Cat Negotiable

by Nino Greene

Directed by Hannah Eckstein

Setting: A house for rent

Eva Schewe Kathleen

Noah Syren Jeremy

Brad Rodes Rental Agent/Chorus

This Side of Michigan

by Rachel Whalen

Directed by Denise Keplinger

Setting: Lois's apartment in Detroit

Stephany Buswell Lois

Laney Correa Octopus

Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On

by Dan McGeehan

Directed by Karin Babbitt & Janet Norton

Setting: Poppy and Tucker's living room

Eva Schewe Poppy

Ben Canant Tucker

Martin Sampad Kachuck Chip

Ash Hartman Sparky

— Intermission —

PART 1 – ACT II

Henry's Epitaph

by Jalen McKoy

Directed by Greg Fritsch

Setting: A modest bedroom in a wooden home.

Alexis Makayla Williams Riri

Darren Jackson Wilkins Junior

Gail T. Borkowski Ma

Locker Room Talk

by John Holleman

Directed by Brad Roades

Setting: A high school locker room

Brady Aiello Statler

Avondina Wills Timbo

Ad Hominem

by Eric Thomas

Directed by Davis Banta

Setting: Three TV commercial sets

Manirose Bobisuthi Woman

Laney Correa Kid

Ben Canant Blender Guy

David Leach Pharmacist

The Moment Before

by Samantha Eppes

Directed by Brian Spencer

Setting: An abandoned warehouse

Brady Aiello Hero

Andy Waddell Villain

Noah Syren Henchperson One

Susy Parker Henchperson Two

Felicity Fluffman El Diablo

PART 2 – ACT I

The Last Continent

by Ken Henry

Directed by Andrew Davids

Assistant Director: Andrew Yabroff

Setting: The bridge of the HMS Endurance / a living room

Andrew Davids Shackleton

Gino Danna Worsley

Marcus Cato Herb

Jennifer Galvin Pastor Janine

The Tea Test

by Seth Freeman

Directed by Gail T. Borkowski

Assistant to the Director: Donna Tanner

Setting: The dining area of a house

Linda Gunther Maude

Tara McMilin Emma

Blue Bag

by John Molina

Directed by Christopher Peak

Setting: A landscape... after battle

Larissa Farias Woman

Emerson Kapture Soldier

Stephen Hawking's Train

by Mike Byham

Directed by Cathy D. Warner

Setting: A train from London to Cambridge Station on June 28, 2009

Chad Davies Person 1

Ward Willats Person 2

Gino Danna Person 3

— **Intermission** —

PART 2 – ACT II

Code A

by Mary Hayakawa

Directed by Gerry Geringer

Setting: An office in the Park Facilities and Operations building at Disneyland

Emerson Kapture Christina “Tink” Disney Brown

Scott Kravitz Maurice “Mo” Spellman

Line Cooks Like Baby Birds

by Maggie Cregan

Directed by Peter Gelblum

Setting: An inexpensive restaurant

Music: “Ozebela” and “Compass” by Jon Scoville

Marcus Cato Jeff

Bernadette Glenn Teresa

Sacred Trust

by Andy Waddell

Directed by Jim Schultz

Setting: A hotel room, late at night

Chad Davies Bob

Tara McMilin Molly

Pelusa

by Eric Alan Bower

Directed by Susan McKay

Setting: A suburban neighborhood

Tom Boyle Glenn

Ward Willats The Neighbor

Noah Syren Police Officer

THE ACTORS



Brady Aiello (*Locker Room Talk, The Moment Before*) has never acted in a play before, not even in school. He started learning improv in June 2024 to cope with a major life event. He has since performed long-form improvisation at Broadway Playhouse four times, and has had the pleasure of learning first hand from Stephen Kearin, Rafe Chase, Regina Saisi, Patti Stiles, and Paul Vaillancourt, among others. Known for his deeply committed improv, Brady was encouraged by his fellow improvisors to start acting, and he took their advice. This year's 8 Tens @ 8 Festival is Brady's acting debut, but it is not the end. You can also find Brady at Mountain Community Theater in March in the musical *The Spitfire Grill*.



Manirose Bobisuthi (*Ad Hominem*) is delighted to be returning to the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival for her fourth year. She has been enjoying a strong return to the Santa Cruz theater community since 2023. Appearing most recently in Stephen King's *Misery* (Annie Wilkes) with Actors' Theatre, and *Steel Magnolias* (Truvy) and *The Odd Couple* (Renée) both with Mountain Community Theater. Manirose warmly thanks her friends and family for their support. And you, the audience, thank you for being here. Enjoy the show! (photo by Jana Marcus)



Gail Thornton Borkowski (*Henry's Epitaph*) is a playwright director, and actress She has directed, produced and acted in Santa Cruz since 1984. She is also a member of the 36North Playwrights Collective. She is thrilled to work with Greg, Lexi and Darren. Theater folks are amazing!



Tom Boyle (*Pelusa*) is returning to the stage after a 20 year hiatus. A recent transplant to the west coast, Tom performed in Mountain Community Theater's production of *Oscar and Felix*, and was introduced to Actors' Theatre in last year's 8 Tens @ 8 Festival with roles in *Exit Strategy* and *The Wakers*. Most recently, Tom played one of the Murderers in *Richard III* in Bill Peters' *Shakespeare Gala*. He feels the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival is a wonderful creative format supported by incredible scripts and a talented ensemble of actors, directors and production crew. He is grateful to the Actors' Theatre community who helped him rediscover the joy that theater brought to his earlier life during 30 years of community theater.

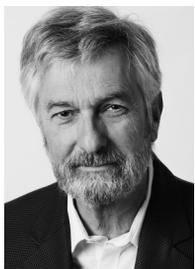


Stephany Buswell (*This Side of Michigan*) is thrilled to be returning to the Actors' Theatre stage after a 30 year hiatus. Her theater bug was awakened when she was in a murder mystery fundraiser for Garfield Park library this year. Stephany was active in local theater for many years through the 70s, 80s and 90s. Her career as a baking instructor and pastry chef took her away from the theater for many



years but retirement allows her the time to return to the stage. You might have seen her a few years ago on Food Network's Holiday Baking Championship, Season 4, when she made it to the finale.

Ben Canant (*Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On, Ad Hominem*) has been performing for over 25 years, and this is his third 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. You may have seen him most recently in Mountain Community Theater's *Evil Dead the Musical* or Scotts Valley Performing Arts' *Cinderella*. Look forward to more in 2026. I'm glad you asked!



Marcus Cato (*The Last Continent, Line Cooks Like Baby Birds*) has acted and directed in the annual 8 Tens @ 8 Festival since 2011. He has acted for many local theater companies including Jewel Theatre, Santa Cruz Shakespeare and its previous incarnation Shakespeare Santa Cruz. He was a company member, actor and director for ten years with the former Bear Republic Theatre. As an arts administrator, he enjoyed a career of over 35 years in Santa Cruz, working with Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Tandy Beal & Company, and the Bear Republic Theatre. Marcus studied theater at the University of Illinois and the California Institute of the Arts.



Laney Correa (*This Side of Michigan, Ad Hominem*) is so grateful to be a part of this incredible Festival! She recently appeared in the ensembles of *The Addams Family Musical* (Mountain Community Theater) and *Sweeney Todd* (Cabrillo Stage). Later this year, she is taking on the role of Music Director for the first time with *Reefer Madness* (Renegade Theater Co.) She thanks you all for supporting local theater!



Gino Danna (*Pronouns, The Last Continent, Stephen Hawking's Train*) has performed in local community theater and improv shows for the last several years. This is his fourth time with 8 Tens @ 8 and he is delighted to be working once again with the talented and dedicated individuals involved with the Festival. Gino would like to thank his wife for her support, and well as his fellow actors and writers who help keep the creative fires burning.



Chad Davies (*Stephen Hawking's Train, Sacred Trust*) is an actor, director, and producer who has worked with both equity and community theater productions in the San Francisco Bay Area. He majored in Theatre Arts at San Jose State University. Past roles include Willy Loman (*Death of a Salesman*), Clarence Darrow (*Never the Sinner*), Billy Einhorn (*House of Blue Leaves*), Candy (*Of Mice and Men*) and Santee (*Geography of a Horse Dreamer*). In 2017, Chad moved to Tucson, Arizona, where he joined Winding Road Theater Ensemble, serving as Managing Director and Executive Director. He also founded Winding Road's "Eight 10s in Tucson" a 10-minute play

festival modeled after Actors' Theatre's 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. He returned to Santa Cruz in 2025.



Larissa Farias has performed classical, contemporary, and physically driven theatre both in the U.S. and Brazil. Recent credits include *Trojan Women*, *He Says Yes He Says No*, and *Mermaid Madonna*. She has also worked with Shotgun Players (Berkeley), Climate Theater and the Magic Theatre (San Francisco). Larissa was honored to receive a Best Actress Award and a Best of Fringe Award for her one-woman show *A (Bearded) Lady* at the SF Fringe Festival, and a BATCC nomination for her one-woman show *Memoirs of a Virgin*. She is most at home when working collaboratively and is grateful and thrilled to participate in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival for the first time!



Felicity Fluffman (*The Moment Before*) has appeared in over a hundred plays, films and TV shows since her breakout role in Edward Albee's *The Sandbox*, including *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Cat Ballou*, and the title role in the comedy classic, *What's New, Pussycat?* Despite her public declaration that she would never work again after the disastrous film version of *Cats*, she has been lured back onto the stage to play "El Diablo" in *The Moment Before*. "Once I read the script," she said, "I knew this was the part I was born to play!"



Jennifer Galvin (*The Last Continent*) is happy to return to the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival after a long hiatus, and to share the stage with this talented cast. She has acted in community and professional theatres in the San Diego, Los Angeles, and Monterey Bay areas. Her most recent credits include Hilda in *The Thin Place* (Actors' Theatre) and Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Mountain Community Theater). She holds a BA in Theatre Arts from UCSC and is proud to have passed down her love of the arts to her two grown kids.



Bernadette Glenn (*Line Cooks Like Baby Birds*) enjoyed her first 8 Tens @ 8 Festival outing last year. She is delighted to be a part of this generous and creative community.



Linda S. Gunther (*The Tea Test*) has been performing in local theater in the Santa Cruz and Silicon Valley areas for more than 20 years, and has studied acting with the British American Drama Academy at Oxford University. This is Linda's third season with the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. Her artistic focus for the past several years has also been on writing suspense novels, short stories, memoir and most recently on crafting short plays. Her most recent novel is titled *Death is a Great Disguiser (A Santa Cruz Murder Mystery)* and her memoir released in 2024 is titled *A Bronx Girl*. Both are

available on Amazon and at Two Birds Bookstore in Capitola. In 2025, five of Linda's short plays were performed in Napa, California; Buffalo, New York; and on Zoom with Drama with Friends. In 2026, two of Linda's other short plays will be produced and performed in Naples, Florida, and in Cedar Springs, Michigan.



Ash Hartman (*Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On*) recently woke up from a long boring dream and remembered they love theater. They are so honored to be part of the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. They're excited to play Sparky, a thief freshly out of his mother's basement, in *Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On*.



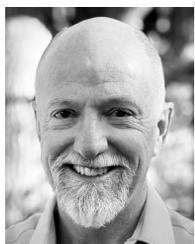
Martin Sampad Kachuck (*Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On*) has performed in and around the South Bay area for countless years. Favorite roles include Mark Rothko in *Red*, Matt Friedman in *Talley's Folly*, Tevye in *Fiddler*, Chester in *The Viewing Room* at Mountain Community Theatre, and most recently, Jeremy Overholt in *Lucky Time*, directed by Wilma Chandler at Actors' Theatre. Martin is also grateful to have participated in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival three of the last four years. Along with performance, Martin has dedicated his life to the craft of teaching, working for over 40 years at Mt. Madonna School, a private school in the Watsonville mountains, as the Director of Theater as well as a Middle School English teacher. Recently retired, Martin is grateful for the opportunity to perform in this Festival. He dedicates the show to his former students, walking the talk that a good director must remember what it is like to go through the actor's experience of thrills, spills, anxieties, excitements that are all part of the process of creating a character.



Emerson Kapture (*Blue Bag, Code A*) is a multidisciplinary artist whose work bridges performance, music, and psychology. Now active in the Santa Cruz theater and improv scene, Emerson has studied with renowned acting teacher Larry Moss and brings an instinctual approach to her work. She will star as Percy in *The Spitfire Grill* at Mountain Community Theater, March 6 to April 5, 2026.



Scott Kravitz (*Code A*) is delighted to once again appear in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. Last year he was behind the scenes as the director of *Duels and Détentes*. He has been seen onstage since then as Herr Schultz in *Cabaret* (Renegade Theater), and Nick Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mountain Community Theater). Scott would like to thank both Gerry and Emerson for their collaboration on *Code A*, and extended thanks to the entire 8 Tens family!



David Leach (*Ad Hominem*) is back for his fourth 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. In last year's fest, he played in *Aileen* and *The Wakers*. Other local credits include the Mountain Community Theater, with last year's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theseus, Oberon), *The Humans* (Erik),

The Cherry Orchard (Gaev), *Rapture, Blister, Burn* (Don), *Sordid Lives* (Brother Boy), and *Julius Caesar* (JC) among others. He also provided his producing, writing, and acting talents to support MCT in kicking off their GhostLight Theater video productions. He trained with the British American Theatre Conservatory and has a BA from Arizona State University. Hope you love this show.



Tara McMilin (*The Tea Test*, *Sacred Trust*) has been throwing her theatrical side around Santa Cruz County for over 35 years. Her flair for feigning has been evidenced on various local stages including *The Thin Place* directed by Miguel Reyna (2023), *Looking for Normal* directed by Tandy Beal (2019), and *Realistic Joneses* directed by Gerry Gerringer (2018) as well as the 2018 and 2019 8 Tens @ 8 Festivals at Actors' Theatre. A few of her favorite stage credits include Brooke (*Other Desert Cities*), Charlotte Hay (*Moon Over Buffalo*), and Stevie (*The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*) with Mountain Community Theater. Tara's archived (younger days) roles include Roxanne (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), Wilhelmina Murray (*Dracula*), Nellie (*South Pacific*), and Nurse Ratched (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). In addition to performing, Tara has taught courses in storytelling and theatre, and ran the SLV Theatre Department for two secondary schools for a few years. She directed shows at SLVMS during that time and facilitated the staging of multiple scene showcases for SLVHS—musical and non-musical. She hopes that you'll experience an emotional catharsis, validation, connection and purpose during this season's 10-minute plays.

Mark your calendars for 2026!

COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL of Santa Cruz

Harp Festival	4/26/26
Teen Camp	6/14-20/26
Kid Camp	7/20-8/1/26
Adult Camp	10/16-18/26



Descriptions, photos, and videos online at
CommunityMusicSchool.org



Susy Parker (*Pronouns, The Moment Before*) is very happy to be performing in the 8 Tens at 8 festival for the third year in a row. She started acting at age 8, when her mother told her she was “too dramatic” and put her in acting classes as a way to channel it. She’s been acting ever since, most recently in Cabrillo College’s production of *Metamorphoses*. She’s been in many local stage productions since 2024, including *The Santa Cruz Shakespeare Gala*, *MCT’s Miracle on 34th Street* and *The Odd Couple, Female Version*. She has also acted in films, including Robert Kirkendall’s *Escape from Jury Duty*, and the feature film *TWENTY*, directed by Hilary Davidson.



Brad Rodes (*Small Cat Negotiable*) recently earned a Broadway World Bay Area Best Supporting Actor nomination for his work in the Actors’ Theatre production of *Misery*. He has worked with Mountain Community Theatre in *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Becky’s New Car* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. Brad has appeared in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival for the last two years as well as directed. In 2023 and 2024 he directed the Storytellers for Next Stage. Locally Brad has worked with All About Theatre where he directed *Billy Elliot*, *Batboy*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Addams Family*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. In addition, he works with Miracles Santa Cruz. Brad won the Mimi Steinberg playwriting award at Brandeis University where he studied writing and directing with Martin Halpern, David Wheeler, Michael Murray and Edward Albee, Jayne Anne Phillips, Geoffrey Wolff et al.



Eva Schewe (*Small Cat Negotiable, Such Stuff as Dreams Is Made On*) performed in various community and school productions in Santa Cruz County as a child, including Little People’s Theater and Santa Cruz High School. Last year, she had a blast in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival and can not wait for her fellow Santa Cruzians to see this year’s show. When she’s not acting on stage, she performs a different kind of one woman show as a History teacher at Kirby School.



Noah Syren (*Small Cat Negotiable, The Moment Before, Pelusa*) has been acting for almost 10 years, starting in the foothills of the Sierras with Volcano Theatre Company. Only a few years ago Noah moved to Santa Cruz and, after settling in, decided it was time to find a new theatre to take the stage. This is his first time acting with Actors’ Theatre and in the Santa Cruz area. Noah is delighted to be a part of this Festival and company, and hopes you enjoy the show!

Want even more short-play goodness?

ACTORS' THEATRE

Check out the **“Best of the Rest”**
staged readings of the 8 runners-up
coming Feb 27 - Mar 8, Fri/Sat @ 8, Sun @ 2

Submit your short play to the 8 Tens @ 8 2027 contest!

Sixteen winners are selected to become full-fledged productions in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. Each play must be 10 minutes or less and, to continue our mission of producing new work, must not have had a previous full production (readings and workshops are OK).

The deadline for submissions to be considered for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival in January 2027 is June 30, 2026, or 300 submissions, whichever comes first.

See our website for details:
[www.santacruzactorstheatre.org/
play-contest-submissions](http://www.santacruzactorstheatre.org/play-contest-submissions)



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Andy Waddell (*The Moment Before*) is a retired high school English teacher who studied drama in college but hadn't been on the stage in 40 years before becoming a part of 8 Tens @ 8 three years ago. Since then, he's portrayed a grumpy writer in *Talking to Myself*, a grumpy wolf in *The Hill*, and a grumpy farmer in *Balloon Release*. This year he faces his most challenging role: a grumpy super-villain.



Ward Willats (*Pelusa*) returns for his sixth year with the Festival. This year Ward played two bad father-kings in the Cabrillo production of *Metamorphoses*, jilted-lover George in The Western Stage Production of *Humble Boy* and a manipulative talk-show host in the short indy film STARBOY. He also made an appearance in Actors' Theatre own *Shakespeare Gala* last April. Ward holds a BA in Theater Arts from UCSC, runs a YouTube channel at youtube.com/WardCo, and does the odd video project at www.doornumberthree.com.



Darren Jackson-Wilkins (*Henry's Epitaph*) is an actor, director, and arts administrator originally from New Jersey. Darren graduated from Skidmore College summa cum laude where he earned a degree in Theater with double minors in Music and Arts Administration. His performance credits include *Eurydice* (Orpheus), *The Courage to Right a Woman's Wrongs* (Fernando), and *Black Superhero Magic Mama* (Tramarion). He also studied abroad with the British American Drama Academy. He is currently an MA candidate in the Theater Arts program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he concentrates in arts management and outreach. Darren is a UCSC Arts Research Institute Graduate Fellow and Miranda Family Fellow. He is also the Managing Director of the Barnstorm Theater Company at UC Santa Cruz where he will be directing two productions. Darren would like to thank Gregory for his guidance and his scene mates for helping build his West Coast community!



Alexis Makayla Williams (*Henry's Epitaph*) is a 22-year-old Monterey native who has been performing since she was 7 years old. Some of her featured roles include Carla from *In The Heights*, Emilia from *Emilia* by Morgan Lloyd Malcom, and *Killer Queen* from *We Will Rock You*. She is truly looking forward to sharing this experience for the first time with you all.



Avondina Wills (*Pronouns, Locker Room Talk*) is so grateful to be in the 2026 8 Tens @ 8 Festival! He was last seen at Actors' Theatre in the *Shakespeare Gala* and in *Aileen* and *The Scorpion Dance* in the 2025 Festival. He thanks everyone for coming out and supporting community theater.

**Become an Actors' Theatre supporter at:
www.santacruzactorstheatre.org/donate**

THE DIRECTORS



Karin Babbitt (*Co-Director, Such Dreams as Stuff is Made On*) is a Comedy Store Legend who performed nightly through the 80s on the mainstage in Hollywood. She was one of the 10% of females in a roster of over 200 male comics. Featured on many TV shows of the time (MTV, Vh-1, etc.), she toured America, headlining comedy shows and opening for rock stars. Karin relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1988. In 1990, she became a finalist in the San Francisco International Comedy Competition out of a field of hundreds (mostly male) and became a staple of Bay Area radio. Wanting to do something that mattered, she segued into teaching, both high school and college, then later managed a vocational film studio which trained adults with developmental disabilities. Covid brought her to reclaim her passion for stand up. Today, Karin is an instructor with the San Francisco Comedy College, headlines all over, and has recorded her first album: *Not In A Cult*. Find it on Spotify, Apple and YouTube.



Davis Banta (*Director, Ad Hominem*) is an actor, director, and sound designer who has been working in the Santa Cruz theater community for way too long, honestly. This is his fourth directing credit with the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. Some of his recent full-length directing credits include *Assassins* and *Evil Dead: The Musical*, both at Mountain Community Theater.



Gail Thornton Borkowski (*Director, The Tea Test*) is a playwright, director, actress and DJ. She has directed, produced and acted in Santa Cruz since 1984. She is a member of the 36North Playwrights Collective and a DJ on KSQD radio. Her play *Waking Up* was a finalist and produced in the 2020 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. She has also had plays in the Best of the Rest staged readings. She has directed in past Festivals and is thrilled to be back as a director in this iconic Santa Cruz event.



Andrew Davids (*Director, The Scorpion Dance*) is proud to be part of Santa Cruz's vibrant theater community. He appeared as Luke in the 2024 premiere of *Lucky Time* at Actors' Theatre. He has performed in many acclaimed Jewel Theatre productions including *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Explorers Club*, and *Under Ben Bulben*. Andrew was in MCT's productions of *The Last Noel*, *The Mystery Plays*, and *Julius Caesar*. Local personal highlights include performing in SEE Theatre's *The Nether* and directing and performing in several 8 Tens @ 8 Festivals. Andrew believes that the core of live theater is the exaltation and exploration of the human spirit, and the shared experiences with the audience and the community at large. The arts heal hearts. Thank you for being here.



Hannah Eckstein (*Director, Small Cat Negotiable*) is thrilled to be back for her 10th season of 8 Tens @ 8 and is a Board Member at Actors' Theatre. She directed *Becky's New Car, Calendar Girls, Sordid Lives, New Works* and *Cassandra Murders* at Mountain Community Theater. As an actress at MCT she appeared in *Calendar Girls, The Waiting Room, Other Desert Cities, Harvey, Beaux Stratagem, David Copperfield* and *The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild*. Since moving from Santa Monica she has appeared at Jewel Theatre, Cabrillo, NextStage, Monterey Pacific College and History Theater. She worked in film and TV shows including *Married with Children, Law & Order, Mike & Molly, Murder She Wrote, The Nanny, Ed Wood, For Their Own Good, Ghost Rider*, voice overs on all X-Men, and over 100 national commercials. She studied acting at HB Studios NYC with Uta Hagen and William Hickey, and at Meisner Center, Lee Strasberg Institute and Michael Karm Studio in Los Angeles. She holds a BA in Drama from Pitzer College, and an MA in Psychology from USC.



Greg Fritsch (*Director, Henry's Epitaph*) has worked as a professional director for over 40 years. He co-wrote and directed the musical *Escaping Queens*, now known as *Over the Roof* and the musical *Circus* for Cabrillo Stage. His other directing credits include: *Starbird, Emperor Norton*, and *Orpheus in the Underworld* for Pocket Opera in San Francisco; *Master Class, Lettice and Lovage* and *The Grapes of Wrath* for Hillbarn Theatre; *Suor Angelica, Company, The Magic Flute, Chicago, Rent, Into the Woods* and *Godspell* for Notre Dame de Namur University; *The Foreigner* for Sierra Repertory Theater in Sonora, to name a few. He taught Acting and Directing at Santa Clara University and Notre Dame de Namur University. He teaches Acting at UCSC.



Peter Gelblum (*Director, Line Cooks Like Baby Birds*) received his B.A. in Theater from Wesleyan University, then worked professionally as an actor and director in New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. He has directed for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival most years since 2010. Peter has also directed regularly at Mountain Community Theater, including *August: Osage County, Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, The Goat, or Who is Sylvia, Miracle on 34th Street*, and *Steel Magnolias*. His acting roles range from Kris Kringle in *Miracle*, to Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, to a killer on "Kojak." In 2022, he created "The CZU Fire In Their Own Words," a 90-minute film about people who lost their homes in, and fought, the August 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fires.



Gerry Geringer (*Code A*) has been involved in Santa Cruz theater since 1981. He has been a producer, director and actor. He has worked with Santa Cruz Repertory, Bear Republic Theatre, Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre and produced and directed independently. In 1991, he oversaw the creation of the Broadway Playhouse at the Santa Cruz Art League. Gerry has directed for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival

for many years and has a special place in his heart for this wonderful Festival. He dedicates this year's performances to his long-time best friend, the incredible Bonnie Ronzio.



Helene Simkin Jara (*Director, Pronouns*) received her BA in Theatre Arts from UCLA in 1969. She has performed in Los Angeles, NYC, and at The Western Stage in Salinas, Carl Cherry Center for the Arts in Carmel, Scotts Valley Performing Arts, Pisces Moon, SEE Theatre, and Cabrillo College. She is also a frequent collaborator with Actors' Theatre, having directed eight 8 Tens @ 8 Festival shows, as well as acting in five Best of the Rest shows and ten 8 Tens @ 8 shows. In September 2020, Helene was featured in *Side x Side*, a Zoomed play reading of three short plays by Jory Post, presented by 36 North Playwright's Collective. In addition to performing, Helene is an award-winning author. Her stories, poems and plays have been published, often winning various awards. Learn more at helenesimkinjara.com.



Denise Keplinger (*Director, This Side of Michigan*) was first cast as a workhouse boy in *Oliver* at 9 years old and was bitten hard by the theater bug. After learning to sew at 11 she was recruited to work on costumes, and subsequently became a crew head and feverish designer. Her parents took her to Ashland at 12, and that was the cement... she was officially a theater kid. Many years later and now living her best life directing one of the 8 Tens @ 8 and serving on the Actors' Theatre board, she continues to be devoted to this amazingly collaborative art form. She even went so far as to marry a playwright so she must really be committed. (Pun intended!) Create or die trying! Theater people are wonderful!



Kathie Kratochvil (*Co-Artistic Coordinator*) has worked as an actor, director, and designer for numerous theatrical productions and theatre companies throughout Santa Cruz County and the Bay Area over the last 40 years. After directing a variety of short plays in past 8 Ten @ 8 Festivals, she is excited and grateful for the opportunity to work with Buff on the artistic coordination of the festival this year. She currently serves as a Board member for the Actors' Theatre, and recently retired from the Theatre faculty at San Jose State University where she worked for the last 25 years. She holds a BA in Creative Arts & Drama, an MA in Theatre, and a Doctorate in Education from UCSC with a focus on Arts Education.



Susan McKay (*Director, Pelusa*) is very excited to be directing her first production for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival. Her passions include costume design, production managing, and over-committing. Susan is stepping down as President of Mountain Community Theater, having served for the past 3 years, and is looking forward to having more time to design costumes and explore directing opportunities. To my devoted cast: "Lycka till!"



Buff McKinley (*Co-Artistic Coordinator*) has been involved behind the scenes on productions at Actors' Theatre for almost 20 years. Having worked in a variety of technical roles here and with some of the best local theater companies, including Soaring Dragon Endeavors, MCT, SEE Theater, VanAntwerp Theater Company and LPRT, she's so pleased to be once again working on one of her annual favorites. In a world full of craziness - much of it beyond her control, Buff often relies on theatre to keep her sane. Upcoming projects under this proscenium of sanity include GoodEgg's *Matt & Ben* in March and Joe Ortiz' *Over the Roof* this summer. Enjoy the show!



Janet Norton (*Co-Director, Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On*) is so proud and excited to be back at Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre for her second year directing another short play. Starting out last year for the first time on *Giver of Beauty*, she has learned so much from everyone and is grateful for the opportunity to direct again!



Christopher Peak (*Director, Blue Bag*) is excited to be directing again in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival after stepping away from the theater 20 years ago. Previous engagements include Sacramento Theater Company, Seattle Rep, Intiman, Berliner Ensemble, Trevis and co., touring nationally with his new-vaud comedy trio X,Y&Z, working with Arden Shakespeare on *Romeo and Juliet*, being artistic director of his LA-based theater company, Howling Peak, touring his one-man shows, and clowning around whenever possible.



Brad Rodes (*Director, Locker Room Talk*) recently earned a Broadway World Bay Area Best Supporting Actor nomination for his work in the Actors' Theatre production of *Misery*. He has worked with Mountain Community Theatre in *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Becky's New Car* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. Brad has appeared in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival for the last two years as well as directed. In 2023 and 2024 directed the Storytellers for Next Stage. Locally Brad has worked with All About Theatre where he directed *Billy Elliot*, *Batboy*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Addams Family*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. In addition, he works with Miracles Santa Cruz.

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Brad won the Mimi Steinberg playwriting award at Brandeis University where he studied writing and directing with Martin Halpern, David Wheeler, Michael Murray and Edward Albee, Jayne Anne Phillips, Geoffrey Wolff and others.



Jim Schultz (*Director, Sacred Trust*) received a scholarship to the American National Theater Academy in Los Angeles as a senior at Bellarmine in 1966. When he arrived in the fall, he was so intimidated by the aggressive demeanor of the other students, he dropped out, never to pursue theater again. Forty-five years later he was cast as a cricket in a 10-minute play at Actors' Theatre. Having mastered that, he went on to play a dodo bird the following year. That also went well. Seemed like maybe this acting thing might not be so bad. He went on to play countless human roles. Tonight, he is one of the few, the proud, the directors.



Brian Spencer (*Director, The Moment Before*) has directed several plays for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival and has had several of his own plays produced. Brian has directed full-length stagings of *Copenhagen*, *Freud's Last Session*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *A Number*, *Shakespeare's R&J*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* to name a few. Brian holds a Masters Degree in Theater Arts (Playwriting) from San Jose State University.



Donna Tanner (*Assistant to the Director, The Tea Test*) has been happily assisting Gail Borkowski any time she directs. She was treasurer way back when for REPA and had a long time career as a bookkeeper. She walks, she gardens and loves supporting the theater process.



Cathy D. Warner (*Director, Stephen Hawking's Train*) is a theatre artist, choreographer, and educator, who has had the great pleasure of running the Theatre and Dance programs at Harbor High for 37 years, where she was Artistic Director and Producer for over 100 productions. She loves sharing her deep passion for theatre and all aspects of performance. Favorite directing experiences include co-directing Best of the Rest, several seasons of directing for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival, and Lampshade Theatre's Production of *Going to St. Ives*. She is a retired teacher who is absolutely delighted to be directing for the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival again.



Andrew Yabroff (*Assistant Director, The Last Continent*) is thrilled to help out the great Andrew D! When he is not assistant directing he is an actor himself, most recently seen as Felix Humble in *Humble Boy* at Western Stage. Andrew is also a teaching artist and youth theatre director for Santa Cruz Shakespeare, most recently co-directing *Macbeth* for SCS's fall Shakespeare camp. Andrew wants to as always thank the great Andrew Michael Davids and everyone at Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre!

THE WINNING PLAYWRIGHTS - 2026

Eric Alan Bower – *Pelusa* – has had his plays produced in California, New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, and West Virginia, and published by Heuer Publishing. His middle-grade comedic children's book series, *The Bizarre Baron Inventions*, is published by The Chicago Review Press. He lives in Pasadena, California, and currently works for Occidental College.

Mike Byham – *Stephen Hawking's Train* – has had several productions on the community theatre and scholastic level. His plays have also won multiple awards. Recently, *Southlake* was named winner of 2024 Theatre Network of Texas POPS! competition and was produced at The Core Theatre. Mike works as an aircraft performance engineer for a major airline with headquarters in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and the American Association of Community Theatre.

Maggie Cregan – *Line Cooks Like Baby Birds* – is an award-winning playwright whose work often features dark humor, difficult women, dangerous belief systems, and themes of contemporary American life. Her play *The Station* sold out its off-Broadway debut at the SheNYC theater festival in the summer of 2024. *The Station* also received Pittsburgh Public Theater's 2023 New Play Award and emerged as a finalist for Playhouse on the Square's NewWorks@TheWorks Series, the 2024 WATERWORKS Festival, and the Stage 32 Female-Driven Screenwriting Contest. Maggie is based in her hometown of Cleveland and is pursuing opportunities to produce her work both on stage and on screen.

Samantha Eppes – *The Moment Before* – received her BA in Theatre Performance from the University of South Florida. After working as an actress in the Tampa Bay area she became interested in writing during the pandemic lock down. She currently lives in North Carolina with her husband.

James P. Flores – *Pronouns* – has had performances of his 10-minute plays *Minor Side Effects*, *Love in Ten Minutes*, and *Divine Comedy* on both coasts at various theaters. His play *The Saint on the Couch* about the embodiment of Catholic guilt when Saint Anthony, patron saint of lost things, shows up in his living room, was described by Backstage as a "tangy little comedy." His absurdist play, *The Fifty Yard Lion*, about three people who must avoid being eaten by a lion, was selected by Theatre Three in Port Jefferson from three hundred submissions. After a performance of his play, *The Stinger*, about a sexually irresponsible man whose 'libido' becomes a human, an audience member told him, "You are depraved, sir. But I love it!"

Seth Freeman – *The Tea Test* – writes for the stage, print, film, and television for which he created the series "Lincoln Heights." His work in TV has been recognized with multiple Emmys, Golden Globes, and other awards. His articles appear in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Southern Theatre Magazine*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Hill*, the *Huffington Post*, *YaleGlobal* and other periodicals. There have been over 300 productions of his plays around the world. In 2019, he earned a Master's degree in Public Health, just before the first worldwide pandemic in a century. He has been honored to have his work performed by the Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre in previous years.

Nino Greene – *Small Cat Negotiable* – recently completed both a mid-life crisis and an MFA in Creative Writing at San Francisco State University. His first full-length play, *You Don't Have to Cry*, was a semi-finalist at the Ashland New Play Festival 2024, a quarter-finalist at the Screencraft Stage Play Competition 2023, and received staged readings at the Greenhouse Festival in San Francisco and the Shawnee Playhouse in Delaware. He received the Marcus Scholarship for Creative Writing for Men Talking in Rooms, the culminating project for his degree at SF State. He is a newly minted member of the SF PlayGround Writers Pool.

Mary Hayakawa – *Code A* – lives in Davis, California, with her husband and two adorable cats, Ravioli and Fettucine. A lifelong theatre lover (and mother of three actors), Mary decided to learn the craft of playwriting as part of her retirement journey. *Code A* is her first, but certainly not last, 10-minute play.

Ken Henry – *The Last Continent* – is a retired Presbyterian pastor. For over 36 years, Ken pastored churches in such places as Santa Cruz, California, Vancouver, Washington, Eugene, Oregon, San Jose, California, and Charlottesville, Virginia. Ken now lives on the northern coast of Oregon with his wife, Heather. He loves theater, music, good beer, and the creative act of putting on the stage life's most challenging and meaningful moments.

John Hollerman – *Locker Room Talk* – is a playwright and director based in Atlanta. He is often described as the most beautiful man that's ever been seen.* A selection of produced scripts include *The Ants*, adapted from the Pulitzer prize winning writings of E.O. Wilson at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *Odd Man Out* at the NY International Fringe Festival, and *Fish or Cut Bait*, winner of the Manhattan Punchline Festival. Raised by labradors, he's loyal, excellent at fetching and good with children, but is sadly marred by a certain thick-headedness.** His latest work, a holiday comedy, *Sherlock Holmes and the Figgy Pudding*, can be found at the National New Play Network. Inquiries, criticisms and compliments are welcome at johnhollerman02@gmail.com. (*outright lie, **surprisingly accurate)

Dan McGeehan – *Such Dreams as Stuff Is Made On* – is an actor, director, playwright, composer, and illustrator. He studied at Philadelphia's Arden Theatre and has over 150 theatrical productions to his credit. Dan is the author of a number multi-media ballets, opera librettos, and short plays, including *A Long Trip*, which has received multiple awards and is recognized as one of the most performed short scripts in the nation. When not writing, Dan is providing illustrations for several publications, advertisements, and children's books internationally.

Jalen McKoy – *Henry's Epitaph* – is a playwright, screenwriter, and performer based in Los Angeles. Born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, Jalen brings his experiences to the forefront of his storytelling. While receiving his BA in Performance Studies from the University of North Carolina, he wrote and performed a one-person show titled *Playing it Straight*. After graduation, Jalen was commissioned to adapt the book *Rap & Redemption on Death Row* into a stage production, which was selected for the UNC Chapel Hill Process Series. He is a member of the 2025 Geffen Playhouse YA Storyteller's Cohort, the inaugural Eight Ball Theatre & Playground Theatre Writer's Group, and a Page at NBCUniversal.

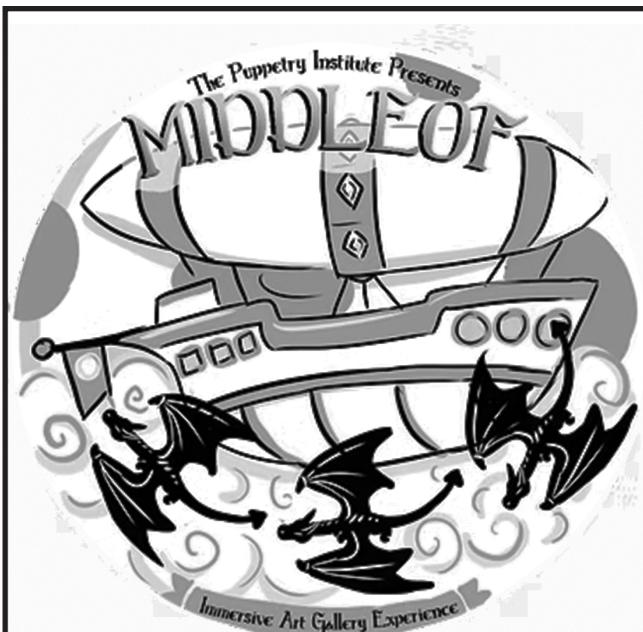
John Molina – *Blue Bag* – is a California playwright and instructional assistant. His 10-minute play *Our Mission Statement or: What a Bunch of Crock* was an Honorable

Mention at the 2015 Show Off! International Playwriting Festival in San Juan Capistrano, California. His latest 10-minute play, *The First Handshake*, was a finalist in the 2021 Stage It! 10-Minute Play Festival in Bonita Springs, Florida, subsequently published, and received a staged reading in 2022 and in 2023 at the Redlands Theater Festival in Redlands, California. An earlier 10-minute play, *Always in Threes*, received a staged reading by the Three Roses Players in North Hollywood in 2011, and more recently at the 2022 Bonita Arts Centers Reading Series, in Bonita Springs, Florida.

Eric Thomas – *Ad Hominem* – is an award-winning Cincinnati based actor and playwright. His short plays have been selected for performance across the U.S., and in London, and his one act play *The Stands* was selected for the Scribe Playwriting Award in 2020. Eric has co-produced a short play festival called Home Brew Theatre at his home theatre The Drama Workshop since 2019. Eric appreciates the unceasing support of his friends and family.

Andy Waddell – *Sacred Trust* – is a retired high school English teacher and author of the sci-fi novel *Hard Rain*. Acting in the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival for the past two years has inspired him to write his own. This is his third attempt; unfortunately, the first two were coldly rejected, much to the detriment of Western Civilization.

Rachel Whalen – *This Side of Michigan* – is a writer and translator from Buffalo, New York. She has an MFA from NYU and has had poems and translations published in *New Delta Review*, *Laurel Review*, and *Latin American Literature Today*, among others. You can find more of her work at rachel-whelen.com.



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