

MEN ON BOATS

written by
JACLYN BACKHAUS
directed by
DOMENIQUE LOZANO



APRIL 28 – MAY 1, 2022

Zellerbach Playhouse at UC Berkeley

 **tdps:** theater dance & performance studies
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



PRESENTS

MEN ON BOATS

BY JACLYN BACKHAUS

DIRECTED BY DOMENIQUE LOZANO

STAGE MANAGER

Lauren Chang

SCENIC DESIGNER

Tanya Orellana

COSTUME DESIGNER

Wendy Sparks

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ray Oppenheimer

SOUND DESIGNER

Emily Fassler

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Ryan Huber

CHOREOGRAPHER

Megan Lowe

DANCE CAPTAIN

Erzsabet Gonzalez

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Presented in approximately 2 hours, including a 10-minute intermission.

Photography, video, and audio recording are strictly prohibited.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

SETTING:

“On boats in 1869. Traversing the Green and Colorado Rivers from Wyoming to a Big Canyon on the government’s first Sanctioned Expedition.”

CASTING:

“The characters in MEN ON BOATS were historically cisgender white males. The cast should be made up entirely of people who are not. I’m talking about racially diverse actors who are female-identifying, trans-identifying, gender fluid, and/or non-gender-conforming.”

MEN ON BOATS is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York. Playwrights Horizons, Inc. and Clubbed Thumb produced MEN ON BOATS in New York City, 2016. Initially developed and produced by Clubbed Thumb in 2015.

CAST

JOHN WESLEY POWELL

Sum Ying Celeste Wu

WILLIAM DUNN

Kamaile Alnas-Benson

JOHN COLTON SUMNER

Eva Fleur

OLD SHADY

Amelia Patterson

BRADLEY

Lou Avril

O.G. HOWLAND

Pranathi Santosh

SENECA HOWLAND / THE BISHOP

Erzsabet Gonzalez

FRANK GOODMAN / MR. ASA

Madeline Rose

HALL

Wailea Siler

HAWKINS

Elly Grace Hudson

TSAUWIAT

Fran Astorga

COLLABORATORS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Nathan Payne

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

Hannah Bailey, Keanu Marquez

ASSISTANT COSTUME DESIGNER

Mirin Scassellati

ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Tiffany Hernandez

ASSISTANT HEAD ELECTRICIAN

Amy Abad

LIGHT BOARD OPERATORS

Cristina Miller, Rachel Nesheim

SOUND BOARD OPERATOR

Bryce van der Klomp

WARDROBE & DECK CREW

Lulu Cardoza, Joanna Castillo,
Yuri Choi, Abhiraj Muhar

COSTUME SHOP ASSISTANTS

Jenn Park, Maya Romero, Tessa Schaap,
Tiffany Stratton, Jazmin Velazquez

DECK CREW

Jack Grable, David Levitt,
Thomas Nguyen, Tai White

**SCENIC & COSTUME SUPPORT
& ELECTRICS INSTALLATION**

Students of Theater 168, 169, 175B

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Saira Brown

FRONT OF HOUSE & BOX OFFICE STAFF

Provided by Cal Performances

STAFF & FACULTY ADVISORS

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Jamila Cobham

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER

Emily Fassler

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Joshua Frachiseur

SCENE SHOP SUPERVISOR

Timothy Kopra

SCENIC ARTIST

Zoë Gopnik-McManus

PROPERTIES DIRECTOR & CARPENTER

Peet Cocke

THEATER SUPERVISOR

Eugene Palmer

COSTUME DIRECTOR

Wendy Sparks

HEAD COSTUMER

Jane Boggess

ASSISTANT COSTUMER & COSTUME CURATOR

Miyuki Bierlein

LIGHTING DESIGN ADVISOR

Raymond Oppenheimer

SCENIC/COSTUME DESIGN ADVISOR

Annie Smart

STAGE MANAGEMENT ADVISOR

Laxmi Kumaran

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Myriam Cotton

Robin Davidson

Ben Dillon

Jean-Paul Gressieux

Megan Lowe

Michael Mansfield

FACULTY PRODUCTION REP

Brandi Wilkins Catanese

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Joe Goode

SPECIAL THANKS

Joy Meads

Lauren Spencer

Shannon Davis

Chelsea Gregory

Max Abner

Leyla Modirzadeh

Jay Yamada

Keith Hernandez

& Berkeley Language Center

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Back in February of 2021, when I was asked to consider titles for this performance slot, I tried to imagine what it would be like being in a rehearsal room with students again, working on a play in person. By the time we would begin rehearsals, it would be after almost two years of live theatre being nonexistent. What kind of play could I even begin to imagine working on? I knew I wanted to give as many actors a chance to engage with a live production as possible, so could I find a script that could accommodate a large cast, say 10 folks, and provide meaningful stage time and roles for them? Coming out of the isolation of Zoom, could this text offer students opportunities to reconnect with their physical bodies? Could it give them an experience of being part of a physical ensemble? Perhaps more importantly, could the text give students an experience of deeply connecting to their creative imaginations? Could this mystery text also possibly provide opportunities for growth, transformation, and an experience of big and brilliant theatricality? And lastly, could I find a text that was funny, witty, delightful, surprising—all things I felt we needed to reconnect with, coming out of the pain/isolation/trauma of this pandemic?



It felt like an impossible task, and then I crossed paths with *Men on Boats*. This play is a wild act of imagination. Its theatricality, satire, pointed humor, and reimagining of history are clever, biting, and sometimes radical. The playwright, Jacklyn Backhaus, has chosen a very American tale to tell, one populated by cisgender white men, draped in the ideas of manifest destiny, discovery, and conquest. But brilliantly, she has turned this story on its head. On stage, instead of the expected gathering of white men, we find ourselves in the company of a racially diverse group of female and non-binary explorers. This alone is already a radical act, because what's the last play you saw that centered 10 women and non-binary folks onstage? This was an inspiration for Ms. Backhaus, and in repopulating *Men on Boats* with anything but a cisgender white male

cast, it reframes the moment in history, and we can begin to reflect on the account of the actual journey with a new set of eyes and perhaps begin to ask a new set of questions. Who was left out of this expedition? Whose stories were untold, left off the page, erased? Our stories are what make up our history, and our received history in this country is from a very particular point of view. What if that view expands? What if we start getting curious about the stories that were left off the page? What if we make room for them, and by extension, make room for new history?

This theme of storytelling is central to the play and to how I wanted to frame the production. One of the first impulses I had about the play was a scratchy radio montage depicting the awesome (and sadly, many times erased) accomplishments of female and non-binary folks beginning now and stretching back to 1869, the year that the expedition of this play takes place. In researching those stories, I was awed by the audacity, courage, and accomplishments I discovered, and struck by the fact that half of these stories were virtually invisible, relegated to a back corner, forgotten. I wanted to bring them forward, even if just for a moment. If you look closely, you'll see some anachronistic elements in the costume design on stage. Early in our process, we collaborated with the cast to include elements of their families' histories in the costume design. We asked the cast, what might your families have been doing and wearing in this time period? Was there anything special or essential to them in their clothing? It was important to us that this cast's stories, their histories, are present and included on stage as witness to this journey, and this storytelling.

It is my hope that your curiosity gets pricked by watching *Men on Boats*. That after spending the evening with us, perhaps you'll marvel at who and what might have been left off the page of your history books. I hope you wonder about the badass women and gender non-conforming folks of 1869 and onward; that your eye is hungry for more plays that are populated with casts like ours; and that your spirit is delighted by the wild and theatrical ride this play is. Thank you for celebrating this cast, and the return of live theatre. Oars up! Oars out!

— Domenique Lozano

VOICES OF THE PAST & PRESENT

The following individuals are featured in the show's opening audio montage:

2020: Katanji Brown Jackson, 1st Black woman seated on the United States Supreme Court

2010: Haifa Al-Habibi, 1st woman to register as a Saudi political candidate

2000: Wangari Maathai, 1st African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize; founder of the Green Belt Movement

1990: Florence Griffith Joyner, set world records for the 100 & 200 meter dash; major figure in athletic history

1980: Indira Gandhi, 1st and only female Prime Minister of India

1970: Marsha P. Johnson, co-founded STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries); major figure of gay rights and trans rights movements

1960: Dolores Huerta, co-founded the United Farm Workers; 1st Latina inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

1950: Chien-Shiung Wu, disproved the law of the conservation of parity; 1st female president of the American Physical Society; worked on the Manhattan Project

1940: Frida Kahlo, Mexican artist whose work has been celebrated as emblematic of Mexican heritage and the female experience

1930: Amelia Earhart, pioneer of aviation; first female pilot to fly across the Atlantic; first president of the Ninety-Nines

1920: Charlotte Edith Anderson Manture, 1st Indigenous-Canadian woman to become a registered nurse, as well as to gain the right to vote in a Canadian federal election

1910: Edith Wharton, a premier author of the Gilded Age; 1st woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Literature

1900: Marie Curie, 1st woman to win a Nobel Prize (Chemistry and Physics); conducted innovative research on radioactivity

1880: Susan La Fleiche Picote, 1st Native American woman to receive a medical degree; helped bring medicine to reservations in the Nebraska region

1870: Mary Tape, Chinese desegregation activist who won a landmark case in favor of desegregation of schools in America

1860: Harriet Tubman, American abolitionist and political activist; integral member of the Underground Railroad and the women's suffrage movement



NAVIGATING THE RAPIDS:

A CONVERSATION ABOUT *MEN ON BOATS*

Director Dominique Lozano joined fellow theater artists and educators in conversation about the significance of *Men On Boats* and the experience of bringing the play to life.



Visit tdps.berkeley.edu/MenOnBoats or scan this QR code to watch.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

We welcome your feedback about your experience of this show.

Visit tdps.berkeley.edu/MenOnBoats or scan this QR code to access an anonymous survey form.

