



CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY OF WALNUT CREEK
 Michael Butler, Artistic Director Scott Denison, Managing Director

presents

**The
 Syringa
 Tree**

By Pamela Gien

Directed by Michael Evan Haney

Starring

Shannon Koob

Scenic Designer
Narelle Sissons
 Sound Designer
Chuck Hatcher

Lighting Designer
James Sale
 Stage Manager
Briana J. Fahey

Costume Designer
Elizabeth Eisloeffel
 Assistant Stage Manager
Joe Coe

First produced at A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle
 Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director

Original New York stage production presented by Matt Salinger

Use of the music and lyrics of "Ballad of the Southern Suburbs" a.k.a. "Ag Pleez Deddy"
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This production of The Syringa Tree was originally produced by The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

Margaret Leshner Theatre
 January 28 - February 27, 2010
 Leshner Center for the Arts

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The Actor and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association,
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 The Scenic Designer, Lighting Designer and Sound Designer are members of United Scenic Artists Union
 The Director of this production is a member of the Society of Stage Directors

Center REP is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), The National Organization for the American Theatre and Theatre Bay Area



CAST

Shannon Koob Elizabeth, et. al.

TIME and PLACE...1963 - Present, South Africa

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Grace Family:

Elizabeth Grace: a white South African girl.

Eugenie Grace: Elizabeth's mother.

Dr. Isaac Grace: Elizabeth's father, a local doctor for blacks and whites.

John Grace: Elizabeth's younger brother.

Grandpa George: Eugenie's father.

Granny Elizabeth: Eugenie's mother.

The Grace Family Servants:

Salamina: the black servant who looks after Elizabeth.

Moliseng: Salamina's daughter.

Iris: the black servant who looks after John.

Isaac: the black gardener for the Grace family.

Peter Mombadi: the black driver for the Grace family.

Pietros: another black servant.

Next door to the Grace Family:

Loeska: a young Afrikaans girl around Elizabeth's age.

Dominee: (the Afrikaans word for minister), *Loeska's* father.

Zephyr: their gardener.

Other Characters:

Dubike: Salamina's cousin.

Matron Lanning: works at Baragwanath, a hospital.

Sergeant Potgieter: a policeman.

Father Montford: a priest.

Mrs. Biggs: Salamina's employer after the Graces.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Shannon Koob (Elizabeth, etal)

is delighted to be making her Center REPeritory Company debut in this production of *The Syringa Tree*. Shannon has performed this one-woman show at Vienna's English



Theatre (Continental European Premiere), the English Theatre of Frankfurt, Two River Theater Company, the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, where she won the 2003 Cincinnati Entertainment Award for Best Actress, and Ensemble Theatre Company in Santa Barbara. Her other international credits include the European premiere of *Doubt* and *Crimes of the Heart*. Shannon's New York credits include the world premieres of *New House Under Construction*, *The Bridge in Scarsdale* and Jeff Baron's *What Goes Around*. Her other regional credits include *You Never Can Tell* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Picnic*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Bus Stop*, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, *Pierre* (World Premiere) and *Christmas Carol* (Denver Center Theater Company); *Karla* (Long Wharf Theater); *Doubt* (Pioneer Theatre Company), *Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare in Santa Fe); and *Lobby Hero* (Lizard Head Theater Company). On television, Shannon has appeared on "Law & Order: Criminal Intent", "Law & Order: SVU", "The Sopranos" and "Guiding Light", as well as in a number of commercials. She holds an MFA from the National Theater Conservatory in Denver, Colorado and is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association. Love and thanks to Aaron.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Apartheid is an Afrikaner word that means "apartness." However, it was much more than a word. It was the rule of law in South Africa for almost fifty years. It was similar to "segregation" in the United States. The South African government passed laws to keep the races (Black, Colored and White) separate. It was ruthless in its enforcement.

The Syringa Tree is the story of a young white South African girl growing up in 1963 at the very height of Apartheid. Through her innocent eyes we see the society of South Africa. We meet her parents and grandparents. We meet the black "nanny," Salamina and her daughter Moliseng. We glimpse her white Afrikaan neighbors and the black men and women who are "allowed" to be in the "White Only" section of Johannesburg to serve them. We follow events from 1963 through the student riots of 1976 to the first democratic elections in April of 1994. The author, Pamela Gien, shaped this story, based on her real life experiences.

Those are some of the facts of the play.

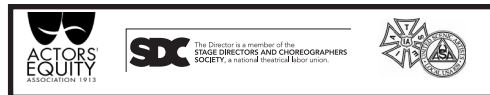
The play, however, is about the love between two families—one Black and one White—the sacrifices they make for each other and how the horrible facts of apartheid affect their lives.

I cannot think of a more important time for this play to be seen. As we endure this time of fear and war we are made very aware of the differences between people in the world. In *The Syringa Tree*, one actress embodies twenty eight very different people. (Our actress Shannon Koob, constantly amazes me with her talent and depth of feeling.) We see all this varied humanity pouring forth from a single human being. It shows us that we all have a common human experience. Through the wondering eyes of Elizabeth we see the world unfiltered by politics and societal structures and we can begin to understand how "racism" is taught and learned and the terrible toll it takes on the souls of our children.

In rehearsal, we have strived to tell this story with simplicity and truth. The innocence of Elizabeth reminds us of what is really important in this tumultuous time—the love between people no matter their differences and the positive actions we can take as individuals against what seems like impossible odds. "Apartheid" is pronounced apart-hate. *The Syringa Tree* stands as a testament of togetherness—love. It is a play of hope made into reality.

"The sun will continue to shine on the South African people as we build this non-racial, nonsexist and democratic country, instilling in all a shared sense of nationhood and human solidarity."
- President Thabo Mbeki in his New Year Message

Michael Evan Haney
Director



A TIMELINE OF APARTHEID

1652	The Dutch create a colony in Africa at the Cape of Good Hope.
1806	The British defeat the Dutch, the Xhosa and other African peoples.
1880	The first of the two Anglo-Boer wars begins.
1902	The British win the second of the Anglo-Boer wars.
1910	The Union of South Africa is formed.
1912	The South African Native National Congress (later named the African National Congress or ANC) is formed to fight discrimination.
1913	Afrikaners (Dutch settlers) form the National Party to preserve their identity under British rule.
1948	The National Party comes to power and institutes a policy of apartheid.
1960	ANC and other activist groups are banned following the Sharpeville massacre.
1976	Riots break out in the Soweto uprising and black townships across the country.
1983	The United Democratic Front is created to oppose apartheid.
1986	Talks begin between Afrikaners and the ANC.
1990	President F.W. de Klerk legalizes anti-apartheid groups and releases Nelson Mandela from prison.
1994	South Africa holds its first democratic elections.

Source: *A Guide to Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers, Facing History and ourselves, Public Affairs Television, Inc.*

COSTUME NOTES

How do you dress an actress who plays 24 characters during the performance? Those characters are both male and female, black and white, little girls, pregnant women and elderly men who people a 40-year time period.

The obvious conclusion is that she needs to wear something as neutral as possible to cover her broad range of movement through the cast of characters. Yet I wanted her costume to be interesting to look at, comfortable, flattering and in the world of Elizabeth Grace.

I knew she needed a dress. Michael requested something that was "twirly." When I found the blue hand batik fabric I knew I had a great beginning. The color and pattern spoke to me of sky and water and memory. It then occurred to me that wearing capri pants and a T-shirt under a jumper would be a good solution to covering her wide range of movement in addition to supporting her male characters.

Elizabeth Eisloeffel
Costume Designer

CREATIVE TEAM

Pamela Gien (Playwright) As both writer and original performer of *The Syringa Tree*, won the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance, the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Solo Performance, a Drama League Honor, a nomination for the John Gassner Playwriting Award and the Obie for both Performance and Best Play 2001. A principal member of The American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, for four seasons, she played Estrella in *Life's A Dream* with Cherry Jones, Annabella in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* opposite Derek Smith and Sonya in the premiere of David Mamet's adaptation of *Uncle Vanya* opposite Christopher Walken. She played Gabriella in Ronald Ribman's *Sweet Table at the Richelieu*, and Angela in *The King Stag*, both directed by Andrei Serban. She also appeared in several productions directed by David Wheeler, including *Gillette* by William Hauptman and *The Day Room* by Don DeLillo. She played Stella/Ann in *The End of the World with Symposium to Follow* directed by Richard Foreman. She played Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* for The Public Theatre's New York Shakespeare Festival. Alicia in *Piano* by Anna Deavere Smith, and starred opposite David Selby as Hannah Jelkes in *The Night of the Iguana* at the LATC, for which she won a Drama-Logue Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Theatre. She has also performed in the New Works Festival at The Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles opposite J. T. Walsh, The Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, and at South Coast Repertory. Her television appearances include guest-starring roles in *Tales From the Crypt*, *Reasonable Doubts*, *Hunter*, *Secret Lives*, and *Into Thin Air*. She recently began working in film, appearing in *Men Seeking Women* with Will Ferrell, directed by Jim Milio, and *The Last Supper* starring Bill Paxton, Jason Alexander, Charles Durning and Ron Perlman. Random House has commissioned her to write *The Syringa Tree* as a novel. She is writing the screenplay of *The Syringa Tree*, and has completed the screenplay for the upcoming film *The Lily Field*. *The Syringa Tree* is dedicated to her parents.

Michael Evan Haney (Director) As Associate Artistic Director for Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, he has directed *Sleuth*, *Blackbird*, *Love Song*, *Around the World in 80 Days* (transferred Off-Broadway to the Irish Repertory Theatre), *Crime and Punishment*, *Reckless*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *The Clean House*, *A Christmas Carol* (1993-2009), *Bad Dates*, *A Picasso*, *Hiding Behind Comets*, *The Drawer Boy*, *The Syringa Tree*, *Proof*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (2001), and *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. His International credits include: *The Syringa Tree* (the English Theatres of Vienna and Frankfurt); and Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Mr. Haney's regional credits include: *All My Sons*, Alabama Shakespeare Festival; *The Drawer Boy*, Actors Theatre of Louisville; *The Syringa Tree* and *The Heidi Chronicles*, the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis; *The Underpants*, Capital Repertory Theatre; *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, Meadow Brook Theatre; *Comedy of Errors* and *Mr. Rickey Calls a Meeting*, Sacramento Theatre Company; *Monument Boulevard*, Missouri Repertory Theatre; *The Potting Shed*, Washington Stage Guild; *Comedy of Errors*, Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival; *Charley's*

Aunt, Wayside Theatre; *King of Dominoes*, Passage Theatre Company; *Scotland Road*, Pacific Resident Theatre, Drama-Logue Award for direction; and *As the Wind Rocks the Wagon* (a one-woman show written and performed by his wife Amy Warner). He was also the Artistic Director of Allenberry Playhouse in Pennsylvania where he directed more than thirty plays including *Bus Stop*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Love Letters* with Shirley Jones, *Crimes of the Heart*, *The Secret Garden*, and *Gypsy*. Mr. Haney's acting credits include seasons with The Arena Stage, Missouri Repertory Theatre, and Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival; a national tour of *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Return to the River*, *Jail Diary of Albee Sachs*, and *The Devils* (off-Broadway); and Elie Wiesel's *Zalmen* on Broadway.

Narelle Sissons (Scenic Designer) Broadway: *All My Sons* at The Roundabout. Off Broadway: *How I Learned To Drive*, original production. *Stop Kiss*, *In The Blood*, *Kit Marlowe* and *Julius Caesar* at Joseph Papp Public Theatre. Also in NYC: Playwrights Horizons, New York Theatre Workshop, Epic Theatre Ensemble, Classic Stage Company and The Women's Project. Regional credits include: Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Rep, ACT, Laguna Playhouse, Steppenwolf, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and Cincinnati Playhouse in The Park. International: *Jesus Hopped the A Train* director Philip Seymour Hoffman, London and NY; *Mabou Mines Doll House* director Lee Breuer, US and World Tour, *The Syringa Tree*, director Michael Haney, Vienna Austria and Frankfurt Germany. Nominations and awards: Drama Desk, Helen Hayes, American Theatre Wing, Kevin Kline Award, Back Stage West and Exhibitor at Prague Quadrennial 2007.

Chuck Hatcher (Sound Designer) is an associate professor of Theatre Design and Production at the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati where he is head of the BFA/MFA program in Sound Design. He is proud to be a part of *The Syringa Tree* team and to share this wonderful, magical work with Center REP audiences. This sound design was first heard at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and then at Cincinnati's Playhouse in the Park and has since been heard at theaters across the U.S. as well as at The English Theater in Frankfurt, Germany and Vienna, Austria. Chuck designs regularly for the university (*Hair* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, musical) and is a frequent guest artist at Playhouse in the Park (*Victoria Musica*) and the Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati (*Sleeping Beauty*). He is a proud member of USA829/IATSE as a Sound Designer.

James Sale (Lighting Designer) has designed over 500 shows in the last 30 years. His work in theater, opera and ballet has taken him all over the United States and the world. Some of the companies he has designed for include: Los Angeles Opera, Cleveland Opera, Wolf Trap, Opera Pacific, Kansas City Opera, Opera Colorado, The Spoleto Festival in Italy, Palm Beach Opera, Central City Opera, Tulsa Opera, Colorado Opera Festival, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Asolo Theatre, Denver Center, English Theater Frankfurt, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, English Speaking Theater

of Vienna, Portland Center Stage, Alley Theater, Pennsylvania Center Stage, Seattle Repertory, Studio Arena, Intiman Theater, Merrimack Repertory, St. Louis Repertory, Alliance Theater, Crossroads Theater, The Hartman, Alley Theater, Alaska Repertory, Sarasota Ballet, & Colorado Ballet. Mr. Sale is also senior designer and partner at JAMES SALE LIGHTING, INC., a firm that specializes in high-end residential and commercial lighting design in Denver, Colorado.

Elizabeth Eisloffel (Costume Designer) is delighted to once again be a part of this creative team producing *The Syringa Tree*. She has designed costumes for the following productions at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis: *Blackbird*, *Bad Dates*, *Lobby Hero*, *Life (x) 3*, *Fully Committed*, *Day Trips*, *Dog Logic* and *Tom and Viv*. She has also designed costumes for The Capital Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Vienna's English Theatre, Theatre Project Company, and St. Louis University. As an assistant designer she has worked for the New York Shakespeare Festival with Martin Pakledinaz, and the Sante Fe Opera with Michael Stennett. She has also worked as a technician for Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Broadway costume house that produced *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*. Elizabeth also managed the costume shop at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis for eight years. She is an alumnus of Washington University in St. Louis from which she has a BFA in Fashion Design. In September of 2007 she got married for the first (and only) time. Elizabeth, her husband, and two dogs, a German shepherd and a Welsh Corgi, live on a farm in southern Illinois. The state of Illinois has designated it a Centennial farm. That designation means the farm has been owned by the same family for one hundred years or more, in this case since 1863. You can find more about the farm and food at her blog: www.foodfromthefield.blogspot.com

Briana J. Fahey (Stage Manager) is excited to be back at Center REP after stage managing last season's production of *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Other regional credits include California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, Utah Shakespearean Theater and the Milwaukee Repertory Theater.

Joe Coe (Assistant Stage Manager) This is Joe's tenth production with Center REP and he couldn't be happier to be a part of such an amazing team of professionals and friends! Joe has had the pleasure of working with such companies as Berkeley Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Summer Repertory Theatre, Suicide Kings touring production of *In Spite of Everything*, Boston Conservatory, SpeakEasy Stage Company, and Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre. Joe would like to thank all of his colleagues here at the LCA for a great season and for making it such a joy to work here!

Michael Butler (Artistic Director) most recently directed REP's productions of *A Number*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Enchanted April*, as well as the award-winning productions of *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. His directing work has also been seen in New York, L.A. and at regional

theatres around the country. As an actor, Michael has worked on Broadway, off-Broadway, in regional theatres, film and television. He is a published songwriter and the co-writer and composer of numerous music-theatre pieces, which he has directed and performed in NY, LA, and at festivals in India and Morocco. In his career as a performer he has also danced with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, portrayed the villainous Pierre LeChance on *The Guiding Light*, and played guitar and harmonica in many rock, blues, and country western bands at all the notable dives in NYC.

Scott Denison (Managing Director) has been the General Manager for the Leshler Center for the Arts since it opened 19 years ago and has worked for the Arts in this area for 36 years. Scott has directed over 150 productions, including *The Wizard of Oz*, the musical hit *Cinderella* and *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* and for the past 13 seasons Center REP's *A Christmas Carol* as well as all Fantasy Forum productions since 1972. He created and produces the annual *Shellie Awards* now celebrating 31 years. Scott has also designed lights for over 250 productions, including the national touring production of *Sylvia*. In 1979 he created the *Shellie Awards*, which annually honors outstanding performing arts achievement in Contra Costa County. Under Denison's guidance the Leshler Center for the Arts presents over 900 public events each year. He coordinates performing arts activities with over 85 producers and producing organizations. Scott created the *Chevron Family Theatre Festival* which hosted over 7,000 guests this year. He is also the Managing Director of the Center REPeritory Company producing professional productions each season; and is the director and co-founder of Fantasy Forum Actors Ensemble, an adult family performing arts company which presents programs for the young and Young at Heart.

OUR SPONSORS

Chevron (Season Sponsor) has been the leading corporate sponsor of Center REP and the Leshler Center for the Arts for the past eight years. In fact, Chevron has been a partner of the LCA since the beginning, providing funding for capital improvements, event sponsorships and more. Chevron generously supports every Center REP show throughout the season, and is the primary sponsor for events including the Chevron Family Theatre Festival in July. Chevron has proven itself not just as a generous supporter, but also a valued friend of the arts.

Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA) (Season Partner) is both the primary fundraising organization of the Leshler Center for the Arts (LCA) and the City of Walnut Creek's appointed curator for the LCA's audience outreach. DRAA's role in the community is all about building partnerships with the focused goal of enhancing artistic quality at the LCA and providing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the arts. Through partnerships with the LCA and its producers, individual donors, corporate and foundation sponsors and the City of Walnut Creek, DRAA plays a vital role in advancing the arts for the betterment of the community. Please visit us online at www.draa.org.

Contra Costa Times (Season Media Sponsor) In the East Bay, the largest newspaper of the Bay Area News Group is the Contra Costa Times and its sister editions, the West County Times, Valley Times, San Ramon Valley Times and East County Times. The Times, was judged the best newspaper in its circulation category in the state five times in a six-year period by the California Newspaper Publishers Association. In 2005, it won the prestigious national Freedom of Information Award from Associated Press Managing Editors. And, in 2007, it was honored by the California Newspaper Publishers Association for its leadership on public records.

ABOUT CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY

Center REP is the resident, professional theatre company of the Leshler Center for the Arts. Our season consists of six productions a year – a variety of musicals, dramas and comedies, both classic and contemporary, that continually strive to reach new levels of artistic excellence and professional standards.


Our **mission** is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre, and through Outreach and Education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities we serve.

What does it mean to be a producing theatre? We hire the finest professional directors, actors and designers to create our productions at Center REP. These are not touring productions – they're conceived and developed here, the sets and costumes are built in our shops, and the actors rehearse in our rehearsal hall. Whether the production is a Bay Area premiere or a Shakespearean classic, each is devised to be a one of a kind, artistic creation that will be a unique theatre experience for our audience.

What does it mean to be a professional theatre? It means that all our artists and artisans are career theatre-practitioners. The actor in this production is a member of Actors' Equity Association; many of our directors and designers are members of professional unions. All do theatre because it is their profession and their passion.

We are very proud to have the opportunity to produce professional theatre for our community in the beautiful Margaret Leshler Theatre here at the Leshler Center for the Arts. Thank you for your support!

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