

FOR MADMEN ONLY

MAGIC'S QUARTERLY

Fall 2018 #1



Barbara Hammond's *The Eva Trilogy* (2017). Julia McNeal (Eva). Photo: Jennifer Reiley.

Jessica Hagedorn's *The Gangster of Love* (2018). Golda Sargento (Rocky). Photo: Jennifer Reiley.



John Kolvenbach's *Reel to Reel* (2018). Andrew Pastides (Walter 1) and Carla Spindt (Maggie 2). Photo: Julie Haber.



Code Tenderloin performance, Pianofight. May 25th 2018. Photo: Sonia Fernandez.

Making Magic: Arts and Community

Education Director Fran Tarr discusses Magic's burgeoning Tenderloin-based education program with editor Adam Levonian.

Adam Levonian: What was the genesis of the *Making Magic: Arts and Community* program?

Fran Tarr: Loretta [Greco, artistic director of Magic] called me up and told me Magic's dream: to start an education program in the Tenderloin by March of 2018. It was to be a precursor to Magic's second space opening in 2020, so that there was a program ready to move right into the building. And I said, "I'm your girl."

AL: And you've been working in theatre education for years, is that right?

FT: More than 17 years. I started at Women's Project Theater [now WP Theater]; I was an education director there and at Atlantic Theatre Company, where I am currently the education coordinator. And seven years ago I founded and continue to run Breaking Walls, an international youth empowerment movement. Of course, this is all in my bio.

AL: This is all in your bio. [Laughs.] Well, so why theatre education? What's so special about theatre?

FT: There's something truly powerful and positive about guiding young people and adults to discover their voice and giving them a platform on which to use it. Especially in this day and age, when it seems like everyone can be "heard"—and I'm putting air quotes around "heard"—because you can tweet, you can Instagram, you can blog. But the reality is that very few people have the opportunity to speak out loud and have somebody be in the room and respond back. That's really, really powerful.

AL: With these values in mind, how did you start building *Making Magic*?

FT: We started out with what's called a listening tour—I spent a week in the Tenderloin, connecting with neighborhood organizations and people. The key is going in completely open.

Initially, there was this sense that connecting with more formal organizations already integrally connected to the neighborhood—theatre companies, schools—would be the best route to developing the program. But I spoke with Rob [Ready], the founder of PianoFight, and he was tremendously helpful. He said to me, "Yeah, that's great, but the reality is, the schools are just a portion of the Tenderloin and the Tenderloin population. It's not everything." He really encouraged *Making Magic* to reach out to individuals that are frequently overlooked in the community—and

Tenderloin Elementary performance, the Curran Theater. May 30th 2018. Photo: Mark Luevano.



VYDC Family: Our Hopes, Our Dreams, Past and Future



Vietnamese Youth Development Center performance. August 8th, 2018. Photo: Sonia Fernandez.

by that I mean adults. Because everybody wants to reach out to the kids. That makes perfect sense, who wouldn't? And they need the support. But that's forgetting that there are individuals of many ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds that also need to discover *their* voice and be offered a platform on which to use it.

It just turned out that my next meeting was at PianoFight, with a man named Curtis [Bradford], who was from the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation [TNDC]. And as soon as we started, he said to me, "God, we want to do this! I can get twelve people tonight, when do we start?" So it was really serendipitous.

And that was the start of the adult program. This was men and women in their late 20s through their early 70s—people living in SROs [single room occupancies], veterans, people who've faced homelessness, challenges, difficult choices. Now, once a week, they had an opportunity to discover their voice. I believe this is almost like God's work.

AL: So *Making Magic* launched with elementary and adult programs.

FT: We started at Tenderloin Elementary School with 4th graders. We've run workshops with TNDC, the

Vietnamese Youth Development Center, Larkin Street Academy (an organization specifically aimed at helping youth experiencing homelessness), and Code Tenderloin, one of the most successful job placement programs in the city.

Every workshop is a blend of mindfulness, literacy and creative writing, and theatre performance skills; we take this approach so that we offer a more holistic, balanced program that benefits individuals of *any* age.

AL: Who leads the workshops?

FT: We have a system where there's a teaching artist team composed of one man and one woman. The reason we do that is so that they can role model how a man and a woman work together, collaboratively.

AL: What does the future look like for *Making Magic*?

FT: We are continuing these programs into the fall, with fifth graders and our adult programs, and we're going to expand in Spring 2019.

The program itself is developing into something that is really, really beautiful. Now, I consider *Making Magic* to be one of the most extraordinary programs I've ever worked on. *

Ely Sonny Orquiza, Teaching Artist:

It has been fulfilling and gratifying being a Teaching Artist for Magic Theater's *Making Magic: Arts and Community*. My experience has given me a unique opportunity to know intimately the Tenderloin community and provided me an outlet to share my craft, my tools as an artist to generate new works. *Making Magic* is special and *needed* programming in that it gives community members an agency to shape, own, and reclaim their voices. This program has empowered and continues to empower and inspire!



Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (2017). Photo: Teddy Wolff.



← Playwright Ashlin Halfnight

Playing Now: *The Resting Place!*

FALL SCHEDULE

October 17th – November 4th – *The Resting Place*
 December 1st – 16th – Virgin Play Festival
 December 10th – Magic Family Dinner

Two in the Magic Family

John Marx

Current board member John Marx chatted with editor Adam Levonian about architecture, the arts, and risky Magic plays.

You're a principal architect and the Chief Artistic Officer of Form4 Architecture, and your firm won the 2017 American Prize for Architecture. Your acceptance speech opened with these lines: "We asked ourselves: When did the world become so grey? When did our profession begin to neglect the people we pledged to care for?" What motivated these questions? We wanted to challenge and change the profession. The short version of the idea is that for the last 50 years architects haven't been allowed to design beautiful buildings, and have lost their sense of how to create emotional meaning.

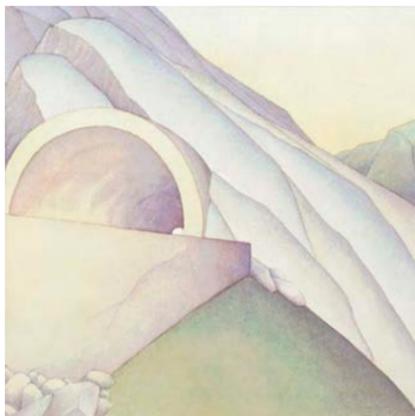
What do you propose as an alternative? Work that exemplifies what I call lyrical expressionism. The expressionism part is when you've got dramatic formal heroics going on. You look at a design and the form is very powerful, it captures your imagination, it's iconic, it's got presence, it's not in the background. The lyrical part is when you add a narrative. One of our projects is called Crashing Waves. It's a concert hall that also functions as a memorial for the two Koreas. The two forms look like waves coming together, and the base of the building is the waters gently receding back into each other. Emotion and story—that's lyrical expressionism.

Besides architecture, you also work in watercolors. Does art also struggle with emotional meaning? There was a great saying that was popular during the 70s, which was, "beauty is more than skin deep." But in the fine arts and in architecture, this saying was reinterpreted to mean, "anything that is beautiful

is superficial." And so—in order to not be superficial—both of these groups decided to drain work of its emotional content and instead focus on intellectual meaning. If on the one hand you've got a linear, logical, verbal world, and on the other hand you have a visual, three-dimensional, intuitive world, architecture is currently at 90% linear/logical/verbal. It's out of balance; emotion has been effectively banished.

Has theatre been afflicted too? Theatre is a bit different, because I think it has always been about emotions. For example, every play I've been to at Magic has been intensely rewarding from an emotional standpoint. Take a Linda McLean play, either of her plays the Magic did, *Every Five Minutes* or *Any Given Day*. Those were powerful, emotional plays. You cried, or you were aghast. You could not go away without feeling *something*—angry, passionate, sad. There was no middle ground. You didn't come away saying, "Well, this was quite a cleverly written play," engaging purely on an abstract, intellectual plane.

What makes a play a Magic play? I've been going to Magic Theatre for 35 years. Magic has had two great golden eras. There was the John Lion golden era. And then Loretta brought it back. And in between, there were these great, grand successes, and these horrible failures. And far more failures than successes! But throughout, Magic stayed true to itself. Failure or success, you always had to be willing to encounter something challenging and uncompromising. And those successes sure do come along. Sharr White's *Annapurna*. It was about male regret. I just wept afterwards. I said to Loretta, "that's a Magic play." That's Magic: dedicated to the art, to new work, to ambitious works, to putting it all at risk. *



John Marx. Watercolor.

Corky LaVallee

Outgoing board member Corky LaVallee sat down with Magic to reminisce and share a recipe!

There are a lot of theaters in town. Why Magic? We have always had season's tickets to a theater wherever we've lived. When we moved to SF twelve years ago, we started at the large, well-known theater, and we loved two of the works that Loretta had directed there. Soon after, Donna noticed that Loretta had just been hired as the Artistic Director at the Magic. So it is really all Loretta's fault that we got involved with the Magic! It didn't hurt that the plays, while very different from one another, were consistent in being thought provoking, relevant, exciting and yes, entertaining.

You've just cycled off the Magic board after 9 years of service. Can you share some of your favorite experiences during that time? First and foremost are the people we've met: Loretta and the rest of the staff, who make the Magic magic; my fellow trustees, who share(d) a common passion for and vision of what the Magic was and could be, and who put their money (and time and efforts) where their mouth was; and the playwrights, actors, directors, designers and other creative personnel who dazzled me over and over again with their talent and commitment. And some of the plays—*Terminus*, *Or*, *Reel to Reel*, *The Lily's Revenge*, *Se Llama Cristina*... I could go on and on... And the Adopt-a-Plays...

You've had a long and successful career. What is it about helping to start up companies and project managing inside the Bio-Tech world that keeps you challenged and excited? Despite the horrible public image that drug companies seem to have these days, the daily reality I see is amazingly smart and committed people who are personally invested in finding treatments and cures for diseases both big and small. I love working with them, I love the challenge of being (often literally) the dumbest person in the room, but at the same time knowing that I bring a very specific skill set to the game; the ability to bring alignment to a diverse group of individuals, turning them from a collection of talented people into a team. It always keeps me on my toes,

and every day is different.

You've conjured many a drink in honor of plays at Magic. Will you share a recipe with us that was particularly delicious? Making up a drink (or drinks) for every show has been one of my favorite things, a way to show my appreciation for the cast and crew that make these incredible works of art. By last count, I had over 50 drinks to my credit, some wholly original and others very derivative, and some super tasty and others... not so much. I'll never forget my first, made for the play *Or*, for which we were Adopt-a-Play "parents". It was named after the lead character, Aphra Behn. To this day Loretta swears that is her favorite drink, and it is one of mine as well.

Favorite all time drink? Favorite all time bar? A Vieux Carre—strong, complex, and classic, basically a Manhattan taken up two or three notches. For bars: Smuggler's Cove, Bar Agricole, and Trick Dog in SF. Death & Co in Denver/NYC. Café ArtScience in Cambridge (the ultimate geek bar!).

You and Donna have hosted so many wonderful gatherings at your home. What's the secret to entertaining a room full of drama queens? Ha! Easy! Have a lot of good food, plenty of libations, and make everyone feel like you are really happy to see them (and we always were), and then let them have fun. I always recognized that the whole point of that first night party was to help accelerate the socialization of the cast, to bring them together as a group. That said, having playwrights like Jessica Hagedorn, Octavio Solis, and Taylor Mac in our living room was pretty terrific.

Who should consider becoming a Trustee at the Magic? Anyone who loves great theater and who wants to be part of a 50 plus year legacy of impacting the national theater scene while staying in their own backyard. The rewards come back in multiples! *

Get more involved! Interested in learning more about Magic's Board? Contact Gabrielle Chapple, Director of Development, at gabriellec@magictheatre.org or 602-628-8272.



Donna LaVallee and Corky LaVallee, Magic Gala 2017. Photo: Jim Norrena.

The Aphra Behn

2oz rum (I used Rum Barbancourt)
1oz fresh squeezed lime
1oz of pineapple juice
1oz home-made ginger syrup

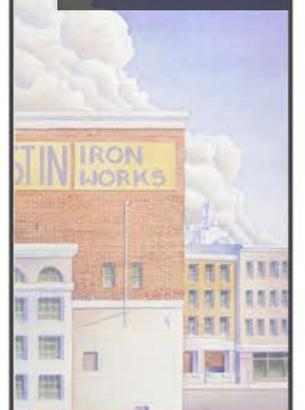
Paula Vogel, Nikki Beach, and John Marx, *The Baltimore Waltz* opening night (2017).



Crashing Waves, Tongyeong Music Hall. Design team: John Marx, 2009. Rendering: Form4 Architecture/Downtown.



John Marx. Watercolor.



The Resting Place First Rehearsal. Photo: Sonia Fernandez.

In Other News...



Congratulations to managing director Jaimie Mayer and Daniel Raiffe—institute married on September 2nd, 2018!

Artistic director Loretta Greco was one of five international fellows at the 2018 Sundance Institute Directors Retreat in Arles, France this summer.



The Resting Place set model. Set design by Edward T. Morris. Photo: Edward T. Morris.



Clockwise from head of table: Jessica Holt (director), Ashlin Halfnight (playwright), Kate Leary (dramaturg), Wiley Naman Strasser (Liam), Emily Radosevich (Macy), Martha Brigham (Annie), James Carpenter (Mitch), Emilie Talbot (Angela), Andrew LeBuhn (Charles), Claire Ganem (assistant director).

PROCESS – Magic's Ephemera