

Virtual Show Program

Saginaw Valley State University Department of Theatre
Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts



Presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York

Saginaw Valley State University Department of Theatre

PRESENTS

SILENT SKY

Written by Lauren Gunderson

Presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York

Stage Manager

Briellé Myles-Williams

Dramaturg

Holly Houck*

Co- House Managers

Wendy Gonzalez Scott LaMont

Projection Designer

Abbey Kuhns*

Sound Designer

Lucas Inman*

Lighting Designer

Jaden O'Berry*

Costume Designer

Olivia Greanias*

Make-up and Hair

Designers

Chloe Velez

Props Designer

Kylee Monahan*

Scenic Designer

Jerry Dennis

Intimacy Choreographer

Tommy Wedge

Director

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Mentor to Student

Mentor to Theatre

Designers and Crew

Management

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Tommy Wedge

*Denotes an SVSU Theatre Scholarship Student

Saginaw Valley State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. It encourages diversity and inclusion and provides equal opportunity in education, employment, all of its programs, and the use of its facilities. It is committed to protecting the constitutional and statutory civil rights of persons connected with the University. Saginaw Valley State University is committed to providing work and learning opportunities without regard to age, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, height, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, veteran status, weight, or on any other basis protected by state, federal, or other applicable law, and to achieving its objectives in compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination.

The actors onstage are unmasked following the university's theatrical COVID protocol. Once they leave the stage, the actors and everyone not onstage are following the SVSU NEST guidelines that requires all individuals to be masked inside regardless of vaccination status.

Cast

Henrietta Leavitt

Alyssa Yankee*

Margaret Leavitt

Zoe Gilbert

Peter Shaw

Jared Kaufman*

Annie Jump Cannon

Lexie Schultz*

Williamina Fleming

Kee Ferguson

Galactic Center Sonification



Hubble Ultra Deep Field



Production Team

Director
Intimacy Choreographer
Scenic Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Projection Designer
Prop Designer
Costume Designer
Make-up and Hair Designer
Dramaturg
Stage Manager
Co-house Managers/Publicity

Production Manager

Peggy Mead-Finizio
Tommy Wedge
Jerry Dennis
Jaden O'Berry*
Lucas Inman*
Abbey Kuhns*
Kylee Monahan*
Olivia Greanais*
Chloe Velez
Holly Houck*
Briellé Myles-Williams
Wendy Gonzalez
Scott LaMont
Peggy Mead-Finizio

Production Staff

Scene Shop Supervisor
Scene Shop Assistant
Costume Shop Coordinator
Mentor to Costume Shop Coordinator
Assistant Costume Designer
Assistant Makeup and Hair Designer
Assistant Sound Designer
Assistant Stage Manager
Assistant Prop Designer
Logo Designer
Dept. of Theatre Office Worker
Administrative Secretary
Mentor to Student Designers and Crew
Mentor to Student Theatre Management

Jerry Dennis
Artemis Teeple
Olivia Greanias*
Jennifer Lothian
Sarah Doran
Katelynn Bell
Drea Brown*
Ethan Bach
Scout McCulloch*
Josh Abram
Abbey Kuhns*
Kelly Helmreich
Peggy Mead-Finizio
Tommy Wedge

Production Crew

Electricians

Light Board Operator
Sound Board Operator
Follow Spot Operators

Costume Crew

Stagehands

Prop Crew

Caroline Temple
Adam Coggins
Brett Greathouse
Scout McCulloch*
Caroline Temple
Morgan Gradowski
Dillen Phillips
Kimberly Mruzek
Thomas Street
Trinity Caldwell
Gabrielle Easterly
Dale Peters
Jordan Rose
Erica Close
Rue Bolzman

A Note from the Director

I first saw this play as a staged reading and fell in love with the characters and the story. It is based on true events and real people. With the advances in astronomy and the recent launch of the Webb telescope, Henrietta Leavitt's story is still relevant to current news and today's research.

Playwright Lauren Gunderson shows us a portrait of many types of women in this play and their passions, beliefs, and how they fit into society in the early 1900's. Many of these themes reflect our won current society. Through the various characters we see an exploration of the growing role of women in science in the early 20th century and the struggle for women as they navigate their work-life balance. The play makes me reflect on the sacrifices women make to pursue their goals. Some of the sacrifices are imposed by society and some are chosen by the women. Either way, they are sacrifices that make a huge impact on the lives of women and seeing them presented in such a thoughtful way has a large impact. Each of these women are strong and forthright and they are an inspiration. Seeing stories with strong female protagonists is something the world needs right now.

The program cover artwork by Josh Abram was inspired by a collage created by artist Meredith McGhan titled *I am the Cosmos*. For me, the collage represents the wonder that Henrietta Leavitt felt about the night sky. In the collage the woman is part of the cosmos and in the cosmos all at the same time. This inspired and spoke to me about the essence of the play and Henrietta's story. The character of Annie says to Henrietta – “*I choose to measure you in light.*” This line of the play came to my mind when I first saw the collage.



Artist Spotlight

Meredith McGhan is a Michigan native working as a free-lance writer and artist.

My collages present themselves to me as elements that fit together, leading to an end result that evokes a dreamworld, and is left open to interpretation. I call my process "surrealendipity".

More about Meredith's work can be found on her website: meredithmcghan.com.

———— A Note from the Dramaturg ————

Stars, astronomers, sisterhood, nebulae, suffragettes, friendships, novae, *supernovae*, and galaxies— they all abound! Through the retelling of Henrietta Leavitt’s career in *Silent Sky*, Lauren Gunderson illuminates a world grounded in history, science, and art to bring to light the momentous accomplishments of female astronomers at the Harvard College Observatory.

At the turn of the twentieth century the Harvard Observatory was a progressive leader among institutions for hiring women to analyze astronomical star plates. Their work was laborious, requiring the utmost care and precision in handling the glass plates; it included naming and classifying the stars, tracking their orbits, and recording their brightness. Despite their tremendous contributions to the field, these women have been widely disregarded in the creation of historic narratives. In *Silent Sky*, Gunderson introduces us to just three of the dozens of women whose work at Harvard influenced our modern understanding of the universe. Audiences will meet Williamina Fleming, the first leader of the project to classify stars in the *Henry Draper Catalogue*; Annie Jump Cannon, a principal contributor to the published edition of the *Draper Catalogue* with her classification of stars by temperature— a system still used today; and Henrietta Leavitt, the play’s heroine: who discovered how to measure the universe by determining the relationship between a star’s periodicity and its luminosity. All of these remarkable women who charted the stars to the great benefit of the international astronomical community have not received the credit deserved for their significant contributions.

Until now.

Artists, authors, and educators are actively working to retell history, writing back in the women whose work was erased from the popular narrative. Lauren Gunderson stands alongside women similarly driven to bring to light the contributions of female scientists. Besides Gunderson stands historian of science, Margaret Rossiter, who has dedicated her career to uncovering the systemic camouflaging of women in science in her pivotal study, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*. Curator Lindsay Smith Zrull from Harvard is a leading figure in the recently launched Project PHAEDRA (Preserving Harvard’s Early Data and Research in Astronomy) with the initiative to digitize the logbooks of the women, and whenever possible, crediting the previously unnamed women. This necessary work to give female scientists the recognition due to them is ongoing, and it is a critical step towards making scientific spaces inclusive to people of all genders.

In the words of *Silent Sky*’s playwright, Lauren Gunderson:

“Stories change us, within and without. They ask us to question our world, our history, and ourselves.”

Perhaps *Silent Sky* will inspire audiences to encourage, validate, and recognize the work of all women and historically marginalized communities.

— Holly Houck, Dramaturg

For more information about the women who charted the stars, please visit the interactive display in the Malcolm Field Theatre’s lobby.

Production Spotlights



Alyssa Yankee

Henrietta Leavitt: Alyssa is a senior Theatre and Marketing major at SVSU, and she is excited to be back on stage with a live audience! Alyssa has been involved with every SVSU theatre production in some capacity since her freshman year, so she is no stranger to the Malcolm Field stage. She is thrilled to be working with so many superstars on this production, and can't wait to bring Henrietta to life! She would like to thank her family, boyfriend, and friends for all their support throughout. Enjoy the show!



Zoe Gilbert

Margaret Leavitt: After growing up performing, Zoe is excited to be on SVSU's stage for the first time. She is a first-year Theatre major, also studying Creative Writing, and was the Assistant Stage Manager for SVSU's *Animal Farm* last semester. She is a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha, and is a National Collegiate Scholar. After falling in love with Margaret, and the whole of *Silent Sky*, she is thrilled to help bring this story to life!



Kee Ferguson

Williamina Fleming: Kee is a sixth year dual-major at SVSU and is appearing on stage for the first time ever, including at the college level. They are excited for *Silent Sky* to be their first production, and they are extremely grateful for their mother and their close friends for never giving up on them. They are proud of everyone for all their hard work putting this show together.



Lexie Schultz

Annie Cannon: Lexie is a junior double major in Music and Theatre here at SVSU. She is ecstatic to be back acting for a live audience in the Malcolm Field Theatre, especially for this captivating story. She would like to thank the cast and crew, her friends, and family for all of their support in the pursuit of her dreams.



Jared Kaufman

Peter Shaw: Jared is a 4th year Communication and Theatre Education Major. He has made many appearances in SVSU productions and is grateful for all he has gotten to do in his time on this stage. Jared hopes to continue his love for theatre by sharing his passion with future students. Enjoy the show!



Director: Peggy is an active director, theatre designer, technical theatre instructor, choreographer, dance instructor, and arts administrator. She holds MFA degrees in Theatre Arts and Choreography from the University of Iowa and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre at Saginaw Valley State University.

When she is not directing, she is one of the designers for lights and sound for the SVSU main stage productions and is a mentor to student designers and technicians. Her most recent lighting design was for the Bay City Players production of *Portraits*. Peggy also teaches the Musical Theatre Dance classes for the Department of Theatre.

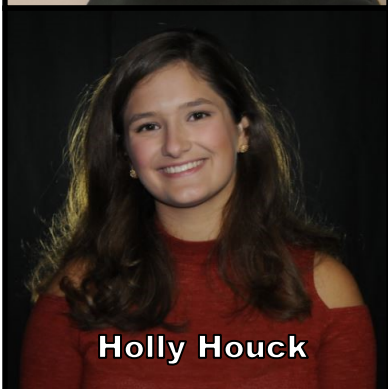
She is a certified teacher Primary - Level 3 of the ABT® National Training Curriculum and teaches dance classes at the Flint School of Performing Arts in Flint, MI. Her most recent choreography was a collaborative choreographic project with Flint Youth Ballet and The Flint Rep Education program for *Global Water Dances* which was performed downtown Flint in June 2021.



Stage Manager: Briellé is a senior, and she is excited that she gets to perform at SVSU for the first time in front of a live audience. Recently she has been in *Joan the Girl of Arc* as ensemble but has also been working in other areas of theatre. Some of her previous work at SVSU includes Assistant Stage Managing for *A Dolls House*, *No. 6*, and *Roustabout*.



Assistant Stage Manager: Ethan is a third year Comm/Theater Education major at SVSU. This is Ethan's first time as assistant stage manager, which has been an enriching experience. He is grateful to those involved in *Silent Sky* and his loved ones for their support.



Dramaturg: Holly is in her fourth year at SVSU pursuing Theatre, International Studies, and French. With a background in acting and management, this is Holly's first production as a dramaturg. The experience has been fulfilling for her creatively and intellectually as she's explored the intersections between history, science, and storytelling with the production team.



Intimacy Choreographer: Tommy is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at SVSU and has been active in teaching, directing, stage management, and stage combat. Tommy holds an MFA in Directing from The University of South Dakota and a BS in Theatre from South Dakota State University. Professional memberships include Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and The Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) where Tommy holds the rank of Advanced Actor Combatant.

Upcoming Productions



Marlene has been promoted to managing director of the 'Top Girls' employment agency and is celebrating with some distinguished guests, women in legend or history who offer perspectives on maternity and ambition. In a time warp, these ladies are then transformed into her co-workers, clients, and relatives as we transition to London in the Thatcher years.

Marlene, like her famous guests, has had to pay a price to ascend from proletarian roots to the executive suite. She's become, figuratively speaking, a male oppressor: This seminal play of the modern theatre poses complex questions about feminism, power, motherhood, agency, and the meaning of success.

Performance Information:

Wednesday, April 6, 2022 @ 7:30pm

Thursday, April 7, 2022 @ 7:30pm

Friday, April 8, 2022 @ 7:30pm

Saturday, April 9, 2022 @ 7:30pm

Sunday, April 10, 2022 @ 3:00pm

Location: Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts

[Tickets—\\$15](#)

For updates on our upcoming season or information on how to get involved, check out our social media pages!

[Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [SVSU's Theatre Page](#)

———— Acknowledgements ————

Full Time Faculty

Peggy Mead-Finizio, MFA
David Rzeszutek, MFA
Tommy Wedge, MFA

Adjunct Faculty

Dan Gerics, MA
Caleb Knutson, MA
Dakotah Myers, MA

The Office of President Dr. Donald Bachand

The Office of Dr. Deborah Huntley,
Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs

The Office of Dr. Marc Peretz,
Dean College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences

The Office of University Communications

Departments of RPW & Theatre

Administrative Secretary Kelly J. Helmreich

The Conference Center at SVSU

Andy Sharrow, Kellie Lehner, and Julie Eddy

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.