WFU Theatre
Presents,

BACKSTORY

FEBRUARY 24-25 AT 7:30 pm
FEBRUARY 26 AT 2:00 pm

THE RING THEATRE, SFAC

directed by Michael Kamtman
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

I first encountered *Back Story* when it premiered at the Humana Festival for New American Plays in Louisville, Kentucky in 2000. To be honest, I remember next-to-nothing about the production, and so it does seem odd, in some ways, that I’d become so enamored of a play that I barely recall from its performance. What stuck with me, however, was the story of its creation—a story that was as intriguing as it was unique: an artistic adventure that involved an unusual collaborative effort. There are only two characters in this story, Ainsley and Ethan, who are sister and brother, respectively. Not so unusual so far. The play consists of 16 monologues and 3 scenes. Still not unusual. But these pieces can be performed by as many as 22 different actors in the show or as few as 2. Now we’re starting to move into slightly different territory. Add to that the fact that these 19 different pieces (16 monologues and 3 scenes) were written by 18 different playwrights (I love math). And add to this that this play was originally a short story by playwright Joan Ackermann. A director came up with an idea to solicit 18 playwrights and ask each one to expand on one moment of the short story in dramatic form—either a monologue or a scene. Each playwright, essentially, would create a piece of backstory for the short story, and all these pieces of backstory would be compiled into one dramatic piece, essentially becoming the reversal of the way a play is created. The backstory (or background information) has become the play itself. And that’s what you are about to see (or, if you are reading these notes later, what you have just seen). The cooperative effort between all these writers, not to mention the directors and actors who were initially involved in this great experiment, was truly a small marvel of collaboration.

Our production of *Back Story* is part of another experiment by the Department of Theatre and Dance here at Wake Forest: a new, smaller scale production that offers more opportunities for students to get involved (or continue their involvement) in theatre. And one more thing that I can’t resist mentioning. This is my personal expansion of a central image of this play: a postcard. I love old postcards. I have a small collection of them at home. The ones I love the most are the ones that are old, colorized photos. And if there is a message and a postmark, they become even more wonderfully intriguing. Because they have been hidden in a shoebox or an old envelope for decades or generations, only to emerge in an antique store, they are like messages in bottles that roll up on our shores. They are sometimes haunting and sometimes sweet, and I wonder if any of them changed the lives of the senders or the recipients. There’s just never enough time to think about them….

Michael dedicates these performances to his dad, an avid fisherman who always came home, and to his dear friend and colleague, director Louis Rackoff, whose many dimensions of influence changed Michael’s artistic life for the better.

*Back Story* is produced by special arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Company of Woodstock, Illinois.

This piece was originally commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville.
Wake Forest University Theatre presents

Back Story

based on characters created by Joan Ackermann

written by Joan Ackermann, Courtney Baron, Neena Beber, Constance Congdon, Jon Klein, Shirley Lauro, Craig Lucas, Eduardo Machado, Donald Margulies, Jane Martin, Susan Miller, John Olive, Tanya Palmer, David Rambo, Edwin Sanchez, Adele Edling Shank, Mayo Simon, and Val Smith

February 24-26, 2023

Director
Michael Kamtman

Scenic & Projection Designer
Sean Jones*§ (*'23)

Lighting Designer
Zachary Atala*§ (*'24)

Assistant Director
Zhirun Reese Fan* (*'23)

Costume Designer
Mary Wayne-Thomas

Sound Designer
Vir Gupta* (*'25)

Stage Manager
Will Landau* (*'23)

CAST BY SCENE

TIME TO THINK
Ainsley..........................................................................................................................Anna Kitts*

GOOD MORNING TO THE HORSE
Ethan.....................................................................................................................Casey Salzman*
Ainsley...................................................................................................................Olivia Woods*§

WHAT BECAME OF THE POLAR BEAR?
Ethan..............................................................................................................................Joe Bruno§

THE RELUCTANT INSTRUMENT
Ainsley................................................................................................................Ruisi Nicole Liu*

ETHAN’S GOT GET
Ethan..................................................................................................................Katharine Collie*

TRYING TO GET THERE
Ainsley...........................................................................................................Frances Gray Riggs*

*Anthony Aston Players member
§Presidential Scholar in Theatre
MAID OF ATHENS
  AINSLEY...................................................................................................................Olivia Woods§

MOBY ETHAN AT THE SCULPTOR’S MUSEUM
  ETHAN.....................................................................................................................Casey Salzman*

TURN DOWN
  AINSLEY.....................................................................................................................Anna Kitts*

MISADVENTURE
  ETHAN....................................................................................................................Joe Bruno§
  AINSLEY...................................................................................................................Maddie Koontz

SOMETHING TO DO WITH BOLIVIA
  ETHAN..................................................................................................................Mary Grace Gower*
  AINSLEY.....................................................................................................................Anna Kitts*

OR MAYBE NOT
  AINSLEY.....................................................................................................................Isabella Biricik

DEAD MEN MAKE NO DOLLARS
  ETHAN.....................................................................................................................Maddie Koontz

THE DEAL
  ETHAN....................................................................................................................Joe Bruno§
  AINSLEY..................................................................................................................Mary Grace Gower*

BLACKFISH
  ETHAN..................................................................................................................Katharine Collie*

STAR SKATING
  ETHAN.............................................................................................................Ruisi Nicole Liu*
  AINSLEY...............................................................................................................Olivia Woods§

BARBRA LIVE AT CANYON RANCH
  AINSLEY...............................................................................................................Frances Gray Riggs*
  BARBRA STREISAND.............................................................................................Maddie Koontz

INTRODUCING DAD
  ETHAN....................................................................................................................Joe Bruno§

NORMAN ROCKWELL’S THANKSGIVING IN THE YEAR 2000
  ETHAN.....................................................................................................................Casey Salzman*
  AINSLEY..................................................................................................................Isabella Biricik

*Anthony Aston Players member
§Presidential Scholar in Theatre
INFORMATION

In consideration of everyone in the theatre, especially the cast who have rehearsed for weeks, please observe the following:

- Audience members are encouraged to wear a mask while inside the building including the entire performance. Masks are available at the box office upon request.
- Turn off and put away your cell phone or any device that might ring, buzz, or light up.
- If you are anticipating the need to be contacted during the performance, leave your name and seat location with the box office staff and the box office number with the person who may need you; the box office number is 336-758-5295.
- Laptops are not allowed; pens and paper are great alternatives for taking notes.
- Copyright laws prohibit recording in any format of any performance. Flash photography can be especially hazardous to performers and a distraction to the rest of the audience.
- Eating and drinking (other than water) are never allowed inside the theatre.
- There is NO late admission or re-admission for events in the Ring Theatre. If you leave during the performance, you CANNOT re-enter theatre.

Thanks, and enjoy the show!

The show runs approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes without an intermission.
PRODUCTION STAFF

Director of Theatre.................................................................................................................................Corey Gilliam
Technical Director...........................................................................................................................Thomas Williams
Costume Shop Manager...........................................................................................................Alice Burton Barsony
Costume & Wardrobe Technician..............................................................................................Jacquelyn "Jax" Loy
Audience Services Coordinator.................................................................................................Leslie Spencer
Academic Coordinators........................................................................................................Lara Ianni, Lu Anne Simpson

Technical Director for Back Story...........................................................................................................Drew Skilton*
Assistant Stage Managers...........................................................................................................Abby Parr*, Ananya Rajgaria
Properties Head........................................................................................................................Michael Votto*
Assistant Scenic Designer...........................................................................................................Riley Shanaghan‡
Head Electrician........................................................................................................................Zachary Atala§
Scene Shop Assistants...............................................................................................................Evan Daane*, Sophie Thomas‡
          Drew Skilton*, Sarah Cadena*
          Riley Shanaghan‡, Thomas Bauserman
          Zewen Ma*, Yue Yu
          Gabby Miller‡, Ruisi Nicole Liu*

Additional Costume Shop Assistance................................ ..........................................................Alice Burton Barsony, Jacquelyn Loy
          Tatiana Bicalho, Isabelle Merrifield
          Nicole Namath, Emily Patten, Hannah Riley

Wardrobe Crew..........................................................................................................................Gabby Miller‡
Light Board Operator..................................................................................................................Michael Votto‡
Sound Board Operator.............................................................................................................Nathaniel Avery*
Marketing Artwork Designer.....................................................................................................Sean Jones‡
Photographers........................................................................................................................Lyndsie Schlink, Bill Ray III, Katie Fox*
Social Media Assistant.............................................................................................................Zac Anderson‡
House Managers.....................................................................................................................Hope Peterson ('17, MS '18), Chris Cates ('22)
          Devin Collins, Sarah Goncalves, Evan Lipetz
          Zac Anderson‡, Joey Crane
          Evan Lipetz, James Oparinde
          Frances Gray Riggs*, Noah Stoycos

Box Office Staff........................................................................................................................Zac Anderson‡, Joey Crane
          Evan Lipetz, James Oparinde
          Frances Gray Riggs*, Noah Stoycos
          Anthony Aston Players
          WFU Dance Company
          Theatre & Dance students

*Anthony Aston Players member  ‡Presidential Scholar in Dance  §Presidential Scholar in Theatre

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Lu Anne Simpson
Moore Music Company
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* Wake Forest alumni
Silent Sky
by Lauren Gunderson
directed by Cindy Gendrich
March 31-April 1, 5-8 at 7:30 PM
April 2 at 2:00 PM
Harold C. Tedford Stage
Tickets:
$15 adults,
$12 senior citizens,
$7 students
336.758.5295  theatre.wfu.edu

Student Spring Choreographic Concert

directed by Chris Martin
April 20-21 at 7:30 PM
April 23 at 2:00 PM
Harold C. Tedford Stage
Tickets:
$15 adults,
$12 senior citizens,
$7 students
336.758.5295  theatre.wfu.edu