Upcoming Events:

*Water By The Spoonful*
by Quiara Alegria Hudes

Auditions:
March 31 & April 1
Callbacks: April 2
in The Playhouse

Performances:
May 14-16, 7:30 p.m.
May 17, 2:00 p.m.

Devised Theatre Project Information:

9th Week Workshops: March 3-7, 2020
Sign-up online or on the call board
(in the lower level of the Light Fine Arts Building,
neart the production office)

For more information, visit the Devised Theatre Webpage at theatre.kzoo.edu/devisedtheatre

Box Office / Information: (269) 337-7333
Tickets: festivalplayhouse.ludustickets.com
All performances handicapped accessible

www.kzoo.edu/festivalplayhouse

Nelda K. Balch Playhouse, 129 Thompson St.
Dungeon Theatre, 139 Thompson St.

Thank you for choosing the theatre tonight!
We gather on the land of the Council of the Three Fires – the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. Indigenous nations of the Great Lakes region are also known as the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-nah-bay), or original people, and their language is Anishinaabemowin (Ah-nish-nah-bay-mow-in).

“Kalamazoo” itself is derived from the Anishinaabe word meaning to surround with smoke, and reflects the way the mist rises off the Kalamazoo River. Kalamazoo College rests on Potawatomi land – specifically, on the traditional land of Match-e-be-nash-she-wish and his people.

The United States began seeking land cessions in Michigan after the defeat of the British and their Anishinaabe allies in the War of 1812. Southwest Michigan was ceded in the 1821 Treaty of Chicago with small tracts of land reserved at the sites of prominent Potawatomi villages, including a three-mile square area for Match-e-be-nash-she-wish in present-day Kalamazoo. Under the 1827 Treaty of St. Joseph, the U.S. government did away with four of the five reserved areas, including the one in Kalamazoo, in an attempt to consolidate the Potawatomi as a precursor to removal west. Although many Potawatomi were forcibly removed in 1840, some bands found ways to remain, including the Match-e-be-nash-she-wish band. Their descendants belong to the sovereign nation known as the Gun Lake Tribe. The Tribe has never been compensated for the loss of their Kalamazoo reserve.

We acknowledge the enduring relationship that exists between the People of the Three Fires and this land.

THEATRE KALAMAZOO
theatrekalamazoo.com

Theatre Kalamazoo takes great pride in promoting the diversity and richness of the many theatre offerings in Kalamazoo County. We seek to foster a spirit of cooperation and support among the organizations that produce live theatre. The success of each theatre is a benefit to all theatres. Thus, members of Theatre Kalamazoo will work together in ways that both strengthen the theatres themselves and enhance the cultural life in greater Kalamazoo by promoting the arts and enriching our community.

Upcoming Productions:

CIVIC THEATRE
Race -- Feb. 28 - Mar. 14
Disney’s Frozen Jr. -- Mar. 13 - Mar. 22

FARMERS ALLEY THEATRE
Balloonacy -- Mar. 14 - Mar. 28
Lost in Yonkers -- Mar. 13 - Mar. 2

NEW VIC THEATRE
The Belle of Amherst -- Feb. 28 - Mar. 14

WMU-GILMORE THEATRE COMPLEX
Tribes -- Mar. 13 - Mar. 27

CONNECT WITH US
Facebook “Festival Playhouse of Kalamazoo College”
Instagram @festivalplayhouse

NEW Theatre Arts and Festival Playhouse webpages!
theatre.kzoo.edu
festivalplayhouse.kzoo.edu

Look for our events on the Jublie mobile app
Developed by Fabien Debies ’20

OUR 56TH SEASON: HERSTORY: FORGOTTEN FEMALE FIGURES
UPCOMING FINE ARTS EVENTS AT K

College Singers / BachFestival - “Love is, Love is, Love is”
First Congregational Church - Downtown Kalamazoo
Wednesday, March 4th, 7:00pm (Week 9)

Academy Street Winds
Dalton Theatre
Friday, March 6, 8:00pm (Week 9)

Jazz Band Concert
Dalton Theatre
Saturday, March 7th, 8:00pm (Week 9)

Kalamazoo Philharmonia - “From Sea to Shining Sea”
Dalton Theatre
Sunday, March 8th, 4:00pm (Week 10)

International Percussion Concert
Dalton Theatre
Tuesday, March 10th, 6:30pm (Week 10)

Monkapult Performance
Dalton Theatre
Friday, March 13, 9:30pm (Week 10)

Check the department pages for more information on Music and Art events. For Monkapult and A Capella, be on the lookout for campus advertisements and social media post.

Welcome to Our 2019-2020 Season:

HERSTORY: Forgotten Female Figures—this year’s season theme. While aptly depicting the women in the plays we will produce in 2019-20, this descriptor reminds us there are two women who should never be forgotten here in Kalamazoo Nelda K. Balch and Dorothy U. Dalton: two of Kalamazoo’s most significant pioneers.

Nelda (as we affectionately call her) literally created the theatre arts program here at K. In fact, throughout the year, we have “Tea with Nelda,” times when we gather to celebrate and reflect upon theatre work we do and why we do it. Dorothy U. Dalton established a foundation to support the arts in the greater community; indeed, there are theatres both at Western Michigan University and at Kalamazoo College bearing her name—two of the more obvious examples of her impact on this city. (For more on these women, please see page 8 in this program.) In an era when a woman’s place was in the home, these women not only worked outside the home but in the public eye: in the theatre. Nelda’s mission: to provide theatre that was both provocative and thoughtful.

Theatre that is provocative. From Waiting for Godot, which Balch directed in 1953 here at K*, to The Firebugs, from A Raisin in the Sun to It Can’t Happen Here, Festival Playhouse productions encourage people to think. To think about the story being shared. To reflect upon the issues the characters face. To examine the decisions we would make if in their shoes. To consider how those issues are still relevant today.

Theatre that is thoughtful. Thorough and thoughtful script analysis leads to intriguing play selections as well as scenic, lighting, sound, and costume designs that help tell the story—and good storytelling is done clearly and carefully. Fun Home* by Lisa Kron ’83 in 2016 and directed by Ed Menta, Professor Emeritus, shares the story of a family’s search for identity and connection through circular platforms and spotlights creating circles onstage; even scene changes happened in non-linear patterns—all underscoring the confusing repetition of unanswered questions, of hidden truths, and masked needs.

This season, we will tell stories of forgotten women whose stories must be told. We remember visionary women and celebrate the gifts they gave us. We remind ourselves that we are empowered to do the work we do in theatre because of their efforts. We will not forget our foremothers nor the women of the world.

-Laura Livingstone-McNelis ’89
Festival Playhouse Company Manager

*K was the first college to stage this revolutionary work
About Festival Playhouse Theatre of Kalamazoo College

Fifty-six years ago during the season of 1963-64, the generous and visionary support of the Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation along with Professor Nelda K. Balch created the inaugural year of Festival Playhouse with a season of ground-breaking modern dramas, a first for its time. From its beginning, Festival Playhouse has sought to produce provocative and thoughtful theatre for both our campus and the greater Kalamazoo community, combining talents from students, faculty, alumni, and professional guest artists.

Now, 56 years later, we continue to celebrate these goals and the spirit of Festival Playhouse.

Our distinctiveness lies in four major areas:

The Kinds of Plays We Do and the Way We Do Them

Every year we have a “Season Theme” for our plays, connecting historical, artistic, and socially relevant themes to contextualize and deepen our work for our students and greater community. You will be sure to see theatre that stimulates the mind as well as the heart, whether seen in this season of “Herstory: Forgotten Female Figures,” our last season of “Assumption and Confusion” (It Can’t Happen Here, Student Body, and Twelfth Night), or a past season such as “The World is Our Stage: A Season of International Theatre” (Naga-Mandala, Sorrows & Rejoicings, and The Imaginary Invalid).

The Integration of Theatre and the Liberal Arts

We seek to make the theatre experience the center of the liberal arts environment: an intersection of knowledge, creativity, and education for our entire community. Sometimes interdisciplinary work on the production is obvious: working with our Shakespeare scholars in the English department to help the actors in the rehearsal process. Sometimes it is not: working with our developmental psychologist in preparing the musical The Secret Garden or on the Jungian meaning inherent within Strindberg’s A Dream Play. Sometimes it includes the Greater Kalamazoo community as in our collaboration with NAACP, the Black Arts & Cultural Center, the Kalamazoo Hispanic American Council, and the Kalamazoo Chinese Association in our 2002 production of Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 (which marked the 10th anniversary of the Rodney King uprisings).

Recent ACTF Nominees

2019-2020- HERstory: Forgotten Female Figures

Aly Homminga ’20: Scholarship for Collaboration and Devised Theatre through California State University Summer Arts
Milan Levy ’23: Devised Theatre Golden Collaborator Award
Spitfire Grill
Sophie Hill ’20: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Rebecca Chan ’22: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)

2018-19—Theatre of Assumption and Confusion

Rebecca Chan ’22: Institute for Theatre Arts and Journalism National Fellowship
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare
Rebecca Chan ’22: Certificate of Merit, Dramaturgy
Kate Kreiss ’19: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Jorence Quiambao ’21: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Student Body by Frank Winters
Grace Pickett Erway ’22: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Francesco Giusseppe-Soto ’22: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Ynika Yuag ’21: Certificate of Merit, Dramaturgy
It Can’t Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis, adapted by Tony Taccone and Bennet Cohen
Teyia Artis ’21: Certificate of Merit, Stage Management; recipient of Stage Manager’s Toolkit
Grace Pickett Erway ’22: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Amira Kamoo ’19: Certificate of Merit, Dramaturgy
Matthew Swarouth ’22: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)

2017-18—Theatre and Making New Families

Intimate Apparel by Lynn Nottage
Amira Kamoo ’19: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Karishma Singh ’19: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Fun Home, book and lyrics by Lisa Kron ’83 and Jeanine Tesori
Madison Donoho ’17: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Ellie Hughes ’21: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Sam Meyers ’18: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Kathleen Russell ’18: Certificate of Merit, Choreography
Stina Taylor ’18: Certificate of Merit, Scenic Design

2016-17—Broadway Firsts: Stories of ‘Outsider’ Cultural Landmarks in American Theatre

In the Heights by Lin-Manuel Miranda, book by Quiara Alegria Hudes
Alejandro Antonio Jaramillo ’18: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Yanelli Soriano ’17: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry
Quincy Isaiah Crosby ’17: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Tricia LaCaze ’18: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O’Brien
Ren Ballew ’17: Certificate of Merit, Sound Design
Thaddeus Buttery ’17: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Madison Donoho ’17: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Valentin Frank ’17: Certificate of Merit, Vocal Direction
Kate Kreiss ’19: Irene Ryan Award for Performance (Nominee)
Sarah Levett ’17: Certificate of Merit, Stage Management; Stage Management Fellowship (Finalist)
The Kennedy Center
THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival 49®, part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program, is generously funded by David and Alice Rubenstein.

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting the John F. Kennedy Center of the Performing Arts’ Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation; the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation; Beatrice and Anthony Welters and the AnBryce Foundation.

Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts and the President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts.

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 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theatre department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theatres across the nation.

The Festival Playhouse Guest Artist Diversity Series

This significant community asset is made possible primarily through funding from the Dorothy U. Dalton Enrichment Fund, and provides culturally diverse art free to the Greater Kalamazoo community. In tandem with the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership (ACSJL), three seasons ago saw the visit of performance artist Daniel Beaty. Previous Guest Artist Series performances have included our collaboration with Face Off Theatre and our co-production of The Mountaintop with Kenajuan Bentley, award-winning Off-Broadway playwright Oni Faida Lampley in The Dark Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo College alumna and Broadway playwright/actor Lisa Kron ’83 in 2.5 Minute Ride, performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and hip-hop theatre artist Psalmsayene 24 in Free Juju Brown.

Innovative Special Projects

Rarely has a theatre season passed without some special event that benefits our theatre students, the campus community, and the greater Kalamazoo community. For example, in 2011-12 we worked with the ACSJL and Center for International Programs to produce a season of “Theatre & Social Justice” themed plays that culminated in Kahani, a devised theatre piece that traveled to India and performed at our Study Abroad Center in Varanasi. And, in the Fall of 2008, with the help of the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs, and numerous programs at the college, we produced Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka’s Death & the King’s Horseman, which included the following guest artists: master drummer Adbisi Adeleke director Femi Euba, and choreographer Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka, all Nigerian colleagues of Soyinka, culminating in a visit from Soyinka himself.

What will you see in our 56th Season?

Fall 2019

The Spitfire Grill – November 7 - 9 @7:30pm. November 10th @2:00pm. By Fred Alley and James Valcq, licensed through Samuel French, Inc. Directed by “C” Heaps

Nelda K. Balch Playhouse
Based on the 1996 movie of the same name, The Spitfire Grill, tells the story of Percy Talbott as she tries to forge a new life for herself in the small town of Gilead, Wisconsin. After her recent incarceration, can she battle the town’s prejudice against her to keep both herself and the Spitfire Grill afloat?
Winter 2020

The 10th Annual Theatre Kalamazoo New Play Festival
February 15 –16 Judy Jolliffe Theatre (Epic Center)
Among other works, new plays written, performed, and directed by Kalamazoo College students.

Silent Sky – February 27 – 29 @7:30pm. March 1 @2:00pm.
by Lauren Gunderson
Directed by Ren Berthel
Neld K. Balch Playhouse
Henrietta Leavitt, a gifted astronomer, is relegated to the role “computer” while her male colleagues take credit for her celestial discoveries. Our winter production, Silent Sky, pays homage to Henrietta Leavitt’s mind, discoveries, and struggle to be recognized.

Spring 2020

Water by the Spoonful – May 14 – 16 @7:30pm. May 17th @2:00pm.
by Quiara Alegría Hudes
Directed by Bianca Washington
Nelda K. Balch Playhouse
Quiara Alegría Hudes’ Pulitzer Prize-winning drama tells the story of Odessa Ortiz, a.k.a. “Haikumom.” Online, Odessa moderates a chat room that ministers to those struggling with addiction. Offline, Odessa herself is still fighting her own disease and trying to hold together a family that is falling apart at the seams.

Festival Playhouse gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation.

Theatre that is always provocative.
Theatre that is always thoughtful.

Thank you for choosing the theatre tonight.

Lanny Potts
Director of Festival Playhouse Theatre of Kalamazoo College

Laura Livingstone-McNelis ’89 (Company Manager) graduated with an M.A. from the University of Michigan-Flint with a degree in Liberal Studies in American Culture, and focused her thesis on African American playwrights. She strives to use theatre as a tool to achieve social justice. This past summer, she furthered her experience in devised theatre through participation in a devised theatre institute at the Sojourn Theatre, Chicago. As an Internationalization Innovation Fund grant recipient, she recently travelled to Ireland, England, and Scotland to research theatre opportunities for K-students interested in pursuing their theatre education while studying abroad. Laura would like to thank her husband Peter for his unwavering support since they met as students here at K, and her greatest teachers, her children: Mary Lee, Vincent, and Ryuksuke.

Angela Mammel (Assistant Scenic Designer) is very excited to be involved in another Festival Playhouse production! She is a sophomore Theatre/ Political Science double major. Most recently, she stage managed The Spiffy Grill. In her free time, she enjoys playing piano and guitar.

Eleftherios (Lefti) Manopoulos (Light Board Operator) is a senior Business major and Theatre Arts minor. He is originally from Greece. He has been involved in various Festival Playhouse productions in numerous positions, and is delighted to work with Festival Playhouse once again.

Lanford J. Potts (Lighting and Scenic Design, Audio Engineer) is ecstatic to be working with the amazing production team of Silent Sky! Lanny’s work includes Michigan Wilde Awards (best in lighting design) for Farmers Alley productions of Gypsy, The Light in the Piazza, and Bridges of Madison County, a national lighting award for Fun Home from the John F. Kennedy Center, and numerous regional design awards. Recent work includes: Doubt, Gypsy, Dogfight, Cabaret, Next to Normal, Parade, West Side Story, Phantom of the Opera, Little Shop of Horrors, and A Few Good Men. He is the resident design consultant for Farmers Alley Theatre and provides design and production work internationally. Lanny would like to thank his family: children Brittany, Evann, and Elena, wonder dogs Brodie and Tucker, and fabulous wife Barbara, for allowing him to pursue his passions.

Rigoberto Quintero, Jr. (Peter Shaw) is a sophomore and is excited to take on the role of physicist Peter Shaw, especially given the fact that he is a Physics major. He hopes you all enjoy the show.

Lori Sands (Costume, Hair, and Makeup Design) is a visiting Artist Designer and Guest Professor in Costume Design. A 2010 graduate of Michigan State University with an M.F.A. in Theatre Design, she enjoys working in educational theatre and has taught and designed productions in Michigan and Iowa. Her costume designs have been seen at Festival Playhouse since 2017, including the college premier of Fun Home (2017), an American College Theatre Festival regional winning production. Lori would like to thank her family for their support.

Madeline Schroeder (A2 Audio Engineer) is a first-year student. This is Madeline’s second Festival Playhouse production. When she is not at The Playhouse, you can find her drawing or memorizing Japanese vocabulary.

Ethan Tuck (Stage Manager) is a sophomore Political Science major and the News Editor of The Index. This is Ethan’s third production with Festival Playhouse.

Clara Valenti (Head of Wardrobe) is a junior Theatre Arts major. She has been involved with the costuming and makeup for Festival Playhouse since her first year. She recently returned from study abroad in Valpo, Chile.

Mars Wilson (House Manager) Silent Sky is Mars’ debut as house manager. Mars is a senior within the Theatre Arts Department and also acts as the DSA. He has been involved with Festival Playhouse since the fall of 2016 acting in The Rocky Horror Show and has appeared on stage in Gruesome Playground Injuries, Fun Home, and It Can’t Happen Here. He is looking forward to being your house manager for Silent Sky.

www.festivalplayhouse.kzoo.edu
COMPANY BIOGRAPHIES*

*An asterisk denotes ACTF recognition; see page 17.

Abby Barnum (Properties Master) is thrilled to be making props for her second Festival Playhouse show! She is a first-year and plans to study biology. Abby also enjoys singing with the College Singers in her free time.

Berthel, Ren (Director) is currently Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts. As Professor of Theatre Arts, she specializes in performance courses. She is a founding member of Queen’s Company in NYC, an all-female company devoted to producing classical texts. Favorite credits include the Cardinal in Duchess of Malfi, Gremio in Taming of the Shrew, and the title role in Macbeth. Some West Coast performance and direction credits include San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Electa Theare Company, Central Works, Boscov Productions, Human Nature, and The Marsh. Ren also spent six years with Kaiser Permanente’s Educational Theatre programs, as both an actor and manager of multiple shows that toured across the U.S. mainland and Hawaii. Ren holds a Master of Fine Arts in Acting from The American Conservatory in San Francisco, is a Fitzmaurice Voicework Associate, and a member of the Voice and Speech Trainers Association. Previous directing credits for Festival Playhouse Twelfth Night, Intimate Apparel, for colored girls who have considered suicide.... A Raisin in the Sun, Good Night Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet), In the Next Room (or the Vibrator Play), Cloud 9, The Tempest, The Rover, Macbeth, Top Girls, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, As You Like It, Imaginary Invalid, and an all-female production of Hamlet.

Christina Diaz (Wardrobe/Run Crew) is a current junior and Theater Arts major. She enjoys her minor in Japanese and has participated in many Festival Playhouse productions. Christina hopes to pursue teaching and theatre as career options.

Rose Hannan (Margaret Leavitt) is a first-year and is looking forward to her future at Kalamazoo College. This is her second production with the Festival Playhouse, the first being The Spitfire Grill, in which she played Effy.

Meaghan Hartman (Asst. Stage Manager) is excited to be working with this amazing cast and crew. She is a first-year at K studying history and theatre. Last term she performed in The Spitfire Grill, and thanks everyone who has supported her.

Sophie Hill (Annie Cannon)* is a senior Theatre Arts major. Her past involvements with Festival Playhouse include the roles of Viola in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night, and Hannah in The Spitfire Grill. She is also the supervisor for the Festival Playhouse scene shop.

Aly Homminga (Henrietta Leavitt/Dramaturg)* is a senior Theatre Arts and Religion double major. Some of her past Festival Playhouse Productions include Twelfth Night (Olivia) and Fun Home (Helen Bechdel). Previous directing credits include Beauty’s Daughter and Wine and Pizza (Strasberg Institute). She is co-captain of K’s improv comedy team, Monkapult, and works in the theatre arts office. In 2019, Aly trained in Method Acting at the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, NYC. She would like to thank her supportive family and the faculty and staff at Festival Playhouse, especially Laura Livingston-McNelis.

Maria Joy Jensen (Asst. Stage Manager) is a senior Psychology major and theatre arts minor. She has been involved with building sets, lighting shows, sound design, costumes, organizing wardrobe, and working box office. She is wrapping up her final quarter at K and wrapping up her theatre experience with stage management.

Milan Levy (Williamina Fleming)* is a first-year student and is very happy to be acting in her first Festival Playhouse production. She would like to thank everyone who worked on Silent Sky, and all of you for coming and supporting their work.

FESTIVAL PLAYHOUSE FIRSTS: OUR FOUNDING LADIES

Nelda K. Balch
(July 13, 1916 - May 5, 2011)
Festival Playhouse – the production company of the Department of Theatre – has become a staple of Kalamazoo College due in part to its committed faculty, passionate students, and impressively successful line-up of alumni. But as former Professor of English Conrad Hillberry wrote, “It wasn’t always that way. At first, there was Nelda Balch. Everything else followed.” Nelda K. Balch built the department from the ground up, playing an instrumental role in the construction of Dalton Theatre, The Playhouse, and nurturing a deep artistic relationship with kindred spirit Dorothy U. Dalton that would provide for our first gift establishing “Festival Playhouse” at Kalamazoo College. She carried many titles, including Department Chair, Full Professor, and Founding/Managing Director of Festival Playhouse. Following her retirement in 1981, the Playhouse was renamed the Nelda K. Balch Playhouse in her honor. She continued to teach and direct students for the next four years, and by 1985, Balch had directed and performed in over 200 productions. The Playhouse honored her once more in 1999 by producing the world premiere of her play Return Engagement: A Dorothy Dalton Tribute. Without Balch’s vision of firsts, theatre at Kalamazoo College would not be possible.

Dorothy U. Dalton
(October 26, 1890-July 16, 1981)
Dorothy U. Dalton’s passion for theatre stems back from her time as a student at Kalamazoo College, where she starred as Caliban in a production of The Tempest. Following her graduation from Smith College, Dalton continued her passion for the theatre, performing for the Provincetown Players and the Washington Square Players, as well as serving as assistant director for the War Camp Community Services during World War I. When she moved back to Kalamazoo, she became a founding member of the Kalamazoo Civic Players, providing for its development while serving as a board member. In 1958, Dalton and Balch became artistic kindred spirits, each interested in what is now known as “activating theatre” and providing “theatre with a consciousness” that would connect significant and relevant theatre arts with the community. Dalton became an integral partner in the development of the Light Fine Arts Building, the Dalton Theatre, the Dungeon Theatre, and what became the Nelda K. Balch Playhouse. Her dedication to Festival Playhouse continues today in the form of the Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation, continuing to fund the work and the vision of these Kalamazoo Firsts.
**On Directing and Designing Silent Sky**

This play is interesting and complex and scientific and funny. On the page, it reads easily; it rolls along with fun, quick-paced dialogue spoken by smart, interesting characters in clever circumstances, based on actual historical truth. As a director, who could ask for more?! Then, as I began the process with the designers, and then later, with the cast, a much more complex, layered, and minutely detailed production undeniably revealed itself. For this show to work (as in “flow along,” looking effortless to an audience), every element of design and direction had to coordinate with a precision that was beyond typical demands of theatrical spectacle. Much like, I dare say, looking up at a star-filled sky, we might say, “Oh, look, how pretty!” We may never venture toward attempting to understand the details of exactly what “created” that which our senses are taking in. *Silent Sky* illuminates layers of truth by simply telling a story: Henrietta Leavitt’s story and her life contribution which has illuminated more awareness for our entire planet. Putting this show on stage has been on honor and a pleasure. Lux Esto.

~Notes by Director Ren Berthel

**Visual Imagery for Silent Sky…**

A play production is a carefully choreographed story, one thoughtfully crafted by an artistic team of performers, directors, playwrights, designers, dramaturgs, and more, all working together to create a scenographic environment in which to understand the world of the play and its story. Visual storytellers — artists-for-all-occasions — seldom discuss the process of discovery, allowing instead the work to be viscerally experienced as one small part of the overall playgoing experience.

We approach each play production as an academic research endeavor and our process for bringing the artistic vision for *Silent Sky* to fruition was no different. However, in part because of the richness of collaboration, and in part because of the treasure trove of historical material available, the artistic team wanted to share how we were able to “steal like an artist” (in the words of Austin Kleon) by using a remarkably rich amount of historically accurate detail.

**Scenic environment…**

Our floor is an inspired reproduction of the Winter Nebulae taken from the Hubble space telescope, both in terms of color and scale, and painted by local artist Raven Wynd (see her notes which follow, and our lobby video display of the painting process). Our spiral staircase and landing platform is a recreation of the dome of the famous Great Refractor in the Harvard College Observatory. The first observation with
FESTIVAL PLAYHOUSE OF KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

proudly presents

Silent Sky
by Lauren Gunderson

Silent Sky is produced with permission from Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

CAST

Henrietta Leavitt .................. Aly Homminga
Margret Leavitt .................. Rose Hannan
Williamina Fleming ............... Milan Levy
Annie Cannon .................... Sophie Hill
Peter Shaw ...................... Rigoberto Quintaro

There will be one 10-minute intermission.

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited, a violation of the author’s rights and actionable under United States copyright law.

ARTISTIC STAFF

Director .................................. Ren Berthel
Dramaturg ................................. Aly Homminga
Scenic and Lighting Design ............ Lanny Potts
Costume Design ...................... Lori Sands
Technical Director ..................... Jon Reeves
Sound and Lighting Design ............ Lanford J. Potts
Assistant Scenic Design ................. Angela Mammel
Sound Design .......................... Madeline Schroeder
Scenic Painter .......................... Raven Wynd

the Great Refractor was of the Moon on the afternoon of June 24, 1847, and after the appointment in 1877 of the observatory’s fourth director, Edward C. Pickering, the telescope was employed almost entirely for photometry. (It is currently being restored to nearly its original form.) Our railings and proscenium treatment are a reproduction of art nouveau spiral staircases and railings of the period, researched and rendered by Assistant Scenic Designer Angela Mammel (K’22), and help us establish a sense of time and place.

Properties...

Our astronomical items are reproductions of equipment used during the period and found from DASCH (Digital Access to a Sky Century), an ongoing project at Harvard College Observatory (HCO) seeking to digitize more than 500,000 images. Some of the plates used in our production are replicas that Henrietta Leavitt had signed and used for her discoveries, and all of the plate images are from images that our historical “computers” actually reviewed and used for their discoveries.

The real plates are extremely fragile – and while the photographic plates used in our production contain a replica of the images, our material is plexiglass for stage safety reasons. Our viewers are a replica of the viewers used (and still exist) at HCO, and the fly spankers are actual replicas as well. In fact, the letter and marking “scribbles” you see on the front of your program are replicas of the actual luminosity ratings taken directly from period “fly spankers.” Our hearing aid is a 3-D printed replica of the period, with our research done on-site at the WMU Speech and Audiology Department using the Baldwin historical collection.

~Notes by Scenic and Lighting Designer Lanny Potts

Costumes...

Our costumes represent the period in which our story takes place, and reflect the shape, silhouette, undergarments, and accessories as the starting point for our characters. And, as a stage costume, we have the opportunity to use that research to catapult us into another world – something grander, more fantastic, more magical than it would have been in that moment in history. Such was the process for Silent Sky. Seeing the finished painted galaxy floor and the fantasy star sky allowed me to push the characters into a magical realm by incorporating colors that were more intense and fabrics that were more lush than working-class women would have worn at the time. For the character of Henrietta for example, I chose to put her in purple which is a color I associate with dreams, and tempered it with a deep navy overlay to mimic the night sky.

~Costume Design Notes by Lori Sands

(Stage Floor Notes by Raven Wynd next page)
On Directing and Designing *Silent Sky* (continued)

**Stage Floor...**

This is by far the largest canvas I’ve ever worked with and the most public. Jon showed me the basics of the tools, larger brushes, primarily the 2” fish, a good quality latex paint, and a spray bottle with plain water. I figured other people have done it, it’s doable, no big deal. Just point yourself in the general direction of where you want to go and proceed. Optimism required.

This project is a culmination of so many different parts of my life. My parents met and fell in love in the theatre. My earliest memories are being backstage while they were rehearsing *Fiddler on the Roof*. Dad was in the Air Force. We travelled from base to base, performing and working at any local theatre they found. Sometimes doing tech work, sometimes on stage. Dad’s favorite topic was space. He could tell you how black holes were formed, even after he suffered from a stroke.

For the first couple nights the goal was to get a coat of paint down. It was already black when I started so I brought waves of red and yellow mixed followed by the blues and purples. After a few days it started almost looking like a nebula. Paint and spray came next. The spraying breaks up the brush strokes and casts the paint this way or that, depending on how the spray is introduced. You let it dry, and repeat the paint and spray with another color. The paint tells you what to do, you have to let the paint have its way to a point.

I think of the act of doing art as either formulaic or intuitive. Sometimes art is controlled by a formula or theory, and sometimes it’s more emotional, a whim. Or it’s a dance between the two. This project was a push and pull. There were moments of panic and moments of almost meditative peace. My mentor’s voice in my head saying, “you know what to do” .... tap tap tap. Some nights I’d be down on the floor, a brush in each hand teasing out the shapes, thinking about the plasma and dust in the universe swirling up into itself. Energy doesn’t stop. It flows.

I invite you to see how different it looks from the top of the stairs in the seats versus up close. Someone asked me, “why are you still working on it? It looks fantastic!” “Cause the hard part is done,” I said, “I’ll never do this image again. It’ll never have the same energy or magic to it. I want to make it the best that I can.” Thank you for enjoying our efforts.

~Stage Floor Notes by Raven Wynd

**Dramaturgical Note**

Annie tells Henrietta, “I choose to measure you in light” as a way to express that Henri is a constant in her life and the field of astronomy. The speed of light is a constant, $3 \times 10^8$ meters per second. It never changes. **Henrietta and the rest of the women from the Harvard Observatory should be measured in light.** Their impacts and discoveries are constants and are just as important as they were 100 years ago.

Henrietta Leavitt (1868-1921) discovered something called the **Period-Luminosity Relation**, “period” meaning a short time period and “luminosity” meaning brightness. She determined that the amount of time it took for certain pulsing stars to blink correlated with how bright those stars got. This was important because, from Earth, we could not properly identify how bright stars actually were. The Period Luminosity Relation gave astronomers the tools to determine how bright stars actually are. The important constant in her equation was light.

Light determines what we see and how we perceive our surroundings. There is a reason why the phrase “shedding some light on the subject” is so popular. **Illuminating something means that it is easier to see, comprehend, and understand.** For so long, the women portrayed in this play were not given the light they deserved. Williamina, the first female photometer, went uncredited for most of her work and discoveries for a long time. Annie Cannon’s system of Stellar Classification is still called the Harvard system of classification, not the Cannon system. *Silent Sky* focuses the light back on the women who made these leaps for the field of astronomy.

In the theatre, it is our job to bring to light issues that plague our society in order to spark conversations and education around hard topics. Through Festival Playhouse’s **56th Season- HERstories: Forgotten Female Figures**, we are illuminating stories of women who have been overlooked or under-appreciated. Henrietta, Annie, and Williamina were kept in the dark for so many years, and it is our honor to help bring their stories back into the light.

~Aly Homminga ’20

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OUR 56TH SEASON: HERSTORY: FORGOTTEN FEMALE FIGURES