

REGIONAL PREMIERE

ATHENA

BY GRACIE GARDNER

Directed by Kathryn MacMillan

MAY 19TH - JUNE 5TH



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A LETTER FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Welcome to Theatre Horizon! I'm thrilled that we can finally present the regional premiere of Gracie Gardner's *ATHENA*, a production originally planned for our 2019/20 season, now two-years in the making.

One of my favorite elements of this script is that the only note playwright Gracie Gardner gives to people who are about to stage it is "Resist the urge to get cute, these women are blunt." I love watching Mary Wallace and Athena, the two characters you will encounter in this production, because of their bluntness. In a world where women are socialized to put politeness, appeasement, and caretaking of others above all else, it is thrilling to watch these two young women unapologetically defy those expectations. I love living in the world of this show because it reminds

me that another world is possible.

This play gives me hope that a new generation of young women, and the space they've found for themselves in various arenas, may remain with them as they grow older. That they might give themselves permission to cry, scream, feel anger, celebrate, weep, and most of all, hold one another in solidarity, even beyond stadium lighting and darkened theaters.

Thank you for being here and hope to see you at TOWN, our most ambitious project to date, premiering in September.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Nell Bang-Jensen". The signature is fluid and expressive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Artistic Director NELL BANG-JENSEN



In their first training session together, teenage fencers Mary Wallace and Athena debate the purpose of sports. I won't say too much about this moment—there's a joke in there I don't want to give away—but their perspectives, at least in this early moment in the play, are quite different. Athena finds competition to be a helpful benchmark for comparing herself to others; Mary Wallace values camaraderie and the mind-body connection.

I have a third perspective. As a theater artist whose only childhood sporting trophy was in bowling (it gets worse—I think it was only a *participation trophy*?), I'm most keenly interested in sports for their metaphorical power. And this is a play rich in sports metaphors. In both fencing and conversation, these two young women attack and parry and riposte. They try to justify a few dirty tricks; they hurt each other. But they also get stronger by learning how to fight.

At the end of our first day of fencing training, our brilliant fight director, Alex Cordaro, asked the cast what they'd learned. I wrote down their responses because, again, they were such beautiful metaphors for the play as a whole.

KIRA: This is a brave sport. I mean, I knew that, but it feels really different once a blade is coming at you.

CAMPBELL: The more you commit to the attack, the more you open yourself up and become vulnerable.

KIRA: Yeah! If I don't stick her, she'll stick me. And once you're worn out, you don't hold yourself back. You just don't have the capacity.

Athena explores the limits of teamwork in a culture that worships individual achievement—whether that's fencing or our society at large. The play also reveals the ways in which we are conditioned to pursue our lives as a zero-sum game, measuring our improvements in comparison to others. But at its core, *Athena* employs fencing as a profound metaphor for growing up, especially growing up in a woman's body: it's brave, vulnerable, exhausting, sometimes messy, and it requires some strategy, even brutality, in order to stay safe. How painful and wonderful.

Thank you for joining us.

Director KATHRYN MACMILLAN



REGIONAL PREMIERE

ATHENA

BY GRACIE GARDNER

MAY 19 - JUNE 5, 2022

DIRECTOR

KATHRYN MACMILLAN

FIGHT DIRECTOR

J. ALEX CORDARO

LIGHTING DESIGNER

LILY FOSSNER

**SET AND PROPS
DESIGNER**

CHRIS HAIG

COSTUME DESIGNER

NATALIA DE LA TORRE

**SOUND AND PROJECTION
DESIGNER**

DAMIEN FIGUERAS

**PRODUCTION STAGE
MANAGER**

SARAH E. T. JACKSON*

* Appearing through an Agreement between Theatre Horizon and Actors' Equity Association,
the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

CAST

Kira Player*	Athena
Campbell O'Hare*	Mary Wallace
Satchel Williams	Jamie / Athena Understudy
Erin Renee Russo	Jamie Understudy / Mary Wallace Understudy

PRODUCTION TEAM

Kathryn MacMillan	Director
Gracie Gardner	Playwright
J. Alex Cordaro	Fight Director
Chris Haig	Set and Props Designer
Lily Fossner	Lighting Designer
Natalia de la Torre	Costume Designer
Damien Figueras	Sound and Projection Designer
Elliot Konstant	Master Electrician
Erin Renee Russo	Assistant to the Fight Director
Sarah E. T. Jackson*	Production Stage Manager
Steven Gross	Assistant Stage Manager
Flannel & Hammer	Scene Shop
Janine Grando	COVID Compliance Officer



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors & Stage Managers. Actors' Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 50,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CAST

Campbell O'Hare (MARY WALLACE) she/her is a member of the Wilma Hothouse company where past productions include: *The Cherry Orchard*, *Minor Character*, *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* (Drama League Nomination for Outstanding Digital Theater, Individual Production), *Describe the Night*, *Dance Nation*, *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play*, *Blood Wedding* (Barrymore Nomination, Leading Performance) and *Rapture, Blister, Burn* (Barrymore Award, Supporting Performance). Philadelphia credits: *Charlotte's Web*, *Equivocation* (Arden Theatre Co.); *Romeo and Juliet* (Commonwealth Classic Theatre); *The Whale* (Barrymore Nomination, Supporting Performance/ Theatre Exile); *Mauritius* (Act II Playhouse); *Othello* (Lantern Theater Company); *Our Oujia Board*, *Wolfcrush*, *The Bride's a C%\$@*, *Birdie's Pit Stop* (On the Rocks). She can be heard as halfling cleric "Winnie Winchester" in the D&D actual-play podcast Critical Faile DM & The Goons: The Strahdcast! www.campbelllohare.com

Kira Player (ATHENA) she/her is a New Jersey-based actor who is feeling very thankful to be back in the theatre. Past credits include *Inside Siberia* (Rootbeer Occasion Theatre Co); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *And Then They Came for Me* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival); *Belleville* (A Company of Fools); *Women on Fire* (Royal Family); *A Doll's House Part 2* (Theatreworks Hartford). She received her BFA from Montclair State University. She sends a huge thank you to her parents for trusting and believing in her. More info at kiraplayer.com

Satchel Williams (JAMIE/ATHENA UNDERSTUDY) she/they is a Brooklyn-born, Philadelphia-based actor, writer, director, and filmmaker. After graduating from Temple University, they've had the pleasure of working with Inis Nua Theatre Company, Delaware Shakespeare, Revolution Shakespeare, Azuka Theatre, Passage Theatre, We're Trying Up Here Entertainment, and now for the first time, Theatre Horizon! When not working on a production, she dabbles as a barista, occasional teaching artist, and amateur astrologer.

Erin Renee Russo (JAMIE UNDERSTUDY/MARY WALLACE UNDERSTUDY) she/her is a Philadelphia-based actor, sound designer, and good friend. She is a recent graduate of the University of the Arts' Directing Playwriting and Production BFA program. Her last appearance at Theatre Horizon was *TJ Loves Sally 4 Ever* (Assistant Sound). For Jack, Always. www.erinreeneurusso.com

CREATIVE TEAM

Kathryn MacMillan (DIRECTOR) she/her is a Philadelphia-based director of more than 50 productions regionally and off-Broadway, including *Unraveled* (Off-Broadway); *Arcadia*, *Betrayal*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (Lantern Theater Co.); *Fully Committed* (Delaware Theatre Co.); *Grounded* and *The Niceties* (InterAct); *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Shakespeare in Clark Park); *The Comedy of Errors* (Dram Tree Shakespeare, NC); and *Romeo & Juliet* (Commonwealth Classic). KC is grateful to have had a long affiliation with Theatre Horizon; here she has directed *The Revolutionists* (nominated for six Barrymore Awards for Theatre Excellence, including Best Production & Best Director), *I Am My Own Wife* (winner—Virginia Brown Martin Philadelphia Award), *Fully Committed*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Violet Hour*, and *The Laramie Project*. Other honors and awards include: *Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Best Production 2012/13 & Best Director, from Philadelphia Weekly), *Doubt* (one of the Best Plays of 2015 from the Philadelphia Daily News), and Barrymore nominations for Outstanding Direction for *The Hothouse*, *I Am My Own Wife*, and *The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged* (also co-writer). In 2015, KC was named one of Billy Penn's Who's Next: 16 Young Philadelphians Shaping the Arts Scene. KC is the Artistic Director of Philadelphia's Tiny Dynamite.

Gracie Gardner (PLAYWRIGHT) she/her is an American playwright. Her play *Pussy Sludge* was selected for Theaterreffen Stückemarkt in Berlin, and previously received the Relentless Award; it was developed by Less Than Rent at HERE Arts Center, and The Old Vic in London. Her play *Athena* (New York Times Critics' Pick) was presented by The Hearth at JACK. Gracie is the recipient of the McKnight National Residency and Commission, an Ensemble Studio Theater Sloan Foundation Commission, a Claire Tow Fellowship, the James E. Michael Award, the James Stevenson Prize, and she is a Samuel French OOB Festival winner. She's a proud member of New Dramatists, Ars Nova Play Group, Youngblood, and she has received commissions from Clubbed Thumb, Manhattan Theatre Club, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and the Atlantic Theater Company. She's also worked as a video game writer for Annapurna Interactive.

Sarah E. T. Jackson (PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER) she/her is thrilled to be a part of this beautiful production! Recent credits include: *Fiddler on the Roof* (UMS & Philadelphia Orchestra); *The Lion King* (North American Tour); *Dracula* (Classic Stage Company); *Annie Get Your Gun* (Bay Street Theatre); *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Bucks County Playhouse); *Into the Woods* (Juilliard Drama Division); *Kiss, Mary Jane* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *A Chorus Line* (Transcendence Theatre Company); *Evita* (Olney Theatre Company), among others. Education: MFA in Stage Management, Yale School of Drama.

Chris Haig (SET AND PROPS DESIGNER) he/him a graduate of University of the Arts, has professionally set and prop designed throughout Philly for 20 years and is enjoying his 10th season as Props Supervisor at Arden Theatre Company. He has designed sets and/or

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

props for Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Horizon, InterAct Theatre Company, 1812 Productions, Inis Nua, 11th Hour, Shakespeare in Clark Park, Tribe of Fools, Delaware Theatre Company, Commonwealth Classic Theatre Company, Delaware Shakespeare Festival, University of the Arts, Quintessence Theatre Group and Simpatico Theater, including their production of *Time Is On Our Side* for which he received a Barrymore nomination for Best Scenic Design. To see more of his work, visit chrisaigdesigns.com.

Damien Figueras (SOUND AND PROJECTION DESIGNER) he/him is Cuban-American composer, music director and Sound Designer based in Philadelphia. He has received two Barrymore nominations for his work. Recent credits include: *Party Face* (Off-Broadway, New York City Center), *Into the Woods* (Resident Theatre Company), *Warplay* (Azuka Theatre), *Meteor Shower* (Walnut Street Theatre), *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* (Curio Theatre Company). He is a proud member of the Theatrical Sound Designer and Composer Association (TSDCA). In addition to his design work, Damien is the Production Manager for Wolf Performing Arts Center. As always, he would like to dedicate his work to the memory of his mother. www.DFigueras.com

J. Alex Cordaro (FIGHT DIRECTOR) he/him has been studying, practicing, teaching, and directing stage violence for over 30 years. He has directed fights for The Wilma Theater, The Arden Theatre Company, the McCarter Theater Center, The Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Philadelphia Theater Company, The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, The Philadelphia Shakespeare Festival, Three Rivers Shakespeare Festival, The Opera Company of Philadelphia, Lantern Theater Company, Theater Exile, Inis Nua Theater Company, Philadelphia Artists Collective, Quintessence Theater Group, Forensic Files on TRU TV, and others. Alex's choreography has been sailing across Europe for the past ten years with twenty different casts in Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's productions of *Saturday Night Fever* and *Columbus...The Musical!* Alex has also directed numerous fights for Philadelphia area dance companies and colleges. Currently, Alex runs the Stage Combat Progression at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He has also served as Stage Combat Instructor at Arcadia University, Rowan University, Temple University, and The University of Delaware. Alex is a core instructor for the annual Philadelphia Stage Combat Workshop which recently celebrated its 20th year. Alex is Certified Teacher, Fight Director, and Theatrical Firearms Instructor with the Society of American Fight Directors. He is a three-time Barrymore Award Nominee for Outstanding Movement/Choreography and was featured on the Discovery Channel's "Project Discovery" series: *Careers in the Arts; Fight Director*.

Elliot Konstant (MASTER ELECTRICIAN) he/him is a freelance lighting designer, electrician, and photographer from Philadelphia. He is happy to be returning to Theatre Horizon for his 6th mainstage production as Master Electrician. His recent credits include Lighting Designer for Theatre Horizon's *The Agitators* (2020), LD with Wolf-PAC on *Something Rotten* (2022), Lighting Supervisor with Pig Iron Theatre Company, and Lighting Programmer at Bristol Riverside Theatre.

Lily Fossner (LIGHTING DESIGNER) she/her is a Philadelphia-based theatrical lighting designer. For Theatre Horizon: *The Revolutionists*. Recent work includes: *A Man for All Seasons* for the Lantern, *Shakespeare in Love* for People's Light, *Sunset Baby* for Azuka. Other theatre: *A Fierce Kind of Love* for the Temple Institute on Disabilities, 1812, Delaware Theatre Company, Act II, WAM, TACT, Culture Project, Public Theatre, Prospect Theater Company, NYU/Grad Acting, Chautauqua Theater Company, Berkshire Theatre Group, Radio City Christmas Spectacular. Dance Includes: Nichole Canuso, Doug Varone & Dancers, Monica Bill Barnes & Company. Opera Includes: Juilliard Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass Festival. Training: MFA, NYU/Tisch. Website: lilyfossner.com

Janine Grando (COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER) she/they is a graduating theatre student from Montgomery County Community College. She recently worked as Assistant Stage Manager for Theatre Horizon's *TJ Loves Sally 4 Ever*. Janine worked as the stage manager and dramaturg for the school's production of *Incorruptible*, a director for a devised theatre festival, and the scenic designer for the school's production of *Men on Boats*.

Steven Gross (ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER) he/they is a Jewish, queer theater artist based in Philadelphia. He is drawn to developing and telling stories that interrogate the norms of theater and the world. They graduated from the University of the Arts with a BFA in Directing, Playwriting, and Production. Recent projects include *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet* (Directing Apprentice, New Light Theater), *The Expanding Universe and Other Bullshit Theories* (Director, UArts), *Venus in Fur* (Stage Manager, On The Edge Theatre Collective). Find out more at thestevengross.com.

Natalia de la Torre (COSTUME DESIGNER) she/they serves as Costume Shop Manager for Walnut Street Theater. They are also a freelance costume designer, draper, and scenic painter in PA/NJ/DE. Regional work: *Nina Simone* (People's Light); *The Great Leap* (Interact Theater Company); *Snow White* (Arden Theater Company); *Sh*theads* (Azuka Theater Company), *An Iliad* (Lantern Theater Company). Training: MFA in Production Design, Ohio University. www.nataliadelatorre.com

ATHENA was rehearsed and performed at Theatre Horizon in Norristown, which stands on the territory known as “Lenapehoking,” the ancestral home of the Lenape people.

For the past 10,000 years, the Lenape have been the original caretakers and stewards of Lenapehoking—one of numerous tribes that comprised tens of millions of people residing on this continent prior to the invasion of European colonizers.

We recognize that Isaac Norris, Sr.—Norristown’s namesake—purchased land from the family of William Penn even though nobody “owns” Lenapehoking. We acknowledge that Isaac Norris, Sr. was a slaveholder who benefited from a system that captured, sold, and enslaved over 10 million Africans who were trafficked to various locations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean.

We acknowledge the 6 million African Americans that moved from the American South to the Northeast during The Great Migration and their role in making places like Norristown a central hub for industry and retail. Finally, with a large Latinx population in Norristown—particularly people from Puerto Rico and Mexico—we acknowledge the past, present, and future legacies of the Taíno and Aztec peoples.

This land acknowledgement was written by Director of External Relations Gilberto Vega with advisement from Adam Waterbear DePaul and Barbara Bluejay of the Lenape Cultural Center.



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TONIGHT in the lobby. Complete a donation envelope and submit to the Box Office.

ONLINE at TheatreHorizon.org

CALL 610.283.2230 x 717

MAIL a check to Theatre Horizon at 401 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA 19401

Eager to support Theatre Horizon's work but worried about cash flow?

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We invite you to join our family of volunteers as an usher.

As a nonprofit, Theatre Horizon runs with a small staff, active Board of Directors, and volunteers (YOU)! It takes a lot of hard work from all parties to ensure that Theatre Horizon continues to grow and serve our community.

If you'd like to sign up, contact Audience Engagement Manager Zaina Dana via Zaina@TheatreHorizon.org or (610) 283.2230 x1



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Theatre Horizon presents

TOWN

A play written for and
about Norristown



Photo by John C. Hawthorne

**TOWN will premiere on the lawn of Eisenhower Science
and Technology Leadership Academy
September 15-18, 2022**

**Want to ACT in the play?
No previous experience necessary.
Paid roles are available!**

Come try-out at one of the following open auditions:

**JUNE
14**

MontCo-Norristown
Public Library -
1001 Powell Street
6pm-7:30pm

**JUNE
20**

Theatre Horizon -
401 DeKalb Street
4pm-7pm

**JUNE
25**

Theatre Horizon -
401 DeKalb Street
1pm-4pm

**Just show up that day or make an appointment
by emailing Community Coordinator Marisol Rosa-Shapiro:
Marisol@TheatreHorizon.org.
*People of all ages (5+) are welcome to audition!***



**TOWN has been supported by
The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.**