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# *Colonialism Is Terrible But Phở Is Delicious*

by Dustin H. Chinn

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**OREGON CONTEMPORARY THEATRE**

Presents

***Colonialism Is Terrible,  
But Phở Is Delicious***

by Dustin H. Chinn

**Director**

Oánh Nguyễn

**Scenic Designer**

Jeffrey Cook

**Assistant Director**

Shinshin Yuder Tsai

**Sound Designer**

James Ard

**Stage Manager**

Riley Allen

**Lighting Designer**

Ashley Christensen

**Dramaturg**

Natalia Duong

**Costume Designer**

Erin Willis

**Assistant Stage Manager/****Props Designer**

Laura Tuffli

*Production Sponsor:*

*COLONIALISM IS TERRIBLE, BUT PHỞ IS DELICIOUS is produced at Oregon Contemporary Theatre as a part of a Rolling World Premiere. Other partnering theatres are Aurora Theatre (Berkeley, CA), and Chance Theater (Anaheim, CA).*

*Oregon Contemporary Theatre is a Constituent Member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the professional non-profit American theatre.*

CAST

Madame Gagnier/Rose/Julie .....	Jerilyn Armstrong
Nguyễn/Quang/Sam .....	Anthony Doan
Guillaume/Hugh/Chris.....	Alex Foufos
Thúy / Mùì / Danielle .....	Cat Limket

*The performance lasts approximately 1 hour 25 minutes with no intermission.*

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director .....	Oánh Nguyễn
Assistant Director.....	Shinshin Yuder Tsai
Sound Designer .....	James Ard
Lighting Designer .....	Ashley Christensen
Scenic Designer .....	Jeffrey Cook
Costume Designer.....	Erin Willis
Production Stage Manager .....	Riley Allen
Assistant Stage Manager/ Properties Designer.....	Laura Tuffli
Culinary Consultant .....	Clark Barlowe
Dialect Coach .....	Tricia Rodley
Dramaturg .....	Natalia Duong

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## *Cultural Diplomacy in a Bowl of Noodle Soup*

Natalia Duong, Dramaturg

In many ways, phở can be considered the national dish of Việt Nam. It's certainly the most recognizable Vietnamese dish around the world, but it has of course been influenced by the many different cultures that occupied the region now called Vietnam, and the vast array of Vietnamese diasporic communities that bring their own flair to the soup today. Every family has their own signature way of cooking phở, and even as recipes have been shared across generations, they've been adjusted to fit the changing tastes of migrating and displaced communities. In ***Colonialism is Terrible but Phở is Delicious***, Dustin H. Chinn presents us with one possible origin story: that phở was developed from a combination of noodles brought from China and the robust beef and slow stewing technique of French cuisine essentialized in pot-au-feu. Some food historians even speculate that the name "phở" itself is derived from a homonym for the French "feu" meaning fire. The play presents us with the multitude of ways that colonialism and imperialism operate, and how we become complicit in these ongoing occupations. This is part of what makes this play so layered and resonant, even as we find ourselves laughing at the challenge of communicating across languages and the clashing of powers over culture.

In the first two parts of the play, Chinn cleverly deploys language to center the Vietnamese characters, or in his words, to normalize their speech, while othering the role of foreigners (whether French colonists or US American tourists). While the phrases that are lost in translation are sometimes frustrating for the characters, as audience members we are given a more complex understanding of the Vietnamese characters, who in the first two parts of Chinn's play, are those who occupy service positions, economically disadvantaged in comparison to their Western counterparts, and who often do not have the explicit power over their encounters with the occupying forces. On the other hand, through stylized cartoonishly-accented language, Western characters are denaturalized and made unfamiliar even to those of us who may identify more strongly with them.



During the play's development over the past five years, Chinn wrestled with how to portray this cross-cultural communication as languages themselves were evolving as cultures clashed into one another. For example, in Part 1, which takes place in colonial French Indochina, the French characters speak to each other in French, they speak to their Vietnamese servants in a halting elementary form of Vietnamese, and the Vietnamese characters speak to one another in their native tongues. From the start, Chinn knew that he wanted audience members to hear fluent Vietnamese as fluent English. However, other linguistic questions remained. Would the French characters have their French translations projected as subtitles on the set but speak in fluent unaccented English? What do we make of new French terms that are proper pronouns (celery, potato) but that do not yet in the colonial era have a direct translation in either English or Vietnamese? For example, when the French dish "pot-au-feu" is first introduced, French characters are speaking French, but no equivalent exists in Vietnamese or English, so are these proper nouns actually being spoken in French, and not Vietnamese? How do we communicate the birth of a new culinary term, and with it, its world of sense?

In this staging of the play, during this tripartite rolling world premiere, director Oánh Nguyễn and Chinn agreed to use cartoonishly exaggerated accents to emphasize the strangeness of hearing a foreign language. In doing so, French and American characters who travel to Vietnam are portrayed as strange foreigners whose grasp of Vietnamese slips into comedic miscommunication, whereas the audience understands the Vietnamese characters fluently. As you watch the show, consider how your understanding of various characters, and your consequent experience of them, shifts as they navigate the complicated language of the play and how you find yourself amidst the many cultural translations exchanged on stage.

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**DUSTIN H. CHINN (*Playwright*)** is a NYC-based Seattle native who's developed work with Ars Nova's Play Group, the Ma-Yi Writers Lab, A.C.T.'s New Strands Festival, the University of Washington via a Mellon Creative Fellowship, UC Berkeley, SPACE on Ryder Farm, UMass at Amherst New Play Lab, Vampire Cowboys and is a 2022-3 Colt Coeur CoCo Resident. This show is a product of the Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep, Bay Area Playwrights Festival and is a recipient of the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. He'll be in Scotland this June to attend the Hawthornden Castle Writers Retreat, starting a new play about liveaboard scuba diving boats.



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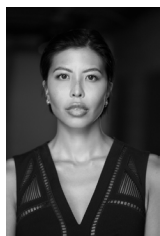
**JERILYN ARMSTRONG (*Madame Garnier/Rose/Julie*)** is delighted to be back at Oregon Contemporary Theatre to share this hilarious and poignant story with such a fire team. Past OCT productions include: *Alabaster*, *Middletown* and *The Big Meal*. She was most recently in *Metaverse* at Corrib Theatre in Portland, Oregon. Film credits include independent feature films *Woe* and *#chadgetstheaxe*. She's studied and performed improv at UCB (Los Angeles) and Kickstand Comedy (Portland).



**ANTHONY DOAN (*Nguyễn/Quang/Sam*)** is thrilled to make his debut at Oregon Contemporary Theatre. He returns to these roles having played them in the first production of *Colonialism is Terrible, But Phở is Delicious* at Aurora Theatre Company in Berkeley, California. As a Vietnamese-American immigrant, he feels proud to represent his cultural identity and celebrate his love for phở through this thought-provoking and hilarious comedy. Other notable credits include Christian in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Dumaine in *Love's Labor's Lost* (Island Shakespeare Festival); Nhan & Playwright understudy tracks in *Vietgone* (City Lights Theatre Company); and John Lee in *Porcelain* (Brown Bag Theatre Company). Anthony is a coastal theatre artist and storyteller currently based in the San Francisco Bay Area.



**ALEX FOUFOS (*Guillaume/Hugh/Chris*)** graduated from Willamette University with a BA in Theatre. While most of his days are spent building river boards and inflatable raft pumps in Hillsboro, he finds the time to sing and act as much as possible. Most recently he was seen as Dorante in *The Liar* (Willamette University) and Henrik in *A Little Night Music* in Salem, OR. Outside of work and theatre, Alex enjoys spending time with his friends, family and partner.



**CAT LIMKET (*Thúy/Mùi/Danielle*)** is thrilled to be working at Oregon Contemporary Theatre for the first time. On film, she can currently be seen in Spike Lee's *Tales from the Hood 2* (AppleTV, PrimeVideo), *The Blonde Experiment* (Comedy Central) and this Fall in *Kill Her* (Amazon Prime). She is also known for her TV roles on *Ballers* (HBO), *90210* (CW) and *Entourage* (HBO). Big hugs and love to her new OCT family, her partner Liam and her manager Iona (Zero Gravity Management).

# Windows Into: Colonialism and Phở 10

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**1887-1954:** French Colonial period where the region known today as Viet Nam, and parts of Cambodia and Laos, were called French Indochina. French became the language of government affairs and colonial buildings from of this era still remain in Vietnam.

**1940-1945:** Japanese occupation of French Indochina

**1946-1954:** First Indochina War between France and Việt Minh (Democratic Republic of Vietnam)

**1954-1975:** US - Vietnam War (referred to as Vietnam War in the US, and The American War in Vietnam)

**1994:** Bill Clinton ends the trade embargo between Viet Nam and the US leading to an influx of economic exchange, tourism and partnership between the two nations

**2000:** Bill Clinton visits Vietnam and eats at Phở 2000 in Southern Vietnam.

**2018:** *Colonialism is Terrible, but Phở is Delicious* workshopped at The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep Summer Residency Lab (Berkeley, CA) directed by Mina Morita

**2018:** *Colonialism is Terrible, but Phở is Delicious* staged reading at Playwrights Foundation's 2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival directed by Ken Savage, dramaturg Nakissa Etemad

**2021:** Online zoom co-production of *Colonialism is Terrible, but Phở is Delicious* directed by Oánh Nguyễn produced by Aurora Theatre Company (Berkeley, CA), Chance Theater (Anaheim, CA) during lockdown

**2022-2023:** Three part rolling World Premiere of *Colonialism is Terrible, but Phở is Delicious* at Aurora Theatre Company (Berkeley, CA), Chance Theater (Anaheim, CA) and Oregon Contemporary Theatre (Eugene, OR)

*Timeline created by dramaturg Natalia Duong*

**RILEY ALLEN (Production Stage Manager; Production Assistant)** graduated from Central Washington University with a Bachelors in Theatre Design and Production, specializing in everything from scenic design to stage management to electrician work. His stage management credits include: *Dissent* (CWU Ghostlight Lab), *Holiday Inn* (The Shedd Institute) and OCT's entire 2022-2023 season so far (though he would like to specifically mention *Hedwig And The Angry Inch*, as calling that show gave him a few grey hairs). Riley is excited to not only be using all facets of his degree this season, but to have the opportunity to work with Oregon Contemporary Theatre in such an intimate venue on a season teeming with variety and tough questions. Born in the Puget Sound area, he is excited to see that the Seattle Kraken are no longer the worst team in the NHL.

**JAMES ARD (Sound Designer)** is a noisemaker with a focus on new works, interactive media and immersive stage productions. Recent theatrical Sound Design credits include *Our Country* (Octopus Theatricals / Under The Radar Festival / The Public Theater), *This Much I Know*, *Exit Strategy*, *Actually*, *Dry Powder*, *The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company), *This Is Who I Am* (Playco / Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company / Guthrie Theater / Oregon Shakespeare Festival / American Repertory Theater), *9 Parts of Desire* (Portland Center Stage), *Phantasmagoria*, *Utopia*, *Free For All*, *La Ronde* (Cutting Ball Theater), *A Small Fire*, *Kings* (Shotgun Players), *Our Town* (Center Repertory Company), *Indecent* (San Francisco Playhouse), *Time of Change* (Joe Goode Performance Group), *On The Periphery* (Crowded Fire Theater / Golden Thread Productions), *You For Me For You*, *Church* (Crowded Fire Theater) and *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World* (Golden Thread Productions). He is a Resident Artist with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater.

**ASHLEY CHRISTENSEN (Lighting Designer)** is a senior at the at the University of Oregon majoring in Theatre Arts and Music History. Recent credits include: stage manager and lighting designer for *L'italiana in Algeri* (UO Opera Ensemble), assistant lighting designer for *She Kills Monsters* and designer for *God Said This* (University of Oregon). She is excited to be working with the Oregon Contemporary Theatre for the first time!

**JEFFREY COOK (Scenic Designer)** is a Washington native living in Seattle and working throughout the Northwest since 1990. Productions for Oregon Contemporary Theatre include: *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberly*, *Marjorie Prime*, *Last Five Years*, *Good People*, *Clybourne Park*, *Lie of the Mind*, *Next to Normal* and *Assassins*. Seattle design work includes: The Seattle Children's Theatre (Designs with Mo Willems, Kevin Kling and Steven Dietz), The 5th Avenue Theater, Village Theater and designs for Harlequin Productions, Book-It, Tacoma Actors Guild, Taproot and Profile Theatre in Portland (Pinter season). He has designed the official City of Seattle Winterfest experience since 2008. National Work: Three years at the Denver Center Theatre design and production shops, and *Thomas the Train Live on Stage*. BFA Washington State University 1991, MFA University of Oregon 1995.

[JeffreyDesigns.net](http://JeffreyDesigns.net)



**NATALIA DUONG (Dramaturg)** is thrilled to rejoin the **PHỞ** team after serving as a dramaturg for the 2018 staged reading at Bay Area Playwrights Foundation and the first two portions of the World Premiere at Aurora Theatre Company (Berkeley, CA) and Chance Theater (Anaheim, CA)! Natalia is a scholar, teacher and multidisciplinary performance maker whose recent credits include: dramaturgy for *love you long time (already)* by Katie Đỗ (South Coast Rep) and *Tiger Beat* by Kaela Mei-Shing Garvin (Bay Area Playwrights Foundation); assistant directing *Poor Yella Rednecks: Vietgone Part 2*, and *Vietgone* (A.C.T.); and *The Luckiest* and *Seize the King* (La Jolla Playhouse). She holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from UC Berkeley and is currently a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow at UCLA.

[www.nataliaduong.com](http://www.nataliaduong.com)

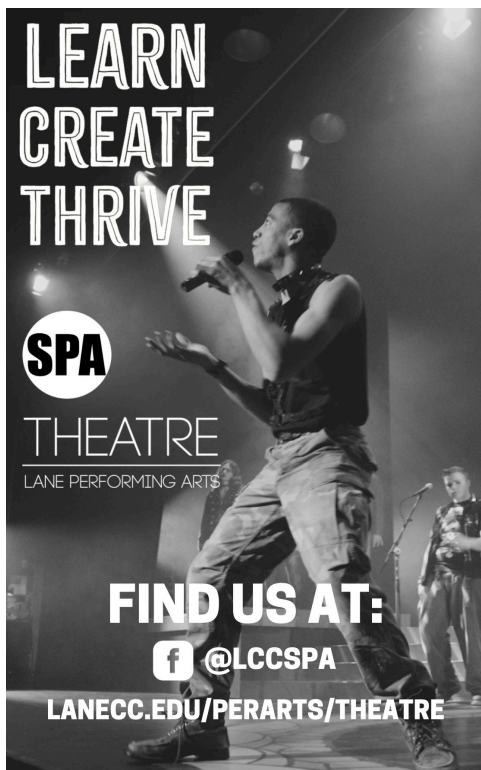
**Oánh Nguyễn (Director)** has been serving as Chance Theater's founding Artistic Director since 1999. Oánh is a recipient of TCG's New Generations Grant and the TCG Nathan Cummings Young Leaders of Color Fellowship. He was awarded the Outstanding Artist Award by Arts Orange County, profiled in Orange County Register's "Most Influential People" series and OC Weekly's People Issue, inducted into Anaheim High School's Hall of Fame and was a commencement speaker for Chapman University College of Performing Arts. Oánh was Producing Associate at South Coast Repertory for three years. He also served on the advisory board of the Anaheim High School Performing Arts Conservatory, the board of Network of Ensemble Theatres, LA's 99-seat Transitional Committee, and OC Theatre Guild, as well as panels and committees for Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Alternative Theatre Los Angeles, National Endowment for the Arts and Theatre Communications Group. His directing credits include productions at Chance Theater, East West Players, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, South Coast Repertory, Aurora Theatre Company, Oregon Contemporary Theatre, Chapman University, Azusa Pacific University, AMDA, CSU Fullerton and served as the Associate Director for the international tour of David Henry Hwang's *Chinglish* (Berkeley Repertory, South Coast Repertory, Hong Kong Arts Festival). His selected film credits include *Two Brothers*, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaude, *Rush Hour 3*, directed by Brett Ratner, and *Lonely Boy*, directed by Dale Fabrigar (Best First Feature Grand Jury Prize at the 2013 Louisiana International Film Festival and Audience Award Winner at the 2013 BolderLife Festival).

**TRICIA RODLEY (Dialect Coach)** is a Senior Instructor in Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon with a career focus on teaching, acting, directing and voice/accent coaching. Her practice areas also include dramaturgy and new play development. Recent directing projects at UO include Sarah DeLappe's *The Wolves* and Noël Coward's *Hay Fever*. Recent dialect coaching projects include: *Hay Fever*, *Once*, *A Christmas Carol* (UO University Theatre); *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (Oregon Contemporary Theatre). Prior to UO, Tricia lived and worked in New York, received an MA in Classical Acting from The Central School of Speech and Drama in London and co-founded Printer's Devil Theatre in Seattle.

**SHINSHIN YUDER TSAI (Assistant Director)** who previously assisted Oanh in the Rolling World Premiere, is thrilled to collaborate with this talented group of artists on such an exciting project. With a love for the arts and a passion for storytelling, Shinshin is committed to creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere in the rehearsal room while fostering a safe and supportive space for all members of the production team. As an added bonus, this show always makes Shinshin crave a bowl of Phở—with bruised Thai basil and all the meat cuts, especially extra tripe! Shinshin is excited to witness the growth and evolution of this show and to continue exploring the endless possibilities of theatre.

**LAURA TUFFLI (Props Designer; Assistant Stage Manager)** recently graduated from the University of Oregon, majoring in Theatre Arts and minoring in Music. They have spent their time in theatre focusing on costumes, wigs and makeup. Costuming credits include: *The 39 Steps*, *After the Revolution*, *12 Angry Jurors* (Pocket Playhouse); *Birds Flying Through* (LCC); assistant costume design for *Hay Fever* (University Theatre); makeup/wig design for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Tall Tale Players); and makeup/wig stylist and assistant stage manager for *Hedwig And The Angry Inch* (Oregon Contemporary Theatre). Laura is very excited to be a part of the show!

**ERIN WILLIS (Costume Designer)** has previously designed at Oregon Contemporary Theatre for: *Alabaster*, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, *Buyer and Cellar*, *Art*, *The Roommate*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *Fun Home*, *The 39 Steps*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Lucky Me*, *Clybourne Park*, *A Bright New Boise*, *Tribes*, *Next to Normal* and *Fahrenheit 451*. She graduated from the University of Oregon and completed MFA work in costume technology at the North Carolina School of the Arts. Additional credits include the Old Globe Theatre, Georgia Shakespeare Festival, North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, New York City Center and Broadway productions.



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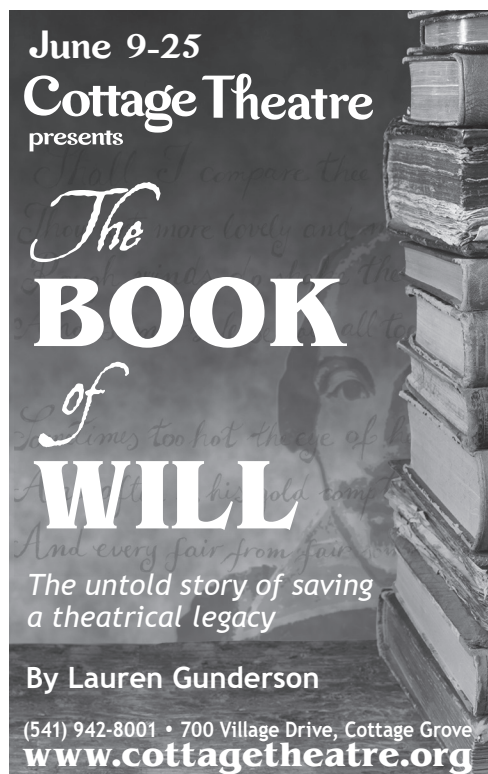
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**TYLER ANTHONY (*Master Electrician*)** joined Oregon Contemporary Theatre in August 2019. He is a stage electrician, lighting designer, stagehand and director. In addition to his work with OCT, Tyler is the touring electrician for Right Angle Entertainment and the Eugene Ballet and an IATSE local 675 member. Design credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *The Wolves*, *Boston Marriage*, *Treehouse* and *Winter Shorts*. Director credits include *Boston Marriage*, *Nightlight* and *Out of Joint*. He can be found working at OCT, The Hult Center, Matthew Knight Arena, Autzen Stadium, Hayward Field and Lane Community College.

**DAVID ARNOLD (*Production Assistant*)** is a Eugene-based actor. He was last seen onstage at Oregon Contemporary Theatre in *Witch* (Scratch) and *Good People* (Stevie). He studied acting at CWU and LCC, where he worked with director Tara Wibrew on *The Pillowman* (Tupolski) and appeared in *Angels in America* (Prior Walter). Other notable favorite roles include *She Kills Monsters* (Miles) and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Snoopy).



**AMY DUNN (Production Manager/Master Carpenter)** graduated from the UO with a BA in Theatre Arts and joined the staff of Oregon Contemporary Theatre shortly thereafter in August 2007 as the Master Carpenter. In 2019, Amy took on the additional role of Production Manager. Select design credits include: *Stop Kiss, Mud* (University Theatre); *The Explorers Club* (VLT); *King Lear* (SPA); and *Hello, Dolly!* (Lane Summer Musical Theatre). Amy's OCT design favorites include: *Witch, Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, Buried Child, Venus in Fur, A Bright New Boise, I and You, August: Osage County, boom, The Pillowman, Shipwrecked!* and *The Clean House*. In her spare time, Amy can be found cross stitching, gaming, or gushing over her adorable cats, Oskar and Shadow.

**CAMERON JACKSON (Marketing Manager)** is a poet and maker joining Oregon Contemporary Theatre in 2022. He has experience both on- and off-stage in the theatrical and filmed spaces; performance credits include *Scapin (Les Fourberies de Scapin, CSU Stanislaus)*, *Grantaire (Les Misérables, San Benito Stage Co.)* and *Indiana Jones (Flashback, Disneyland)*. Cameron's plays *Moving On* and *Dominant Species* were selected and performed at OCT as part of the Northwest Ten festival. When not backstage, Cameron can be found at home with his wife Laura (and their excessive pets). [camjaxn.com](http://camjaxn.com)

**CHRIS LEWIS (Sound Designer; Sound Engineer)** is a live performance sound technician and recording/mixing engineer, joining the staff at Oregon Contemporary Theatre in August 2022. Chris also works with George Relles Sound and IATSE 675 as a stagehand and a/v technician, and he can be found moving pianos with Carter Piano services. Chris started his professional audio career in Eugene at The Shedd Institute, where he was acting Technical Director, managing light, projection and sound design. Sound design credits include *Annie and White Christmas* (The Shedd) and live sound mixing for *Hedwig And The Angry Inch* (OCT). When not doing shows or moving pianos, Chris enjoys playing guitar and soccer (not at the same time), or listening to music or a good story.

**MARY WETHERBEE (Box Office Manager/Volunteer Coordinator)** began her involvement with theatre in high school where she acted in several plays. She holds a BA from Penn State in Social Work. Mary's acting credits at Oregon Contemporary Theatre include *Life in the Theater* and the Northwest Ten plays *Paper is Dope* and *Savage & Strawberry*. She has also performed monologues with Actors Table and is active in the Eugene Shakespeare Club and Reader's Theater.



**CRAIG WILLIS (Producing Artistic Director)** has been at the helm of Oregon Contemporary Theatre since 2003. Craig has an MFA in Directing and a PhD in Dramatic Literature/Theory from the University of Oregon. In 2008, he received an Oregon Arts Commission fellowship to train with Anne Bogart and SITI Company. Craig's OCT directing credits include: John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask's *Hedwig And The Angry Inch*, Jonathan Tolins' *Buyer & Cellar*, Jen Silverman's *The Roommate*, Edward Albee's *At Home at the Zoo*, Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori's *Fun Home*, David Ives's *Venus in Fur*, Steve Yockey's *Blackberry Winter*, Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*, Aaron Posner's *Stupid Fucking Bird*, Nathan Alan Davis's *Dontrell*, *Who Kissed the Sea*, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Lauren Gunderson's *I And You*, Bruce Norris' *Clybourne Park*, Nina Raine's *Tribes*, Adam Gwon's *Ordinary Days*, Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt's *Next To Normal*, Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx and Jeff Whitty's *Avenue Q*, Geoffrey Nauffts's *Next Fall*, Itamar Moses's *The Four of Us*, Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Joe Calarco's *Shakespeare's R & J*, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage*, Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's *Assassins*, Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*, David Auburn's *Proof* and Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. His scenic designs for OCT include: *The Flick*, *Becky's New Car*, *Ordinary Days*, *The Seagull* and *I Am My Own Wife*.



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