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AN ARTIST BIO

MARSHA GINSBERG (Set and Costumes) Interdisciplinary practice extends from scenic and costume design for the stage, to the mediums of photography and installation art. She studied Theater Design at NYU, Tisch School of the Arts, and Visual Arts at The Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and the Cooper Union School of Art. Previous designs for the UR include sets and costumes for The Puzzle Locker by W. David Hancock, and The Lower Depths by Maxim Gorki, both directed by Nigel Maister. Her work in theater often entails designing new plays. Recent designs include Bleakhouse, created in collaboration with director/video Heiko Kalmbach, “Crash! Boom! Baul!” Festival, Theaterhaus, Jena, Germany; Kafeneion directed by Dimitri Kourtakis, Athens International Festival, Greece; Telephone by Ariane Reines, dir: Ken Rus Schmoll, Foundry Theater, NY; Knock-out, Katerina Schmitt (based on Gerhard Richter painting cycle), dir: Heiko Kalmbach, Theaterhaus Jena, and Thalia Theater, Hamburg. Work in opera includes collaborations with directors Roy Rallo: Don Pasquale, Nationaltheater Weimar, Germany; La finta giardiniera, San Francisco Opera Center; Bluebeard’s Castle and Elektra, at Long Beach Opera; and with Christopher Alden: Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Theater Basel, Switzerland; Imerino, Glimmerglass Opera, NY; Carmen, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Germany; In Mahler’s Shadow, with EOS Orchestra, New York City; and Three One-Acts, San Francisco Opera Center. As a visual artist she has participated in solo and group exhibitions including Pavlov’s Lab and other rooms, a solo exhibit at Magnus Gallery Berlin, and “Design Life Now”, the National Design Triennial, the Cooper Hewitt Museum, NY, ICA Boston and the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, Texas. Recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts/Theater Communications Group Design Fellowship. Upcoming: Lascivious Something, by Sheila Callahan, Woman Project, NY; Habit conceived by David Levine with a play by Jason Grote. Watemill Foundation, NY; Sets and Costumes for the U.S. premiere of Wolfgang Rihm’s opera, Proserpina, Spoleto Festival, Charleston.

THOMAS DUNN (Lighting) designs lighting for architecture, dance, theater, and visual art venues in the US and abroad. Other University affiliations include: Auburn University, Bard College, Florida State University, and Fordham University. New York City company credits include works with: The Civilians, Gone Missing and Paris Commune; DD Dorvillier/human future dance corps: Coming Out of the Night With Names, No Change or “freedom is a psycho-kinetic skill,” Notthing Is Importannt (for which he received a Bessie in 2007). Choreography, a Prologue for the Apocalypse of Understanding, Get Ready!: Sens Production/Noëmie Lafrance productions: Noir, Agra, Melt, Rapture and Home; Trajal Harrell: Notes On Less Than Zero, Before Intemission: Shovel, and Quarter for the End of Time. Thomas is the recipient of a 2009 Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Lighting Design on The Little Dog Laughed. The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. He was educated at Bennington College and Yale School of Drama. Thomas is an Associate Artist of the UR International Theatre Program

Will Pickens (Sound) was privileged to have designed the UR International Theatre Program’s first musical, Hello Again in 2008, Andy Bragen’s The Hairy Dutchman in 2009, and The Illusion both at URITP and Geva Theatre Center. He was the Audio Engineer and Resident Sound Associated at Geva Theatre Center for four years and was fortunate to have designed many shows there including Cabaret. A Marvelous Party, Key West, and That was Then. Recently he has worked on Broadway: Present Laughter (Roundabout Theatre), Off-Broadway: I Never Sang for My Father, Heroes, and Beasley’s Christmas Party (Keen Company), Red and Brown Water, Marcus or the Secret of Sweet, Why Torture is Wrong, and the People who Love Them, and Emergency-See (The Public Theatre), Tell Out My Soul, Green Girls (NYC Summer Play Festival), A Dangerous Personality (The Women’s Project), Something You Did (Primary Stages), and The Overwhelming (Roundabout Theatre). Regional credits: Comedy of Errors, Cymbeline, and Macbeth (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), St. Nicholas, Merton of the Movies, The Hollow, and Mary Me A Little (Dorset Theatre Festival). He was also the front-of-house mixer for The Adding Machine: a Musical. www.willpickens.com.

a note about the program

Program content is compiled by the production’s Assistant Directors, Diana Hartnett and Christine M. Rose, and edited by Nigel Maister. For a complete list of sources used and credits, please contact the Theatre Program. The program and its printing is supported in part by the UR English Department (“The Project”).

the university of rochester international theatre program presents

CRIMINAL GENIUS

by george f. walker

Directed by nigel maister

set & costume design by marsha ginsberg

lighting design by thomas dunn

sound design by will pickens

video design by kevin brice

production staff

production stage manager (criminal genius) ............................... brian lobenstein

production stage manager (featuring loretta) .......................... anna kroup

assistant stage managers (criminal genius) ................................ camber hansen-kars/props

assistant stage managers (featuring loretta) ............................ jessica nicosia/costumes

sound design ................................................................. jimpangler/sound

franny swanson/run crew .................................................. rebecca weiss/lights

assistant stage managers (featuring loretta) ............................ kevin brice/sound

cassandra donatelli/lights .................................................... juan de la guardia duran/run crew

lydia jiminez/props ............................................................ emily morris/costumes

master electrician ............................................................ david moiseev

asst. master electrician ...................................................... erica greenbaum

audiovisual engineer ......................................................... bruce stockton

asst. audiovisual engineer ................................................... alex quinones-bangs

asst. lighting designer ...................................................... jeff englander

asst. director (criminal genius) ............................................. diana hartnett

asst. director (featuring loretta) ............................................. christine m. rose

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canada
George F. Walker is one of Canada’s most prolific and widely produced playwrights. He has received nine Chalmers Awards, five Dora Awards, and three Governor General’s Awards. He is also the recipient of the Order of Canada. His plays have met with critical and popular success in hundreds of productions worldwide. They have been translated into German, French, Hebrew, Turkish, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarian, Mandarin, and Japanese.

In 1997, Suburban Motel—6 plays located in the same motel room—premiered in Canada under Walker’s direction at the Factory Theatre in Toronto, and in New York at Rattlestick Productions. Since then, individual plays from the series have had numerous productions throughout the USA and the UK and all six plays were presented at the Schaubühne in Berlin starting October 2004 and also received over twenty productions in the rest of Germany during the subsequent year. All six plays were in Munich at the Bavarian State Theatre starting in October 2005.

George F. Walker’s latest play, Heaven, opened to rave reviews in January 2000 at Canadian Stage Company in Toronto and has since had successful US productions at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in Washington, DC and at Yale Repertory Theatre Company in New Haven, CT. It has also had various productions in Germany, including at the Theatre Kammerspiele in Magdeburg, the Theater Schleswig and the Landestheater Wuerttemberg-Hohenzollern, (LTT), Tuebingen.

In addition to his playwriting, George F. Walker has written extensively for television and radio. Included in his list of credits are Creative Consultant to CBS’s “Due South” and to Ken Finkleman’s “Newsroom” for CBC. Along with writing partner Dani Roim, George F. Walker is also the writer and creator of This is Wonderland for CBC TV, The Line on the Movie Network as well as the feature film Niagara Motel based on three of the plays from his Suburban Motel cycle.

Most of George F. Walker’s plays have been published including Heaven, Suburban Motel, Nothing Sacred, Criminals in Love, Zastrozzi, Love and Anger, Better Living and Escape from Happiness. George F. Walker’s latest play And So It Goes premiered at the Factory Theatre in February 2010.

According to one advocacy website, “Japan is a transit and destination country for human trafficking”, though it is by no means the only such location. “White slavery” often refers to the abduction and enslavement of women as prostitutes, but can also refer to child slavery, compulsory marriage, and nonsexual forced labor. “White slaves” are frequently taken from Eastern European and East Asian nations, but pass through Western countries with surprising frequency. In March of 2010, one Florida man was arrested for allegedly trafficking women for prostitution, and another from Minnesota was arrested for doing the same with his own wife, under threats of violence against their child. Still, the fear surrounding this issue is exceptional, and is in large part rooted in the sexual repression of the Victorian era. In 1910, the White Slave Trade Act was passed supposedly as a measure of protection for trafficked women, but was in actuality used as a method of subjective moral policing on a host of subjects until its amendment in 1978. Racial concerns played a role as well, creating fears of a savage, dark-skinned other. Western distress surrounding the idea of possible white subjugation to such a creature, even as non-western societies were themselves persecuted, exacerbated irrational terror over the “white slave” trade. As colonialism and exploration continued, such xenophobia and racism revealed itself in all parts of Western society, and in subtle ways continues to hold influence and foster fear today.
While bear attacks are by no means common, human behavior has increased their frequency. Campers are often the culprits, leaving out meals, trash, or toiletry items which easily draw bears into areas where they clash with human activity. When animals identify humans with food, they become unafraid. In the case of bears, this can result in attacks geared towards obtaining this food. If a camper or hiker finds themselves in a situation of danger, the best advantage is to know the type of attack. The Grizzly Bear Outreach Project distinguishes between “defensive” and “aggressive” attacks. In the former, playing dead is advocated. In the latter, fighting back—strongly, and focusing on the eyes and face—is generally the only accepted recourse.

Menthol cigarettes are stereotypically considered cheap and dainty, offering the smoker a cooling sensation. The Spud Brand tobacco factory of Ohio produced the first menthol cigarettes in 1924. The ubiquitous Kool brand of menthol was first created in 1933. The popularity of menthols has grown, and they currently constitute a quarter of the American cigarette market, with Kool, Salem and Newport brands dominating. Menthol smokers take in more nicotine and carbon monoxide per cigarette, so although they might smoke fewer cigarettes per day, they find it more difficult to quit than non-menthol smokers.

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An Interview with George F. Walker by featuring Loretta, asst. director, Christine Rose

What inspired you to start writing?

George F. Walker

I don’t know if it’s inspiration so much as finding something you enjoy doing, and then you do more of it, and then you find that you can actually make money at it, and so you do it even more. So, it’s kind of like finding a median of what you can do and what they’ll let you do.

CR

What were you doing before that?

GFW

I did lots of stuff. I moved from job to job. I had been on the police force for a year. I had done all sorts of things. And I had always been writing.

CR

I’ve noticed some recurring themes in your writing, like crime and sexuality and economic trouble. What would you say influenced your decision to write about those?

GFW

Oh, the whole world. You learn a little and are attracted to what’s going on in the world, and things have an impact on you. You learn about those things that are troubling you, and you have some kind of response to it, and that informs your work.

CR

Featuring Loretta seems to deal with serious things, but it does so in a really humorous and accessible way.

GFW

Well, you know, there it is: what do men want from this woman, and what does she want from them? I try not to be too heavy-handed about it, and to have a little bit of fun. It’s a comedy. It should be funny. [laughs]

CR

What was your favorite show to write?

GFW

I don’t know. I enjoy writing. And if I don’t enjoy writing plays, I stop. Ultimately, I’ve liked writing them all. Some were harder, and some came more easily. They all have their own qualities.

CR

I just saw your new play, And So It Goes. It seemed a little bit darker than most of the ones in Suburban Motel.

GFW

I don’t know if it’s any darker than The End of Civilization or Problem Child or Adult Entertainment. But it’s more personal in some ways, and it’s more of a little bit more painful in some ways, if that’s what you mean by dark. Maybe the world is darker. I don’t know. Some of the things the characters are dealing with... if, by dark, you mean troubling, yeah, I agree.

CR

Of course, I particularly liked the daughter in that play.

GFW

Well, I did a TV show appearance a few years ago. It was about the criminal courts, and one of the parts of the criminal court was the mental health court. I saw a lot of schizophrenic people. That still haunts me. We have had some very good responses to the play and some heartening involvement from the schizophrenic societies up here.

CR

What was your favorite show to write?

GFW

And So it Goes.

CR

I don’t know. I just kept working on Loretta, trying to make her more human.

GFW

Maybe the world is darker, I don’t know. Some of the things the characters are dealing with... if, by dark, you mean troubling, yeah, I agree.

CR

Would you mind if I asked you just one more question?

GFW

Sure, go ahead.

CR

When we were first starting to work on Featuring Loretta, we noticed a lot of differences between the early script and this revised edition that we purchased. Could you say anything about those changes?

GFW

Well, sometimes you have to go back and revisit some plays more often. I just kept working on Loretta, trying to make her more human. I don’t feel that they’re major changes. They’re just line alterations, and a few of the characters are different.

CR

You know, what do men want from this woman, and what does she want from them? I try not to be too heavy-handed about it, and to have a little bit of fun. It’s a comedy. It should be funny. [laughs]

CR

Thank you so much for talking to me, I really appreciate it.

GFW

Thank you for the interest, and good luck!
Afriedal run down motel room on the outskirts of a major city

Criminal Genius runs approximately 1 hours and 20 minutes. It is performed without intermission.

Please note:

Theatrical gunshots are used in this production.


**CAST**

**Criminal Genius**

Rolly ........................................ John Amir-Fazli
Stevie ......................................... Ross Brenneman
Phillie ....................................... W. Spencer Klubben III
Shirley ....................................... Jessica Chinelli
Amanda ...................................... Anna Kroup

**Canadian Theatre**

Though just on the other side of our border, the work of indigenous Canadian playwrights is little known in the United States. But a distinct, vibrant, and diverse theatre scene, both of original Canadian plays and established theatrical work, is present above the 49th parallel.

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, is internationally acclaimed, not only for its productions of Shakespeare, but also for musicals and plays from the classical repertoire. Productions run from April to November, attracting a large audience from Canada and also from Western New York, Michigan, Ohio and even further abroad. The festival uses the talents of many of Canada, Britain, and America’s finest actors. Another major Canadian arts festival is the Shaw Festival, located in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. The second-largest repertory theatre company in North America, the Shaw Festival presents the work of George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) as well as by playwrights writing anywhere in the world during, or about, the era of Shaw’s lifetime.

Two other significant theatre festivals are Toronto’s Harbourfront Festival, which features international theatre works in addition to Canadian theatre, and the largely French-language Festival TransAmériques which specializes in new works in theatre and dance.

Some of Canada’s top regional theatres include the Théâtre de Nouveau Monde (Montreal), the Monument National (Montreal), the Citadel Theatre (Edmonton, Alberta), the Neptune Theatre (Halifax, Nova Scotia), Le Théâtre du Petit Bonheur (Toronto), National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Saidye Bronfman Centre (Côte Saint Luc, Quebec), Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui (Montreal), and the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company (British Columbia). Additionally, many smaller alternative theatres exist across the country.

Among the country’s top theatres is The Factory Theatre, a company that focuses exclusively on new Canadian work for the stage. Almost all of George F. Walker’s plays have premiered here, including the Suburban Motel cycle.

Other important Canadian playwrights include Michel Tremblay and Robert Lepage. Tremblay’s most famous play, Les Belles Soeurs, was controversial for its use of j'oual language (a French Canadian dialect prevalent among the Quebeccois working class), and for its presentation of women, sex, and abortion. An open homosexual and Quebeccois separatist, Tremblay’s works reflect his socio-political beliefs and have had a great impact on Canadian theatre. He has received the Prix Victor-Morin (1974), the Prix France-Québec (1984), the Chalmers Award (1986), and the Molson Prize (1994). In 1999 he accepted, despite some nationalist Quebeccois disapproval, a Governor General’s Award for the Performing Arts. Most recently Tremblay has been granted a Chalmers Award and a Dora Mavor Moore Award.

An actor, writer, filmmaker and director, Lepage is from Quebec City, Quebec. As a teenager he struggled with depression, and turned to drama classes to conquer his shyness. In 1994 he founded Deus Ex Machina, a multidisciplinary production company. The company has achieved international renown with shows such as Needles and Opium, The Far Side of the Moon (in which he juxtaposed the Cold War competition of the Americans and the Soviets in the Space Race with the story of two Quebeccois brothers), the multi-hour Seven Streams of the River Ota, Lipsynch (a work that spans 70 years and explores the voice as a metaphor for human expression and interaction), and a one man Hamlet (starring Lepage himself). Elinor. His work has won numerous awards, including four trophies at the Gala des Masques, a Time Out Award, and London’s prestigious Evening Standard Award.

In addition to general government support for the Arts, Canada has several organizations dedicated to emerging playwrights and their work. The Playwrights Guild of Canada was created in 1971 in order to promote original Canadian work for the theatre. The organization publishes plays under the imprint, Playwrights Canada Press.

Another organization promoting Canadian theatrical work is the Canadian Association for Theatre Research which works to foster theatre research by preserving and interpreting past theatrical performances. In all, Canada boasts a flourishing theatrical scene—one that has steadily grown in international stature.
As an alternative to hotels, the first Auto Camps try into crisis and caused an evolution away from such options. However the Great Depression plunged the hospitality industry. Women tourists and their children, since the man of the house usually had a full time job and could not vacation with them. Different hotels catered to different tastes and social classes. Downtown commercial hotels were mainly for men, while resort hotels were the first to attract automobile tourists and well-heeled railroad passengers. Vacation hotels were for women tourists and their children, since the man of the house usually had a full time job and could not vacation with them. However the Great Depression plunged the hospitality industry into crisis and caused an evolution away from such options.

As an alternative to hotels, the first Auto Camps were created—essentially a form of camping by the road in your car. Auto camps were followed by Tourist Homes—private homes that rented out rooms to travelers. Some offered meals and garage space for an extra fee. Soon after came the first official motels: Cabin Camps. These camps were a mix of both auto camps and tourist homes—an assembly of buildings arranged in such a way that the rooms opened out either into a common area or a parking lot. Some had rooms with specific parking spaces or garages attached.

Cabin Camps soon developed into 'Cottages'—more durable lodging structures that were winterized. Cottage Courts offered a bathroom and a closet and were geometrically arranged around a 'court of grass.' The next popular form of motel was the Motor Court. This was essentially the same as the Cottage Court, except that the room units were all under a single roof, forming a single building. Some offered long porches, coffee shops, and restaurants, and were often shaped around an indoor court that frequently contained a swimming pool. Following World War II the words 'Motel' and 'Autel' became synonyms for Motor Court.

In the 1950's Motor Inns became popular. These were located in metropolitan areas and were larger and more luxurious than motels. They contained two to three stories of accommodations that surrounded a courtyard and had expanded indoor public space with dining rooms, cocktail lounges, meeting rooms, and gift shops. Two successful examples of the motor inn concept are the Holiday Inn and Best Western chains of motels.

Motels in America

T
developments remained an obstacle to seamless integration of travel
and accommodation.

Although in the 1920's and 1930's Highway Hotels were unsuccessful, their popularity increased in the 1950's. These hotels contained all their rooms in a high-rise structure with central hallways, and were located near highways instead of in the crowded city area. The bulk of the public space was on the first floor.

As the years progressed, consolidation of businesses and the expansion of the highway system led to the establishment of chain motels, with identifiable logos, color schemes, and building designs. The first chain of motels was the Alamo Plaza Hotel Courts in the 1930's. Independently owned branches were overtaken in 1950 by the Holiday Inn. Some of the most trusted brands today include: Comfort Inn, EconoLodge, Holiday Inn, and Super 8. Although constantly changing and evolving over time, motels with their generically bland furnishings and bare bones amenities, still symbolize the mobile, transient and impermanent nature of a society perpetually on the move.
Suburban Motel, the collection from which Featuring Loretta and Criminal Genius are taken, does not consist of a series of plays in sequence so much as six separate episodes in the life of a room. This collection could easily seem disjointed, and the connection between the plays obscure were it not for the strong ties Walker establishes between the worlds of each play. Rather than rely on continuous plot development through all six, particular themes are woven throughout the work as a whole, and certain characters recur. Sexuality and violence are presented as common parts of life in every play, and the difficulties of unemployment and issues with romantic relationships are frequently represented. In a more overarching sense though, all of these elements tie into a larger theme relating to the power of money.

Evidence of financial tensions begins with the setting—each set of characters seems to come to the motel for some reason related, at least partially, to their lack of funds. Henry and Lily from The End of Civilization move into the room as they search for employment opportunities after Henry loses his job. Eventually, the need for money and the tension in the marriage cause the two to react in different ways: Lily begins prostituting herself, and Henry goes on a serial killing spree. Reducing their actions to one sentence oversimplifies them and emphasizes their antisocial qualities, but Walker's representation of the couple is far more complex. He is able to bring out, not only humor and sympathy, but also a great understanding of the myriad reasons behind his characters' decisions.

The audience develops this understanding about Walker's other, unsavory characters too. We are able to comprehend fully why Denise, of Problem Child and Risk Everything, buries a woman alive. We can understand Jane, of Adult Entertainment, when she tries to explain her reasons for the concealment of a teenager's wrongful death at the hands of policemen. We identify without much judgment with Lorrie's decision to make a sex film, just as we are able to see some reason for Amanda's desire to murder her father. The understanding Walker develops in the audience is what truly gives the plays depth—his characters are not merely money-obsessed, avaricious gluttons. They do not care for money itself, but rather for what money can allow them to accomplish.

In most of the cases that pass through the motel, money is a means of gaining agency. Lorrie constantly talks about her "options"; exploring different ways of getting money and getting out of her situation. For Lorrie, money is the equivalent of independence. As she explains, "Money is the only thing that expands your options...it's not love or respect or intelligence or hard work or even the way I look. The world doesn't give a shit about any of those things if they're not also connected to the ability to make money." What Lorrie is explaining in this line is the source of money's power—the fact that it allows its possessor to do what they wish and accomplish their goals.

For the characters in Suburban Motel, these goals vary greatly. Providing for a family is a frequent priority, but sometimes the aim is sexual conquest, career promotion, or revenge. For Carol of Risk Everything, gambling is more important than the lives or thousands of dollars she plays with. For Lily, of The End of Civilization, proving her ability to make money, even through prostitution, is a more desirable result of her actions than the money itself. For Criminal Genius's Amanda Castle, revenge is her ultimate goal, the destruction of valuable property merely a side effect. We understand the ravenous desire for money without judgment, because we comprehend the underlying longing on which it is based, different for each character but in every case identifiable within ourselves. It is this that makes Suburban Motel such a deep, yet accessible and enjoyable collection: we are able to step out of our lives into a completely different, somewhat outrageous, yet possible, situation, and learn to accept the unacceptable.