
The Women Computer Astronomers at Harvard College Observatory

In 1885 the director of the Harvard Observatory, Professor Edward Pickering, began a mammoth project to record and catalog the “spectra” of all stars down to the 9th magnitude. After telling his male staff, “my Scottish maid could do a better job,” he hired his maid and other women to do the tedious “clerical” task of examining, recording, and cataloging the hundreds of dots of light on each glass plate. Many of these women had studied mathematics, physics, and astronomy at highly respected women’s colleges, and had hopes of utilizing the Harvard telescopes. But they were not allowed to touch the telescopes, and to add injury to insult, they were paid 25 cents per hour -- a small fraction of that paid to the male staff. The women were seldom given credit for their efforts or their discoveries of planetary nebulae or other astronomical phenomenon found on the plates. From 1890 until 1940, Harvard Observatory’s “women computers” catalogued and analyzed tens of thousands of star plates. Three of these computer women, the main characters in *Silent Sky*, became famous astronomers.

WILLIAMINA FLEMING (1857 – 1911) was born in Dundee Scotland and emigrated to America with her husband in 1878. After he abandoned her while she was pregnant, she worked as a maid for Pickering, who recognized her intellect and, in 1881, hired her to analyze and record spectra of stars on photographic plates taken with the Harvard telescopes. Williamina catalogued over 10,000 stars and discovered 59 gaseous nebula. She also discovered 310 variable stars and 10 novae and developed a scheme to classify stars based on color. She became the first woman to hold the title of “curator” in astronomy and the first American woman to be elected to the Royal Astronomical Society of London.

HENRIETTA LEAVITT (1868 – 1921) was born in Lancaster, MA. She attended Oberlin College and graduated in 1892 from what later became Radcliffe College. She began her association with the Harvard Observatory in 1895 as a volunteer. After taking time off to teach and to travel, she returned to the observatory, this time as a paid staff member. While studying glass plates as part of Pickering’s ambitious project, Ms. Leavitt became interested in pulsating stars, known as Cepheid variables, that vary in brightness in periods ranging from a few days to several months. Her findings about the relationships between the brightness of variables and their periods of luminosity provided the foundation that enabled Edwin Hubble and other noted astronomers to measure the distance of stars beyond our solar system. In 1925, a senior Swedish mathematician wanted to nominate Miss Leavitt for the 1926 Nobel Prize in Physics, but she had died five years earlier, and the prize is not offered posthumously.

ANNIE JUMP CANNON (1863 – 1941) was born in Dover, DE. Annie graduated from Wellesley College in 1884 with studies in physics and astronomy. After traveling for a few years and becoming skilled in photography and music, Annie returned to Wellesley to further her astronomy studies. In 1895 she enrolled at Radcliffe to study astronomy under Professor Pickering. In 1896 she was hired as Pickering’s assistant at the Observatory. Although she too cataloged star magnitude and position, Annie’s most notable achievement was organizing stars into stellar classes: “O, B, A, F, G, K, M” based on their temperature. Many of you may remember the mnemonic “Oh Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me”! Annie holds the record of classifying more than 350,00 stars! Her stellar classification system is still being used today. Annie became Oxford University’s first woman to receive an honorary doctorate of science.

– KAREN ELLIOTT



JANUARY 11 TO FEBRUARY 2

2018/2019 season



THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

January has always been a time for reflection and renewal; an opportunity to look forward to what the new year will bring and how we can be better moving forward – both personally and professionally. Lots of people are making resolutions this time of year. Some resolutions fall by the wayside quickly, but others – those that have a clear goal in sight – shine brightly on the horizon; guiding us onward.

Colonial Players is no different in that regard. We strive to make each show – each performance – better than the last. We listen to our members and volunteers – and you, our patrons – to gauge how well we’re doing. We tweak and make adjustments on our process and policies to make sure everything is running smoothly and on track. Change can be difficult, but we don’t let that get in our way. After all, we have our goal right in front of us – keeping you, our audience, entertained and challenged.

What are your goals for the new year? Is there something you’ve always wanted to try, but haven’t yet? What are your unique skills and talents and how can you share them with others in 2019? We are always looking for new friends who want to help us with our playmaking; but even if this isn’t the right place for you (yet!) – I hope you will share your gifts elsewhere and challenge yourself to grow and meet new friends throughout the year.

Thank you for coming, and enjoy the show!

– SHIRLEY PANEK

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Gwen Morton
Producer.....Jennifer Cooper
Assistant Director/Stage Manager.....Mariana Mahoney
Assistant Stage Manager.....Dave Carter
Sound Designer.....Richard Atha-Nicholls
Set Designer.....Heather Quinn
Costume Designer.....Carrie Brady
Properties Designer.....Peter Branscomb
Lighting Designer.....Ernie Morton
Hair/Makeup Designer.....Beth Starnes
Lead Carpenter.....Ted Yablonski
Carpenters.....Tom Dicken, Norm James, Ken Kaiser, Bob Mumper, Jim Robinson
Projections.....Eric Hufford
Technical Consultant.....Wes Bedsworth
Lighting Programmer.....Jenn Smith
Set Decoration.....Laurie Nolan
Floor and Set Painting.....Laurie Nolan, Heather Quinn
Assistant Properties Designer.....Karen Elliott
Lighting/Sound Technician.....Lyana Morton
Stage Crew.....Hannah Houseley
Play Consultant.....Joan Townshend
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Dr. David H. DeVorkin, Senior Curator in the Space History Department
of the National Air and Space Museum
Dr. Ellen Stofan, Director of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum
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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

During this production of *Silent Sky*, you will hear references to the Draper Catalogue of Stellar Spectra, the Harvard Spectral Classification System, and the Hubble Space Telescope. What you won't hear about are the Fleming Catalog, the Cannon Classification System of Stars, and the Leavitt telescope, even though the work of Williamina Paton Stevens Fleming, Annie Jump Cannon, and Henrietta Swan Leavitt made each of these remarkable achievements possible. Thanks to playwright Lauren Gunderson, you and audiences like you around the country are learning about the work of these remarkable women. If you would like to learn more, I highly recommend the book *The Glass Universe* by

Dava Sobel, which tells the story of these and other dedicated astronomers of the Harvard Observatory. The actors and I would not have been able to tell this story so entertainingly or effectively without the work of a stellar (pun intended) staff and crew. I attempted to give special recognition to each of them and found I had exceeded my 600 word limit by about 150 words. Please look at all of the names listed under Production Staff and know they all have my undying gratitude. And in the words of the late Casey Kasem, "Keep your feet on the ground and keep reaching for the stars."

— GWEN MORTON

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



GWEN MORTON grew up wanting to be Liza Minnelli. As she became older, she recognized many obstacles to this ambition. One, she grew up in a small town in Arkansas rather than New York. Two, she never took dance lessons. But when she went to college at Arkansas Tech University, she jumped into the voice and drama programs, finishing with a B.A. in Speech and Theater. She thought she was ready to fulfill her ambition at the University of Arkansas when she read a casting notice for Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*. Failing to get the part, she realized it was time for a new ambition.

Gwen began directing while working on her M.A. in Drama at the U. of A. She has since alternated acting and directing, with an occasional credit as stage manager, five years as a board member of Juneau-Douglas Little Theater in Juneau, AK, and her recent going-on-five-year stint as assistant director for the Broadneck Dramatics Guild at Broadneck High School. (She would like to express special thanks to Kevin Whewell, head of the Dramatics Guild, for not only putting up with her but continuing to show her how

much there is to learn about this theater stuff. Thanks for being an outstanding teacher to your students and to your assistant.)

Her acting credits include Mrs. Higgins in *My Fair Lady* (at the advanced age of 24); four seasons at Perseverance Theater in Douglas, AK (including the world premiere production of *King Island Christmas*); and Mrs. Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol* at The Colonial Players. There were also several appearances as an ensemble member and a few that actually weren't in musicals. In 1999, she was named best director for *Steel Magnolias*, which was named best production at the Alaska Association of Community Theatre Festival. She made her Colonial Players directing debut in 2008 with *The Curious Savage*, followed in 2012 with Neil Simon's *Chapter Two*.

She is currently a substitute teacher for Anne Arundel County Public Schools. While Gwen wouldn't trade her husband Ernie, daughter Lyann, son Sam, cat Jamie, or dog Malcolm (RIP Cadhla) for Liza's Tonys, her Emmy, her Oscar, or any of her other awards, the next time she grows up she wants to be Carrie Mulligan.

The Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the generous bequest from Roland Riley, a longtime patron whose gift helps ensure the future economic viability of our theater.



The Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the recent gift from the Donald M. Reed Living Trust that made possible the critical upgrade of our stage lighting control system.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

LAUREN M. GUNDERSON is a playwright, screenwriter, and short story author from Atlanta, GA. She received her BA in English/Creative Writing at Emory University, and her MFA in Dramatic Writing at NYU Tisch, where she was also a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. She was named the most produced playwright in America by *American Theatre Magazine* in 2017, was awarded the 2016 Lanford Wilson Award from the Dramatist Guild, the 2016 Otis Gurnsey Award for Emerging Writer, and was awarded the prestigious 2014

Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for her play, *I and You*. She co-authored the play *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* with Margot Melcon, which is also one of the most produced plays in America for 2017-18. Ms. Gunderson is the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award, the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award. She is also a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's 3-Year Residency with Marin Theatre Company.

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

For *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, we will transport you to a time and place - not of the doublets, corsets, and pumpkin pants of Ye Olde England - but of the shoulder pads, big hair, and Izod shirts of the bedroom community of 1980s Windsor....Connecticut.

This Shakespearean comedic farce, which will run from February 22 through March 23, will feature all the music, fashion, and cultural references of the 1980s, but with the language and characters that we love. The well-to-do Page and Ford families live a comfortably suburban life, confronting minor problems typical of the upwardly mobile classes. Then Falstaff enters. This down-on-his luck Wall Street trader has completely missed the bull market and is looking for other sources of income. He hatches a plan to ensnare Mrs. Ford AND Mrs. Page in a love trap, and extort money from them in order to re-bankroll his former lifestyle. But the "Real Housewives of Windsor Connecticut" find out and devise all sorts of tricks and torments for Falstaff.

Shakespeare and Shtick! After over a 20-year absence from The Colonial Players...
The Bard is Back!

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WHAT'S GOING ON AT CP.



THE STAFF (continued)

decided to return to her roots and participate in the local theater scene, bringing her to *Silent Sky*. She is incredibly grateful for the graciousness and warm welcome she has received from everyone and looks forward to being a part of CP productions to come!



ERNIE MORTON
(Lighting Designer)

Ernie is usually found lurking in the shadows waiting for the next scene change as a stage manager for a dozen shows, most recently with *A Christmas Carol* and next month on to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Now he is bringing the light. Ernie wants to thank Gwen for trusting him with making her vision real. He also wants to thank Richard and Eric for being such great partners in making the technical element of this show spectacular.



LAURIE NOLAN
(Set Decoration)

Laurie is very pleased to have assisted Heather in her cosmic vision of the set and stage floor for *Silent Sky*. We always swear we are not going to do "wood graining" **AGAIN**, and then here we are! Wood is all around us, and we laugh at how many times we cover the same wood furniture with a different layer of "faux bois"! Who knows how many layers are on the floor?



HEATHER QUINN
(Set Designer/Set and Floor Painter)

Heather has appeared on stage and behind the scenes in many CP productions, but few have drawn upon both her degrees in geology and fine arts like this one. "Thanks to Gwen for the opportunity to design and the forbearance of the actors who, in rehearsals at the annex, had to imagine a lot of what was to come. My gratitude goes to the many people who helped bring the design to reality, but most of all to Laurie Nolan, whose artistic talents and creativity served as the brightest of stars in bringing the many facets of Henrietta Leavitt's universe to the stage at CP. Special thanks and appreciation go to my

former classmate Dr. Ellen Stofan, now director of the National Air and Space Museum(!), who recommended Dr. David DeVorkin, an expert and author on space science history, as a potential speaker for our theater forum."



BETH STARNES
(Hair and Makeup Designer)

Beth has assisted in countless theater productions and enjoys working behind the scenes. Her most recent CP credits include costumes for *The Babylon Line* and co-hair/makeup designer for *Nine* (WATCH nominated). One of her favorite credits is animal costume designer for 2nd Star's *Children of Eden*, which won the 2014 WATCH Award for Best Costume Design in a Musical. In real life, Beth is the librarian for Southern High School, where she is passionate about digital citizenship and teen literacy. Most importantly, she is mother to three wonderful young adults: Stephanie, Austin, and Daniel (her singer/actor who started all this). Beth would like to thank Gwen for inviting her to this special production, and as always, her husband, Jeff, for his unwavering support of her theater endeavors.



THE STAFF



RICHARD ATHA-NICHOLLS (Sound Designer)

Richard is happy to be back at The Colonial Players designing sound for *Silent Sky*. He has previously engineered or designed sound for numerous productions, primarily at CP and Laurel Mill Playhouse. His sound design has garnered two WATCH nominations. As well as designing sound, Richard has appeared on area stages, and in his spare time he helps run Discworld conventions. Occasionally he has been known to direct. Love to C, A & P. Always in my heart, O.



CARRIE BRADY (Costume Designer)

Carrie is happy to be costuming for The Colonial Players again after costuming *Sherlock's Last Case* (WATCH Award nominated), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *City of Conversation*, and *33 Variations* (WATCH Award nominated). Previously, she costumed for Spirited Productions, the Moonlight Troupers/The Theatre at AACC, and Bay Theatre Company. Outside the wardrobe area, Carrie appeared on stage in *Shiloh Rules* at CP, and she enjoys helping out at her alma mater, St. Mary's High School Theater, as their new set designer and decorator. All this theater fun gives Carrie something to do when she's not working at the Library of the Department of Legislative Services or diving headfirst into another new geeky fandom. Many thanks to her family, especially to her husband and dog for putting up with all the time she's not at home while costuming!



PETER BRANSCOMBE (Properties Designer)

This is Peter's fourth production with The Colonial Players. Previously, he worked on the productions of *Chapter Two*, *Inventing van Gogh*, and *Private Lives*.



JENNIFER COOPER (Producer)

Jennifer recently made her Colonial Players mainstage directorial debut with *The Babylon Line* after directing

David Ives' *The Universal Language* in The Colonial Players 2017 One Act Festival. That production represented CP in the 2018 Maryland Community Theater Festival and won awards for Excellence in Directing, Outstanding Production, and Technical Excellence. This is Jennifer's inaugural role as producer.



KAREN ELLIOTT (Assistant Properties Designer)

Karen joins us as a first-time assistant properties designer for *Silent Sky*. Previously, she assisted properties designer Constance Robinson by researching and donating vintage 1960s makeup and cosmetic cases for CP's *Casa Valentina*. Karen is a former Virginia public school physics, space, and earth science teacher and was also a docent and aerospace/aviation lab teacher at the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles Airport. Her astronomy and aviation experience has made Karen a valuable consultant during the production process of *Silent Sky*.



ERIC HUFFORD (Projections)

Eric is happy to be back doing fun techie things for *Silent Sky*. His most recent theater credits at The Colonial Players include *Ghost of Christmas Present* in *A Christmas Carol* and director of CP's Spring Musical, *Lucky Stiff*. You may have also seen him as Jerry Lukowski in *The Full Monty* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre. Other favorite roles at CP include Jack Worthing in *Ernest in Love*, Leslie Bainbridge in *Taking Steps*, and Thomas Jefferson in *1776*. He has also played Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at AACC. From a special effects standpoint, Eric also did the effects for CP's *Sherlock's Last Case* and designed projections for CP's *33 Variations*.



MARIANA MAHONEY (Assistant Director/Stage Manager)

Mariana is thrilled to be joining The Colonial Players for the first time, especially as an Annapolis native. After graduating from the New York Film Academy with a BFA in Acting for Film, she



THE CAST



SHANNON BENIL (Annie Cannon)

Shannon is proud to be portraying this actual woman from history who was instrumental in stellar classification and the suffragist movement. Shannon has performed regularly at The Colonial Players over the past 25 years, beginning at age 16 as a cast member in *A Christmas Carol*. Since then some of her favorite shows include *Calendar Girls*, *Rumors*, *Clue: The Musical*, and *Bat Boy*. By day, she is the Director of Accounting at an Annapolis advertising agency and by night she is Mama to an amazing 6-year-old boy. Many thanks to her wife, Marcy, for single-parenting so often during rehearsals and shows. And, as always, thanks to the folks at The Colonial Players for allowing her to satisfy her theater craving and letting her do it for the love of it!



TYLER HEROUX (Peter Shaw)

Tyler has been acting in theater since his sophomore year in high school. His shows include *Almost, Maine* (Steve); *Clue* (Mr. Green); *Rumors* (Ernie); *Shipwrecked!: The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont* (Bruno/Louis); and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Claudio). He also won the Baltimore Cappie Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Play in 2017. This is his first show outside of school, and he is thrilled to be a part of such an important and beautifully written show! He is also very thankful to his family and friends who support him on his journey and hopes to continue working with The Colonial Players in the future.



EMILIE ZELLE HOLMSTOCK (Henrietta Leavitt)

Emilie is incredibly excited about the opportunity to take part in her first show on The Colonial Players stage. A graduate of Mary Baldwin College with a bachelor's degree in theater, she took a short break from acting to pursue an alternate career path before inevitably being pulled back by the lure of the stage. Her past performing credits include Rosalie in *The Children's Hour*, Cecelia in *Shiloh Rules*, and Thea in *Hedda Gabler*. She would like to thank Gwen for this opportunity, the cast and crew of *Silent*

Sky for their tireless work and dedication, The Colonial Players and their amazing audience for an unyielding support of live theater. She sends love to all her friends and family.



ROBIN SCHWARTZ (Margaret Leavitt)

Robin is thrilled to return to The Colonial Players stage, where she was last seen as Joan Dellamond in *The Babylon Line*. Other favorite credits include Dawn in *The Universal Language* (Outstanding Performance from the MD Community Theatre Festival), Thea Elvsted in *Hedda Gabler*, and Philinte in *The Misanthrope*. Robin has a degree in Theatre and Communications from Goucher College. Special thanks to Daniel for supporting me tirelessly and unconditionally, to my sons Jacob and Henry for being Mommy's cheerleaders, and to family and friends for their loving encouragement. So much gratitude to the whole CP team for the opportunity to create theater with some truly amazing people.



BETH TERRANOVA (Williamina Fleming)

Beth is ecstatic to make her return to The Colonial Players stage after over a 7-year absence! She was last seen on stage at CP in 2011 when she played Aunt March in the musical *Little Women*. More recently, she was on stage last year as Helsa Wenzel in *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940* with 2nd Star Productions. Other favorite roles include her WATCH-nominated portrayal of Ellen van Oss (*Two Rooms*) and Costanza (*Enchanted April*) at CP; Trania (*The Taming of the Shrew*) at ASGT; and, in Florida theaters, Casey (*Anton in Show Business*), Maureen (*The Beauty Queen of Leenan*), Amy (*Company*), Linus (*You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*), and Anybods (*West Side Story*). Beth also has numerous backstage credits as a director (WATCH Award for *Hauptmann*), producer (WATCH Award for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), costume designer (three WATCH nominations), stage manager, and set designer. She is currently the artistic director and *News and Cues* editor for The Colonial Players. Now a happy federal government retiree, these days you might just also catch Beth as a Colonial Annapolitan leading tours of the town.

THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.
presents



Written by
LAUREN GUNDERSON

Directed by
GWEN MORTON

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Henrietta Leavitt.....Emilie Zelle Holmstock
Margaret Leavitt.....Robin Schwartz
Peter Shaw.....Tyler Heroux
Annie Cannon.....Shannon Benil
Williamina Fleming.....Beth Terranova

PLACE

Star Field; Leavitt Home, Wisconsin; The Harvard Observatory
 2nd-floor Offices; Ocean Liner on the Atlantic;
 Henrietta's Home, Cambridge, MA

TIME

1900-1920

There will be one intermission between Act I and Act II.

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 Taking photographs and using any recording devices are strictly prohibited.
 Smoking is prohibited throughout the building.