

Ross Valley Players New Works Presents
a musical by June Richards and Elaine Lang

THE DIVINE Sarah

SARAH BERNHARDT.
A SUBLIME ACTRESS. A SINNER. A SAINT.

DIRECTED BY JAY MANLEY
March 15-April 7, 2024

RVP NEW
WORKS



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Design: Mark Shepard



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The Book Club Play

May 10 - June 9, 2024



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Design: Mark Shepard

Director's Note

Over the last few months as I have spoken to many people, I have been astonished and a bit saddened that many do not know the name: Sarah Bernhardt. Or if they do, it is a vague notion of a long-ago stage star, with no sense of her significance. To understand Sarah is to realize that she was a pioneering woman at a time when those in her class were relegated to the role of courtesan, and women, in general, were expected to "know their place." She commanded attention and in her unrelenting and single-minded pursuit of her objective, became a 19th Century megastar – truly a first "celebrity."

By today's standards of naturalistic acting, we would undoubtedly find her grand style affected. But in the day, with huge, unamplified theatres, an elevated presentation was required. So in her own time, Sarah set the style for great acting. She was magnetic. It is no wonder that the likes of Oscar Wilde, D.H. Lawrence, Sigmund Freud and Mark Twain fell under her spell. Not to mention the great playwrights of the day, who wrote plays especially for her, among them Edmund Rostand and Oscar Wilde. No wonder, too, that contemporary stars, the caliber of Glenda Jackson (who made a film about her) and Barbra Streisand (who so desperately wanted to make one), were so smitten with her.

It has been my absolute pleasure to work with June and Elaine in finally bringing this piece of theatre to a full realization. Forty years in development, theirs has been a true labor of love. As a director, I could not have asked for more accomplished, creative and generous collaborators, and I am proud to have been able to serve them and Sarah in this way. I hope our Ross Valley Players New Works production of *The Divine Sarah* stirs some of the deserved excitement, respect and awe for this magnificent star which is her due. Or, as Sarah might have said, *Quand même!*

Jay Manley, Director

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The Divine Sarah

The Divine Sarah is set during the life of Sarah Bernhardt, 1844-1923. The action is continuous, following her early life in Paris through her world tours, concluding with her death in Paris.

CAST

Sarah Bernhardt	Merrill Grant
The Company (alphabetically)	
Jean-Mounet Sully	Lucas Michael Chandler
Mother Superior, Speech Teacher,	
Mme. Nathalie	Amy Dietz
Young Sarah, Prompter, Régine	Alexandra Fry
Duc de Morny, Charles de Chilly,	
Oscar Wilde, Czar Alexander III	Keith Jefferds
Julie "Youle" Bernard, Sophie Croizette	Anna L. Joham
Mme. Guérard, Dance Teacher,	
Lady Sylvia, Flower Girl	Julia Ludwig
Voice Teacher, Henri de Ligne,	
Wounded Soldier, Business Manager	Brad Parks
Emile Perrin, Victor Hugo, Mark Twain	Robin Schild
Edouard Thierry, General de Ligne,	
Compt de Keratry, Edward Jarrett	Ron Talbot

MUSICIANS

Keyboard	Jon Gallo
Cello	Diana Lee

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director	Jay Manley
Musical Director	Jon Gallo
Choreographer	Lucas Michael Chandler
Scenic Design	Ronald E. Krempetz
Associate Scenic Designer, Properties	Dhyanis Carniglia
Costume Design	Michael A. Berg
Lighting Design	Michele Samuels
Photo Research and "Block" Digital Images	John Diestler
Music Preparation	Peter Penhallow
Producers	Michael Cohen, Gina Pandiani
Stage Manager	Jannely Calmell
Assistant Stage Manager	David B. Smith
Intimacy/Fight Coach	Bessie Zolno
Technical Director	Michael Walraven
Master Electrician	Frank Sarubbi
Production Photography	Robin Jackson
Graphic Design	Mark Shepard
Program Consultants	Suzie Hughes & Nancy Wilson
Volunteer Coordinator	Eleanor Prugh
Webmaster	Andrew Wilson
Lobby Flowers and Décor	Maureen Kalbus

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Creative Team

June Richards is a professional actress appearing at the OSF, San Francisco Actor's Workshop, Stanford University, and New York. As a theatre director and emeritus professor, June created theatre programs for Dominican University, Contra Costa College, and served as Chair of Visual and Performing Arts at San Diego City College. June has directed more than 100 productions.



June and Elaine in 2023 and in 1985 (right).



Elaine Lang is a pianist/composer, and Musical Director. She was trained as a classical pianist, but has always had her heart in show music, improvisation and composing. She has composed the music for many musical stage productions and created original music for Bravo's TV documentaries on the lives of Sarah

Brightman, Jackie Chan and Nathan Lane. She was also pianist and Musical Director for Princess Cruises, Royal Viking, and Sitmar Cruise Lines. She currently lives in Aliso Viejo, CA

The writers began collaborating at Dominican University during the 1980s. They wrote: *The Day After*, *Happily Ever After*, *Beauty and the Beast*,

The Divine Sarah, and collaborated on a musical score for Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*. *Unicorn* was presented at ACT in SF and later received a World Premiere in Seattle at the Intiman Theatre.

Jay Manley (*Director*) is honored to return to Ross Valley Players New Works with *The Divine Sarah*. At RVP, Jay previously directed another biographical play, *Arches*, *Balance and Light*, about architect Julia Morgan. He also staged the New Works productions of *The Swiss Family Robinson* and *Surprise Party*. In Marin County, from 2013-2023 Jay directed six Mountain Plays atop Mount Tamalpais. In the South Bay, Jay



founded award-winning Foothill Music Theatre and chaired the Theatre Arts Department at Foothill College. He was awarded a special citation by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle in recognition of his founding and artistic direction of Foothill Music Theatre. With his husband, Vance Martin, Jay leads popular theatre tours to New York City, Ashland and other theatrical centers. nytheatretour.com.

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Tessera Trademark Screening is proud to support *The Divine Sarah* and artistic excellence at Ross Valley Players.



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Program Note from the Authors

The Genesis of *The Divine Sarah*: In the early 1980s, June Richards, theatre artist/educator, and Elaine Lang, pianist/composer, began writing a full-length musical based on the life of Sarah Bernhardt, the great French actress. June and Elaine were in their early 40's. Within two years, *The Divine Sarah* was complete, with fourteen beautiful songs, including solos and ensemble music. A professional recording was made, there was a staged reading, but a full production never happened.

Fast forward to the Covid pandemic in 2020, forty years later. Now in their 80's, living in two different states, June and Elaine decided to work on "Sarah" again. They rewrote and updated the script entirely, with the original music integrated into the new story, remaining powerful and poignant.



Sarah Bernhardt

Musical Numbers

Act I	
Welcome To You All	<i>The Company</i>
Soliloquy	<i>Sarah</i>
Mama, Keep Me	<i>Young Sarah, Sarah</i>
Youle's Lament	<i>Youle, Young Sarah, Sarah</i>
Mama, Please Listen	<i>Sarah, Youle, Charles de Morny</i>
Anything Can Happen	<i>Sarah</i>
Damn Their "Ize"	<i>Speech, Dance, Voice Teachers,</i>
	<i>Sarah, Company</i>
First Love	<i>Henri</i>
Madness	<i>Henri, Sarah</i>
Sarah's Lament	<i>Sarah</i>
Act II	
Le Passant	<i>Zanetto, Lady Sylvia</i>
This Is My Moment	<i>Sarah, Company</i>
Surprise!	<i>Perrin, Pierre, Sarah, Sophie, Sully, Company</i>
Let Me Have Roses	<i>Sully, Flower Girl</i>
I'll Have My Moon!	<i>Sarah, Sully, Company</i>
Soliloquy, reprise	<i>Sarah</i>
This Must End	<i>Sarah, Sully</i>
Lies!	<i>Sully</i>
Quand Même	<i>Sarah</i>

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THE CAST



Lucas Michael Chandler (*Jean-Mounet Sully* and Choreographer) is honored to be giving this musical life on the stage for the first time with the wonderful Jay Manley at the helm. Lucas has worked professionally for the last 10 years at PCPA, Sierra Repertory Theater, Warner Bros, and throughout Chicago. He has designed props, worked on costumes, scenic builds, administration, junior companies, Arts Education, box office, etc., but this marks his debut as a choreographer. He has enjoyed working with the staff of Ross Valley Players! It's a great day to be in the theater! Enjoy the show, and please consider donating to your local theater.



Amy Dietz (*Mother Superior, Speech Teacher, Mme. Nathalie*). When not underwater communing with the fishies, editing, or working in public health, Amy loves being on stage. Favorite past shows include *Romeo and Juliet* (Curtain), *Pride and Prejudice* (Ross Valley Players), *Rent* (MMTC), *Godspell* and *JC Superstar* in concert (Theater at Large), *Hair* (Mountain Play), *Sweeney Todd* (NTC), and *Company* (NTC). In her spare time, she likes to float under bubbles in an inflatable unicorn. For Dad, always.



Alexandra Fry (*Young Sarah, Prompter, Régine*) is delighted to return to the Barn where she has effectively been living for the past three months. Recent roles include Rebecca Gibbs in *Our Town* (RVP), Juliet in *Romeo...Choose Your Own* (Belrose), and Balthasar in *Romeo and Juliet* (Curtain). Other interests include anthropology, mythology, Agatha Christie novels, and trying to understand how iambic pentameter works. Love and thanks to Mom, a retired English and French teacher. Quand même!



Merrill Grant (*Sarah Bernhardt*) is thrilled to make her debut at RVP with this incredible cast and creative team and thanks "Les Sarahtadours" everywhere! Merrill grew up as a serious ballet dancer and with a French-speaking mother before she found singing, and she's thrilled to speak French on stage at last! She moved to the Bay Area after over ten years in New York, where she originated roles in new musicals for both the NYMF and NY Fringe Festivals, debuted at Avery Fisher Hall and Weill Recital Hall and toured extensively with the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players, as well as performing in her own cabaret act, *My Shirley Years*. Merrill now resides in Noe Valley. (She/Her). www.merrillgrant.com



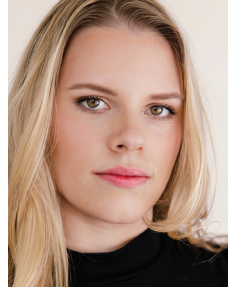
Keith Jefferds (*Duc de Morny, Charles de Chilly, Oscar Wilde, Czar Alexander III*) is thrilled to be back at RVP, where he performed in *Sylvia* (with wonderful Jannely Calmell as the titular doggie), *The Tin Woman*, *Private Fears in Public Places*, and the 2007 production of *Our Town* (BATCC Best Ensemble Award). Other favorite roles include Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life*, Shelley Levene (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), John Campbell (*Be My Baby*), Father Flynn (*Doubt*), King Henry (*Lion in Winter*), Tartuffe (*Tartuffe*), Elwood P. Dowd (*Harvey*), and Boss Mangan (*Heartbreak House*). Keith has also had scripts produced for RAW...and a presentation of his *Swing Set* is coming to RVP New Works this March 24 (Sunday) at 7pm. Hope you can make that, too! (He/Him)

We still have a few opportunities to design a personalized seat plaque. Please contact Ellen at noscaasi@comcast.net

Anna L. Joham (*Julie “Youle” Bernard, Sophie Croizette*), an award-winning actress and singer, is thrilled to return to the Ross Valley Players and work with this talented team. Originally from Portland, OR, she has a Bachelor's in Vocal Performance and Masters in Music Theater and Opera. Past projects include: *Mrs. Thorn, Ruthless* (Altarena Playhouse), *Beatrice, Much Ado About Nothing* (Foodbank Players), *Ernestina, Hello Dolly* (Mountain Play); *Stepmother, Into the Woods* (Berkeley Playhouse) and *Ms. Pennywise, Urinetown* (Spreckles Theater). Next up for Anna is *Kinky Boots* with the Mountain Play in June. She also teaches private music lessons based in Alameda to students of all ages. In her spare time, she loves to take cat naps with her two kitties – Prima Donna and Muse. You can follow her on her website: annaljoham.wix.com/aljsoprano



Julia Ludwig (*Mme. Guérard, Dance Teacher, Lady Sylvia, Flower Girl*) is thrilled to grace the RVP Barn stage once more, this time in this enchanting production of *The Divine Sarah*. Previously, she appeared as Dainty June in last winter's production of *Gypsy*. Her Bay Area theater journey includes performances with Center Rep, Lamplighters Music Theatre, the Mountain Play, Woodminster, and 42nd Street Moon. Julia's days are spent as a Development and Marketing Director in nonprofit healthcare. She studied voice at University of the Pacific where she received a Bachelor of Music. Thank you for supporting live theater and keeping the arts thriving in our community. On with the show! (She/Her)



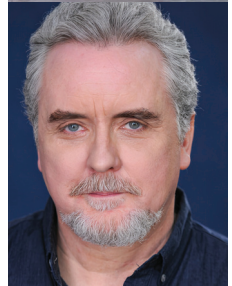
Brad Parks (*Voice Teacher, Henri de Ligne, Wounded Soldier, Business Manager*) is thrilled to be making his Ross Valley Players debut. A recent transplant from the East Coast, he would like to thank this talented cast and crew for making him feel at home. When not on stage, Brad is a prolific author and ghostwriter. The only writer to have won the Shamus, Nero, and Lefty Awards, three of crime fiction's most prestigious prizes, Brad's eleven novels have been translated into sixteen languages (for more, visit bradparksbooks.com). He lives in San Anselmo with his wife and two children, and is grateful for their continued forbearance of his theater habit.



Robin Schild (*Emile Perrin, Victor Hugo, Mark Twain*) had his theatrical aha moment when he was about 3 years old when his parents took him to some sort of theatrical show in Paris. He was hooked and couldn't wait to get on stage. Things really took off at Berkeley High where he had the pleasure of being directed by Jay Manley as Fagin in *Oliver!* Later he again was directed by Jay in *Arches, Balance and Light*, a play about Julia Morgan at Ross Valley Players. As of late, Robin has been producing Radio plays. He is delighted to return again for yet another play directed by Jay.



Ron Talbot (*Edouard Thierry, General de Ligne, Compt de Keratry, Edward Jarrett*) is thrilled to be returning to Ross Valley Players. Favorite roles include: *Romeo and Juliet* (Friar Lawrence) for Los Gatos Shakespeare, *Enemy of the People* (Thomas Stockman) for The Pear, *Scott and Zelda* (Perkins) for Ross Valley Players, *The Philadelphia Story* (C.K. Dexter Haven) for Western Stage, *The Three Musketeers* (Rochefort) and *Lysistrata* (Socrates) for City Lights, *Twelfth Night* (Sebastian) for Marin Shakespeare, *Sherwood* (The Sheriff of Nottingham) for SVS, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Don John) for Pacific Repertory, and *Taming of the Shrew* (Petruchio) for San Leandro Shakespeare.





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Backstage Bios

Jon Gallo (*Music*)

(*Director, Keyboard*) is a music director and pianist based in Oakland, CA. He has been musical director on many productions in the Bay Area, working with companies such as the Mountain Play, SFBATCO, ACT, YMTC, 42nd Street Moon, Bay Area Musicals and more. Some of his favorite musical director credits include, but are not limited to - *Gypsy* (twice!), *Mamma Mia!* (twice!), *Crazy For You*, *Chicago*, *Into the Woods*, *Hairspray*, *The Wedding Singer*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *42nd Street*, *Assassins*, *Legally Blonde*, and *La Cage aux Folles*. Jon is also choir director for the Trinity Music Ministry in Oakland, and produces a twice yearly community benefit concert (WeAreOaklandConcert.com). (He/Him)



Diana Lee (*Cello*) is a

music director and teaching artist based in the Bay Area. She was last seen music directing *RENT* (Hillbarn), *Shidaiqu* (SFBATCO's 3rd New Roots Theatre Festival), *Little Shop of Horrors* (YMTC), and *The Scottsboro Boys* (42nd Street Moon). As a cellist, she was last seen in *Ruthless! The Musical* (NCTC), *Into the Woods* (Mountain Play), and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (YMTC). During the day, she is the Visual and Performing Arts Technician at the Berkeley Unified School District. Diana is thrilled to be playing in her first show here at Ross Valley Players.



Jannely Calmell (*Stage Manager*) welcomes you to *The Divine Sarah*! She recently stage managed *Our Town* at RVP and is honored to be involved with RVP New Works! Whether it is on stage or behind the scenes, Jannely enjoys wearing many hats in the theater. She has been performing around Marin County for over eight years. Some of her highlighted works include; *Sylvia* and *Native Gardens* at Ross Valley Players,

The Wolves at Marin Theater Company, and *Amy and the Orphans* at Cinnabar Theater. Jannely would like to thank the entire cast, crew and staff for all their hard work, and to the wonderful audience members for supporting the arts!

Michele Samuels (*Lighting Design*) is thrilled to be back at RVP to design the premiere of *The Divine Sarah*. She recently designed lights for RVP's *The Glass Menagerie* and last year's RAW Festival play, *Reservations*. Michele's theatre career began with Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre in New York. Recently working on many shows at College of Marin (COM), Michele has designed and assisted many shows, including *Much Ado About Nothing*, *When We Were Young* and *Unafraid*, *The Firework Maker's Daughter*, *As you Like It*, *Antigone*, *Stories of Eva Luna*, and more. As the Guest Artist in Lighting, she is working with the students at CTE (Contemporary Theatre Ensemble at Tam High), assisting with their productions throughout the school year. Michele thanks her COM family for their support, and her "real" family for their patience with her many hours away from home. (She/Her)

Ronald E. Krempetz (*Scenic Design*) is the recently retired resident set designer and teacher at the College of Marin in Kentfield where, since 1970, he has designed over 260 productions. He has also created sets for many Bay Area professional, educational, and amateur theatre companies, including the Mountain Play, San Francisco Ballet, Marin Theatre Company, Porchlight Theatre Company, Ross Valley Players, Napa Valley Community College, and numerous independent theatre productions. Throughout his lengthy career, Ron has earned awards for both industrial and theatre scenic design projects. In 2015, Theatre Bay Area celebrated his set design for the Ross Valley Players' production of *Journey's End* with its 2014 award for Outstanding Scenic Design. At RVP he designed sets for *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Glorious*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Robin Hood*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The 39 Steps*, *Cabaret*, *Tin Woman*, *Moll Flanders*, *Crimes of The Heart*,

Silent Sky and many more. Ron resides in Petaluma with his wife, Diane. He is the proud Pop-Pops of nine perfect grandchildren who continue to inspire his inner child.

Michael A. Berg (*Costume Design*) has created costumes for many Bay Area theatrical organizations, including Center Rep in Walnut Creek, the Mountain Play, Marin Shakespeare and the College of Marin. Michael is Resident Costume Manager for RVP. His knowledge of the current extensive costume stock and the ever-expanding costume shop he has created at the Barn are invaluable assets to RVP productions. In addition to Michael's RVP responsibilities, he is on the costume staff of Center Repertory Company in Walnut Creek, and he costumed *Spamalot* for the Marin Shakespeare Company.

Bessie Zolno (*Intimacy/Fight Coach*) is excited to return to RVP, following *Our Town*. She currently splits her time between Tel Aviv and the Bay Area and is passionate about helping performers safely navigate heightened moments on stage. She is an associate faculty member with the Association of Mental Health Coordinators and has worked on over 40 productions. Some favorites include *Alexander Penn* (Niko Nitai Theater/Tel Aviv), *Hamlet* (Fight Choreography/Vallejo Shakes), *The Cost of Living* (Oakland Theater Project), *R+J* (Contra Costa School of Performing Arts). bessiezolno.com

Dhyanis Carniglia (*Associate Scenic Designer, Properties*) was introduced to the Barn Theatre in 1986 and has served many roles here and at other Bay Area theatres, including Head Costumer and Designer, Scenic Artist,

Choreographer and Prop Designer. She is currently assistant to the set designer at College of Marin. She designs and produces her own line of dance costumes and clothing, teaches belly dance and is a Grief Coach. Past credits at the Mountain Play include Costume Designer for *The King and I* (1987), *South Pacific* (1988), *Brigadoon* (1989), and *Anything Goes* (1990). She also served as Scenic Artist on the Mountain up to and including *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Awards for costuming include Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (*Follies*, 1994), four Shellies (Contra Costa Civic Light Opera musicals) and a Solano College Award for *Elephant Man* (1995).

Michael Walraven (*Technical Director*) is pleased to be back in the theatre. Michael has also performed on stage at RVP in *Pirates of Penzance* and *The Polynesian Lounge* and in the Mountain Play's *Sound of Music* and *Guys and Dolls*. Favorite roles include Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Boyd Bendix in *A Case of Libel*, Mr. Cladwell in *Urinetown*, Mr. Mushnik in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Jean in *Miss Julie* and Hogan in *Moon for the Misbegotten*. Michael is now performing weekends as the Count of Buena Vista at Buena Vista Winery.

David B. Smith (*Assistant Stage Manager*) came to the theatre late following retirement from business life. His first position was last season as the assistant stage manager for RVP's production of *Native Gardens* and he just completed a role as a member of The Crew in Cinnabar Theater's production of *Dream House*. He is excited to be a part of RVP New Works' production of *The Divine Sarah*.

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