

David Greenspan in

Four Saints in Three Acts

by Gertrude Stein

“If you enjoy it
you understand it.”

– Gertrude Stein on *Four Saints in Three Acts*

Lucille Lortel Theatre presents

David Greenspan in
**Four Saints
in Three Acts**
by **Gertrude Stein**

Performer

David Greenspan

Director

Ken Rus Schmoll

Production Design

Yuki Nakase Link

Dramaturgy

Jay Stull

Production Manager

Teresa Cruz

Press Agent

Sin Gogolak

Stage Manager

Michal V. Mendelson

Special thanks to the Estate of Gertrude Stein

Permission granted through its Literary Executor, Mr. Stanford Gann, Jr., of Levin Gann, PA

**Production made possible with support from
Target Margin Theater**

Creative Team



David Greenspan, Performer

David Greenspan is perhaps best known for appearing in his own plays, most notably *Dead Mother*, *She Stoops to Comedy*, *Go Back to Where You Are*, *I'm Looking for Helen Twelvetrees* and his solo plays *The Argument* and *The Myopia* – and for performing solo renditions of Barry Connors' *The Patsy*, Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Gertrude Stein's lectures *Plays, Composition as Explanation* and *What are Masterpieces*. He has worked with many contemporary playwrights – drawing especial notice for his performances in Terrence McNally's *Some Men* and in revivals of Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* and Goethe's *Faust*. He

enjoys close collaborative relationships with directors David Herskovits, Leigh Silverman, Jack Cummings III, Ken Rus Schmoll, Morgan Green and is the recipient of Lortel, Guggenheim, and Fox fellowships, Alpert, Lambda Literary, Helen Merrill Playwriting awards, a Ruthie and six Obies.

Ken Rus Schmoll, Director

Ken Rus Schmoll directed David Greenspan's radio plays *Loops* and *(There's) No Time for Comedy* for Playwrights Horizons Soundstage, as well as Mr. Greenspan's adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* at Two River Theater, which featured lighting designed by Yuki Nakase Link. Other credits include the world premiere of Charles Wuorinen's cantata *It Happens Like This* (Tanglewood), the American premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's opera *Prosperpina* (Spoleto Festival USA), the New York premiere of George Brant's play *Grounded* (Page 73), and six productions for Clubbed Thumb, where he is an associated artist and co-founder of its directing fellowship. He is the recipient of two Obie Awards and nominations for both the Lucille Lortel Award and the Drama League Award and was a finalist for the Joe A. Callaway Award.

Jay Stull, Dramaturgy

Jay Stull is a theater maker whose work has been produced by or developed with Ars Nova, The Alliance Theater, Bloomington Playwrights Project, NY City Center Off Center, Joe's Pub, The Gym at Judson, Roundabout, and The Tank. He is an alumnus of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, The Civilians R&D Group, and the Clubbed Thumb Directing Fellowship. He is the 2022 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Playwriting and he was an artist-in-residence and visiting professor in the Theater, Dance, and Media concentration at Harvard College in 2020, and will teach and be in residence there again in the Spring of 2023. MFA: Columbia. www.jaystull.com

Yuki Nakase Link, Production Design

Yuki Nakase Link is a lighting designer for theatre, dance, opera, performing arts, television and fashion productions. Previously designed with David Greenspan and Ken Rus Schmoll: *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (Two River Theater), and with Ken Rus Schmoll: *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Long Wharf Theatre), *Octavia* (Todd Theatre/University of Rochester), *The Women Of Padilla* (Two River Theater) and *Blue Window* (Columbia Stages/CSC). Recent design credits include: *In A Grove* (Pittsburgh Opera), *The Orchard* (Baryshnikov Arts Center), *Red Velvet* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Embarqued* (Duke Performances), *Our Town* (Dallas Theater Center), *Queen* (Long Wharf Theatre), *When Monica Met Hillary*, *The Cubans*, *Queen of Basel* (Miami New Drama), *Seven Deadly Sins* (NYC and Miami Beach), *Stick Fly* (The Juilliard School), *Blood Moon at Prototype* (Baruch Performing Arts Center), *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* (La MaMa), *Theo* (Two River Theater), *Triptych: Eyes of One on Another* (Disney Hall, Kennedy Center and BAM). Next: *Orpheus and Eurydice* (San Francisco Opera). She was born in Tokyo, grew up in Kyoto, Japan and currently lives north of NYC in the woods of Hudson Valley. M.F.A.: NYU. <https://yukinlink.com/>



Teresa Cruz, Production Manager

Teresa Cruz is a Canada-born, Texas-raised multi-disciplinary artist and producer of live events. She has organized and assisted on events, productions, and processes across the country at Berkeley Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Center Theatre Group, Huntington Theatre Company, Lincoln Center, Ars Nova, the Apollo, and the VORTEX Rep in Austin where she is currently the Associate Artistic Director. Most recently, she assisted director Stan Zimmernan on *Hyprov*, a half hypnosis-half improv show starring *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* star Colin Mochrie. She graduated from Connecticut College with a degree in Psychology and Theatre.



Michal V. Mendelson, Stage Manager

Michal is so happy to be working with David, again. Her NY credits include: Primary Stages, Hi-ARTS, Theater Breaking Through Barriers, St. Ann's Warehouse, Pomegranate Arts, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, The Flea Theater, The New School for Drama, New Georges, Red Fem Theatre, TerraNova Collective, New Dramatists, The Pearl Theatre, Studio 42, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Dog-Run Rep, and Worth Street Theatre. Regionally, she has worked at The Kennedy Center, Studio Theatre, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Passage Theatre and Fairfield Theatre.

About Lucille Lortel Theatre

The Lucille Lortel Theatre's mission is to foster both new and established artists, increase awareness and appreciation of Off-Broadway, and uphold fair and equitable business and artistic practices in service of creating a larger, more diverse community of theatre makers and audiences. In addition to *Four Saints in Three Acts*, this season the Lortel Theatre is producing *The Kate Berlant Show* at the Connelly Theater. The Lortel has numerous programs, including its NYC Public High School Playwriting Fellowship, Live at The Lortel podcast, the Lucille Lortel Awards and Playwrights' Sidewalk, the Internet Off-Broadway Database (IOBDB.com), Non-Profit Theatre Strategic and Management Services, Subsidized Theatre Space, and Fellowships in Theatre with Bennington College. For more information, please visit lortel.org.

How I Came To The Four Saints

A letter by David Greenspan

In 2010 Jack Cummings, Artistic Director of Transport Group, attended a performance of my multi-character solo play, *The Myopia*. Shortly thereafter he asked me to work with him on a solo rendition of *I Remember Mama*. I was intrigued by the idea – but had reservations about my performing that play. We decided instead to look for a script I might better connect with.

I recalled seeing a charming and tender 1927 silent comedy, *The Patsy*, based on Barry Conner's 1925 eight-character romantic comedy of the same name. I found a copy of the play and read it aloud to Jack and his creative team. We loved the script – and during a three-week workshop in the winter of 2010, Jack, dramaturge Krista Williams and I trimmed the play to a fleet 80 minutes and developed a preliminary staging (for which I took very detailed blocking notes). I then spent the next three months working on my own (in my apartment), memorizing the lines while mastering the blocking and developing my physical and vocal interpretation of the characters. We rehearsed in the spring of 2011 and put the show up that summer. It went like gangbusters – we had a great time of it and audiences found it a delight.

Jack, Krista and I were determined to find another script to work on. Two years later I made an outlandish proposal: a solo rendition of Eugene O'Neill's 1928 eight-character, six-hour, nine act, seldom-produced and vastly underappreciated drama, *Strange Interlude*. The play is noted for its frank depiction of infidelity, mental illness, abortion, and deception over paternity – and, most importantly, its extended internal soliloquies. After a week-long residency in which we examined the script, we were persuaded by our designer Dane Laffrey, to make this our next endeavor. We staged the play in a series of workshops – after each of which I would (as I had with *The Patsy*) work on my own at home to master the script and staging and develop a physical and vocal interpretation of each character. It was a four-year project – and a remarkable creative experience. Our 2017 production was greeted with great enthusiasm.

I have dedicated a certain amount of my creative energies to performing work by Gertrude Stein – principally several of her lectures – one being *Composition as Explanation*. In that lecture, Stein speaks of making in her work a “continuous present.” Essentially, it suggests a film strip playing at normal speed of which the viewer can nonetheless see each individual frame. Stein of course set out to accomplish this in words. It occurred to me that I was accomplishing something to that effect by performing a solo rendition of *Strange Interlude*. In a conventional production, as characters speak their inner thoughts, the actors portraying the other characters are required to enter a soft freeze so as not to distract from the soliloquy being delivered. As a solo performance, the audience had only to look and listen to the single actor. The play thus became the film strip moving at normal speed and I became from moment to moment each individual frame.

Shortly after this realization, I decided that I would perform a third solo – thus creating a trilogy of sorts. I knew immediately it should be a work by Gertrude Stein. After reading various texts, I settled on *Four Saints in Three Acts*. All three plays in the series were written in the late 1920's; and each represents a different form of playwriting. *The Patsy* is a romantic comedy, *Strange Interlude* a modernist drama and *Four Saints* a radical theater text.

Four Saints was conceived as an opera – and written in collaboration with composer Virgil Thomson. But collaboration, as we generally think of it in the theater, is perhaps not the most accurate description of their working relationship. Stein wrote her text independently – and then gave it to Thomson to set to music without any further collaborative involvement. I feel that the script itself has literary and theatrical merit and have chosen to perform it without the musical score. Stein often referred to *Four Saints* as a play. I have taken her at her word.

I had worked with director Ken Rus Schmoll on my adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. We enjoyed an exceptionally fruitful collaboration – and were eager to continue collaborating. I read the play to Ken – and despite my uninformed and inept delivery, he was immediately intrigued. It didn't take long for the two of us to become enthusiastically engaged in this endeavor.

Ken has a probing intelligence, sensitive to the intricacies of language and attuned to unconventional expressions and depictions of human experience. Long before working with him, I was moved by the emotional and intellectual energy of his work. His productions feature an exceptional coordination of speech, movement, visual representation – and all in sync with fine acting performances. He created a gorgeous production for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* – and we have a heck of a good time working together. We are joined in this project by Jay Stull – Ken's associate director and our dramaturge. In addition to being an astute director, Jay is gifted playwright; and he brings a playwright's intelligence to our investigation of Stein's singular approach to theater.

The Patsy and *Strange Interlude* each presented their own unique challenges. *The Patsy* features breakneck comedy, pyrotechnic family hysteria and tender romance – all without pause. It requires non-stop, high-speed performance. Given its length, *Strange Interlude* requires endurance; but that is not all: while the characters in *The Patsy* are recognizable types, the characters in *Strange Interlude* are highly individual – and there is a psychological intricacy in the characters' pivot between dialogue and inner monologue.

Four Saints is its own remarkable challenge. There is no discernable plot; dialogue is interspersed with substantial unassigned narrative passages; when lines are assigned to characters the lines in-and-of-themselves do not suggest characterization. Stein stated that she was interested in “emotion and time” rather than “story and action.” That suggested to Ken, Jay and I that her language – its rhythms, cadence, wordplay, rhymes – all eschewing ordinary sense – could be interpreted in service of a continuous flow of emotional moments “unburdened” (as Stein would have it) by having to follow a story. Interpreting *Four Saints* has necessitated my making a multiplicity of decisions: vocal and physical characteristics for the various characters, choices regarding rhythm and tempo, physicalizing the narrative passages and, most importantly, interpreting the dialogue and narration in a manner that *implies* story only insofar as it facilitates the emotional flow.

Four Saints “dramatizes” the experience of artists as saints and saints as artists. Their creative acts are realized in a gyroscopic relationship between their inner and outer lives. According to Stein, genuine artists (who she thinks of as saints) construct the “contemporary composition” from which they are inseparable. In other words, they fundamentally create the time in which

they live and of which they are a part of. And like saints, authentic artists are often rejected (“refused” as Stein puts it) during the time in which they live.

Because of a Covid surge, Transport Group postponed a planned 2022 production featuring a cast of nine actors when the risk of infection was high. Instead, I was asked to revive *The Patsy*. I jumped at the chance – and relearned the play in a matter of weeks. Serendipitously, this has meant again performing the first play in this series only months before premiering the last of the three plays. I thus come to the *Four Saints*.

Production Staff

Production Manager	Teresa Cruz
Stage Manager	Michal V. Mendelson
Assistant Scenic Designer	Colleen E Murray
Assistant Lighting Designer	Josh Hemmo
Production Electrician	Art Kopischke
Assistant Production Electrician	Cody Richardson
Technical Director/Production Carpenter	Nicholas Brester
LX Programmer	Dariel Garcia
Company Manager	Graeme Cohen
Press Agent	Sin Gogolak
General Managers	Nancy Hurvitz, Alana Canty-Samuel
Marketing and Social Media	Karla Liriano

Lucille Lortel Theatre Staff

Executive Director	George Forbes
Senior Directors	Jeffrey Shubart, Nancy Hurvitz
General Managers	Alana Canty-Samuel, Maura Le Viness
General Management and Marketing Associate	Karla Liriano
Box Office Treasurer	Daigoro Hirahata
Facility Manager	Zebulon Brown
Digital Design and Administrative Support	Ellen Chan

Acknowledgments



The Director is a member of the **STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



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The development of this production of *Four Saints in Three Acts* was made possible, in part, by generous support from piece by piece productions, a creative residency at SPACE on Ryder Farm, and kind assistance from both Clubbed Thumb and Target Margin Theater.

Special thanks to Kendra Bator, Michael Bulger, Mia Chung, Gordon Dahlquist & Anne Washburn, Crystal Finn, David Herskovits, Anne Kauffman, Ralph & Louise Schmoll, Teri Schrader, Maria Striar, Wendy Vanden Heuvel, Rattlestick Theatre, Daniella Topol, and Aiyanna Tumulac.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that we are gathered today on land formerly occupied by the Munsee Lenape, Canarsie, and Marechkawieck peoples. We honor the history of Indigenous peoples in their homeland and acknowledge the privileges that we possess that allow us to use this stolen land. We stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and we seek to transcend the pain of the past and create a present that respectfully embraces all of us. Please join us in recognizing this history and our responsibility towards decolonization, reunion, and allyship.