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stageleftseries

a documentary web series about theatre and community

STAGE LEFT

WHAT DOES THEATRE DO IN TIMES LIKE THESE?

Logline:

Stage Left is a documentary web series about theatre and community.

Synopsis:

Stage Left introduces viewers to the performances, artists, theatre-makers, and communities that are making work in places that go largely unnoticed by the mainstream.

Stage Left examines the impact of theatre and performance on local communities. Each episode of **Stage Left** investigates a theatre company, performance tradition or performative ritual that is actively steeped in a particular community. Through highlighting the work of artists who are actively using theatre to engage, challenge and inspire their own communities, we hope to inspire and activate our viewers.

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SEASON ONE

CABARET FOR LIFE New Jersey Shore



Stage Left kicks off with a visit to the Jersey Shore to meet the creative team of Cabaret for Life's *Housewives of Monmouth County*. Cabaret for Life is celebrating its 25th year of raising money for local HIV/AIDS charities. In this episode, we look at how the *Housewives of Monmouth County*, an episodic theatre project spanning the course of 10 years, poking fun at the Jersey Shore has become a local legend and helped to revitalize a beach town.

TRIBE OF FOOLS Philadelphia



Our second episode takes us to the Philadelphia Circus School to meet the **Tribe of Fools**, a group of physical theatre practitioners who are using circus, parkour, and acrobatics to address critical issues in their local community. We explore how movement helps to transcend language and express the complex emotions when words fall short.

MAAFA Brooklyn



In our third episode we visit the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church in East New York, Brooklyn as they prepare for the annual production of MAAFA, a large-scale production that explores the trauma endured by African people in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We look at how the creative team and members of the church transform the sanctuary into a living museum to create a healing journey for audiences.

SEASON ONE

SENIOR CITIZEN ENSEMBLE Queens



This episode of Stage Left looks at how a group of senior citizens in White Stone, Queens harnesses the power of theatre to strengthen their local community and combat age-related memory loss and physical limitations while simultaneously exploring their personal histories and the legacies they want to pass on for generations to come.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT Lower East Side, NY



This episode explores the issue of creative space and artist development through the lens of the University Settlement's Performance Project, the oldest settlement house in New York's Lower East Side.

EAGLE PROJECT AT ASHTAR Turtle Island and Palestine



The final episode of season one takes place at the ASHTAR Theatre in Ramallah, Palestine where we meet artists from the ASHTAR Theatre and Eagle Project who are forging collaborations between Palestinian and Native American artists. This episode explores the intricacies of political and artistic solidarity while proposing questions of how artists can work to decolonize spaces both in and out of the rehearsal room.

STAGE LEFT HOST

Ashley Marinaccio is a New York City based director, writer, performer and photographer who creates work that challenges the status quo. She is dedicated to documenting the socio-political issues that define our times. She's a TED speaker. Her theatrical work has been seen off-Broadway, at TED conferences, The White House, The Apollo, United Nations and on tour throughout the United States and Europe. Her work has received critical acclaim from *The NY Times*, *New Yorker*, *Huffington Post*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Ebony*, *NY Press*, *Time Out NY*, *Backstage*, *Show Business* and has been featured in segments on *Buzzfeed*, *NBC*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, *MTV*, *VH1* and *NY1*. Ashley has traveled extensively throughout the world as an artist, researcher and teacher.

Currently, Ashley is working on her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center. Her research interests include exploring theatre practices in war zones, applications of theatre in social justice movements, politics and performance in times of crisis, community-based theatre, intersections between anthropology and theatre, and documentary theatre.

Ashley holds her M.A. in Performance Studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and BA in theatre directing and sociology/anthropology with minors in women/gender and Middle Eastern from Pace University. She is a member of AEA, SAG/AFTRA, League of Professional Theatre Women and American Anthropological Association. To learn more visit ashley-marinaccio.com.



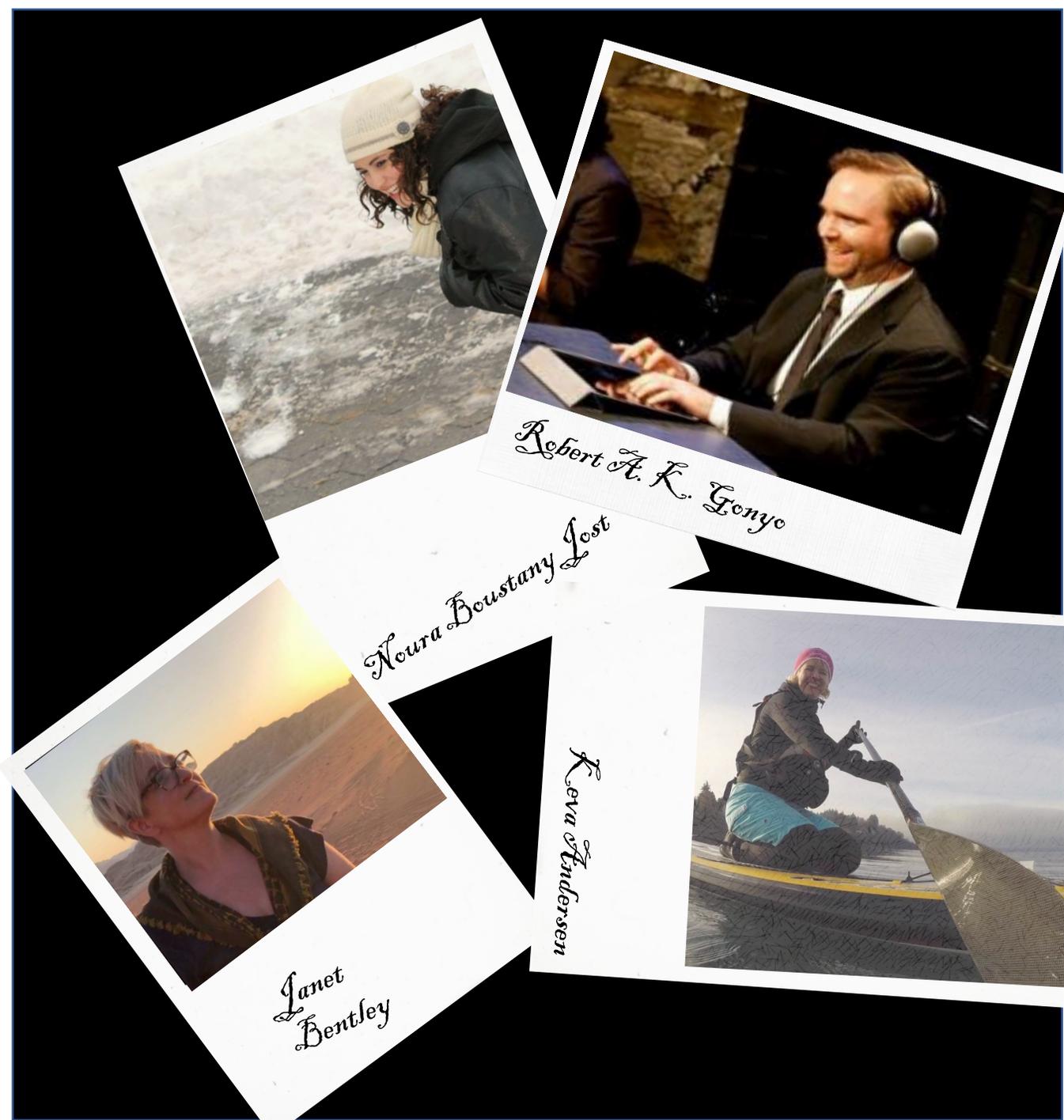
STAGE LEFT CORE CREATIVE TEAM

Noura Boustany Jost (Director of Photography/Videographer) is a Director of Photography, Director, and Actor. She graduated May of 2018 from Pace University with a degree in Film, TV, Voice-Overs and Commercials. Her passion is centered around social activism films. She has participated in / helped create films about immigration, identity, toxic masculinity, 9/11, and more.

Keva Andersen (Editor) is a video producer and editor for NBC News Digital. Projects include daily news editing, politics, livestreams, and content creation for partners. Previous projects include video podcasts for MSNBC shows including the Rachel Maddow Show. Keva is also a content editor, and social media manager at X-Files News, the only fan site authorized by 20th Century Fox to promote The X-Files.

Robert A. K. Gonyo (Sound Mixer) As a sound designer, his work has been heard with companies such as Co-Op Theatre East, End Times, The New Collectives, Writopia Lab's Worldwide Plays Festival, Amios, and at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting. He is a Director with Co-Op Theatre East (cooptheatreast.org), company member with End Times Productions, producer & host of the radio horror podcast *Apparitions*, the producer & host of *Go See a Show!*, New York City's independent theatre podcast (goseeashowpodcast.com), and a member of *The Best Thing Ever*, a directors collective.

Janet Bentley (Composer/Sound Design) holds an MFA in dramaturgy from the University of Iowa. Some projects include: *Death House Jamboree* by Michael Panes, *Mr. Chekhov and Mr. Porter, Brand* by Henrik Ibsen (translation), *The Chaplin Plays* by Don Nigro, *Comes A Faery* by James McClindon, *To Damascus II* by August Strindberg, *Land of Broken Toys* by Yasmine Lever, *An Enemy Of the People* by Henrik Ibsen, *Angels In America, Part I* by Tony Kushner, *Natural Life* by Eduardo Lopez, *The Flea In Her Ear* by Georges Feydeau, and *A Yellow Fever* by Joe Hiatt.



MEET THE TEAM:

AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEY MARINACCIO

STAGE LEFT HOST AND CREATOR

Why did you make *Stage Left*?

I have been involved with community-based theatre initiatives for most of my life and wanted to create a project that highlights the exciting work practitioners are doing in their own communities. I am interested in redefining and exploring what Americans view as “community theatre”. Oftentimes, that term is associated with “amateurs”, and is dismissed. American theatre education places a huge emphasis on Broadway and regional theatre as the pinnacle of success as an artist. I want to challenge that notion by highlighting how theatre is used to build community, explore difficult topics, tell narratives of marginalized people, but also be high quality and entertaining.

What has been your most memorable experience of making or seeing theatre?

I was the Artistic Director of a theatre that primarily worked to tell young women’s stories. We were touring a show in Dallas about sex trafficking. The show featured monologues from girls who were survivors of sex trafficking. Following the performance nearly 50 people lined up to share their own stories of sexual violence, often for the first time. We received e-mails several months after the performance stating that seeing the show had inspired people to start their own support groups and domestic violence shelters in their communities.

What do you hope audiences will walk away with from watching *Stage Left*?

I hope audiences will walk away with a renewed faith in the power of art, particularly theatre. I hope this will shed light on new ideas that can be both accessible and implemented in any community. I also want audiences to be exposed to the work of artists that are largely ignored by the mainstream.



MEET THE TEAM:

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT A. K. GONYO STAGE LEFT SOUND MIXER

What theatre practitioners inspire you and why?

Anyone using Theatre of the Oppressed. I think those tools are just incredible for using the power of theatre to open up the imagination, and desire to be active in one's community, for all people!

What has been your most memorable experience of making or seeing theatre?

I saw a production of *Waiting for Godot* that was set in post-Katrina New Orleans, and the experience of that production made me take time to go and volunteer for Habitat for Humanity in St. Bernard Parish. It's always been so incredible to me that a work of theatre could have moved me so much, that I had to physically do something to try to help the world. That's powerful stuff.

Why are you excited to be part of the Stage Left community?

I worry that too often, people hear "theatre" and think of Broadway, the Tony Awards, big-time productions with big, outsized stars and huge spectacles. But there is so, so much wonderful work being done at a community level that is simultaneously entertaining and socially vibrant—and THAT is where I like to be. New York's indie theatre scene is my home, and I want all artists to feel like they have a home as well. Stage Left is showcasing the work of groups that are providing that kind of home. We should all have the opportunity to be theatre artists in our own way—just because you're not treading the boards of Broadway, doesn't mean you can't make incredible theatre.



MEET THE TEAM: AN INTERVIEW WITH JANET BENTLEY, STAGE LEFT DIRECTOR, COMPOSER, AND EDITOR

What attracted you to this project?

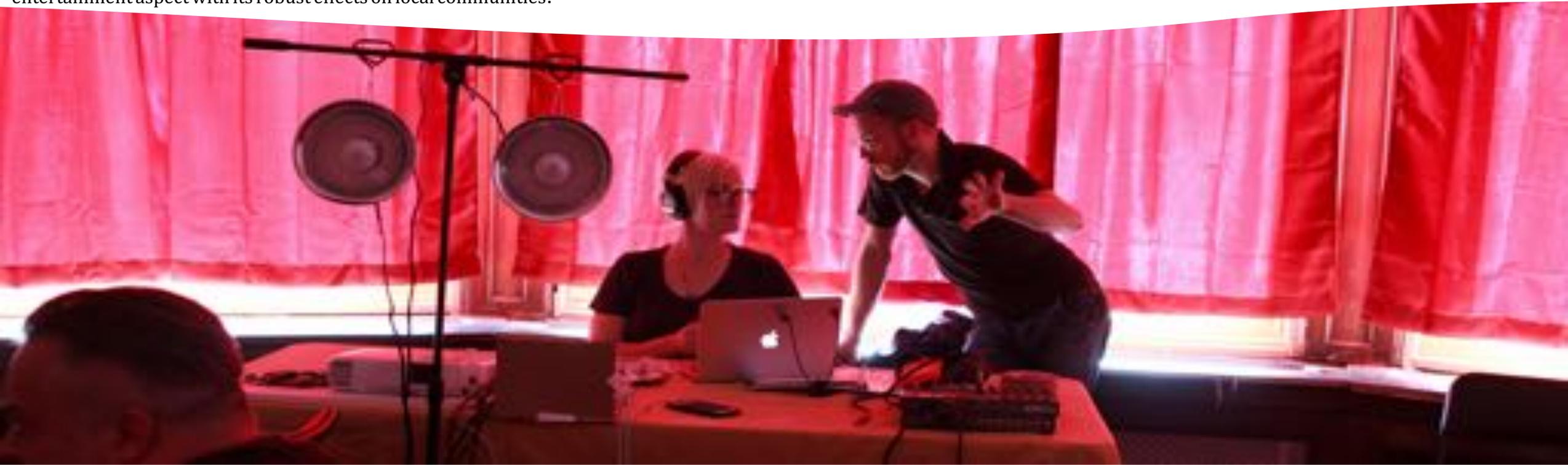
I've always felt that theatre is more than entertainment – that it can have a transformative effect not just on an audience, but on all those who engage in the process. Because of theatre's local (and ephemeral) nature, it is extremely hard to reach a large number of people so they can experience this healing and transformative art. That's why I'm so excited by *Stage Left* because it gives me the opportunity to focus on local theatres that do this work and artfully encapsulate this experience in short, powerful episodes that can be shared with millions of people all over the world.

What do you hope audiences will walk away with from watching *Stage Left*?

I hope that audiences will either discover or confirm that theatre is essential to life and the health of communities. I hope that it will inspire people to get involved. I hope that it will also show that theatre's effects can be felt without a multimillion dollar production budget – that people can feel the ancient power that started with bodies in space, lifting their voices, and sharing stories.

What is unique about *Stage Left* in comparison to other web series?

I've seen series that investigate theatre, but what I find unique about *Stage Left* is that, in addition to sharing knowledge about theatre companies in different communities, it also consistently trains its eye on the connection between theatre and the health of communities without being overly academic or preachy. It balances the discussion about theatre's entertainment aspect with its robust effects on local communities.



STAGE LEFT SUPPORTERS

Stage Left has been made possible by generous donations from the following:

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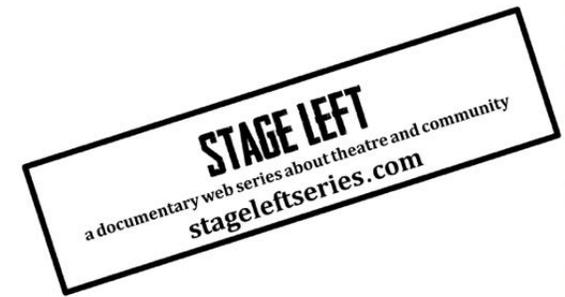


Photo by Jody Christopherson