presents

THIS BITTER EARTH

by HARRISON DAVID RIVERS
Directed by MIKAEL BURKE

FEATURING
SHELDON BROWN & DANIEL DESMARAIS

Scenic Design JOE SCHERMOLY +
Costume Design ROBERT KUHN \+
Composer/Sound Design ERIC BACKUS
Lighting Design JOHN KELLY
Props Design EMMA CULLIMORE
Intimacy Design SASHA SMITH
Production Manager CATHERINE ALLEN
Stage Manager HELEN COLEEN LATTYAK *

* Denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association
+ Denotes member of United Scenic Artists 829
\+ Denotes About Face Theatre Artistic Associate

NOVEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 8, 2018
AT THEATER WIT

SETTING New York City, NY and St. Paul, MN
TIME This play jumps around in time between

Originally Commissioned & Produced at The New Conservatory Theatre Center
September 22, 2017 • San Francisco, CA • Ed Decker, Artistic Director
OUR MISSION
To create exceptional, innovative, and adventurous theatre and educational programming that advances the national dialogue on sexual and gender identity, and challenges and entertains audiences in Chicago and beyond.

OUR VISION
To be a nationally recognized, intergenerational, and community-focused LGBTQIA arts organization by creating theatre that fosters awareness, understanding, and celebration of all forms of sexual and gender expression.

THIS BITTER EARTH PRODUCTION SPONSOR
Robert McCamant

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

About Face Theatre is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation - empowering world-changing work.
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THE AFT 2018/19 SEASON:
THIS BITTER EARTH
Chicago Premiere  |  Nov. 1 - Dec. 8, 2018  |  Theater Wit
by Harrison David Rivers | directed by Mikael Burke
A poetic romance challenged by political realities.

DADA WOOF PAPA HOT
Chicago Premiere  |  Jan. 10 - Feb. 16, 2019  |  Theater Wit
by Peter Parnell | directed by Keira Fromm
A comedic venture into modern day parenting

TBA
Feb/March, 2019
An exciting musical soon to be announced

AFYT WORLD PREMIERE: 20/20
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CAST
SHELDON BROWN (Jesse)
DANIEL DESMARAISS (Neil)
DWAYNE EVERETT (Jesse u/s)
NICK TRENGOVE (Neil u/s)

PRODUCTION STAFF
Associate Director JACOB JANSSEN
Scenic Design JOE SCHERMOLY +
Costume Design ROBERT KUHN aft +
Composer/Sound Design ERIC BACKUS
Lighting Design JOHN KELLY
Props Design EMMA CULLIMORE
Intimacy Design SASHA SMITH
Dramaturg AJ SCHWARTZ
Technical Director BRIAN SPRAGUE
Master Electrician ALON STOTTER
Scenic Painter NATALIE SANTORO
Production Manager CATHERINE ALLEN
Stage Manager HELEN COLLEEN LATTYAK*
Assistant Stage Manager ANDREA ENGER
Casting KEIRA FROMM & STEPHEN SCHELLHARDT
Public Relations DAVID ROSENBERG
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+ Denotes member of United Scenic Artists 829
Denotes About Face Theatre Artistic Associate
FROM DIRECTOR MIKAEL BURKE

The walls we erect
around our innermost selves,
for our own protection,
allow us to survive.
But.
Do those same walls actually stop us from living?
How can we trust anyone enough to let those walls down and find out,
when that trust requires the very vulnerability the walls protect?

In a world where hate is currency, love is an un-ignorable protest.

FROM ABOUT FACE THEATRE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, MEGAN CARNEY

We are so proud to begin our 23rd season with Harrison David Rivers’ brilliant play, THIS BITTER EARTH. Mikael Burke and Harrison first met through a reading at About Face a few years back and it’s a thrill to see their collaboration fully bloom with this production.

This is a play about race and class in an interracial relationship, about the complexity of finding your voice to speak up for what you believe, about fighting for racial justice, for LGBTQ equality, for love, for black lives. Ultimately this is a play about a couple with great passion, imperfections, and dreams, like me and you, people trying to figure out how to live in this mad world.

Through a series of memories that unfold in a non-linear structure, the story comes into focus. Only a handful of years ago President Obama was in the White House. The murders of Trayvon Martin in Florida, Mike Brown in Ferguson, and the nine black churchgoers in Charleston, took place during the same time period as the murders of Rekia Boyd and Laquan McDonald in Chicago. Each of these devastating losses at the hands of police or vigilantes, along with many others not named here, sparked urgent acts of collective mourning and demands for justice in the streets along with, as the play so brilliantly evokes, deep reverberations within our private homes and with our most intimate loved ones.

It gets hard to stand in the face of such brutality, loss, and disparity. I believe that brave stories of recognition and liberation can provide some necessary fuel to keep fighting for black lives, for survivors, for lovers and families, for the children at the border, for all of us striving to be free. I hope you take away some fire for the journey ahead. Thank you for joining us.
SHELDON BROWN (Jesse) is a 2014 graduate of Acting at Emerson College in Boston. His recent credits include The Shipment at Red Tape Theatre, Time Is On Our Side (understudy performed) at About Face Theatre, 1980 or Why I Voted for John Anderson at Jackalope Theatre, A Wonder In My Soul at Victory Gardens (understudy performed), Man In The Ring at Court Theatre, Feral with MPAACT Theatre Company and more. He also has numerous credits in Boston including The Grand Inquisitor directed by Peter Brook, and The Shakespearean Jazz Show, a collaborative new work that turns Shakespeare into New Orleans jazz.

DANIEL DESMAR AIS (Neil) is a graduate of UC Berkeley with a degree in Geography. Other well-known geography majors are Michael Jordan and Prince William. After graduating, he was an apprentice at both Williamstown Theatre Festival and Actors Theatre of Louisville before returning home to Chicago. Some of his Chicago credits include Charlotte’s Web (Drury Lane), Mr. Burns...a post electric play (Theater Wit), 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Flare Path, The Stinky Cheese Man (Griffin Theatre Company), The Raid (Jackalope), The Awake (First Floor Theater), This House Believes... (Oracle), and Hit the Wall (The Inconvenience).

DWAYNE EVERETT (Jesse u/s) - This Northwest Indiana native is honored to be making his About Face Theatre debut! Dwayne holds a BA in Theatre from Columbia College Chicago. Recent credits include productions at American Theatre Co., Haven Theatre, Redtwist Theatre, and Refuge Theatre Project. This winter, Dwayne will be performing in Brown Paper Box Co.’s production of Little Women. Many thanks to family and friends for continued love and support, this incredible cast, and our brilliant Creative Team.

NICK TRENGOVE (Neil u/s) Nick is a California native and a recent graduate of DePaul’s MFA Acting program. Most recently, he performed in Chicago’s One Minute Play Festival and in the Jacobins’ production of the new musical The Book of Sebastián.

MIKAEL BURKE (Director) is a Chicago-based director, deviser, and educator. A Princess Grace Award winner in Theatre and graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University (MFA Directing), Mikael’s most recently worked with Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight Theatre, American Theatre Company, and Strawdog Theatre Company in Chicago, and regionally with Asolo Repertory Theatre, GEVA Theatre Center, and Indiana Repertory Theatre. He currently serves as the inaugural Artistic Fellow at Northlight Theatre and is a Directors Inclusion Initiative fellow at Victory Gardens Theatre. He also serves as Head of the Directing Concentration of the High School Training Program of the Theatre school at DePaul University, and is a core faculty member in the Theatre division of the National High School Institute (Cherubs) at Northwestern University. Recent directing credits include Hooded, or Being Black for Dummies by

**HARRISON DAVID RIVERS** (Playwright) resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he was recently named one of *City Pages*’ Artists of the Year. His plays include: *When Last We Flew* (GLAAD Media Award, NYFringe Excellence in Playwriting Award, NYFringe), *Sweet* (AUDELCO nomination for Best Play, NBT), *And She Would Stand Like This* (20% Theatre Company, The Movement Theatre Company), *Where Storms Are Born* (Berkshire Theatre Award nomination for Best New Play, Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, Williamstown), *A Crack in the Sky* (History Theatre), *Five Points* (Theatre Latte Da) and *This Bitter Earth* (New Conservatory Theatre Center, Penumbra). Harrison has received McKnight and Many Voices Jerome Fellowships, a Van Lier Fellowship, an Emerging Artist of Color Fellowship and New York Stage & Film’s Founders’ Award. He was the 2016 Playwright-in-Residence at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Harrison is an alumni of the Public Theater’s Emerging Writers’ Group, Interstate 73, NAMT and The Lincoln Center Directors’ Lab. He is an NYTW Usual Suspect and a Core Writer at the Playwrights’ Center where he is also a member of the Board of Directors. Harrison received his BA from Kenyon College and MFA from Columbia School of the Arts. www.harrisondavidrivers.com

**JACOB JANSEN** (Associate Director) is a director originally from Kiel, Wisconsin. Jacob recently completed an MFA at the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago, where he directed *Three Sisters, A Bright New Boise, The Maids, Richard III, Trouble in Mind, and Contractions*. In Chicago Jacob has worked with American Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, and the Goodman where he served as Ivo Van Hove’s assistant on *A View From The Bridge*. Before grad school, Jacob spent several years working in Washington, DC as a director and producer at several theatres, most notably at Studio Theatre where he worked on *Carrie: The Musical*, starring Barbara Walsh, *10,000 Grey* with the German company Machina Ex, and assisted on the world premiere of Lucas Hnath’s *Red Speedo*. Jacob is also a new play dramaturg and has spent the last few years developing the work of playwrights Tearrance Chisholm and Nina Segal, among others.

**HELEN COLEEN LATTYAK** (Stage Manager) Some of Helen’s credits include *Bull in a China Shop, Significant Other, Bright Half Life, The Secretaries, Le Switch, Abe Lincoln Was A Faggot*, and *We Three Lizas* with About Face Theatre. A *Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Hospital of New York City* with Route 66. *PICNIC* at American Theater Company. *Sucker Punch, SAMSARA and Failure: A Love Story*, at Victory Gardens Theater. *Christmas at Christine’s, Ultra American, Muthaland and The Hundred Flowers Project* at Silk Road Rising, *Brahman/i: A One-Hijra Stand Up Comedy Show* with About Face Theater and Silk Road Rising. Helen is a company member at TUTA Theater Chicago. She is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago and a member of the Actors Equity Association.

**ANDREA ENGER** (Assistant Stage Manager) is delighted to be working with *About Face Theatre* again after working on *Bull In A China Shop and Significant Other*. Some of their favorite credits include being the ASM for *PICNIC* at American Theatre Company, *Good Friday* at Oracle Productions, and they were the PSM on *Another Jungle* at Cloudgate Theatre/The Syndicate. They have a BA in Theatre from Columbia College Chicago.
Catherine Allen (Production Manager) is thrilled to be back working at About Face Theatre where she previously production managed Bull in a China Shop, Time Is On Our Side, and Significant Other. Other production management credits include work with Steep Theatre where she is an Artistic Associate, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Griffin Theatre, Route 66, Congo Square, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Pegasus Theatre Chicago, Haven Theatre, and many circuses with Actors Gymnasium where she is the staff Production Manager. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she received a BFA in Acting.

Eric Backus (Composer/Sound Designer) is excited to join About Face Theatre again after working on last season’s Bull in a China Shop. Eric’s recent credits include Six Degrees of Separation and Frost/Nixon (Redtwist Theatre), Bus Stop (Eclipse Theatre), and A Wrinkle In Time (Lifeline Theatre, Jeff Award Nomination). Regional credits include Rock of Ages (Lake Dillon Theatre Co.), and Murder for Two (Finger Lakes Musical Theatre). Eric also designed the Off-Broadway, Chicago, and touring productions of SoloChicago Theatre’s Churchill, and the Chicago and LA productions of Thrones! The Musical Parody. To hear more of his music, please visit www.ericbackus.com.

Emma Cullimore (Properties Designer) designs costumes and properties for The Plagiarists and costumes for Chicago Tap Theatre, while also freelancing with other Chicago storefront companies. Outside of Chicago, her designs have been seen at the Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre, the Okoboji Summer Theatre, and internationally in Havana, Cuba. Emma holds an MFA from the University of Alabama–Tuscaloosa, and a BFA from Stephens College.

John Kelly (Lighting Designer) is very excited to be designing his fourth show for About Face Theatre! Previously he designed Abraham Lincoln was a Faggot, I Am My Own Wife and Significant Other. Other companies he has worked with include The Second City, Theater Wit, The Neofuturists, Lifeline Theatre Company, The Gift Theatre, Oracle Productions, Redtwist Theatre and Eclipse Theatre Company. His designs for Great Expectations and D.O.A. at Strawdog Theatre Company and I Am My Own Wife at About Face Theatre were nominated for Joseph Jefferson Awards. John is an ensemble member at Strawdog Theatre Company. www.johnkellydesigns.com

Robert Kuhn (Costume Designer) is a freelance costume designer in the Chicago area, an About Face Theatre Artistic Associate and is pleased to be returning for his 7th production. For About Face Theatre Robert previously designed Time is on Our Side, I Am My Own Wife, and Abraham Lincoln was a Faggot, among others. Roberts most recent design credits include: Something in the Game (American Musical Theater Project), Company, HAIR! (Jeff Nominated), The Bardy Bunch (Mercury Theater), Peter Pan, Mame (Music Theater Works), Bonnie and Clyde, Heathers (Kokandy Productions), and SS! Macbeth (The Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Other designer/assistant designer credits include works with Drury Lane - Oakbrook, Writers Theater, Emerald City Theater, Concordia University-Chicago, Pegasus Theater, Piven Theatre Workshop, Lookingglass Theater Company, Marriott Theater, and Paramount Theater. Regional design credits include: Smokey Joe’s Cafe (Pennsylvania Centre Stage) and Dracula and Othello (The Arkansas Shakespeare Theater). Robert is a member of USA 829. www.robertskuhn.com
JOE SCHERMOLY (Scenic Designer) is delighted to be working with About Face Theatre again, after designing The Temperamentals and Le Switch. Other Chicago credits include: Yasmina’s Necklace (Goodman Theatre), Constellations (Steppenwolf Theatre), Hand to God, Samsara (Victory Gardens); Puff: Believe it or Not, Pirandello’s Henry IV, Travesties (Remy Bumppo); Naperville, The Watson Intelligence, Mr Burns, Seven Homeless Mammoths, Completeness (Theatre Wit); American Idiot (The Hypocrites); Linda, Birdland, Wastewater and Lela & Co. (Steep); Pocatello, Titanic, Spelling Bee, Flare Path, Punk Rock, Port, Constant Wife (Griffin); Stupid Fucking Bird, Idomenius, The Ugly One (Sideshow); The Seafarer, Lay Me Down Softly (Irish Theatre of Chicago). Joe studied scenic design at Northwestern University, has received one Equity Jeff Award, two After Dark Awards and five Jeff Nominations. www.joeschermoly.com

AJ SCHWARTZ (Dramaturg) is proud to be returning to About Face Theatre, where they last worked as Assistant Director on Time is on Our Side. As a theatremaker, they aim to use performance to explore the world through a radical, iconoclastic, and undeniably queer lens. Past credits include Assistant director on Zurich (Steep Theatre Co.), Refrigerator (First Floor Theatre), and Romeo and Juliet (Loyola University Chicago Mainstage). They have also worked as associate producer with About Face Theatre and QUEER, ILL + OKAY. To learn about their work and their face, visit aj-schwartz.com

SASHA SMITH (Intimacy Designer) is a Chicago-based actor and violence and intimacy choreographer. Recent acting credits include Hinter (Steep Theatre), Hookman, (Steep Theatre), Stay Lit (The Roustabouts), and Johanna Faustus (The Hypocrites). She has been seen on television in Chicago Fire, Chicago PD, and Green Screen Adventures. Recent choreography credits include You Got Older (Steppenwolf), Smart People (Writers Theatre), Fear and Misery of the Third Reich (Haven Theatre), The Toilet (Haven Theatre), A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Gynecologic Oncology Unit At Sloan-Kettering Memorial Cancer Center Of New York City (Route 66), Ideation (Jackalopec), and Octagon (Jackalope). She is a company member of Steep Theatre. She is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago. Sasha is represented by Shirley Hamilton Talent.

BRIAN SPRAGUE (Technical Director) is a Chicago based Freelance Theatre Artist. He received his Master of Fine Arts in Acting from Northern Illinois University and has studied/performd internationally at the Moscow Art Theatre and Adana State Theatre in Adana, Turkey. Some past Technical Directing credits include: Fun Harmless Warmachine (The New Colony), Warrior Class (Comrades) The Harvest (Griffin Theatre Company), Akeelah and the Bee (Adventure Stage Chicago), JB, Arms and the Man (City Lit Theatre Company) Invisible Hand, Birdland, Earthquakes in London (Steep Theatre), You Can’t Take it With You, Fair Maid of the West, Macbeth, African Company Presents Richard III (Oak Park Festival Theatre), Grace, The Goat: or Who is Sylvia (Interrobang Theatre Project), Happiest Place on Earth, Give It All Back and Truth and Reconciliation (Sideshow Theatre Company), Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival).

ALON STOTTER (Master Electrician) is a freelance Lighting Designer and technician working in Chicago, Originally from Haifa, Israel, Alon attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he got a BFA in Lighting. He has worked with such companies as The Neofuturists, A Red Orchid Theatre, Definition Theatre Company, Jackalope Theatre, The New Colony, Redtwist Theatre, Music Theatre Works, and Hartford Stage Company.
MEGAN CARNEY (About Face Theatre Artistic Director) is a director and playwright. Recent Chicago directing credits include *Time Is On Our Side* (About Face), *Winter, Grizzly Mama*, Danielle Pinnock’s *Body/Courage*, *American Wee Pie* and *The Walls* (Rivendell). Megan has written several plays based on true stories including *Women at War* (Rivendell), *Open Systems: 5 Years After Hurricane Katrina* (Goodman Theatre), *Let Them Eat Cake* (Dixon Place), and eight years of ensemble based plays with About Face Youth Theatre. Carney’s work has been recognized with multiple After Dark Awards, the GLSEN Pathfinder Award, an APA Presidential Citation, induction in Chicago’s LGBT Hall of Fame, and a Rockefeller Foundation MAP Grant. Megan served as the Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago where she developed public arts-based programs. She is a certified mediator with the Center for Conflict Resolution and earned a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre with a focus on Directing and Public Dialogue from Virginia Tech.

WORK WITH US TO TRANSFORM YOUR SCHOOL, WORKPLACE OR COMMUNITY GROUP!

POWER IN PRIDE: About Face Theatre has been touring into schools, workplaces and community organizations since 2000. Our dynamic and innovative program, based in bold performances and facilitated conversations, helps people better understand each other across differences, build community, foster understanding of LGBTQIA experiences along with other intersecting identities, and create a more inclusive environment for all. Our model of community transformation has received multiple awards including a GLSEN Pathfinder Award, the American Psychological Association Presidential Citation, and the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office Community Empowerment Award and reaches around 5,000 people each year.

Contact Mia Vivens, Associate Director of Outreach and Engagement, to arrange a guest speaker, workshop, or a performance of our new touring show, Power in Pride. Mia@aboutfacetheatre.com / 773-785-8565 / www.aboutfacetheatre.com
FOR MY OWN PROTECTION

I want to start an organization
to save my life.
If whales, snails, dogs, cats
Chrysler and Nixon can be saved,
the lives of Black men are priceless
and can be saved.
We should be able to save each other.
I don’t want to wait for the Heritage Foundation
to release a study saying
Black people are extinct.
I don’t want to be the living dead
pacified with drugs, sex and rock-n-roll.
If a human chain be formed
around nuclear missile sites,
then surely Black men can form
human chains around Anacostia, Harlem
South Africa, Wall Street, Hollywood
If we have to take tomorrow with blood
are we ready?
Do our s curls and dreadlocks and phillies
make us any more ready than a bush or a conkaline?
I’m not concerned
about the attire of a soldier.
All I want to know
for my own protection
is are we capable
of whatever
Whenever.

Essex Hemphill
poet, editor, activist


SPECIAL THANKS to the League of Chicago Theatres
At Theater Wit
We are a theater company within a building, within a community, within a world.

As a production company, Theater Wit’s mission is to be the premier “smart art” theater in Chicago by producing humorous, challenging, and intelligent plays that speak with a contemporary theatrical voice.

As an institution, Theater Wit seeks to be the hub of the Chicago neighborhood theater scene. In our three spaces, we bring together Chicago’s best storefront theater companies. Here you will find a smorgasbord of excellent productions, see the work of a parade of talented artists, and mingle with audiences from all over Chicago.

In the Middle of a Community
Everyone here: folks in the audience... the person who handed you this program... somewhere on or off the stage there are actors... if you look up in the corner you might get a glimpse of the stage manager in the booth... We’re all in this room for the same reason: to be a part of this shared experience. No matter who they are or where they come from; no matter if they are complete strangers or familiar faces; no matter how different the age, the race, or the walk of life; after this performance, you will have something in common. So, strike up a conversation in the lobby, introduce yourself to someone new. Meet our staff, shake hands with an actor, get a drink from our bar. We’re all in this together.

Part of the Chicago Scene
Theater is part of the Chicago experience. Each year, over 200 theaters present thousands of shows to Chicago’s loyal and enthusiastic theater-going audience. Chicago’s theater community is recognized around the world for its talent, its innovation and its power to entertain and enlighten. If Tony awards were sports championships, our artists would beat out the combined efforts of Michael Jordan, Bobby Hull, Jim McMahon, Jermaine Dye, and the entire Chicago Cubs roster going back 100 years. This stage is a Chicago stage, contributing to the vibrant artistic life of our city and the economic development of our neighborhood. Very few cities on the planet offer the theatrical richness and diversity of Chicago. But you get to share in it. Because you are here.
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Mezcales de Leyenda Guerrero, Blaum Bros. Hellfyre, Koval Ginger, Fresh Lemon, Cinnamon

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1921 Silver Tequila, Sparkling Limonata, Combier Triple Sec, Blaum Bros. Hellfyre

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**REBECCA’S FLORAPOLITAN**  
Belvedere Citrus Vodka, Combier Triple Sec, Sparkling Aranciata Rossa

**CIRUS SUNRISE**  
1921 Silver Tequila, Rouge Cherry Liqueuer, Sparkling Clementine, Rose’s Lime

**WICKED JAIQUIRI**  
Shipwreck Spiced Rum, Combier Triple Sec, Fresh Lime, Pineapple Juice

Libations or concessions purchased at the bar are always allowed in the theater.
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Denotes About Face Theatre Artistic Associate

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ABOUT FACE THEATRE creates exceptional, innovative, and adventurous theatre and educational programming that advances the national dialogue on sexual and gender identity, and challenges and entertains audiences in Chicago and beyond.
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This donor listing reflects gifts made from 9/1/17-8/31/18.

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With a generous annual contribution or monthly gift totaling $1,000 or more in a year, Founders Society members support today’s LGBTQIA artists creating About Face Theatre’s mainstage performances as well as tomorrow’s leaders with AFT’s youth and outreach ensembles.

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