

**The Serpent asks:
'Is This the World We've Created?'**

The Serpent was written in the late sixties and first performed by the Open Theatre in 1968. The playwright, Jean-Claude van Itallie, intended for the play to bring the audience, not into an acted piece of theatre, but into an experience. Unlike most plays, *The Serpent* does not follow a causal or linear plot. Instead, it should be viewed as a postmodern ceremony; an in depth look at ideas and themes constructed by individual and cultural perceptions of life.

In creating the play, the Open Theatre was attracted to, and experimented with, stories from the Book of Genesis. As they improvised to locate meaning within these biblical tales they became increasingly aware that they were asking questions that they could not answer. With this knowledge, they shifted their focus by grounding their experiments in inquiry and imagery. The intent was not to discover and expose what happened when Eve bit the apple or how the first murder occurred, but to ask audiences to view the images of the play and assign their own meaning to human existence and the state of the world.

Thus, the Open Theatre created a ceremony where actors were no longer obliged to provide an audience with a story, moral, or life lesson. In fact, Itallie suggests that acting ensembles experiment with meaning and imagery to create their own performance piece rather than abide by the formal text. The words and actions written in the text only serve as a guide to begin the process. With this understanding, we present our experiments to you in hopes to raise concern about the 'world we've created' - including its creation, preservation, and possible destruction.

Department of Theatre and Dance Faculty

Professor of Theatre, Chair Liz Carlin-Metz
Professor of Theatre (*sabbatical*) Neil Blackadder
Associate Professor of Theatre..... Craig Choma
Associate Professor of Dance..... Jennifer L. Smith
Assistant Professor of Dance Kathleen Ridlon
Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre Jeff Grace
Visiting Instructor of Theatre Kelly Lynn Hogan
Director, Costume and Makeup Margo Shively
Distinguished Professor *Emeritus* Robert C. Whitlatch

theatre & dance presents

The Serpent

a ceremony written by
Jean-Claude van Itallie

Directed by Jeff Grace



Studio Theatre, CFA
May 19, 20, 21, & 22, 2010
7:30pm

Welcome to Knox College Theatre

Welcome to the final Main Stage production of the Department of Theatre 2009-10 Season. We are pleased to celebrate with you our work in the fields of theatre and dance. This year's audiences have numbered over four thousand at productions ranging from classic realism to contemporary expressionism and from modern to postmodern. Students who have participated in theatre and dance productions come from across the academic disciplines, represent all four class years, and number more than 400. Every year, we seek to enlarge the classroom experience and manifest on stage the material investigated in books and discussions, with computers and construction tools, and through critical papers and experiential work in text and performance. Every year, we seek plays and dance contexts that examine what it means to be human and how we negotiate that experience as humans in nature and societies—past, present, and future. We select for our seasons a range of plays, which, if considered over the four year tenure of a Knox student, will expose that student to a wide a range of lenses with which to view the human condition. This vast canon of dramatic literature is drawn from throughout history and around the world.

Currently under discussion for next season are plays from the classical Greek canon, the era when the theatres were reopened in England upon the restoration of the monarchy, the French Avant Garde, American classic realism, and the contemporary cutting edge. We will open the season with a modern staging of *Medea* by Euripides directed by Visiting Assistant Professor Jeff Grace. Liz Carlin-Metz will direct in winter term and Neil Blackadder will direct in spring term. Jennifer L. Smith will oversee Choreographer's Workshop, which will perform in Studio Theatre. Craig Choma and Margo Shively respectively will design sets and lights and costumes, and students once again will work along side professors as designers, actors, writers, dramaturges, assistant directors, stage managers, choreographers, dancers, and technicians.

– Liz Carlin-Metz, Chair

Join us at Harbach Theatre in November for our fall production of

EURIPIDES' MEDEA

In a new translation by Robin Robertson
November 3-6, 2010

Knox College Department of Theatre & Dance presents



a ceremony
written by

Jean-Claude van Itallie

in collaboration with

Joseph Chaikin and The Open Theatre

Directed by Jeff Grace

Scenic Design by Craig Choma

Costume Design by Analise Rahn

Lighting Design by Ryn Flynn

Sound Design by Keegan Siebken

Videography by Alex Lindgren

Studio Theatre, CFA May 19-22, 2010

All smoking materials used in this production are herbal and pose no health risk.
For audience members with hearing devices: This play contains loud gun shots,
electronic buzzers, and the use of microphones.

Please: No photographs, video, texting, or recording.

**Turn off all cell phones, pagers, watch alarms, or anything else that may
emit light or sound.**

The Serpent is produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016 www.dramatists.com

The Ensemble

Katie Haynes
Nate Hults
Lyle Lippincott
Robin Mahung
Anna Munzesheimer
Nellie Ognacevic
Jay Robillard
Alex Shi
Avery Wigglesworth

Movements

Opening
Procession / The Doctor
Assassination
The Garden / Eve and the Serpent
Eating the Apple
The Curses
Statements I
Cain and Abel
Blind Men's Hell
Statements II
Begatting
Old People / The Song

Administrative Staff

Chairperson Liz Carlin-Metz
House Manager Abby Harms
Assistant House Manager Kate Donoghue
Reservations & Box Office Alicia Vallorani
Program & Advertising Designs Levi Flair
Publicity Theatre Advisory Board (TAB)
Cindy Reiter, Peter Bailley, The Ensemble
Ushers The Ensemble

Production Staff

Director Jeff Grace
Stage Manager Alix DeWald
Assistant Stage Manager Ivy Reid
Dance Captain Avery Wigglesworth
Technical Director Craig Choma
Scene Designer Craig Choma
Videography Alex Lindgren
Props Master Gloria Feliciano
Properties Assistant Rebecca Warner
Scenic Artist Alix DeWald
Scenery & Lighting Staff Rob Bauwens, Alix DeWald
Ryn Flynn, Anna Munzesheimer, Ivy Reid
Carlyse Owens, Liz Picurro, Lauren Neiheisel
Becky Warner, John Mast, Samantha Newport
Scene Shop Volunteers Jack Dryden, Marina Capizzi
Robert McCarty
Run Crew Josh Gunter, Liz Picurro
Costume Designer Analise Rahn
Director of Costume Design Margo Shively
Costume Studio Assistants Peter Glinsmann
Franzeca Meyer, Carla Hamilton
Allison Smith, Analise Rahn, Katie O'Connor
Kate Donoghue, Erica Bailley
Merideth Noseworthy, Aisha Mergaert
Lighting Designer Ryn Flynn
Master Electrician Liz Picurro
Lighting Board Operator Alix DeWald
Sound Designer Keegan Siebken
Sound Board Operator Ivy Reid

Special Thanks

Zack Wahlquist, Katie Grace, Dakota Scott, Theatre
Advisory Board (TAB), Peter Bailley, Lindsey Murrell, Nellie
Ognacevic, Abby Harms, Ryan Fowler, Pier Debes,
Jerry Goodin, Dan Gray, HyVee, Knox Facilities

Who's in the Ensemble

KATIE HAYNES is a sophomore majoring in Theatre. She was recently seen in the Knox College Repertory Term productions of *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika* (Homeless Lady/Mormon Mother). She has also performed in *Three Sisters* (Anfisa), *Come Back to the Five and Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean* (Juanita), and *Blithe Spirit* (Madame Arcati). When not on stage, Katie enjoys spending her free time watching movies with friends, obsessing over anime, and playing video games. She would like to thank her parents, friends, and boyfriend for their love and support. Katie is from Chicago, Illinois.

NATE HULTS is a junior majoring in Theatre. At Knox, he has performed in *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* (Martin), *Three Sisters* (Kulygin), and *Women and Wallace* (Wallace). His original play *No Time Like the Present* was recently selected for a reading at the Region 3 section of the American College Theatre Festival. This summer he will perform as Elvis in the University of Missouri Summer Repertory Theatre's production of *Picasso* at the Lapin Agile. He has also stage managed and designed sound for productions at the Old Creamery Theatre in Amana, Iowa. He is honored to be a part of *The Serpent*. Nate is from Columbia, Missouri.

LYLE LIPPINCOTT is a senior majoring in Theatre with a minor in Spanish. She is very excited to be a part of this challenging piece of theatre. At

Knox she has appeared in *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika* (Ethel Rosenberg/Angel of Australia), *Rosa and Blanca* (The Deer), and *Vinegar Tom* (Margery). She would like to thank her friends and family for their love and support. Lyle is originally from Austin, Texas.

ROBIN MAHUNG is a sophomore majoring in Psychology with a double minor in Child Development and Dance. She was recently seen on stage at Knox in *Intimate Apparel* (Artist). She has been a member of the Terpsichore Dance Collective, as well as worked as a volunteer dance instructor at various centers in Illinois and Minnesota. She is always grateful to be given the opportunity to express her love of movement. She would like to thank her family, friends, and the Department of Theatre and Dance. Robin is from Chicago, Illinois.

ANNA MUNZESHEIMER is a sophomore majoring in Theatre. She hails from Omaha, Nebraska where she has been participating in theatre since she was in middle school. Since coming to Knox she has kept busy directing, acting, and constructing sets as an employee of the scene shop. She has recently been seen on the Knox stages in *The Arsonists* (Babette) and *Angels in America: Perestroika* (Ethel Rosenberg). Anna would like to thank both her Knox family and her biological family for their endless support and encouragement.

NELLIE OGNACEVIC is a sophomore majoring in Theatre with a minor in Psychology. At Knox she has performed in *Angels in America: Perestroika* (Hannah), *Three Sisters* (Irina), *Tartuffe* (Madam Pernelle), *Women and Wallace* (Grandma), and *Marisol* (Woman with Furs). She has also assisted with Props on various Studio Theatre productions at Knox. She would like to thank her family back in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and her friends for their endless support. This summer Nellie will be interning at the Celebration Barn in South Paris, Maine, helping the acting workshops go up without a hitch.

JAY ROBILLARD is a senior with a double major in Theatre and Creative Writing. He is honored to take part in *The Serpent* and relishes the chance to step outside his comfort zone. With most of his stage experience based in realism, acting in a piece such as this is a welcome change. At Knox he has appeared in *Never Swim Alone* (Frank), *Instruments of Faith* (Henry), *Sweet-and-Twenty* (George), and *The Bacchae* (Pentheus). Jay looks back on the last four years fondly and would like to thank Knox College for every wonderful experience. He comments: "It's never to late to try something new." Jay is from Libertyville, Illinois.

ALEX SHI is a junior majoring in Biology. He only began dabbling in the theatrical arts this year, and so far has not regretted it at all. He made his stage debut last fall in the Studio production of *Controlling Interest* (David). He is a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity and the Knox College Choir. He

would love to thank his mom for her unconditional support, and his sister for her limited support. Alex is from Naperville, Illinois.

AVERY WIGGLESWORTH is a first-year student who dove headfirst into the Knox theatre scene as Loud Stone in *Eurydice* during her first term on campus. Her most recent theatre credits include KCTC Summerfest's production of *Big Love* (Olympia), and Cardinal Stage Company's *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Anne Frank). Summer 2008, she performed the role of Ida Rose in *Dust*, an original composition piece, at the International Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her training includes ballet, Laban, Viewpoints, Suzuki, and clown technique. She would like to thank her fellow cuddle-cave gangsters, Jerome, Bun-Buns, and Al for their undying comfort and encouragement. Avery hails from the hills of Kentucky.



Who's Who in the Creative Team

JEFF GRACE (Director) is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre. He received both his M.S. in Education (2004) and Ph.D. in Theatre History, Theory, and Literature (2008) from Indiana University. Having various productions to his credit, Jeff's work has been represented on stages at Indiana University, Brigham Young University, Scera Shell, Brighton High Productions, UHSAA Jordan, and Street Theatre Jab. Recent directing credits include: This is Your Song (a musical tribute), The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Backstory, The World Goes 'Round, Once on this Island, Chess, George Orwell's 1984, Grease!, Cagebirds, Up the Down Staircase, The Diviners, Doors, Act Without Words I & II, Footfalls, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton, and Pippin. Jeff is excited to present The Serpent as his directing debut at Knox, and is thankful to such a wonderful cast and crew for all their hard work. He would especially like to thank his partner, Zack, for the unwavering love and support through the many miles travel. Jeff is originally from Pleasant Grove, Utah.

CRAIG CHOMA (Scenic Designer and Technical Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre, and Knox's resident designer and technical director. He received his B.A. from Knox College, and holds M.F.A.'s in both Scenic Design and Lighting Design from Carnegie Mellon University. He is an inaugural member of the Vitalist Theatre in Chicago, whose designs include the award winning productions of A Passage to India and Mother Courage and Her

Children, Anna Karenina, Floating Rhoda and the Glue Man (sets), King Lear (lighting), The Mill On the Floss (set and lighting), and the world premiere of Anung's First American Christmas (set). Other Chicago designs include the sets for Death and the Maiden (Timeline), Pippin, Night Sky, A Midsummer Nights Dream, and Museum. Favorite Knox designs include Intimate Apparel, Tartuffe, Rosa & Blanca, The Striker, Noises Off, A Moon for the Misbegotten, As You Like It, The Grapes of Wrath, War and Peace, Arcadia, and Macbeth.

He would like to thank his lovely wife and two beautiful daughters for their unconditional love. Craig is originally from Chicago, Illinois.

ANALISE RAHN (Costume Designer) is a senior majoring in Theatre with a minor in History. Her designs have been seen on both the Studio and Harbach stages in productions of Angels in America: Millennium Approaches, Eurydice, Marisol, and Tartuffe. She has worked professionally with Vitalist Theatre in Chicago, and has designed for the Bailiwick Director's Festival. Although seam rippers and fabric are most comfortable for her, she has appeared in both Studio and Harbach devised productions at Knox. She is thrilled to be working on such a challenging piece for her final show at Knox. Analise is from Sycamore, Illinois.

MARGO SHIVELY (Director of Costume Design) has been the Director of Costume and Makeup at Knox for thirty years. She graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago with a focus in fashion design. Subsequently, she interned with designer Oleg Cassini and then designed women's ready wear. Her shift to costume design occurred because of the students at Knox. Margo has designed and consulted for the Chicago City Ballet, Black Hills Playhouse, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Santa Fe Opera, APT, and Vitalist Theatre. This past summer she costumed a PBS film about Carl Sandburg. She is also an active member of United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT). Of all her accomplishments, Margo is most proud of the students she has had and her ability to pass on the love of design. She is from Galesburg, Illinois.

RYN FLYNN (Lighting Designer) is a senior majoring in Theatre with a minor in Philosophy. She has worked as a stage technician in the scene shop for three years. She has designed lights for numerous productions at Knox, having most recently worked as co-lighting designer on Angels in America: Millennium Approaches. Other design credits include Eurydice and Three Sisters. Ryn has also worked as a master electrician both at Knox and professionally for Vitalist Theatre in Chicago this past summer. She plans to pursue her M.F.A. in Lighting Design. Ryn is from Kensington, Connecticut.

KEEGAN SIEBKEN (Sound Designer) is a senior majoring in Theatre with a minor in Physics. Most recently he has

been seen on the Knox stages in Angels in America: Perestroika (Roy Cohn), Eurydice (Nasty Interesting Man), and Tartuffe (Tartuffe). He has also served as Production Manager for the on-site filming of a soon to be released Carl Sandburg documentary by Bonesteel Films. He would like to thank his family, friends, and girlfriend, Lauren Assef, who has supported him through this process. Keegan is from Galesburg, Illinois.

ALEX LINDGREN (Videographer) is a sophomore majoring in Music with a minor in Theatre. He has developed quite a passion for theatre since initially dabbling in it back in 2006. Most recently he worked on the videography for Knox's Repertory Term production of Angels in America and also performed in Millennium Approaches (Joe). When not participating in theatre, he studies music with an emphasis on singing and composition. Alex is from Maple Grove, Minnesota.

GLORIA FELICIANO (Props Master) is a senior with a double major in Theatre and History. At Knox, she has performed in Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (Prior Walter I), This is a Play (Older Female Actor), the devised production Beyond the Fourth Wall, and Red. She worked as the Assistant Stage Manager for Our Town and was Props Master for Intimate Apparel. She also worked on props design for both parts of Angels in America, and Assistant Directed Perestroika. She would like to thank her family for their loving support. Gloria is from Chicago, Illinois.

DAKOTA SCOTT (Cast Member at Large) just joined the Knox community this spring. Over the last ten years she has performed in over 20 productions with Downtown Art, most recently appearing in the gypsy rock/folk musical *Twelfth Night* (Viola; dir. Ryan Gillian; comp. Michael Hickey). She has been a member of Nature Theatre of Oklahoma in New York since 2005. Before touring with the company last year, she worked as a performer and dance captain on *Life & Times: Episode 1* (dir. Kelly Copper and Pavol Liska; comp. Robert M. Johanson), a collaboration piece with Vienna's Burgtheater that recently appeared in the 2010 Berliner Festspiele. Dakota would like to thank Jeff and everyone who has made *The Serpent* possible. Also, a big thank you to Rozina Kidari, Fabian Kruger, Jeremy Malvin, and her family for their love and support. Dakota is from Brooklyn, New York.

ALIX DEWALD (Stage Manager) is a junior with a double major in Education and Theatre. She was the Company Manager and lead Scenic Artist for Knox's Repertory Term productions of *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*. Her favorite experiences from past shows include scenic painting for *Eurydice*, general technician for *Kitty Kitty Kitty*, acting in *Bom Bom Bole!* (Gia), and stage managing for AZ Broadway Theatre's production of *Charlotte's Web*. Alix feels most joyful in the theatre when smothered in paint, sawdust, and her theatre family's arms. She would like to express sincere, soulful thanks to her parents for breathing technicolor

into her heart from birth. Alix is from Phoenix, Arizona.

IVY REID (Assistant Stage Manager) is a sophomore with a double major in Theatre and Creative Writing. She recently appeared on stage in *Angels in America: Perestroika* (Europa), *Never Swim Alone* (Woman), and *Women and Wallace* (Vicky). She has fallen in love with the technical aspects of the theatre and worked as Master Electrician for *Angels in America*, *Three Sisters*, and *An Evening of Beckett*. She was the Stage Manager for Knox's 2009 Spring Dance Concert and Assistant Stage Manager for *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, *Three Sisters*, and *Red*. She would like to thank her family, both biological and theatrical, for their unconditional love and support. Ivy is from Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The Theatre of Jean-Claude van Itallie



Jean-Claude van Itallie, born in Brussels in 1936, emigrated to America with his family in 1940 and grew up on suburban Long Island. He graduated from Harvard in 1958, and subsequently became a seminal force in the explosive New York Off-Off-Broadway theatre movement of the sixties. He became playwright-in-residence at the newly formed Open Theatre and established a lasting professional relationship with director Joseph Chaikin. They worked together with actors to develop new performance techniques, striving for ways to establish emotional contacts with the audience by combining the experimental with the classical. Their collaboration on *The Serpent* is arguably the most successful piece of ensemble theatre by any theatre group of the period, and is still frequently performed by ensemble companies today.

As evident in *The Serpent*, van Itallie is more concerned with dramatic form than with character delineation and/or plot development. In his constant striving for formal innovation, van Itallie refuses to be associated with a definitive dramatic technique or mode of writing, which in turn makes it all the more difficult for critics and audiences to draw neat comparisons between his theatre and that of others. Because his work defies preclosing interpretations, it can be a source of confusion and frustration. He rejects the allegedly superior insight ascribed to artists and shuns any form of didacticism. In the same way, he does not bestow upon the audience universal truths and refuses to magically unveil social afflictions, let alone propose remedies for them. Critic Gene Plunka interprets van Itallie's theatre "as a therapeutic cure to heal personal and global afflictions." Furthermore, he claims that van Itallie's model "is the triumph of the human spirit through a spiritual understanding of friends, family, and goodwill, which will ultimately transcend to a planet that is well balanced."

Moreover, van Itallie's theatre retains a political agenda without assuming a pseudo-prophetic stance. His plays are political because they offer a critique of existing dramatic representations of world and self while at the same time striving to transgress such representations in order to establish new representations that become the vehicle of the author's genuinely postmodern concerns. This transformative process reinforces the concept that postmodern drama is a veritable theatre of transformation.

- Kerstin Schmidt