

Knox College

theatre
presents

Silent Sky

Written by

Lauren Gunderson

Directed by

Liz Carlin Metz

Harbach Theatre, CFA
November 2-4, 2023 @ 7:30 pm
November 4, 2023 @ 2:00 pm

Knox College Observatory viewing: Friday, November 3 following the performance.

Welcome to the first faculty directed production of the Department of Theatre 2023-24 Season. We are thrilled to once again be able to celebrate with you the power of the stage. Knox audiences annually have numbered over two thousand at productions ranging from classic realism to contemporary expressionism and from modern to postmodern. Students who participate in theatre productions each year come from across the academic disciplines, represent all four class years, and number more than 300—not including the students in the audience. 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 on text and in performance. Every year, we seek plays that examine what it means to be human and how we negotiate that experience as a society and a community—past, present, and future. We select our seasons from a range of plays, which, if considered over the four year tenure of the Knox student, will expose that student to a wide range of lenses with which to view and engage with the human condition.

Our current season on the Harbach Theatre stage consists of plays from the contemporary theatre. All three of the faculty directed plays are in conversation with critical social and political issues currently facing our nation and our world: inclusion, accountability of the powerful, and damage to the vulnerable. Tonight’s production of *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson as directed by Liz Carlin Metz shares the stories of 3 representatives of “The Harvard Computers,” women that classified, cataloged, and documented the star photographs taken by Harvard astronomers (men) from all of the world and whose work led directly to our modern understanding of the universe. In winter term, Deana Nichols directed two time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage’s *Clyde’s* where we drop in on a truck stop sandwich shop that offers its formerly incarcerated kitchen staff a shot at redemption. Even as the shop’s callous owner tries to keep them down, the staff members learn to reclaim their lives, find purpose, and become inspired to dream by their shared quest to create the perfect sandwich. In spring term, Jeff Grace will direct the moving and ethereal *Coast Starlight* where one morning, a young man boards the *Coast Starlight*, a long-distance train that runs from Los Angeles to Seattle. He’s got a secret that can land him in terrible trouble, and he has roughly one thousand miles to enlist the help of his fellow travelers - all of whom are reckoning with their own choices in search of a way forward. Keith Bunin’s new play is a smart, funny, and compassionate story about our capacity for invention and reinvention when life goes off the rails. All aboard--come celebrate with us!

Content Information



THEATRE DEPARTMENT FACULTY

Smith V. Brand Distinguished Prof of Theatre.....	Liz Carlin Metz
Associate Professor of Theatre	Craig Choma
Associate Professor of Theatre	Jeff Grace
Associate Professor of Theatre	Deana Nichols
Director of Costume & Makeup.....	Allison Smith Hahn
Professor of Practice	Sherwood Kiraly

Knox College Theatre Presents

Silent Sky

A play by Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Liz Carlin Metz

Scenic Design by Craig Choma

Costume Design by Amelia Waltz

Lighting Design by Gwen Heidank

Original Music by Jenny Giering

Sound Coordination by Vansh Chugh

Videography Design by Craig Choma

Properties Design by Susan Gibbs

Setting; Wisconsin, Cambridge MA,
and the Atlantic Ocean (1905-1921)

Please; No photographs or video/audio recording
Turn off cell phones, notification alerts, or anything
that may emit light or sound.

The performance's running time is two hours,
including a ten-minute intermission.

Commissioned and first produced by South Coast Repertory with
support from the Elizabeth George Foundation. SILENT SKY is
presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing,
LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection.
(www.dramatists.com)

Cast

Henerietta Leavitt.....Mei Zuch
Peter Shaw.....Cole Songster
Margaret Leavitt.....Hazel Carroll
Williamina Flemming Alexis Sendall
Annie Cannon.....Elizabeth Menges

Production Staff for Silent Sky

Director.....Liz Carlin Metz
Set Designer.....Craig Choma
Video Designer.....Craig Choma
Lighting Designer.....Gwen Heidank
Costume Designer.....Amelia Walz
Sound Coordinator.....Vansh Chugh
Original MusicJenny Giering
Properties Design.....Susan Gibbs
Specialty Properties Designer.....Nina Frost
(Belhaven University)
Co-Stage Managers.....Carissa Medlock
Naelin Peffley
Costume Studio Supervisor..Allison Smith Hahn
Sound Board Operator.....Benjamin Sheats
Video Operator..... Jakob Brody
Deck Supervisor.....Carissa Medlock
Deck Crew..... Jaelin Carwell
Dramaturge.....Daisy Buchanan

Pioneering Women in Astronomy Throughout the Decades

by Daisy Buchanan

Women have been at the forefront of scientific advancement since the beginning of time, though proper acknowledgement has been long in coming. In the field of astronomy, countless women have made and continue to make outstanding discoveries that still impact astronomy research today. *Silent Sky* tells the story of three women who made huge advancements in astronomy in the early 19th century.

The humorous Scottish “firecracker,” Williamina Fleming began her career in astronomy first as a housekeeper for Edward Pickering (Head of the Harvard Observatory) and later was hired to work at the Observatory to analyze information. There, she examined stars on photographic plates noting brightness and intensity and examined theory spectra. Throughout her career she discovered and cataloged 310 variable stars, 10 novae, and nebulae including the horsehead nebula. H.H Turner, a professor of astronomy at Oxford in 1912, said, “As an astronomer, Mrs. Fleming was somewhat exceptional in being a woman; and in putting her work alongside that of others, it would be unjust not to remember that she left her heavy daily labors at the observatory to undertake on her return home those household cares of which a man usually expects to be relieved. She was fully equal to the double task . . .” (Gordon 1978).

In 1912 Henrietta Leavitt joined Fleming, cataloging stars. She began noticing a pattern in Cepheid Variables and went on to study the correlation between luminosity and periods of dimming/brightening. Her discovery was groundbreaking, as it allowed astronomers to calculate the distance to galaxies and led Edwin Hubble to espouse the Big Bang Theory and introduce the idea of an expanding universe.

Like Fleming and Leavitt, Annie Jump Cannon worked at the Harvard Observatory, notably on the Henry Draper Catalog. She created a new way to classify stars via temperature and devised a mnemonic device to remember the classification system that became widely used; “Oh Be A Fine Girl- Kiss Me!” (OBAFGKM). Her data on stellar spectra led to Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin’s 1925 discovery of hydrogen being the main component of stars.

These women all faced opposition in their careers. Fleming moved all the way from Scotland to Boston where she quickly became a single mother to an infant when her husband left her. Leavitt and Cannon were hearing impaired as a result of scarlet fever when they were young leaving them to face even more challenges in the male dominated field of astronomy. Fleming, Cannon, and Leavitt fought hard for their inclusion and paved the way for countless future women and people of other marginalized identities to be acknowledged and included in science.

Author and Composer

LAUREN GUNDERSON (Playwright) is one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015 topping the list thrice including 2022/23. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her play *The Catastrophist*, about her husband virologist Nathan Wolfe, premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the *Miss Bennet* plays with Margot Melcon, and *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* premiered off-Broadway and at Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*; *Exit Pursued By A Bear*; *The Taming* and *Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists*; *The Book of Will*; *Silent Sky*; *Bauer, Natural Shocks*, *The Wickhams* and *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book [Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon](#) is available from Two Lions/Amazon. She is the book writer for musicals with Ari Afsar ([Jeannette](#)), Dave Stewart and Joss Stone ([The Time Traveller's Wife](#)), Jorjah Kwamé ([Sinister](#)), Kait Kerrigan and Bree Lowdermilk ([Justice](#) and [Earthise](#)), and Kira Stone ([Built for This](#)). She is a board member of The Playwrights Foundation. LaurenGunderson.com

JENNY GIERING (Original Music) is a theater composer who writes both musicals and incidental scores for straight plays. She holds an undergraduate degree from Harvard and an MFA from the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU. She has been artist in residence at Harvard and at the York Theater Company. Her awards include The Jonathan Larson Prize, The Constance Klinsky Prize from Second Stage Theater Company, The National Art Song Award, New Dramatists' Frederick Loewe Award, several NEA and NAMT production grants. She has twice received the Tilles Music Chair from Chicago Shakespeare and the Weston New Musical Award. She has scored plays at TheatreWorks/Silicon Valley, Chicago Shakespeare, Shakespeare Theater, Weston Playhouse, Barrington Stage among many others. Her residencies include Montalvo, Goodspeed Opera House's Mercer Colony, Rhinebeck Writers Retreat, and Sundance's Ucross Residency. Currently, she's working on two musicals: *Alice Bliss* (commissioned by Playwrights Horizons, book by Karen Hartman, lyrics by Adam Gwon, directed by Mark Brokaw) and *What We Leave Behind* (book & lyrics by Sean Barry), a one woman show exploring her journey through chronic illness. Her essays about her disability have appeared in Slate Magazine and the New York Times.

The Harvard Computers

ANNIE JUMP CANNON (1863-1941) was known as "the census taker of the sky," who attained significant scientific attention for her work in the classification of stellar spectra. Cannon studied physics and astronomy at Wellesley College, graduating in 1884. In 1894 she returned to Wellesley for a year of advanced study in astronomy, and in 1895 she enrolled at Radcliffe in order to continue her studies under Edward C. Pickering. In 1896 Cannon was named an assistant at the Harvard Observatory, becoming one of a group known as "Pickering's Women." In a catalog of 1,122 stars published in 1901, Cannon drastically simplified Fleming's initial classification scheme to the classes O, B, A, F, G, K, and M. It was soon realized that Cannon's scheme actually was classifying stars according to their temperature, and her spectral classifications were universally adopted. She eventually obtained and classified spectra for more than 225,000 stars. Her work was published in nine volumes as the Henry Draper Catalogue (1918–24). In 1911 Cannon succeeded Fleming as curator of astronomical photographs, cataloging tens of thousands of additional stars down to the 11th magnitude for the two-volume Henry Draper Extension (1925, 1949). The work was an invaluable contribution to astronomy, bearing strongly on countless other critical areas of research and exerting major influence on the evolution of the science of astronomy from one of mere observation to one of great theoretical and philosophical content. In the course of her work, Cannon also discovered some 300 variable stars and 5 novae. She received the first honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford to be awarded to a woman (1925) and the Henry Draper Medal of the National Academy of Sciences in 1931. She was also the first woman to become an officer in the American Astronomical Society. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Annie-Jump-Cannon> 10/11/23

HENRIETTA SWAN LEAVITT (1868-1921) American astronomer known for her discovery of the relationship between period and luminosity in Cepheid variables, pulsating stars that vary regularly in brightness in periods ranging from a few days to several months. Leavitt attended Oberlin College (1886–88) transferring to the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women (later Radcliffe College), graduating summa cum laude in 1892. In 1895 she became a volunteer assistant in the Harvard Observatory, and in 1902 received a permanent staff appointment. A crucial phase of her work was to ascertain photographically standardized values for stellar magnitudes. Devising new methods of analysis, she determined their magnitudes and then those of a much larger sample in the same region, extending the scale of standard brightness down to the 21st magnitude. In 1917 Leavitt advanced to a position as head of Photographic Stellar Photometry. Leavitt's outstanding achievement was her discovery in 1912 that in a certain class of variable stars, the Cepheid variables, the period of the cycle of fluctuation in brightness is highly regular and is determined by the actual luminosity of the star. The most dramatic application of her work was Hubble's use in 1924 of a Cepheid variable to determine the distance to the great nebula in Andromeda, which was the first distance measurement for a galaxy outside the Milky Way. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henrietta-Swan-Leavitt> 9/9/23

WILLIAMINA PATON STEVENS FLEMING (1857-1911) was a one of the first and most famous of the 19th and 20th century women astronomers. During her career, she helped develop a common designation system for stars and catalogued thousands of stars and other astronomical phenomena. Fleming is especially noted for her discovery of the Horsehead Nebula in 1888. Trained as a teacher, she found work as a maid in the home of Harvard professor Edward Charles Pickering, director of the Harvard College Observatory. In 1881, Pickering hired Fleming to do clerical work at the observatory. While there, she devised and helped implement a system of assigning stars a letter according to how much hydrogen could be observed in their spectra. Fleming was placed in charge of dozens of women hired as "computers" to do mathematical classifications, and edited the observatory's publications. She contributed significantly to the cataloguing of stars that would be published as the Henry Draper Catalogue. Within nine years, she catalogued more than 10,000 stars. During her work, she discovered 59 gaseous nebulae, over 310 variable stars, and 10 novae. In 1907, she published a list of 222 variable stars she had discovered. In 1888, Fleming discovered the Horsehead Nebula. In 1899, Fleming was given the title of Curator of Astronomical Photographs. In 1906, she was made an honorary member of the Royal Astronomical Society of London, the first American woman to be so elected. Soon after, she was appointed honorary fellow in astronomy of Wellesley College. She published A Photographic Study of Variable Stars (1907) and Spectra and Photographic Magnitudes of Stars in Standard Regions (1911). She died in Boston of pneumonia in 1911. <https://scientificwomen.net/women/fleming-williamina-37> 10/11/23

The Cast

MEI ZUCH (Henrietta) is a junior majoring in Theatre and minoring in Music. Mei has been a part of multiple productions in the Knox Theatre Department, including *The Kassandriad* (Sound Designer), *The Wolves* (#8, Sound Designer), *Antigonick* (Stage Manager, Sound Designer), and *The Language Archive* (Emma), and also co-organizes New Plays Workshop for the Theatre Advisory Board. Outside of theatre, Mei is a member of the Knox College Choir and Knox Chamber Singers, a singer for the pop band Chicxulub, and a member of the club Water Polo team. Mei is excited and grateful for the opportunity to be a part of *Silent Sky* and for the support of friends and family throughout the process. Mei is from Portland, Oregon.

COLE SONGSTER (Peter) is a junior majoring in Theatre and Creative Writing. His involvement in Knox Theatre includes *The Aliens* (KJ), *Antigonick* (Nick), *Play* (Director/Writer), *The Language Archive* (Old Men), and *Sure Thing* (Bill). He is a very active and excited participant in the arts on campus, currently serving as co-Production Manager for the Theatre Advisory Board, Secretary of the Knox College Choir, and Playwriting Editor for Quiver. He would like to thank the cast and crew for the opportunity to work alongside them on this show and his friends across the department for their love and support. Cole is from Portland, Oregon.

HAZEL CARROLL (Margaret Leavitt) is a first-year with interests in theatre, history, and literature. She has been involved in the performing arts for as long as she can remember. Her favorite roles have been The Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* and Malcolm in *Macbeth*. She would like to thank her family and friends for convincing her to audition and for supporting her in all other aspects of her life. Hazel is from Saint Paul, Minnesota.

LEXI SENDALL (Williamina) is a transfer sophomore with a self-designed major in Book Studies and a minor in religious studies with plans to pursue a career as a Special Collections Librarian. She is ecstatic to be a part of her first production at Knox and is so thankful for the welcoming community here! Recent performance credits include *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (Ruth), *Elegies: A Song Cycle*, *She Loves Me* (Amalia), *Into the Woods* (Cinderella), and her first directing project, *The Theory of Relativity*. She spends her time working in the Archives, being in the Tri Delta house, and practicing her Scottish accent. She gives special thanks to her family and friends for their endless support! Dedicated to J & G.

ELIZABETH MENGES: (Annie Cannon) is a first year at Knox. She has vast interest in Creative Writing, Japanese, Asian Studies and Art. She acted throughout all of highschool. She is excited to tell this amazing story. She is from New Hope, Minnesota

The Production Team

ALLISON SMITH HAHN (Costume Studio Manager) is an instructor, resident costume designer, and costume studio manager. She received her BA from Knox, studying under the mentorship of Margo Shively and serving as a Post-Baccalaureate Fellow in the Costume Studio. Chicagoland costume designs include *Multitudes* and *Pool (no water)* (Vitalist Theatre). *Good People*, *The American Clock*, *Red, I and You*, *Another Bone* (Redtwist, resident designer), *Rhinoceros* (Theatre Heist), *Miles Away*, *Mike and Seth*, *Hello Failure*, *Through the Leaves*, *Request Concert* (Side Project Theatre), *How to Succeed in Business [...]*, and *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* (Wilmette Center for the Arts), *Next Fall* (AstonRep). Allison holds an MLIS (University of Illinois) and is most recently from Chicago, Illinois.

AMELIA WALZ (Costume Designer) is a visiting guest artist for fall term and a 2023 Knox graduate with a BA in Theatre and Art History. During her time at Knox, she worked as a teaching assistant in the costume shop and as a costume designer for *The How and the Why*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *We Are Pussy Riot or Everything is PR*, and *Antigonick*. She appeared on stage in *Dear Elizabeth* (Elizabeth), *Antigonick* (Ismene/ Euridyke) and *The Wolves* (#11). She has also worked as a costume technician and designer for Shenandoah Summer Music Theatre. This past summer she was the costume design intern for The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. She would like to thank her friends, family, and mentors for their endless support and encouragement.

LIZ CARLIN-METZ (Director) is the chair of the Department of Theatre and Co-Founding Artistic Director of Vitalist Theatre in Chicago. She has directed award winning and productions of *Life is a Dream*, *Pool (no water)*, *The Night Season*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *A Passage to India*, *Anung's First American Christmas* (World Premiere), *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *King Lear*, and *Anna Karenina* among many others. Some memorable Knox productions include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *As You Like it*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *12th Night*, *Angels In America (Perestroika)*, and *War and Peace*. She has worked as a voice director at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Tacoma Actor's Guild, Steppenwolf (Chicago and Off-Broadway), and Williamstown Theatre Festival (MA), where she also administered the Apprentice Program and directed Shakespeare and Moliere with the Act One Company. Liz holds an M.F.A. from Temple University and teaches performance at Knox. She is originally from Rhode Island.

CRAIG CHOMA (Scenic Designer, Lighting Designer, Videography Designer, Scenic Artist, Technical Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Knox Theatre's resident designer and technical director. Favorite Knox designs include *The Wolves*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *The Laramie Project*, *The Drowning Girls*, *Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere*, *Rapture Blister Burn*, *The Caffè Cino Project*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *The Green Bird*, *Under Construction*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Euripides' Medea*, *Angels in America*, *Intimate Apparel*, *The Skriker*, *War and Peace*, and *Macbeth*. Craig has designed both sets and/or lights professionally in Chicago, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Ohio, Toronto, Canada, and Avignon, France. He has been the production designer for a number of fundraising events, and he has collaborated on court cases, creating forensic models used in the presentation of evidence. Craig holds a B.A. in Theatre and Philosophy from Knox College (1993), and MFA's in both Scenic and Lighting Design from Carnegie Mellon University (1996). Craig is originally from Chicago, Illinois.

VANSH CHUGH (Sound Coordinator) is a first-year interested in sports analytics, education, music, and data analytics. He has pursued hip-hop, Indian classical music, and pop music via his voice and on instruments such as the guitar, piano, drums, tabla, and the sitar since he was five. For the last four years, he has been focused on music production and songwriting and has released several songs. He has been a sound coordinator for several plays during high school and looks forward to doing the same at Knox. Vansh is from Delhi, India.

NAELIN PEFFLEY (Co-Stage Manager) is a first-year student who plans to study theatre and humanities. This is her first time stage managing a production. They participated regularly in theatre at Lane Tech High School, playing Adam in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the headmaster in *Puffs*. Naelin worked with The Miracle Center in Chicago and The YAT Bently Center in California for acting. Naelin is from Chicago, IL.

SUSAN GIBBS (Properties Designer) is a 5th-year at Knox majoring in Theatre and minoring in Music Theory & Composition. Her prop design credits at Knox include *Dear Elizabeth* (2022), *We Are Pussy Riot or Everything is PR* (2022), *The Laundromat* (2022), *The Language Archive* (2022), and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2023). She is currently applying to MFA programs in properties design, and is also the singer in the Knox funk band, Strawberry M.I.L.F. Susan is from St. Louis, Missouri.

CARISSA MEDLOCK (Co-Stage Manager) is a first-year planning to major in computer science and minor in psychology. It is her first time working on a theatre production, but she hopes to get involved in many more throughout her time at Knox. They would like to thank all of the wonderful people involved in the show for putting hours and hours of hard work into this production. Carissa is from Houston, Texas

DAISY BUCHANAN (Dramaturge) is a junior majoring in Theatre and Creative Writing. They have recently been seen in *The Kassandriad* (Hekuba) and *The Wolves* (Soccer Mom). They also were the assistant stage manager and assistant director for *The Wolves* and they serve as the House Manager on the Theatre Advisory Board. Daisy works on the Knox Farm and enjoys singing. They would like to thank their family, friends, and the theatre faculty. Daisy is from Adelaide, South Australia.

This production is made possible in part by alumni donations to
The Liz Jahnke Metz Memorial Fund for Theatre
Contribute to Knox Theatre by donating at: knoxtheatre.org

Administrative Staff

House Manager.....Daisy Buchanan
Box Office.....Student Volunteers
Ushers.....Student Volunteers
Social Media.....Hadley Mollman and Jonas Dodge
Poster Design.....Craig Choma
Programs.....Madelyn Pellegrino
Work Study Teaching Assistants.....Nida Baig, Jaylen Carwell,
Grace Dinges, Gwen Heidank, Nicole Ruby, Andreas McDonald
Scene Shop Volunteers.....Leah Binzel, Mei Zuch,
Bria Gilliam, Kengo Uehara
Costume Studio Teaching Assistants.....Rowan Collins,
Audra Steinbrugge, JoJo Ludington, Soran Rubio, Amanda Jens,
Costume Studio Volunteers.....Daisy Buchanan, Carissa Medlock,
Haruko Sawa, Noelle Brown, Emily Kunkel, Kailyn Storer, Elizabeth
Menges, Arielle Brannon, Sienna DeSuza-Bradshaw

Special Thanks

Professor Mark Schroyer, Professor Nathalie Haurberg, Dean of the College Michael
Schneider, Pat Pendergast, Cathie Brush, Trent Avery, Belhaven University
Department of Theatre: Braden Graves, Assistant Professor Peter Rule: Monmouth
College Theatre Department, Troy Crumb, Jacob Etienne, Hunter Anderson,
T.J. Nehls, and Kay Vandermuehlen

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