

Knox College

*theatre*  
presents

# THE COAST STARLIGHT

BY KEITH BUNIN

DIRECTED BY JEFF GRACE



# WELCOME TO KNOX COLLEGE THEATRE

Welcome to the final production of the 2023/24 season: *The Coast Starlight*, directed by Jeff Grace. The Department of Theatre continually seeks to bring to the Knox stages plays that engage our community in considerations of what it means to be human and how we, as individuals and as a community, navigate that journey. This season has posed the question that every class of graduating seniors every year asks themselves: "What is next?" Commencement speakers around the nation will soon be attempting to inspire young adults with reflections on the path toward answers to that eternal, existential question.

This year, our theatre season has similarly sought to inspire our Knox community to reflect upon the uncertain horizon that lies before us. In the fall production of *Silent Sky*, turn of the century women astronomers determined to know "what's out there" gazed at the glass ceiling that literally stood between them and the universe and proclaimed, "We're coming!" In the winter term production of *Clyde's*, the formerly incarcerated employees of a truck stop diner struggled to envision their next steps as they discovered their identities through the quest to invent the perfect sandwich, thereby empowering themselves to claim their right to step into the world. And, finally, in *The Coast Starlight*, a group of strangers on a train grapple with the same existential question that each of us in our own time will face, "How do I shape my future?"

Not a bad question to continually ask ourselves. Every day.

Bon voyage—safe journey,  
— Liz Carlin Metz, Chair

## 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  
Assistant Professor of Theatre .....Deana Nichols  
Director of Costume & Makeup .....Allison Smith Hahn  
Writer-in-Residence .....Sherwood Kiraly

Knox College Theatre  
presents

# THE COAST STARLIGHT

BY KEITH BUNIN

DIRECTED BY JEFF GRACE

SCENIC DESIGN BY CRAIG CHOMA

COSTUME DESIGN BY ALLISON SMITH HAHN

LIGHTING & PROJECTION DESIGN BY CRAIG CHOMA  
AND GRACE DINGES

SOUND DESIGN BY MEI ZUCH

STUDIO THEATRE, CFA  
MAY 16, 17, 18, 2024

*Please:*

**No photographs, video, or recording.  
Turn off all cell phones, notification alerts,  
or anything that may emit light or sound.**

"The Coast Starlight" is presented by special arrangement with  
TRW PLAYS, New York, NY. [trwplays.com](http://trwplays.com)

## THE CAST

T. J. ....	Benjamin Sheats
JANE .....	Mei Zuch
NOAH .....	Esteban Lopez
LIZ .....	Keyera Williams
ED .....	Cole Songster
ANNA .....	Delaney Edsall

## TIME & PLACE

A few years ago.

On a train from Los Angeles to Seattle.

## SCENES

Union Station, Los Angeles

San Luis Obispo

Salinas

San Jose

Jack London Square, Oakland

Between Emeryville & Redding (a sleeping car)

Dunsmuir / Klamath Falls / Portland / Olympia

King Street Station, Seattle

*The Coast Starlight* is performed without an intermission

## CONTENT NOTICE

Please be advised that this play includes discussions of war induced trauma, military desertion, sex, alcoholism, suicide, and drug abuse. It also contains moments of very harsh language.

## **PRODUCTION STAFF**

Director .....	Jeff Grace
Technical Director .....	Craig Choma
Stage Manager .....	Carissa Medlock
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Siena Adwere-Boamah
Scenic Designer .....	Craig Choma
Lead Carpenters .....	Gwen Heidank & Andreas McDonald
Scenery & Lighting T.A.s .....	Nida Baig, Leah Binzel, Grace Dinges Gwen Heidank, Andreas McDonald Hadley Mollman, Tara Rose Nicole Ruby, Mei Zuch
Scene Shop Volunteers .....	Martin Herrera, Alan Plascencia
Costume Designer .....	Allison Smith Hahn
Costume Studio Technical Artists .....	Daisy Buchanan Amanda Jens, JoJo Ludington Carissa Medlock, Zo Peterson Soran Rubio, Audra Steinbrugge
Lighting Designer .....	Craig Choma
Assistant Lighting Designer .....	Grace Dinges
Lead Electrician.....	Grace Dinges
Lighting Board Operator .....	Carissa Medlock
Projection Designers .....	Craig Choma & Grace Dinges
Sound Designer .....	Mei Zuch
Sound Board & Video Operator .....	Siena Adwere-Boamah
Props .....	Allison Smith Hahn & Jeff Grace

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

Chairperson .....	Liz Carlin Metz
House Management .....	Student Volunteers
Box Office .....	Student Volunteers
Tickets & Reservations .....	Madelyn Pellegrino & Jeff Grace
Ushers .....	Student Volunteers
Contract Licensing .....	Jennifer Lazarz
Publicity .....	Cast & Crew
Poster Design .....	Craig Choma
Lobby Display .....	Craig Choma, Grace Dinges & Peter Bailley
Programs.....	Jeff Grace

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

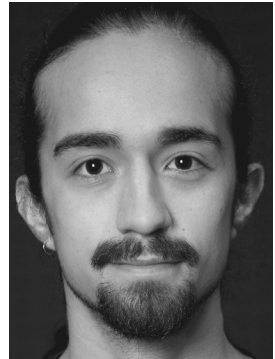
(in order of appearance)

**BENJAMIN SHEATS** (T.J.) is a senior majoring in Music and minoring in Theatre. This is his first time acting on stage at Knox after previously doing musicals in high school, like *Shrek* (Wolf), *Footloose* (Chuck), and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Dan). At Knox, he has worked behind the scenes running video for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Silent Sky*. Outside of theatre, Ben is actively involved in music production, songwriting, recording, and audio engineering. He is a member of the musical duo Lost in the North Side, and their music is available on all streaming platforms. He is also a member of the Knox College Choir and has been involved with track & field, cross country, and student senate during his time here. He would like to thank God, his family, friends, Jeff and the supporting cast, and all the wonderful audience members for their time and attention. Ben is from Dixon, Illinois.

**MEI ZUCH** (Jane & Sound Designer) is a junior majoring in Theatre and minoring in Music. Mei has been a part of multiple productions in the Knox Theatre Department, including

*Clyde's* (Sound Designer), *Silent Sky* (Henrietta), *The Kassandriad* (Sound Designer, and *The Wolves* (#8 and Sound Designer). Mei 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, and singer for the pop band Chicxulub. Mei is thrilled to be able to work on *The Coast Starlight*, and is grateful for the support of friends and family throughout the process. Mei is from Portland, Oregon.

**ESTEBAN LOPEZ** (Noah) is a senior majoring in Theatre and minoring in Environmental Studies. He has acted in *Clyde's* (Rafael), *The Lindworm* (Sasha), *The Thanksgiving Play* (Ensemble), *We Are Pussy Riot or Everything is P.R.* (Patriarch, Professor Mihailgor, Ensemble), *Dear Elizabeth* (Robert Lowell #1), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Ed), various plays for New Plays Workshop and New Plays Festival, and the devised play *Laundromat* (Avery). His goal is to act on a Broadway stage and put on shows at community theaters around the country. He would like to thank



friends and family for being a constant support along the bumpy road less traveled, Knox's theatre department for helping him to develop his love for the stage, and you for coming to support Knox's production of *The Coast Starlight*. Esteban is from Chicago, Illinois.

**KEYERA WILLIAMS** (Liz) is a freshman majoring in Music and Theatre. Some of her favorite roles include performing in *Aladdin* at Peoria Players (Manal) and in *Clyde's* at Knox (Letitia). Her goal is to eventually inspire people all over to go after their dreams and realize no dream is too big. She would like to thank her director for this opportunity, the cast for being encouraging and such nice people to work with, and her friends and family for always supporting her dream by being there. Keyera is from Peoria, Illinois.

**COLE SONGSTER** (Ed) is a junior majoring in Theatre and Creative Writing. He has previously acted in the Knox Theatre productions of *Silent Sky* (Peter), *The Aliens* (KJ), *Antigonick* (Nick), *The Language Archive* (Old Men), and *Sure Thing*

(Bill). He has also worked on *Clyde's* (Stage Manager, Assistant Sound Designer) and *Play* (Director, Playwright). He is currently a Production Manager for the Theatre Advisory Board, Playwriting Editor for *Quiver*, and sings with the Knox College Choir and Chamber Singers. When free from responsibilities, he can be found writing poetry or going on walks where he admires the clouds and how they move. Cole is from Portland, Oregon.

**DELANEY EDSALL** (Anna) is a first-year majoring in Theatre. Delaney previously directed *Rat Play* in Studio Theatre and New Plays Workshop. She has also participated in *Clyde's* (Deck Crew). Her favorite past roles include performing in *Museum* (Barbara Castle) and *Almost, Maine* (Marvalyn). Next year, she will serve as Education Coordinator for Terpsichore Dance Collective and House Manager on the Theatre Advisory Board. She would like to thank the Knox theatre community for their incredible creative work, and her friends and family for the continued support. Delaney is from Bangkok, Thailand, and Ames, Iowa.



## WHO'S WHO IN THE CREATIVE TEAM

**JEFF GRACE** (Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Knox College. He received both his M.S. in Education (2004) and his Ph.D. in Theatre History, Theory, and Literature (2008) from Indiana University. Jeff's work as a director has been seen on stages at Knox College, Indiana University, Brigham Young University, Brighton High Productions, UHSAA Jordan District, and Street Theatre Jab. Recent directing credits include *The Wolves*, *Dear Elizabeth*, *Mrs. Harrison*, *A Doll's House Part 2*, *The Laramie Project*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Nether*, *The Secret in the Wings*, *Rapture Blister Burn*, *The Caffè Cino Project*, *Next Fall*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Under Construction*, Euripides' *Medea*, *The Serpent*, *This is Your Song*, *Chess*, *The World Goes 'Round*, *Grease!*, *Pippin*, *Once on This Island*, George Orwell's *1984*, *Cagebirds*, *Up the Down Staircase*, *The Diviners*, *Doors*, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, and *Act Without Words*. Jeff is excited to present *The Coast Starlight* at Knox, and he is thankful to such a wonderful cast for all their hard work. He would especially like to thank his husband, Zack, for the unwavering love, support, and patience through the many hours away from home. Jeff is originally from Pleasant Grove, Utah.

**CRAIG CHOMA** (Scenic Designer, Lighting Designer, Projection Designer) is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Knox Theatre's resident designer and technical director. Favorite Knox designs

include *Clyde's*, *Silent Sky*, *The Wolves*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *The How and the Why*, *The Laramie Project*, *The Drowning Girls*, *The Secret in the Wings*, Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, *Rapture Blister Burn*, *The Caffè Cino Project*, *In the Next Room or the vibrator play*, *The Green Bird*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Under Construction*, *A Lie of the Mind*, Euripides' *Medea*, *Angels in America*, *Intimate Apparel*, *The Skriker*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *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. Craig designs for both theatre and dance, and he enjoys both equally. He has designed in proscenium, thrust, and arena spaces, small storefront theaters, converted churches and libraries, and site-specific locations. 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 M.F.A.'s in both Scenic and Lighting Design from Carnegie Mellon University (1996). Craig is originally from Chicago, Illinois.

**ALLISON SMITH HAHN** (Costume Designer) is an instructor, resident costume designer, and costume studio manager. She received her B.A. 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), and *Next Fall* (AstonRep). Allison holds an MLIS from the University of Illinois, and is most recently from Chicago, Illinois.

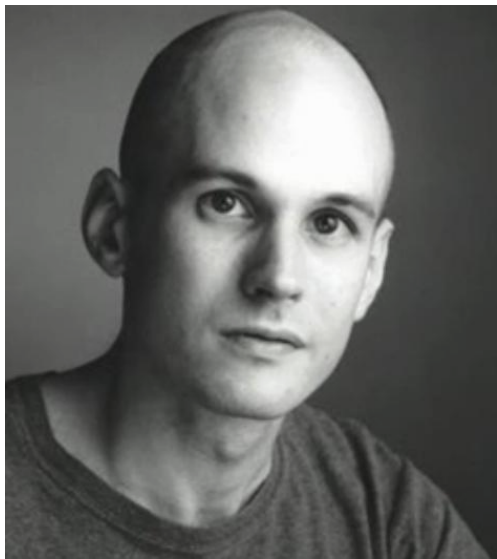
**GRACE DINGES** (Assistant Lighting Designer & Co-Projection Designer) is a sophomore majoring in Theatre. They have been involved in theatre both on stage and off since 2013. Previous Knox credits in lighting design include Terpsichore Dance Collective (Winter 2023), Terpsichore Dance Collective (Fall 2023), and Aetherius Veritas. They also designed video and projections for the Tritones *Les Misérables* Medley. In addition, they have been involved with stage management (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*), props design (*The Laundromat*, *The Language Archive*, *The Aliens*, *The Kassandriad*, *Clyde's*), directing (New Plays Workshop Fall 2022, *Les Misérables* Medley) and scenic art (*The Wolves*). Grace is from Pullman, Washington.

**MEI ZUCH** (Sound Designer) is also performing the role of Jane in tonight's production. At Knox, Mei has also designed the sound for *Clyde's*, *The Kassandriad*, and *The Wolves*. See the previous section "Who's Who in the Cast" for more information about Mei.

**CARRISSA MEDLOCK** (Stage Manager) is a first-year student planning to major in Computer Science and minor in Psychology. She has recently worked on *Silent Sky* (co-stage manager) and *The Rat Play* (stage manager), so this production is Carissa's second faculty-directed show and her third show at Knox. They would like to thank their family for their support even from 1,000 miles away, their suite-mates for their support every night after rehearsal, and the amazing cast and crew who worked to get this show together in such a short time frame! Carissa is from Houston, Texas.

**SIENA ADWERE-BOAMAH** (ASM) is a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Previously, she was involved with *Clyde's* (Assistant Props Designer and Deck Supervisor). Outside of theatre, Siena spends her time singing in the Knox College Choir, working as an admissions ambassador and psych tutor, and building props for the LARP club. She is super excited to be a part of *The Coast Starlight* and would like to thank everyone involved! Siena is from Palo Alto, California.

## KEITH BUNIN



Keith Bunin is the author of *The Coast Starlight*, which was commissioned and first produced by La Jolla Playhouse in 2019, and received its New York City premiere in 2023 at Lincoln Center Theater.

Keith was born in Poughkeepsie, New York. He attended film school at New York University, and then graduated with a B.A. from Goddard College. He later received a master's degree from Columbia University.

His plays *The Credeaux Canvas* (2002), *The World Over* (2002), and *The Busy World Is Hushed* (2006) all premiered Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons. His other plays include *The Unbuilt City* (New York Stage and Film), *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (La Jolla Playhouse / City Theater Pittsburgh, 2012), *Vera Laughed* (New World Stages and Film), *The Principality of Sorrows* (Pure Orange Productions, 2009), *The King of Clocks* (Lincoln Center Lab), and *A Joke* (Malaparte Theatre Company). He also wrote the book for the musical *10 Million Miles* (Atlantic Theater Company, 2007). Keith also has a few essays published in *American Film Magazine* and on the web at McSweeney's Internet Tendency.

His screenwriting credits include working for Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, CBS Films, Fox Animation, and Likely Story/Mandalay Films, among others. He wrote the screenplay for the film *Horns* (2013), which was directed by Alexandre Aja, starring Daniel Radcliffe, and was based on the novel by Joe Hill. He co-wrote Disney/Pixar's *Onward* (2020) along with Dan Scanlon and Jason Headley, and he shares story credit on Netflix's *Nimona* (2023). He recently adapted Steve Almond's and Julianna Baggott's novel *Which Brings Me to You* (2024) for film. Keith was also a writer for the HBO TV series *In Treatment* (2009).

## **"It's a journey of what could be ... and what might have been."**

Do you ever think about the strangers around you, and how your world could change with a simple "hello"? Playwright Keith Bunin explains how he used this idea as inspiration to write his most recent play *The Coast Starlight*. He says:

*It's a play about a young man who gets on a train without knowing where he's going or what he's going to do once he gets there. He's a navy medic who has been stationed at Camp Pendleton, and he is in the process of making a big and potentially dangerous decision in his life – and that's sort of the literal story of the play. When I was living out in California for a writing job, I was doing a lot of traveling up and down the west coast, and I discovered there was this train called the Coast Starlight that went from L.A. to Seattle everyday, a 36 hour train ride, so about a day and a half. I decided to take that train a bunch of times. I discovered that part of the experience of living in a city where you don't know many people, and you're traveling a lot, is realizing that you're alone ...a lot. But also, realizing that you're alone 'in public' a lot. The lives of the people that you're in close proximity with —even if you don't talk to them or you are only able to say very simple things to them— well, they become a real part of your life.*

*I wanted to write a play in which the imagined conversations or the fantasies people have about each other are given theatrical life because I think that's kind of how we live our lives most of the time. I think one of the great things about writing a play [as opposed to a film] is that you can take something that is kind of an internal state, that might feel like it's the way we think about things, and you can make it three dimensional on stage. So 'The Coast Starlight' is my way of physicalizing the effect we all have on each other when we are together in the same space, even if we don't know we are having it.*

### **A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

Knox Facilities, Flores Printers, Peter Bailley

Zack Wahlquist, Deana Nichols

Knox Theatre Advisory Board (T.A.B.)

*Knox College*

*theatre*

This production is supported in part by the

**ELIZABETH JAHNKE METZ  
THEATRE FUND**

Contribute to Knox Theatre by donating to this fund at:  
[knoxtheatre.org](http://knoxtheatre.org)