



BACKYARD  
RENAISSANCE  
THEATRE COMPANY

*Presents*

# SMOKE FALL

by Noah Haidle

with arrangement by  
Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

a production in Residence at  
La Jolla Playhouse

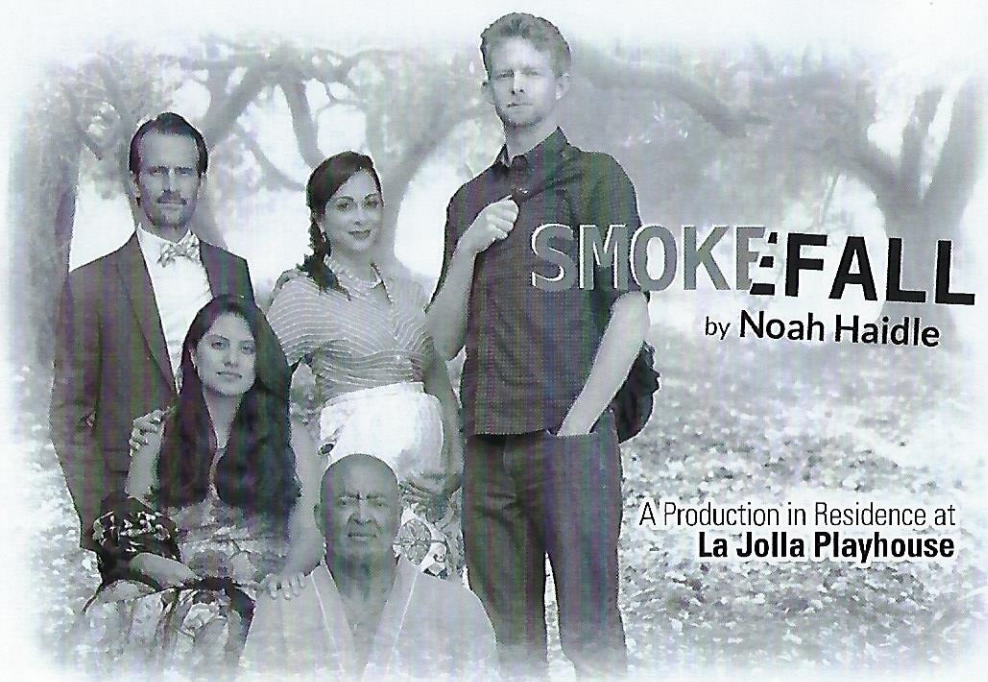
Directed by  
**Andrew Oswald  
& Francis Gercke**

**AUG 23**  
THROUGH  
**SEP 16, 2018**  
**THEODORE AND ADELE  
SHANK THEATRE**

2910 La Jolla Village Drive  
La Jolla, CA 92037

*Starring*  
**Francis Gercke,  
Jessica John,  
Antonio T.J. Johnson,  
Brian Mackey &  
Fedra Ramirez Olivares**





# SMOKEFALL

by Noah Haidle

A Production in Residence at  
**La Jolla Playhouse**

## Cast of Characters

*(in order of appearance)*

**VIOLET** – Jessica John

**FOOTNOTE/FETUS TWO/SAMUEL** – Brian Mackey

**COLONEL/JOHNNY** – Antonio TJ Johnson

**BEAUTY** – Fedra Ramirez Olivares

**DANIEL/FETUS ONE** – Francis Gercke

## Acts

### I. HELP ME REMEMBER

A house in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### II. WHERE WE'LL NEVER GROW OLD

Inside Violet's womb.

### III. THE ATTEMPT IS HOW WE LIVE

The same house in Grand Rapids, Michigan – 74 years later.

*There will be an intermission between Acts II and III*



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RENAISSANCE**  
THEATRE COMPANY

## ABOUT BACKYARD RENAISSANCE

Backyard Renaissance Theatre Company is a non-profit 501(C)(3) with an "art to the gut" sensibility. Founded in 2015 in San Diego, CA, Backyard Renaissance believes that exceptional storytelling is rooted in a sense of joyful play, human connection and gutsy intensity. For more information go to:

[www.backyardrenaissance.com](http://www.backyardrenaissance.com)

## Production Staff

### Backyard Renaissance Executive Director

Jessica John Gercke

### Backyard Renaissance Artistic Director

Francis Gercke

### Backyard Renaissance Producing Director

Anthony Methvin

### Backyard Renaissance Photographer

Daren Scott

### Smokefall Directors

Andrew Oswald and Francis Gercke

### Smokefall Lighting Designer

Curtis Mueller

### Smokefall Costume Designer

Jeanne Reith

### Smokefall Scenic Designer

Justin Humphres

### Smokefall Sound Designer

Melanie Chen Cole

### Smokefall Props Designer

Rachel Hengst

### Smokefall Choreographer

Katie Banville

### Smokefall Stage Manager

Isaac Fowler

### Smokefall Assistant Stage Manager

Savanna Lyons

### Smokefall House Manager

Rachael Fowler

## About The Players

### **Francis Gercke** (PLAYING Daniel/Fetus One-SMOKEFALL Director -BYR ARTISTIC DIR.)

Fran is a graduate of The Actors Studio Drama School at the New School for Social Research. In 2001, Gercke co-founded New Village Arts Theatre in Carlsbad and served as the artistic director until 2008. Recent roles include: *Noises Off*, *Camping with Henry and Tom*, *The Explorers Club*, *Equivocation*, *Freud's Last Session* (Lambs Players); *Stupid F\*\*king Bird*, *True West*, *Fool for Love* (Cygnet Theatre); *The Zoo Story*, *Abundance*, *Parlour Song*, *The Elephant Man* (Backyard Renaissance); *The Behavior of Broadus* (Capital Stage Company); *In the Next Room*, *Honky* (San Diego Rep); *Accomplice*, *Suzette Who Set to Sea* (La Jolla Playhouse WOW and POP Tour); *A Life in the Theatre*, *Time Stands Still* (NCRT); *Hurlyburly*, *Grace*, *Shining City* (ion theatre); *The Pride* (Diversionsary Theatre); *Orphans*, *Playboy of the Western World* (New Village Arts); *Oleanna*, *Macbeth*, *I Hate Hamlet* (Intrepid Theatre Company). He is a resident artist with Cygnet Theatre and recipient of the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award as an actor and a director, as well as a faculty member at Palomar College, University of San Diego, and California State University San Marcos and teaches privately through ActorsApproach.

### **Jessica John Gercke** (PLAYING Violet - BACKYARD RENAISSANCE EXECUTIVE DIR.)

Jessica is the co-founder and executive director of Backyard Renaissance Theatre Company. Backyard Renaissance: *Abundance*, *The Elephant Man*, *Parlour Song*; Lambs Players Theatre: *Noises Off*, *The Explorer's Club*; Cygnet Theatre (Resident Artist): *Private Lives*, *Noises Off*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Love Song*, *Mauritius*, *Communicating Doors*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (SD Playbill - Best Actress), *Burn This* (SD Critic's Circle - Best Actress); Diversionsary Theatre: *The Pride*; *Moxie Theatre: Pulp!*; ion theatre: *Shining City*, *Angels in America*; Moonlight at the AVO: *Born Yesterday*; New Fortune Theatre Company: *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Henry V*; New Village Arts: *The Playboy of the Western World* (Patte - Best Actress); North Coast Repertory Theatre: *Unnecessary Farce*, *School for Lies*, *A Shana Maidel*, and Renaissance Theatre: *A View from the Bridge* (SD Critic's Circle - Best Actress). She was named one of the "Top 50 People to Watch" by San Diego Magazine. Love to fellow-performer Jillian Jeter.

### **Antonio TJ Johnson** (PLAYING Colonel/Johnny) *Backyard Renaissance Debut.*

Antonio TJ Johnson is grateful to be included in this amazing ensemble with Backyard Renaissance Theatre. TJ has been an actor, teacher, singer, songwriter, director, and producer for over 35 years in San Diego. Antonio has appeared at The Old Globe, Moonlight Amphitheatre, Black Ensemble Theatre, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Common Ground Theatre, Lamb's Player's, Cygnet Theatre and Intrepid Company and the The Lajolla Playhouse, Playwrights Project, and Moxie Theatre. He is the Founder of VAGABOND PROJECTS a company focusing on multi discipline live Theatre, Film, Dance and Music projects. His company will pay attention to creative casting, site specific theatre, social issues and creating change from the stage. He has received the Dramalouge Award in 1991 - *Stories about the Old Days*. The Playbill Award - *Buried Child*, 2008 Critic Circle Award and Patte Award for Best Lead actor in *Fences*, directed by Moxie Artistic Director Delicia Turner Sonnenberg. 2013 Resident Artist at Thurgood Marshall College on UCSD. 2015 Ensemble award for August Wilson Rep at Cygnet Theatre, 2017 Critic Circle Award for co direction of *Father Comes home from the Wars*.

### **Brian Mackey** (PLAYING Footnote/Fetus Two/Samuel)

Brian is delighted to be back with Backyard Renaissance, where he was last seen in *Abundance*. Elsewhere: *Noises Off*, *Smoke on the Mountain*, *The Explorer's Club*, *Silent Sky*, *The Angel's Arms*, *Equivocation*, *Dinner with Marlene*, *The Nerd*, *An American Christmas*, *Twelfth Night* (Lamb's Players - Associate Artist); *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Travesties*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *History Boys*, *Christmas Carol* (Cygnet Theatre- Resident Artist); *Romeo, Romeo & Juliet* (The Roustabouts); *All My Sons*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Musical*, *An Enemy of the People* (Intrepid Theatre); *In the Heat of the Night*, *The Woolgatherer*, *Bash: Latter-Day Plays*, *Jack Goes Boating*, *All in the Timing*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Grapes of Wrath* (ion theatre); *In the Next Room or The Vibrator Play* (San Diego Rep); *The Pride*, *The Little Dog Laughed*, *Baby with the Bathwater*, *As Much As You Can*, *Corpus*

*Christi* (Diversionsary Theatre); *A Christmas Carol* ('07, '08, '09), *Little Women* (North Coast Rep); *Born Yesterday* (AVO Playhouse); *Night Sky* (Mo'olelo); *The Heidi Chronicles*, *Julius Caesar* (New Village Arts); *Side Man* (BANG!). Brian was awarded the 2011 Craig Noel Award for Actor of the Year.

### **Fedra Ramirez Olivares** (PLAYING Beauty) *Backyard Renaissance Debut.*

Fedra is a Mexico City born actress based in San Diego. She recently graduated from UCSD with a BA in theatre. Credits include: Diana in *How to Defend Yourself* (Potiker Theatre), Abigail in *#takebackgtaffittihall* (site specific), and Kayleen in *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (Arthur Wagner Theatre).

## About The Production Staff

### **Andrew Oswald** (SMOKEFALL CO-DIRECTOR)

*Smokefall* marks Andrew's second collaboration with Backyard Renaissance. Previously he appeared in their production of *The Elephant Man* as Carr Gomm. He has been seen in San Diego as Charlie in *The Whale* and Harry in *Company* and he assistant directed *Man of La Mancha*, all at Cygnet Theatre. At the Diversionsary Theatre he has worked as a director (*Baby with the Bathwater*) and an actor (*Regrets Only*, *Boys and Girls*, and *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler*.) In New York he was the co-artistic director of Bedtime Sketch Comedy and he has performed at the New York City Opera, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, and Wisconsin Shakespeare Festival. He is a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts.

### **Katie Banville** (SMOKEFALL CHOREOGRAPHER)

Katie is delighted to be returning to Backyard Renaissance, where she previously choreographed *Tarrytown* (World Premiere) and *Gutenberg! The Musical!* Choreographic credits include: Cygnet Theatre (Resident Artist) - *Spamalot* (Choreographer and Associate Director), *A Christmas Carol*, San Diego Repertory - *Beachlot*; San Diego State University - *Company*, Grossmont College - *Lucky Stiff*, *Cinderella*, *80 Days*; The Old Globe - *A Doll's House* (Movement Coordinator). MFA Musical Theatre, San Diego State University. [www.katiebanville.com](http://www.katiebanville.com)

### **Melanie Chen Cole** (SMOKEFALL SOUND DESIGN)

Melanie is delighted to be working with Backyard Renaissance again! Her recent regional credits include: At the Old Place, #SuperShinySara (La Jolla Playhouse), *The Imaginary Invalid* (The Old Globe); *Vietgone* (San Diego Rep); *Cloud 9*, *Three Sisters*, *Romeo & Juliet* (Old Globe/USD MFA Program); *The Father*, *This Random World* (North Coast Repertory Theatre); *Avenue Q*, *Men on Boats* (New Village Arts Theatre); *Bachelorette* (Backyard Renaissance). Melanie holds an M.F.A. in Sound Design for Theatre & Dance from UC San Diego. [www.melaniesound.com](http://www.melaniesound.com)

### **Isaac Folwer** (SMOKEFALL STAGE MANAGER)

Isaac is delighted to be back with Backyard Renaissance. Selected Credits include: *The Zoo Story* (Stage Manager - Backyard Renaissance); *The North Plan* - Director, *Cabaret* - Assistant Director/ASM, *The Ballad of Emmett Till* - Producer, *The Normal Heart* - Assistant Director, Lydia - Assistant Director/ASM (All at ION Theatre); *The Loneliest Girl In The World* - ASM (Diversionsary Theatre). Isaac also spends time working in various scene shops around town. All my love to Rachael.

### **Rachel Hengst** (SMOKEFALL PROPS DESIGNER) *Backyard Renaissance Debut.*

Rachel is delighted to make her debut with Backyard Renaissance Theater! Recent prop design credits include Lamb's Players productions *Mixtape*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Dinner With Marlene*, *The Miracle Worker*, *American Rhythm*, *Equivocation*, *Festival of Christmas*, *Beau Jest*, *Dinner with Marlene*, *Silent Sky*, *Camping With Henry and Tom*, and *Once*. Other credits include Cygnet Theater productions of *A Christmas Carol*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Stupid F\*\*king Bird*, *Gypsy*, *Bad Jews*, and *Shockheaded Peter*. She thanks her family for their endless support and for God's guidance in her life.

### **Justin Humphres (SMOKEFALL SCENIC DESIGN)**

Justin Humphres is a scenic and projection designer based in California and a founding member of People of Interest. Justin is a graduate of Western Michigan University (BFA) and University of California San Diego (MFA). Selected Credits Include: *The Zoo Story*, *Bachelorette* (Backyard Renaissance), *Vietgone* (San Diego Repertory Theater), *FAN* (People of Interest - Bangkok, Thailand). Associate Credits Include: *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* (La Jolla Playhouse & Broadway) and *Temptations: Ain't Too Proud* (Berkley Repertory Theater & Pre-Broadway Tour).

### **Curtis Mueller (SMOKEFALL LIGHTING DESIGN)**

Previous Designs for Backyard Renaissance: *Tarrytown* and *Gutenberg! The Musical*. Other local credits: *Homos, or Everyone in America*, *Cardboard Piano*, *The Happiest Place on Earth*, *Lizard Boy*, *Now or Later*, *A Civil War Christmas*, *Amazons and Their Men*, and *A New Brain (Diversionary Theatre)*; *Romeo, Romeo and Juliet*, *Withering Heights*, *Margin of Error (Roustabouts)*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *End of The Rainbow*, *Quality of Life*, *I Hate Hamlet*, *All My Sons*, *Macbeth*, and *Oleanna* (Intrepid Theatre Company); *The Secret Garden*, *Big River*, *The 1940s Radio Hour*, and *Seascape* (New Village Arts); *Little Women* and *I Love A Piano* (Moonlight Stage Productions). Curtis holds a BFA in Lighting Design from California Institute of The Arts.

### **Jeanne Reith (SMOKEFALL COSTUME DESIGN)**

In her 25-year career as a Theatrical Costume Designer, Jeanne has dressed over 350 productions. She has served as a Resident Designer for theatres in Los Angeles, Glendale, and Santa Barbara, and locally at Lambs Players Theatre Coronado and Cygnet Theatre. Costume Design Awards include: San Diego Critic's Circle, Patte, LA Weekly, Backstage West, and Dramalogue. Jeanne also teaches Fashion History, Draping, Pattern Making, and other fashion-related classes at San Diego Mesa College and San Diego Continuing Education, West City.

### **Anthony Methvin (BACKYARD RENAISSANCE PRODUCING DIR.)**

Anthony was last seen as Sir Bedevere and others in Cygnet Theatre's *Spamalot*. Recent Backyard Renaissance productions include *Bachelorette* (director), *Abundance* and the World Premiere of *Tarrytown* (co-director), readings of *Showgirls*, *Mommie Dearest* and *Troll 2 Live and Unleashed* (director and co-adapter), and performances in *Gutenberg! The Musical!* and *The Elephant Man*. Other local performances include *A New Brain*, *Boys and Girls*, and *Harmony, Kansas* (Diversionary). Other direction and/or co-direction include productions and readings at Diversionary, the Old Globe, Cygnet Theatre, and Palomar College. Upcoming: Anthony will be directing *Significant Other* in 2019 at Diversionary where he is also Artistic Associate. You can follow him on Instagram @anthonymethvin

### **Noah Haidle (SMOKEFALL Playwright)**

Mr. Haidle's plays have premiered at the Goodman (Vigils), Lincoln Center Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, the Huntington Theatre Company, Long Wharf Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, South Coast Repertory, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Summer Play Festival in New York City, HERE Arts Center, as well as many others around the United States and abroad. He is a graduate of Princeton University and The Juilliard School, where he was a Lila Acheson Wallace playwright-in-residence. He is the recipient of three Lincoln Center Lecompte Du Nouy awards, the 2005 Helen Merrill Award for emerging playwrights, the 2007 Claire Tow Award and an NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Grant. He is published by Methuen in London, Suhrkamp in Berlin, and through Dramatists Play Service in New York City. His original screenplay *Stand Up Guys*, starred Al Pacino, Christopher Walken and Alan Arkin. Smokefall opened at South Coast Repertory in April 2013 and was produced at the Goodman Theatre in 2014. Mr. Haidle is a proud resident of Detroit.

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