

MONUMENT,

OR FOUR SISTERS

(A SLOTH PLAY)

WRITTEN BY SAM CHANSE

DIRECTED BY GIOVANNA SARDELLI



MAY 12 – MAY 29

THE MAGIC THEATRE

WELCOME TO

MAGIC

Mural by Miguel Bounce Perez @misterbouncer



Welcome back to LIVE theatre and welcome to a new world! We are so hyped to present the World Premiere of Sam Chanse's Monument, or Four Sisters (A Sloth Play). When I first met Samantha, she was not as singularly rooted in theatre as she is now, but her narrative, her style, and her reach were always theatrical. Sam has an ability to address cultural issues writ large— feminism, API lineage, equity—in ways that are deeply human and uniquely personal. In this

new age at the Magic Theatre we are wholly committed to rightfully centering People of Color in all ways, and certainly Sam Chanse and her work will further this effort and aesthetic- and to be doing it through the empowerment of a cast of characters of ALL API Women, is inspiring and exciting to witness and support. We are not alone in enthusiasm for Sam Chanse and her work, as she is one of the five API playwrights picked for a special project that just premiered for the The Public Theatre in New York this season, as well as the writer of a new piece for The Civilians. Get on flight with Sam Chanse, people. And thank you for helping us expand the reach of the Magic Theatre.

-SSJ

Magic Theatre
presents

Monument, Or Four Sisters (A Sloth Play)

written by Sam Chanse

directed by Giovanna Sardelli[†]

Opening Night: May 14th, 2022

Produced with generous support from



CAST

AMY/CESAR	ERIN MEI-LING STUART
CONSTANCE/JULIO	RINABETH APOSTOL*
MAC/MIGUEL	SANGO TAJIMA
MAGDALENA/LINA	LISA HORI-GARCIA*

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Design	Mikiko Uesugi**
Costume Design	Michelle Mulholland
Lighting Design	Cassie Barnes
Sound Design	Sara Witsch
Video Design	Sarah Phykitt
Puppet Design	Brooke Jennings
Properties Design	Samantha Alexa
Stage Manager	Nicholas Carvalho
Assistant Director	Aidaa Peerzada
Casting Director/Producer	Karina Fox
Scenery Engineered and Built By	CalShakes



This theatre operates under an agreement with Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director is a Member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.

**Member of United Scenic Artists local 829, which represents the designers and scenic painters for the American theatre

[†]Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

The video and/or sound recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

BIOGRAPHIES



Sam Chanse PLAYWRIGHT

Sam Chanse's (she/her) plays include *What You Are Now* (Ensemble Studio Theatre/Sloan and The Civilians), *Disturbance Specialist* (National Asian American Theatre Company/The Public Theater's Out of Time), *TRIGGER* (Lark Venturous Fellowship), *Fruiting Bodies* (Ma-Yi Theater), and *Monument, or Four Sisters* (A

Sloth Play) (Magic Theatre). A past fellow at MacDowell and Sundance, her work has also been recently developed with Ars Nova (P.S.), 24 Hour Plays plays developed with Ars Nova (P.S.), 24 Hour Plays, En Garde Arts, and Playwrights' Realm, and is published by Kaya Press (Lydia's Funeral Video) and TCG (The Kilroys List). Other residencies and commissions include La Jolla Playhouse, Workshop Theatre, NYSAF, SPACE, Djerassi, and SF Arts Commission. In television, she's a member of WGAE and currently writes on ABC's *The Good Doctor*, and as an educator, she's taught at various schools and organizations, including Columbia University, NYU, University of Rochester, and Performing Arts Workshop. A native New Yorker, she lived in San Francisco for several years, when she had the privilege of serving as Artistic Director of Kearny Street Workshop and co-director of Locus Arts, and developed work as a writer and performer at Bindlestiff and other artistic homes. She's a proud resident playwright of New Dramatists and member of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab.



Giovanna Sardelli DIRECTOR

Besides Sardelli's (she/her) well-received productions with the Tony Award winning TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, where she is Director of New Works, she has directed and developed plays around the country, including many off-Broadway productions over the past decades. Sardelli's directing credits include numerous productions of

plays by Rajiv Joseph including his first professional production, *Huck & Holden* (Cherry Lane), as well as the World Premieres of *The North Pool* (TheatreWorks), and *Animals Out of Paper* (Second Stage), for which she was awarded the Joe A. Callaway Award for Best Direction, and the production of the Obie Award-winning play *Describe The Night* at Atlantic Theatre. Her West Coast Premiere of Mathew Lopez' *The Whipping Man* for The Globe Theatre won her an NAACP nomination for Best Director and her production of Rajiv Joseph's *Guards at the Taj* for the Geffen Theatre won the 2016 Ovation Award for Best Production of a Play. Sardelli holds an MFA NYU's Grad Acting Department. She was named the 2019 Alumna of the Year for the University Nevada, Las Vegas College of Fine Arts. Upcoming Festival Premiere of *Funny Like An Abortion* (Playground) and World Premiere of *Nan and The Lower Body* by Jessica Dickey (TheatreWorks). Check out her newly released Marvel podcast *Squirrel Girl* and the Unbeatable Radio Show!



Erin Mei-Ling Stuart AMY/CESAR

Erin Mei-Ling Stuart (she/her) is a Bay Area Actor, director, dancer, choreographer (and sometimes musician and scrappy filmmaker). Eleven years after being a part of Taylor Mac's Epic show, *The Lily's Revenge*, she is thrilled to return for her second show at The Magic. Erin is a proud company member of shotgun Players and Detour Dance and has performed many times with both. She has also performed with Central Works, Berkeley Rep, Mugwumpin, Killing My Lobster, Playwright's Foundation, and others. You can catch Erin on film in *The Girl in Golden Gate Park*. She's looking forward to co-directing *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812* at Shotgun this fall. Keep track of what Erin is up to at erinmstuart.com



Lisa Hori-Garcia* MAGDELENA/LINA

Lisa Hori-Garcia (she/her) is beyond thrilled to return to The Magic Theatre to perform in Sam Chanse's World Premiere play with this group of rock star actresses and under the direction of Giovanna Sardelli. Lisa relocated to Denver, Colorado from San Francisco right before the pandemic and has been fortunate to maintain artistic homes in both of these

creative cities. During the height of the pandemic, Lisa focused her energy to radio plays, voice-over acting, zoom readings, teaching theater online, continuing to collaborate and develop new works, and can be heard in both Word for Word's podcasts: www.zspace.org/pod and SFMT's radio plays "Tales of the Resistance I & II": www.sfmt.org. Lisa received her BA from Smith College and MFA from the University of Southern California. She is a member of AEA and SAG/AFTRA and is a proud collective member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and a core company member of Word for Word. www.lisahorigarcia.com



Sango Tajima MAC/JULIO

Sango Tajima (she/her) is a Japanese-American performer, writer, & theatre-maker based in the Bay Area. Born in Michigan and raised in Thailand, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, and Japan, she returned to the U.S. to get her BFA at the University of Michigan. She has worked with Berkeley Rep, Guthrie Theater, Cal Shakes, SF Playhouse, Shotgun Players, Marin Theatre Company, Campo Santo, Magic Theatre, Cutting Ball Theater, Playwrights Foundation, Bay Area Children's Theater, FaultLine Theater, and has performed on stages in Japan, China, Korea, and Israel. Most recently she was in *Water by the Spoonful* at SF Playhouse. She is a company member of Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company and former member of Ragged Wing Ensemble, both of whom have produced her work as a playwright. www.sangotajima.com

BIOGRAPHIES



Rinabeth Apostol*

CONSTANCE/MIGUEL

Rinabeth Apostol (she/her) was last seen at The Magic in *The Chinese Lady* and *Dogeaters*. Regionally, she has appeared at American Conservatory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Seattle Rep, Theatreworks, California Shakespeare Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, East

West Players, Berkeley Rep Ground Floor, among others. 2021-2022 productions include *Starting Here*, *Starting Now* (SF Playhouse), *The Magic Lamp* (Presidio Theater), *Red Winged Blackbird* (world premiere, SP Productions), *The Chinese Lady* (Williamsburg), and upcoming projects, *Smart People* (Capital Stage). She is currently The Class of 1939 Artist in Residence and Asian Distinguished Theater Fellow at College of William + Mary, and is a proud member of Actors' Equity, SAG-AFTRA, Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company and PlayGround. Love to my wife, Marie, Mom + Dad. For Caca + my sister-cousins. @rbdtwo



Aidaa Peerzada

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Aidaa Peerzada (she/her) is a theatre maker who grew up between Baltimore, Maryland, and Lahore, Pakistan. She is so excited to be growing her inner director with Magic Theatre. Her previous directing experience includes workshops of her original plays *One Google* and *One* (SFBATCO) and *SHINING* (New Roots Theatre Festival; SFBATCO) as

well as assistant directing for Marcelo Javier on *Death and The Artist* and Thomas Pang on *Salt Pepper Ketchup* (SFBATCO.) As an actress, Aidaa has performed with Marin Theatre, The Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, American Players Theatre, and Quantum Theatre. Her on-camera credits include the HBO series *Girls* and the web series *Blank My Life*. Aidaa studied at the Baltimore School for the Arts and went on to receive her BFA in Drama from Carnegie Mellon University.

Nick Carvalho

STAGE MANAGER

Nick Carvalho (he/him) is very excited to be stage managing his first production with Magic Theatre as well as his first Equity project. He's previously stage managed *Head Over Heels*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Book of Will*, *Seussical: The Musical*, and *Our Lady of 121st Street* with Diablo Valley College where he was awarded two certificates of merit for stage management from the KCACTF and earned two associates degrees in 2021. He also stage managed Town Hall Theatre's productions of *The Cherry Orchard* and *Cinderella: A Fairytale*. Nick regularly works as the supervising technician at El Campanil Theatre and works as a production manager & 1st assistant director for Lumos Films. Nick has also worked as an EMT since 2021.

Mikiko Uesugi**

SCENIC DESIGN

Mikiko Uesugi (she/her) has designed *A Common Vision*, *Bronte*, and *Body Familiar* for Magic Theatre. Other theater credits include *The Children*, *Detroit*, *Our Practical Heaven*, *Fat Pig*, *Salome* for Aurora Theater Company, *Elevada*, *Kill the Debbie Downers! Kill Them! Kill Them! Kill Them Off!*, *Women Laughing Alone with Salad*, *Kiss* for Shotgun Players, and *Our Enemies*, *444 Days*, *Language Rooms*, *Night over Erzinga* for Golden Thread Productions. She has also designed for Cutting Ball Theater, Marin Theater Company, Word for Word, Crowded Fire, Theater Works, ACT M.F.A Program, Berkeley Repertory Theater and Chanticleer, among others. She is a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions, a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and The Isadora Duncan Dance Award.

Sarah Phykitt

VIDEO DESIGN

Sarah (she/her) is originally from the East Coast where she attended the University of Massachusetts and promptly moved to NYC after graduation. She spent several years touring with the Broadway productions of *Cabaret*, *Fosse*, and *Rent*. In 2008 she relocated to the Bay Area. Design credits include *West Side Story*, *Memphis*, and *Into the Woods* at Berkeley Playhouse, *M. Butterfly*, *Little Brother*, *The Goat*, or *Who is Sylvia*, *The Lion in Winter*, *Hooded*, or *Being Black for Dummies*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* and several others for Custom Made Theater Company, *Agrippina* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* for West Edge Opera, *Le Switch*, *This Bitter Earth*, *Head Over Heels*, and *You'll Catch Flies* for the New Conservatory Theater Company and *A Time for Hawking* and *Copenhagen* for Indra's Net Theater, *Bitch Slap*, *Champagne White and the Temple of Poon*, *Champagne White is Disastrous*, *Star Trek Live*, *Sex and the City Live*, *Golden Girls Live*, *Project Lohan* and many other for D'Arcy Drollinger and Oasis.

Michelle Mulholland

COSTUME DESIGN

Michelle Mulholland (she/her) is delighted to be designing her first production at The Magic. Her other work includes *I Call My Brothers* and *You For Me For You* (Crowded Fire Theater), *We Swim*, *We Talk*, *We Go to War*, *Isfahan Blues*, *Urge* for Going and *Night Over Erzinga* (Golden Thread Productions), *Late Company*, *Daniel's Husband*, *Harbor*, and *Cock* (New Conservatory Theater Center), *Lucia Berlin: Stories* (Word for Word), *The Colored Museum* (African-American Shakespeare Company), *Totalitarians* (Z Space), *Tenderloin* (Cutting Ball Theater), *The Oldest Profession* and *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles* (Brava Theater). She is also the Managing Director of Golden Thread Productions.

BIOGRAPHIES

Sara Witsch

SOUND DESIGN

Sara Witsch (they/them) is a Bay Area noise maker, production manager, and actor with a degree in Theater Arts from San Francisco State University. Sara designs sound for theater, radio plays, video games, podcasts, and film. Some recent credits include a radio play rendition of *Rough Magic* with A.C.T.'s Conservatory, *The Claim* with Shotgun Players, and *Ways to Leave a Body* at Cutting Ball Theater. They are Co-Artistic Director and Production Manager at SoundPlay.Media, a sound collective exploring the world of sound-specific performance art and theater-focused media. Check out Sound-Play's podcast series at barewiretheater.com.

Cassie Barnes

LIGHTING DESIGN

Cassie (she/her) is a Lighting Designer with Desired Effect designing primarily for theatre and dance in the greater Bay Area. She is a resident designer for Golden Thread Productions, Applegate Dance Company, and Bayer Ballet Academy (an official partner of the Vaganova Ballet Academy). She also designs regularly at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Shotgun Players, and Cutting Ball Theatre.

Samantha Alexa

PROPERTIES DESIGN

Samantha Alexa (she/they) is a prop and set designer for theater and film. She has art directed and assisted numerous commercials, music videos, and short films including "Stuffed", which recently received a BFTA nomination. She has a background in contemporary performance and studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. During her time there, she was exposed to a wide variety of world-class boundary-pushing performance works. After living abroad for six years she returned back to the Bay Area where she was raised and will celebrate her first year in San Francisco this June! She is excited to rediscover and contribute to the city's theater and live arts community.

Lisa Hu

CREATIVE CONSULTANT

Lisa Hu (she/her) is a queer AAPI creative, writer, facilitator, and policy advocate committed to uplifting and empowering the voices and dreams of womxn and nonbinary folk of color. She has performed in several states and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Local credits include *Killing My Lobster*, FaultLine Theater, Bindlestiff Studio, QAF Collective, Movement Generation, and SF Bay Area Theatre Company. Lisa was an inaugural member of Making Good Trouble, an anti-racist artist activist cohort anchored by Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, and Playwrights Foundation; a lead for the BIPOC Living Document; and a former performance critic. She is rooted in Oakland and works in policy and politics.

Lauren Quan

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Lauren (she/her) is a recent college graduate of UC Santa Cruz. During her undergraduate studies she was a stage manager for the student run theatre program, Barnstorm. Her first professional project was being the assistant stage manager on *The Kind Ones*, Magic Theatre's first production since 2020.

Brooke Jennings

PUPPET DESIGN/ASSISTANT COSTUME DESIGNER

Brooke Jennings (she/her) is delighted to return to The Magic with this wild show. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz's Theater Arts Masters Program, Brooke is an award winning Costume Designer working in the Bay Area and New York. Her recent credits include San Jose Stage Company (*The Great Leap*), Shotgun Players (*Vinegar Tom*, *Arcadia*), San Francisco Playhouse (*You Mean To Do Me Harm*, *The Effect*, *Colossal*, *The Nether*), We Players (*Pyschopomp*, *Caesar Maximus*, *Roman Women*, *Ondine*), Magic Theater (asst. designer: *A Lie of the Mind*, *Bad Jews*), FaultLine Theater (*Maggie's Riff*, *Dead Dog's Bone*), Virago Theatre (*The Singularity* (New York Premier), Custom Made Theater Company (*Belleville*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Sam and Dede* (SF and NY Premieres)), City Lights Theater (*Rocky Horror Show*), and Santa Cruz Shakespeare (asst. Designer, *A Year with Frog and Toad*). She thanks her husband, Cole, for his unwavering support and encouragement.

Cal Shakes

SET CONSTRUCTION

California Shakespeare Theater (Cal Shakes) is a nationally recognized leader in drawing on the power of authentic, inclusive storytelling to create more vibrant communities. Cal Shakes invites people from all walks of life to make deeply felt connections with our shared humanity through its work onstage, in schools, and in communities throughout the Bay Area. The Cal Shakes scene shop includes Steven Schmidt (Technical Director), Heidi Voelker (Associate Technical Director), Charlotte Wheeler (Shop Supervisor), Tenaya Raives (Asst. Shop Supervisor), Adeline Smith (Paint Charge), Gray DePol, Nick Gomersall, Nick Mead, Tyler Miller, Mozart Pierson, Ying Yu (Carpenters). For more information visit calshakes.org.

ABOUT MAGIC

Magic Theatre is dedicated to the cultivation of bold new plays, playwrights, and audiences—and to producing explosive, entertaining, and ideologically-robust plays that ask substantive questions about, and reflect the rich diversity of, the world in which we live. For over 54 years, Magic's belief in supporting the writer's vision has manifested in a rigorous artistic home where a full body of work can be imagined, developed, and produced. By adding innovative, challenging new voices to the canon, Magic ensures the future vibrancy of the American theatre.

Special Thanks

Devin at Bamboo Reef

Sonia Fernandez

Jessica Kubzansky

CORAL are CREATURES!

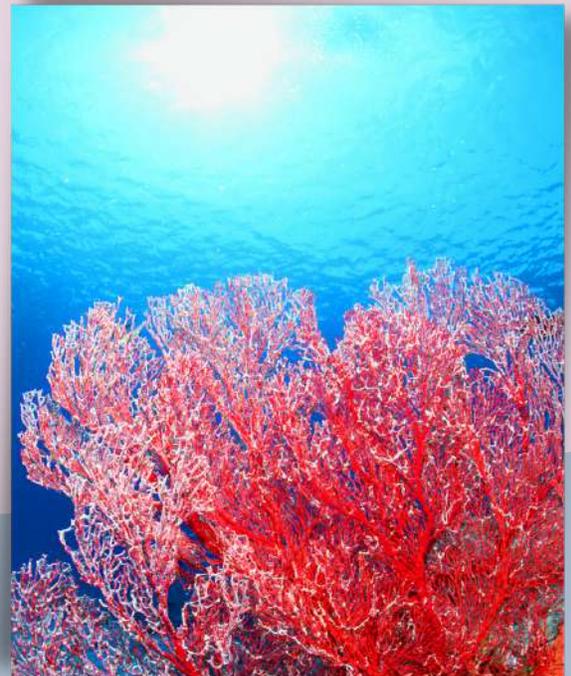


Though they may look like rocks or sea plants, Corals are living sea creatures like Jellyfish or Anemones. An individual coral is called a Polyp. Each Polyp has tentacles and a single orifice through which it can eat prey. Corals have a unique physical alliance with Zooxanthellae algae which lives in the flesh of Polyps and also provides most of the Coral's nutrients through photosynthesis. Coral reef structures are made up of many individual Coral Polyps growing over generations on the exoskeletons of their ancestors. Their complex physical structure makes them home to one-quarter of all marine life. You could think of them as the infrastructure of the ocean's big cities.



Most Coral Reefs are 5000 to 10,000 years old. However, since the 1950s, half of all living Coral Reefs have died due to global warming. The ocean absorbs around one-quarter of the carbon dioxide emitted from humans burning fossil fuels. As water becomes warmer and more acidic, it is less hospitable to Corals. The loss of grazing marine life like Sea Turtles, also results in starving coral of the energy they need from sunlight by allowing competing algae to overgrow.

Some scientists believe humans can help Coral Reefs survive climate change by keeping them healthy and protecting them from local threats and invasive fishing practices. To find out how you can volunteer or donate to support Coral Reef restoration, check out The Coral Reef Alliance at coral.org.



SLOTHCAPADES!

While their name is derived from the latin word for "laziness," Sloths live incredibly efficient lives in harmony with their environment. They are tree-dwelling mammals that share an ancient lineage with Armadillos and Anteaters known as Xenarthran. Unlike us Homo sapiens, various species of Sloth have inhabited the earth for at least 30 million years. Around 65.5 million years ago, giant ancestors to the Sloths called Megatheriam lived on the lands of South America. Their disappearance coincided with the end of the last ice age 10,000 years ago, and there is some evidence that early humans hunted giant ground Sloths. Today all six living species of Sloth live in the lowland tropical forests of South and Central America.



Sloths' extremely low metabolisms earn them the title of the slowest mammals on earth. Their multi-chambered stomachs can keep food in their digestive system for thirty days. Moving slowly allows sloths to save energy and blend in with their surroundings. They move so slowly that in their wet environments, algae is able to grow on their fur and support colonies of moths. The moths lay their eggs in Sloth poop and live in the Sloth's fur. The moths transport nitrogen from the Sloth's poop to the algae, helping the algae grow, and when the moths die, their body matter contributes to feed the algae. When sloths groom themselves, they eat the fat-rich algae, which is an essential source of nutrients for the Sloths. Sloth poop is also an excellent fertilizer for the trees where they live and spend most of their lives.

Sloths live and depend on tropical rainforest ecosystems. One species of sloth, the Pygmy Sloth, was deemed critically endangered in 2001. Deforestation of Tropical rainforests by humans is the greatest threat to sloth populations. To support the rainforests in which sloths live, you can check out Rainforest Foundation US at rainforestfoundation.org or the organization Amazon Watch at amazonwatch.org.

FINDING LIGHT AND COMING BACK FROM LOSS

A Conversation with Sam Chanse

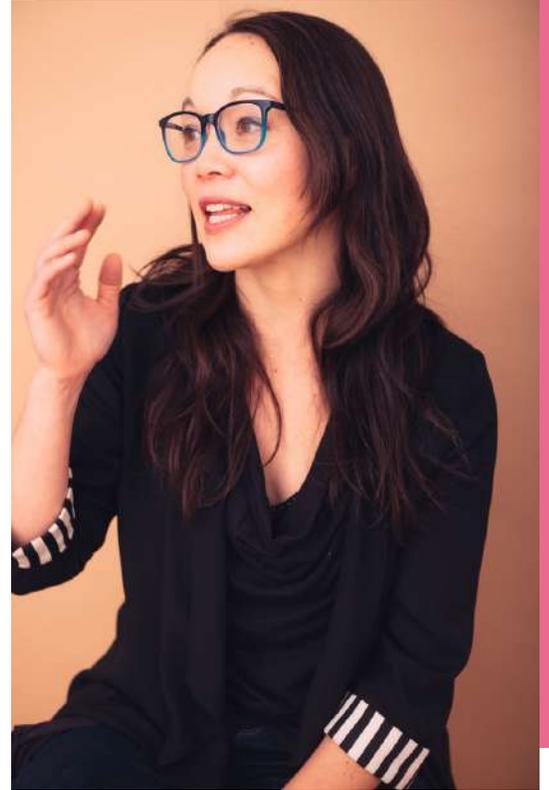
Playwright Sam Chanse and Literary Manager Kate Leary hopped on Zoom during rehearsals for *Monument* to talk about inspiration, legacy, and coming back from heartache.

Kate Leary: This play tackles a lot of really huge ideas. It's big, and beautiful, and layered, and complicated, and I'd love to know where it came from for you. What seeds did it grow from? What were the early moments of inspiration or questions that prompted you to investigate?

Sam Chanse: There are a few different starting points. One of them was when I started writing it. It was in the very final weeks of 2017, a year after the 2016 election. I had the sense of this mounting pressure, and all of these anxieties and fears and anger were building. That felt like the starting point of the play in a psychological, emotional, pre-verbal way. A lot of the play for me feels like it's about the cumulative impact of different stressors and the cumulative impact of different traumas, aggressions and battles. I remember feeling like I couldn't write anything for a while, and then this play came out.

As for some of the other things I had been thinking about...well, I'm one of four sisters.

KL: Oh cool! I didn't know that. I love that.



SC: I always wanted to write about four sisters, but I never have. I think because of the fear that people will assume it's autobiographical, about my family. But, many of my plays have involved some sort of sister dynamic. I think I naturally write about it because it was such a formative part of my experience growing up. All of the different complexities of sisterhood: the intimacy and conflict, and friendship that happens.

And the number four—I don't speak Chinese (although my dad speaks Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese languages), but I was always told growing up, "Oh you're the fourth child, which is bad luck and means death." So that number felt appropriate for this particular play, which I knew was going to explore and reckon with profound loss. Can we come back from that? Can we find a sense of wholeness and recover ourselves? Can we have resilience with all of this ongoing catastrophe?

I had also been thinking about the idea of monuments and legacy, how our culture is obsessed with legacy, the need to be seen and recognized and

DRAMATURGY

to leave something behind, as humanity, but also on an individual level. At the time, there were ongoing conversations and controversy around Confederate monuments being taken down, and I was thinking about what we honor and recognize and elevate, and what we do not recognize or elevate.

And after doing a lot of thinking and reading I found my way to these four sisters, and coral (the Great Barrier Reef as a kind of natural monument), and anthropomorphic cartoon sloths somehow, and the ideas began influencing one another, speaking to one another. So that's how the play started to take form at an early stage, too.

One other starting point was this sense of feeling a little removed and isolated from community at the time, and one of the characters in the play is also wrestling with that. So, I think that ache for community or the ache of loss is also embedded in the play.

KL: As you were writing and doing research throughout this process, what have been the biggest challenges in tackling this piece? Were there moments when you had to lean back, or moments where you felt like you didn't have the tools to move forward? Were there big questions that you weren't sure how to answer?

SC: One of the big challenges, and what was both really fun and really maddening about building the play, is the two modes of storytelling in the play. In the cartoon sloth world, the storytelling is linear, plot-driven, action-oriented, concrete stakes—find the bomb before it explodes! And then there's this human sisters world, where the storytelling is completely different—it moves sideways, backwards, takes tangents, there's a meditative and introspective quality, the action and stakes are often in a very interior space. So tackling that was maybe the trickiest part, how to balance and weave together those two worlds and kinds of narrative modes to create this whole...and both are integral to the play and the story.

And then also, I think that there's something about the way I started it, the impulses I was following, which are so varied. There are sisters who have their

own individual stories and their own struggles and private catastrophes that they're navigating. There are these big global questions about the state of the world. There's this cartoon sloth TV show. So another challenge was to understand what those initial impulses were and honor them, and also clarify them.

I think there's an understandable desire, when we're workshoping and developing plays, to try to understand every element in a really concrete way. Sometimes that's great, and other times, in trying to understand and explain, there's the danger of inadvertently jettisoning and undermining the original impulse. Maybe it's clearer in a conceptual way, but something is lost. I think of something a playwright and friend I respect immensely, Kimber Lee, said to me over the years—paraphrasing her badly here, but that sometimes you have an element in a play that's a little weird or hard to explain but feels necessary somehow. You can't always articulate it, but it's important to be with it and take some time with it. And I think when a play feels a little sprawling, there's, again an understandable, desire to be able to control this unwieldy thing. The challenge is in preserving the energy and spirit of it, but also making those tough changes.

Sometimes, in trying to understand and explain [every element], there's a danger of inadvertently jettisoning and undermining the original impulse.

KL: I think it's easy to forget the value in wildness, or the value in a little bit of chaos. I think it can hit us in a more visceral way. I'm curious if there is one sister in particular you had the hardest time writing for?

SC: No, and I don't say that to be-like, am I in denial about that, am I hiding? [laughter] It's a very personal piece, and they all felt very clear to me. Lina is the sister who is absent, who they're trying to find, in a way, who they're trying to save. She's gone. They assume they know why, but we don't hear from her directly. There's that mystery in the play. So I guess in that sense, Lina is in some ways the hardest to write

DRAMATURGY

for. But yeah, the other sisters all felt very clear. It's interesting, I wrote this play, at least the first drafts, before the pandemic, before I ever wrote for TV. And then a few months after, I started writing for TV for the first time. So it's interesting to go back and read those scenes around the sister who writes for TV and think about my own experiences in the last couple of years. So the sisters are all very close to me, I guess. There's something in each sister that feels like an aspect of myself that I have a direct line to. And again, that's true for all the characters I write, I'm always feeling them in a visceral way. I imagine that's true for all writers, and for me I think it comes from having a background as a performer. (A long time ago, in another life, I used to be a performer as well as a writer.)

KL: Same!

SC: Right? There's so many of us. But I think when I'm writing, I am writing from that body and feeling it on a visceral, physical level.

The sisters are all very close to me. There's something in each sister that feels like an aspect of myself that I have a direct line to.

KL: I'm glad you brought up writing for TV. I like to ask our playwrights who have written for TV and are also working playwrights: How are those processes different for you, and how are they the same?

SC: So I should preface it with the fact that I've only written on one show for two seasons. So, it's not like I have this wealth of TV writing experience.

KL: You have more TV writing experience than I do!

SC: It was weird because it was all on Zoom my first year. So, the first time I entered the room (on Zoom), I was expecting it to be completely foreign and very uncomfortable, which it was on some levels.

KL: [laughter]



Sam Chanse, first day of *Monument*, photo by Stephanie Holmes

SC: It was such a different community than the kind I've been ensconced in—this theatre community in New York, and being with Ma-Yi Theatre and New Dramatists and the Lark. It's a very loving, intimate community of writers. And this room was all people I had never met before, and no one else was a playwright. But at the same time, the energy once we started talking and the conversations in the room felt really familiar. A bunch of writers in a room talking. It was a little reassuring.

And then, there's so much that is really different. In my case, I'm not writing on a show I created. It's not my baby. Somebody who created it, who knows more about it, is saying, "This is what the show is. These are the characters. This is what we need to accomplish." And in a way, that freed me up to focus on learning this new medium, and I was curious about the craft of it and liked my fellow writers...

KL: But it's not your blood on the page.

SC: Yes. And when people would give notes, I was like, sure! With no attachment to it. With plays, notes can feel more sensitive. Like, how can you tell me to change my child?! But when I was working in the tv room, I developed a different relationship to notes, which has been helpful in theater too.

DRAMATURGY

KL: I find it so fascinating to look at these different kinds of collaboration because theatre is inherently collaborative, but I think a TV writers' room is collaborative in a very different way. I love looking at that and thinking about the different parts of your brain and muscles that you get to exercise and work.

SC: It is very cool. And I love the collaborative nature of the room, and throwing ideas around. The other thing that's so different for me is that there are clear steps that you take with the material. You're going to do the story doc and the beat sheet and the outline and the script, and you're going to get your notes and do your different drafts. And then it is going to be produced.

KL: It's like a flow chart versus a spider web.

SC: Right. And it's a lot of work, but you know that there are these specific steps to take. It's not like when I'm writing a play, where I start with this mess of exploratory pages and an embryonic draft, the process is completely amorphous and unpredictable. The steps are uncertain, and who knows how many workshops it will have, or if it will ever be produced. And I love that process, I love diving into a play and not always having a map, I love being being in this more undefined space [of theater] with people I get to work with. And experiencing what is, for me, a different structure [of tv writing] is also valuable.

KL: So, in another life, you were a performer. In another life, I was also a performer.

SC: What kind of performer?

KL: I was a ballerina for a long time and then I discovered that I really love cake, and it wasn't going to work for me.

SC: [laughter]

KL: If you hadn't gotten into theater, if you hadn't pursued performance and then pursued writing, what other careers might you have pursued?

SC: That's such a great question. I love languages. That suggests that I know many languages, which I do



Monument team on the first day of rehearsal, photo by Stephanie Holmes

not. But when I was younger, I really wanted to be an interpreter for the UN. I still wonder if I could do that...

KL: You can!

SC: [laughter] When I was much younger, I wanted to be a veterinarian. I always think about how this profession, being a writer, can be so excruciating. It can feel there's no concrete sense of progress, or how to quantify what you are doing—if you are contributing anything of value.

KL: And I think it's hard sometimes to love something that doesn't always love you back.

SC: [laughter] Yes. I keep thinking that I just want to do something that is useful. In the last couple of years, during this pandemic, whenever I read about one of those epidemiologists, I would think, "What a useful career you have! You are doing a clear public good." Why did I not go into a career where I would be performing a clear, measurable public good?

KL: It might not be measurable, but you ARE performing a public good. I have to believe that, or my job would also be pointless.

[laughter]

SC: Right. And to be clear, I do believe this about theater, as a general principle.

DRAMATURGY

KL: I think that in this piece, and in a lot of your work over the years, you have a particular passion for the environment and for examining the scars that we leave on the environment. Your writing will create change. And I think the more people who are brave enough to look at the world around them, and identify fallacies and problems and misconceptions, the more likely we are to have a chance to address them.

You already mentioned the brilliant playwright Kimber Lee, but who are some of the other creatives who inspire you? Playwrights, novelists, poets, visual artists, musicians...who pushes you and broadens your mind?

SC: The playwrights in the Ma-Yi Lab, that community has been really formative, all those writers push and inspire me, also the New Dramatists community, the people in the Lark. Lloyd Suh, who is in all of those communities – I saw the premiere of his play *Charles Francis Chan Jr.'s Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery* a few years after moving back to New York, I remember feeling so thrilled that this existed, that this was in the world for Asian Americans to see and experience. I felt the same way when I saw Qui Nguyen's play *The Inexplicable Redemption of Agent G*. It blew me away, like, "Ohmygod, this is what's possible with theater." And of course all their more recent work.

Other artists who have inspired me and been so formative in my writing, and just in general, are the folks I worked with when I lived in the Bay Area, now many years ago, way back in the aughts. I was working with a couple Asian American art spaces, and there were so many different artists coming through: musicians, filmmakers, graphic novelists, visual artists, stand-up comics, there was an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary nature to the community. That was really energizing and really grounded me, as a human

and a writer, and really fueled my writing. I was working as an arts administrator. My day job was helping to present and produce the work of these incredible artists. And then I was also performing and writing my own work. That energy and exchange is baked into my writing. I'm always feeling that energy. I'm very indebted to and continue to be inspired by the artists at Bindlestiff, at Kearny Street Workshop, and Intersection. I feel very lucky to be able to come back to the Bay working on this play.

I also love speculative fiction writers. I feel like I come back to Ursula K. Le Guin a lot.

KL: My last question, which is also kind of a big one, is what do you hope Magic audiences leave with after experiencing this play?

SC: So I know everyone comes to a play from a different place and context, but what it helps me with sometimes, and maybe might offer others, is holding the catastrophe and pain alongside a sense of community and being connected to others—and the commitment to staying fully here and present... I hope folks leave feeling more connected, to other people, maybe to some part of themselves.

It's a play about how to reckon with loss and come back from it, how to recover a sense of wholeness and resilience. And part of reckoning with loss and disaster is laughter, too. Not laughter as distraction, but laughter that comes from recognizing and identifying with something true, a shared experience. I hope that is something that people take from it, too. And I hope there's a sense of finding belonging, whatever that means to you—finding your way back to some belonging, if you're someone who has struggled to find it.

I hope there's a sense of finding belonging, whatever that means to you—finding your way back to some belonging, if you're someone who has struggled to find it.



RESOURCES/FURTHER LEARNING

Let's make sure the conversation doesn't stop here. Check out these organizations, and get involved!

Asian American Women's Arts Organization

www.aawaa.net



Women In Ocean Science

www.womeninoceanscience.com



Cal Academy of Arts and Sciences

www.calacademy.org



Coral Restoration Foundation

www.coralrestoration.org



The Sloth Conservation Foundation

www.slothconservation.org



Aquarium of the Bay

www.aquariumofthebay.org



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Coordinator of Space and Residencies	Mike Ferrell
Producing/Casting Director	Karina Fox
Director of Growth	Liam Vincent
Literary Manager	Kate Leary
Manager of Institutional Giving	Brechin Flournoy
Director of Communication	Stephanie Holmes
Director of Education	Ely Sonny Orquiza
Artistic Producing Associate	Daniel Duque-Estrada
House Production Technician	Leah Hammond
Web Design	Ciera Eis
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PR Consultant	Jonathan White
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Residency Program Curator	Juan Amador
Resident Playwright	Star Finch
Resident Home Company	Campo Santo
Residency Program	Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience, Ellen Sebastian Chang, Sunhui Chang
Poetry Program	Tongo Eisen-Martin
Film/Theatre Hybrid Program	Ashley Smiley
Residency Designers	Russell Champa, Tanya Orellana, Joan Osato, Christopher Saucedo, Brittany White

PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Assistant Stage Manager	Lauren Quan	Props Assistant	Annie Aguirre
House Production Technician	Leah Hammond	Master Electrician	Lyle Barrere, Josh van-Eyken
Creative Consultant	Lisa Hu	Light Board Programmer	Ben Miller
Technical Direction	Charlotte Wheeler, Steven Schmidt	Light Board Operator	Sara 'Edie' Saavedra
Assistant Costume Designer	Brooke Jennings	Scenic Charge Artist	Adeline Smith
Poster Design	Oliver Holmes	Costume Assistants	Haley Baldwin, Bahar Gözmener

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BY STAR FINCH



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WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY KEVIN ROLSTON

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