The Firebirds Take the Field
by Lynn Rosen
Directed by Jessica Fisch
April 18 – May 27, 2017

Dining Sponsor:
Cellars Bar and Grill

Funded in part by The Ensemble Studio Theatre/
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science & Technology Project
CAST

Penelope Landis ..................................................................................................................... Jessica Ervin+
Dr. Avery Kahn .................................................................................................................. Meighan Gerachis*
Cynthia Kahn ...................................................................................................................... Margaret Kusterman
Kathy Bowen ........................................................................................................................ Tara Mallen*+
Mark Cooper ...................................................................................................................... Josh Odor
Lucia Bowen ........................................................................................................................ Aurora Real de Asua
Helen Fraselli Landis ......................................................................................................... Rebecca Spence*+
Agatha Cooper .................................................................................................................... Hannah Toriumi

The play runs approximately two hours with one ten-minute intermission.

TIME: The present, early fall

PLACE: Highland Falls, NY. A working-class town in upstate NY on the Hudson River. Closed factories litter the shoreline. It has fallen on hard times.

SETTING: The gymnasium of Highland Falls High School, home of the football team “The Fighting Firebirds.”

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director ............................................................................................................................... Jessica Fisch
Choreographer .................................................................................................................. Katherine Scott
Stage Manager ................................................................................................................... Andra Sturtevant*
Dramaturg ......................................................................................................................... Tanya Palmer
Scenic Design .................................................................................................................... Joanna Iwanicka+
Costume Design .............................................................................................................. Stephanie Cluggish
Lighting Design ................................................................................................................ Paul Toben^
Original Music and Sound Design .................................................................................. Sarah Espinoza
Properties Design ............................................................................................................. Blake Leo Burke
Production Manager ....................................................................................................... Sam Moryoussef
Technical Director ........................................................................................................... Elyse Estes
Scenic Charge ................................................................................................................... Lee Moore
Master Electricians ........................................................................................................... Danielle Davis, Meghan Erxleben
Assistant Director ............................................................................................................. Joan Sergay
Assistant Costume Designer ............................................................................................. Ariel Mannie
Box Office Manager ......................................................................................................... Trisha Hooper
Scientific Advisor to Playwright ...................................................................................... Dr. Heather Berlin

Present this ad or mention FIREBIRDS and receive a 10% discount the day you see the performance.

This offer cannot be combined with any other discounts and ends on midnight on May 27, 2017.

5900 N. Broadway, Chicago
www.cellarsbarandgrill.com
Welcome back to our 2017 Season of new plays that take a dive deep into the mind-body connection. As science, medicine, and technology continue to advance, many of us continue to ignore the vital interface between our minds and our bodies. When researching the stories that inspired this play, the 18 teenaged girls from LeRoy, New York who developed a mysterious illness akin to Tourette’s, I was a little surprised to learn that their final diagnosis of Conversion Disorder was just a new moniker for “Female Hysteria.” But what really intrigued me was how the parents of these girls seemed absolutely driven to find some other diagnosis… something tangible, something physical, something that pharmaceuticals could be prescribed for. And suddenly I understood their motives all too well. Women, in particular, when diagnosed with mental or emotional issues, are often immediately dismissed both from the medical profession and by society, as their conditions are not seen as being ‘real’ -- even with symptoms that are absolutely physical and even debilitating. This is what those parents were so afraid of, the stigma and uncertainty of a psychological diagnosis instead of something concrete and curable. Doctors have pondered the connection between our mental and physical health for centuries. The cautionary of tale these three girls exemplifies the sometimes devastating results when we disregard the essential connection between mind, body and spirit. I hope you enjoy The Firebirds Take the Field and that it provides some food for thought as we all contemplate what it means to be truly whole.

Thank you for joining us,

Tara M. Mallen
Artistic Director and Founder
SPECIAL THANKS

William Carden; Susan Bernfield; Heather A. Berlin, PhD, MPH’ Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; Linsay Firman; Nathanael Filbert; Graeme Gillis; Amy and Holly Gitlin; GT Upchurch; The Lark; Lookingglass Theatre; Eric Ocasio; Carrie Preston; Lauren Shouse; Natalie Savoy and The Senn High School Cheer Squad.

As always, our heartfelt gratitude to Stjepan and Ivan Misetic for offering us a place to call home. Naša iskrena hvala!

We would also like to thank the 48th Ward Alderman Harry Osterman, State Representative Kelly Cassidy, the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce and their staffs for their support and generosity in welcoming us to the Edgewater community.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Jessica Ervin
(Penelope) was last seen at Rivendell in Dry Land (Ester) and currently understudies their touring production of WOMEN AT WAR. As one of their newest ensemble members, she is very proud to call RTE home. Other Chicago theatre credits include Erasing the Distance, Herculaneum (Blue Goose Theatre Ensemble), the Night Out in the Parks production of The Wild (Walkabout Theater Company), 12 Ways to Play Festival (The Public House Theatre), and Collaboraction’s final Sketchbook Festival. Jessica completed Chicago Shakespeare’s Folio I and Folio II courses and can also be seen in the upcoming feature film Princess Cyd. She is a graduate of Ball State University with a B.F.A. in Acting, and is proudly represented by Gray Talent Group.

Meighan Gerachis
(Avery) Rivendell credits include: The Electric Baby, Precious Little, The Walls, Elliot: A Soldier’s Fugue, Indulgences at the Louisville Harem, Factory Girls, My Simple City, Wrens, and Ten Tiny Fingers, Nine Tiny Toes. She has also appeared in Blue Skies Process (Goodman), Domesticated, Our Town, The House on Mango St. (Steppenwolf), Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England (Theater Wit), Solstice (A Red Orchid Theater), Measure for Measure (Chicago Shakespeare), Cloud Nine (About Face), Cigarettes and Moby Dick, Che Che Che (Latino Chicago), The Underpants (Noble Fool), The Road to Graceland (Lifeline Theatre). Regional credits include: Charm (Mixed Blood Theatre) Elliot: A Soldier’s Fugue (Stageworks/Hudson); A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Contact Theatre-Manchester,UK). Film: Batman v. Superman, At Any Price, Virginia. Television: Chicago PD, Crisis, Bobby & Iza (NBC), Sirens (USA), Battleground (Hulu).

Margaret Kusterman
(Cynthia) played Mrs. Donovan in The Luck of the Irish and Polly in Great God Pan at Next Theatre. She understudied Patricia in The Herd at Steppenwolf where she was also in the Ensemble of No Place Like Home. At Seanachai she was part of the Jeff Nominated Ensemble of The Big Picture. She played Madame Pernelle in Tartuffe at Remy Bumppo and was in Uncle Vanya at Strawdog. After understudying Meg in The
CAST BIOGRAPHIES cont.

**Beauty Queen of Leenane** at Steppenwolf; she played the role at Northern Stage in Vermont. Margaret has worked with Jackalope, The Gift, Defiant, Livebait, Lifeline and Center Theatre. She holds a Masters Degree in Theatre from Northwestern University.

**Tara Mallen** (Kathy) an actor, director, producer and the Artistic Director at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Tara was most recently on stage in Rivendell’s production of *Grizzly Mama*. Other recent credits include Lynn Nottage’s *Sweat* at Arena Stage; Rivendell’s Jeff Nominated, world premiere productions of *Look, we are breathing* and *Rasheeda Speaking; How Long Will I Cry: Stories of Youth Violence* at Steppenwolf’s Theatre for Young Audiences; Rivendell’s World Premiere, Jeff nominated production of *The Walls* and *Self Defense, or the Death of Some Salesmen* -- both productions part of Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s Visiting Theater Initiative. For Rivendell, Tara has both produced and acted in over thirty productions. She received a Joseph Jefferson award for “Supporting Actress” for her portrayal of Gwenyth in *Wrens* as part of that production’s Jeff-winning ensemble. She was nominated the following year for “Actress in a Principal Role” for her work in *My Simple City*. Screen credits include Steven Soderbergh’s film *Contagion; Boss* (STARZ); *Chicago Fire* (NBC); *Chicago P.D.* (NBC) *FOOLS* (Feature film); *Sense8* (Netflix); and the CBS/Sony Pictures pilot *Doubt*. Tara co-conceived and directed the critically acclaimed World Premiere of *WOMEN AT WAR*, a theatrical exploration of women in today’s military that played to sold out houses in the fall of 2014 and is now touring throughout the mid-west.

**Rebecca Spence** (Helen) joined Rivendell Theatre Ensemble after appearing in *These Shining Lives* for which she received a Jeff Nomination in 2009. Other RTE credits: *Wrens* and *How the World Began* (Jeff Nom). Her most recent work was originating the role of Mary Page Marlowe 40/44 at Steppenwolf where her previous credits include: *The Crucible, Our Lady of 121st Street* and *Pacific*. Other theatre credits include: *In The Garden* (Lookingglass Theatre Company); *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *This* (Theatre Wit); *The Voysey Inheritance, Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Remy Bumppo - Equity Jeff Nom.); *Dracula* (Defiant Theatre); *Cyrano* (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre). Film Credits: *Kingfisher, Recke, Not Welcome, Bloomin’ Mud Shuffle, Man of Steel, Fools, Tiger Tail in Blue, One Small Hitch, Contagion, The Dilemma, Audrey the Trainwreck, Earthling, Public Enemies, Grace is Gone* and *The Break-Up*. Television Credits: *Easy* (Netflix), *Chicago Fire* (NBC), *Crisis* (NBC), *Betrayal* (ABC), *Boss* (STARZ), *The Mob Doctor* (FOX), *Detroit 1-8-7* (ABC), *The Chicago Code* (FOX), *The Beast* (A&E) and *Prison Break* (FOX).

**Josh Odor** (Mark) most recently performed in Griffin’s *Winterset*, The Hypocrites’ *You On the Moors Now*, Haven Theater’s *The Distance* and *The Time of Your Life* with the Artistic Home. Josh has also worked at Steppenwolf, The Goodman, TimeLine, Steep, Teatro Vista, The Inconvenience, The House, The New Colony, Collaboraction, LiveWire, Buffalo Ensemble and as a member of Pine Box. Josh’s television work includes *Chicago PD, Chicago Fire, Betrayal* and *Boss*. 
CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONT.

Aurora Real de Asua (Lucia) Past Chicago credits include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Metropolis), You on the Moors Now (u/s Hypocrites), Twelfth Night (u/s Chicago Shakespeare in the Park), as well as work with the Goodman Theatre and American Myth Project. She recently graduated from Northwestern University.

Hannah Toriumi (Agatha) has performed with such theaters as The Gift, Goodman Theatre, Silk Road Rising, Step Up Productions, and TOTC. She has also made appearances in commercials, film, and television. She is a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf Class of 2015 and holds a BA in Theatre Performance from North Central College.

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Lynn Rosen (Playwright) has had plays produced or developed with: New Georges, TheatreWorks (Silicon Valley), Actors Theatre of Louisville, Women’s Project, Ensemble Studio Theatre (three EST/Sloan commissions), Centerstage (Baltimore), Studio Theatre, Working Theater, Barrington Stage, The New Group, The Lark, terraNOVA Collective, New Harmony, GEVA, Fault Line Theatre, The Brick Theater, Red Bull Theatre, Todd Mountain Theater Project, The Lark Development Center (Writing Fellow), and 52nd Street Project, among others. Lynn was commissioned in 2016 by UCSB for her new play Bernhard which was then produced in their acclaimed Launch Pad series. She also co-writes and co-created the award-winning web series Darwin, directed by Carrie Preston, with whom she is developing two TV pilots. Darwin was named one of the “Top Ten Best Web Series of 2015” by Paste Magazine and season two is currently in production. Her short play I Love You was just recorded for Playing On Air starring Bill Irwin, Steve Boyer, directed by David Auburn, and her one-act The Opulent Complex was recently published in Red Bull Shorts. Coming up: Washed Up On the Potomac with The Pool, NYC; continued development of Gurley!—a musical about Helen Gurley Brown—at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, along with rock band, The Kilbanes. Lynn currently lives in NYC but she’s originally from Gary, Indiana, and trekked into Chicago everyday to attend high school at the Lab School.

Jessica Fisch (Director) Recent credits: Straight White Men (Associate Director, Steppenwolf), Trudy, Carolyn, Martha and Regina Travel to Outer Space (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival), Fefu and Her Friends (Goodman Theatre/Rivendell Latina/o Celebration) Opulent Complex and That Thing That Time (Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Tens), The Rosenkranz Mysteries: An Evening of Magic (Royal George Theatre), Psychodramatic (A Red Orchid, Incubator Series), Traces (Feast Productions/ Jackalope Theatre), Far Away (SITE Festival), 42 Stories (Raven Theatre, [Working Title] series), Machinal, Spike Heels (Northwestern University). Selected New York credits: The Realm (The Wild Project), strive/seek/find (Abingdon Theatre), the 2009 Playwrights Horizons Stories on 5 Stories Benefit, Personal History (Ensemble Studio Theatre), The Redheaded Man (Barrow Street Theatre/Down Payment
Productions/FringeNYC/FringeEncores), *Dressed In Your Dreams* (Public Theater/Emerging Writers Group), an adaptation of the cult 1960’s gothic vampire soap opera *Dark Shadows* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Jessica was a resident director at Ensemble Studio Theater, the Playwrights Horizons Directing Resident, a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, and the founding Artistic Director of Down Payment Productions. MFA: Northwestern University. www.JessicaFisch.com

**Katherine Scott** (Choreographer) is a choreographer, dancer, and teaching artist. Choreography credits: *Fuente Ovejuna*, *Hair: An American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*, *Jump Rhythm Jazz Project’s Getting Down, Going Forward* (Northwestern University), *The Great and Terrible Doctor Faustus* (The Athenaeum Theatre), and *Splendour Without Diminishment* (Chicago Fringe Festival). Katherine has danced as a company member with Striding Lion Performance Group, and she will be performing as a part of Synapse Arts New Works this spring. Katherine regularly teaches, directs, and choreographs at Mudlark Theater, and she instructs a dance class for individuals with developmental differences at Dovetail Studios. Katherine studied dance, psychology, and theatre at Northwestern University, and she will be pursuing her M.A. in Dance/Movement Therapy & Counseling at Columbia College of Chicago this fall.

**Andra Sturtevant** (Stage Manager) Recent Chicago area credits include *The Hundred Dresses, The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, Wonderland: Alice’s Rock & Roll Adventure, Frederick, The Selfish Giant, Mr. Chiceee’s Funny Money, and A Year With Frog and Toad* at Chicago Children's Theatre; *Life Sucks* at Lookingglass Theatre Company; *Short Shakespeare: Twelfth Night!* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater; and productions with the Evanston Dance Ensemble. Andra is a graduate of Northwestern University. She also teaches creative drama and theatre classes for young artists.

**Tanya Palmer** (Dramaturg) is the director of new play development at Goodman Theatre, where she coordinates New Stages, the theater’s new play program, and has served as the production dramaturg on a number of plays including the world premieres of *2666* by Roberto Bolaño, adapted by Robert Falls and Seth Bockley, *Smokefall* by Noah Haidle, *Carlyle* by Thomas Bradshaw, *The Happiest Song Plays Last* by Quiara Hudes and the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage. Prior to her arrival in Chicago, she served as the director of new play development at Actors Theatre of Louisville, where she led the reading and selection process for the Humana Festival of New American Plays. Originally from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, she holds an MFA in playwriting from York University.

**Joanna Iwanicka** (Scenic Design) previously designed sets for Rivendell’s productions of *Dry Land, WRENS* (2012 remount), and *The Electric Baby*. She is a Chicago-based theatre artist with design credits from 16th Street Theatre (Into the Beautiful North, Carroll Gardens, Merchild, Pinkolandia), Jackalope (Rolling), Lifeline (Monstrous Regiment), The Oracle (President, Romulus), Trap Door (No Matter How Hard We Try, Balcony) and Steppenwolf for Young Adults (Monster) among others. Joanna has also realized shows at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, the State Theatre Academy’s Department of Puppetry Arts, The Białystok Puppet Theatre, Teatr K3, and Teatr Lalek Arlekin in her native Poland. For more info on previous, current and upcoming projects please visit her online portfolio at www.joannaianicka.com. Her professional affiliations include IATSE local 476 and 829.
Stephanie Cluggish (Costume Design) has many recent projects including: *Winter* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble), *Betrayal* (Raven), *How We Got On* (Haven), Phillip Glass’s *In The Penal Colony* (Chicago Fringe Opera), *Posh* (Steep), *Good For Otto* (The Gift), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Wolf Trap Opera), and *Melancholy Play* (Piven Theatre Workshop). She was the Associate Costume Designer with Mara Blumenfeld on *One Man, Two Guvnors* and *The Secret Garden* (Court Theatre), *East of Eden* (Steppenwolf), *Into Shadowland* (Disney Tokyo, Japan) and the recent production of *Rusalka* at the Metropolitan Opera directed by Mary Zimmerman. See more at stephanie-cluggish.com.


Blake Leo Burke (Properties Design) other Props Master/Designer credits include: *Winter* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble). *AfterLove* (Chautauqua Theatre Company). *Spamalot, Anything Goes, Oklahoma* (McLeod Summer Playhouse). *She Loves Me, Arsenic And Old Lace, The King And I* (The Monomoy Theatre). *A Streetcar Named Desire, Dracula, Return To The Forbidden Planet* (ECU/Loessin Playhouse), and more! Blake graduated from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC earning her BFA in Theatre Design and Production with a dual concentration in Costume Design and Theatrical Properties.

Sam Moryoussef (Production Manager) is currently the Interim Assistant Technical Director for Lookingglass Theatre, and also serves as the Master Electrician/AV Supervisor at Lifeline Theatre. He moved to Chicago summer of 2015 from North Carolina where he worked at Elon University as the Assistant Technical Director for Performing Arts and Cultural Programs. He graduated in 2010 from the University of North Carolina Greensboro with a BFA in Drama concentrating in Technical Production.

Dr. Heather Berlin (Scientific Advisor to Playwright) is a cognitive neuroscientist and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount
Sinai, and Visiting Scholar at the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. She explores the neural basis of impulsive and compulsive psychiatric disorders with the aim of developing novel treatments. She is also interested in the brain basis of consciousness, dynamic unconscious processes, and creativity. Passionate about science communication, Berlin is a committee member of the National Academy of Sciences’ Science and Entertainment Exchange, and host of the PBS series *Science Goes to the Movies*, and the Discovery Channel series *Superhuman Showdown*. She co-wrote and stars in the critically acclaimed off-Broadway and Edinburgh Fringe Festival show, *Off the Top*, about the neuroscience of improvisation. Dr. Berlin has made numerous media appearances including: BBC, History Channel, Netflix, *StarTalk* with Neil deGrasse Tyson, and TEDx. She received her doctorate from the University of Oxford and Master of Public Health from Harvard University.

**Jackie Banks-Mahlum** (Rivendell Managing Director / Producer) is an arts manager, producer, and educator based in Chicago. She was thrilled to join the Rivendell Theatre Ensemble as the Managing Director in March 2014. Jackie is also the Membership and Development Associate at Arts Alliance Illinois, and the Co-Producer for Theatricum Botanicum. Previously Jackie was in the Los Angeles area where she worked with Center Theatre Group’s P.L.A.Y., the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Theatricum Botanicum. She has also freelanced regionally where she has had the opportunity to work in a variety of performing arts including opera, ballet, modern dance, improv, and theatre. She is a member of Actors’ Equity Association, has a Bachelor of Science in Theatre Production and Business Management from Bradley University, and a Masters of Fine Arts in Producing from the California Institute of the Arts.

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Rivendell Theatre Ensemble

IN MEMORY OF

Dr. Carol Klimick Cyganowski

APRIL 12, 1949 - NOVEMBER 11, 2016

Rivendell recently lost one of our most treasured supporters—Carol Cyganowski. A true ally to Rivendell, Carol served on our literary committee and was one of our biggest fans and most honest critics. Carol was a gift to Chicago theatre and we were honored to have her as a supporter, and more importantly, a friend. She will be truly missed.

A lifelong Chicagoan, born and raised on the South Side, Carol earned her B.A. cum laude from Knox College (1969), and her M.A. and Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago (1970 and 1980). Her dissertation, published in book form by Garland (1988), on Magazine Editors and Professional Authors in Nineteenth Century America: The Genteel Tradition and the American Dream explored the role of national magazines such as the Atlantic Monthly, the Century, and Harper's Monthly in "establishing authorship as a viable profession in the United States.”

Carol was an energetic scholar and beloved teacher. She spent most of her career at DePaul University (from 1983 to her retirement in 2014), where she served as Director of the American Studies Program (1996-2002) and Director of the Women's Studies Program (1990-93 and 1994-95) as well as originating over 20 new courses (from American Political Drama to Civil War Literature to American Women's Drama). As Director, she revitalized the American Studies Program by planning and producing Theme Quarters—on topics including “Chicago Theatre,” “Pursuits of Happiness,” and “Idealism in America”—that included public performances, lectures, films, panels, readings, and exhibits.

As a scholar of American Literature and Women's Studies, Carol contributed extensively to reference works including the Handbook of American Women’s History, the Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature (in which she wrote the overview essay on the Nineteenth-century U.S., as well as over 200 companion articles on authors, works, and concepts in 19th century U.S. women's literature and culture), the Reader’s Guide to Women’s Studies, the Women’s Studies Encyclopedia, Twentieth-Century Romance and Historical Writers, and The Encyclopedia of African American Literature.

Carol was both a scholar and an enthusiastic supporter of Chicago theatre, from established “giants” downtown to storefront theatres. At DePaul, she established the Chicago Playwrights manuscript collection at the Richardson Library (part of the Arts Community Archives within the Library’s Special Collections) and developed and taught a course on Chicago Theatre. In retirement, she was a member of the play reading and selection committee for Chicago’s Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Chicago’s only professional theatre company dedicated to the work of women theatre artists, and supported many other Chicago companies with time, enthusiasm, and financial contributions. At the time of her death, Carol was working on a play about the first sexual harassment class action case in the US, Jenson v. Eveleth Mines, which changed American sexual harassment law.
Rivendell Theatre Ensemble is an award winning, critically acclaimed professional theatre company committed to recognizing and cultivating the talents of women in theatre—from playwrights and actors to designers and managers. Rivendell's productions explore the unique female perspectives of everyday stories in an intimate, salon environment. Over the past twenty years, Rivendell has grown to fill an important role in the Chicago theatre community as the only Equity theatre in Chicago committed to advancing the lives of women through theatre. Rivendell is a leader in new play development and a major port for new writers, and also offers a brick and mortar artistic home for women theater artists.

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