World Premiere

The Catastrophist

By Lauren M. Gunderson

Commissioned by Marin Theatre Company

Co-produced by Round House and Marin Theatre Company

2020-21 Season • Your Home for Dramatic Discoveries • TrinityRep.com
Presents

THE CATASTROPHIST

By LAUREN M. GUNDERSON

Commissioned by MARIN THEATRE COMPANY

Co-Produced by

Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director
Ed Zakreski, Managing Director

Jasson Minadakis, Artistic Director
Jenna Deja, Interim Managing Director

THE ARTISTIC TEAM

Director Jasson Minadakis
Director of Photography/Editor Peter Ruocco
Dramaturg Martine Kei Green-Rogers
Lighting Designer Wen-Ling Liao+
Composer/Sound Designer Chris Houston/Implied Music
Costume Designer Sarah Smith
Assistant Director Christina Hogan
Producer Nakissa Etemad

THE CAST

Nathan William DeMeritt*

Running time approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes

March 18 – May 31, 2021

TRINITY REPERTORY COMPANY • 201 WASHINGTON ST. • PROVIDENCE • RHODE ISLAND • TRINITYREP.COM
LAUREN M. GUNDERSON
**Playwright**
Lauren M. Gunderson has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including in 2019-2020. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s National Playwright Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University and Dramatic Writing at NYU’s Tisch School, where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. She co-authored the Miss Bennet plays with Margot Melcon, and her play *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* is available on Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You; Exit, Pursued by a Bear; The Taming; and Toil and Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists; The Book of Will; Silent Sky; Bauer; Natural Shocks; The Wickhams; and Miss Bennet*), and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr. Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* is available on Amazon. She is currently developing musicals with Ari Afsar; Dave Stewart and Joss Stone; and Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk. LaurenGunderson.com. This is for Nathan, Charles and Asa, Carol Wittenberg and Julie Hirsch.

NATHAN WOLFE
**Subject and Scientific Consultant**
Nathan Wolfe is the Founder and Chair of Metabiota, which provides a unique data analytics platform for epidemic risk. Wolfe received his doctorate in Immunology and Infectious Diseases from Harvard in 1998. He has been honored with a Fulbright fellowship and the NIH Director’s Pioneer Award. He is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and a National Geographic Emerging Explorer. Wolfe has published over 100 scientific publications, and his work has been published in or covered by *Nature, Science, The New York Times, The Economist, NPR, The New Yorker, Wall Street Journal, and Forbes*, among others. Wolfe has two prominent TEDTalks that have garnered close to two million views. His critically acclaimed book, *The Viral Storm*, has been published in six languages and was shortlisted in 2012 for the Royal Society’s Winton Prize. In 2011, he was named as one of the hundred most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine; *Rolling Stone* named him one of the “100 Agents of Change” in 2009; and *Popular Science* recognized him as one of their “Brilliant 10” in 2006.

JASSON MINADAKIS
**Director/MTC Artistic Director**
Jasson Minadakis is in his 15th season as artistic director of Marin Theatre Company, where he has directed *Mother of the Maid*, *Sovereignty*, *Oslo*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Thomas and Sally*, *Guards at the Taj*, *August: Osage County*, *The Invisible Hand*, *Anne Boleyn*, *The Convert*, *The Whale*, *Failure: A Love Story*, the world premiere of *Lasso of Truth*, *The Whipping Man* (San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle Awards for Best Production and Best Acting Ensemble), *Waiting for Godot*, *Othello: the Moor of Venice*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Edward Albee’s Tiny Alice*, the world premiere of Libby Appel’s adaptation of Chekhov’s *Seagull, Happy Now?*, *Equivocation* (SFBATCC Award, Best Director), the world premiere of *Sunlight*, *Lydia*, *The Seafarer*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, A Streetcar Named Desire, said Said, Love Song, and *The Subject Tonight is Love*. As artistic director of Actor’s Express Theatre Company, he directed *The Pillowman; Bug; The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer; Echoes of Another Man; Killer Joe; Burn This; The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?; Blue/Orange; and Bel Canto*. As producing artistic director of Cincinnati Shakespeare Festival, he directed *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train, Chagrin Falls* (2002 Cincinnati Entertainment Award for Best Production), and numerous others, including 19 productions of Shakespeare. Regional credits include *The Whipping Man*, *Virginia Stage Company; Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Hamlet*, *Georgia Shakespeare; Copenhagen*, *Playhouse on the Square (2003 Ostrander Theatre Award for Best Dramatic Production); and Bedroom Farce, Wayside.*

PETER RUOCCO
**Director of Photography/Editor**
Peter Ruocco is an Emmy award-winning filmmaker based in the SF Bay Area. His work has been distributed nationally on
KQED, NPR, Upworthy, PBS, and at film festivals across the country. He is thrilled to be part of helping the MTC and RHT team get this important new work out into the world.

MARTINE KEI GREEN-ROGERS

Dramaturg

Martine Kei Green-Rogers is an Associate Professor at SUNY New Paltz, the Fellowship Associate at The Playwrights’ Center, Past President of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, and a freelance dramaturg. Her dramaturgical credits include He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box and Ohio State Murders, Round House Theatre; The Greatest with the Louisville Orchestra; Four Women Talking About the Man Under the Sheet and Silent Dancer, Salt Lake Acting Company; Fences and One Man, Two Guvnors, Pioneer Theatre Company; Clearing Bombs and Nothing Personal, Plan-B Theatre; Uncle Vanya, Antigone, Candida, Ghosts, Tartuffe, and Shylock, The Jew of Venice, Classical Theatre Company; Sweat, Goodman; King Hedley II, Radio Golf, Five Guys Named Mo, Blues for An Alabama Sky, Gem of the Ocean, Waiting for Godot, Iphigenia at Aulis, Seven Guitars, The Mountain Top, Home, and Porgy and Bess, Court Theatre; The Clean House, CATCO; Hairspray, The Book of Will, Shakespeare in Love, UniSon, Hannah and the Dread Gazebo, Comedy of Errors, To Kill A Mockingbird, The African Company Presents Richard III, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Fences, Oregon Shakespeare Festival; 10 Perfect and The Curious Walk of the Solamander, 2006 and 2007 Madison Repertory Theatre’s New Play Festival; and A Thousand Words, 2008 WI Wrights New Play Festival. martinekeigreenrogers.com

CHRIS HOUSTON/IMPLIED MUSIC

Composer/Sound Designer

Chris Houston is a pianist and composer, who records and produces as Implied Music. He has composed music and/or designed sound for over 30 productions at Marin Theatre Company, including Oslo; The Legend of Georgia McBride; Guards at the Taj; The Invisible Hand; The Oldest Boy; The Convert; The Whale; Failure: A Love Story; August Wilson’s Fences; Jacob Marley’s A Christmas Carol; The Whipping Man; Waiting for Godot; It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play; Topdog/Underdog; Othello, the Moor of Venice; The Glass Menagerie; the world premiere of Bellwether; Seven Guitars; and In the Red and Brown Water. His designs and compositions have been featured at American Conservatory Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, SF Playhouse, Center REP, Magic Theatre, and the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. impliedmusic.com

WEN-LING LIAO

Lighting Designer

Wen-Ling Liao is happy to be back with MTC and work with Round House for the first time. Her previous credits with MTC include: I and You, The Who & The What, The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley. Selected credits include: Are You There?, Nicole Clark is Having a Baby, and Flex, 44th Humana Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville; Gloria and Vietgone, A.C.T; White Pearl, Studio Theater; House of Joy and Quixote Nuevo, Cal Shakes; The Chinese Lady, Oedipus El Rey, The Resting Place, and Reel to Reel, Magic Theater; Dance Nation, Significant Other, King of the Yees, and Barbecue, San Francisco Playhouse; Native Gardens, Center Repertory Theater; The Importance of Being Earnest, Aurora Theater Company; The Boy Who Danced on Air, Abingdon Theater Company; Chill, Merrimack Repertory Theater; Milk Like Sugar, Huntington Theatre Company; Sense and Sensibility, Dallas Theater Center; Precious Little, Marjorie Prime, and Grounded, Nora Theater Company; Appropriate, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Luna Gale, Stoneham Theater; and A Nice Indian Boy, East West Players. Her selected international credits include: Scarlet Stone, Tigran Festival, Toronto; BodyParts/In Spite of It, TANZINOL-TENF Festival, Switzerland; Riz Flambe and Riz Souffe, Avignon Off-Festival in France; and Toi, Taipei Fringe Festival in Taiwan. She earned her MFA from University of California, San Diego and BA from National Taiwan University. welingliao.com

CHRISTINA HOGAN

Assistant Director

Christina Hogan is excited to work with Round House for the first time, and to return to Marin Theatre Company. Previously she has worked as a stage manager at MTC on Mother of the Maid, Skeleton Crew and The Wolves. Other stage management credits include: Gloria, Top Girls, Edward Albee’s Seascape, and Men on Boats, American Conservatory Theatre; In Old Age, The Baltimore Waltz, runboyrun, And I Silence, and Any Given Day, Magic Theatre; Ripped and Selkie, Z Space; It Can’t Happen Here, Berkeley Repertory Theatre; and A Raisin in the Sun, California Shakespeare Theater. Hogan has a BA in theater arts from Saint Mary’s College of California.

NAKISSA ETEMAD

Producer

Nakissa Etemad, MTC’s new Associate Artistic Director, is an Iranian American dramaturg, producer, and French translator specializing in new plays and musicals for over 25 years. She is Regional VP Metro Bay Area for Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA), a Resident Artist of Golden Thread Productions, and a member of the Anti-Racism Task Force of LMDA. Recent credits include: Yussef El Guindi’s Hotter Than Egypt, 2020 Colorado New Play Summit; Heather Raffo’s Nora, Marin Theatre Company/Golden Thread; Marcus Gardley’s Play on! commission of King Lear, Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and world premiere productions with Gardley, Lauren Yee, Mariela Treviño Orta, Margo Hall, and Torraine Yeghaizarian. She is a costume designer and builder in the Bay Area for the last five years. Shows she has designed include: Mother of the Maid, Marin Theatre Company; Pool of Unknown Wonders: Undertow of the Soul, Ubuntu Theatre; Black Eagles, African American Shakespeare Company; and Big Love and The Inspector General, The Nueva School. She has also worked on costumes for A.C.T, Berkeley Rep, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Menlowe Ballet, Dawson Dance, Lines Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and Colorado Shakespeare Festival. She is currently pursuing an Associates Degree in Fashion Construction and Design from Apparel Arts in Oakland.

SARAH SMITH

Costume Designer

Sarah Smith is a costume designer and technician in the SF Bay Area. Sarah was born and raised in Boulder, Colorado, and made her way to San Francisco after graduating from the University of Puget Sound with a BA in Theatrical Arts and Classical Studies. She has worked as a
frequent collaborator on Golden Thread's ReOrient Festivals of Short Plays and Bay Area Playwrights Festivals, including plays by Betty Shamieh, Naomi Wallace, Niku Sharei, Katori Hall, Garret Groenveld, Dustin Chinn, and Terence Anthony. Early highlights include: the East Coast premiere of Resurrection Blues by Arthur Miller, The Wilma, Every Good Boy Deserves Favor by Tom Stoppard & André Previn, The Wilma/The Philadelphia Orchestra; Culture Clash in Bordertown, San Diego Rep; and Festival Director for the 5th Annual New America Playwrights Fest, featuring new plays by Lynn Nottage, Naomi Iizuka and Polly Pen, San Jose Rep. Former dramaturg and literary manager of The Wilma Theater, San Jose Rep, and San Diego Repertory Theatre, and recipient of the 2015 Elliott Hayes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy for The Lark's four-city premieres of Marcus Gardley's the road weeps, the well runs dry. MFA in Dramaturgy, UC San Diego.

**DR. STEVEN FUGARO**
**COVID Medical Consultant**

Dr. Steven Fugaro is an internist in San Francisco, where he has practiced for 35 years. He resides in Mill Valley with his wife Jill. He has been a member of the Sausalito Presbyterian Church for 25 years and is the Congregation President. Dr. Fugaro graduated from Stanford in 1977 and received his MD from Yale in 1981. He has held various faculty positions at UCSF. Dr. Fugaro is the former President of the San Francisco Medical Society. He is also the Chairman of the Board of the SF Health Plan, which oversees the MediCal program in SF.

**LIZ MATOS**
**COVID Compliance Officer**

Liz Matos is delighted to return to Marin Theatre Company, where she has previously worked as a stage manager on LOVE, Noura, August Wilson's How I Learned What I Learned, and The Who & The What. Liz has also worked with Magic Theatre, The Cutting Ball Theater, A.C.T. Conservatory, and PlayGround. She is a graduate of Dartmouth College and is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

**JENNA DEJA**
**MTC Interim Managing Director**

Jenna Deja began serving as MTC’s Interim Managing Director in November 2019 through the firm Arts Consulting Group (ACG) and is thrilled to be a part of such an esteemed organization and vibrant community. Ms. Deja has more than 20 years of experience in cultural organization leadership, programming, strategic planning, human resources, facility management, and marketing. She is passionate about building and aligning strong teams and has a track record of artistic innovation, business acumen, and administrative excellence. Developing diverse programs, increasing earned and contributed revenue, and fostering collaborative relationships with board, staff, and communities are at the center of Ms. Deja’s achievements. Ms. Deja joined ACG as a Vice President in 2015 as an integral part of the firm’s Leadership Transition team and in 2018 became ACG’s Practice Leader for Interim Management. She has delivered effective management and interim consulting services for clients such as Bravo! Vail, Long Wharf Theatre, The National Theatre, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, New York City Opera, Marathon Center for the Performing Arts, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Her deep belief in the value of interim management and her high-level client service skills have led to success in providing arts and culture organizations with impactful leaders. Prior to joining ACG, Ms. Deja spent 12 years at Chicago’s legendary comedy theater The Second City, most recently as Managing Producer, and has held various management roles in regional theaters across the country.

**ED ZAKRESKI**
**Round House Theatre Managing Director**

Ed Zakreski is in his fifth season as Managing Director of Round House Theatre. He has produced the five bestselling shows in Round House history and led the theater’s $12 million Full Circle campaign. He has been an executive leader and fundraiser in DC area nonprofit arts organizations for more than 25 years, raising more than $120 million. Prior to joining Round House, Ed spent 12 years as Chief Development Officer at Shakespeare Theatre Company where he completed the $75 million capital campaign to build Sidney Harman Hall and produced its $3 million opening gala. From 1998-2005, Ed worked in Development at the Kennedy Center, ultimately overseeing a 22-member team raising more than $11 million annually. Ed holds a degree in Arts Management from American University and frequently presents and leads workshops about management and fundraising for nonprofit arts organizations. He is the incoming Co-Chair of Montgomery County Arts Advocates.

continued on next page
Three Sisters
United Kingdom, and Australia. His translations of Chekhov’s 
Dostoevsky’s, as well as Feydeau’s A Flea in Her 
and Lope de Vega’s Like Sheep to Water, 
or Fuente Ovejuna. Curt’s adaptation of Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment (with Marilyn Campbell) has won awards and accolades around the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. His translation of Chekhov’s Three Sisters, developed at the Arden Theatre in Philadelphia, is published by Dramatists Play Service, as is Sparrow Grass and his translations of Chekhov’s Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Cherry Orchard, and Ivanov, as well as Lope de Vega’s Fuente Ovejuna. Curt lives in Providence, Rhode Island with his husband, Nate Watson.

CURT COLUMBUS
Trinity Rep's Arthur P. Solomon and Sally E. Lapides Artistic Director
Curt Columbus became Trinity Repertory Company’s fifth artistic director in January 2006. He is also the artistic director of the Brown/Trinity Rep MFA programs in Acting and Directing. His directing credits for Trinity Rep include A Christmas Carol Online, Macbeth, Ragtime, Beowulf: A Thousand Years of Baggage, Middletown, Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, The Merchant of Venice, His Girl Friday, Camelot, Cabaret, Blithe Spirit, A Christmas Carol, Cherry Orchard, and the world premieres of The Completely Fictional—Utterly True—Final Strange Tale of Edgar Allen Poe and Social Creatures. Trinity Rep has been home to the world premieres of three of his plays, Paris by Night, The Dreams of Antigone, and Sparrow Grass, and produced his translations of Chekhov’s Cherry Orchard and Ivanov, as well as Feydeau’s A Flea in Her Ear and Lope de Vega’s Like Sheep to Water, or Fuente Ovejuna. Curt’s adaptation of Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment (with Marilyn Campbell) has won awards and accolades around the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. His translation of Chekhov’s Three Sisters, developed at the Arden Theatre in Philadelphia, is published by Dramatists Play Service, as is Sparrow Grass and his translations of Chekhov’s Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Cherry Orchard, and Ivanov, as well as Lope de Vega’s Fuente Ovejuna. Curt lives in Providence, Rhode Island with his husband, Nate Watson.

LAURA E. SMITH
Trinity Rep Production Director
Ms. Smith is in her 24th season with Trinity Rep. She was the associate production manager at Trinity Rep for six years and the capital projects manager for two years, overseeing the construction of the Pell Chafee Performance Center. In the past, she has been the production manager for the Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance at Brown University and the Berkshire Opera Company. She has also stage managed for institutions such as the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and the Juilliard School.

TOM PARRISH
Trinity Rep Executive Director
Leading Trinity Rep since 2015, Tom Parrish is responsible for overall audience and donor development, financial management, operations, and administration. Previously, he served successful tenures as executive director of Geva Theatre Center and Merrimack Repertory Theatre. He also worked at Arena Stage, Cleveland Play House, Dallas Theater Center, and San Diego Repertory Theatre. He is currently Treasurer of the League of Resident Theatres and involved on the boards or committees of Theatre Forward, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Providence District Management Authority, Providence Foundation, and the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau. Awards include a NAACP Theatre Award for Best Producer and “Forty Under 40” recognition in Providence, Rochester, the Merrimack Valley, and San Diego. He received his MBA/MA, Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University; BA in Theater Arts and Economics from Case Western Reserve University; and attended the National Theater Institute, Commercial Theater Institute, and Harvard Business School’s Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management.

MARIN THEATRE COMPANY
Co-Producer
Marin Theatre Company is the San Francisco Bay Area’s premier mid-sized theater and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay, producing a six-show season focused on new American plays. MTC is committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, readings, and workshops by the nation’s best emerging and established playwrights. MTC’s numerous education programs serve more than 4,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. Marin Theatre Company believes in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theater, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community and believes that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

MTC PRODUCTION TEAM
Director of Production …… Sara Huddleston Technical Director ……………………. Jeff Klein Camera Operators …………… Del Medoff Electricians…….Krys Swan, Liz Kreter-Killan Corey Schaffer Assistant Carpenter ………….. Mike Ferrell COVID-19 Medical Consultant ……………… Dr. Steven Fugaro COVID-19 Compliance Officer …… Liz Matos

* Actor appears courtesy of SAG-AFTRA, the Screen Actors Guild of America.
You think you know your partner of a decade. And then you attempt to write a play about them.

“I WAS LIVING WITH MY SOURCE MATERIAL, LUCKY ME.”
When San Francisco went into lockdown in April and everyone’s world catapulted into a new normal of isolation, homeschool, and a ban on all public gatherings (including my beloved theatre), Jasson Minadakis posed the idea of writing a new play about my husband. Nathan Wolfe is a foremost expert on pandemics with a thrilling life of discovery, travel, and intellectual pursuit. What would a play about him look like? Would I ever consider it?

No, I would not. I first rejected Jasson’s idea of creating a play about Nathan for three reasons:

First, I usually write about scientific history, not contemporary science. I’ve written about Marie Curie, Isaac Newton, Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, Henrietta Swan Leavitt and Emilie du Chatelet. I don’t write about contemporary science because we don’t know the end of it yet, we don’t know what current science means at this point. We need a few decades to figure that out.

Second: We’ve been together for ten years, and I hadn’t yet found a way to write about virology that works for the stage. The joke in our marriage is that we were set up to meet so that I would write something about Nathan’s work, and I never did. “Where’s my movie?” Nathan teased. “Where’s my play?” I joke that he got a wife and two kids instead.

Third: My job as a dramatist is to find my character’s deepest secrets, most potent traumas, darkest nights of the soul, and put them onstage for anyone to see. If the play is to work, I cannot be nice to my characters. I have to test them, to corner them, to back them to the cliff’s edge of emotion, and sometimes to kick them over. Was I willing to do that to the man I love? No.

Okay, maybe.

The idea of a play started to make more and more sense. Every person has trauma, secrets, pain. And in this moment—with a global pandemic raging and ravaging communities, with a chilling rejection of science resurfacing, and with undeniable and unnecessary deaths devastating families worldwide—Nathan’s story might be more universal than ever before. I was starting to get that tangled, electric feeling that a good play idea might be blooming.

This wasn’t a good idea just because of his science, but because of his life facing mortality. His family was forced to manage and make sense of death since he was young. His work is the work of preventing mass scale death and disruption due to disease. And he has faced his own mortality more than once.

So the play started to take shape not as a story of science, but of a scientist. A scientist who is smart, determined, adventurous…but most importantly, human. A mortal man facing what we are all facing now: waves of loss, the feeling of racing against death, the feeling of being helpless against a deadly unknown.

But a good main character needs secrets, something they are forced to reckon with, something that can’t be hidden any longer. I knew Nathan’s secret because it was mine too. I won’t spoil it for you, but in this shared trauma I realized I could write a new kind of one-person play that twisted the predictable theatrical form. One where the writer is almost in the play, sharing the journey with the main character. You recall how a playwright must push her characters to the edge? Well, I thought, what if the character pushes back?

And with that, I knew that this was a play I could write. No. This was a play I couldn’t wait to write.

I recorded dinnertime interviews with Nathan and used them to go deeper into his past, closer to his current thinking, and to surf his dreams and new ideas. I read Nathan’s papers. I asked him questions I’d never asked before. I assumed things about him, then was corrected in my assumptions. This play made us both unpack things we’ve never stopped to unpack before. And since we were on lock down, he was always there to interrogate. I was living with my source material. Lucky me.

After much delay and indecision, I wrote the first draft in one week. Jasson was happy and (more accurately) relieved that I actually wrote the damn thing after all.

Of course I told Nathan what I was writing and asked his permission to delve into the harder parts of his life. But I didn’t tell him how the play would feel, how the story moves, the battle of writer and character, or where it ultimately goes. And I didn’t let him read it or see it until the very first rehearsal with our brilliant actor, Bill DeMeritt.

I wanted Nathan to be not only the subject of the play but its first audience.

He laughed. He cried. He gave me several notes on the science.

The strange prism of theatre evokes new meaning and new truth from a world we think we already know. Even though it was a play about his own life, I think Nathan would admit that he learned things unknown to him. Even though it was personal, it was surprising. The scientist discovered a new story of himself.

This sounds a bit grand. But theatre can do that. It uncovers. It unpacks. It lets one person’s story flow into another’s.

A playwright must become intimate with their protagonist. A writer must face their character’s every flaw, examine every fault, challenge every choice. I love my characters because I know them so well. This, I start to understand, is what happens when you write a play about your partner. Facing the tough parts of their life head on deepens understanding and thus deepens empathy. Deep knowing and deep love are partners. I love him in new ways because, now, I know him in new ways.
Just after the New Year, playwright Lauren Gunderson sat down with her husband Dr. Nathan Wolfe to discuss his point of view on the making of her play The Catastrophist.

LAUREN INTERVIEWS NATHAN

LAUREN: What did you first think when I told you about the idea of writing a play about you?

NATHAN: I don't remember—did I think it was a joke?

LAUREN: You might have. What did you expect that I would write about?

NATHAN: I should've known from your work that it would be a personal piece. I've been covered elsewhere, but never for a piece of literature, never for a piece that featured my non-scientific thinking, my family, my emotions. And so it was really different from any other exercise I've had in communicating with the public. I think what you do is a form of scientific communication. Part of what your plays do is to inform us of the human nature of science and help to give people a more holistic understanding of science, which is just not limited to hypothesis, generation, experimentation. It's people working together, it's people who are human and have lives. And so in the same way that communicating with a journalist is an outgrowth and part of the scientific process I think, it feels very natural to me that plays are a different way in which science becomes manifest and understood by the world.

LAUREN: When you saw the reading on the first day of rehearsal, what did you come away with?

NATHAN: All the pieces that I've seen have a truth to them, and there's nothing in it that feels to me particularly fictionalized. Having said that—it's a piece of art that...
transcends me, my work, my personality. And frankly, I think, if you're married to one of the most prolific playwrights in the world, you learn pretty quickly that reflections of yourself that you see in characters are best left uninterpreted, right? But the reality is it's a piece of art that exists that I'm related to but that also exists sort of independent of me. And frankly, in a way that a great piece of art is supposed to provide some sort of accurate reflection on reality, I felt it did that and I saw myself in it. Not like you would see yourself in a mirror but in a way that I often found humorous, or emotional. Of course, at the end of the day, it's a great honor to have such a talented team that you're at the center of taking time to talk about this topic and to, among other things, amplify elements of the work that I've done.

**LAUREN:** What do you wish people knew about pandemics?

**NATHAN:** These are not static things, these are rapidly-evolving. One of the things I'm thinking about is there's this interesting variant which appears to cause increased transmissibility, and so I feel like one of the things that scientists like myself can do is to help provide context. And part of the context is that I think people naturally, but erroneously, tend to view the epidemic in static terms. 'Okay, we've got a vaccine, it was proved to be efficacious, that's good news, we need to get it out there.' But the reality is that the pandemic is a living, evolving thing—these viruses evolve very rapidly, so there's a whole range of variants out there and the notion that it appears that we may have gotten lucky with this variant, that it is still amenable to protection from these amazingly efficacious vaccines. The pandemic is a range of different variants of that virus in different people around the world—some of which have different characteristics, and spread faster, or don't spread faster, some of which cause more disease to different people, or to other people, or less disease, some of which are more amenable to a vaccine, and some of which are less amenable to a vaccine. And the pandemic now is quite different than [what] the pandemic will be at every moment after, and not recognizing that this is a living, rapidly-evolving population is missing the boat on what a pandemic is.

**LAUREN:** What do you love most about science?

**NATHAN:** The magical part of science for me is a little bit like how you would think of the Oracle in some Greek play, where you have to ask the Oracle the right question, you have to ask the Oracle the right question, you have to ask the Oracle the right question, and you have to be able to understand the answer from the Oracle in order for the Oracle to be valuable. When science is done well, what it feels to me is: humans are asking questions of the universe about its fundamental nature. And when science does its job well, it asks the question in a way that it gets an answer, the answer is meaningful and consistent over time. And that's a pretty remarkable thing to be able to do, and our capacity to do it just continues to seemingly grow. It's like the universe, as manifest in us, can ask questions about itself that are answered, and sometimes in deeply compelling ways. And so it's a pretty cool enterprise to be a part of. Cause you feel like it's a — you're at this self-reflective moment of the universe understanding itself.
WOLFE FAMILY PHOTOS

1974

Mother Carol, father Chuck, daughter Julie, and son Nathan in 1974.

1979

FATHER AND KIDS
Chuck Wolfe with son Nathan (9 yrs.) and sister Julie (6 yrs.) in 1979.

1970s

FATHER OUTDOORS
Nathan’s father Chuck Wolfe in the 1970s.

2000s

CAMEROON VISIT
Chuck visits Nathan (seated, left) at a dinner hosted by Nathan’s colleague in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in the early 2000s.

FATHER AND SON
Nathan with his father Chuck

1998

NATHAN’S HARVARD GRADUATION
Nathan’s graduation from Harvard in 1998 with his dad Chuck Wolfe.

2014
One of my favorite aspects of dramaturgy is that every play I work on becomes an opportunity to learn something new. For example, did you know that, contrary to popular lexicon, it is redundant to call COVID-19 a "global pandemic?" This is because the word "pandemic" in and of itself implies "global." For this reason, I thought it may be useful to all of you who have watched, or are about to watch, The Catastrophist to provide a small series of basics on the science in this play.

PANDEMICS 101

What is a pandemic, and how is that different than an epidemic or an outbreak? The short version of that answer really lies in the scale of the spread. As defined by the CDC, "an Epidemic refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area. Outbreak carries the same definition of epidemic, but is often used for a more limited geographic area. Cluster refers to an aggregation of cases grouped in place and time that are suspected to be greater than the number expected, even though the expected number may not be known. Pandemic refers to an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people." (www.cdc.gov/csels)

What is sincerely interesting about pandemics and epidemics is that the definition of these terms vary depending on the source. For example, in the book Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction by Christian W. McMillen, he states that: “Several infectious disease specialists at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institute of Health (NIH) came up with a broad framework that can work to help define what a pandemic is and has been. They suggested that it must meet eight criteria: wide geographic extension, disease movement, high attack rates and explosiveness, minimal population immunity, novelty, infectiousness, contagiousness, and severity.”

continued on page 17
The family tree of viruses that shows evolutionary relationships among viruses and cellular life, a randomly sampled set of 368 cells and viruses with major groups identified, including up to 5 viral species from each viral order or family and 34 proteomes (the complete set of proteins expressed by an organism) corresponding to only free-living organisms in Archaea (single-cell prokaryotic organisms), Bacteria (also prokaryotes), and Eukarya (plants, animals, and humans).

Source: Science Advances (scientific journal) 25 Sep 2015, Vol. 1, no. 8 – from the article "A phylogenomic data-driven exploration of viral origins and evolution" by Arshan Nasir and Gustavo Caetano-Anollés (https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/1/8/e1500527)
McMillen goes on to point out several ideas that ring very true with our current pandemic, such as:

- “[There is a] relationship between poverty and disease and the geography of epidemics and pandemics”.
- “Fear and dread characterize epidemics”.
- “Epidemics and pandemics cannot occur without a dense and mobile population”.

What is sad to acknowledge about the current pandemic is that, globally, the lack of infrastructure to deal with pandemics has not strengthened in a substantial way since the most recent pandemics in modern history. All of this is to note that maybe while it is important to figure out how to define a pandemic, the more important thing may be to figure out how to deal with a pandemic once something has been determined to be a pandemic. That leads us to the people and areas of science that deal with pandemics.

VIROLOGY 101

Nathan Wolfe, PhD, the subject of *The Catastrophist*, is a virologist.

Virology is "the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the biology of viruses and viral diseases, including the distribution, biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, ecology, evolution and clinical aspects of viruses" (www.nature.com/subjects/virology). In short, a virologist is a scientist who studies everything about viruses.

As when discussing pandemics vs. epidemics, one has to discuss virology with the fields of epidemiology and immunology. According to the CDC, Epidemiology is the “study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events in specified populations, and the application of this study to the control of health problems” (www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section1.html). In a more wordy but maybe clearer way, it is a field of science that is interested in the distribution (frequency and pattern), determinants (causes and other factors that influence the occurrence of disease and other heath events), and application (applying the knowledge gained by the studies to community-based practices) of health events in the population. Similarly, but definitely not the same thing, Immunology is “the study of the immune system” and is a “branch of the medical and biological sciences” (www.immunology.org/public-information/what-is-immunology).

These three fields of study come together in times of a pandemic to help determine the best courses of action to deal with the pandemic. Virologists are the scientists who are concerned with hows and the whys of the virus itself, and in cases like our current pandemic, especially the hows and whys of zoonotic viruses (the diseases/pathogens that have jumped from an animal to a human). Virologists are those scientists who either discover the beginnings of a virus spread or the point of origin of a novel virus by trying to figure out how the disease came into existence.

What this play, and Dr. Wolfe’s book, *The Viral Storm: The Dawn of a New Pandemic Age*, discusses is that sometimes a virologist’s work can be pretty “un-sexy” (for lack of a better term) but when a virologist discovers something—we should be thankful and pay attention, since they are usually the first ones to know when a disease with the possibility of becoming a pandemic begins.
Follow us on social media! 
Tag your experience with #TrinityRep.

TRINITY REP STAFF

RESIDENT ACTING COMPANY
Stephen Berenson, Maria Brazil, Timothy Crowe, Janice Duclos, 
Daniel Duque-Stradis, Mia Ellis, Rebecca Gibel, Mauro Huntman, 
Phyllis Kay, Brian McElaney, Jude Sandy, Anne Sciarra, 
Stephen Thorne, Charlie Thurston, Rachel Warren, Joe Wilson, Jr.

ARTISTIC AND MABEL T. WOOLLEY 
LITERARY DEPARTMENT
The Arthur P. Solomon & Sally E. Ladipes Artistic Director .......... Curt Columbus
Resident Designer .................................................. Eugene Lee
Associate Directors ............................................ Brian McElaney, Brian Martes
Resident Artist ..................................................... Marta V. Martinez, Michael McGarty
Playwright-in-Residence ..................................... Deborah Salem Smith
Director of Community Engagement .................... Michelle Cruz
Conversationalist-in-Residence ....................... Christina Bevilacqua
Commissioned Artists .................................. Ana Bess Moyer Bell, George Brant
Leandra Kifa Castro, Jackie Sibbiles Drury
Marcus Gardley, Orlando Hernandez, James James
Vatic Kaumba, The Low Anthem, Katie Pearl
Ken Prestininzi, Charise Castro Smith, Regina Taylor
Whitney White, Lauren Fye

EDUCATION & ACCESSIBILITY
Director of Education & Accessibility ....................... Jordan Butterfield
Associate Education Director .......................... Matthew Tibbs
School Partnerships & Professional Development Manager .......... Natalie Dreyer
Teaching Artists .................................................. Jay Are Adams, Taxon Gamble
Sensory Friendly Consultants .............................. Tracy Allard, Dan Boyle
Daniel Perkins

PRODUCTION
Production Director ............................................ Laura E. Smith
Master Electrician ............................................. Steve McLehan
Costume Shop Director ................................. Amanda Darrow Carney
Props Master ..................................................... S. Michael Getz
Sound Engineer ................................................ Peter Susha Hurwitz
Technical Director ............................................. Ian Stillman
Carpenter ....................................................... Michael McGarty

ADMINISTRATION
Executive Director ........................................... Tom Parrish
Staff Accountant ............................................... Karen O'Malley
Accounts Payable and HR Assistant ..................... Jessica Toporoski
Receptionist ..................................................... Kelly McDonald
Auditor ......................................................... WithumSmithBrown, PC, Karen Kowgos

BUILDING OPERATIONS
Maintenance Technician ...................................... Kai Almeida
Security Supervisor ............................... Shawn Williams
Security ....................................................... Georgina Coffey

DEVELOPMENT
Director of Development .................................. Jennifer Canole
Assistant Director of Development .................... Kate Kataja
Major Gifts Officer ............................................ Brad Delzer
Development Coordinator ................................. Blake DeLavaney
Grants Writer .................................................. Emily Atkinson

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Director of Marketing & Communications .......... Kate Brandt
Creative Director ............................................... Michael Guy

AUDIENCE SERVICES
Box Office Manager ......................................... Baron Pugh
Box Office Representatives ............................. Henry Barchoana, Alexis Pelletier
Front of House Manager .......................... Brandy Widner

BROWN UNIVERSITY/ 
TRINITY REP MFA PROGRAM

The Arthur P. Solomon & Sally E. Ladipes Artistic Director, 
Trinity Repertory Company ......................... Curt Columbus
Director, Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Programs ............. Angela Brazil
Head of Acting ................................................. Brian McElaney
Head of Directing ............................................. Brian Martes
Head of Movement & Physical Theater, DGS ........... Shura Basyukhnikov
Interim Head of Voice and Speech ....................... Josh F. S. Moser
Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and 
Performance Studies .................................. Patricia Ybarra
Founding Director ............................................ Stephen Berenson
Program Manager ............................................. Jill Jann
Interim Production Manager ......................... Anne L. Harrigan
Program Coordinator .......................... Sammi Haskill
Technical Supervisor of the MFA Programs .......... Michael Cline
PCPC Technical Director ................................ Marc Tiberiis
PCPC Costume Shop Manager .......... Lisa Burt-Parente
Props Master ............................................... Hoye Westphal
Creative Producer, Professional Development ........ Melissa Kievan
Acting .................................................... Stephen Berenson, Rachel Christopher
Anne Sciarra
Directing/Dramaturgy .................................. Curt Columbus, Taibi Magar
Patti Ybarra
Playwriting .................................................. Vichet Chum, Deborah Salem Smith
Singing ....................................................... Hillary Nicholson, Rachel Warren
Speech ....................................................... Angela Brazil
Physical Theater ............................................ Angie Jepson, Tina Mitchell
Mycah Hogan, Jackie Davis
Design ......................................................... Eugene Lee
Alexander Technique, Voice ......................... Barbara Casey, Carol Gill
Industry Mentor ............................................. Erica Jensen

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Louis Giancola, Chair* 
Kibbe Reilly, Vice-Chair*
John S. Lombardo,* Treasurer
Jon Duffy,* Secretary
Hannah Bell-Lombardo
Richard Beretta
Paul Choquette
Linda Cohen
Curt Columbus,
The Arthur P. Solomon & 
Sally E. Ladipes Artistic 
Director*
Judhajit De
Joseph Dowling, Jr., M.D.
Rebecca Gibel, Acting Company
Sergio M. Gonzalez*
Philip Gould
William F. Greene
Nancy Smith Greer
Laura Harris
Sean W. Holley, Esq.
James Hurley
Jeffrey Kasle
Eve Tucker Keenan
Larry La Sala
Doris Licht
Peter Lipman
Joe Madden
Sara Shea McConnell
Brian McGuirk
Tom Parrish, Executive Director*

Clay Pell
Yahaira “Jay” Placencia
Marisa A. Quinn
Sean Redfern
Kate Sabatini
Julia Anne Slim
Arthur Solomon*
Donna Vanderbeck*
Manibeth Q. Williamson

TRUSTEES EMERITI
Richard L. Brady
Arnold B. Chace, Jr.
Johnnie C. Chace
Liz Chace
Michael Corrente
Geoffrey B. Davis
Sally D. Dowling
Constance Eyvart
Rhoda Fluxman
Leslie Y. Gutterman
Louis Haslen
John M. harpoontian
Mary D. Higgins
Barry G. Hittner
Michael E. Hogue
John H. Howland
Eugene Lee
Mayer A. Levitt
John J. McConnell, Jr.
Marc Perlman
Myrna K. Rosen
*Executive Committee