

# ROE

By Lisa Loomer

Directed by Susannah Wood



TWO PERFORMANCES ONLY

SUNDAY, JUNE 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 5 pm

**David Brower Center, Berkeley**

THURSDAY, JUNE 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7 pm

**The Marsh Berkeley**

*All performances are free of charge*

Produced by Arrangement with Dramatists Play Service  
World Premiere Commissioned and Produced by The Oregon Shakespeare Festival  
(Bill Rauch, Artistic Director; Paul Nicholson, Executive Director)

## **About Actors Ensemble of Berkeley**

Actors Ensemble (**AEB**) has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest-running stage company in Berkeley. Since 1965 we have performed primarily at Live Oak Theatre in North Berkeley. Recently we have also taken the opportunity to bring the magic of theatre to the John Hinkel Park Amphitheatre, a wonderful outdoor space with a vast legacy of performance.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce. If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

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Check out [www.AEOfBerkeley.Org](http://www.AEOfBerkeley.Org) and subscribe to our email list for

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### **Board of Directors**

Michael R. Cohen, Nathan Bogner, Jeff Trescott, Jerome Solberg, Tracy Baxter, Jane Goodwin, Paulette Herring, Meryn MacDougall, Gabriel Ross, Victoria F. Siegel, Ian Wilcox\*, Crystal Brown\*, Susannah Wood\*, Robert Estes\*, Martha Luehrmann\*, Norah Foster\*  
\*=alternate.

### **Performance Schedule:**

**Sunday, Jun. 12<sup>th</sup> 2022 at 5 pm**

**David Brower Center**

**Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7 pm**

**The Marsh Berkeley**

The Performance is approx. 2 ½ hours, with 1 intermission

All performances are free of charge



**ROE**  
**by Lisa Loomer**

*Norma McCorvey (Jane Roe) (Older).....GiGi A. Tasse  
(Younger).....Riki Juster*

*Sarah Weddington (Older).....Jane Goodwin  
(Younger).....Emily Steelhammer*

*Connie Gonzalez/Roxanne Rodriguez.....Crystal Brown*

*Flip Benham.....Bruce Kaplan*

*Linda Coffee.....Jamie Brooke*

*Henry McCluskey.....Richard Wenzel*

*Jay Floyd.....Michael Girts*

*Justice Thurgood Marshall.....Christensen Sanders*

*Ronda Mackey.....Billie J. Simmons*

*Emily Mackey.....Colette Goodman*

*Roxanne Rodriguez (June 16<sup>th</sup> only).....Tia Hicks*

*Mary McCorvey.....Martha Luehrmann*

*Justice Harry Blackmun.....Jeff Trescott*

*Chief Justice Warren Burger.....Dan Schwager*

*Richard Flowers.....John Tranchitella*

*Gloria Allred.....Phoebe Green*

*Helen.....Phyllis Van Kranenburgh*

*Holly Hunter.....Jane Schoenfeld*

*Music at Intermission.....Hali Hammer*

*Graphic Design.....Liddy Freeman*

*Production Assistant.....Tracy Baxter*

*Props.....Crystal Barnes, Paola LaVerde and Susan Dunn*

*Producer.....Jerome Solberg*

*Co-Producer.....Carole Marasovic*

*Most actors play many roles apart from those listed*

This performance was preceded by the companion piece **SHE. HER. THEY.**, performed on June 9th at the Downtown Berkeley BART Plaza by **Susannah Wood** (also writer) **Vicki Siegel**, **Phoebe Green**, and **Mike Girts**, with music by **Hali Hammer**. The performance was partially supported by the Downtown Berkeley Association.

## DIRECTORS NOTE

I am so happy to be back in three-dimensional live theater, free from peering at a flat screen! This performance is a staged reading, a form that theater groups present in many ways. It's fun for the audience of listening viewers, because they must use much more imagination to fill in missing pieces that lighting, sound design, sets, costumes, and action would have expressed.

Lisa Loomer's ROE tells a story in epic style, across decades, through multiple points of view. Time collapses because in one page we can jump from 1972 to 1989 to the present day. Perhaps Loomer's fluid time in ROE is like real life, in which our memories, our current moment and our future exist now and not-now. Therefore, four wonderful actors play Normas and Sarah's younger and older selves.

Roe v Wade may any minute be eliminated by the Supreme Court's June 2022 decision. The issue of access to abortion exemplifies the pain of inequity, systemic racism, dogmatic demands, and the role of government in providing justice. What does the Constitution say in 2022? After all, for thousands of years human beings thought they were doing the right thing. ROE shows us the people involved in Roe v Wade stumbling through moments of history with all their flaws and prejudices. Despite all the mistakes and shouting, do flashes of truth, do answers emerge? Theater helps us to see and think deeper.

## Cast and Crew Biographies

### *In Alphabetical Order*

**Jamie Rose Brooke** (Linda) is thrilled to be joining the cast of ROE, especially during such a pivotal moment for Roe v. Wade. Jamie is returning to theater after a three-year hiatus and is so grateful for the opportunity to work with Susannah and her fellow cast. She previously worked with Power Street Theatre Company in Philadelphia, PA as a Stage Manager for *Las Mujeres* and *Queer Bodies* devised theater and Front of House Manager for *MinorityLand*. Some of her favorite ensemble productions include *Tierra y Cuerpo* workshop, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Odd Girl Out*, and *Call of the Revolution*. Her performance is dedicated to all people who want and need abortion access. Jamie sends her love to friends, family, and her partner Kamal.

**Crystal Brown** (Connie) is a performing artist, director, and educator. A Texas native, she has performed with a wide variety of theater organizations both internationally and domestically including Actors Ensemble, Altarena Playhouse, Opera Erratica, and The Royal Opera House in London. She has likewise appeared in commercials, music videos, and has performed as a singer in musicals and with jazz and funk bands. As a director, she works primarily in children's theater and

is the founder of Theater4Life, an organization which uses devised theater to help children & adults explore their creativity and build community. She has an MA in Music Theatre from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, is a private teacher of both voice and acting, and is represented by JE Talent. She is very grateful to be a part of this production and is a firm supporter of a woman's right to choose.

**Michael Girts** (Jay Floyd) recently moved to San Francisco from Chicago, where he spent 15 years acting, improvising and teaching theater. Favorite roles include Father Flynn in *Doubt*, Bobby in *American Buffalo*, Adam in *The Complete History of America (Abridged)* and Rod in *Rod Blagojevich Superstar*. He created and produced the critically acclaimed *Blank! The Musical* Off-Broadway. Michael believes access to safe and legal abortion is a human right, and he is happy to join the cast of *Roe* during this important moment.

**Phoebe Green** (Gloria Allred) last performed locally in Berkeley High School's 1976 production of Albee's *The American Dream* (aged 17, as Grandma). Also appeared (Boston cabaret, mid-1980s) as a close-harmony-singing punk and on top of a piano. A French to English translator, she spends her spare time subtitling and arguing repertoire for Don Malcolm's Midcentury Productions.

**Colette Goodman** (Emily) is thrilled to be joining the cast of *ROE*. Previous roles include Young Emily in the upcoming short film, "Roots in my Garden"; Uncle & Moxy in *Becoming Robin Hood* at Berkeley Playhouse; Young Amy March in the musical *Little Women* with the Peter Pan Foundation as well as the roles of Tinker Bell and Anna in Peter Pan Foundation's musical, *Wish Upon A Star*. Colette will be entering the fifth grade in the fall and resides in the East Bay.

A long time ago and not so far away **Jane Goodwin** (Older Sarah) acted at College of Marin, SF State, Berkeley Stage Company, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival and Actors Ensemble. After 30 years working at Cal Performances, she joined the board of Actors Ensemble and when Covid began, many of those dark days were filled doing Zoom readings of eclectic plays with Actors Ensembles' Friends & Family group plus with some "old" members of Berkeley Shakes and others doing all of the wonderful Shakespeare canon.

**Hali Hammer** (Music) is an award-winning singer-songwriter who has been playing for social justice causes for decades. Aside from writing and performing her own music, she is a founding member of Occupella, which plays at political rallies and marches and is with The

ReSisters She is Vice President of the San Francisco Folk Music Club and was coordinator of the 2003 Berkeley Free Folk Festival. Hali has produced six CDs of her original music and is the author of a novel, Keep the Motor Running: A Hippie Escapade and is on YouTube.

Born and raised in Oakland, California, **Tia Hicks** (Roxanne) engaged in performing arts as a youth through after school enrichment programs in middle and high school. She has performed in community theater and participated in arts advocacy throughout Oakland and the East Bay. After a 13-year hiatus from acting, Tia is excited to be back in action.

**Riki Juster** (Younger Norma) is beyond thrilled to be part of this important reading. Favorite roles include Julia/*Lend Me a Tenor*, Yente/*Fiddler on the Roof* and Sally Phelps/*Big River*. When Riki isn't performing, she is an early childhood music instructor and program assistant for a non-profit senior transportation program. You can also occasionally find her performing or hosting murder mystery dinners in Berkeley. Shout out to East Bay Play Readers for letting me read so many plays during the past 2 years (and beyond)!

**Bruce Kaplan** (Flip) is grateful to be helping tell this important story with AE. Bruce's most recent roles were Jaques in *As You Like It* and Buck in *Rocket Man*, both with Masquers Playhouse. His favorite previous role with AE was Malvolio in a musical *Twelfth Night* at Hinkle Park. Other favorite roles include the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* and Grandpa in *You Can't Take It With You*. Thanks for supporting community theater!

**Phyllis van Kranenburgh** (Helen) is excited to join the cast of *Roe*. Phyllis is a retired paralegal and a member of the Berkeley Play Readers group. This is Phyllis's debut performance.

**Martha Luehrmann** (it) playing Mary (Norma's mother) has been seen in many Actors Ensemble productions along with (in the Bay Area) Masquers, Orinda Starlight Theatre, Pittsburgh Players, James Keller's Poor Players, The Barn, and Generation Theatre. "It" has had a frightening abortion in 1963 when such things were illegal and dangerous, so "It" feels honored to take part in this incisive play at this historic time.

**Jane Schoenfeld** (Holly Hunter) has been a theater buff since she made it into the "Production Class" in fourth grade. Teaching and administrative work intervened until her retirement when she joined Playreaders at the Berkeley Library, Stagebridge – a performance company for people over 50 – and Actors Ensemble as head cook and

ensemble member for *The Marriage of Figaro*. She's happy to be joining the cast of ROE in its exploration of such an important issue.

After performing in a variety of Bay Area theater venues, **Dan Schwager** (Justice Berger) is thrilled to be performing once again with Actors Ensemble of Berkeley. Prior to his most recent performance this Spring at Sonoma Arts Live in *Saturday Night at Grossinger's*, Dan performed at The Ross Valley Players in *Moll Flanders* and *Antigone* at the COM theater. Recently, Dan has also performed with The Pacifica Spindrift Players in *'The Crucible* (Reverend Parris), and with Foothill Theater in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Mr. Van Daan). Previous performances with **AE** include *'Middletown, A Dybbuk, The Lady from the Sea'* and *'Rosmersholm'*.

**Billie J. Simmons** (Rhonda) is a Bay Area Native. She is a Graduate of Fisk University, with a degree in dramatics and Speech. Billie is a Retired Peace Officer, Youth Correctional Counselor who has been dedicated for forty years to creating free food programs, affordable housing for the unsheltered, and educating our youngest citizen while working in the capacity as a "Preacher's Wife". I am honored to be a part of this production and this cast. I believe in human rights, and the right to choose.

**Christensen Sanders** (Justice Marshall) is better known as **DJ Swang**, a nod to his Southern accent and charismatic personality. He is a disc jockey specializing in hip-hop, soul, funk, jazz, Latin, old-school and top 40. Sanders developed his craft growing up in San Bernadino and as a college student in Chico before spreading out to L.A. and the Bay. He is proud to join the cast for this production.

**Emily Steelhammer** (Young Sarah) is thrilled to join AE for another staged reading having previously performed in a reading of *A Man for All Seasons*. More recently, they appeared as Trisha in *Rocket Man* at Masquers Playhouse. During shelter-in-place, they kept the creative juices flowing with voiceover classes and Zoom scene study in the Barrow Group approach. It's a joy to be acting live and in-person once again. Big thanks to their mom, their dad, and their teacher, Alyson Schacherer, for all the love and support.

**GiGi A. Tasse** (Older Norma) is thrilled to be part of this extremely relevant and powerful play. After amassing acting credits on both coasts, GiGi took a hiatus to pursue different creative endeavors. 7 years ago through some fluke she wound up as a killer in a grindhouse film, and returned to acting in film and theatre. During the pandemic she was graced to act in 7 plays via zoom and work in several films and do several voiceovers. Most recently she can be seen

as Bettina the Italian American mother in Ravioli Night, coming to a festival near you. GiGi would like to thank anyone who reads her bio.

**John Tranchitella** (Richard) is happy to be working again with AEB in this timely and historical piece. And very happy to be live and in-person again! He last appeared with AE in the ensemble of *The Skin of Our Teeth*. In addition to acting, John is also a Director and Producer. He has worked on many Bay Area stages. He is currently working on finding a home for a production of *Waiting for Godot*.

**Jeff Trescott** (Justice Blackmun) has been acting as an amateur since forever and has also done every other job in the theater except owning one. He played Polonius in AE's recent production of *Hamlet* and will be playing Polonius in the upcoming production of *Fortinbras*.

**Richard Wenzel** (McCluskey) is a Bay Area actor/singer and member of Custom Made Theatre where he co-starred as Julius Becker in *Prelude to A Kiss* and Mr. Bungee in *A New Brain*. He is thrilled to be a part of this project, as given the current political climate regarding abortion, some consciousness-raising is to help wake people up to the terrible danger we are all in. He has studied acting with Kathryn Keats and voice with Daniel Levenstein.

**Susannah Wood** (Director) is incredibly honored to direct AE's staged reading of ROE. Just before Lockdown, she enjoyed performing in AE's *The Skin of Our Teeth* and Anton Well's production of *Escaped Alone*. Among her directing credits, Wood directed AE's production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, by Beaumarchais, as well as *Bastien und Bastienne* by Mozart with the Oakland Chamber Orchestra and dozens of folk-tale musicals with Opera Piccola (*Small Works*). She likes to play board games, walk in the woods, and teach Jazzercise on Zoom in the space next to her washing machine.

### **Actors Ensemble Thanks**

Berkeley Councilmember **Susan Wengraf** for financial/other support. Financial support from Berkeley Mayor **Jesse Arreguin**, and Berkeley Councilmembers **Ben Bartlett**, **Rigel Robinson**, **Sophie Hahn**, **Terry Taplin**, **Kate Harrison**, and **Rashi Kershawani**.

**John Caner** and the Downtown Berkeley Association.

**Stephanie Weisman** and The Marsh Berkeley.

The **East Bay Gray Panthers** and **Elana Auerbach** for providing financial support for ASL interpretation at the June 12<sup>th</sup> performance.

**KPFA's** Kris Welch of *The Living Room* for broadcasting an interview with actors **Crystal Brown** and **Jamie Brooke**.

**Kelly Hammargren**, **Paola LaVerde**, **Boona Cheema**, **Jacquelyn McCormick** and **Ruth Giron Wong** for financial and other support.