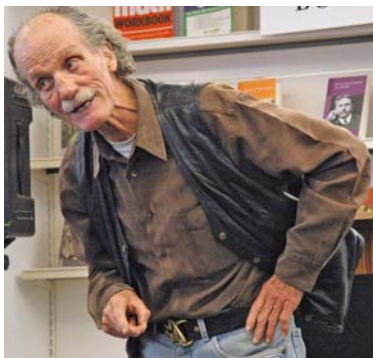




Healthy Aging Programs Win Accolades

Two of Stagebridge's Healthy Aging Programs are making a difference in the lives of older adults. The "See Me!" program trains healthcare workers to be more understanding of older adults and



TimeSlips helps elders with dementia be more expressive. Not long ago, actress Joanne Grimm was at Kaiser waiting patiently to have her husband treated. A nurse passed by, stopped, recognized her and asked "Didn't you come to my class years ago at Samuel Merritt University School of Nursing and tell that story about caregiving?" She then stopped what she was doing and took care of Joanne's husband.

For the past six years Stagebridge has pioneered a method of training student nurses to see their older patients with greater respect and understanding. "See Me!" training involves improvisation, storytelling, role-playing and other performance techniques. By offering nursing students a senior "voice" and point of view, Stagebridge actors and storytellers bring the text books to life and put a positive face on older patients – the most rapidly growing medical population. Students are spellbound listening to real life stories of surviving cancer, heart attacks, even having an enema put in the wrong orifice! Laughter fills the room when they get to role play difficult situations with older patients. Then, in the panel discussion students get to ask questions they rarely get to ask: What is your greatest fear; How do you feel when someone calls you "honey"?

The training has been so successful it has spread to other Bay Area nursing schools. It was even awarded special recognition by the Blair L. Sadler International Healing Arts Competition, which cited Stagebridge for "one of the most innovative integrations of arts

into healthcare that improves the quality of the health care experience for patients, their families and caregivers."

"Forget Memory: Try Imagination" is the tag line for a revolutionary approach to working with people with dementia and Alzheimer's. TimeSlips, developed at the University of Wisconsin, is a creative storytelling technique that is now nationwide. Since 2007,



Stagebridge has been the Western regional training base for this exciting approach. Rather than relying on memories, TimeSlips encourages elders to use their imagination by responding to a photograph and creating a story.

Looking at a photo of a baby in a doctor's bag, people respond: "He's cute. He's got something good in the bag." "He's not afraid of anything." "He's having fun hiding from his parents." "Good morning, this is going to be a good day." TimeSlips is about inclusion, so all comments become part of the story, which is written down and read back. Participants beam when they hear their words spoken with their name referenced. The director of the BACS program at North Oakland Senior Center notes: "It has left the staff with deeper appreciation of the spirits that lurk in the labyrinth of dementia, waiting to be found and celebrated. . . I hope that more people . . . can benefit from this unique approach."

Healthy Aging Issue: Backstage Vol. 2, Issue 5

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Sylvia: The Making of a Musical

(This is the third of a four-part series by Maryann Maslan on the process of creating an original musical.)



Opening Night — we're almost there. The cast and crew of *Sylvia's Advice on How to Age Gracefully on the Planet Denial* will move into The Ashby Stage Monday, February 1 when they will be on the real set for the first time.

"After almost two and a half years since the idea for the production,

bringing everyone on board and working through the process of creating an original musical, it's so exciting to see it opening," said Josiah Polhemus, Stagebridge's Co-Artistic Director and production manager for *Sylvia*.

"It has exceeded all expectations," he added.

Rehearsals are fun, by all accounts, with the cats Kismet and Lassie the Wonder Cat leading the antics and choreographer Bruce Bierman incorporating it all into dance movement.

Bruce's process has been one of drawing character movement from the actors to complement Scrumbly Koldewyn's music and he draws his inspiration from the master Jerome Robbins.

"It's all about ideas: character, theme, plot and story. The movement has to go somewhere," said Bruce.

With a snap, snap, snap of his fingers then sweeping his hands up in front of his face he spreads wide his fingers watching the actors, "more, more lollipop hands. Yes, that's it!"

Off stage left, watching the action with an eye on the script is stage manager and properties master Dorothy Carnegie. She smiles at the clown-like goofiness of Sara Moore (a.k.a. Lassie the Wonder Cat and the only non-senior in the company) who is mugging for all she's worth.

"See what happens when you put a youngster in the mix?" notes Dorothy.

Parts of the mix are the two understudies Charmaine Hitchcox and Miyoko Sakatani. They watch intently from the sidelines, echoing movements, picking up the blocking and dance steps knowing that at any moment they could be called in to replace an actor.

There's a comfortable routine to the rehearsal with only a week to go. A warm camaraderie has built up from months spent together learning, changing, polishing and fine tuning what began as a comic strip and a concept for a show.

"To bring three such powerful women together — Nicole Hollander, Martha Boesing and Joan Mankin — in one event celebrating creative aging is a triumph and an example of what Stagebridge is all about," said Josiah.

From the GREENROOM

(A series of profiles on company members who reflect the energy, enthusiasm and great variety of talent at Stagebridge)

From critical care nurse to singer, actor and dancer in less than two years

Miyoko Sakatani, with a twinkle in her eye, a radiant smile and a glance to the musical director, steps to the front of the stage to share the joy of song for nursing students at Samuel Merritt University in Oakland.

"A lot has happened in a very short time," Miyoko says.

A critical care nurse for 35 years, she retired from hospital life in 2008 to part-time independent consulting. She continues to teach holistic health courses, but she still misses hospital nursing.

"It's hard to let go of your identity. That's who you are, but Stagebridge helped with the transition," she added. "You are offered the opportunity to sing and dance and do things you only dreamed of."

She started with a singing class and then auditioned for *Never Too Late*, Stagebridge's touring musical troupe. She is also currently an understudy for two of the main characters in the world premiere musical *Sylvia's Advice on How to Age Gracefully on the Planet Denial*.

With her nursing background and as a member of *Never Too Late*, she is part of Stagebridge's internationally recognized Healthy Aging Program "See Me!" which takes the performing arts into nursing classes as part of their geriatric training.

"We do a short performance so they get an idea of what we do. We then share actual stories of experiences in the hospital as patients, or in my case as a nurse," Miyoko said.

Role playing, group discussions and improvisation also are part of the workshop. The question and answer portion goes both ways.

"Students ask questions like 'What does it feel like to be old?' or 'how do you want to be treated?' and they tend to stereotype older people as grumpy, angry and inactive," she said.

"Then we tell them what we would want from nurses. These young students are so mesmerized by our stories, you can hear a pin drop."

Stagebridge's Healthy Aging Programs are offered throughout the Bay Area. Students and teachers are appreciative of this approach to training, Miyoko continued. "But, I wonder if they really know how much we appreciate them."

Maryann Maslan, Marketing Director

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February 5-21

Sylvia's Advice on How to Age Gracefully on the Planet Denial

Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby, Berkeley
Thursday, Friday, Saturday 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday 2:00 p.m.

[Click HERE](#) for tickets or go to www.stagebridge.org for more information.

Sunday, February 7

An Evening with Nicole Hollander

Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby, Berkeley
7:00 p.m.

[Click HERE](#) for tickets or go to www.stagebridge.org for more information.

Thursday, February 18 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

TimeSlips Training

Aegis Retirement Community of Concord
(4756 Clayton Rd., Concord)

\$85 includes manual, lunch and live demonstration of a storytelling session

This one-day training will teach you how to employ the TimeSlips creative storytelling technique with people who have dementia or Alzheimer's.

[To register click here.](#)

July 19 – 23

4th Annual Performing Arts Camp for Adults 50+

Registration coming soon. Check www.stagebridge.org for the latest information.

Spare Change?

Six ways to help Stagebridge:

1. Fulfill our "Wish List" – we need:

- a. Flat Screen Monitor
- b. Small flat screen TV
- c. LCD projector
- d. Portable Sound System
- e. Recent model laptops (2)
- f. New cordless mikes (10)

2. Donate online or by mail – It's never been easier to make a donation to your favorite charity. You can donate safely through Network for Good by clicking [here](#). You can always send us a check at 2501 Harrison, Oakland 94612.

3. Host a House Party – Help us celebrate our 31st Season by throwing a house party. It's simple: you invite your friends, we provide the entertainment, and people are encouraged to make a donation to this wonderful organization. Contact Stuart Kandell at director@stagebridge.org for more info.

4. Write a Review of Stagebridge – You can help more people learn about and donate to Stagebridge by writing a short review on the company at Guidestar/ Great Non Profits

<http://www.greatnonprofits.org/reviews/profile2/stagebridge>

5. Use E-Scrip. You can donate to Stagebridge every time you shop or eat at a wide variety of stores. There are no fees!!! Just go to <http://www.escr.com> Sign up and type "Stagebridge".

6. Volunteer – We always need people to help out with mailings, the library, productions, outreach events, etc. We also would like to have someone to coordinate our monthly social events. Contact: Jim in the office by phone at 510-444-4755 ext.114 or email Jim at jim@stagebridge.org.

