



New Leadership for Stagebridge



Gary Oстераas

Josiah Polhemus

After 32 years at the helm, Stagebridge founder and Executive Director Dr. Stuart Kandell is turning over the management of the company to two new leaders. The Board of Trustees announces the appointment of Josiah Polhemus as the new Artistic Director and Gary Oстераas as new Managing Director. Both will assume their roles July 1 when Dr. Kandell will go on a six month sabbatical. Kandell will return to the company to help replicate Stagebridge's work around the country. He will also remain on the board (for more about Kandell's plans, see *From the Director's Desk*).

Our new Artistic Director is Josiah Polhemus. As many know, Josiah took over the helm from Linda Spector when she retired three years ago. As our Theatre Director and this past year Co-Artistic Director, Josiah has been responsible for doubling the number of classes that we offer; creating new relationships with many wonderful professional theatre artists; creating and managing all our Showcase events at The Ashby Stage; originating the Antic Witties; writing and directing three *Grandparent Tales* plays that have been the most successful ever

in reaching new audiences; and developing a new playwrighting program. In the meantime, he has managed to appear in several feature films, is an actor with *Fool's Fury* and will be starring onstage this August in the *Norman Conquests* at the Ashby Stage.

Our new Managing Director is Gary Oстераas. Gary was the top choice following a national search that was done by the Board, an eight-person selection committee, and members of the company. We were looking for three qualities: successful management, great people skills and fundraising expertise – Gary has them all. He has a long history in the field of aging: as director of Meals on Wheels in San Francisco, Adult Day Services in Contra Costa and most recently, the Ombudsman program in Oakland. He also brings a lot of theatre experience: six years on the board of the Shotgun Players and years of organizing intergenerational projects in community history, theatre and the arts. Gary is a member of Toastmasters and has been the spokesperson for the many outreach campaigns he has led. He has a master's degree in nutrition and aging and a doctorate in history. Gary, who is already very familiar with Stagebridge, says "I am eager to contribute to the growth and vitality of this trail-blazing program." He and his wife live in Oakland. Please join us in welcoming our new leaders.

Spring Issue: Backstage Vol. 2, Issue 7

- [New Leadership for Stagebridge](#)
- [Stagebridge Actors Featured in National Stories](#)
- [Storytelling in Review](#)
- [CURTAINS UP!: Interview with Jack Midgley](#)
- [IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Stagebridge Showcases](#)
- [From the Director](#)
- [Save the Dates: Coming Attractions](#)
- [Spare Change](#)

Stagebridge Actors featured in National Stories

Imagine seeing an image of yourself seven stories high on the NASDAQ jumbotron screen on Times Square. Or opening up



the most widely circulated magazine in the world and looking at a picture of yourself. Fantasy? Perhaps. But, for storyteller Jeff Byers and actress Joanne Grimm, it is a reality.

Byers is featured in a video and photo exhibit that debuted last week in Times Square before it takes off for a tour around the country. The exhibit is "Beautiful Minds: Creativity and Aging" that is sponsored by the Martek Corporation (a biotech company) and the National Center for Creative Aging. Jeff is one of ten profiles of older adults who are doing extraordinary things in their retirement. You can see the video with Jeff by clicking here. Since joining Stagebridge three years ago as a storyteller, Jeff has expanded his talents by acting for the first time in *Chicken Sunday*, performing with the Antic Witties improv troupe, sharing stories with children in the Storybridge program and leading storytelling groups at Satellite Housing, Inc.! Whewww!



Longtime company member Joanne Grimm was just flown to New York City for a photo shoot for the AARP magazine. Joanne is one of just seven profiles that the magazine is spotlighting in a feature "Budding Geniuses" looking at people over 70 who are doing amazing creative and artistic things. Joanne joined Stagebridge as a storyteller after a career in education. She quickly took to performing in

many Grandparent Tales plays; has served as the hostess of *Never Too Late*, where she is known for her biting humor; and also enjoys sharing her stories with the student nurses training programs and serves on Stagebridge's Board of Trustees. See Joanne's picture and story in the September issue.

Maryann Maslan, Marketing Director

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STORYTELLING IN REVIEW

As spring winds down at Stagebridge and our year comes to an end, I look back in a daze and in awe of my first year at the nation's oldest senior theater company. I am amazed at how many programs, activities, events, classes and opportunities that Stagebridge, its staff, contract workers, volunteers and community partners manage to squeeze in to a few short months.



From the fall of 2009 to the current spring semester, here are the highlights of storytelling at Stagebridge:

- Along with the storytelling director, five Stagebridge students got to strut their stuff and perform at the Julia Morgan Theater with the *Tell It On Tuesday Solo Performance* and Storytelling production.

- Stagebridge hosted three showcases at The Ashby Stage in Berkeley (fall, winter, spring), where our students performed to full houses, for the public and demonstrated some of the skills and techniques that they learned throughout the semester.

- Stagebridge was proud to present its 19th annual *Grandparent's Tales Contest*. Over 200 children submitted written stories and illustrations about their grandparents. The winners read their entries at Barnes & Noble, and several lucky children read their stories on *Wee Poets Cable 26*, children's television program.

- For the first time Stagebridge hosted a workshop by internationally acclaimed, San Francisco based, performing artists Eth-Noh-Tec.

- Another first happened when Stagebridge partnered with the Bay Area Storytelling Festival and hosted "one of Europe's most influential storytellers," Ben Haggarty from the United Kingdom. Haggarty performed a two-hour rendition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

- La Pena Cultural Center partnered with Stagebridge to bring international Chilean performer, Osvaldo Torres, storyteller, musician, singer and writer to our company for a workshop and lively exchange.

- Some of the continuing programs that we offered throughout the year were our beginning and advanced storytelling classes for seniors, Civil Rights programs for middle and high schools, *Respond, Reflect, Respect* Storytelling Assemblies for elementary schools, after-school programs, and residencies. We also offered *TimeSlips* and *Storybridge*, which are separate grant-funded storytelling programs which ran successfully all year long.

If that was my first year at Stagebridge, I can't wait until next year! See you at summer camp!

Kirk Waller, Director of Storytelling Programs

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CURTAINS UP!

(This is the first in a series of articles introducing our new board members.)

New faces at Stagebridge include board members Paul Ethier, Jack Midgley and Liz Macera, whom you may have seen in class, at schools and enjoying our shows.

"We are so pleased and excited to welcome our new board members," said Board President Tom Flynn. "As Stagebridge has grown in size and stature in recent years, we recognized the need to grow our board to help us move forward."

"They bring new contacts, new skill sets and new ways of looking at the opportunities and challenges we face and a love of our mission."

Jack Midgley found Stagebridge through Board Match, an event that brings together non-profits and prospective board members.



"I was aware of Stagebridge and what it does and the issues around growth of a company," said Jack, Vice President of Products at TriNet Group, a technology and professional services company. "Stagebridge is ready to grow and take on different directions, and my skill set might be helpful."

Jack is not an actor and said he has no aspirations or artistic talent, but he does have an interest in the arts.

"I am an arts supporter – my son is a professional actor, so I've been supporting the arts for a long time," he adds with a laugh. His son and two daughters live on the East Coast, and Jack and his wife are residents of Walnut Creek.

At a recent performance of *City Green*, Stagebridge's annual musical adaptation of a popular children's book, Jack said he was not sure what to expect and was impressed by what he saw.

"It was well done, well written, and presented with a great deal of care and attention to detail. It was a delightful afternoon." Jack is from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and his background includes degrees in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a Ph.D. in political science from MIT. He has worked "with great companies around the world" and as an award-winning teacher and academician.

In the Spotlight:

The chaos of comedy, the roar of the greasepaint, the "cocky, confident, way-cool" dancers and singers who are "Jets, all the way" plus 10 plays by 10 new playwrights.

It's Stagebridge's spring student showcase at The Ashby Stage, Mondays, June 7 and 14, at 6:30 p.m. – two exciting evenings not to be missed. The first night will feature the playwriting class with interludes by Joan Mankin's Comedy Routines class. June 14 is Stagebridge's touring musical revue *Never Too Late* and excerpts from the musical theatre workshop's *West Side Story*.

The student showcases were the inspiration of Joshiah Polhemus, Stagebridge's Artistic Director, teacher and resident playwright.

"Our first showcase took place in 2008 at the Montclair Presbyterian Church with the Wednesday acting class presenting scenes and monologues. Everyone had such a great time," said Josiah.

Wanting to give Stagebridge students the opportunity of a full-stage production, he approached Liz Lisle, Managing Director of The Ashby Stage, an intimate 99-seat theater in Berkeley. She agreed that we could rent it as a "one-time" deal.

"I asked the playwriting class to chip in for the cost of the rental, and we gathered volunteer professional and amateur directors and actors and put on the first playwriting showcase," he added.

"The house was packed, and now we have six Monday evening showcases that feature all our classes throughout the year."

Each evening of entertainment is about two hours long, including intermission. Tickets are available at the door, and the suggested donation is \$15.

The Ashby Stage is located at 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley, near the Ashby BART station. For more information call Stagebridge at 510.444.4755.

Maryann Maslan, Marketing Director

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: Time for a Change

My oldest daughter Sophia graduated college last year and now is making her way in the world. It seemed fitting that after spending half my life raising my other child, Stagebridge, it is time for me to



assume a new role. Stagebridge has been well fed, weaned, coddled, and grown up into a big beautiful adult who is ready to make its own way. Just as I will always be a caring father to my two daughters I will continue to be a caring parent to Stagebridge.



They say that no one loves a change but the baby. When Linda Spector, the Stagebridge "mom" of 27 years, retired three years ago, we all felt that she could never be replaced and that the organization might suffer from her loss, but we

were wrong. Of course, we could never replace Linda, but we found a new source of blood and energy in the person of Josiah Polhemus. He brought a new way of doing things and the company has benefited greatly from his work.

They also say that one of the keys to successful aging is learning new things, taking risks and adapting to change. I've realized for the past number of years, as the company has grown, that I have had less and less time to be creative and do many of the things I'd like to do — both with Stagebridge and in my personal life — because I'm far too busy running everything, steering the ship and keeping it afloat. As I travel around the country talking about Stagebridge, there is such growing interest in bringing the kinds of programs we have pioneered here to other communities. I simply haven't had the time to even follow up with these requests. Or find ways of "packaging" what we do so that other communities can benefit. When you are running a hundred miles an hour like all of us on the staff, there isn't time to think, reflect, imagine, or even see things outside your narrow field of vision.

Now is a good time for change. Stagebridge is healthy. Not only is it stable financially and organizationally, it is growing and responding to the needs of a society with an exploding elder population that is looking for meaningful activity and ways of giving back.

I need time for change. On my sabbatical, I plan to do some of the things I love doing: spend more time with my sweetie, take a long car trip, go backpacking, dance, bike, learn Spanish and return to Buenos Aires for tango and travel to Patagonia. Oh, yes, and have some time to...think.



When I return in February, I look forward to developing some projects that will enable Stagebridge to grow on a national level and, of course, supporting our new leaders Josiah and Gary in every way possible.

Stuart Kandell

Founder/Executive Director

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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)

TimeSlips Training Workshop - Thursday, June 3. 9:00 – 3:00pm North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Way, Oakland \$85 includes manual and lunch; Click here to register. Learn this innovative creative storytelling technique for people with dementia

Student Showcases at the Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Ave., Berkeley.
Suggested donation \$15 (Pay what you can)

Monday, June 7, 6:30 p.m. *The Playwriting presents “10 plays by 10 new playwrights,” with interludes by Joan Mankin’s Comedy Routines class.*

Monday, June 14, 6:30 p.m. – *An Evening of Musical Theatre! The musical theatre class presents selections from “West Side Story” and then Stagebridge’s touring revue “Never Too Late” performs sketches and songs.*

Famed Chilean Storyteller, Osvaldo Torres – Thursday, June 10, 3:30pm Stagebridge, 2501 Harrison, Oakland. **FREE!** La Pena Cultural Center brings this talented artist to America to share stories and songs from Chile.

Annual Awards Luncheon, Friday, June 18, noon – 2:00pm
Stagebridge, 2501 Harrison, Oakland \$10 contribution

Performing Arts Camp – July 19-23
Spaces are still available!

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.escrrip.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.

