

Odyssey Theatre Ensemble presents the U.S. premiere of



YAACOBI & LEIDENTAL

Written by Hanoch Levin

English Translation by Naaman Tammuz

Directed by Yonatan Esterkin

Music by Alex Kagan

The Ensemble

Sera Heywood-Rakhimova,* Michael Redfield,* Ilia Volok*

SET DESIGNER
Pete Hickok

COSTUME DESIGNER
Denise Blasor

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Michael Blendermann

MUSIC DIRECTOR/PIANIST
Nisha Sujatha Arunasalam

STAGE MANAGER
Gabriel E. Jimenez Montes

YAACOBI & LEIDENTAL runs from March 17 to April 30, 2023

There will be no intermission. Running time 90 minutes

Yaacobi & Leidental is licensed by The Hanoch Levin Institute of Israeli Drama

The Odyssey is supported in part by a grant from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and The Shubert Foundation Inc.



ODYSSEY THEATRE ENSEMBLE: 2055 South Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025
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*Member of Actors' Equity Association

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.



CAST

(in order of appearance)

ITAMAR YAACOBI..... Ilia Votok*
DAVID LEIDENTAL Michael Redfield*
RUTH SHEKHASH Sera Heywood-Rakhimova*



* Appearing through an Agreement between this theatre, [Odyssey Theatre Ensemble], and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States."

A NOTE FROM AVRAHAM OZ

Avraham Oz is Professor Emeritus, Department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, University of Haifa and Resident Director, Alfa Theatre, Tel Aviv.

The Politics of the Body's Trap: Hanoch Levin's World of Desire

Mounting *Yaacobi and Leidental* in a context foreign to the language and culture with which the play originally corresponded, seems to require some thoughts which, while obviously do not pretend to cover the wide themes and features contained in the play's rich dramatic texture, may be in place to accompany this theatrical meeting between Hanoch Levin's work and its reception by a totally estranged cultural host.

Hanoch Levin (1943-1999), considered by many as the most significant playwright of Israel to date, started his dramatic writing as a provocative political satirist, in whose work the political body took precedence to the human subjects inhabiting its dramatic universe. From the very outset, however, this dramatic scheme coincided in his writing with initial experiments in full-fledged plays where the manifest, succinct political message gave way to prolonged narratives, mainly pursuing human male's advancement toward fulfilling his subjective bodily desire. The skeletal political fable in which a male-devouring woman (obviously inspired by Israel's rigidly dominant female Prime Minister Golda Meir) confiscates the family's apartment's bathroom as an occupied territory, avoiding the challenging yet subdued figure of "the cousin" (a term often employed in Israeli popular vocabulary as a signifying code for Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular) from freely using it, was converted in *Heffetz*, one of Levin's early major comedies (whose production just preceded *Yaacobi and Leidental*), into a dramatic charade where the women in the family, hierarchically deployed in the figures of an ambitious mother, clinging to her gradually waning dominant power over her husband and *Heffetz*, the cousin (whose dehumanized name, retaining its former political disadvantage, signifies concomitantly both "thing" and "desire"), and *Fogra*, the cold, aloof and alienated daughter, remotely presiding over and manipulating the action by means of her all-admired, inaccessible statuesque beauty, bring out the coerced, tortuous progression of the male subject towards the destructive fulfilment of his desire.

Contrary to the common reading of his ensuing work, it is my contention that Levin hardly ever abandoned the political core as the nucleus informing his dramatic writing, although it has taken various shapes and forms. In his earlier "neighborhood comedies," anonymously located in the imaginary social space of his childhood off centre suburbs of Tel Aviv, his characters still moved within a semi-realistic locus composed of a bourgeois apartment, a coffee house or a decrepit local cinema. The emphasis on the body and sexual desire is defined

by a social status.

Levin does not hesitate to deploy to the utmost his male subjects' attraction/disgust with the consequences of the female body.

While that holds true for man, it does so even more for woman, whether she be the object of the painful admiration of the male subject or a socio-sexual tool whereby to compromise humiliating loneliness (like Ruth Shachash for both friends Yaacobi and Leidental). All women in Levin's plays figure as a negotiable currency in patriarchal exchange-systems, comprising both potential blessings of bodily functionality and commodification, to the extent that they are serviceable in either or in both. All subjective delineations purportedly characterizing them as individuals, from health conditions to temperament and intellectual constitution, are soon appropriated to serve as parameters of their mercenary value.

The common desiring subject of Levin's early dramatic milieu, who finds itself at the receiving end of Levin's amoral deadly Narcissists, is ironically reappropriating some conspicuous features of what early Zionist drama had rejected as the diaspora components of Jewish identity. Although its notable grotesque elements prevent the early Levinian subject from becoming entirely realistic, its vitality deliberately overshadows the dramatic presence of the exaggeratedly monolithic vestiges of the native tsabar myth to expose the marked Eurocentric nature of the worn out Zionist dream of a European Romantic ideal.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



SERA HEYWOOD-RAKHIMOVA

Ruth Shekhash

Sera is a Canadian-American international performer and graduate of the Ilkhom Theatre of Mark Weil School of Drama, Studio 7, a Russian theater conservatory in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Sera performed in five mainstage shows in the Ilkhom Theatre's repertory, in English, Russian and Uzbek, and won first place in the Tashkent singing competition "Songs for Actors." Sera also holds a BA in Drama with a minor in Slavic languages and literatures from the University of Washington. Sera graced Broadway her first year in New York City with her self-devised one-woman show *The Point and the Universe* at the United Solo Theatre Festival. She has worked in an array of experimental theater and bi-lingual films across NYC, and now in Los Angeles. Sera is also a published writer, a certified Reiki and EFT Tapping practitioner, and creator of the brand and ensemble-based company Actor to Artist. Sera is thrilled to be making her Los Angeles stage debut in *Yaacobi & Leidental*, continuing her passion for international artistic collaboration.



MICHAEL REDFIELD

David Leidental

Michael has spent his life in Los Angeles theater. He made his Odyssey debut in 2007 with Craig Lucas' *Small Tragedy*, and works regularly at Pacific Resident Theatre in Venice and Rogue Machine Theatre, where he is a founding member. He's received multiple Ovation, LA Weekly and LADCC nominations for roles in *Small Tragedy*, *When They Speak of Rita* and *Happy End*. He starred in *Small Engine Repair* at Rogue Machine, which swept the 2013 LA theater awards for production and ensemble, with Variety asserting, "Redfield walks off with the evening...there's no end of joy in his irrepressible love of life." As a pianist and composer, he's worked at 24th Street Theatre for over a decade, accompanying their flagship educational show, Enter Stage Right, which serves 10,000 LAUSD school children every year, and he won an Ovation award for his original live score for 24th Street's *Walking the Tightrope*.



ILIA VOLOK

Itamar Yaacobi

Ilia was born in Kiev, Ukraine, where he lived for the first half of his life. He is a graduate of Moscow Art Theatre School and a lifetime member of The Actors Studio. In Hollywood, Ilia has appeared in over 170 films and television shows, including two films currently in pre-production: *The Palace*, directed by Roman Polanski, and Paramount's *Self-Reliance*, a film by Jake Johnson. Recent television credits include a five-episode arc in the new HBO miniseries *Full Circle*, directed by Steven Soderbergh, and recurring roles on Apple TV's *The Morning Show* and BET's *Diarra from Detroit*. Last October, Ilia received the NOHO Cinefest "Best Actor" award for his portrayal of Dark in the independent feature *Balloon Animal*. Theater credits include *The Orchard* at the Baryshnikov Art Center opposite Mikhail Baryshnikov and Jessica Hecht, and *The Revisionist* by Oscar nominee Jesse Eisenberg at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.



NISHA SUJATHA ARUNASALAM

Musical Director/ Pianist

Nisha is a multi instrumentalist/composer/educator from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She began music lessons at the age of four, and plays the piano, organ, violin, steel pans and gamelan. Nisha is a graduate of Berklee College of Music, where she double-majored in film scoring and contemporary writing and production. She also holds diplomas in piano performance from Trinity College London, the Australian Music Examination Board and University College Sedaya International. Nisha has performed all over the world, including opening for artists like Al Jarreau, and toured with The Three Irish Tenors for five years. She has also done composing/orchestrating/arranging and session work for artists such as Korn, Richard Page, Eisley, Vinnie Colaiuta, Luis Conte, Miles Mosley, Joe Sumner, Ozomatli and Mystic Marley. Nisha has taught music for over twenty-five years, and is the co-founder of Happy Human Music Project—a Los Angeles based music education organization, aimed at providing music lessons for students of all ages and abilities.

HANOCH LEVIN

Playwright

Hanoch Levin was born in Tel Aviv on December 18, 1943 and died of cancer on August 18, 1999. He wrote plays, sketches, songs, stories and poetry, and also directed most of his own plays. During his work as a playwright and stage director, he developed a unique dramatic and theatrical language, created by combining poetic written text and images designed with the actors and set designers, costume and lighting, composer and choreographer. His plays are characterized by his ability to combine the work of different artists, and have always been a celebration of words and visual images, based on a great love for the theater and all who take part in the performance. Levin left a spiritual – artistic legacy, which includes 56 plays (except for his political satires, only 33 of his plays were performed in his lifetime), two books of prose, two collections of sketches and songs, a book of poems and two books for children. In 1999, the last year of his life, he took care to publish all his works

NAAMAN TAMMUZ

Translator

Hanoch Naaman is a translator and technology executive based in London, UK. He was born in Tel Aviv and spent the first twenty years of his life between Israel and London. He obtained his undergraduate degrees and PhD in Physics from the University of Cambridge and has since worked as an executive and founder of startups focused on data science, machine learning and artificial intelligence. He has translated over a dozen plays by Hanoch Levin from Hebrew to English, with eight of these included in the three-volume anthology, *Hanoch Levin: Selected Plays One/Two/Three*, published by Oberon Press (now Bloomsbury Publishing) in 2020. He lives in London with his wife and two sons.

ALEX KAGAN

Composer

During his military service, Alex met Hanoch Levin for the first time, and after the Six-Day War, both staged the satirical cabaret *You and I and the Next War*, which caused a public scandal. Kagan continued to collaborate with Levin and composed music for eight more plays. Kagan wrote music for about 30 plays with the best playwrights and directors in Israel and abroad, and has also written music for television and cinema. In 1982, he was invited to Germany with the play *Yaacobi and Leidental*, and remained there composing music for theaters, musical management, directing cabarets, theater and opera in Dusseldorf, Stuttgart, Nuremberg, etc. From time to time, he returned to Israel and directed productions with a special combination of opera and cinema: *Le Villi* by Puccini, Anne Frank, Lieders by Schubert, Mahler and more.

YONATAN ESTERKIN

Director

Yonatan is a theater director, writer, speaker and teacher based in Tel Aviv, Israel. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy from the Open University, as well as an MFA in theater directing and an MA in theater research, both from Tel Aviv University. He is the recipient of the "Sharet" scholarship from the AICF, and two scholarships from the Goethe Institute for theater experts in Berlin. Esterkin has directed productions at Haifa Theater, where he also headed the International Relations division, The Cameri Theater of Tel Aviv and the Habima Theatre, which is the national theater of Israel and Yiddish theater. Esterkin gives lectures and courses about Israeli theater and film from a social and political perspective for institutions such as Israel's Teachers Association and the Media-Tech Center in Holon, and was recently invited to speak about the Holocaust at New York's 92nd Street Y. He has directed Israeli plays in several public theaters in Slovenia, including the National Theater.

PETE HICKOCK

Scenic Designer

Pete is a production designer, art director, scenic designer, and artist based in Los Angeles, California. His designs have appeared across Southern Californian theaters, such as the Geffen Playhouse, the Kirk Douglas Theatre, the Odyssey Theatre Ensemble and the International City Theatre. He holds an MFA and post-baccalaureate from the San Francisco Art Institute and a BFA from Lewis & Clark College.

DENISE BLASOR

Costume Designer

Denise is a Puerto Rican actress, director, writer, designer. She's designed shows for the Odyssey Theatre, including *The Greeks*, *The Tempest*, *Lysistrata Unbound*, *The Unseen Hand* and the revival of Irene Fornes' *Fefu and Her Friends*, which she also directed (KCRW & LA Times best play). She directed the political musical film *Calle De La Resistencia*, recently nominated best film by Puerto Rico United Press, and won Best Latino Podcast for her productions of the bilingual podcasts *Tonantzin Guadalupe*. She produced and directed *Twelve Children Stories*, written by Juliette Blasor, as well as new bilingual adaptations of *The Nutcracker* and *Christmas Carol* for Guadalupe Radio. She's appeared extensively on stage as an actor, and was last seen in Stephanie A. Walker's *The Abuelas* at the Antaeus Theatre. Film and TV credits include *A Place Among the Dead*, *Noriega: God's Favorite* and *Death In Granada*. She plays Doña Rosa in *Snowfall*.

MICHAEL BLENDERMANN

Lighting Designer

Michael began theater and lighting work in high school, and has gone on to design and operate lighting for various styles of production, including work in dance, experimental theater, site-specific productions and experiential installations. He has had the pleasure of working with international artists and directors through the MFA in Performance program at Naropa University and the Boulder Fringe Festival, and has toured nationally as a lighting director for dance production.

CHRIS BELL

Scenic Artist

Chris is a theater maven's theater maven who has been designing for the stage most of his life, and one who relishes painting scenery here at the Odyssey. His first home was The Actors' Gang in Hollywood, where he participated in a multitude of original productions, and where he's known for his fun-house rides at the New Year's Eve parties. Chris was set designer and the technical director at the historic Los Angeles Assistance League Playhouse with the Nine O'Clock Players. He created sets and special effects for *The Grand Guignolers*, became resident designer and tech director for Theater Arts at CalTech (TACIT) in Pasadena, and he's now on his fifth season of building sets at the High Street Arts Center in Moorpark. He has done murals at the Peterson Auto Museum, and lately has been constructing escape rooms embedded with electronic wizardry.

GABRIEL E. JIMENEZ MONTES

Stage Manager

Gabriel is a highly skilled actor and performer, originally from Puerto Rico. He earned his BA in Theater from the University of Puerto Rico and went on to obtain his MFA in Acting from CalArts. Throughout his career, Gabriel has captivated audiences around the world with his versatile talent, performing at renowned venues and festivals such as the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Prague Quadrennial and Fabrica del Arte in Cuba, among others. Currently, he is assisting with production at the Odyssey Theatre, and feels grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful community. As a true Renaissance man in the world of theater, film, and television, Gabriel is experienced in all aspects of the performing arts, including writing, directing, producing and acting. He is most notably recognized for his outstanding solo performance, *INSULA* directed by Gema Galiana, which premiered at the Odyssey Theater in July 2022. Gabriel's artistic contributions have also been featured at the prestigious Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw, Poland, where he completed an artistic residency. He is deeply passionate about creating impactful and innovative work that pushes the boundaries of traditional theater, and his dedication to the craft is unwavering. IG: @acrobat.of.life Bio generated by ChatGPT OpenAI

RON SOSSI

Artistic Director

Ron received the LA Weekly Career Achievement Award in 2013. He has also received the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Margaret Harford Award for "demonstrating a continual willingness to experiment provocatively in the process of theatre" and the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Ron Link Award for "consistent quality of direction." Recent OTE directing projects include *Wakings!*, *The Serpent*, *Faith Healer*, *The Dance of Death*, *Beckett's*, *My Sister*, *Oedipus Machina*, *Theatre in the Dark* (LA Weekly nomination, Best Production of the Year), *Way to Heaven* (LA Weekly and LADCC nomination for Best Production of the Year), *Adding Machine: A Musical*, *The Arsonists* (LA Weekly nomination for Best Direction) *Sliding Into Hades* (Best Production of the Year, LA Weekly), *Kafka Thing!*, *Far Away* and *The Three-penny Opera*. Ron has led the Odyssey throughout its 53-year history.

BETH HOGAN

Producer

Beth is the associate artistic director of the Odyssey, an actor, and also functions as a producer on many Odyssey shows. Together with Barbara Mueller-Wittmann, she founded *Dance at the Odyssey*, a six week dance festival now in its sixth year. Beth is a founding member of the Odyssey's in-house process-oriented resident acting ensemble, KOAN, developing original work over a four-to-eight-month process, and was last seen in *Old Clown Wanted*. She is a faculty member at Los Angeles City College Theatre Department.

TELL A FRIEND

Monday night performances (**April 3, 10 & 24 at 8pm**) of YAACOBI & LEIDENTAL are Pay-What-You-Will, with tickets available online and at the box office starting at 5:30 on the night of the performance. RESERVATIONS: odysseytheatre.com or 310-477-2055 ext. 2

Additional performances are every Saturday at 8pm and Every Sunday at 2pm

Friday on March 24, April 14 at 8pm

Wednesday on March 29 & April 12 & 26 at 8pm

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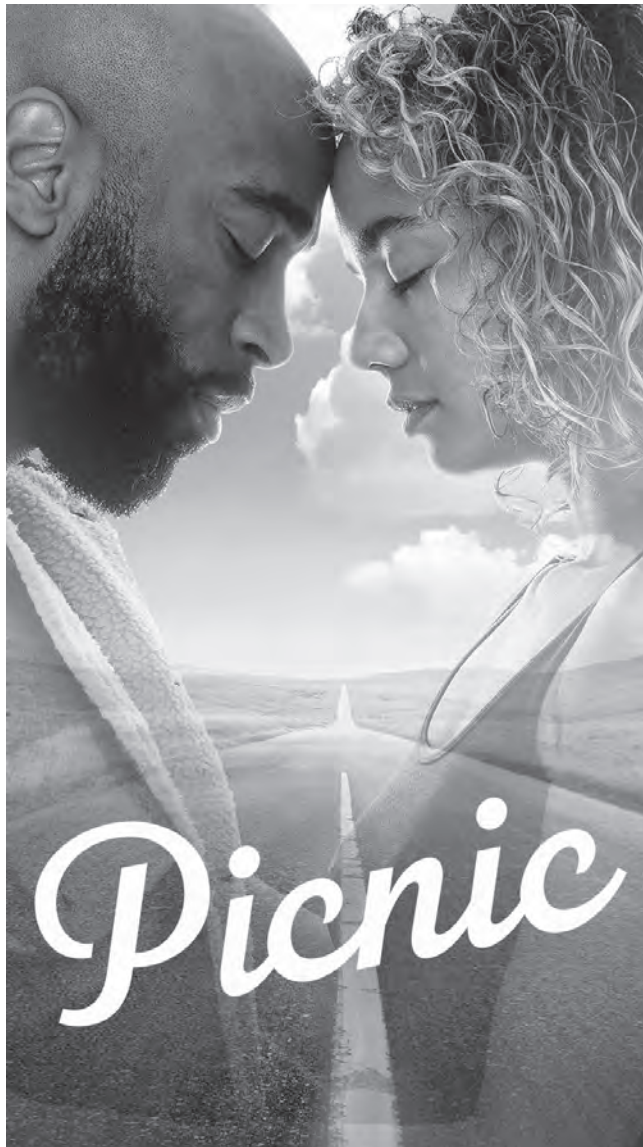
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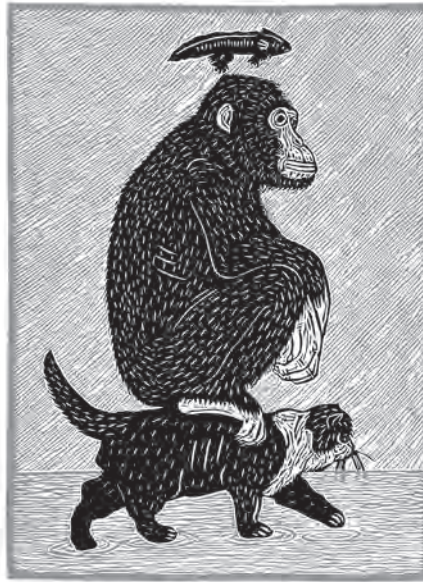


Powerful and moving, William Inge's drama is not simply a breezy summer romance. When a handsome young drifter named Hal arrives on the eve of the annual Labor Day picnic, his combination of uncouth manners and titillating charm sends the women reeling — especially the beautiful Madge. Friendships are pushed to the limit and the fragile line between restraint and desire is stretched thin.

March 24 – May 28, 2023

Tickets: [odysseytheatre.com](https://www.odysseytheatre.com) or call us at 310-477-2055 ext. 2

THRESHOLDS OF INVENTION



Sandra Tsing Loh Michael Kearns

Saturday, April 1 at 8 pm

A Madwoman of the Theatre: 25 F*cking Years of Sandra Tsing Loh

A hilarious, quasi-TED-style rant revealing Loh's past artistic ms/adventures, and an introduction to Loh's new comedy *Madwoman of the West* that will star Caroline Aaron, Marilu Henner, Melanie Mayron and JoBeth Williams at the Odyssey beginning May 26.

Sunday, April 2 at 2 pm

It Must Be Him

A musical memoir exploring the splendor of gender written and performed by Michael Kearns, recently named the "Godfather of LGBTQ+ authenticity" by the Los Angeles Blade.



MUSIC AT THE ODYSSEY returns with

Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter on March 31 and April 28

Odyssey Theatre Ensemble's ongoing Music at the Odyssey series, curated by music director and bass player John Snow, returns with more music from Rodgers and Hammerstein and Cole Porter. Singers, including Kenton Chen, Bella Hicks, Ren Martinez, Taubert Nadalini and Broadway veteran Carolyn Mignini (*Tintypes*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *The Fantasticks*), will be backed by a live band: Nathan Heldman on piano, Zev Shearn Nance on drums and Snow on bass.

FOR TICKETS AND INFORMATION visit our website at odysseytheatre.com or
phone our box office at 310-477-2055 ext 2