

MOTHER LEAR

Adapted from William Shakespeare's *King Lear*
Created and Performed by Ava Roy and Courtney Walsh

ABOUT:

This tight 50 minutes of fiercely original theatre is created and performed by Courtney Walsh and We Players' Artistic Director, Ava Roy.

An irascible middle-aged scholar with dementia communicates with her caretaker daughter using only the text of *King Lear*, as the two struggle with aging, love, and their own balance of power.

The performance is immediately followed by a discussion with the audience.

PRESS:

"**Heartrending**", Marin Independent Journal: [**Mother-daughter 'Lear' captures heartbreak of dementia**](#)

"...a winding emotional journey", [**Theatrius**](#): Roy & Walsh Stir Souls with *King Lear* Mash-Up

Marin Independent Journal: **Mother Lear included in Year's Best Marin Theatre**

The Mercury News: [**We Players uses 'Lear' to talk about aging in the 21st century**](#)

AUDIENCE TESTIMONIALS:

"Eloquent, stirring, and darkly funny."

"Filled with beauty and humor."

"One of the most impactful performances I've seen in my life."

"I felt everyone stop and be still like the trees around us."

"I was left with a powerful sense of love."

"Spoke to the universality of loss of control in the face of aging, death and grief."

"Deeply touching and surprisingly funny."

AWARDS:

2017 Theatre Bay Area Award Recommended Production.

2018 Theatre Bay Area Award Recommended Production.

2018 Theatre Bay Area Awards:

Finalists for "Outstanding Production of a Play" and "Outstanding Direction of a Play".

Both Courtney Walsh and Ava Roy received awards for "Outstanding Performer in a Principal Role in a Play".

ABOUT THE CAST:

Courtney Walsh: "Lear"

Ava Roy: "Cordelia"

Courtney Walsh is delighted to return to the incomparable We Players. After earning a B.A. in Theater Studies at Yale University, she acted professionally in Los Angeles. During an acting hiatus, she earned a law degree to represent children in child abuse cases, returning to the stage in 2006. Since then, she has appeared on national and international stages, both in English and French (including Berlin, Amsterdam, Paris, Montpellier, Cardiff, Athens, Corfu, Sydney, and Auckland). Bay Area credits include: Cutting Ball Theater

(title role in *Phèdre*); Marin Theatre Company (*Native Son* – West Coast premiere); San Francisco Playhouse (*Jerusalem*, and *Seared* – world premiere); We Players (*Romeo and Juliet*); New Conservatory Theatre Center (*Dear Harvey*), and many others. For *Moby Dick* – Rehearsed at Stanford Repertory Theater (where she has been a core company member for ten years) she won Theatre Bay Area Awards for Outstanding Production, Directing and Acting Ensemble. Her solo show *Clytemnestra: Tangled Justice* has toured eight countries over three continents. Courtney periodically teaches a CSP Drama course at Stanford University and workshops on acting in the U.S. and Europe. She is also a mother of four and a competitive equestrienne. Find her at courtneywalsh.net

Courtney Walsh appears in this production courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.

Ava Roy is the Founding Artistic Director of We Players. Her unique style of interactive, site-integrated performance aims to highlight the historical and natural treasures of the local landscape and encourage new ways of experiencing and appreciating these places. She is an alumna of Stanford University, where she founded We Players in the spring of 2000. She holds a BA in a self-designed major: Ritual and Performance in Aesthetic Education, 2003. Since 2008, she has pioneered unique partnerships with both the National Park Service and the California State Park system, creating large-scale performances at park sites throughout the Bay Area. Inspired and guided by Shakespeare since her teenage years, Ava has explored many characters from the canon ranging from Juliet to Henry V, Mercutio to Lady Macbeth. In addition to her love of Shakespeare, classic literature, historic sites, crumbling buildings, and majestic natural landscapes, Ava likes espresso, salt spray, and sunshine. She is a yoga teacher, a sailor, and in her next life, plans to live in the ocean.

WHERE:

The piece is extremely flexible and can be performed for intimate groups in a wide range of settings. Since its debut in Fall 2017, *Mother Lear* has been performed at [McLaren Park](#) (SF Recreation and Parks Department), [Montalvo Arts Center](#), the [JCC of Berkeley](#), [Nueva School](#), and numerous private homes throughout the greater Bay Area. Because of the mobile nature of the piece,

we are looking to grow our reach both geographically and demographically. We are interested in sharing the piece in more public and private settings, including schools, more traditional theatrical contexts, and within the elder-care community.

ACT TWO:

Our “Act Two” is a facilitated conversation with the audience about the project themes. It has been a tremendous privilege to experience art working in such an immediate and profound way. During each post-performance conversation we witness strangers sharing some of their deepest feelings and fears with each other. The performance, and the poetry of Shakespeare allows access to difficult emotional terrain and the discussion holds a space for the audience to share and listen to one another.

PREVIOUS FACILITATORS:

NADER SHABAHANGI, PH.D.: Nader received his Doctorate from Stanford University, is a licensed psychotherapist, and is cofounder of AgeSong. His multicultural background has fueled his passion for becoming an advocate for marginalized groups and for creating programs with the purpose of caring more comprehensively for elders. As CEO, Nader ensures that the company's vision drives its decisions and plans for elder care services. In 1992, Nader also founded the Pacific Institute, a nonprofit organization that defines its mission as one of helping elders live meaningful lives. Nader is a frequent guest lecturer, including presenting at international conferences focusing on aging, counseling, and dementia. In 2003 he authored *Faces of Aging*, a book challenging stereotypical views of the aging process and of growing old. In 2008 he co-authored *Deeper Into the Soul*, a book aimed at de-stigmatizing and broadening our understanding of dementia. In 2009 he co-authored *Conversations With Ed*, a book challenging readers to look at dementia in different ways. In 2011 he published *Elders Today*, a photo and text book that cherishes aging and old age as a most desirable phase of our lives. Celebrating the intergenerational dialogue between young and old, Nader edited and published *Encounters of the Real Kind* in 2012. This book is a collection of stories and anecdotes that pay tribute to the deep and

life-changing encounters between elders and those learning to become elders.

SHOSHANA BERGER: Shoshana got her start as a writer for a magazine called Bikini (no jokes) for whom she interviewed Jeff Buckley and Allen Ginsburg. That led to writing for the New York Times, SPIN, WIRED, and a stint as the editorial director (more like “cool-hunter”) for Young & Rubicam. With little more than a fuzzy idea and a boil in the blood, she went on to found ReadyMade, a national do-it-yourself design magazine. The venture was funded by 10 credit cards. (Her credit rating is excellent). ReadyMade was a finalist for National Magazine Awards in 2005 and 2006. After co-authoring the book *ReadyMade: How to Make Almost Everything* (Clarkson Potter), she sold the business to the Meredith Corp., publisher of Better Homes & Gardens. Shoshana then joined WIRED as director of special projects in 2011, and launched a new website, WIRED Design. She landed at IDEO in 2013 as editorial director and hasn't looked back.

ALISA MALLARI TU: Alisa is currently the executive director of [Gordon Manor](#), a memory care and assisted living community in Redwood City. She has been working with people living with dementia and their families for over 20 years. Alisa holds degrees in both Human Biology and Medical Anthropology.

THOMAS VARNER: Thomas has spent years in hospice work and has been with numerous people during the dying process. Thomas has served as a Hospice Aide, Chaplain, Bodyworker and Psychotherapist.

ALANNA MCLEOD: Alanna wanted to be an actress when she grew up. While this dream never quite manifested, and she found herself studying cognitive science in college and then found her way into world of marketing and advertising, she remains fascinated by the theater. Today, she is the San Francisco Producer of [Re:Imagine | End-of-Life](#) - a community-driven, city-wide festival exploring death and celebrating life. It features an emergent network of artists, storytellers, healthcare professionals, religious communities, and innovators, banding together to amplify the end-of-life conversation. Having experienced significant loss in recent years (to put it lightly, her family went extinct), Alanna's understanding and empathy enable her to connect deeply with others on this difficult topic.

BRAD WOLFE: Brad uses insights from the fields of positive psychology, business, and sociology to design meaningful cultural experiences and spark innovation within organizations and communities. In partnership with IDEO, he recently launched a new brand called Re:Imagine, which works with cities to hold meaningful conversations around taboo topics. Be on the lookout next April in San Francisco for the Re:Imagine | End of Life festival, exploring death and celebrating life via art, experiences, and conversation. Brad's background in palliative care stems from his role as founder of the Sunbeam Foundation, a 501(c)3 that identifies and supports cutting edge research for rare and underfunded pediatric cancers, which he founded in memory of his friend Sara. Brad graduated with an M.A. in Organizational Behavior from Stanford University and received his M.B.A. from Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, where he has served as coach/lecturer on the topics of design and innovation. He is a contributing writer on positive organizational psychology for the Greater Good Science Center and is the author of the young adult award-winner, *Breakfast on Mars* (Macmillan, 2014).

ELIZABETH BECKER: Elizabeth is a facilitator and former business strategist who is now pursuing a life-long call to interfaith ministry with a focus on chaplaincy. She has her own consultancy and used to lead sales and marketing teams for big tech companies like Lucent and Salesforce and ran non-profits like the Professional BusinessWomen of California and the East Bay chapter of the Women Presidents' Organization. Elizabeth lives in Piedmont. She has led adventure travel programs to Machu Picchu for the past 10 years, and is a published poet and memoirist. She is a mom of teenagers - one who is applying to colleges now. Her very active world-traveling father, who lives independently in Philadelphia, will be 94 next week.

LINKS:

- <http://www.weplayers.org/press>
- <http://www.weplayers.org/mother-lear-2018>
- <http://www.weplayers.org/mother-lear-2017>