

For Immediate Release

Contact: Britt Lauer, [britt@weplayers.org](mailto:britt@weplayers.org)



Photo by Lauren Matley

**We Players**

**Presents**

# **MOTHER LEAR**

**A two-woman, hour-long meditation on family, aging, and mortality**

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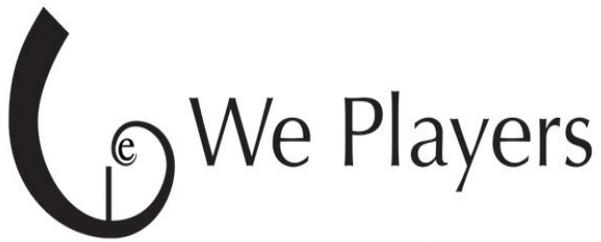
## ***Coming to the Jewish Community Center of the East Bay October 8, 2017***

**Berkeley, Calif.** – We Players is pleased to announce that this October it will present a new production, ***Mother Lear***, a two-woman, hour-long distillation of William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. Created by We Players’ founder **Ava Roy** and actress **Courtney Walsh**, *Mother Lear* tells the story of an aging mother and her caretaker daughter. “Lear” (Walsh) is a formerly brilliant Shakespeare scholar who is descending into dementia. As her memories and her words desert her, she finds her only reliable method of communication is through the words of her favorite play, *King Lear*. Determined to live out her last days on her own terms, her grip on reality recedes and she succumbs to her imagined identity as Lear. Her daughter “Cordelia” (Roy) must try to reach her mother through the only language she now recognizes. Donning a variety of personas from Shakespeare’s play—from the loyal friend Kent, to the manipulative daughter Goneril, to the irreverent Fool—Cordelia engages her mother in the difficult conversations they never managed to negotiate prior to her illness. Through this artificial construct, they finally achieve authentic communication.

### **ABOUT THE PIECE**

***“Mother Lear has an important message and will serve as a conversation starter for people of any age and any walk of life,” said Roy. “Death is something that touches us all, yet so many of us struggle to discuss it with our families and closest friends. Courtney and I are particularly excited about intergenerational audiences and discussions. There are so few situations in our society where the young and old come together and share intimate experiences and dive into difficult discussions such as this.”***

Drawing from an earlier We Players adaptation of the Lear story (the 2014 production *King Fool*), Roy and Walsh have plumbed the depths of Shakespeare’s language to explore the themes of family, aging, pride, control, and mortality. Audiences will rediscover the magic of the Bard’s gift for expression, as two relatable contemporary characters find that Shakespeare’s words surpass their own in navigating difficult subjects like regret and mortality. After the performance, the audience will reconvene along with the performers and **Shoshana Berger**, editorial director at IDEO magazine, whose life’s work involves reframing the process of dying, for a community conversation about the themes of death, dying, grief, loss, and healing.



Connecting people with place through site-integrated theatre

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### **ABOUT THE PLACE**

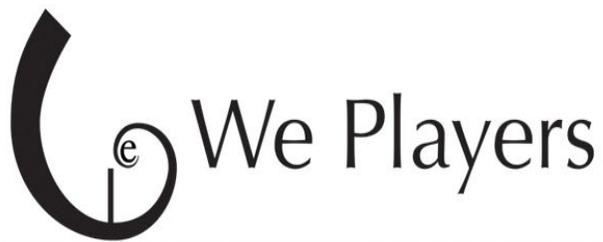
The **JCC East Bay** is a welcoming, inspiring home for people of all ages and life stages. Their mission is to create healthy communities inspired by Jewish values, culture and tradition. The JCC serves and reflects the diverse residents of the East Bay, offering physical gathering spaces for the Jewish and broader community. Presented during **The Holiday of the Harvest, Sukkot**, the performance will take place in the JCC East Bay's community **sukkah**. Imagined, designed, and built by local artists Dan Edleson and Brain Scharf specifically for the JCC East Bay Berkeley Branch, this innovative, usable, handcrafted sukkah is made from bamboo and willow leaves covered with palm fronds. More information about the JCC East Bay can be found at <http://www.jcceastbay.org>.

**Shoshana Berger**, editorial director at IDEO magazine, will be facilitating this event's post-performance discussion. In collaboration with Zen Hospice Project and Dr. BJ Miller, IDEO has designed a digital campaign around "Redesigning Death" labeled #designabetterending and are preparing renderings for a new palliative care facility. Shoshana's work on this project gives her a unique perspective on reframing how we think about death preparation.

### **ABOUT WE PLAYERS**

We Players was recently recognized by Backstage.com as [one of seven companies](#) around the globe producing groundbreaking immersive theatre. We Players was featured in [American Theatre Magazine's cover story on immersive theatre](#) and was honored by San Francisco Magazine with the "Best of the Bay" pick for their unique site-specific performance work noting, "We Players didn't just break the fourth wall, it toppled the whole playhouse." We Players has received several "Best of Bay" awards from the SF Weekly, including this mention in their 2015 award, "We Players actors have the ability to draw power out of their surroundings, channeling it into spectacular, immersive experiences for audience members unlike anything you'll see on Broadway."

**We Players creates site-integrated performances that transform public spaces into realms of participatory theatre in an effort to engage with history and the environment, build community, and activate personal relationships with place.** Our work inspires, awakens the senses, and connects people with each other and the landscape. We Players is a Bay Area arts non-profit founded in 2000 at Stanford University by Ava Roy. For more information about We Players, please visit [www.weplayers.org](http://www.weplayers.org).



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**Calendar Listing Information**

**Date: October 8**

**Time: 5pm**

**Location: JCC East Bay, 1414 Walnut St, Berkeley, CA 94709**

**Tickets: \$25-\$35**

**Tickets will be available at: [www.weplayers.org](http://www.weplayers.org)**

**Information, group sales, and educational opportunities contact:**

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**Website:** [WePlayers.org](http://WePlayers.org)

**For press reservations or more information email [britt@weplayers.org](mailto:britt@weplayers.org)**