

# Theater & Such

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Sunday, May 12, 2019

## Undiscovered and Unexpected

### UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY



Hunter Scott MacNair, Chris Steele, Ava Roy Photo: Lauren Matley

Written and directed by Ava Roy

[We Players - weplayers.org](http://weplayers.org)

Sunnyside Conservatory / 236 Monterey Blvd, San Francisco

Th-Sun until May 19, 2019

By Christine Okon

Leave it to We Players to conjure a magical stage from a familiar, real world place. In past productions, for example, Fort Point in the Presidio became Macbeth's castle, and Sutro Baths was where Ondine came from the sea.

Now they've turned the historical and beautifully restored Sunnyside Conservatory into *Undiscovered Country* where the Wild West meets *Shakespeare in Love* inflamed with the madness of *Hamlet*. Written and directed by We Players Artistic Director Ava Roy and set in the American West in the late 1800's United States, *Undiscovered Country* is a fast, visceral, fun, and sexy ride for actors and audience alike (especially if you agree to be a stagecoach "passenger.")

We think we know what to expect with the familiar western trope of two law-breakin', gun-totin' cowboy pardners, a beautiful rich widow, and a stagecoach robbery. But *whoa*, there's more.

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Ava Roy and Hunter Scott MacNair Photo: Lauren Matley

Turns out that the alpha outlaw, Jack Spear, is as wild and unpredictable as a mustang and a manic actor who LOVES Shakespeare and draws only on lines from *Hamlet* to communicate with his compliant sidekick and best friend Horace. Red-haired and spry Hunter Scott MacNair percolates with Jack's desperate and sparking madness as he spews dialog from *Hamlet* while Chris Steele's Horace patiently obliges and replies in kind. When the widow Aurelia (Ava Roy), no innocent lamb, reveals that she also loves and knows Shakespeare even better than Jack (echoes of Annie Oakley's "I can do anything better than you can..") there's no stopping the passionate repartee of the secret language "bardolalia" that ignites between them. The *Hamlet*-inspired back-and-forth volleys, slings and arrows of attraction soon burst into obsession, and things turn steamy indeed when the two engage in "country matters."



Hunter Scott MacNair and Chris Steele Photo: Lauren Matley

Inevitably, the "bromance" of Jack and Horace is rocked as Jack's passion for Aurelia escalates. As his hurt and resentment increase, Horace confronts Jack with the perceived betrayal. The tension builds to fighting, with Jack and Horace rolling across the floor in graceful and convincing fight scenes (designed by Steele).

Although no guns are fired, some beautifully crafted and historically accurate firearm artifacts from the collection of JD Durst are used. The scent of leather from the holsters and saddle adds to the verisimilitude along with the spot-on costumes meticulously researched and designed by Brooke Jennings.

We don't really know where the characters are headed, and neither do they, it seems. As Jack spins off into madness, Aurelia and Horace face off and, in the kind of twist Shakespeare would have written himself, take first steps into their own undiscovered country.

#### **UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY**

Written and directed by Ava Roy

[We Players](#)

Sunnyside Conservatory 236 Monterey Blv SF

Th-Sun until May 19, 2019

#### **CAST**

Hunter Scott MacNair -- Jack Spear

Chris Steele -- Horace

Ava Roy -- Aurelia

## CREATIVE TEAM

Brooke Jennings -- Costume Designer

JD Durst -- Historic Weapon and Leather Consultant

Chris Steele -- Fight Director

Britt Lauer -- Stage Manager

Nick Medina -- Collaborator

at May 12, 2019



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