

Silent Sky



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THEATRE MEMPHIS presents **"SILENT SKY"**

Written by **LAUREN GUNDERSON** ■ Directed by **CECELIA WINGATE**

Sponsored by **KIM AND MABRY FORD**

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Rosette Nebula photographed by Memphis Astronomical Society member Brent Ellis

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THEATRE MEMPHIS *in the* **NEXT STAGE**



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IN THE NEXT STAGE AT THEATRE MEMPHIS

Silent Sky

by **LAUREN GUNDERSON**

Directed by **CECELIA WINGATE**

Assistant Directed by **JARED THOMAS JOHNSON**

Executive Producer **DEBBIE LITCH**

Production Manager/TD
MICHAEL COMPTON

Resident Costume Designer
AMIE EOFF

Resident Lighting Designer
NICOLE NORTHINGTON

Resident Scenic Designer
JACK NETZEL-YATES

Sound Designer
JASON ESCHHOFEN

Assistant Technical Director
MAGGIE JACKSON

Resident
Sound Designer
EMILY LUCE

Director of Stage Management,
Outreach & Volunteer Engagement
BECKY CASPERSEN

Costume Shop Manager
ASHLEY SELBERG

Stage Manager
JENNIFER TOWNSEND

Original music composed for the show by
JENNY GIERING and **JASON ESCHHOFEN**

CAST

Henrietta Leavitt **NATALIE JONES**
Annie Jump Cannon **KIM JUSTIS EIKNER**
Williamina Fleming **EMILY F. CHATEAU**
Margaret Leavitt **JULES CALDWELL**
Peter Shaw **ERIC JAMES SCHULTZ**

Stage Crew
NATALIE CHAMBLIN, CHARLENE HONEYCUTT

TIME AND PLACE:

1900-1920

Star Field

The Harvard Observatory, 2nd Floor Offices
Leavitt home, Wisconsin
Henrietta's home, Cambridge, MA

SPECIAL THANKS

Buddy Hart, Memphis Astronomical Society,
University of Memphis Physics-Astronomy

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Before reading Lauren Gunderson's beautiful play *Silent Sky*, I had never heard of Henrietta Leavitt. She was one of three truly extraordinary lady scientists (also known as scientists) at the Harvard Observatory who made vast and important discoveries that changed the field of astronomy. In the early 1900s, the universe seemed to be a much smaller place. The overall belief was that the Milky Way galaxy was the only galaxy to exist and the idea of a larger universe was highly doubted and wasn't really explored much or even questioned. Henrietta Leavitt asked many, many questions of the universe. Her work paved the way for modern astronomy's understanding of the vastness, structure, and scale of our universe.

Silent Sky is historical fiction. Most of the play is based on actual documents and records from the Harvard Observatory and beyond. Other elements are created by the playwright to represent the struggles with norms and family obligations that were the expectations of women during that time. Women generally didn't leave their families to pursue a passion, especially in science and astronomy.

This story deals with the choices that passion sometimes leads us to and the exploration of the fallout in our personal lives that can sometimes come with those choices. It also presents the idea that a spiritual life and one that recognizes science are not mutually exclusive. It puts at the forefront the idea that art and music can very often poke at us to look at things differently, which can lead us to more imaginative discovery. Please know that this play jumps in and out of realism to sometimes magical dream spaces or fantasy. It spans two decades and the use of the dream spaces allows us to see inside the heart and mind of Henrietta with her imagination, her desires, and her dreams. I hope you enjoy your experience with these fascinating characters and I hope that when you leave tonight, look up at the universe and throw a big thank you their way.

AN ASTRONOMICAL GLOSSARY

Cepheids — Cepheid Variables are very large, luminous, yellow stars. They change in magnitude (brightness) regularly, with periods of 1 to 70 days between peaks. The stars are called Cepheids after the first star of this type to be discovered, Delta Cephei, a bright star in the constellation of Cepheus.

Declination and Right Ascension — Similar to geographic latitude and longitude but projected onto the celestial sphere: Declination is expressed in degrees north or south of the celestial equator, and right ascension measures an angle that increases toward the east as measured from a zero point (the place in the sky where the Sun crosses the celestial equator at the March equinox).

Draper Catalogue — Its first edition published in 1890, the Draper Catalogue of Stellar Spectra contained spectroscopic classifications for 10,351 stars. Most of the classification was done by Williamina Fleming at the Harvard Observatory. The catalogue is named after Henry Draper, an American doctor and amateur astronomer who pioneered the field of astrophotography.

Great Refractor Telescope — A 15-inch telescope installed at Cambridge in 1847. For 20 years it was the largest telescope in the United States, the most significant American astronomical instrument and equal to the finest in the world. It formed the nucleus for development of the Harvard College Observatory.

Light Year — The distance traveled by light in one year, equal to about 6 trillion miles.

Magellanic Clouds — Known to astronomers since the tenth century, the Large Magellanic Cloud and its neighboring Small Magellanic Cloud are irregular dwarf galaxies visible in the southern hemisphere. They orbit our own Milky Way galaxy, whose gravitational force has contributed to their distorted shape and cloudy appearance.

Period-Luminosity Relation — The relationship between a variable star's luminosity (the total amount of radiation it gives off in one second) and the period of its pulsation (the length of time between successive peaks in its brightness). In Cepheids this relationship is well defined, a discovery made by Henrietta Leavitt.

Photometry — The branch of astronomy that deals with the accurate measurement of the brightness, color and temperature of stars and the changes in their brightness over time.

Spectral Class — One of seven classes designated by the letters O, B, A, F, G, K and M; the hottest stars (O and B) are blue-white in color, while the coolest (M) are red. Each of the letter classes has subdivisions indicated by numerals 0 through 9.

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



JULES CALDWELL (Margaret Leavitt) is excited to return to the Next Stage as Margie in *Silent Sky*. Jules studied at the Maggie Flanigan Studio in NYC and performed in

Lone Tree Live's 24 Hour Plays festival. Jules thanks her family and friends for their love and support.



EMILY F. CHATEAU (Williamina Fleming), a native of Michigan, is rounding out her time here in Memphis after living here since June 2008. Some of her favorite roles at Theatre Memphis

have been in *The Addams Family*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Falsettos*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Music Man*, and *Our Town*. A huge thank you to Cecelia for being the greatest role model and teacher I've ever had in theatre. I am where I am because of your direction. "To D - who's my 'far but not apart.'"



JARED THOMAS JOHNSON (Assistant Director) rejoins his mentor, favorite teacher and collaborator Cecelia. He thanks her for teaching storytelling, details, and how to

encourage brilliance. Jared's TM director credits are *American Son*, *A Raisin in*

the Sun and the upcoming *Ain't Misbehavin'*. His Playhouse on the Square credits include *Passover*, *The Scottsboro Boys* and *Fat Ham*. Jared thanks JJ for an enduring friendship, Jules for her sincerity and laughter, Emily for being a gracious star and teacher in acting and directing, Kim for being simply the best human and role model in acting, Eric for being so supportive, engaging, and a leading man, Natalie for being his queen in all things. Love to the production team for defining excellence and collaboration. Love to Josh for encouraging his dreams.



NATALIE JONES

(Henrietta Leavitt) is incredibly grateful to remount this beautiful production with such a talented director, cast, and crew. Other Theatre Memphis credits include Titania in *Mid-*

summer, *Lady Macbeth* (Ostrander), Georgie opposite Jerry Chipman in *Heisenberg*, Tracy in *The Philadelphia Story*, Tourvel in *Dangerous Liaisons*, and Gwen in *The Royal Family*; Blanche in *Streetcar Named Desire* (Ostrander) at GCT & Emily in *Disgraced* at Circuit. She worked with Ellen Geer as a company member at Theatricum Botanicum playing Juliet, Phoebe, Imogen, Hippolyta, and Anna in *The Cherry Orchard* while also appearing in their productions of *The Tempest* and *Dracula*. She holds a BFA in Theatre from the U of M and is a founding member of Lost In Found. This one's for you, Dad; Vivian, you're the brightest star in my sky.

Poster/Cover Design by Missy McClendon
Production Photos by Carla McDonald
Program Layout by Michael Gravois

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY (cont.)



KIM JUSTIS EIKNER

(Annie Jump Cannon) is honored to soar with this constellation of stars on the *Silent Sky* team and explore the magnificence of the universe under the stellar direction of Cecelia. What a blessing to reprise her role of Annie Jump Cannon!

She was most recently seen at TM in November, when she and Jenny Odle Madden brought back *Parallel Lives*. Last fall she performed in *What the Constitution Means to Me* at Circuit, and Quark's *The Sound Inside* last spring. Other Theatre Memphis performances include *Cicada*, *Bad Dates*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Three Days of Rain*; *Ruthless*; and others. Also in town: *The Other Place*, *God of Carnage*; *Other Desert Cities*; *Good People*; *August: Osage County*; *From Up Here*; *Rabbit Hole*; *Proof*; *Dinner with Friends*; *How I Learned to Drive*; *Falsettos*; *Tartuffe*; *Oleanna*; and *Kindertransport*, among others. She sends special thanks to her spectacularly patient and kindhearted husband, the brilliant Flip Eikner, for helping her cope with their empty nest.



ERIC JAMES SCHULTZ

(Peter Shaw) grew up in Durham, NC. He's been involved in the Memphis Theatre scene since Fall 2017. You may have seen him last as Oleg

Salt in *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory* @POTS. Other TM credits: Little Charles in *August: Osage County*; Bert Jefferson in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*; Lieutenant Brannigan in *Guys & Dolls*. Other POTS credits: Earl in *May We All*; Krogsdad in *A Doll's House*; Roving Guitarist in *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*. GCT credits include: Sherlock Holmes in *Baskerville* and Shaun Bengson in *Hundred Days*. Currently, Eric is also performing in

POTS' *Freedom Train*, a play about Harriet Tubman, which is touring elementary schools in the greater Memphis area. Eric is excited to be back working with this talented team. He gives thanks to TM and all accompanied with this remount of *Silent Sky*. Special thanks to Cecelia for being such a passionate director, which is refreshing for, Eric imagines, most actors. He hopes you'll walk away with a bit of the sky in mind, after the show. "You'd think the stars would make war seem trivial." Eric appreciates you making the time to see this story.

JENNIFER TOWNSEND (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back in the Next Stage at Theatre Memphis! She's been involved here at Theatre Memphis for two decades. Thanks to Cecelia for asking me to come along on this journey into space!



CECELIA WINGATE

(Director) is an award winning actor and director from Memphis, TN. She holds numerous Ostrander Awards for both acting and directing. She also holds a Joseph Jefferson

Award (JEFF) for Best Supporting Actor in Chicago theatre for her role in *Byhalia, MS*, which took her to both Steppenwolf Theatre and The Kennedy Center. Cecelia has a long list of shows she has directed at TM, most recently *Beautiful, the Carole King Musical*. Her next project at TM will be *Mamma Mia!* in the spring of 2026. "Thank you to Debbie Litch for listening to that nudge from the universe to bring this beautiful show back for a remount. Many thanks to Michael Compton and his amazing design team for creating this gorgeous set one more time. I am forever grateful to my amazing Assistant Director, Jared Johnson, our trusted Stage Manager, Jennifer Townsend, and this truly delightful and wonderful cast for returning to once again tell this beautiful and true story. What a truly fulfilling journey it has been!" Proud member Actor's Equity Association.