

Governors State University Theatre and Performance Studies Presents



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**b.Ob** r a u s c h e n b e r g

**Ame** r i c a

by Charles L. Mee

Directed by Dr. Patrick Santoro

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**Live Streaming**  
May 6 - 8, 2021  
at 7:30 PM

# **bobrauschenbergAMERICA**

by Charles L. Mee

Directed by Patrick Santoro

*bobrauschenbergamerica* is presented by special arrangement with  
United Talent Agency

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# Director's Note

"I think a painting is more like the real world if it's made out of the real world."

—Robert Rauschenberg

The world has radically changed over the last year, and America is no different. The pandemic disrupted life as we knew it, forcing us into isolation, straining the social connections we once held so dear (and that are necessary for living within our communities), while bringing with it a sharpened focus on inequity, injustice, and economic instability, to name a few.

Enter *bobrauschenbergAMERICA*: a unique look at America through the collage style of visual artist Robert Rauschenberg. Playwright Charles L. Mee borrows from varied traditions and styles to craft a story that does not follow a linear plot but instead offers snapshots of moments in Americans' lives. Themes include love, death, sex, capitalism, violence, innovation, division, and the myth of Americana—all more acutely relevant now than before.

True to Rauschenberg's artwork, *bob* both reflects and interrogates the intersection of art, life, and freedom. While *bob* does not offer easy answers for the audience about what it means to be an American, it poses provocative questions (and feelings) for us to consider. Perhaps tonight's production will allow you to reflect on America in this current moment.

Personally, this has been an especially fulfilling project—the ability to create for the first time in a long time after such a long period of collective inertia. I believe I speak for all of us involved in this production when I say that it has been a welcomed opportunity to embody our craft once again, in real time and real space, collaborating with other people in the same room. Working on this project, with such a committed cast and crew, has made me feel less alone, more connected to others—and that is exactly what so many of us need right now. Hopefully that spirit of interconnectedness and joy is felt through your screen.

Thank you for supporting the arts.

Patrick Santoro, Ph.D.  
Director

The text for *bobrauschenbergamerica* was developed in a workshop with Tali Gai, Jane Comfort, Kathleen Turco-Lyon, Rebecca Brown, Reba Herman, Alec Duffy, Jacki Goldhammer, and Carolyn Clark Smith and incorporates texts from them as well as from Robert Rauschenberg, Fred Becker, Philip Morrison, Walt Whitman, William S. Burroughs, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Allen Ginsberg, and Laurie Williams.

Charles Mee's work has been made possible by the support of Richard B. Fisher and Jeanne Donovan Fisher.

# Cast

Thea L. Anderson	<i>Susan</i>
Reynolds “Rey” Andújar, Ph.D.	<i>Allen</i>
Michael DePriest Reed	<i>Becker</i>
Rachel A. Kim	<i>Wilson</i>
Ronald McDowell	<i>Carl</i>
Samantha Patti	<i>Phil’s Girl</i>
Chuck Salvatore	<i>Phil, the Trucker</i>
Faiz Siddique	<i>Bob, the Pizza Boy</i>
JaNina Simone	<i>Bob’s Mom</i>
Zowie Trudeau	<i>Roller Girl</i>
Brian McKee	<i>Bagpiper</i>
Tyler Fears	<i>Voiceover</i>
James Kane	<i>Understudy</i>

# Production Team

Direction

*Patrick Santoro, Ph.D.*

Choreography

*Megan Lindsay*

Music Direction

*Stacy Eckert, Ph.D.*

Production Management

*Michelle Medvin*

Scenic Design

*Michael Krull*

Lighting Design

*Shelley Strasser*

Costume and Prop Design

*Rachel M. Sypniewski*

Sound Design

*Sebby Woldt*

Stage Management

*Kimelia Carter*

Assistant Stage Management

*LaT`ya Johnson*

Scenic Carpentry

*Michael Hart*

Scenic Art

*Gretchen Jankowski*

Art Assistant

*Dominique McLean*

Properties/ Fly Rail

*Tracey Offett*

CPA Audio Engineer  
*Ian West*

Sound Board Operation  
*Tammi Bolden*

Light Board Operation  
*John Sorfleet*

Run Crew  
*Gaston Beltran*  
*Tyler Riemenschneider*

Producers  
*GSU's College of Arts and Sciences and Division of Arts and Letters*

# Profiles



**Thea L. Anderson** (Susan) is a lifetime dancer, actor, and musician, returning to the stage after a long hiatus. Previous theatre credits include *Brigadoon* (Maggie Anderson), *Cinderella* (chorus), and *The Drunkard* (chorus). When she's not performing, you can find her writing and recording music, working on home renovations, gardening, and spending time with her rescued pit bull, Ekhi. Thanks to all castmates, crew, GSU faculty and staff, as well as my family, friends, instructors, and mentors!



**Reynolds "Rey" Andújar, Ph.D.** (Allen) is a writer and performer who lives in Chicago. The movie *Candela*, based on his second novel, will premiere this summer. Andujar is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Governors State. He has written plays for Aguijón Theater and has performed for Collaboraction. Rey is grateful and excited to be working with such a great cast in such an iconic and necessary production for these tumultuous times. "I would like to thank Prof. Santoro for this opportunity and my beautiful family for all their love and support."

**Gaston Beltran** (Run Crew) is a senior TAPS Major at Governors State University. He previously appeared in *Failure: A Love Story* and *Alice in Wonderland* and did various backstage work for *The Laramie Project*. He's very grateful for the amazing TAPS program that has given him many glimpses and exposures to the world of theatre and performance studies. This has allowed him to learn not just the necessary aspects of performance but also the technical skills, communication and teamwork needed to help run productions, and therefore highly increased his interest and passion for theatre.

**Kimelia Carter** (Stage Management) has always believed that art has a way to connect people in the most unlikely of ways. She started acting at the age of five and began to involve herself in other aspects as well, such as a love for writing and stage management. Her writing includes poems and performances dealing with life experiences like love, heartbreak, and oppression. This passion has given her the opportunity to work for companies like Congo Square Theater and South Shore Opera. She is currently studying Theater and Performance Studies with a minor in Creative Writing at Governors State University.



**Michael DePriest Reed** (Becker) has been associated with the theater arts for over four decades. This is his second production with TAPS, having also acted in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Michael has participated in all aspects of theatre, including directing, acting, and crew. Directing credits include *The Good Doctor*, *The Water Engine*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*, among others. He has acted in such productions as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Twelfth Night*, *Bleacher Bums*, *The Bald Soprano*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Ragtime*, and countless others. Lighting design is another passion of Michael's. It's with a tremendous amount of pride that the cast and crew present to you *bobrauschenbergamerica!*

**Stacy Eckert** (Music Direction) is an Adjunct Faculty member at GSU. She received her B.F.A. in Theatre/Voice from the University of Kansas and her M.M. and D.M.A. in Vocal Performance (Theatre minor) from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. A professional singer, Dr. Eckert has sung throughout the US and Europe. Currently, she is a member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and Grant Park Music Festival Chorus while she continues her solo career. At GSU, she teaches Choral Performance and Music of the World.

**LaT`ya Johnson** (Assistant Stage Management) is a student at Lewis University, studying to attain a bachelor's degree in psychology. She has maintained a love of the arts since the age of three and hopes to obtain a master's degree in graphic design and performance arts. Although this is her first performance she hopes to be involved in many more.



**Jamese Kane** (Understudy) graduated from Clarke University in August 2020 with a B.A. in Drama and Philosophy. She is still doing theatre and film and was recently signed to model with the Charismatic Agency. It can be said that she is most known for her roles as Tybalt from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Estragon from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. She is also a freelance makeup artist who practices for theatre, films, and sfx.





**Rachel A. Kim** (Wilson) is a local Chicago actor/dancer/musician and this is her first show with Governors State University's TAPS program. She is very excited to be part of this cast. *bobrauschenbergamerica* is Rachel's first play and she is grateful that her first theatre experience is with TAPS. She is also thankful to Dr. Patrick Santoro, Dr. Stacy Eckert, and Megan Lindsay for pushing her as an artist while putting the show together.

**Megan Lindsay** (Choreography) Originally from northwest Indiana, Megan has served as an instructor, performer, choreographer, director and producer for many dance companies and schools in Illinois, Indiana, and Florida. Megan served as adjunct faculty at Indiana University Northwest for nine years (2004-2010, 2012-2015) and was the resident choreographer for the Department of Performing Arts, as well as the Artistic Director of the IUN student dance company. Megan joined the Theatre and Performance Studies program at Governors State University in 2013 as adjunct faculty and resident choreographer, and also serves as the coordinator, director and faculty advisor of the Governors State University Dance Company. Megan co-created the Dance Minor at GSU which took effect fall 2019. Megan currently works as a teaching artist in Chicago with a variety of companies and works with Indiana Ballet Theatre during their summer season facilitating dance camp and offering studio classes. Megan has danced professionally with modern dance company Perceptual Motion Dance Company and Sarasota Contemporary Dance Company, and co-founded Rebound Dance NPF, a dance festival production company. Megan graduated cum laude from Ball State University with a BS in Dance Performance, and later obtained her Master of Arts in Dance/Movement Therapy from Columbia College Chicago. "There are shortcuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them." – Vicki Baum



**Ronald McDowell** (Carl) is a Theater and Performance Studies major at Governors State University. He has performed in *The Scarlet Letter*, *Caroline or Change*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. Ronald was musical director for Rich East High School and directed performances which included *A Tribute to The Lion King*, *The Wiz* and *A Night on Broadway*. Ronald has performed with the gospel artists Pastor Dietrick Haddon, Ricky Dillard, and Hezekiah Walker. Ronald was the local winner of *America's Got Talent* and winner of McDonald's *American*. "Entertaining is my life. I can't wait to see my name in the bright lights soon."



**Brian McKee** (Bagpiper) has been playing the bagpipes since 1975. He has had the opportunity to play at countless weddings, funerals, parades and competitions. He's also been in a movie (about 12 seconds) and a few TV shows in that time. Brian teaches the pipes at Providence High School where the pipers play at football games, graduation, etc. Brian is very excited to play at GSU and is grateful to Dr. Stacy Eckert for her recommendation.

**Michelle Medvin** (Production Management) is in her fifth year with the TAPS program. As a stage manager, Michelle has worked with Steppenwolf Theatre for nearly twenty years, and credits include the world premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *August, Osage County*. She has also stage managed at Northlight Theatre, Drury Lane, Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago Children's Theatre, Hartford Stage, Dallas Theater Center, and Portland Center Stage. Michelle is proud to be a member of Actors' Equity, a graduate of Smith College, wife to Mary, and mama to Elliott, Lena, and Samuel.



**Samantha Patti** (Phil's Girl) has worked with the Prairie State Players for the past few years and is so proud of the work they have done. She is now an English major and TAPS minor at GSU and is very excited to be a part of the TAPS program. She would like to thank her biggest fan, her grandmother Marlene Sims, for always supporting her. She would also like to thank her mother, Nancy Patti, and her family for their continued support.

**Tyler Riemenschneider** (Run Crew) is a transfer student to Governors State University. He is a Theatre and Performance Studies major in his senior year. Tyler was in a number of performances during his high school years. He constructed puppets for last semester's *Failure: A Love Story* and worked as the sound board operator for *The Laramie Project*. He also served as stage manager for the recent dance concert.



**Chuck Salvatore** (Phil, the Trucker) is an actor and improviser who made his feature film debut in 2017's *Landline* starring Tom Arnold. He has appeared on stage throughout the Chicagoland area as an actor and improviser. The former reporter for the Southwest News-Herald has trained at Acting Studio Chicago, Second City, iO and the Annoyance. The southside Cubs fan lives in Orland Park and can't wait to have a Bud in Wrigley again.

**Patrick Santoro** (Direction) is an educator-artist who believes in the transformative power of stories to enact change. He is Associate Professor and Artistic Director of Theatre and Performance Studies at Governors State University, where he teaches courses in storytelling, performing culture and identity, performance and social change, performance art, and writing as performance. He received his doctorate in Performance Studies from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and his master's degree in Communication Studies and bachelor's degree in Humanities from the University of South Florida. Patrick has worked as a director and performer in professional and educational theatre for 20+ years. Representative directing credits include *Fahrenheit 451*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Laramie Project*, *Fat Pig, for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, Anne Sexton's *Transformations*, a contemporary retelling of *Alice in Wonderland* from the perspective of the #MeToo movement, and *Baggage* (winner of Source Theatre's 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Washington Theatre Festival 10-Minute Play Competition). He is the recipient of the 2017 Ellis-Bochner Autoethnography and Personal Narrative Research Award.



**Faiz Siddique** (Bob, the Pizza Boy) is a Chicago-based actor most recently seen in Aston Rep's reading of *American Dinner* as Aaraav. You can expect to see him as Dr Sanderson in *Harvey* with The Beverly Theatre Guild. He is beyond grateful to work with such a brilliant team. The chance to play Bob, the Pizza Boy has been one of the most fun times in his theatre career and he promises to not let that down.



**JaNina Simone** (Bob's Mom) is a singer, songwriter, actress, dancer and instructor. She has been performing for over 20 years in each skill set aforementioned. Some of her greatest accomplishments in performance include: singing alongside living legend Stevie Wonder during the "Songs in the Key of Life" tour, writing for the Brooklyn youth chorus, playing the role "Mother" in the Menotti opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, winning the "Pittsburgh Idol" competition series, and writing/singing on the honorable "John Lennon tour bus". Ms. Simone currently works as a lead vocalist for Boogie Down Experience LLC, as an independent artist, and as a Performing Arts teacher for Chicago Charter Schools. JaNina Simone's goal is to use her gifts to inspire, encourage, transform and bring joy to the lives of those who experience her artistry.

**John Sorfleet** (Light Board Operation) is a chicken enthusiast and graduate student at Governors State University. He is excited to be working on his first production at GSU. When he is not operating lighting equipment in the Center for Performing Arts, you can find him operating analytical equipment in the chemistry department.

**Shelley Strasser** (Lighting Design) is a freelance designer and educator based in the Chicago area. Ms. Strasser began working at GSU's Center for Performing Arts in when it opened in 1995 and joined the adjunct faculty in Theatre and Performance Studies in 2013. Shelley has designed scenery and/or lighting for productions including: *Almost Maine*, *Eurydice*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Kimberly Akimbo* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Since 1992, Shelley has been the Resident Lighting Designer and Ensemble Member with Shattered Globe Theatre where she received a Jeff nomination for lighting *The Glass Menagerie*. Shelley attended Eureka College receiving a BS in Mathematics/Theatre and Northwestern University where she holds an MFA in Theatre Design.

**Rachel M. Sypniewski** (Costume and Prop Design) is thrilled to be returning to GSU for this new adventure, previously designing *Failure: A Love Story*, *Almost, Maine* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Other companies she has worked with include Goodman, Trap Door, Broken Nose, Black Button Eyes, Jackalope, The New Colony, Emerald City, Lifeline, Haven, Griffin, CityLit, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Chopin, Promethean, Strawdog, Vitalist, Rasaka, the Factory, Red Tape and Redtwist. She also has designed at Wheaton College, North Central College, St. Patrick's High School, Indiana University Northwest, and the Chicago Academy for the Arts. She is a seven-time non-equity Jeff nominee, having been awarded one for *La Bete* at Trap Door. More info at [www.rachelsyp.com](http://www.rachelsyp.com).



**Zowie Trudeau** (Roller Girl) is a TAPS major here at Governors State University. This is her first production at GSU, and she is grateful for the opportunity. Theatre has always been a point of interest for her, and she can finally experience more about the craft. She hopes that you can all enjoy the performance of *bobrauschenbergAMERICA*.

**Sebby Woldt** (Sound Design) is excited to be doing another show at GSU after last year's *Picnic*. Sebby has designed sound for over 70 productions and has been nominated for several Broadway World awards. [Woldtsound.com](http://Woldtsound.com)

# **Summer 2021**

## **Theatre and Performance Studies Courses**

### **++DANCE++**

DNCE 2100: Intro to Dance (W 6:00-7:15; Remote Combination; Lindsay)

DNCE 2410: Intro to Tap Dance (W 7:30-8:45; Remote Combination; Lindsay)

### **++MUSIC++**

MUS 3401: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music (Online Only; Staron)

### **++THEATRE & PERFORMANCE++**

TAPS 2700: Performance Text Analysis (W 4:30-7:20; Remote Combination; Walls)

# **Fall 2021**

## **Theatre and Performance Studies Courses**

### **++MUSIC++**

MUS 1500: Music of the World (TR 11:30-12:45; Remote Synchronous; Hamilton)

MUS 1500: Music of the World (MW 1:30-2:45; Remote Combination; Eckert)

MUS 2500/3500/4500: Choral Performance (W 4:30-7:20; Remote Combination; Eckert)

MUS 3401: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music (Online Only; Staron)

### **++THEATRE & PERFORMANCE++**

TAPS 1100: Theatre Appreciation (Online Only; Latham)

TAPS 2000/4000: Playwriting (Online Only; Bradley)

TAPS 2100: The Storytelling Tradition (TR 11:30-12:45; Remote Combination; Santoro)

TAPS 2210: Introduction to Acting (MW 3:00-4:15; Remote Combination; TBD)

TAPS 3099: Critical Perspectives in TAPS (M 4:30-7:20; Remote Combination; Latham)

TAPS 3510: Costume Design (T 2:00-3:15; Remote Combination; Latham)

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To stay informed of TAPS audition announcements, upcoming productions, course information, and campus and community happenings, like us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/TAPSGSU](http://www.facebook.com/TAPSGSU)) and follow us on Instagram ([instagram.com/TAPSGSU](https://www.instagram.com/TAPSGSU))

For further information about the Theatre and Performance Studies program at GSU, contact Program Coordinator, Dr. Lara Stache: [lstache@govst.edu](mailto:lstache@govst.edu)