

The Braid

presents

True Colors



 The Braid
INSPIRING JEWISH STORIES

www.The-Braid.org

True Colors

Adapted, curated & produced by **Ronda Spinak**

Produced by **Eric Greene** • Directed by **Susan Morgenstern**

Assistant Artistic Director **Andrew Fromer** • Creative Associate **Daphna Shull**

Managing Director **Sharon Landau** • Associate Producers **Susie Yuré** & **Rose Ziff**

Communications/Marketing **David Chiu** • Community Partnership Lead **Jodi Marcus**

Stage Manager **Amanda Horowitz** • Assistant Stage Manager **Talya Camras**

THE PROGRAM

I've Got to Be Me - Instrumental

Written by Walter Marks. Performed by Marcos Cohen and Joshua Silverstein.

Birthright While Black

Written by Shekhiynah Larks. Performed by Nadège August and Joshua Silverstein.

El Beso Adapted from *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir in Between Journeys*, (Duke University Press, 2013).

Written by Ruth Behar. Performed by Heidi Mendez.

True Colors

Used by permission of songwriter Billy Steinberg. Performed by Marcos Cohen.

Sabbath Peace

Written by Larry M. Sanders. Adapted from an interview by Ronda Spinak. Performed by Joshua Silverstein and Nadège August.

The Men in My Life

Written by Marissa Tiamfook Gee. Performed by Kimberly Green.

Beit Din

Written by M. A. Hosein. Performed by Nadège August and Heidi Mendez.

Eli, Eli

Music composed by Marcos Cohen, lyrics by Hannah Senesh. Original melody by David Zehavi. Performed by Marcos Cohen.

No Joke

Written by David Chiu. Performed by Joshua Silverstein and Nadège August.

Both/And

Written by Maria Ramos-Chertok. Performed by Heidi Mendez.

Kimchi on the Seder Plate

Written by Rabbi Angela Warnick Buchdahl. Adapted from an interview by Ronda Spinak. Performed by Kimberly Green.

Special - A Commission of The Braid

Written and performed by Joshua Silverstein.

I've Got to be Me - Vocal

Written by Walter Marks. Performed by Joshua Silverstein and Marcos Cohen.

Q & A POST SHOW

True Colors was created for The Braid, formerly Jewish Women's Theatre, and premiered in the 2019 Salon Theatre season. Material adapted, curated, and produced by Ronda Spinak, Artistic Director. Also produced by Eric Greene. Directed by Susan Morgenstern, Producing Director. Original cast: Brie Eley, Kimberly Green, Heidi Mendez, Joshua Silverstein, and Katherine Washington.

MEET THE ARTISTS

NADÈGE AUGUST (Actor) is proud to be an Abby Freeman Artist-in-Residence of The Braid. An award-winning actress, she is the creator, writer, and lead of *Bougie Dilemma*, on Amazon, and hosts the podcast *What the Fockery?* Stage (partial list): CVRep: *Good People* (Kate) Outstanding Supporting Actress from Desert Theatre League. Antaeus Theatre: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Emilie); Odyssey Theatre: *Sunset Baby* (Nina) NAACP Best Lead Actress nomination; Antaeus Theatre: *Wedding Band* (Mattie); Odyssey Theatre: *Desire Under The Elms* (Abbie Putnam) NAACP Best Supporting Female nomination; Lower Depth Theatre: *Three Sisters After Chekhov* (Jean). Television: Series regular *Ruthless* (BET+) Recurring Guest on *Young Dylan* (Nickelodeon); *Alex, Inc* (ABC). Guest Star: *Key & Peele*, *Castle*, *Criminal Minds*, *Dexter*, *1600 Penn*, *Happy Endings*, *Mr. Sunshine*, *The Mentalist*, *Make It or Break It*, *The Unit*. Series Regular: (Lead, pilot). Films & MOW include *Out of Time*, *Undercover Bridesmaid*, *Raven's Touch*, *The Last Letter*, *The Brothers*, *Runt*. An MFA graduate, Nadège is a lifetime member of the Actors Studio and a member of the Television Academy. For more details, go to imdb.com/nadegeaugust.

RUTH BEHAR (Writer) is the Victor Haim Perera Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan and the recipient of a MacArthur Fellows "Genius" Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. A traveler, storyteller, poet, educator, and public speaker, her books include *The Presence of the Past in a Spanish Village*, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba* and *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir In Between Journeys*. She is the editor of the pioneering anthology, *Bridges to Cuba* and co-editor of *The Portable Island: Cubans at Home in the World*. Her documentary, *Adio Kerida/Goodbye Dear Love: A Cuban Sephardic Journey*, distributed by Women Make Movies, has been shown in festivals around the world. Her debut novel for young readers, *Lucky Broken Girl*, the coming-of-age story of a Cuban-Jewish immigrant girl, won the Pura Belpré Author Award from the American Library Association. Her bilingual poetry collection, *Everything I Kept/ Todo lo que guardé*, is a new release with Swan Isle Press. For more information: ruthbehar.com.

RABBI ANGELA WARNICK BUCHDAHL (Writer) joined Central Synagogue as senior cantor in 2006 and in 2014 was chosen by its congregation to lead them as senior rabbi. Born in Korea to a Jewish American father and a Korean Buddhist mother, Rabbi Buchdahl is the first Asian American to be ordained as cantor or rabbi in North America. She has been nationally recognized for her innovations in leading services, which draw large crowds both in the congregation's main sanctuary and via live stream and cable broadcast to viewers in more than 100 countries. She has served as faculty for the Wexner Heritage Foundation and for the Union for Reform Judaism Kallot programs and has been featured in dozens of news outlets, including the *Today Show*, *NPR*, and *PBS*. Listed in 2012 by *Newsweek* as one of America's 50 Most Influential Rabbis, she serves on the boards of Auburn Theological Seminary, Avodah Jewish Service Corps, AJC, and UJA-Federation of NY.

TALYA CAMRAS (Assistant Stage Manager) graduated from California Lutheran University with a BA in communication and a minor in technical theatre. Stage management credits include *She Kills Monsters*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Pirate Queen Musical*, *columbinus* (KCACTF), *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Richard II*, *The Abuelas*, *The Colored Museum*, and *The Devised Works Project*. Zoom productions include *You're a Good Man*, *Charlie Brown*, *A Mysterious Affair at Soldier Island*, *Family Matters* and *Crossing the Red Sea*.

DAVID CHIU (Writer/Marketing & Communications) is a West LA-based screenwriter whose journey with The Braid began when a story of his was performed in *True Colors*. He went on to become a two-time NEXT at the Braid Emerging Artists fellow and finally joined this incredible story company as an employee. Television: *LORE* (Amazon Prime). The Braid: *True Colors, Inside Our Time, For Goodness Sake* (also Director), *I Am a Jew, Who's Hiding Now?* and *The Rest is History* (also Director & Literary). Represented by The Gersh Agency and Authentic Talent & Literary Management. Member of the Board of Trustees at Temple Isaiah of Los Angeles; recipient of its 2019 Emerging Leader Award. Environmental activist and volunteer on various electoral campaigns. Jew of Color, of Litvak and Cantonese heritage.

MARCOS COHEN, a/k/a MOR D. HAI (Songwriter/Performer) is an actor-singer and songwriter who was born in Uruguay and is currently living in Los Angeles. In 2008, he produced his first CD album in Latin Jewish music, "Diaspora Sur," and since then has been presenting his contagious music across South and North America. Cohen started his artistic career as a playwright and director of musical theater. He has written the music and book of more than ten plays for children and adults, including *Al Jolson, The Show Must Go On, Trapped at Tea Time, A Magic Book, Robotic Park, CooCoo Beat Show, and The Creation*. His "Hay Que Cantar" was awarded best original song at the 2000 World Championships of Performing Arts in Los Angeles. Since his Hollywood acting debut in the movie *The Good Shepherd* (Universal, 2006), directed by Robert De Niro, he has appeared in the TV shows *Jane the Virgin, Dharma & Greg, Ally Mc Beal, Angeles*, and *Locked Up Abroad*, to name a few.

COURTENAY EDELHART (Writer) is the biracial daughter of two social worker parents, one black and one an Ashkenazi Jew. She and her twin sister grew up in Chicago and Albuquerque. Courtenay majored in journalism at Northwestern University before embarking on a nearly three-decade-long career as a newspaper reporter. Now in her 50s, she's recently begun a second career as a high school English teacher. Courtenay lives in Simi Valley, California, with two adopted teenagers, and assorted dying houseplants.

ANDREW FROMER (Assistant Artistic Director), a Los Angeles native, attended Windward School in Mar Vista where his career as an actor began in the school plays and musicals. After completing his BFA in theater at UC Santa Barbara and an exciting year of living in Israel, Andrew returned to LA for acting and producing. His TV credits include *Never Have I Ever* (Netflix) and *Anger Management* (FX); feature film credits include *Highway to Havasu* (Billy/Producer) and *The Sweet Life* (Mike/Assistant to Production). Theater credits include *Pledge* (Sherman u/s), *Bad Jews* (Jonah), and *The Braid's Jews in America*. Andrew also edits, directs, runs youth engagement at Congregation Or Ami in Calabasas and is excited to be coordinating this year's iteration of NEXT, The Braid's Emerging Artist Program. Find out more info at the-braid.org/next.

MARISSA TIAMFOOK GEE (Writer) grew up in Brooklyn, NY. She has always been active in her Jewish community, from being on the board of the Jewish Multiracial Network (JMN) to the board of IKAR, her current spiritual home. Marissa owns a corporate wellness company, helping companies keep their employees fit and healthy. She is also a former lawyer, teacher, runner, coach, and an outdoor adventure enthusiast. She runs, climbs, and explores every mountain and hidden trail she can find. She has traveled the world, worked in Uganda (volunteering through American Jewish World Service), taught English in Asia, worked at the UN in Geneva, studied abroad in Jerusalem and Amsterdam, and backpacked through the Pacific Rim, Australia, and Europe. She now has a more conventional life (although no less active) and lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two daughters.

KIMBERLY GREEN (Actor), an actress and dancer, was born in Seoul, Korea, and is a graduate of Indiana University with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology. Her most recent virtual stage productions include *Piano in the Dark* with the Group Repertory Theatre, *Snowflake* with the Road Theatre and 5 live virtual performances with Smartphone Theater: *Woman No. 6*, *Sophie-Alexander-Lisboa*, *So that Happened*, *Finding the Way* and *Checkmate*. Her notable past theater credits include *It's Just Sex*, LA's longest-running comedy, for which she won the 2017 Valley Theatre award for Best Featured Actress and was nominated at the 2018 NAACP Theatre Awards for Best Ensemble Cast. In 2017 she played Trina in B.L.A.C. Mail seven-year anniversary show, *Can God's Love*, which was nominated for Best Musical and Best Director for the 2019 NAACP Theatre Awards. Some of her TV and film credits include *Lucifer* (Fox), *The Young and the Restless* (CBS), and *The Hot Chick*, a Happy Madison Production. Kimberly is converting to Judaism through the Judaism by Choice Program. She is also a Barre instructor and the creator and owner of Barre Fit, an on-line, ballet fitness class, www.thebarrefit.com.

ERIC GREENE (Producer) is a Los Angeles-based writer and civil rights activist. An associate director of communications at UCLA, Eric previously worked as senior policy advisor at the ACLU of Southern California and as Southern California regional director for the Progressive Jewish Alliance/Bend the Arc. He has also written or contributed to several books on race, the arts, and politics, and his first book, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture*, was hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as a "classic." Eric studied religion at Wesleyan University and was a paralegal at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund before attending Stanford Law School, where he served as vice president of the Black Law Students Association and was a co-founder of the West Coast Conference on Progressive Lawyering. In addition to his efforts as an organizer in national and local Jews of Color communities, Eric has served as a consultant working with Jewish organizations on diversity and inclusion strategies.

AMANDA HOROWITZ (Stage Manager) wants to spend her life organizing and creating new theater. She graduated with bachelor's degrees in theater and math from the University of Alabama, where she stage managed and assistant stage managed eight shows in the theater department. She most recently directed a thirty-minute play as part of a new-works play festival in North Hollywood. She hopes someday to be able to run her own theater company dedicated to producing emerging theater and providing other young adults with their first paid opportunities in the arts. She is thankful to The Braid for providing her first step toward her professional career.

M. A. HOSEIN (Writer) is a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Public Health program at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. For fun, Monique enjoys family hikes, container gardening and books in all forms—paper, audio— she is also a jazz vocalist. Monique and her endlessly supportive husband are the parents of a deeply-thinking, fun-loving girl in the third grade.

SHEKHIYNAH LARKS (Writer) is the program coordinator and a diversity trainer at Be'chol Lashon, a well established Jews of Color advocacy organization. She holds a BA in politics from the University of San Francisco. She is a native of Oakland and is very involved in Jewish life in the Bay Area.

SHARON LANDAU (Managing Director) brings to The Braid 20 years of non-profit leadership experience helping programs and organizations scale and thrive. As a non-profit director and consultant, she engaged multidisciplinary stakeholders to design, pilot, scale, and evaluate innovative programs improving contraceptive access at local, state, and national levels that became replicable models. She launched

Pharmacy Forward, the nation's first leadership program for pharmacists in reproductive health. She previously worked in management consulting for Kaiser Permanente and as clinic manager for Planned Parenthood Los Angeles. She holds a masters in public health from UCLA and is an alumna of CA Women's Policy Institute and Center for Collaborative Planning's Leadership Institute.

JODI MARCUS (Community Partnership Lead) first came to The Braid as a patron, and now helps bring people together to laugh, cry, and share in the human experience by booking Braid shows across the country. Prior to joining The Braid team, Jodi worked for 18 years in the nonprofit sector as a fundraiser and consultant. In a younger iteration of her life, Jodi saw half of the world as a dancer. She's now traded in her tap shoes for tapping on the computer, writing short stories, and working on a novel for tweens. Jodi holds a BA in communications, public relations from Cal State Fullerton and a MPA from Cal State Northridge.

HEIDI MENDEZ (Actor) is a bilingual actor/director/educator who has worked professionally in Madrid, Mexico City, Utah, Texas, and now California. Her favorite roles include Lady Bracknell, Prospero, and most recently Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*. Some favorite shows as director/choreographer include *Cats*, *Working*, *Fiddler*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. She is known as the Rapping Grandma to kids in juvie where she volunteered for two years which led her to be founder/director of ACT RISK NO MORE, a nonprofit whose mission is to rescue troubled teens through theater. Heidi is married to Nick (a Mormon bishop) and is the mother of three boys, resulting in her being afraid nothing. For fun, Heidi takes hip-hop classes and plays dress-up with her granddaughter. Education: BA in acting from BYU and MA in directing from Texas State, plus two Utah teaching certificates for theater and Spanish.

SUSAN MORGENSTERN (Director/Producing Director) began directing in college by staging musical-theatre concert readings while co-teaching American musical comedy with Tom Lehrer at UC Santa Cruz. She went on to teach and direct at the renowned Stage Door Manor, a performing-arts camp in upstate New York. Los Angeles productions: Theatre West - selections from David Ives' *All in the Timing*; the musicals *Just Too Cool*, *Saturday Night at Grossinger's*, as well as Barbara Nell Beery's play, *The Socialization of Ruthie Shapiro*. Falcon/Garry Marshall Theatre - *Leap*, by Arnold Margolin; *Surviving Sex*, by David Landsberg; the hit comedy *The Psychic*, by Sam Bobrick. Whitefire Theatre - Richard Martin Hirsch's *Memorizing Rome*. Skylight Theatre - an INKubator reading of *Ghost-s, a Musical About a Musical*, book by Kincaid Jones, music by Brian Woodbury, as well as an extended run of Meryl Cohn's comedy *Reasons to Live*. In addition, Susan directed *Happy Days, a New Musical*, for Cabrillo Music Theatre. She co-authored and directed *18 Minutes of Fame: A Musical Journey with Barbara Minkus*, which has played in Los Angeles and NYC. Susan works as a consultant show director at Disneyland Parks and Resorts, Anaheim, where she has the privilege of working with Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and all their pals. She has directed numerous Braid salon shows and is especially proud to be its Producing Director, working closely with a tremendous group of brilliant and passionately creative people.

MARIA RAMOS-CHERTOK (Writer) is a writer, workshop leader, and coach who facilitates the Butterfly Series, a writing and creative arts workshop for women who want to explore what's next. Her book, *The Butterfly Series: Fifty-two Weeks of Inquiries for Transformation*, was published in August 2018. She is finalizing her debut novel, *Rosie's Blues*, inspired by the experience of her mother opening their family home

in Hackensack, New Jersey, as a shelter for battered women and children. Maria's manuscript won the 2018 Adult Fiction Mentorship prize from the Word for Diversity. She is a contributor to *All the Women in My Family Sing: Essays on Equality, Justice, and Freedom* (Feb. 2018), edited by Deborah Santana, and *She's Got This! Essays on Standing Strong and Moving On* (Feb. 2019), a Write-on Mamas project. Since 2014, she's cohosted women's salons showcasing women-of-color artists. For more info, visit: mariaramoschertok.com.

LARRY M. SANDERS (Writer) grew up in a small suburb of Detroit. He was raised by his mother, a single parent, and his grandmother "Big Ma," a Choctaw Indian to whom he credits his love of learning and reading. He is a twice graduate of the University of Michigan and, before retiring in 2016, had a forty-year career in public service, providing planning and evaluation services to federal, state, and nonprofit social service agencies across the country. He converted to Judaism in 2011 on MLK Day after several years of studying Jewish history, culture, and thought. He lives in San Francisco with his best friend of 28 years, who also happens to be his husband. He spends his days reading, traveling, cooking, arranging flowers, and tending his orchids.

DAPHNA SHULL (Creative Associate) is a four-time NEXT Arts Council Fellow, literary manager, writer, artist and photographer born and raised in Tampa, Florida. Daphna has been featured as a writer, songwriter and visual artist in multiple Braid productions and her book, *The Quiet Things*, is for sale on Amazon. Along with working at The Braid, Daphna is a teaching artist at Cayton Children's Museum and runs her own photography business, Happy Life Kids Photography. www.happylifekidsphotography.com.

JOSHUA SILVERSTEIN (Actor/Writer) is an award-winning actor, comic, writer, beatboxer, and educator whose performances and productions throughout the country have prompted admiration from creative greats ranging from Norman Lear to Prince. For more than 20 years, Joshua has provided and facilitated theater, improvisation, and spoken-word workshops and in-school residencies designed to create a safe and open space for students of all ages to experience the freedom of creative expression. Joshua brings passion, play, and persuasion to make words, thinking, and expression infectiously fun. He served as the cohost and coproducer of Emmy Award-winning *Downbeat 720* for 19 years and currently cohosts *The Silversteins' Show*, a daily news program and podcast providing levity and context to current events with his life partner Cinthya Guillen.

RONDA SPINAK (Producer/Artistic Director) created The Braid's Salon Theatre Series and since has curated and produced more than 65 original Jewish-themed salon shows, as well as adapted many of the pieces performed. Spinak developed and produced Ovation-recommended *Not That Jewish* at The Braid, which ran for 16 months, garnered an LA Drama Critics Circle nomination, and then moved to off-Broadway. She also produced Rain Pryor's hit show *Fried Chicken & Latkes* and Vicki Juditz's Ovation-recommended *Sacred Resistance*. Spinak co-wrote *Stories from the Fringe*, putting the stories of women rabbis on stage for the first time. Since then, she and her team have interviewed on videotape 180 national and international women rabbis, and in partnership with Jewish Women's Archive have made many of the interviews available online at www.jwa.org. She has written for *Rugrats*, and her plays include *Oscar Wilde's Wife*, a favorite at the Ashland New Play Festival. She is on the board of the Alliance for Jewish Theatres and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. She feels blessed to be working with so many creative people who give their hearts and souls to The Braid.

SUSIE YURÉ (Associate Producer/Director of Community Engagement) has proudly worked with The Braid for eleven years. She has volunteered in nonprofit organizations in which she has held leadership roles in fundraising, event planning, facilities coordinating, programming, membership, marketing, and administration. Susie has produced musical theatre productions, classical concerts, and cabaret performances. She holds a BA and MA in elementary education from USC (where she met her husband), along with her California lifetime teaching credential. Her favorite role is as mom to her two children and grammy to three grandchildren.

ROSE ZIFF (Associate Producer/Special Projects Manager) came out of retirement to work for The Braid after working at UCLA Medical Center for 33 years, where she functioned as “den mother” to more than 1000 interns, residents, and clinical fellows at UCLA, the VA, and Olive View-UCLA Medical Centers, providing resources and support. Rose is currently serving on the Board of Directors for Lev Eisha, a Jewish women's non-profit religious organization and spiritual community. Her hobbies include baking, gardening, visiting Providence St. John’s Hospital with her therapy dog, and hosting a monthly book club.

The Go-To Jewish Story Company

THE BRAID creates legacy by inspiring Jewish stories that connect us all. As the go-to Jewish story company that pioneered a new art form called *Salon Theatre*, we give voice to diverse contemporary stories grounded in Jewish culture and experience that can be performed anywhere. Since 2008, our growing collection of 65 original salon theatre shows have illuminated varied themes like forgiveness, food, family, and freedom. Seminal shows newly spotlight women rabbis, Persian, Latinx, and Russian Jews, and Jews of Color. We also commissioned and produced Ovation-recommended *Not That Jewish*, by Emmy award-winning Monica Piper, which ran more than 16 months in LA and then off-Broadway. Other hit shows include Rain Pryor’s *Fried Chicken & Latkes* and Vicki Juditz’s Ovation-recommended *Sacred Resistance*. We ensure the next generation has an artistic platform and community to explore and celebrate Jewish cultural heritage through our NEXT Emerging Artists program. The Braid tours across the country and is accessible globally via Zoom performances, our podcast *AudioNosh*, streaming on ChaiFlicks, and other online platforms.

Visit us at The-Braid.org.



THE BRAID/JEWISH WOMEN'S THEATRE WAS VOTED FIVE YEARS RUNNING "ONE OF THE BEST LIVE THEATERS ON THE WESTSIDE OF LOS ANGELES" AND VOTED SANTA MONICA'S "MOST LOVED" PERFORMANCE VENUE.

The Braid/JWT mailing address: 3435 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 107-85, Santa Monica, CA 90405 **www.The-Braid.org**

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