



Flat Earth Theatre

S I L E N T / S K Y

BY LAUREN GUNDERSON

Electronic Press Kit

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Flat Earth Theatre Presents Melodious Historical Drama Steeped in Boston History
SILENT SKY

WHAT

Flat Earth Theatre presents historical drama about real-life Cambridge scientists Henrietta Leavitt, Williamina Fleming, and Annie Jump Cannon who worked at the Harvard Observatory in the early 20th century to map the stars, paving the way for modern astronomy in Lauren Gunderson's melodious ***SILENT SKY***.

WHEN

THREE WEEKS ONLY: Friday, March 10th @ 8pm; Saturday, March 11th @ 8pm; Sunday, March 12th @ 2pm; Friday, March 17th @ 8pm; Saturday, March 18th @ 8pm; Sunday, March 19th @ 2pm; Monday, March 20th @ 7:30pm; Thursday, March 23rd @ 8pm; Friday, March 24th @ 8pm; and Saturday, March 25th @ 8pm

WHERE

The Mosesian Center for the Arts
(formerly The Arsenal Center for the Arts)
321 Arsenal Street, Watertown, MA, 02472

TICKETS

\$25; \$10 student rush

<http://flatearth.ticketleap.com/silentsky/>

PRESS NIGHT

Sunday, March 12th @ 2pm

FOR PRESS TICKETS

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WATERTOWN, MA (January 31, 2017) – This March, Flat Earth Theatre smashes the glass ceiling and expands the universe with the melodious, evocative ***SILENT SKY*** by Lauren Gunderson, the most popular living playwright of 2016. ***SILENT SKY*** will run March 10th – 25th at the Mosesian Center for the Arts (formerly known as the Arsenal Center for the Arts), 321 Arsenal Street in Watertown, MA. Tickets can be purchased at <https://flatearth.ticketleap.com/silent-sky/> for \$25 in advance or at the door, or \$10 student rush.

Exploding preconceptions of gender, family, and our very universe, ***SILENT SKY*** tells the story of real-life Cambridge astronomer Henrietta Leavitt and her female colleagues at the Harvard Observatory. Like the women in 2016's box office smash *Hidden Figures*, the "Harvard Computers" use math and measurement to chart the heavens without being allowed to touch a telescope, a task prohibited to women at the turn of the 20th century. Leavitt studies celestial bodies just out of reach while balancing the needs of love and family close at hand, and ultimately discovers the method to measure the distances of faraway galaxies, paving the way for modern astronomy.

"***SILENT SKY*** tackles issues such as women not being seen as equals in the workplace, choosing between love and work, and science versus religion," says director Dori A. Robinson, who serves as Stoneham Theatre's Director of Education. "Although it takes place between 1900–1920, the play resonates easily with us today,"

At this critical moment for the arts, the country, and the world, Flat Earth Theatre believes in the power of representation in theatre, and is proud to produce a play featuring a majority female cast and written by a female playwright. “Not only is gender parity a timely issue both nationwide and here in Boston, these particular women were extraordinary,” adds director Robinson. “Despite their work ethic, brilliant minds, and concrete discoveries, they could not break the glass ceiling. If ever there was a time to tell their stories, it’s now.”

SILENT SKY kicks off Flat Earth’s 2016–17 season, “The Underside Exposed,” featuring true-to-life accounts that reveal the darker truths in society, past and present. These productions defiantly expose the prejudice and corruption buried in human nature, addressing potent themes from gender equality at the turn of the century in the March 2017 production of **SILENT SKY**, to the effects of body image standards on individuals of all types in June 2017’s *FAT PIG*. **SILENT SKY** is supported in part by a grant from the Watertown Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

STAFF & CAST

Helmed by Director Dori A. Robinson, Stoneham Theatre’s Director of Education, **SILENT SKY**’s design team includes Debra Reich (Set Design), Cara Chiamonte (Costume Design), PJ Strachman (Lighting Design), E. Rosser (Props Design), and Kyle Lampe (Sound Design). The Producer is Caitlin Mason, the Stage Manager is Amy Lehrmitt, the Technical Director is Leigh Downes, the Dialect Coach is Lizzie Milanovich, and the Dramaturgs are Joshua Platt and Elizabeth Singer Goldman. The cast features Erin Eva Butcher as Henrietta Leavitt, Brenna Sweet as Margaret Leavitt, Marcus Hunter as Peter Shaw, Juliet Bowler as Williamina Fleming, and Cassandra Meyer as Annie Cannon.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Lauren M. Gunderson is the most produced living playwright in America of 2016, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s 3-Year Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU’s Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her work has been commissioned, produced and developed at companies across the US including South Coast Rep (*Emilie, Silent Sky*), The Kennedy Center (*The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful And Her Dog!*), The O’Neill, The Denver Center, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre, Synchronicity, Olney Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Shotgun Players, TheatreWorks, Crowded Fire and more. She co-authored *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* with Margot Melcon. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You, Exit Pursued By A Bear, The Taming, and Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists (*Silent Sky, Bauer, Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* will be released from Two Lions / Amazon in May 2017. LaurenGunderson.com and [@LalaTellsAStory](https://www.instagram.com/LalaTellsAStory).

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Dori A. Robinson is an educator, director, dramaturg and playwright. Dori holds a Masters from New York University’s Educational Theatre program, having focused on applied theatre, devised work with youth, and Shakespeare. Dori has worked at the New Victory Theatre, Steppenwolf, the Park Avenue Armory, the Theatre Development Fund, Trusty Sidekick, Timeline Theatre, Shattered Globe, the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies, and the New York Student Shakespeare Festival. Directing credits include: *The Merchant of Venice, Die Kleinen, The Lion in Winter, Extremities, Picnic, Into the Woods, The Pajama Game, Flight, and James and the Giant Peach* (2016). Assistant Director credits include: *Meet John Doe, Judgement at Nuremberg, The Chosen, Love’s Labour’s Lost, and The Three Sisters*. Dramaturgy: *Christmas on the Air* (Stoneham Theatre), *A Season in the Congo* (Timeline Theatre), *Macbeth* (Looking for Shakespeare, NYU). Eleven of Dori’s original plays have been produced in New York, Chicago, and Boston, including: *The Great Harvest, The Principal Stream, Name of a Woman, and Six Wings to One*.

About the Cast

Erin Eva Butcher – Henrietta Swan Leavitt

Erin returns to Flat Earth after her role as Grace Fryer in *Radium Girls*. Other credits include: *Sense and Sensibility* (Maiden Phoenix Theatre Company), *Greek* (Boston Lyric Opera), *Kerplop!*, *Lover's Quarrels*, *Hairy Tales* (imaginary beats), *Hookman* (Company One), *Uncle Vanya* (Apollinaire Theatre Company). Erin is the founder and Artistic Director of Maiden Phoenix Theatre Company, a Boston-based theatre company committed to telling stories about women, a professional costume stitcher/first hand by day, and a Renaissance woman who is thrilled to add Astronomy to her list of pursuits.

Brenna Sweet – Margaret Leavitt

Brenna is a Boston-based actor. Recently she has been seen in The Boston Theatre Marathon (*I Don't Know*, Company One), as July (*Doris and Cleveland*, Dixon Place, NY), as Emily (*Rabbit*, Hot Summers Productions), and as Vera (*In the Wake of the Graybow Riots*, Sleeping Weazel). She is also an Actor/ Facilitator for True to Life Training, touring camps, colleges, and Universities teaching communication skills. She graduated from Emerson College with a BFA in acting.

Marcus Hunter – Peter Shaw

Recent credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher* with Cape Repertory Theatre, *From The Sea to Somewhere Else*, which will be opening on the New York Fringe in summer 2017, and *Richard III* at the Grahamstown Theatre Festival in South Africa. He is a proudly sodden member of the ensemble of Sh!tfaced Shakespeare.

Juliet Bowler – Williamina Fleming

Favorite stage credits include *Leontes* in the IRNE-Nominated *Winter's Tale*, *Tupolski* in the award-winning *The Pillowman*, *Our Miss Brooks*, *Rocket Man*, *Fishnet-Networks.Net*, and *Bully Dance*. Film credits include *Clear History*, *That's My Boy*, and *Candy from Strangers*. Juliet is also an improviser and professional voice artist, serving as the voice of United Way Massachusetts, Dental Relaxation and Keep Local Farms. She's lent her voice to a variety of narrative pieces, from the acclaimed PBS documentary *Hidden Warriors*, to the animated short *Kiss Me Quick*, along with a variety of serialized dramas and videogames.

Cassandra Meyer – Annie Cannon

Cassandra received her BA in performance from Northeastern University and has also studied at the Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin, Ireland. Previous credits include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Arts After Hours), *A Southern Victory* (Vagabond Theater Group), *The Winter's Tale* (Maiden Phoenix), *Henry V* (Arts After Hours), *Enigma Variations* (Flat Earth Theatre), *Burning Up The Dictionary* (Vagabond Theatre Group), *Twelfth Night* (Arts After Hours), *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (Happy Medium Theater Company), *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* (Winthrop Playmakers) and the film *Ascendants* (Charles River Media Group).

About the Staff

Cara Chiaramonte – Costume Designer

Cara is a visual artist and designer with a propensity for bright colors and weird, wordy theater. She escaped Bennington College's theater program, and has been working in the Boston scene since 2007. Outside credits include *The Aurora Project* (Science Fiction Theatre Company), *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (Bad Habit), *Paper City Phoenix* (Boston Actors Theater), *Lebensraum* (Hub Theatre), *As You Like It*, *Dracula*, and *The Winter's Tale* (Theatre@First), *Human Contact* and *2010: Our Hideous Future: The Musical!* (Unreliable Narrator). See more of her work at <http://carachiaramonte.com>.

Leigh Downes – Tech Director

Leigh graduated from the RIT in 2009 with a BSEE-Tech and returned to Watertown to work as an AV Engineer. He's an alum of the Watertown Children's Theatre, WHS Drama Club, former RIT Players' President and treasurer, and advocate of deaf theater at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at RIT. He has been working tech for live music, theater, and dance for over fifteen years, specializing in sound systems and set construction. He has been the Technical Director, Set Builder, and electrician for almost all of Flat Earth's productions, helping bring the cast and audience to a distant moon (*On This Moon*), a musical pirate ship (*Pirate Lives!*), a dusty attic starscape (*Rocket Man*), the icy southern pole (*Terra Nova*), and further.

Kyle Lampe – Sound Designer

Kyle has been designing sound waves for theater since his tenure as a student at UMass Amherst. After interning at the Huntington Theatre Company, he has worked on many Boston shows such as “Art” by the Hub Theatre Company, *Planet of the Warrior Bunnies* by Unreliable Narrator, and Flat Earth’s *Lovecraft’s Tales Outside Time and Space*.

Amy Lehrmitt – Stage Manager

Amy has been a member of Flat Earth since 2009, stage managed many Flat Earth productions, produced *The Pillowman*, *Rocket Man*, and *Tales of a Fourth Grade Lesbo*, and penned the radio adaptations *Lovecraft’s Unnamable Tales* and *Lovecraft’s Tales Outside Time & Space*. Her adaptation of “The Masque of the Red Death” was performed with the Post-Meridian Radio Players in *Tomes of Terror: Nevermore*. This June, she’ll be producing Neil LaBute’s controversial *Fat Pig*, so keep an ear out! Ames resides in Medford with her boyfriend / company founder Jake and two cats named Jim.

Caitlin Mason – Producer

Caitlin is thrilled to be producing her second show with Flat Earth! Caitlin has been an area stage manager since 2011, and has worked on nine Flat Earth productions, in varying roles, since 2013. She looks forward to working on her tenth Flat Earth production later this year, when she’ll be working as Assistant Director AND Sound Design on Neil LaBute’s *Fat Pig*. Caitlin is a Company Member of Flat Earth Theatre, and is the Artistic Director of the Post-Meridian Radio Players (pmrp.org).

Debra Reich – Scenic Designer

Debra is happy to be working on her fifth Flat Earth Theatre project. She designed sets for *Blinders*, *Radium Girls*, *Rocket Man*, and *Pirate Lives! The Musical!* As always, it is a privilege to be involved with such a professional and talented group of people.

E. Rosser – Props Designer

E. moonlights as a freelance designer in the Boston theater scene, saving daytime for mundane things like engineering and science writing. She’s thrilled to be back with Flat Earth! Among her favorite creations are 8-foot-tall giraffe puppets, hospital gowns (think “evening,” not “surgical”), rococo zombies, drag queen metamorphoses, and various bits of steampunkery. See more of her work at machinationsbyrosser.weebly.com!

Dori A. Robinson – Director

Dori is an educator, director, dramaturg and playwright. She holds a Masters from New York University’s Educational Theatre program, having focused on applied theatre, devised work with youth, and Shakespeare. Dori has worked at the New Victory Theatre, Steppenwolf, the Park Avenue Armory, the Theatre Development Fund, Trusty Sidekick, Timeline Theatre, Shattered Globe, the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies, and the New York Student Shakespeare Festival. Directing credits include: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Die Kleinen*, *The Lion in Winter*, *Extremities*, *Picnic*, *Into the Woods*, *The Pajama Game*, *Flight*, and *James and the Giant Peach* (2016). Assistant Director credits include: *Meet John Doe*, *Judgement at Nuremberg*, *The Chosen*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and *The Three Sisters*. Dramaturgy: *Christmas on the Air* (Stoneham Theatre), *A Season in the Congo* (Timeline Theatre), *Macbeth* (Looking for Shakespeare, NYU). Eleven of Dori’s original plays have been produced in New York, Chicago, and Boston, including: *The Great Harvest*, *The Principal Stream*, *Name of a Woman*, and *Six Wings to One*. Special thanks to the entire Flat Earth Team.

PJ Strachman – Lighting Designer

PJ has recently designed *Bad Habit’s How Soft the Lining*, *A Man of No Importance*, *Speech and Debate*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Goat or, Who Is Sylvia*, *Orlando*, *Translations*, and *Top Girls*, Gloucester Stage Company’s *Every Christmas Story Ever Told* and *Dueling Divas*, *Unreliable Narrator’s Ultimate Things*, *Wax Wings’ The Man from Willow’s Brook*, Kevin Cirone’s *Creative License*, *Whistler in the Dark’s After-Dinner Joke*, *Our Country’s Good*, *Vinegar Tom*, *Ted Hughes’ Tales from Ovid*, and *Dogg’s Hamlet*, *Cahoot’s Macbeth* (Hubby Award, Best Design), F.U.D.G.E.’s *Merrily We Roll Along*, *City of Angels*, *Jack the Ripper*, *Assassins*, and *Spring Awakening* (IRNE nomination, Best Lighting), *Blue Spruce’s Faerie Tales*, *Once on This Island* (BroadwayWorld.com winner, Best Lighting Design) and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, imaginary beasts’ *Macbeth*, and many other area shows. She is the regular designer for Gann Academy and Stonehill College, including two ACTF regional selections. Her next project is *The Real Inspector Hound* and *Play On!* by Bad Habit Productions at the Boston Center for the Arts. Photos of her work can be seen at www.pjelex.com.

About the Playwright

Lauren M. Gunderson is the most produced living playwright in America of 2016, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John

Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s 3-Year Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU’s Tisch

School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her work has been commissioned, produced and developed at companies across the US including South Coast Rep (*Emilie*, *Silent Sky*), The Kennedy Center (*The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful And Her Dog!*), The O'Neill, The Denver Center, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre, Synchronicity, Olney Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Shotgun Players, TheatreWorks, Crowded Fire and more.

She co-authored *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* with Margot Melcon. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*, *Exit Pursued By A Bear*, *The Taming*, and *Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists (*Silent Sky*, *Bauer*, *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* will be released from Two Lions / Amazon in May 2017. LaurenGunderson.com and [@LalaTellsAStory](https://www.instagram.com/LalaTellsAStory).

About Flat Earth Theatre

Mission Statement

Flat Earth Theatre *crafts experiences that challenge the worldview of both artist and audience. Through evocative, intimate staging and visceral, intelligent performances, we inspire the community to question their preconceived notions and expand their perspective. We stage productions of neglected and underperformed scripts, as well as new and in-development pieces, and conceive unique takes on more conventional works. Flat Earth Theatre thrives in its egalitarian approach, engaging the diverse ideas and skills of its company members and collaborators to create thought-provoking theatre that informs and entertains.*

History

Flat Earth Theatre was established in the summer of 2006 by Kevin Mullins and Jake Scaltreto, long-time friends from Watertown seeking a creative outlet. Now in its eleventh season, Flat Earth has grown to eighteen members and established itself as a distinctive voice in Boston theatre. Over the years, the goal organically emerged to focus on challenging audiences to question their preconceived notions about the world. The company focuses on intellectual themes – often scientific, literary, or historical – as well as topical issues that explore elements of society that inspire thought and discussion.

Flat Earth has no Artistic Director. Rather, all decisions from season selection down are made by company consensus. Each member contributes their own talent and perspective to shape the identity of the company. Flat Earth functions as an egalitarian community of artists, a consortium of creative minds brought together in the pursuit of great theatre.

Featured productions include the award-winning staging of *The Pillowman* with the IRNE-nominated shadow puppetry of Woellert&Clark, the dimension-traveling production of *Rocket Man*, MyTheatre Awards favorite *Terra Nova*, and the IRNE Awards–sweeping *The Farnsworth Invention*.

Our Theatre C.R.E.D.

Collaborative – As an egalitarian company, collaboration among production teams and company members is at the core of decision making. All planning starts with discussion in which every member has equal opportunity to express their opinion and be part of the conversation, and all resolutions are determined through the accord of those involved. Flat Earth Theatre's objective is that everyone has ownership of the outcome, whether that be in how a show looks, what plays are selected, or how the company is run.

Resourceful – Flat Earth showcases creative approaches to complex theatrical matters, onstage and off. We create productions of formidable quality, but remain budget conscious by pushing our artists to think outside the box, embrace their inventiveness, and be truly original in their work.

Evocative – Through our productions and other interactions, Flat Earth Theatre strives to challenge both audience member and artist to reassess what they know about the world around them. Unfamiliar themes and little-known stories awaken an interest in our audience to learn more and discuss with others, and they leave the theatre transformed by what they have just experienced.

Daring – Flat Earth's risk-taking style pushes us in unexpected directions, enabling us to craft theatrical works with an approach unique to our company. Our ambitious choices push us into new, exciting territory and give audiences an experience not often seen on Boston stages.

Engaging The Community

For *Silent Sky*, a play so entrenched in local history, it was clear we needed to involve the community as much as possible as we told the story of these extraordinary women.

Throughout the process, Flat Earth Theatre worked especially closely with the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and the historic Harvard College Observatory, where much of *Silent Sky* takes place, and extended our collaboration with playwright Lauren Gunderson to further foreground conversations about gender parity, representation, and feminism.

Post-Show Discussions with New York Times Best-Selling Author Dava Sobel and the Harvard Center for Astrophysics' Curator of Astronomical Photographs Lindsay Smith

Flat Earth Theatre considers it essential to contextualize an historically based work such as *Silent Sky* with real information about the actual people depicted (realistically or less so) on stage.

Lindsay Smith, Curator of Astronomical Photographs at the Harvard College Observatory, not only grounded cast members in the lived experiences of the original "Harvard Computers" with a guided tour of the observatory where they worked and opportunities to handle the actual glass photographic star plates and logbooks, but also brings her expertise to the theater for two post-show talkbacks, giving audience members a broader glimpse into the groundbreaking work of these female scientists.

For one talkback, she is joined by acclaimed science writer Dava Sobel, *New York Times* Best-Selling author of *The Glass Universe: How the Ladies of the Harvard Observatory Took the Measure of the Stars*, a new book telling the story of the women who worked at the Harvard College Observatory from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s, including the women depicted in *Silent Sky*.

The Taming: A Free Staged Reading, Lauren Gunderson's "Inauguration Day Project"

The beginning of 2017 has seen multiple collaborations between Flat Earth Theatre and *Silent Sky* playwright Lauren Gunderson, the most produced living playwright of 2016.

Leading up to the inauguration of America's 45th president, Gunderson spearheaded a national initiative to present staged readings of her feminist political farce *The Taming*, intending to incite community discussion about democratic participation, the challenges women face in the political sphere, and ways to bridge our deeply divided nation.

On January 20th, Flat Earth Theatre proudly joined more than 40 theatre companies nationwide to present a free staged reading

of *The Taming*, representing the Boston Theatre Community on the national stage.

Flat Earth's reading took place at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Watertown, MA, featured Kiki Samko, Marty Seeger Mason, and Cassandra Meyer (*Silent Sky*'s Annie Cannon), and was directed by Flat Earth Company Member Juliet Bowler (*Silent Sky*'s Williamina Fleming). Donations were collected to benefit BAGLY, the Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth.

The Where Are We? Blog Project

To further engage our audience on the issues inherent in *Silent Sky*, Flat Earth Theatre developed a community blog consisting of contributions by female scientists, artists, thinkers, and dreamers all answering the question "where are we?" which Henrietta poses in the play.

Among those featured were Robin Abrahams, aka The Boston Globe's "Miss Conduct," Christine Banna, a local artist with astronomy-themed animation on the Boston Convention Center's marquee, and *Silent Sky* director Dori Robinson, who also serves as Stoneham Theatre's Director of Education.

The full blog may be viewed at whereareweproject.tumblr.com.



Flat Earth Theatre Presents

June 2017

Fat Pig

A Play By

**Neil
LaBute**

presented

JUNE

9TH-24TH
2017

*tickets
& info* ↘

**MOSESIAN
CENTER
FOR THE
ARTS**
**321 ARSENAL ST
WATERTOWN**

FlatEarthTheatre.com