

Layer the Walls tour was made possible by
The Levinson Family &



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Grand Pistachio creates original theater for young people utilizing larger than life forms of puppetry, mask, and music. Our mission is to engage audience empathy and open new ways for young people to view each other, the world, and their role in it. We achieve this by highlighting the stories of people who might not be in the history books or cultural records - as these stories help young audiences build empathy, see resiliency in action, and provide a broader sense of the world and how their own stories fit into that history. Through that lens we explore the hardships of Lower East Side immigrant families in *Layer the Walls Part I and Part II*, the untapped poetic potential within ourselves in *Blown Away By Poetry*, and the dangers of sanitation workers in *City of Trash*.

Our work has been performed at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Zeiterion Theater, Hudson Hall, New York Public Libraries, The Arsht Center. *Layer the Walls* was developed in support from the New Victory Theater's LabWorks program, The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Jim Henson Foundation, and ART New York. Our work was turned into a series of nine virtual programs with commissions from The Walton Arts Center, The Grunin Center for Performing Arts, Poway on Stage, Midwest Trust Center and the Brooklyn Arts Council. We reach +10,000 young people annually in person and our virtual programs have connected to over 30,000 students.

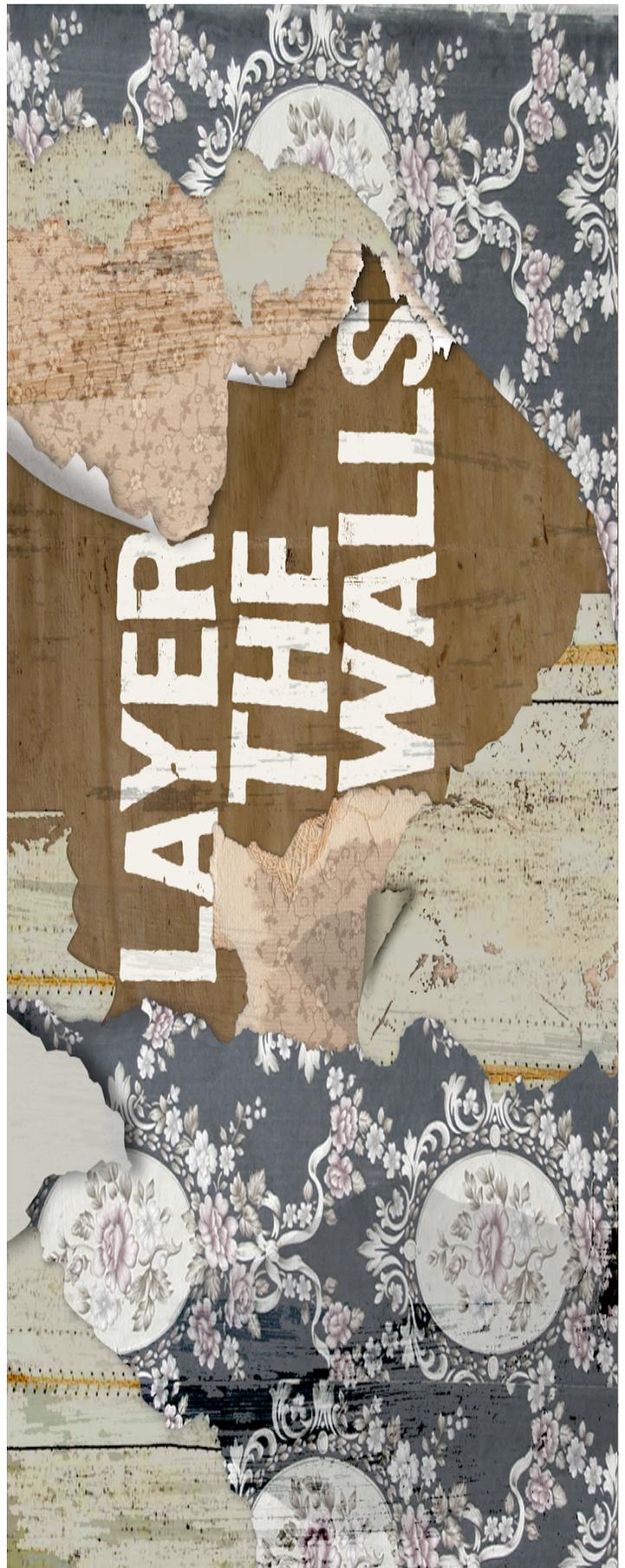
Grand Pistachio Board of Directors

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Special Note

While visiting NYC's Tenement Museum, we learned that forty layers of wallpaper were found on the walls of an old apartment. Each piece had been applied by a new immigrant family in an attempt to make the space their own -- every layer filled with hopes, dreams, and incredible stories of survival. We created *Layer the Walls* to honor these residents and showcase how they shaped the NYC we know today.

We believe investigation into stories of the past will illuminate the larger struggles of immigration that have shaped and continue to influence our country today..

Enjoy the show!

Cast

Puppeteers/Performers: Rachel Sullivan, Liz Parker

Understudies: Zahydé Pietri, Jerry Soto

Artistic & Production Team

Created by: Rachel Sullivan, Liz Parker

Director: Elise Thoron

Production Stage Manager: Andrew Wang

Puppetry & Mask Design by Spica Wobbe

Original Music by Vlada Yaneva

Set Design by Peiyi Wong

Lighting Design by Sarah Johnston

Sound Design by Elia Chuaqui and Caroline Eng

Costume Design by Cat Fisher

Props by Sonya Plenefisch

Scenic Build: August Hunt

Audience Development: Jay Isaacs

Cast, Creative Team & Crew Bios

Rachel Sullivan (Producer, Writer, Performer): At Grand Pistachio, Rachel serves as Executive & Co-Creative Director and is currently developing the company's next production, *City of Trash*, a puppet piece that explores the history and realities of sanitation and waste, for which she received a NYSCA individual artist fellowship. With Zoellner Arts Center, she recently created an in-school Sanitation and Arts focused residency to and is having a ball digging through the layers of trash!

Rachel first began creating for family audiences while serving as Program Director of Urban Stages' outreach department, where she performed regularly at over 80 NYC public libraries and managed the touring roster. Since 2011, Rachel and Liz Parker have been collaborating and touring their work, and having countless adventures along the way! Previously Rachel co-founded Honest Accomplice Theater and directed several productions which toured to college campuses. She also wrote and directed a video on gender for the NYC Commission on Human Rights' groundbreaking sexual harassment training module that is being utilized across NYC and California. Rachel has taught devising at Brandeis University. MA in Applied Theater: CUNY/SPS, BS in Theater: Northwestern University.

Liz Parker (Writer/Performer): founded Grand Pistachio with Rachel, co-writing and performing *Layer the Walls*. She has also traveled the country as an actor with a one person stage performance of Lois Lowry's 'The Giver' adapted by Elise Thoron. She has performed with Spica Wobbe's puppet company Double Image Theater Company at the La Mama Puppet Festival. Liz has a Master's Degree in Applied Theater and over a decade of experience as a teaching artist. She has taught, directed and performed in public schools, libraries, prisons, trauma-informed institutions, museums, summer camps and senior centers throughout the five boroughs. Liz has worked for Lincoln Center Theater, The New Victory Theater, The Museum of the City of New York, The Child Abuse Prevention Program, New York City Children's Theater, viBe Theater Experience and Young Audiences New York.

Zahydé Pietri (Understudy) is a born and raised Puerto Rican actress, artist, and teaching artist based in New York City. Along with Amy Shoshana Blumberg and Kate St. John, she is Co-Producing Artistic Director of *the after-image*, an experimental movement-theater company. Most recently she has been onstage as an actor in *the after-image*'s productions *Let's Exorcise! A Community Catharty Party* and *House of American Activities*, and as an actor and puppeteer in *Grand Pistachio*'s *Layer the Walls II*. Her sculpture and photography collaboration with photographer Emily Dryden, *Fresh Faces*, has been exhibited in Paris, Taiwan and NYC. She used to fight with herself weekly as the sole voice of WWE's Female Division in Spanish on WWE's RAW and SmackDown. She has a BA in Drama from the University of Puerto Rico and has trained and been onstage in Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Perú and NYC.

She's a loving parent to Chaplin (her pup, not the acclaimed silent actor and filmmaker), and Greta Carbo (her sourdough starter, not to be confused with the legendary silent era actress Greta Garbo).

Jerry Soto (Understudy) is an Actor, Voice Over Artist, Singer and Guitarist. He grew up in Yauco, Puerto Rico, started his acting career at the University of Puerto Rico, and trained with the prestigious theater groups Malayerba (Ecuador) and Yuyachkani (Peru). He has been onstage in New York, Washington, DC, Fayetteville, AR, Perú, Ecuador and Spain. In Spain he performed in the prestigious Festival de Teatro Clásico de Almagro (Spanish Golden Age Theater Festival of Almagro). In New York City his theater work has been recognized with various awards including HOLA, ACE and ATI. He has worked on numerous occasions with Repertorio Español including plays such as *La Nena se Casa*, *La Zapatera Prodigiosa* and *En el nombre de Salomé* for which he received an ACE Award for Best Supporting Actor and an HOLA Award for Best Ensemble. He also received an ATI Award for Best Actor for his work as Don Juan in the *El Burlador de Sevilla* production by Teatro Círculo. In Puerto Rico, he did a TV Show called *Noticreo* that won the 2008 Latin Emmy: Best Magazine. Look for the song *Brave One* by Carmen Borla, the guitars you hear, yeah, Jerry played that! He just loves his performance based life that includes his work as Commentator and TV Host for the most famous and important professional wrestling company in the world, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE).

Peiyi Wong (Set Designer) is a Los Angeles and New York-based scenographer and interdisciplinary artist. She holds an MFA in Scenic Design and Integrated Media from the California Institute of the Arts. Peiyi received her BA in Literature and Visual Arts from Columbia University. Her theater work has been shown at REDCAT, Automata, HERE Arts Center, P.S. 122, The Ontological-Hysteric Theater, The Chocolate Factory, Access Theater Gallery, The Brick, The Prague Quadrennial, and multiple other venues and institutions in New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, New Orleans, Indianapolis, and Mount Desert Island, ME. Film design work and art direction has been or is due to be screened at Tribeca, Toronto, and Asian-American International Film Festivals.

Elise Thoron (Director) plays have been produced in the United States, Europe, Japan, Cuba: *Green Violin*, music by Frank London, (*Nine Contemporary Jewish Plays*);

Prozak and the Platypus, music by Jill Sobule (CD/graphic novella); *Charlotte: Life? Or Theater?* based on paintings by Charlotte Salomon, music by Gary Fagin. *Recycling: washi tales* with Japanese paper artist, Kyoko Ibe, and traditional Japanese musicians. Her Afro-Cuban Yiddish opera *Hatuey: Memory of Fire* with Frank London premiered at Peak Performances, after a first production at Opera de la Calle in Havana. As Associate Artistic Director at American Place Theatre, Elise co-founded *Literature to Life*, a highly successful theater literacy program now in its third decade nationwide. For *Lit to Life* she adapted and directed Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (also at Book-it Theater in Seattle), Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Lowry's *The Giver*, and developed *County of Kings* with Tony award-winning spoken-word poet, Lemon Andersen, which went on to the Public Theater and venues around the world. www.elisethoron.com

Jay Isaacs (Audiences Services Manager) is a New York City-based stage manager, production coordinator and audience services manager. They are an NYC native and have a BS in Psychology & Theater from Union College. Having joined the Grand Pistachio team in 2019 as a touring stage manager for *Layer the Walls*, they have taken a wide variety of roles to keep the shows touring and reaching audiences. They are excited to be building relationships with so many school this year and helping to make the school field trips a success! Selected Stage Manager credits include: *The Tempest* (Saratoga Shakespeare Company), *Chaos Theory* (United Solo), *GIRL* (Winterfest Theater Festival), and the US Open 2020 (USTA World Broadcast). Production coordinator credits: US Open 2022, 2023 (USTA World Broadcast).

Spica Wobbe (Shu-yun Cheng) (Puppetry & Mask Designer) is a puppetry artist originally from Taiwan. Her work has been seen in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Holland, Germany, Israel, Austria and the U.S. Now based in NYC, she works as a puppetry designer, performer and educator. She established Double Image Theater Lab in 2011 to create cross-cultural productions that explore the world of the past and the present. She is a two time recipient of the Jim Henson Foundation grant and is a 2015 Sandglass Theater New Vision Series Resident Artist. Spica was the featured artist in "Shadow, Light... Hide & Seek Exhibit" at WenShand Theater in Taipei in 2015 and "Heaven of Puppets Exhibit" at Taipei Puppet Museum in 2016. Spica co-created *The Memory Project* with Karen Oughtred (2016), storytelling through visual arts,

theater and puppetry for culturally diverse older adults. You can learn more about her work at <http://www.doubleimagertheaterlab.com> and about "The Memory Project": <https://www.facebook.com/thememoryproject.storytelling>

Sarah Johnston (Lighting Designer): Selected credits: *The Brobot Johnson Experience* (The Bushwick Starr); *Squeamish* (Theatre Row); *Speak Up, Rise Up* (The Connelly Theater); *Brobot Johnson* (The Bushwick Starr); *Charleses* (The Brick Theater); *I'm Bleeding All Over the Place* (LaMama - Ellen Stewart Theater); *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (The Night Shift at IRT); *Acappella: The Musical*(NYMF);*Emily Climbs*; *Daredevil* (The Brick Theater); *The Harper's Play* (JACK); *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*; *Happily Ever*; *Miss Julie* (NWT); *The Downtown Loop*(3LD). Associate Lighting Designer: *Moulin Rouge* (Boston Colonial); *Jagged Little Pill* (ART); *Saint Joan* (MTC); *The Little Foxes* (The Samuel Friedman Theater, MTC); *Joan of Arc: Into the Fire* (The Public Theatre); *American Psycho*(Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre); *The Humans* (Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre, Helen Hayes Theatre; Laura Pels Theatre); *Invisible Thread* (2econd Stage);*10 out of 12* (Soho Rep.); *Pretty Filthy* (Abrons Arts Center). Associate Creative Director: Drake. Sarah is a graduate of Brooklyn College. www.sarahjohnstonlighting.com

Caroline Eng (Sound Designer) is a New York-based sound designer and engineer. Selected design credits: *Crowndation: I Will Not Live to David* (National Black Theater), *The Fight* (Storm Theatre Company), and *GYNX* (Thespis Theatre Festival). Upcoming: *Grace, or the Art of Climbing* (Art House Productions) and *The Rainmaker* (Storm Theatre Company). Caroline graduated from Fordham College at Lincoln Center with a BA in English and theatre.

Cat Fisher (Costume Designer) has designed over 100 shows for theater, dance, film, and television, is a 2008 member of the Lincoln Center Director's Lab, a New York State Counsel for the Arts awards recipient for design work at Abrons Arts Center, and has been recognized with an Outstanding Costume award, *Hamlet Bound and Unbound*, 2012 Midtown International Theatre Festival; 2011 Planet Connections Theatre Festival (Costume award, *The God Particle*); and, nominated for best costume in the 2018 London International Film Festival. Her work has been seen at 59E59; NYC Fringe Festival and many NYC Festivals; The

Prague Fringe Festival; The Producer's Club; Riverside Theatre, and is often favorably reviewed. Catherine (Cat) has IMDb credits for both acting and design, and is a founding member of Honest Accomplice Theatre.

Sonya Plenefisch (Props Designer) is a UK trained scenic and props designer & maker based in Brooklyn. In London, they were one of the twelve young up and coming designers whose work was exhibited at the National Theatre for the Linbury Prize for Stage Design 2017. Their most recent NYC productions include *Into the Woods* in Bay Ridge, *The House of Bernarda Alba* at the Gene Frankel Theatre, *Heist!* Off-Broadway at the Players Theatre, *Troilus & Cressida* at Under St. Marks, and *Their Food Tastes Better When They See Us Starving* (or, *Coriolanus*) at the Brick. www.sonyaplentifisch.com

Elia Chuaqui (sound design) is a playwright and sound designer. Select Off-Broadway sound credits: *Numbness* (New Ohio Theatre/One-Eighth Theater), *Dark Eyes* (Cloud of Fools), *48-Hour Forum* (Lark/Noor Theatre), *Cervantes' Entremeses* (INTAR Theatre) (SD). Off-off Broadway: *Assimilation* (New Dramatists), *Dark Vanilla Jungle/Junebug* (The Clemente). Fordham University: *Machinal*, *The Maids*, *Tyler!*, *In the Heart of America*.

Andrew Wang (Production Stage Manager) is a lighting designer and electrician. Recent credits include: *Merely Players* (Baruch PAC); *Newsies* (The Chapin School); *Drive the Speed Limit* (HERE Arts Center); *In Corpo* (Theatre Row); *The SpongeBob Musical* (The Chapin School); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Vineyard Theatre); *Layer the Walls Part II* (14th St Y); *Modern Swimwear* (The Tank); *Blue* (Chelsea Factory). Outside of his work, Andrew enjoys photography and restoring vintage typewriters.

Vlada Yeneva (Composer) Bulgarian pianist and educator Vlada Yaneva has performed throughout the US and Europe. Vlada and her husband, pianist Matthew Harrison, created *Masterwork Conversations*, a lecture-recital series dedicated to creating a more personal relationship with the audience through an open conversation. This is her fourth puppetry play composition engagement. Previous collaboration includes *I Laid an Egg* (Double Image Theater Lab). Check out www.MasterworkConversations.com and www.TrioCabrini.com for more information.