

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE PRESENTS

DIRECTED BY WESLEY LONGACRE
SEPT. 25 – OCT. 6, 2025

MEN ON BOATS

WRITTEN BY

JACLYN BACKHAUS



COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY

SEASON SPONSOR:





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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theatre education program are to identify and promote quality in college level theatre production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theatre department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theatres across the nation.

MEN ON BOATS

BY JACLYN BACKHAUS

DIRECTOR Dr. Wesley Longacre

CO-DIRECTORS Alex Pruitt, Ryan Terry

CO-DIRECTOR AND MOVEMENT DIRECTOR Eliza Domingos

LIGHTING DESIGNER Henry Ledbetter

COSTUME DESIGNER Anna Defrees

SOUND DESIGNER Abby Holm

PROPS DESIGNER Tyler Offner

STAGE MANAGER Rene Padilla

CALLING STAGE MANAGER Joshua Moore

CAST

Char Bokhof Powell

Hannah Bonansinga Hall

Lana Greeness Sumner

Lily Hamilton Hawkins

Anna Higgins Old Shady

Gabi Karl O.G., Johnson

Samantha Neptune Goodman, Mr. Asa

De'Neen Smith Seneca, Just Jim

Kaitlin Thompson-Highsmith Dunn

Carmen Warren Bradley

DRAMATURG NOTE

There is perhaps no place and time in human history as romanticized as the American Wild West. Stories of lone gunslingers, gold rushes, and a vast, unexplored frontier enchanted untold Americans with the idea that they too could overcome the odds and become a pioneer that would go down in history. In our modern era, we are compelled to challenge this notion, as history is never so simple. The ravages of an untamed continent, brutality inflicted on its natives, and the complication of a civil war creates a world far more complex than we may have learned about as children. It's against this backdrop that we find ourselves among 10 men and 4 boats in Green River Station, Wyoming, preparing to embark on one last great expedition of the American frontier.

Men On Boats is the story of the 1869 Powell Geological Expedition, a voyage by boat down the Green and Colorado Rivers into what was the last unexplored region in the continental United States. At the time, these regions had been officially annexed by the American government and dubbed as the Utah and Arizona territories, but no American citizens had managed to explore the area. Americans could only rely on stories told by the tribes that had called those lands home, who spoke of waterfalls taller than Niagra and canyons over a mile deep. To geology Professor John Wesley Powell, this sounded like a challenge.

Powell would go on to assemble a group of 10 men to overcome this impossible task. Recruited by Powell himself, they were comprised of gruff mountain men, disgruntled veterans, foreign thrill seekers, and Powell's shell-shocked older brother. Powell himself came into the expedition severely impaired, as he had lost his right arm during the Civil War. This would compound the issues the men faced as they attempted to overcome the brutal white waters of the Colorado river, a task they were woefully unprepared for. The men were faced with unexpected challenges of terrain as their food supplies dwindled, compounded by the fact that none of them had ridden white water in their lives. As these dangers made themselves clear, an environment of fear and frustration formed, with the potential of death or mutiny always looming. In time, it would become one of the great stories of the old west, but much of that stories' harder truths and lessons would be left behind on the river.

Men On Boats tells the story of what was left behind; in forgotten journal entries and discarded artifacts, we can learn not only the death defying peril these men endured on a day-to-day basis, but the heated arguments and moments of vulnerability that would follow in their nights at camp, wondering if they'd survive the next day. CSU theater invites you to our rendition of Jaclyn Backhaus's stunning rendition of the 1869 voyage, as we're reminded that no matter how great our accomplishments may be, we are and always will be emotional, vulnerable, and human at our core.

— Jacob Maddock

DIRECTOR NOTE

I hope you enjoy seeing this story as much as we have enjoyed the telling of it. The play asks us to question what stories are told, who the storytellers are, and why that is the case. It is an incredibly fun, sometimes irreverent, and often moving tale that takes us down the Colorado River for the “first” time as a government-sanctioned event yet pulls back the curtain on the reality that these figures weren’t truly the first, in any way. Being able to tell *this* story with *this* cast has been an immense privilege, and these are the types of storytellers we desperately need to continue listening to.

— Dr. Wesley Longacre

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

Dr. Wesley Longacre (Director) — Directing *Men on Boats* has been one of the most joy-filled experiences of Wesley’s life. Dr. Longacre received his PhD in Theatre from the University of Colorado-Boulder, completing his dissertation in the spring of 2017. Wesley was named a Richter Scholar at Wake Forest University where he received his MA in English Literature and holds a BA in Journalism and Political Science from Baylor University. He is an active theater scholar and practitioner, having recently directed productions of *Our Town*, *The Normal Heart*, *She Kills Monsters*, *Rabbit Hole*, and *Red*. Wesley has also served as a dramaturg and assistant director for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (*Wittenberg*). He is currently an Instructor of Theatre at Colorado State University and has previously served as an Instructor of Theatre at the University of Colorado and in CSU’s Honors Program. Wesley has previously served as a regular contributor and bibliographer for *The Thornton Wilder Journal* and an editor for *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research*. By far, Wesley’s greatest joy is living life with Amanda and their kids, Davy, Wilder, and Ellis.

Anna DeFrees (Costume Designer)— Anna is a senior costume design major and is super thrilled for *Men on Boats* to be the final show they do for CSU! Their other credits include costume designing *Into the Woods*, directed by Noah Racey, and assistant costume designing *Fairview*, directed by Dr. Ray Black. Anna would like to thank family, both blood and chosen, for always having their back and encouraging them to follow their dreams.

Abby Holm (Sound Designer) — Abby is a junior in theatre with a concentration on Sound Design and she could not be more excited to be working on *Men on Boats*. This is her third show with Colorado State University Theatre, some of her other credits include being the sound designer for *Everybody* (CSU), and microphone manager (A2) for *Paradise Lost* (CSU). She would greatly like to thank her family and friends for being so constantly supportive throughout this process.

Henry Ledbetter (Lighting Designer) — Henry is currently a Senior and is very excited to see his last show as a lighting designer at CSU come to fruition. Some of his past credits include *The Pirates of Penzance* (Lighting Designer), *Everybody* (Associate Lighting), and *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Assistant Lighting). He would like to thank all his family and friends but especially his parents for their support.

Tyler Offner (Props Director) — Tyler is excited to start his path and bring his skills to the table as Properties Director at Colorado State University. Tyler graduated from the University of Northern Colorado in 2017 and the University of North Carolina in 2023 where he studied props, specifically furniture construction. Some of the companies Tyler has had the honor of working for are the Utah Festival of Musical Theatre and Opera, Theatre Aspen, and an entertainment company in LA, MadeFirst. Some of Tylers favorite productions he has worked on are Ragtime, Sweeney Todd, and Jersey Boys. Tyler is enthusiastic to work with the new generation of theatre students and teach them skills that will stay with them for years, but also learn from the students as well, as the world is ever changing.

Rene Padilla (Stage Manager) — Rene is thrilled to be Stage Managing her first production at CSU with *Men on Boats*. She is Theater Major with concentrations in Performance, Stage Management and Lighting Design. She gives thanks to her team, amazing mentor, partners, children and family for their support.

CAST BIOS

Char Bokhof (Powell) — Char is a senior studying performance graduating this semester. Char was most recently featured in *Gamerz* with the On the Brink Company. Char is very excited for this opportunity and would like to thank friends and family for their support, as well as the professors that have supported them through this journey.

Hannah Bonansinga (Hall) — Hannah is delighted to be in her third show at CSU. It has been a great pleasure working with this amazing cast and she would like to thank them immensely for all the laughs and memories made during this show. Thanks also to her parents, grandparents, and siblings for their love. Oars up, oars out!

Lana Greeness (Sumner) — Lana is delighted to return to the CSU stage. As a fourth-year performance major, she is feeling thrilled to perform again. Her previous credits include Smee in *Peter and the Starcatcher* (CSU Theatre), Milky White in *Into the Woods* (CSU Theatre), and being part of the ensemble in *Native Gardens* (Bas Bleu Theatre). Much love and thanks to her dad, for all his incredible support.

Lily Hamilton (Hawkins) — Lily is so excited to be making her CSU debut! She is a Sophomore Musical Theatre major. Her past credits include *Seussical* (Pueblo Summer Musical) and *All Shook Up* (Cañon City High School). She would like to thank her family for supporting her dreams of being an actress and her friends for their love.

Anna Higgins (Old Shady) — Anna is so excited to be a part of this production of *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus and directed by Wesley Longacre. She also performed in Dr. Longacre's production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* as Alf this past spring. She is currently a 4th year pursuing a double major in Musical Theatre and International Studies. Many thanks to her parents and friends for their continuous support and love.

Kaitlin Thompson-Highsmith (Dunn) — Kaitlin is thrilled to be part of her fourth mainstage performance at CSU. Past credits include Satan in *Paradise Lost* the Steward in *Into the Woods* and Mrs. Gibbs in *Our Town*.

Samantha Neptune (Frank Goodman / Mr. Asa) — Samantha is thrilled to be part of another CSU production and to work alongside such wonderful people. She is currently a senior pursuing a double major in Theatre and Accounting. Her previous credits include Somebody in *Everybody* (CSU Theatre), Rebecca in *Our Town* (CSU Theatre), Leanne in *Puffs* (Bear Necessity Theatre), Jasmine in *The Staggering Heartbreak of Jasmine Merriwether* (Bear Necessity Theatre), and The Jester in *Once Upon a Mattress* (Bear Necessity Theatre). She sends her endless love and gratitude to her parents and brothers for their unwavering love, support, and friendship.

De'Neen Smith (Seneca) — De'Neen is excited to be at CSU where she is currently a senior bound theatre performance major. Her past credits include Katherine Johnson in *Hidden Figure*, Laura Wingfield in *Glass Menagerie*, Rosa Lee in *Fences* (Rose Lee), Beverly in *August Osage County* and Esther in *Intimate Apparels*. Outside of school, she has found roles in films, her recent credits include Gino Alfonso in *Closing Shift*, and Vidya Vara in *Heaven Sent*. Thanks to her siblings and friends for their motivation for my career.

Carmen Warren (Bradley) — Carmen is *stoked* to play this specific man on a boat! Her previous credits include Little Red Riding Hood in *Into the Woods*, Judy Bernly in *9 to 5*, and Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*. She wants to thank the directors, stage managers, designers, and her fellow men (who are also on boats!) for making this production a wonderful experience! She hopes that they all enjoy the show, and she also wishes to tell her mother, "Hiiiiiiiiii"

CSU THEATRE PRODUCTION STAFF

PRODUCER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Saffron Henke

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION/TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Steven Workman

COSTUME SHOP MANAGER Elise Kulovany

ASSISTANT COSTUME SHOP MANAGER/CUTTER/DRAPER Rebecca Evans

LIGHTING SUPERVISOR Tate Sanders

PRODUCTION MANAGER Matt Grevan

SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST Karl Hermanson

PROPS DIRECTOR Tyler Offner

SCENE SHOP FOREMAN Johnie Rankin

DRAMATURG Jacob Maddock

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER Valeria Reyes

ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER Margot Chupp

ASSOCIATE SOUND DESIGNER Phoebe Williams

WARDROBE HEAD Anney Wood

HEAD OF HAIR AND MAKE-UP Brianna Wheeler

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS Lauren Gentry, Joshua Moore, Kai Pauer

ELECTRICS SHOP TEAM Sydney Berkland, Ayden Edgar, Ire Green, Soren Holmes,
Vincent Liebchen, Koryn McManus, Even Riffe, Abby Sumner

PAINT SHOP TEAM Anna Dean, Grace Hellman, Alex Holland,
Josie Karat Ainsleigh Lindeman, Julia Slagle

COSTUME SHOP TEAM Kodi Campbell, Rene Padilla, Jenna Reece, Eliana Thomas

SCENIC SHOP TEAM Mackenzie Abbot, Bryce Clampitt, Terran Flynn,
Jessica Hix, Savannah Jackson, Thomas Ray, Nicholas Salzberg, Nadia Shafer,
Eleanora Sunker, Ryan Terry

PROPS TEAM Nick Appl, Molly Arndt, Willow Hanff, Kylie Heimlich, Ren Hirtle,
Jacob Maddock, Phoebe Williams

AUDIO TEAM Sabrina Bland, Char Bokhof, Abby Holm, Joshua Moore, Justin Simental

LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR Elisabeth Bartel

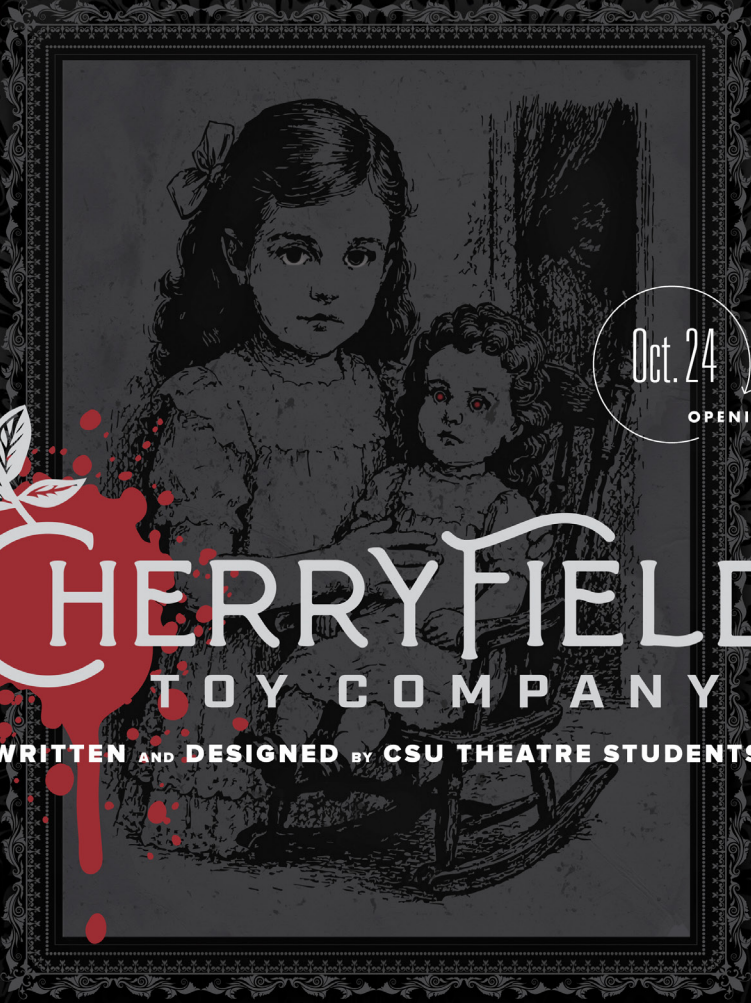
SOUND BOARD OPERATOR Eleanor Long

WARDROBE CREW Vanessa Diaz, Ainsleigh Lindemann

DECK CREW Cameron Aden, Kennedy Ader, Maddie Hallway

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE PRESENTS

An immersive and interactive performance that is part
mystery, part creepy haunted house.



Oct. 24
OPENING



CHERRYFIELD

TOY COMPANY

— WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY CSU THEATRE STUDENTS —

NOTE: THIS IS NOT A TRADITIONAL SEATED PERFORMANCE. THE 50-MINUTE EXPERIENCE
INCLUDES MOVING THROUGH CONFINED SPACES AND IS ADA COMPLIANT.



OCT.
24 through
NOV.
2

THURS 10/29
FRIDAYS
SATURDAYS
AT
7:30h.

MATINEES
10/25, 10/6
AND 11/2
—
2:00h.

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