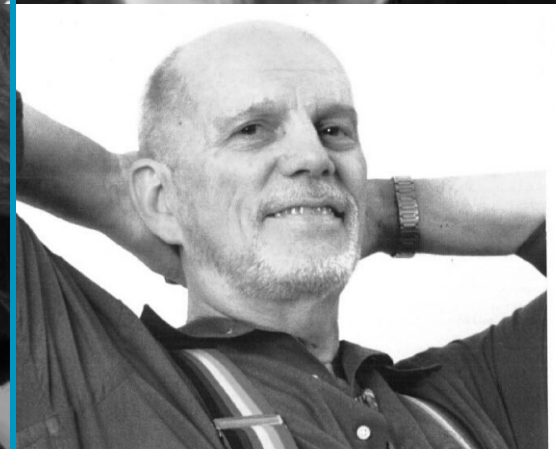




CRISIS COMPETENCE:

Artists of the Performing Arts Legacy Project Reflect on the Pandemic Year

February 22, 2021 | 7:00PM
Held online via Zoom



HB Studio presents

HB Public Conversation
CRISIS COMPETENCE:
Artists of the Performing Arts
Legacy (PAL) Project Reflect on the
Pandemic Year

February 22, 2021

7:00 PM

Moderated by Theresa McElwee

with PAL Artists, from top left:

Virginia Wing

Glenn Kubota

Barbara Kahn

Jasper McGruder

Joan Jeffri, Director

and Bill Koch

Edith Meeks, Executive & Artistic Director

Lauren Ritter, Production Manager

Lorraine de Silva, Zoom Tech



NYC Cultural
Affairs



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"My job is a verb—constantly learning."

—87-year-old actor, NYC, as quoted in Joan Jeffri's study "Still Kicking: Aging Performing Artists in NYC and LA Metro Areas: Information on Artists IV"

Dear Friends,

The title for tonight's conversation came from an item I read a little while back in the New York Times by John Leland which used the term crisis competence to describe the way older adults in New York City are weathering the pandemic year. I thought of the elders on HB's faculty who made the leap of faith to Zoom in March last year, supported by their staff and younger colleagues, and what they have taught us about art and acting by making that adjustment. And I naturally thought of Joan Jeffri, who was first introduced to me through her brilliant study "Still Kicking", about performing artists and longevity. I later had the pleasure of getting to know Joan through her beautiful Performing Arts Legacy project at The Actors Fund's Research Center for Arts and Culture, and HB has been proud to run PAL cohorts of our own with artists working at HB. We invite and encourage you to wander on the PAL site, which will take you on a guided tour of living theater history: performingartslegacy.org.

Joan knows, and what her project to document the lives and longevity of performing artists demonstrates, is that a performing artist leads many lives over the course of their career. For artists the ability to adapt, our resilience and determination, are what define and distinguish us. Artists are not strangers to change, to disruption, to crisis. We learn to live in each moment, and to grasp whatever joy and creative nourishment may be found there.

So we are very honored to welcome this evening representatives of several cohorts of the Performing Arts Legacy Project, to speak with us about their experiences of the pandemic year. We are grateful to Joan for her work, for the spirit and foresight of this project; for bringing these artists together for PAL and for this talk tonight. Big thanks to Theresa McElwee for leading the discussion, and to these beautiful artists for sharing their thoughts and visions with us. Thank you for being here!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edith Meeks', written in a fluid, cursive style.

Edith Meeks
Executive & Artistic Director

The Performing Arts Legacy Project is an online platform to help older professionals in the performing arts to document their careers. It is an initiative of the Research Center for Arts and Culture at The Actors Fund.



Theresa McElwee, Moderator

Theresa currently teaches voice and speech at NYU Tisch School of the Arts and at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. At HB Studio, Theresa has taught Speech 1, Speech 2, Speech 3, Speaking Voice in the Hagen Summer Intensive and Hagen Teacher's Lab, as well as special workshops for the HB community. In private practice, she works with actors, broadcasters, news anchors, and corporate clients. Theresa has taught introductory voice and speech at the New York Conservatory of Dramatic Art, as well as to high school students at the School for Film and Television Summer Program, and South of Broadway Summer Conservatory. Coaching credits include productions at The Signature Theatre, The Abingdon Theatre, NYU's New Studio on Broadway, Boomerang Theatre Company and New Light Theatre Project. As a performer, Theresa appeared on Broadway in THE HEIDI CHRONICLES and I'M NOT RAPPAPORT, and in productions Off-Broadway, at Lincoln Center, and on PBS American Playhouse as well as many regional theatre productions across the country. A proud member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, VASTA and The Voice Foundation, Theresa holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and is a certified Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework®.



Joan Jeffri, Director

Joan Jeffri is the Founder and Director of the Research Center for Arts and Culture housed first at Columbia University and now at The Actors Fund. She is former Director of the Program in Arts Administration at Columbia University and past President of the Association of Arts Administration Educators and the International Arts Medicine Association. Ms. Jeffri is the author of “Respect for Art: Visual Arts Management and Administration in China and the United States” (2008) with Professor Yu Ding from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing; “Arts Money: Raising It, Saving It, Earning It” (1989); and “The Emerging Arts: Management, Survival and Growth” (1990). She is also the editor of “Artisthelp: The Artist’s Guide to Work-Related Human and Social Services” (1990) and “The Actor Speaks”, “The Painter Speaks”, and “The Craftsperson Speaks” (1994, 1993, 1992). From 1981-1990, she served as an executive editor of “The Journal of Arts Management and Law”. She has conducted numerous studies including “Still Kicking”, a study of aging performing artists in NYC and LA; “Above Ground”, a study of aging visual artists; “Changing the Beat: A Study of the Worklife of Jazz Musicians”; “Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers” with William Baumol and David Throsby; “Information on Artists” I, II and III and “The Artists Training and Career Project”. Early in her career, Ms. Jeffri was a poet and protégé of Louis Untermeyer. A former professional

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actress, she appeared in the national tour of THE HOMECOMING and in the Boston Company of THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAIN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS. She also appeared with the Lincoln Center Repertory Company in New York City. Recent and current projects include the development of an interdisciplinary, intergenerational course to assist aging visual artists in documenting their work, called ART CART: SAVING THE LEGACY; THE PERFORMING ARTS LEGACY Project, creation of a prototype for aging performing artists to document their work; a research project measuring the impact of ART CART on older participating artists in the areas of social isolation/inclusion, morale/depression, productivity/activity, and safe functioning; the development of a cultural management and leadership program in Qatar and acting as Advisor and teacher for the development of arts and cultural research in China and pedagogical advisor for the expanding field of arts administration for the National Arts and Culture Policy Research Institute, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. She is on the editorial board of the JOURNAL OF ART FOR LIFE.



Barbara Kahn

Actor, director and playwright are not just what I do. They are who I am. Before I ever saw a play, I wanted to be an actor. I made scrapbooks of clippings from the Arts section in newspapers, and I read all the theater biographies in the local library, looking for clues on how to enter the world of acting. In junior high school, I gave a book report on the history of London's Drury Lane Theater and speeches about 'The Star System in Hollywood' and 'The Barrymore Family.' I learned to love silent movies at the nickelodeon in the Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia. When my Aunt Bea finally took me to see a touring production of THE MIRACLE WORKER, I was totally and irrevocably determined to pursue my dream. In high school, I joined a

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professional acting workshop in Philadelphia and later earned a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Adelphi University on Long Island, NY. I appeared in plays Off-Off Broadway before graduation. After graduation, I studied in a professional acting workshop and privately with acting coaches. The many talented artists I worked with provided invaluable experience – especially directors Ron Link and Bob Dahdah, actor Marilyn Roberts and that force of nature, Ellen Stewart of La MaMa E.T.C., to name just a few. Crystal Field at Theater for the New City has been my producer, mentor and friend since 1994. Throughout my career, colleagues who led the way have generously shared their knowledge and experience with me. I follow their example by coaching other actors and playwrights. I began directing professionally when I replaced a director who had been fired two weeks before opening. This led to more offers to direct in New York, including a production that moved to Théâtre Lucernaire in Paris and then to the National Theatre in London. Artists have stories inside us that we nurture and share—legacy stories of our ancestors, stories from our life experience and stories we imagine. Brecht’s MOTHER COURAGE is my favorite play, reminding me of my grandmother’s bravery and ingenuity fighting against prejudice and oppression. With four children including my father, she was trapped in a European war, unable to join her husband and oldest child who were already in the United States. After years of danger and struggle, she brought her children to safety. I have written more than twenty-five historical plays with the goal of holding a mirror to the present. My plays have been presented in the United States and Europe. I write about the history of prejudice in the United States and abroad, about racism, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia and anti-immigration. Putting a personal face to injustice has a power that reading history books cannot duplicate. As a reviewer wrote, “Barbara Kahn is something rare in theater: an historian and playwright... Aiming for our heads and our hearts she tweaks our intellect and kindles our emotions.” Paulanne Simmons, NYTheatre-Wire.com, Feb. 17, 2012, Acting is my first love. I wrote roles for myself, including two one-character plays that I perform whenever the opportunity occurs — CYMA’S STORY and CO-OP. I am a longtime member of the Dramatists Guild, AEA and SAG-AFTRA. Along with stage work, I have appeared in

several films. My life in the theatre has been governed by a passion for justice and for quality. In the 19th century, George Sand wrote: “All I want is for people to question the accepted lies and call out for the forgotten truths.” Portraying the truth gives me fulfillment as an actor. Directing with integrity and insight is what I offer other actors. Preserving the truth is why I write plays.



Bill Koch

“Why do you want to be in theatre?” If I had a dollar for every time I’ve been asked that question—by family, friends, directors, producers, students, et al—I’d have a lot of dollars!!! The answer for me, Bill Koch, is very simple—because being in theatre is where I’m most happy most of the time, whatever part of theatre I’m in. And thanks to being born with a wide variety of gifts and learning from some terrific teachers, I have actually made a living as a theatre artist throughout my life. I learned early in professional theatre that success is defined individually. I have had a successful career because I have had the opportunity to work my entire life doing what I most enjoy—some form of storytelling—and also the joy of sharing with fellow artists and audiences. I’ve been a dancer, actor, singer, choreographer, stage director, music director and stage manager; a few times I’ve designed sets or costumes or props; I’ve performed as a puppeteer, a mime, (never did learn to juggle); I’ve been a playwright, composer, lyricist, poet; I’ve taught in colleges, universities and acting schools; and I have a long list of “between shows” jobs. An early mentor taught me that even if you’re working at a non-theatre job, remember that you are a theatre artist—look at

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these other jobs as research. My first acting role, in grade school, was as a talking milk bottle in a health food play. During later grade school, my mother and my aunt put together “The Koch Trio” (my two cousins tap dancing and me playing accordion) and took us to every talent show on Long Island! Next came four years playing contrabass in the world famous Hempstead High School Symphony Orchestra. But it was at St. Olaf College, MN where my first mentor Ralph Haugen opened up the world of theatre for me! Wow! I couldn’t get enough! Eventually I got to New York and began an incredible, joyous, painful, stimulating, provoking, life-affirming career in theatre as a full-time profession. I journeyed from ballet dancer to show dancer to actor to choreographer to stage director to playwright to composer and lyricist—all interwoven with puppetry! During more than half a century, I’ve created or brought to life 104 characters and stage directed and/or choreographed 221 productions, as well as written 13 full-length plays (6 produced); 28 one-act plays (20 produced), in addition to countless compositions of folk and art songs, and several poetry collections. I am grateful to my higher power and every person who helped me along the way—and to myself for allowing myself to follow my dream and form an ongoing career in theatre arts! Anyone can learn the techniques of theatre, but no one can teach you the dream! Follow your dream!



Glenn Kubota

Glenn Kubota was born and raised in the Central Valley of California. He grew up working in the fields and agricultural related industries of the valley and attributes his work ethic to those experiences. He moved to New York in 1979 to work in the theatre and to find his natural voice. He has worked in theatre, film, TV, streaming and print advertising. He is a member of the Actors Equity Association and the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artist unions. His most recent theatre credits include AUBERGINE by Julia Cho at Olney Theatre Center in Olney, MD

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and the Everyman Theatre in Baltimore. Recent film credits include MAPPLETHORPE and WE ARE UNSATISFIED. Recent TV/Streaming credits include FBI and DAREDEVIL. Glenn's immersion into the performing arts was a journey of difficult, and at times humiliating, work in search of an inner truth about himself. He has been largely successful to that end and is now in search of a new inner truth.



Jasper McGruder

Jasper McGruder is a New York-based performer who was offered work and a place to stay by Ellen Stewart in 1975. He performed in ZAINOMAH at LaMama in his New York City debut. Notable productions at LaMama include COTTON CLUB GALA directed by Ellen Stewart, CONJUR WOMAN directed by George Ferencz, musical direction by Ellen Stewart, and THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE. Jasper was hired as a dancer in the OPERA LILY, directed by Tom O' Horgan based on Saul Bellow's HENDERSON THE RAIN KING by The New York City Opera at Lincoln Center. In the 1980s he was drawn to educational theatre and worked for The Young Playwrights Festival, Affiliate Artists, Theatre For The Forgotten, and The American Folk Theatre as a project director for international exchanges to London as guests of the Albany Empire in 1984 and Glasgow as guests of the Scottish Youth Theatre in 1986. HIGH RISE SNAPS was performed at Albany Empire with workshops at The Old Vic and The Royal Court. LAUGHING MATTERS was performed at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Glasgow, and Sterling Castle. He also taught improvisation workshops for the Scottish Youth Theatre Summer Institute in Glasgow in 1989. In the 1990s Jasper did extensive work in both Off

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Broadway and Regional Theatres as a performer and director. International performances included *EINSTEIN ON THE BEACH* world tour of 1992 as well as a release of the recording where he is featured as the Judge and Bus Driver. Since 200, he has worked at the Barter Theatre as an actor and director. He was slated to reprise his role of Hoke in *DRIVING MISS DAISY* in the spring of 2020.



Virginia Wing

Virginia Wing is a Chinese-American actress whose ancestors came to the “Gold Mountain” from Canton (now Guangdong) in the mid-1800s to participate in the Gold Rush and the building of the railroads. She is currently writing about growing up Southern in the Mississippi Delta, where she was born and raised. Professionally, she has run the gamut from opera, theatre, cabaret, TV, film, playwriting, directing and producing to script analysis. She modeled in her youth and is in the Breck Girl Hall of Fame. She was the model in the Mitsouko by Guerlain ad in the 1960s, which won awards internationally. She was a nominee for Best Actress in the Hollywood NAACP Image Awards. Her proudest role to date is Grandmother—to three fabulous grandchildren.