

MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE FALL 2023 - CLASS #2 LAUREN GUNDERSON & SILENT SKY

LAUREN GUNDERSON

"THE MOST PRODUCED PLAYWRIGHT IN AMERICA." AMERICAN THEATRE MAGAZINE

LAUREN HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCED PLAYWRIGHTS IN AMERICA SINCE 2015, TOPPING THE LIST THRICE INCLUDING 2022/23.

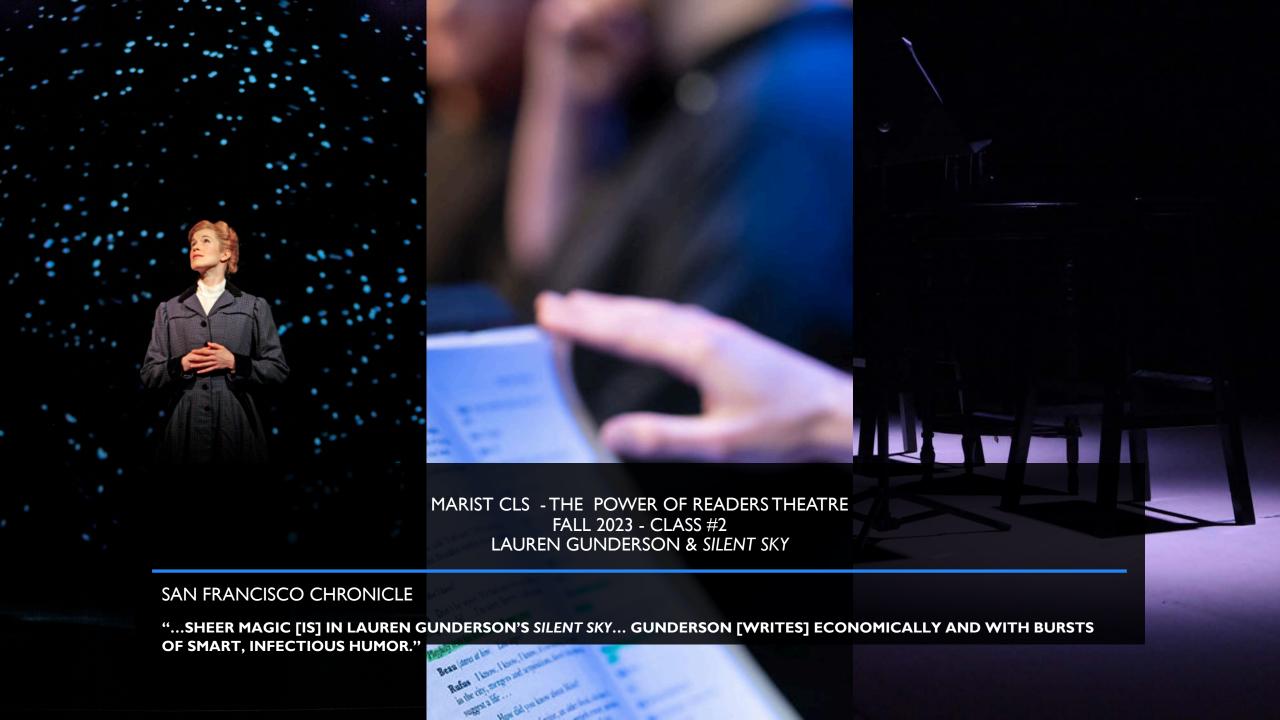
SHE IS A TWO-TIME WINNER OF THE STEINBERG/ATCA NEW PLAY AWARD FOR I AND YOU AND THE BOOK OF WILL,

THE WINNER OF THE LANFORD WILSON AWARD

A FINALIST FOR THE SUSAN SMITH BLACKBURN PRIZE.

SHE IS A PLAYWRIGHT, SCREENWRITER, MUSICAL BOOK WRITER AND CHILDREN'S AUTHOR WHO LIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO. SHE GRADUATED FROM NYU TISCH AS A REYNOLDS FELLOW IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP.





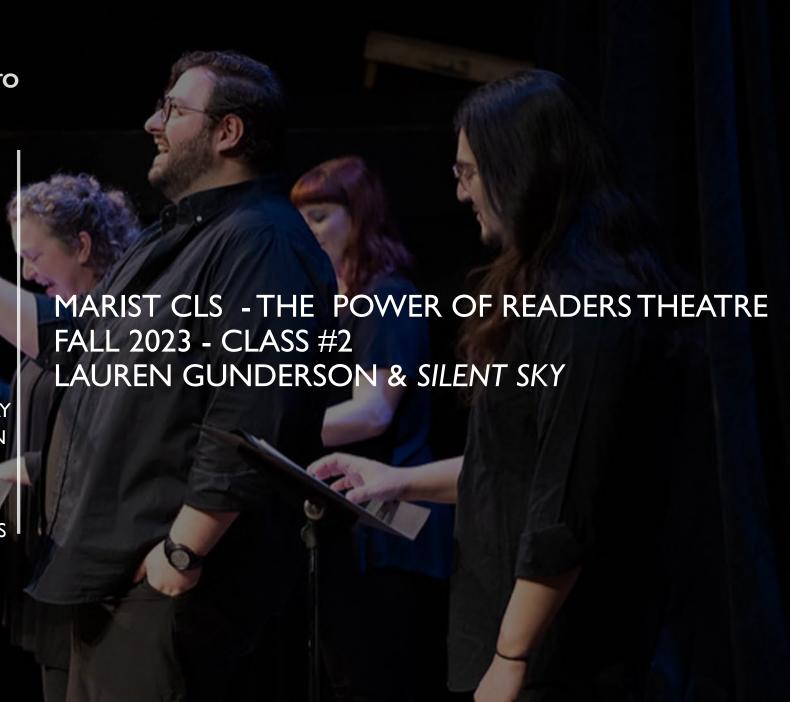
HOW DID YOU DISCOVER HENRIETTA'S
HISTORY? WHAT INITIALLY INSPIRED YOU TO
DRAMATIZE HER LIFE FOR THE STAGE?

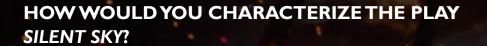
LAUREN GUNDERSON: I DISCOVERED
HENRIETTA IN A BOOK CALLED MISS LEAVITT'S
STARS:THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE WOMAN WHO
DISCOVERED HOW TO MEASURE THE UNIVERSE, BY
GEORGE JOHNSON.

I LOVE STORIES OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND IMMEDIATELY WAS SHOCKED THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THIS WOMAN WAS.

WHAT REALLY MADE ME WANT TO WRITE A PLAY ABOUT HENRIETTA HOWEVER IS THAT HER STORY WAS NOT ONLY ABOUT ONE BRILLIANT WOMAN BUT AN ENTIRE COHORT OF WOMEN WHO [WERE] KNOWN AS HARVARD "COMPUTERS."

THIS WAS A STORY ABOUT A SISTERHOOD. IN THIS PLAY WE ALSO GET TO KNOW ANNIE JUMP CANNON AND WILLIAMINA FLEMING, [AND] OTHER ASTRONOMERS THAT WORKED WITH HENRIETTA.





GUNDERSON: THIS PLAY IS ABOUT THE GLORY AND HARD WORK OF SCIENCE.

IT IS A STORY OF FAMILY, BOTH THE ONES WE ARE BORN WITH AND THE ONES WE CHOOSE.

IT'S THE STORY OF SISTERHOOD AND, YES, A LITTLE BIT OF OLD-FASHIONED BOY MEETS GIRL AS WELL.

THE OTHER INCREDIBLY EXCITING FEATURE OF THIS PLAY FOR ME IS MUSIC. HENRIETTA'S SISTER MARGARET IS A PIANIST AND HER LOVE OF MUSIC TRANSFORMS INTO A CRITICAL WAY THAT HENRIETTA UNDERSTANDS STARS AND THE PATTERNS IN THE SKY.

MUSIC AND MATH ARE ONE & THE SAME!

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IN ADDITION TO HENRIETTA, HER REAL LIFE COLLEAGUES WILLIAMINA FLEMING AND ANNIE JUMP CANNON PLAY SUPPORTIVE AND OCCASIONALLY SASSY ROLES.

FLEMING, A SCOTSWOMAN AND FORMER MAID TO OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR EDWARD PICKERING, IS THE ORIGINAL MEMBER OF "PICKERING'S HAREM," THE CASUALLY SEXIST TERM USED AT THE TIME FOR THE WOMEN "COMPUTERS" WHO ANALYZED PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES.

ANNIE JUMP CANNON, AS HENRIETTA IN THE PLAY POINTS OUT, IS KNOWN FOR THE STELLAR SPECTRA CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM SHE AND FLEMING WORKED TO DEVELOP.

HENRIETTA'S STAR-STRUCK REACTION TO MEETING CANNON AND FLEMING IS PERHAPS MORE FITTING OF A MODERN GIRL MEETING HER FAVORITE POP STAR, BUT IT GETS THE POINT ACROSS:THESE WOMEN SHOULD BE RESPECTED.





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A REMINDER - READERS 'THEATRE OFTEN INCLUDES A "NARRATOR" (STORYTELLER) WHO SERVE S AS A NONPARTICIPATING WITNESS.



