

**Æ** Actors Ensemble of Berkeley  
World Premiere Musical!

# What do Women Want?

A  
Saucy Take  
on  
Chaucer

# The Marriage of Sir Gawain

Developed from "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" By Vicki Siegel & Evan Alparone  
Directed by Bruce Coughran  
Music Coordinator Tania Johnson

Tickets: \$15-\$20 • Fri & Sat at 8pm • Sunday Matinees at 2pm

March 25 - April 16, 2016

www.aeofberkeley.org

At the Live Oak Theatre

1301 Shattuck Avenue



vickiactors@aefb.com

## A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

I first became aware of the wonderful story of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle when I saw it performed in the '70s in Chicago by Paul Sills' Story Theater. It was not only a heartwarming piece, it was surprisingly contemporary. What is it that women want? Might it be a better place if women ran the world? A good question as we may now have our first female presidential candidate. The politics of what men and women want inform our whole culture as well as our personal relationships and home lives.

The story of the Marriage of Sir Gawain is very similar to and probably evolved from the tale told by the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. There have been many versions of this story through ballads and legends, some of which were collected and published by Sir Thomas Malory in his *Morte d'Arthur* (1415).

Alison, the Wife of Bath, is a character unto herself. She seems to have defied the pronouncements of the church and the nobility – a view among many that women should always be in their place. Whatever one's take on the Wife of Bath's story, composed by Chaucer over 600 years ago, discussions of women's position in society and the proper balance of roles between men and women have never been off the front burner as hot topics for life, politics, literature and drama. We hope you enjoy this gentle tale of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle, or the Loathly Lady, as told by Chaucer's feisty Wife of Bath.

### Thanks also to the following:

- My composer, **Evan Alparone**, who has created beautiful melodies (*Knight's Song, Gawain's Song*), adapted some of my melodies (*Wife of Bath Song, Sir Gromer Somer Joure*) and given them variety and a life of their own, and stirred things up with the *Finale, Pilgrimage, Blues, Gromer's Tango* and others. He has co-created this show.
- **Bruce Coughran**, artistic director of Berkeley's Indra's Net Theater, who directed *A Hot Day in Ephesus* for **Actors Ensemble** and has helped make this possible.
- **Steve Beecroft** (Sir Gawain, choreographer) was the first Antipholus of Syracuse in the 2009 *A Hot Day in Ephesus* produced by the Curtain Theatre in Mill Valley, and we have worked on shows for the Curtain Theater every year since then. Thanks, Steve, for all your effort and support.
- The redoubtable **Ron Houk**, our wonderful stage manager, and singer, has kept us all on track and helped make this production possible. Thanks to the brilliant **Louis Lagalante**, who has undertaken to pull all the music together, teach the music to the cast and play the show.
- **Louis Lagalante, Tania Johnson, Debbie Messersmith, Billy Raphael** and **Theo Connell**, our resourceful music team.
- Special thanks to **Paula Aiello**, who designed, found and constructed medieval costumes for all our huge cast, along with helpers **Mercedes Cohen, Patricia Davis** and **Karen Sue Hickey**, who doubtless did not realize how complicated a show they were getting themselves into.

- Our AEB team, **Michael Cohen, Jerome Solberg, Bob Gudmundsson, Robert Estes, Jeff Trescott, Susannah Wood, Martha Luehrmann, Bill Martinelli, Emmy Pierce** and all the others who have helped with all aspects of set, props, and other tasks

- Thanks to **Michael Sweeney**, light designer, and **Krista Carter**, sound and light tech.

- Special thanks to **Steve Hill, Diane Pickell-Gore** and Novato Theater Company for swords, **Stewart Lyle**, set pieces, **Stephen Pitcher, Elsa Rudolph Swanson, Kevin Betou** and **Mr. Junge** at Oakland School of the Arts for the deer, **Robert Estes**, and the cast of the 2014 **Actors Ensemble** staged reading, that helped jump start this project, and the help and support of **Chetana Karel Michaan** and all the friends and colleagues who supported this show.

Thanks especially to our hardworking cast for making this a great show and a great experience.

Victoria F. Siegel, March 2016.

#### **A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Stories. After making a career as a storyteller (for that is what a director essentially is), I grow to love them more all the time. Indeed, sometimes I think that is all we are; our stories. That is why we treasure them. So what fun to work on a story that is based on a storyteller telling a story about people telling stories! Vicki and Evan have created this wonderful journey that stretches from modern times through the middle ages and back to the legends of King Arthur. Maybe it takes that long to answer the question: What do Women Most Desire? (At least many of us men think so!) With the aid of Chaucer, a group of medieval pilgrims and some wonderful songs and music we are on our way to find out. Thanks for coming with us on the quest!

#### *Spring 2016 Performance Schedule*

Friday/Saturday March 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m.  
Friday/Saturday April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at 8 p.m.  
Friday/Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m.  
Friday/Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m.  
Sunday matinees April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.

#### **Live Oak Theatre**

1301 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709

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## **About Actors Ensemble of Berkeley**

Actors Ensemble (**AEB**) has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest-running stage company in Berkeley. Since 1965 we have performed primarily at Live Oak Theatre in North Berkeley. Recently we have also taken the opportunity to bring the magic of theatre to John Hinkel Park, the site of many wonderful performances from the forerunner of Cal Shakes, Shotgun Players, Women's Will, and others over the years. We hope you enjoy the show. Make plans to see our upcoming John Hinkel Park Amphitheatre Season, this year featuring Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro* and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce. If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley  
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### **Board of Directors**

Michael R. Cohen, Robert Estes, Bob Gudmundsson, Martha Luehrmann, Norah Foster, William Martinelli, Emmy Pierce, Vicki Siegel, Jerome Solberg, Jeff Trescott, Susannah Wood.

**Act I is approximately 40 minutes long:  
15 minute intermission  
Act II is approximately 40 minutes long**

***Special Thanks To:*** Urban Mattress (especially), Temple Beth Hillel, The City of Berkeley, TheatreFirst, Berkeleyside, The East Bay Express, and DanSpace.

***What Do Women Want? – The  
Marriage of Sir Gawain***  
***Cast*** in Order of Appearance

Modern Woman.....Kimberly Flynn  
 Modern Man, King Arthur..... Alan Coyne  
 Chaucer, Sir Pellinore.....Bruce Kaplan  
 Wife of Bath.....Alexis Lane Jensen  
 Tavernkeeper, Merlin, Lord of the Manor.....Terry Haley  
 Lady of the Lake.....Peggy De Coursey  
 Sir Gawain.....Steve Beecroft  
 Sir Bedevere..... Bill Liebman  
 Sir Gromer Somer Joure, Freud, Wandering  
 Musician.....Billy Raphael  
 Lady..... Marsha van Broek  
 Young knight..... Will Reicher  
 Young knight (his brother)..... Cameron Dodd  
 Lady of Manor.....Annette Sousa  
 Guenevere.....Veronica Toro  
 Modern Gent.....Ron Houk  
 Crone.....Emily Stone  
 Ensemble.....Virginia Corrigan,  
 Kimberly Flynn,  
 Jenna Peters-Ring,  
 Christine Sheppard,  
 Nils Skudra  
 Dancers.....Annette Sousa, Kimberly Flynn

***Production Crew***

Director.....Bruce Coughran  
 Book & Lyrics, Co-Producer.....Victoria F. Siegel  
 Music.....Evan Alparone  
 Stage Manager.....Ron Houk  
 Costume Design.....Paula Dodd Aiello  
 Costume Team.....Karen Sue Hickey,  
 Mercedes Cohen, Pat Davis  
 Music Direction/Piano.....Louis Lagalante  
 Set Design.....Michael R. Cohen

Light Design.....Michael Sweeney  
 Music Coordination.....Tania Johnson  
 Graphics/Pre-production photography.....Vicki Victoria  
 Dress Rehearsal photography.....Anna Kaminska  
 Rehearsal Pianist.....Debbie Messersmith  
 Co-Producer/Program/Technical Direction/Publicity/Set  
 Construction.....Jerome Solberg

## SONGS

### Act I:

*Pilgrimage/Wife of Bath*  
 Prologue.....Wife of Bath/Company  
*Knights' Song*.....King Arthur and Knights  
*Men Like Us*.....Sir Gawain and Young Knights  
*Knights' Song Reprise*.....Sir Gawain  
*Someone's Always Blocking the Way...*Sir Pellinore,  
 Sir Bedevere, Sir Gawain, Young Knights  
*Sir Gromer Somer Joure/Act I Finale*.....King Arthur,  
 Sir Gawain, Wife of Bath and Women's Ensemble

## INTERMISSION

### Act II:

*I Wonder If You Wonder About Me*..... Wife of Bath,  
 Modern Gent  
*Sir Gromer Somer Joure Reprise*.....King Arthur  
*Gromer's Tango* .....Sir Gromer, King Arthur  
*Crone's Lament*.....Crone  
*Take Back Your Power Blues*.....Wife of Bath,  
 Crone, Women's Chorus  
*Gawain's Song*.....Sir Gawain  
*I Simply Adore Gawain*.....Company  
*Crone's Reprise*.....Crone  
*I Simply Adore Gawain Reprise*.....Company  
*Finale*.....Company

## Cast and Crew Biographies

*In Alphabetical Order*

**Paula Dodd Aiello** (Lead Costumer) has been sewing for over 50 years (almost since the Middle Ages!) and designing costumes for 35 of them. As primary costumer for **Actors Ensemble**, she has costumed such shows as *Panhandle* and *Pride and Prejudice*, but has also done shows for Masquers, Anton's Well, SF Pocket Opera, Stapleton Theater Co., and Novato Theater Co. Cheers to Vicki Siegel and the entire cast and crew for bringing this world premiere to the stage!

**Evan Alparone** (Composer) studied theater and music at UCLA and has music directed and/or accompanied more than 80 productions in the Bay Area and NY. He has worked at Contra Costa Civic Theater, Tri-Valley Rep, **Actors Ensemble** and many others. Evan would like to thank the cast and crew for all their work on this production and a special thanks to his partner in song, Vicki!

**Steve Beecroft** (Choreographer, Gawain) loves to speak in the third person, which he is told is very off-putting in general conversation. He is delighted to work with his dear friend Vicki Siegel again. When not at work (who wants to talk about that!), Steve is usually found acting Shakespeare with the Curtain Theatre, singing classical concerts or designing and teaching choreography. He is lucky the SFBATCC showed poor taste by giving him the best featured actor in a musical award for the Curtain's production of *Return to the Forbidden Planet* in 2014. Enjoy the show!

**Marsha van Broek** (Ensemble) is delighted to be in the ensemble of *What Do Women Want?* She was a member of the One Act Theatre Company in San Francisco, and appeared in several plays in New York with Soho Rep. She thanks Alex for his good humor and support.

**Krista Carter** (Light Board Operator) is happy to be back in the Bay Area after having spent the past three years living in Los Angeles acting on the big screen and earning her yoga teacher certification. Her past productions with **AEB** include *Communicating Doors*, *Passion Play* and *The Winters Tale*.

**Virginia Corrigan** (Ensemble) is a Michigander who escaped to the Bay Area three years ago. This is her second show with **Actors Ensemble**; she appeared as a Falstaff in last summer's *Falstaff!* She is proud to have participated in the workshop of *What Do Women Want* last year, and is looking forward to joining the inevitable Broadway run. She would like to thank Rosa for putting up with many lonely nights with her away at rehearsal.

**Bruce Coughran** (Director) is excited to be part of this follow-on to *A Hot Day in Ephesus*. In addition to directing original musicals for

Vicki and Evan, Bruce directs for Indra's Net Theater in Berkeley where he most recently directed *The Secret of Life* about the discovery of DNA. He has also directed for Novato Theater Company, Masquers Playhouse, Valley College Theater as well as various theaters in LA.

This is **Alan Coyne's** (King Arthur) first appearance with Actors' Ensemble. He has worked at innumerable theatres throughout the Bay Area, including Custom Made, Indra's Net, and SF Shakes; most recently, as Joe Pitt in Lafayette Town Hall Theatre's *Angels in America: Perestroika*. You can see him again at Town Hall this June as Allan Felix in *Play It Again, Sam*. He would like to thank his wife, Angela, for being sweet, smart, supportive, and other assorted s-words.

**Peggy De Coursey** (Lady of the Lake) is delighted to return to **Actors Ensemble**, where she last appeared in *A Hot Day In Ephesus*. Other regional theater work includes productions at the Altarena Theatre, The Marsh, and Oakland Opera. Besides appearing in original text and new music venues both locally and abroad, Peggy performs as a member of the Nguyen Dance Company throughout the Bay Area as well as in Vietnam. She dedicates her performance to her brother Tom De Coursey

**Cameron Dodd** (Young Knight) studies computer science at Berkeley City College. He is very happy to be working with **Actors Ensemble** again. He previously appeared in their productions of *Arcadia*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Relatively Speaking*, as well as a number of staged readings. He was last seen as Ben in Masquers Playhouse's production of *Farragut North*.

**Kimberly Flynn** (Ensemble) is excited to be working with **Actors Ensemble** for the first time. Favorite roles include Jenny from *Company*, and Sally from *A Lie of the Mind*. A Bay Area native, Kimberly has a B.A. in Theater from SFSU and is a graduate of the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress.

**Terry Haley** (Tavernkeeper/Merlin/Lord of the Manor) grew up in Fair Oaks, CA, got a theater MFA at UC Davis, and wrote sitcoms in Los Angeles (he's Terry Maloney Haley on IMDB). Here in the Bay Area, he has written, directed, and performed in short plays at Left Coast Theater Co. in San Francisco. He lives here in Berkeley and is thrilled to be doing his first **AEB** show. Terry lives with his husband, their son, and their dog, two of whom are quite well-groomed.

**Ron Houk** (Stage Manager, Modern Gent) is excited to be making his debut with **Actors Ensemble** both on stage and as stage manager. He has been active in Bay Area theatre for several years, mostly staying near his home base in the Tri-Valley area. Previous favorite roles include Chris in *Miss Saigon*, Jimmy in *Thoroughly*



*Modern Millie* and the Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance*. He is proud to bring this new production to life for you!

Bay Area native **Alexis Lane Jensen** (Wife of Bath) is a classically trained singer who enjoys an active and diverse performance career on a wide variety of stages. She has performed with West Edge Opera, Ray of Light Theatre, Cinnabar, Lamplighters Music Theater, Oakland Opera Theater and the Grammy Nominated Pacific Edge Voices (formerly Pacific Mozart Ensemble) to name only a few. She is pleased to be working with **Actors Ensemble** again, having previously appeared as Sister Peggy in *As It Is in Heaven*.

**Tania Johnson** (Music Coordinator) was founding music director of U.C Berkeley's student run theatre company BareStage in 1996. More recently, Tania was conductor/pianist for Berkeley Playhouse's *Peter Pan*, and has music directed many Conservatory productions. A recipient of the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Music Direction for her work on *Always...Patsy Cline!* (Altarena), Tania's music direction was most recently heard in Half Moon Bay for *Company* (Coastal Repertory). As an actor, she has performed with many companies including SF Playhouse, 42nd Street Moon, and TheatreWorks. Tania is active as an educator in the musical theatre programs at St. Joseph's and Alameda High.

**Bruce Kaplan** (Chaucer, Sir Pellinore) is delighted to be back onstage with **Actors Ensemble**, with whom he appeared in his very first show in 2000. He just finished a saintly run as Father Chenille in *Drinking Habits*. Over the past couple of years he has appeared in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Lingk), *Noises Off* (Selsden), and *Proof* (Robert), as well as in *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *The Haunting*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and the musical *Panhandle*. In 2012 he played the lunatic Putnam in the musical *Jip, His Story* for Marsh Youth Theatre. In 2001, he won the Goodman Choice Award for *Orphans*. Thanks for supporting community theatre!

**Louis Lagalante** (Music Direction, piano) graduated from Stanford University with a degree in psychology and music composition in 2015, where he mounted his own original musical as a senior capstone project. Since graduating, he has music directed productions of *Tarzan*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. He is so excited to be returning to original musical theater with *What Do Women Want?*

**Bill Liebman** (Sir Bedevere) has played many characters on many stages throughout the ages. Characters include: Priest, Construction Worker, Sullen Husband, Grandpa, Master of Ceremonies, Pimp, Santa Claus, J.Edgar Hoover, Ed Meese, Frat Boy, Bar Bum, Rex King, Spirit, Father. Staged By: Stagebridge-Senior Theatre, East Bay Children's Theatre, Cal State East Bay and Diablo Valley

Community College. Retired Berkeley Unified School Psychologist.  
Happy to finally be a Knight, Sir Bedevere, with **AEB**.

**Jenna Peters-Ring** (Ensemble) is proud to be in her third Bay Area play. She previously performed at DVC in *The Taming of the Shrew* as Vincentio, Pedant, and Tailor, and *Richard III* as Ensemble. She would like to thank her cast and crew for making *What Do Women Want?* - *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* such a wonderful experience and her parents for always supporting her acting endeavors.

This will be **Billy Raphael's** (Sir Gromer Somer Jeur, Wandering Musician) debut performance with **Actors Ensemble**. Other Bay Area performances include Mr. Smee in *Peter Pan* @ Berkeley Playhouse, Sir Toby Belch in the *Twelfth Night* @ Shotgun Players, Charlie Cowell in *Music* @ CCMT, and Uncle Louie in *Lost in Yonkers* @ CCCT. He also performed with Downtown Theatre and Pinole Community Playhouse and will be making his debut in BAM's *La Cage Aux Folles* and Ray of Light's *Little Shop of Horrors* later this year.

**Will Reicher** (Young Knight) has been active in theater for most of his 16 years. Favorite roles include Rudy in *Over the Tavern* (**Actors Ensemble**), Edmund in *Narnia* (Berkeley Playhouse), Tomas in *Tomas and the Library Lady* (Stagebridge), Bert in *All My Sons* (Douglas Morrison), Tom in *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (CCCT) and Rory in *A Christmas Carol* (ACT). A 10th grader at Piedmont High School, Will also loves debate and a cappella singing.

**Vicki Siegel** (playwright) has been a board member of **Actors Ensemble** and Curtain Theatre for many years. Her musical, *A Hot Day in Ephesus*, was put on by the Curtain in 2009 and **AEB** in 2012. Favorite acting roles have been Mistress Quickly in *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Curtain) and Kate in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Masquers). Here's to the great cast and crew of *What Do Women Want!*

**Nils Skudra** (Ensemble) is a recent graduate from U.C. Berkeley with a degree in History, with a minor in Theater/Performing Arts minor. He has just been accepted to University of North Carolina, Greensboro's MA program in History, intending to focus on the Civil War and Reconstruction. Outside of academics, Nils also has a great love of theater. He has previously performed in **AEB's** *Fortinbras*. His other theater credits include Starlight Circle Players' (*Dead Men Tell No Tales*), Stage Door Conservatory (*Grease*), and Playhouse Merced's *A Few Good Men*.

**Annette Sousa** (Lady of the Manor) originally from the Central Valley, is oh so pleased to be part of the wonderful cast of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, after a 13 year hiatus from being in a musical. She has been singing since she was a wee lass and continues to enjoy singing at friendly gatherings, weddings, and showers all over the world.

Rumor has it that when **Christine Sheppard** (Ensemble) was born she greeted her audience with a cheerful "Good Morning!" and hasn't stopped talking since. Her first performance (not counting those in her parents' living room) was at thirteen as the variety of legs defining the basement window in *My Sister Eileen*. Three years and a dozen shows later she created "Rags the Clown" for WQAD-TV's *Bozo's Big Top*. After decades in television and theatre, most recently with Chanticleers as Sister Philomena in "*Drinking Habits*" and Masquers in *The Women*, she is thrilled to be returning to **AEB** to be part of *What Do Women Want?*

**Emily Stone** (Crone) has been living and performing in the Bay Area since 2011. Previous roles include Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Hedda Tesman in *Hedda Gabler*, Liza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*, and the Widow in *Taming of the Shrew*. Inspired by the gruesome dedication of Oscar winner Leo Dicaprio, she has not bathed in two months as preparation for this role. She tried but was unsuccessful in tracking down a bear.

**Veronica Toro** (Guinevere) is a recent transplant from the Lone Star State, having earned B.A.s in multiple social sciences at the University of Texas at Austin. She has a long history in choir and vocal performance, but is relatively new to theater. This is her first performance in the Bay Area. When not working or performing, Veronica enjoys spending time with her husband and toy poodle.

When not on stage, **Vicki Victoria** (graphics, publicity photography) enjoys utilizing her photography skills and creating graphics that intrigue people about the story. A member of Inferno Theatre Ensemble, she has acted in their collaborations with **AEB**, *King Lear* and *Penthesilea*, *Queen of the Amazons*. Vicki has also appeared in regional and community musical theatre productions, including PCT's *South Pacific* (Bloody Mary) and *Into the Woods* (Stepmother), and TVRT & MST's *Avenue Q* (Christmas Eve).

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