

Portland Center Stage at

THE ARMORY

A LIFE

By Adam Bock

Directed by Rose Riordan

September 29 – November 11, 2018

In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

Scenic Designer	Costume Designer	Lighting Designer	Sound Designer
Tony Cisek	Alison Heryer	Diane Ferry Williams	Casi Pacilio with Scott Thorson
Stage Manager	Production Assistants	Casting	
Mark Tynan*	Molly Shevaun Reed	Harriet Bass, <i>New York</i>	
	Sarah Stark	Will Cotter, <i>Local</i>	
		Brandon Woolley, <i>Local</i>	

Performed with one intermission

Originally commissioned and produced by Portland Center Stage at The Armory, Portland, Oregon, Chris Coleman, Artistic Director, Rose Riordan, Associate Artistic Director. *A Life* was workshopped at JAW: A Playwrights Festival produced by Portland Center Stage at The Armory. *A Life* was developed, in part, at the 2015 Sundance Institute Writing Studio at Flying Point. Playwrights Horizons, Inc., New York City, produced the New York City premiere of *A Life* Off-Broadway in 2016. *A Life* by Adam Bock is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

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If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

CAST In order of appearance

Nat DeWolf* Nate Martin

Gary Norman Curtis

Cyrcerli Ash* Ellen and others

Dana Green* Jill and others

Jen Rowe *Understudy*, Jill and others

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**JOIN US IN WELCOMING OUR NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
MARISSA WOLF**

Welcome to Portland Center Stage at The Armory's 2018-2019 season! As we come together to experience the transformative power of *The Color Purple* and the aching humor of *A Life*, I am overjoyed to join this team of talented artists, staff and board as the new artistic director.

When I stepped inside The Armory for the first time this summer during the JAW festival, I could immediately feel the breathtaking vibrancy of this space. Hip-hop dancers took to the floor, artisans showed their handcrafted wares and audiences queued up in long lines, waiting with anticipation for the wild new play readings. “This is it!” I thought. “This nationally celebrated company is living its mission every day, inspiring Portlanders both on and off stage, and I feel like I’ve arrived home.”

It will be a great pleasure to get to know each of you over this season. As I welcome audiences to the theater during *The Color Purple* and *A Life*, I hope you’ll come say hello. I’d love to hear your Portland Center Stage stories, whether this is your first time at The Armory or you’ve been coming for decades.

Together with Managing Director Cynthia Fuhrman, I am excited to lead this theater into the next era of growth as part of the continued artistic vanguard of the American theater. Here’s to a season brimming with humor, heated drama and journeys into the depths of the heart!

All my best,

Marissa

ABOUT MARISSA WOLF

Marissa served as the Associate Artistic Director/New Works Director at Kansas City Repertory Theatre for three seasons, launching OriginKC: New Works Festival, a program that supports the creation, development and production of new work from a diverse body of major national playwrights. As part of the 2016 OriginKC: New Works Festival, Marissa directed the world premiere of *Fire in Dreamland* by Rinne Groff (co-commissioned by The Public Theater and Berkeley Repertory Theatre) and went on to direct its Off-Broadway premiere at The Public Theatre in June, 2018. Additional directing credits at Kansas City Repertory Theatre include the world premiere of *Man in Love* by Christina Anderson, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Prior to Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Marissa served as the Artistic Director of Crowded Fire Theater in San Francisco for six seasons, where she directed numerous west coast and world premiere productions for the company, including *The Late Wedding* by Christopher Chen, *The Taming* by Lauren Gunderson, *The Bereaved* by Thomas Bradshaw, *Good Goods* and *DRIP* by Christina Anderson, and *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* by Young Jean Lee. Other selected credits include *77%* by Rinne Groff at San Francisco Playhouse, *Precious Little* by Madeleine George at Shotgun Players, Act II of *The Lily's Revenge* by Taylor Mac at Magic Theatre, and the Bay Area Premiere of *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* by Will Eno at

The Cutting Ball Theater. Additionally, Marissa has directed workshops at The New Group, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, Marin Theatre Company and Playwrights Foundation. She was nominated for Best Director from *Broadway World* San Francisco and the Bay Area Critics Circle Award. Marissa previously held the Bret C. Harte Directing Fellowship at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and has a degree in drama from Vassar College, with additional training from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

ROSE RIORDAN

My relationship with playwright Adam Bock began in 2004 when I read his play *The Thugs* as one of the JAW submissions. I felt so excited when I read that play, I could barely sit still. It was thrilling and hilarious and unique. I was fortunate in that I subsequently directed the reading for JAW, followed by the 2006 production. Personally, it is still a career highlight for me. I went on to direct five more plays of Adam's — all with their own unique charm.

My relationship with *A Life* started in 2013, as a commission with Adam. We did a couple of workshops and developed it at JAW in 2014. My feeling when I read any Adam Bock play is always the same. I am enthralled with the sparseness, and with his ability to capture the human experience on such an insightful level. After directing so many of Adam's plays, I feel uniquely qualified to

orchestrate this journey. It also takes a specific kind of actor to “speak Bock,” and I was lucky enough to find four of them. It’s a gift.

For me, with any good story, it’s not so much what happens but why it happens and the impact that makes the story interesting. That’s the human part. The way Adam tells a story may seem casual at first, but as you get to know it you realize the depth of his observations and understanding of the human experience. I always learn something.

A Life is precisely that. A Life. What we value, hold dear and treasure. Who we share it with, how we take inventory, and what becomes of it all in the end. With Adam’s keen eye and ear for the human journey, he captures it in exactly the right way.

I am really looking forward to sharing it with you.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADAM BOCK

Portland Center Stage at The Armory’s relationship with Adam Bock, author of *A Life*, is rooted in a longtime partnership between him and Associate Artistic Director Rose Riordan. Their relationship extends back nearly fifteen years, when they first worked together on Bock’s play *The Thugs*, which was featured at JAW: A Playwrights Festival in 2005. Since then, four of Bock’s plays have been produced at The Armory and three of his scripts have been

developed at JAW, all directed by Riordan. *A Life* was commissioned by Portland Center Stage and developed at JAW in 2014. It is the fifth Bock play to be produced at The Armory, following its world premiere in 2016, starring David Hyde Pierce, at Playwrights Horizons in New York. This production is the West Coast premiere.

You've described Portland Center Stage as "a second home." Can you talk about your relationship with this theater?

I've been lucky because one, I developed a relationship with Rose as a director but two, how you all do things here matters to me. I like the way you relate to your community — I think that's really important — the community part is almost as important as the theater, but the theater has to be good. And I've had beautiful productions here.

Often you can feel like you're floating out in the ether when you're a writer: "If I send them something, will they read it?" When I send work here, they always say, "Of course, we'll read it." It's exciting to know that if I need to develop something, I can send it to you and say I need help. It's great to have places that do that.

What does it mean to you to receive a commission?

We, as playwrights, are self-generators. We almost always have to set our own deadlines and to figure out what we're going to write. And to figure out how we are going to support ourselves while we do it. When someone says "I want to commission you," they're saying, "I'd like to give you some money to buy you some time." Which is huge. Also, "We'd like to read it and help you develop it

once it's finished." Also huge because suddenly I'm not alone in this generative period.

Director Rose Riordan is known as a champion of playwrights. What is it like to work with her?

She's the best and completely herself as a director. I talk without being afraid that she won't be interested. The other night, we started talking about *A Life* and I was babbling on and she was perfectly happy to be sitting with me while I was doing it. It's very lucky to find someone who is interested in solving similar problems. She supports my process by giving me space. She doesn't say a lot about "you should do this or that." It's really more about "What were you trying to do?" and that's a very different question.

You've always been very outspoken about your identity as a gay writer. How does being gay inform you as an artist?

It has to. I remember when I first got that question about 20 years ago and they said, "Do you mind being called a gay writer?" and I said, "What else would I be called?" It's a perspective I have in the world and it's my job to show what I see, so how could I cut that out?

My goal in this play was to make you fall in love and let you get to know an older gay guy in his 50s.

Just as our culture is racist, it's also homophobic. Homophobia's just built into the system we live in. We breathe it. I don't think that straight people really know the impact it has and I don't think gay people really know the full impact it has had on us. It feels

important for me to explore that. Because everyone has gay people in their lives.

Your plays are known for not conforming to the typical dramatic structure. How would you characterize your approach as a playwright?

I remember saying in *The Typographer's Dream*, "If you change the way the story of the world is told, the world itself has to change." And that's what we do as playwrights. We say something different and then suddenly people can't see the world the old way they used to anymore.

Read the full interview at pcs.org/bock.

Interview by Alice Hodge, Marketing & Publications Specialist

MEET THE CAST

Cylerli Ash, Ellen and others

Cylerli is honored and excited to make her Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. She gives all glory to God for blessing her with this gift. She received her M.F.A. in acting from the University of Tennessee, and her bachelor's degree from Rutgers University. She was honored last year as part of the Drammy Award-winning PassinArt: A Theatre Company, where she played Mary in *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes and Risa in *Two Trains Running* by August Wilson. Cylerli's recent television credits include *Skinned* (TVOne) and *Tales* (BET). Recent regional theater credits include

work at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Clarence Brown Theatre and Dominion Theatre. She is the CEO of the faith-based nonprofit theater company, Dae Productions, located in Atlanta, GA. Special thank you to Papa Paul and Ma Susan Schwarz for all you have done for me.

Nat DeWolf, Nate Martin

Nat is thrilled to be making his debut at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. New York credits include *Take Me Out* on Broadway and The Public Theater, and *Antlia Pneumatica* and *Betty's Summer Vacation* at Playwrights Horizons. Regional theater: Two River Theater, American Repertory Theater, Westport Country Playhouse, Huntington Theatre Company, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, TheaterWorks Hartford, Barrington Stage Company, Boise Contemporary Theater and Kitchen Theatre Company. Film credits include *Lisa Picard is Famous*, which he co-wrote and co-starred in, *A Most Violent Year*, *The Preppie Connection* and *We Are What We Are*. Recent TV credits include *House of Cards*, *Gotham*, *The Black List*, *Pan Am* and *Law & Order: SVU*. He is a graduate of Boston Conservatory and A.R.T. Institute at Harvard University.

Dana Green, Jill and others

Dana is delighted to be back at The Armory, where her credits include *Major Barbara*, *Constellations*, *Great Expectations*, *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other Portland credits include

Scarlet at Portland Playhouse; *d.b.* at CoHo Productions; *Gidion's Knot* and *The Realistic Joneses* at Third Rail Repertory Theatre; and *Dead Man's Cell Phone* at Profile Theatre. She spent four seasons with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and has performed at numerous regional theaters including The Old Globe, South Coast Repertory, Yale Repertory Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Court Theatre, Meadow Brook Theatre and Shakespeare Festival of Dallas. Television credits include *Early Edition*, *Grimm*, *The Librarians*, *Here and Now* and *American Vandal*.

Gary Norman, Curtis

Gary is thrilled to return to Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Past credits include *Our Town* at The Armory; *Fly By Night* and *Chicago* at Broadway Rose Theatre Company; *The Receptionist* by Adam Bock and *The Outgoing Tide* at CoHo Productions; *One Flea Spare* at Shaking the Tree; *The Playboy of the Western World* at Artists Repertory Theatre; and *The Adding Machine* and *The Long Christmas Ride Home* at Theatre Vertigo, where he was a member of the acting ensemble. He has also appeared on the small screen, guest starring in *Grimm* (NBC); *Leverage* and *The Librarians* (TNT); and *Life After First Failure* (CW Seed). Gary is an accomplished portrait and headshot photographer. Originally from Virginia, Gary has called Portland home for 21 years and vows never to go back.

Jen Rowe, *Understudy*, Jill and others

Jen most recently closed a production of *The Secretaries* at Profile Theatre. Her work on stage has been seen at The Armory, Artists Repertory Theatre, Third Rail Repertory Theatre, Portland Playhouse, Milagro Theatre, CoHo Productions, Boom Arts, and Oregon Children's Theatre. She has written and performed in sketch shows for Curious Comedy Theater, Action/Adventure Theatre, and Live Wire Radio. Voice credits include campaigns for Oregon Lottery and Our Oregon. Television credits include TNT's *The Librarians* and NBC's *Grimm*. She is seen in the short film *Go Missing*. Directing credits include Portland Playhouse, Western Oregon University, Proscenium Live, and Third Rail Repertory Theatre. She assistant directed *A Life* and is delighted to join the cast. Jen is represented by Q6 Talent. hellojenrowe.com

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Adam Bock, Playwright

Adam's plays include *The Colby Sisters* (Kiln Theatre, formerly known as Tricycle, London) *Phaedra* (Shotgun Players, dir. Rose Riordan), *A Small Fire* (Playwrights Horizons, Drama Desk nomination), book for *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, with music by Todd Almond (Yale Repertory Theatre), *The Receptionist* (Manhattan Theatre Club, 2008 Outer Critics nomination, Best Plays of 2007-2008, The Evidence Room with Megan Mullally), *The Drunken City* (Playwrights Horizons, 2008 Outer Critics nomination),

The Thugs (Soho Rep, 2007 OBIE Award for Playwriting), *The Shaker Chair* (2005 Humana Festival), *Swimming In The Shallows* (Second Stage Uptown, Shotgun Players, 2000 BATCC Award, Clauder Prize), *Five Flights* (Encore Theatre and Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 2002 Glickman Award, ACTA nomination, Osborn nomination), and *The Typographer's Dream* (Encore Theatre/Shotgun Players). Mr. Bock is a Guggenheim fellow, NEA grantee, a three-time resident at Yaddo, a former member of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab and New Dramatists, a NYTW Usual Suspect, a Clubbed Thumb Associate, a TDF Open Doors mentor and a member of the board of Space on Ryder Farm. Mr. Bock's plays are published by Samuel French, Dramatists Play Service and Playscripts, Inc. *A Life* is his fifth play produced at The Armory, following *The Typographer's Dream* (2014), *A Small Fire* (2014), *The Receptionist* (2010) and *The Thugs* (2007). His work has also been featured at three JAW festivals, including *A Life* (2014), which was commissioned by Portland Center Stage at The Armory and the Perkins Coie's "Innovative Minds" program.

Rose Riordan, Director

Rose is in her 21st season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory, where she serves as associate artistic director and has previously directed *Kodachrome*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Lauren Weedman Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Wild and Reckless*, *The Oregon Trail*, *Our Town*, *The People's Republic of Portland* (2013 and 2015), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *The Typographer's*

Dream, LIZZIE, A Small Fire, The Mountaintop, The Whipping Man, The North Plan, Red, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, A Christmas Story, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, The Receptionist, A Christmas Carol, Frost/Nixon, How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found, Doubt, The Underpants, The Pillowman and The Thugs, which won four Drammy Awards, including Best Ensemble and Best Director. Rose has recently directed, for various other theaters, Adam Bock's *Phaedra* and *The Receptionist*, *The Passion Play* and *Telethon*. In 1999, she founded the annual JAW: A Playwrights Festival. JAW has been instrumental in developing new work for the company's repertory, including this season's production of *A Life* and Storm Large's *Crazy Enough*, as well as *Kodachrome, Lauren Weedman Doesn't Live Here Anymore, Wild and Reckless, Threesome, Bo-Nita, The People's Republic of Portland, The Body of an American, The North Plan, Anna Karenina, Outrage, Flesh and Blood, Another Fine Mess, O Lovely Glowworm, Celebrity Row, Act a Lady, The Thugs* and *A Feminine Ending*. She enjoys being part of a company committed to new work and having a beautiful building in which to work.

Tony Cisek, Scenic Designer

Tony has collaborated with Ms. Riordan at Portland Center Stage at The Armory on productions of *Our Town, A Small Fire, The Whipping Man, The North Pool, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, The Christmas Story* and *Frost/Nixon*. Also for The Armory, he has designed *The Color Purple, Astoria, Ain't Misbehavin', A Feminine*

Ending, Sometimes a Great Notion and *Anna in the Tropics*; and his designs here have received five Drammy Awards. Tony's work has been seen Off-Broadway and regionally at Roundabout Theatre, Arena Stage, Guthrie Theater, Goodman Theatre, Ford's Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Alliance Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Baltimore Center Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, Cleveland Play House, Folger Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre, GALA Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Group and Signature Theatre. tonycisek.com

Alison Heryer, Costume Designer

Alison is a costume designer for theater, film and print. She is thrilled to be returning to Portland Center Stage at The Armory, after designing costumes for *Kodachrome*, *Fun Home*, *Lauren Weedman Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Wild and Reckless*, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, *The Oregon Trail*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Our Town*, *Three Days of Rain* and *Threesome*. Other design credits include productions with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 59E59 Theaters, La MaMa, The New Victory Theater, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Portland Opera, Artists Repertory Theatre and The Hypocrites. She has exhibited work at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, World Stage Design and the Prague Quadrennial of Design and Space. Alison is on the faculty at the

School of Art + Design at Portland State University and a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829. alisonheryerdesign.com

Diane Ferry Williams, Lighting Designer

Diane is pleased to be returning to Portland. Diane has worked for many theaters around the country and abroad. Her most recent design is an international tour of *How to Succeed ...* beginning in Beijing, China. In the U.S., her work has been seen at The Marriott Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Theatre Under the Stars, Goodspeed, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, ACT-Seattle, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Ford's Theatre, Hubbard Street, Regional Dance America and elsewhere. Other international work includes *The Harlem Gospel Singers* (Paris and the European tour) and *Die Shone Und Das Biest* (Berlin and the European tour). She has also lit several national tours and premieres. Awards include a Jeff Award, an After Dark Award, a Carbonelle Award, Drammy Awards – including the 2015 Drammy for *Ain't Misbehavin'* – and seven Jeff nominations. Diane has an M.F.A. in theatrical design from Northwestern University.

Casi Pacilio, Sound Designer

Casi's home base is The Armory, where recent credits include *Kodachrome*, *A Christmas Memory/Winter Song*, *Wild and Reckless*, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, *The Oregon Trail*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *A Small Fire* and *Constellations* with composer Jana Crenshaw; and 12 seasons of JAW. National shows: Holcombe Waller's *Surfacing* and *Wayfinders*; *Left Hand of*

Darkness, My Mind is Like an Open Meadow (Drammy Award, 2011), *Something's Got Ahold Of My Heart* and *PEP TALK* for Hand2Mouth Theatre. Other credits include Squonk Opera's *Bigsmorgasbord-WunderWerk* (Broadway, PS122, national and international tours); *I Am My Own Wife*, *I Think I Like Girls* (La Jolla Playhouse); *Playland*, *10 Fingers* and *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* (City Theatre, PA); *2.5 Minute Ride* and *Fires in the Mirror* (Profile Theatre). Film credits include *Creation of Destiny*, *Out of Our Time* and *A Powerful Thang*. Imagineer/maker of the Eat Me Machine, a dessert vending machine.

Scott Thorson, *Original Sound Designer, JAW 2014*

Scott is a local sound designer and job captain with BRIC Architecture, a local K-12 design firm. Credits at The Armory include sound design for *The Mountaintop*, *The Typographer's Dream*, *Sex With Strangers* (Drammy nomination), and four seasons of JAW, including the original sound design for *A Life* in 2014. Other Portland designs include *Sweet and Sad*, *Noises Off*, *Middletown* and *The Night Alive* for Third Rail Rep; *Ivy and Bean* for Oregon Children's Theatre; and *Uncanny Valley* for Hand2Mouth Theatre.

Mark Tynan, *Stage Manager*

Imagine being in a room full of artists, watching the birth of an idea, a movement given purpose, a sentence, phrase, scene, act given life. Then imagine that room translating to the stage with lighting, sound, costumes, scenery and props; then you can imagine what Mark's job is like. Special thanks to the phenomenal stage

management apprentices, Alexis Ellis-Alvarez, Molly Reed and Sarah Stark, who help keep the vision attainable. Prior to The Armory, Mark toured nationally and internationally with musicals including *Dreamgirls*, *The King and I* with Rudolf Nureyev, *How to Succeed ...*, *Grand Hotel*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Rent* and *Jersey Boys*. Other Portland credits include several summers with Broadway Rose Theatre Company in Tigard. Regional credits include Alley Theatre (Houston, TX), La Jolla Playhouse (La Jolla, CA) and Casa Mañana Theatre (Fort Worth, TX).

Molly Shevaun Reed, *Production Assistant*

Molly is thrilled to be joining Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season as a stage management apprentice, where she most recently served as a production assistant for JAW: A Playwrights Festival (*Pick a Color* and *The Birds of Empathy*). Originally from Denton, Texas, Molly has worked in stage management, props design and developing new work as a director in Dallas and Portland. Local credits include *Spectravagasm X* (stage manager), the one-woman original play *Endless Oceans* (director/designer/producer) and *The Few* at CoHo Productions (assistant director/production assistant). Dallas credits include *Dry Land* at Upstart Theater (stage manager) and *Nomad Americana* (formerly titled *Rooting*) at Nouveau 47 Theatre and WaterTower Theatre's Out of the Loop Fringe Festival (director/designer). Molly

holds a B.F.A. in theater performance from Baylor University. Love and thanks to Cam, Fam, Lyss and Bear.

Sarah Stark, *Production Assistant*

Sarah is a recent Portland transplant from Chicago, where she graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in theater and performance studies. Chicago stage management and assistant stage manager credits include: *Little Shop of Horrors* (American Blues Theater); *Civility!* (The Syndicate); *Ellen Bond, Union Spy* (The House Theatre of Chicago); *Love's Labour's Lost, She Kills Monsters, Belleville, Urinetown: The Musical* (The University of Chicago). Most recently, Sarah has worked as an assistant stage manager for several productions at The Glimmerglass Festival. She is thrilled to be continuing her work and education at The Armory this season!

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS OF A LIFE

Doug & Teresa Smith

We are pleased to be sponsoring Adam Bock's *A Life*, which first appeared at Portland Center Stage at The Armory's JAW festival in 2014 and premiered in New York City in 2016. The JAW festival has been an important incubator of new works for 20 years, with more than 80 plays developed. These have gone on to be staged at more than 100 theaters nationwide. *A Life* is full of surprises. Please enjoy the show.

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Actors take chances. Sometimes they work. Sometimes they don't. But none of these actors would be on stage tonight without taking chances. It's part of growth, and we're all made to grow. That's why we're such a proud supporter of Portland Center Stage. Let this performance inspire you to take the chances that power your own growth.