

Portland Center Stage at

**THE ARMORY**  
PRESENTS

***Every Brilliant Thing***

**By Duncan Macmillan**

**with Jonny Donahoe**

**Directed by Rose Riordan**

**September 23 – November 5, 2017**

**In the Ellyn Bye Studio**

**Artistic Director | Chris Coleman**

# *Every Brilliant Thing*

By Duncan Macmillan  
with Jonny Donahoe  
Directed by Rose Riordan

Scenic Designer  
Derek Easton

Lighting Designer  
Em Douglas

Sound Designer  
Casi Pacilio

Stage Manager  
Jamie Lynne Simons

Production Assistant  
Danny Rosales

Casting  
Rose Riordan

**Featuring Isaac Lamb**

*Every Brilliant Thing* was first produced by Paines Plough and Pentabus Theatre on June 28, 2013 at Ludlow Fringe Festival. The play had its North American premiere at Barrow Street Theatre, New York, on December 6, 2014, where it was presented by Barrow Street Theatre and Jean Doumanian Productions. *Every Brilliant Thing* is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

**Performed without intermission.**

Videotaping or other photo or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

*The Actor and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

## A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In an interview with *The Guardian*, playwright Duncan Macmillan said: “What I enjoy most as a theater maker and as an audience member, is getting my brain to do more than one thing at once.”

This is one way Macmillan leads us into the style of storytelling he’s after in *Every Brilliant Thing*. The central thread (and threat) of the story centers around his mother’s long battle with depression, but that stands side by side with some of the most delightful, silly and buoyant aspects of life on earth.

“It’s the least cool piece of theater ever, in some ways” he said of *Every Brilliant Thing*. But it’s also one of the most democratic. There is something deliciously goofy about the format in which this story unfolds, but at the same time it is unabashedly life-affirming.

Enjoy the journey.

-Chris Coleman

## PREPARING FOR *EVERY BRILLIANT THING*

Before rehearsals began for *Every Brilliant Thing*, we checked in with director Rose Riordan and performer Isaac Lamb about their preparation, process and still-forming thoughts on Duncan Macmillan and Jonny Donahoe's script.

### **The Director: Rose Riordan**

***Every Brilliant Thing* involves the audience in a unique way, unlike any show that has been produced at The Armory. As you prepare for rehearsals, what is your plan for tackling that aspect of the production?**

We are partnering with our education and marketing departments to rehearse with audiences. We plan on being “on the road” to community centers, organizations, any captive audience really. This will help us prepare for just about any situation.

**What is it about directing this piece that excites you? How does the play fit in with your personal aesthetics as director?**

It's the relationship between the audience and the actor that I'm curious about and excited to explore. And of course the story is so honest and personal that I think we will develop a unique relationship with each and every audience. I expect to learn a lot.

**You last worked with Isaac Lamb in *A Small Fire*. What made you think of him for this production?**

Truthfully, it's his likeability. His talent is a given. This character has to connect with the audience and can't have any pretensions as an actor — I think Isaac will be able to navigate that easily.

**In *Every Brilliant Thing*, the central character makes a list of everything worth living for. How does list-making play into your life?**

I have a running list of things I would have to describe if I was abducted by aliens and had to explain what things on earth actually are. (Of course in my daydream they speak English, so ...)  
It's really hard.

Sandpaper

A fly

Nutmeg

Trump

**The Performer: Isaac Lamb**

**What was your initial response to the story and structure of *Every Brilliant Thing*?**

I remember reading the first few pages of the script when Rose made me the offer and realizing that this was an opportunity to do something very special. I was moved by it in a way that at once felt deeply personal and totally universal.

**How are you feeling about taking on a piece that requires so much audience involvement and improvisation?**

To be honest, I relish it. I think it's easy to get comfortable as a performer doing the same things again and again. That's the antithesis of growth. I make it a personal goal to try and broaden my comfort zone as often as I can. I just did Anonymous Theatre's *Urinetown* almost primarily for the scare. It's an opportunity to reinvigorate my work and blow off the cobwebs. Plus, this amazing

script's structure provides a pretty safe harbor to improvise within.

**You've been in solo shows before, including the national tour of Broadway's *Defending the Caveman*. What are the challenges specific to performing solo and how do those factors impact your preparation?**

Memorization is a whole different ballgame when you're working in isolation. That's the most obvious difference. When you don't have a scene partner to work with, you have that much less to rely on when you go up on your lines or get yourself lost. There's no one to show you the way back! So your preparation starts much sooner and with greater urgency, I think.

The other challenge specific to one-person shows is that your energy and rhythm rely so much more on the audience. The difference between a lively house and a quiet one is amplified exponentially because the audience is quite literally your scene partner. Duncan Macmillan has done this brilliant thing, however, by integrating the audience into the performance of the play so they don't really get to be passive observers. I think that's going to make for a unique experience for them and for me.

**You've worked with Rose on past productions such as *A Small Fire* and *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. How would you describe your collaborative process?**

We laugh a lot. At ourselves and at each other. We talk through things. Rose likes to mess up the process too, which I enjoy. During *Spelling Bee*, she'd make us perform the show start to finish while playing the video game "Dance Dance Revolution." During *A Small Fire*, we would do scenes blindfolded and wearing noise-canceling headphones. She likes to sort of crack your head open

(metaphorically speaking) and move the pieces around so that you engage with the work in new ways. I think that's going to be invaluable for a piece like this. She tells me we're gonna take rehearsal on the road and try it in front of different audiences so that we can see how to make it work. I'm excited about that. I imagine some days we'll end up talking about our histories with mental health, and some days we'll share our favorite internet videos with each other. And everything in between. But it'll all be valuable in the final analysis.

**How does list-making play into your life? What are three items on your own list of brilliant things?**

I'm terrible with lists. My wife is brilliant with them. Lists are really just one more piece of paper for me to lose track of, but for Amy they are how she organizes her path through the world. If I was making my own list of brilliant things, though, she'd star in numbers 1, 2, and 3.

1. Watching my wife dance when she choreographs in our living room.
2. Playing with our dog and two cats.
3. The sound she makes when I really make her laugh.

*Interviews by Public Relations and Publications Manager Claudie Jean Fisher*

# BIOGRAPHIES

## **Isaac Lamb**

### **Performer**

Isaac Lamb is an award-winning actor, director, and world-renowned creator of viral video content. He is thrilled to be back onstage at The Armory, one of his favorite places to work. Isaac is a graduate of Loyola Marymount University and a proud company member of Third Rail Repertory Theatre. Select local credits: *The Aliens*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *Belleville*, *The Flick* (Third Rail Repertory Theatre); *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *A Small Fire*, *Great Expectations* (The Armory); *Assassins*, *Playboy of the Western World* (Artists Repertory Theatre); *The Sound of Music*, *The Addams Family*, *Ripper* (Broadway Rose Theatre Company); *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play*, *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Portland Playhouse); *The Three Sisters* (Portland Experimental Theater Ensemble). National Tour: *Defending the Caveman*, Broadway's longest running one-person show. Select regional: *Timeless: Barbara Streisand* (Staples Center), *Sweet Charity* (Red Mountain Theatre Company), *One Sunday in Mississippi* (The Kohl Players). Film: *Lean on Pete* (Film4), *North Starr* (Sundance, 2008). TV: *Portlandia*. Proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

## **Duncan Macmillan**

### **Writer**

Plays include: *People, Places and Things* (2015-2017, National Theatre/Wyndham's Theatre, West End); *1984*, adapted from George Orwell (2013-2017, Headlong/Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company, West End, Broadway, international tours, co-adapted/co-directed with Rob Icke); *Every Brilliant Thing* (2013-2017, Paines Plough/Pentabus Theatre, Edinburgh Festival, UK and



international tours, HBO); *City of Glass*, adapted from Paul Auster (2017, 59 Productions, HOME and Lyric Hammersmith); *2071*, co-written with Chris Rapley (2014-2015, The Royal Court/Hamburg Schauspielhaus); *The Forbidden Zone* (2014-2016, Salzburg Festival and Schaubühne Berlin); *Wunschloses Unglück*, adapted from Peter Handke (2014, Burgtheater Vienna); *Reise durch die Nacht*, adapted from Friederike Mayröcker (2012-2014, Schauspiel Köln, Festival d'Avignon, Theatertreffen); *Lungs* (2011-2016, Paines Plough and Sheffield Theatres/Studio Theatre, Washington, DC); and *Monster* (2006, Royal Exchange Theatre).

## **Jonny Donahoe**

### **Writer**

Jonny Donahoe is an actor, comedian and writer best known for his work with musical comedy act *Jonny & the Baptists*, with whom he has toured extensively in the UK and internationally, as well as performing numerous times on BBC Television, Channel 5 (UK) and BBC Radio 4. Jonny co-wrote (with Duncan Macmillan) the international hit show *Every Brilliant Thing* and performed it more than 350 times, on four different continents. His performance was also filmed and adapted into an HBO TV special, and he was nominated for Drama Desk, Off Broadway Alliance and Lucille Lortel Awards for Best Solo Performance for the role. Other credits include writing and performing in *Thirty Christmases* (Old Fire Station Theatre), *The World Must Be Peopled* (nabokov/Soho Theatre), and the short plays *Real Fly Guy* (Pleasance Theatre) and *Guy Fawkes Night* (Old Vic Theatre). His latest play, *Working Christmas*, will premiere at Old Fire Station Theatre later this year.

## **Rose Riordan**

### **Director**

Rose is in her 20th season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory, where she serves as associate artistic director and has previously directed *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*, *The Passion Play*, *Telethon* and *The Receptionist*. 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 upcoming production of *Kodachrome*, as well as *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*. Rose has also directed some of the staged readings for JAW festivals: *The Thugs* (2005), *Telethon* (2006), *A Story About a Girl* (2007), *99 Ways to F\*\*\* a Swan* (2009), *The North Plan* (2010), *San Diego* (2012), *The People's Republic of Portland* (2012), *Mai Dang Lao* (2013) and *A Life* (2014). She enjoys being part of a company

committed to new work and having a beautiful building in which to work.

## **Derek Easton**

### **Scenic Designer**

Derek is excited to be working as a scenic designer at The Armory for the first time, starting small and looking forward to the next opportunity. Derek has also been The Armory's technical director for the last two years. His past credits include scenic, lighting and video design for over 50 shows at Theatre Cedar Rapids in Iowa, as well as being the company's technical director for seven years. Prior to that, Derek worked for Actors Theatre of Louisville's lighting department and did lighting design work with Aspen Music Festival and School's opera program, Theatreworks, in Colorado Springs and StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville. If interested in seeing more of his work, visit [derek-easton.com](http://derek-easton.com).

## **Em Douglas**

### **Lighting Designer**

Em is delighted to be making their design debut at The Armory. Previous lighting design credits include various productions at University of Portland and Michael O'Neill's *Journey of a Clown*. They have traveled with performances of Merideth Kaye Clark's *BLUE* as the stage manager and lighting technician. This is their third season as master electrician here in the Ellyn Bye Studio, and their first season as associate lighting supervisor. They would like to thank Rose and Liam for this opportunity and Em, Jessica, Bailey and Miles for their constant love and support.

## **Casi Pacilio**

### **Sound Designer**

Casi's home base is The Armory, where recent credits include *Lauren Weedman Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Wild and Reckless*, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, *The Oregon Trail*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Great Expectations*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*; *Constellations*, *A Small Fire* and *Chinglish* with composer Jana Crenshaw; and eleven 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 *Bigmorgasbord-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). 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.

## **Jamie Lynne Simons**

### **Stage Manager**

Jamie is delighted to return to The Armory after being part of the 2016 JAW festival. She has a memory bank filled with an endless amount of brilliant things just from the nearly half a decade of working on cruise ships where she traveled as far west as Tasmania and east to St. Petersburg, Russia. The human experience is beautiful and strange. Many thanks to those who support others who are struggling. Other local credits: Artists Repertory Theatre, Third Rail Repertory Theatre, Portland Playhouse, Chamber Music Northwest and OHSU, where she aids in the education of medical students. She has a B.F.A. in Applied Theater Arts from The

University of the Arts, Philadelphia, and serves as co-vice chair of the local liaison committee for Actors' Equity Association.

## **Danny Rosales**

### **Production Assistant**

Danny is excited to be making his debut at The Armory straight out of college. Born and raised in Oregon, he is a recent graduate of Portland State University with a degree in theater arts. During his time at PSU, he stage managed many shows. His favorites include *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Eurydice* and *Sons of the Prophet*. When he's not busy working on shows, you can usually find him either playing the piano or eating ice cream. Silliness aside, Danny is grateful to be working on this fantastic show with such amazing people. Lastly, he would like to thank his friends and family for all their love and support.

## **SPONSOR STATEMENT**

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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.