

THE MELTING POT

BY ISRAEL ZANGWILL

ADAPTED & DIRECTED BY JESSE BERNSTEIN



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present



THE MELTING POT

by Israel Zangwill

Directed by
Jesse Bernstein

**Stage Manager &
Yiddish Consultant**
Sophie Koester

Production Manager
Hunter Smith

Scenic Design
Meghan Jones

Dramaturg
Ann Gardner

Costume Design
Becky Wetzel

Sound Design
Finn Powers

Lighting Design
Tydell Williams

Fight Director
Eli Lynn

Intimacy Director
KO O'Rourke

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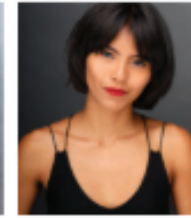
J. Hernandez



Adam
Galloway



Jessy Gruver



Lexi
Thammavong



Eli Lynn



Adam Pelta-
Pauls



Brian McCann

Cast

(In order of appearance)

Mendel Quixano:

J. Hernandez*

Kathleen:

Jessy Gruver*

Vera Ravendal:

Lexi Thammavong

Frau Quixano:

Brian McCann

David Quixano:

Adam Galloway*

Quincy Davenport:

Eli Lynn

Herr Pappelmeister:

Adam Pelta-Pauls

Baron Ravendal:

Brian McCann

**Appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional
Actors and Stage Managers of the United States*

Time & Place

The Richmond, non-Jewish section of New York
1908

Director's Note

When I first read Zangwill's play, I was intrigued by so many things: a British playwright espousing about the promise of America, the unique framing of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish experience within the main character, and the timeliness of its story.

I wondered: what does it mean to wrestle with Zangwill's message and the characters' hopes in 2026? There will be plenty of fodder for the post-show conversations!

The show aligns with Theatre Ariel's mission of telling stories inspired by the Jewish experience, and I thought partnering with PAC would be great because the play aligns with their mission of reviving little known classics, as well. Zangwill's play was a major hit in 1908 and popularized the idea of America as a melting pot. This production is an opportunity to expose both our audiences to this play, to build a broader community, and allows us to stage a show neither company might have the resources for individually.

To do it at the tail end of the semiquincentennial feels fitting given the show's themes. We knew there was a history at the heart of the play that made us want to find a non-traditional space for the performances. The Arch Street Meeting House is a historic venue, a home for a group of people who came to America seeking religious freedom, and so it felt like a perfect setting.

-- Jesse Bernstein

Special Thanks

Jennifer Lee Gray and everyone at Arch Street Meeting House, Johnny Fernandez, the Civic front desk staff, Four Season Campground, Dana Liu

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The Metaphor of *The Melting Pot*

While the metaphor of America as a "melting pot" was not created by playwright Israel Zangwill, it was popularized by his play. Steel and metal alloys were at the forefront of the American imagination in 1908. There were lots of jobs in steel, and Andrew Carnegie's massive fortune and philanthropic work were the product of the steel industry. People would have understood that melting metal was unfathomably hot and incredibly dangerous. They would have known that making a new alloy involved a lot of trial and error and that there would always be **slag**, impurities that just couldn't fit and floated to the top to be removed.

The term "melting pot" fell out of fashion in the 1960s and 1970s as later generations argued that being an American should not involve the erasure of one's ethnic identity. The metaphor was changed to that of a "salad bowl" where each element retains its identity but together they make a delicious whole.



"The Jew Problem"

"The Jew problem" is a corruption of what was originally intended to be an intellectual inquiry into "The Jewish Question," a political, philosophical and often economic debate, starting in the 19th century and positing that the existence of a Jewish minority in a given country was a "problem" that required a solution. A Jewish homeland was one solution often raised. However, the Nazis' "final solution" made it clear that the time had come to stop debating this question intellectually, and thus Israel was established in 1948.

Purim

Purim is a joyous holiday celebrating Jewish survival. Royal vizier Haman, angered that Mordecai, a royal favorite and cousin to Queen Esther, will not bow to him, decides to exact revenge on the whole Jewish population of Persia, but Esther and Mordecai foil his plot, revealing his plan to the King who then executes Haman. The word *Purim* refers to the *lots* that Haman casts to choose the day of execution. While there have been many customs associated with Purim over the centuries, the most observed today are wearing costumes, enjoying *hamantaschen* ("Haman's pockets" - triangular pastries filled with fruit), and performing works of charity. Also important is the reading of the Megillah (or, *scroll*) of Esther, which records this story. Whenever the name of Haman is read, the congregation makes noise to blot out his name.



Kishinev

In 1903, Kishinev (modern-day Chisinau, Moldova) was known for being the site of the most horrific pogrom against Jews in modern history, prior to the

Holocaust. It featured heavily in the American newspapers of William Randolph Hearst, increasing sympathy and alarm for Jews in Russia, and it led to the immigration of many Russian Jews into the United States.

Revolutionist

In pre-Soviet Russia, the word might refer to a wide range of anti-Tsarist movements that varied in their tactics from measured political action to violent overthrow. The General Jewish Labour Bund was one such group, and for many years, they worked closely with the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, some members of which would become the successful Bolshevik leaders of Soviet Russia. The association began to fray in 1903 when the labor congress rejected the Bund's participation.

About the Bund: The Bund was extremely successful in uniting Jews from across Europe. A secular organization, they advocated for preserving a cultural Jewish identity while embracing the nations in which they had settled. They were anti-Zionist, believing instead in the advancement of Jewish culture wherever they lived. Their sheer size and their ability to field a paramilitary defense worried the governments of the many nations they represented.

Guantanamera

Originally a Cuban folksong, the name literally translates to "A Woman from Guantanamo." In the 19th century, the lyrics were changed to those of a poem written by the great Cuban revolutionary, Jose Marti, aligning the song with Cuban peasants and the world's poor. Marti's death, during a battle against the imperialist Spanish government, galvanized Cuba's fight for independence. American folksinger Pete Seeger helped popularize the song which he hoped Americans would sing in Spanish, in solidarity with the people of Cuba. It has become an anthem for immigrants, workers and equal rights worldwide.



About the author: Israel Zangwill

Israel Zangwill was an English-Jewish writer and intellectual. Often described as a Zionist, his thinking underwent many revolutions on the idea of a Jewish homeland. In the late 19th century, he espoused the idea that the Jews should be given the land that was at the time called Palestine. He believed, as many did, that this land was virtually uninhabited. *Give the land without a people to a people without a land*, as the slogan went.

By 1905, he had learned differently. It was clear to him at that point that over a half-million Arabs were already living there. He believed it was foolish to imagine they would abandon the land to give the Jews a homeland, and even more foolish to suggest that these two peoples share the land. *The Melting Pot* was written in the wake of that realization, when America might have started to seem like a good option for Jews.

Who's Who

Adam Galloway (David) (he/him) strives to captivate audiences by bringing to bear a dynamic range that spans many genres. His work reflects his passion for storytelling and his dedication to crafting compelling performances for the stage and screen. Whether in an epic tale of fantasy, a modern comedy, a drawing room drama, or a sci-fi thriller, he wears the mantle of his five watch-words as an artist: Honor, Valor, Passion, Joy, and Hope. Recent credits include: Television - Mr. Robot (Co-star; USA Network); Regional Theater - Vinny in *The Odd Couple* (Plays and Players), Thomas in *Alabama Story* (South Camden Theatre Company), Harker in *Dracula*, Man in *Gint*, and Malcolm in *Macbeth* (The Ritz Theatre Company), Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Berenger in *Rhinoceros* (The Onomatopoeia Theatre Company), Scott in *The Warrior Heroes of Kala Kay* (New York Theater Festival), Noah in *Black Hollow* (The Argo Collective).

Jessy Gruver (Kathleen) (she/her) is excited to be working again with PAC and Theater Ariel! Recent theater credits include *Man of La Mancha* and *Dancing Lessons* at Montgomery Theater, *Countess in All's Well with Shakespeare* in Clark Park, *Camila* in *In the Heights* with Bristol Riverside Theatre, *Alma* in *Alma* at Passage Theatre, the *Stepmother* in *Into the Woods* at Arden Theatre, *Clotaldo* in *Life is a Dream* with EgoPo Classic Theatre, and *Valentina* in the world premiere of *Extreme Home Makeover* with Theatre Exile. She has performed with the Walnut Street Theatre South Pacific, Arden Theatre *Candide*, Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Seussical*, Teatro del Sol *Oedipus el Rey*, PIFA/Kimmel Center Crystal Palace, Bristol Riverside Theatre *Pride and Prejudice*, *Ragtime*, *Pirates of Penzance*, and the Venetian Macao Resort, among others. Jessy is also a burlesque artist and producer. Much love to P and E. www.JessyGruver.com

J Hernandez (Mendel) (he/him) last worked with PAC in their wild reading of *Dog in the Manger*, serving in the capacity of both director and performer and this is his first time working with Theatre Ariel. Other theaters he's worked for in town include Lantern, Quintessence, Arden, InterAct, and PTC, among others. Many thanks to Jesse, Ann, the cast and crew of *Melting Pot*, and everyone with PAC and Theatre Ariel. Siempre resistir. ♥

Eli Lynn (Quincy/Fight Coordinator) (they/them) is a relentlessly queer actor, award-winning fight director, and IDC/IPEC certified Intimacy Director. Regional credits include: *The Woman Question*, *Peter Panto* (People's Light); *Plantation Black* (InterAct Theatre), *The 39 Steps* (Lantern Theatre); *The Drag* (EgoPo Theatre); *Romeo & Juliet*, *Cymbeline*, *Complete Works ... Abridged*, *Henry IV: Pt 2* (PA Shakespeare Festival); *Fun Home* (New Light Theatre); *The Play That Goes Wrong* (1812 Productions); *Twelfth Night*, *Thrive* (American Shakespeare Center); *The Three Musketeers* (Cleveland Playhouse). They are also an Artistic Associate at Philadelphia Artists' Collective, where they've appeared on stage in *Children of the Sun* and *The Sea Voyage*, appeared in and wrote the multiple Barrymore-winning original *Citrus Andronicus*, and also recently adapted *Cato: Remixed*. Love always to V. Eli-Lynn.com @EverInMotley

Brian McCann (Frau Quixano/Baron) (he/him) is a Philadelphia based actor and artist. He has worked at The Arden, 1812, The McCarter Theater, The Lantern Theater and several others. Brian was part of PAC's inaugural show, The Dutchess of Malfi and Cato (Remixed) marks ten shows with them.

Adam Pelta-Pauls (Pappelmeister) (he/him) is incredibly honoured to be joining Theatre Ariel for a third straight mainstage! He graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, Wales, before spending several years on international touring shows, performing Shakespeare and other works on stages across four continents. Returning to the United States, he moved to Philadelphia, where he now works as an actor and theatre educator in and around the city. He'd like to thank Jesse for the opportunity, as well as his wife, Melissa, and their cats, Maisie and Bootsy, for all their support!

Lexi Thammavong (Vera) (they/she) is a singing actor and playwright based in Philly, their hometown. They obtained their BFA in Musical Theatre with a minor in Creative Writing from The University of the Arts. Performing credits include: This is the Week That Is (1812 Productions); Julius Caesar (Portia/Octavius; DelShakes); The Drag (Marion/Winnie/Inspector; EgoPo); Meeting Murasaki Shikibu (Bookstore Manager; Tiny Dynamite); Head Over Heels (Pamela; Theatre Horizon); Rent (Mimi; Media Theatre); and others. As a lover of Shakespeare, she is passionate about expanding upon and decolonizing the "classics". As a lover of new play development and the devising process, they are also passionate about crafting new work that centers marginalized voices in exciting and expansive ways. Lex is passionate about utilizing multiple disciplines— acting, singing, movement, improvisation, playwriting, etc— to tell provocative, cerebral, and darkly funny stories that push conventions of form.

Jesse Bernstein (Director, Producing Artistic Director of Theatre Ariel) (he/him) Directing credits outside of TA include: The Wanderers (Lantern Theater Company); Gift of the Magi, It's a Wonderful Life, Shipwrecked!, Little Mermaid, Jr., Aladdin, Jr. Honk, Jr. (Walnut Street Theatre); Complete History of Comedy (Abridged) (Cardinal Stage); Peter and the Starcatcher (Drexel University); Heathers: The Musical (Penn Players); Young Voices (Philadelphia Young Playwrights); Secret in the Wings, Mary's Wedding, Achilles in Sparta (NHSI); and the short film "Allergy" (available on YouTube). Jesse is also a writer, teacher and actor. He continues to tour his solo shows, Ethics of the Fathers and The Scribe. www.iamjessebernstein.com

Ann Garner (Dramaturg, PAC Producing Artistic Director) (she/her) has served on PAC's Board since 2018 and became the Producing Artistic Director in 2025. Originally from Western Massachusetts, she has worked on the artistic and administrative sides of several theater companies including the UMass Renaissance Center Theatre Company (co-founder), Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Shakespeare & Company, Hampshire Shakespeare, Chester Theatre Company, and Actors Theatre of Louisville, among others. Ann holds a PhD in Renaissance Drama from UMass Amherst and is an award-winning teacher and writer. Ann also serves as InterAct Theatre's Managing Director and is a founding member of the Philly Resource Sharing Committee.

Sophie Koester (Stage Manager/Yiddish Consultant) (she/her) is a stage manager, Yiddishist, and writer based in Philadelphia. She has over a decade of theatre, clown, dance, and event production experience, the last five of which she's spent in the beautiful City of Sisterly Affection. She has studied Yiddish for almost three years with The Worker's Circle, YIVO, and the Boston Worker's Circle, and organizes with Shtetl Philly, a DIY Yiddish language and culture knowledge-share group. Notable theatrical credits include: Fifth Year Stage Manager at Cannonball Festival, Dramaturge and Costume Designer for The Dybbuk: or, Between Two Worlds with Open Theater Workshop, Assistant Stage Manager for Can't Forget About You with Inis Nua, Production Manager for the inaugural Philadelphia Death and Arts Fest.

Becky Wetzel (Costume Design) (she/her) is a national and regional Costume Designer and visual artist based in the Philadelphia area. She graduated from Temple University with an MFA in Costume Design. She has recently completed designs for Opera Idaho's The Abduction from the Sergalio where she is this season's resident Designer. Locally her upcoming projects are The Old Man and the Old Moon at Hedgerow and Love's Labor's Lost at Drexel University. She enjoys arts and crafts of all kinds, but she can't crochet. Her favorite place to be when not working on exciting things is hiking in the woods with her husband and three pups. She is thankful to be back working with the wonderful people at PAC! As well as making new friends here at Theater Ariel, she is grateful to be included in such a wonderful production.

Meghan Jones (Set Design) (she/her) is elated to be working with Theatre Ariel and PAC. Highlighted designs with PAC include Jane Eyre, and Children of the Sun. Her designs can be seen throughout the Philadelphia region with Montgomery Theater, Quintessence Theatre Group, Inis Nua Theatre Co., Act II Playhouse, Lantern Theater Co., Delaware Theatre Co. Past highlighted designs within the region include The Garbologists (Barrymore Nominated), Children of the Sun, LoveSong, The Hound of The Baskervilles, The Outsider, and Don't Dress for Dinner. She also designs for DeSales University, St. Joe's Prep, and Drexel University. She is an exhibition designer for Embarq Creative. Meghan holds her MFA in Design from Temple University. Most appreciation to her family, Theatre Ariel & PAC's staff, cast, and crew for all their support.

Tydel Williams (Lighting Designer) (he/him) is very excited to join the Philadelphia Artist Collective again for the Production of The Melting Pot. He is a lighting designer based and raised in the Philadelphia area. Notable past theatrical lighting designs include Blues For An Alabama Sky, Crumbs From the Table of Joy, American Moor (Lantern Theater Company), and Children of the Sun (Philadelphia Artists' Collective). He has also served as assistant lighting designer for The Royale (Lantern Theater Company), and Abandon (Theatre Exile). He is eager to continue developing his craft and contributing to the future of theater and live entertainment.

Finn Powers (Sound Design) (they/them) is thrilled to be returning to PAC after previously sound designing The Contrast earlier this year. In addition to a Sound Designer, they also work professionally as a Playwright and a Fight Director,

holding rank as an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors and Fight Directors Canada, and as an Actor Combatant with the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat. Their writing was most recently seen in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival with *A Murder Most Felt*; or, *It's Not Easy Bleeding Green*. Other past works include: Theater: *Urinal* (Philly Fringe); *Macbeth*; *The Handmaid's Tale*; *Constellations*; (Temple University); *Cabaret* (UArts). Film: *The Book Keeper*; *The Believer's Club*.

KO O'Rourke (Intimacy Director) (she/they) Stoked to be a returning collaborator with P.A.C. (*Jane Eyre*, *Children of the Sun*, *CATO (Re)mixed*) and to debut with Theatre Ariel! K.O. is a bicoastal artist and educator. Research focus: acting, movement and intimacy for stage and screen. Active in meditation and yoga studies. Ballroom dance instructor. Language lover (Spanish, Russian, all). Proud AEA and SAG-AFTRA member. MA (Villanova), MFA (Temple). Next up: Jessie Mae in *The Trip to Bountiful*, Act II Playhouse. Cambridge / Autumn in the world premiere production of *Play On!*, Azuka Theatre. Gratitude to the entire *The Melting Pot* production team, cast and crew. Éire go brách, for Dad. Слава Україні, for Mom. To say "Hi!": @kokoactor

Lenna Tran (Assistant Stage Manager) (she/her) is a jack of all trades and resident aficionado of the CCP theater program. She guides students pursuing a technical theater career and leads them to showcase a full production every spring alongside the dedicated directing professors. Leena was an ASM for PAC's *Inheritors*, Class C (*Azuka* and *Simpatico*) and has worked with set designing for Irish Heritage Theater. Leena keeps collaboration at the forefront of her career goals. She strives to meet more creatives, forge connections and create inspiring art in many forms. (IG @Drnquest / Business email stran12916@gmail.com)

The Joey Fischer Mainstage Series *The Melting Pot* is the first production in Theatre Ariel's newly minted *Joey Fischer Mainstage Series*. Joey Fischer was a Loving Brother, Fun and Devoted Uncle, Talented Actor and Singer, Passionate Friend. Joey began acting as a three-year-old, when he sang "I'm A Little Teapot" for anyone who would listen. At age 8, in front of five hundred people at Cain Park Theatre in Cleveland Heights Ohio, he sang "The Wells Fargo Wagon" with Bobby Vinton. By the age of 12, Joey played "Oliver", "Peter Pan" and "Charlie Brown". As a teen-ager, he stole the show as "Annie's dog", in a North Carolina dinner theatre. Joey got professional training in acting at Wiley Theatre and Cain Park Youtheatre in Cleveland and later received an MFA in Theatre from NYU. As a model in SEVENTEEN Magazine, he modeled with Whitney Houston, Phoebe Cates and others. In between modeling and acting gigs in NY and LA, he got jobs as a chef and caterer. But his best role was as an uncle to six nephews and one niece. He mentored them and took them on memorable and adventurous bicycle trips.

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