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THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY

Crystal Field, Director - 155 First Ave., NYC 10003 - (212) 254-1109

<https://www.theaterforthenewcity.net> for immediate release

**THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY TO PRESENT
"THE WAYWARD DAUGHTER OF JUDAH THE PRINCE" BY DOUGLAS LACKEY
DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER HARRINGTON**

Play is sort of a philosopher's "Thelma and Louise" set in the Roman Empire.

September 23 to October 10, 2021

Theater for the New City, 155 First Ave. (at East 10th Street)

Presented by Theater for the New City

Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 3:00 PM

Tickets \$18 general admission, \$12 seniors & students

Buy tickets: <https://www.theaterforthenewcity.net>

Box office phone 212-254-1109

Show's website: <http://www.waywarddaughterofjudah.com>

Running time: 2 hours

Critics are invited on or after September 24.

Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/UZwGePR7j7PQMinH6>

New York, August 26 -- "The Wayward Daughter of Judah the Prince" by Douglas Lackey is a high-spirited, philosophically-minded tale that begins in Palestine in the late second century C.E. Hannah is the dutiful and learned daughter of Judah the Prince, compiler of The Mishnah--the core section of The Talmud. She serves her father as his loyal daughter and scribe. When she is caught in the embrace of Sarah, her Christian slave girl, she is faced with difficult choices: living down the "sin" by remaining in her father's household to care for him (and marrying a nerdy rabbinical student he favors), or escaping with Sarah to far-away regions of the Mediterranean for a series of haphazard collisions with ideas of the time, such as Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. What develops is a sort of Thelma and Louise in the Roman Empire, in which Hannah measures herself against the conflicting philosophies of the period. The idea is for audiences to savor how these clashes of ideas affect the emotional equilibrium of a strictly brought up Jewish girl and her Christian companion. Theater for the New City will present the work September 23 to October 10, directed by Alexander Harrington, who has collaborated with Lackey on three prior plays of ideas at TNC. All were critically praised as explosive dramas of doctrines, romance, and politics.

Playwright **Douglas Lackey** has two lives, as a playwright and a philosophy professor. He is a Professor of Philosophy at Baruch College, CUNY, where he has taught since 1972. But he has an 18 year relationship with Theater for the New City, which has presented all his plays to-date. His first play presented there, "Kaddish in East Jerusalem" (2003), dealt with issues of the Second Intifada. His "Daylight Precision" (2014) was a historical drama examining "just war" theories through an unsung hero of World War II, Gen. Haywood Hansell. In 2018, his "Arendt-Heidegger: A Love Story" dramatized the unlikely romance between Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. In 2019, TNC presented his "Ludwig and Bertie," a play that charted the forty-year love/hate relationship between Bertrand Russell and his most famous student, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

To Lackey, the dichotomy of history and humanities versus the sciences is the central conflict of our civilization, as is the question of what is truth: is it particular or universal? So he dreamed up a play based on someone testing the primacy of inherited truth by challenging it with the rich brew of ideas "that were banging around in the late Second Century."

Lackey says that the title character Hannah is based on two models. He writes, "In the first half of the play, Hannah is like Yentl, the Yeshiva girl who yearns only for the Torah. In the second half, Yentl morphs into Hypatia, the ancient mathematician and astronomer who met a tragic end at the directive of Kyril, bishop of Alexandria. The invented character of Sarah provides a foil for probing interfaith dialogue. As for Judah, he is too big to be meddled with. I have left him as I think he was. "

Hannah's Jewish learning provides an effective foil against the ideologies she confronts in the play until she meets Plotinus in Rome. Then her devotion changes from her father's creed to aesthetics and empirical science. Her form of rebellion, triggered by spiritual hunger, is a repeating cultural phenomenon through the ages and has recently been dramatized in such iconic productions as "Unorthodox" and "Shtisel."

Lackey writes, "I am grateful to Crystal Field and Theater for the New City for encouraging me to present this story. TNC is willing to take on my "comedies of ideas" and these are quite different from the contemporary obsession with those of jumbled identities and failed relationships. Kudos to a theater that will buck the mainstream."

Director **Alexander Harrington** staged the premieres of Douglas Lackey's "Ludwig and Bertie" in 2019, "Arendt-Heidegger: A Love Story" in 2018 and "Daylight Precision" in 2014. He has directed in New York theaters at Metropolitan Playhouse, La MaMa, The Culture Project, Queens Theatre, and The Actors Studio and at regional theaters. He founded The Eleventh Hour Theatre Company and was 2012 artistic director of the student ensemble at HB Studio. He has directed his own adaptations of Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov," Chekhov's short story "The Kiss" and a chapter from Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio" titled "The Philosopher," and his translation of Aeschylus' "Agamemnon." He wrote "The Great Society," a play about Lyndon Johnson [not to be confused with Robert Schenkkan's play of the same name on the same subject], which premiered at the Harold Clurman Theater in 2013. Harrington takes a special interest in classics and has directed numerous productions of Shakespeare and Greek tragedies. He has also developed and directed numerous contemporary plays and is a widely published essayist and critic. (<http://alecharrington.wixsite.com/alexanderharrington>)

This production has a commissioned original score by **Michael Sirota**, a principal composer of La MaMa's Great Jones Repertory, who scored Harrington's Eleventh Hour Theatre Company production of Aeschylus' "Agamemnon" at La MaMa in 2009. Sirota's score uses ancient Coptic melodies that may have originated in late antiquity.

The actors are: Jessica Crandall as Hannah, Amanda Kristin Nichols as Sarah, Stan Buturla as Judah, Mohammad Saleem as Jonah & Basilides, Anthon Mondesir as Plotinus & Kyril, and Michael Bradley, Xan Oliva and Asel Otunchieva in the Ensemble.

Scenic Design is by Jon DeGaetano. Projection Design is by Michael Redman. Costume Design is by Anthony Paul-Cavaretta. Lighting Design is by Alexander Bartenieff. Choreography is by Federico Restrepo. Producer/Production Manager is Taylor Jo Poer. Production Stage Manager is Ericka Conklin. Assistant Director is Alyssa Simon.

Tickets to "The Wayward Daughter of Judah the Prince" are \$18 general admission and \$12 students/seniors and available through the show's website, www.waywarddaughterofjudah.com and TNC's website, www.theaterforthenewcity.net. The TNC box office is 212-254-1109.

Critics are invited on or after September 24.

Photos are available for download at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/UZwGePR7j7PQMinH6>.

**REVIEWS OF FORMER TNC PRODUCTIONS BY DOUGLAS LACKEY
DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER HARRINGTON**

LUDWIG AND BERTIE, 2019

"Lackey is a master at bringing philosophy out of the dusty corners of academia and putting them on a very passion filled center stage. As with his previous works produced at Theater for a New City, 'Daylight Precision' (2014) and 'Arendt-Heidegger: A Love Story' (2018), "Ludwig and Bertie" is a victory for smart theater." -- Rachel de Aragon, Berkshire Fine Arts

"The play is a remarkable achievement on two levels: on one level, it provides an exhaustive explication of their respective philosophies (which even those most familiar with the concepts underlying analytic philosophy should find informative and educational). And on another level, it also provides an entertaining theatrical experience for those less committed to the nuances of philosophical thought in its explorations of these men's personae." -- Alan Miller, A Seat On The Aisle

"This is a fascinating play with a solid cast. It will leave you pondering the philosophical theories for days." -- Brenda Repland, Eyes on World Cultures.

"Both [Russell and Wittgenstein] are considered major 20th century philosophers; their relationship, from their first meeting in Cambridge in 1911 until Wittgenstein's death in 1951, underwent the human and intellectual turbulence usually encountered between father and son....The juxtaposition of these contradictory personalities promises explosive drama, perhaps more than can be contained in one session of theater....Alexander Bartenieff's subtle lighting design helps to sharpen the attention while the costume design by Anthony Paul-Cavaretta beautifully adds to the personality of a character as well as the shifts of period style in the play....The actors maintain the sharp personality contrasts and manage the dialogue alternating between rather complicated philosophical theorems (in merciful snippets) and private conundrums with persuasive clarity. -- *Beate Hein Bennet, New York Theatre Wire.*

ARENDT-HEIDEGGER: A LOVE STORY, 2018

"Arendt-Heidegger: A Love Story," though small scenewise, is huge in its character-driven, thought-provoking ideas, many of which, like racism (both genuine and opportunistic), along with the emergence of right-wing autocratic nationalism, like a virus gone wild, appears to be on the rise around the globe. It is a timely play to say the least. -- Edward Rubin, Theatrecriticism.com

This play is mesmerizing in its many now-familiar aspects to our current situation. The casting is perfect, making the story ever so plausible. " --- Brenda Repland, Eyes on World Cultures

"Our highest recommendation! A thoroughly enthralling drama of ideas, romance, and politics – worthy of the great tradition of Shaw and Ibsen. This show will engage your heart and your mind at the deepest levels." -- Ronald Gross, NY Theatre Buying Guide

"Author Douglas Lackey and director Alexander Harrington have managed to extract a thought provoking stimulating performance from two of the most controversial public intellects of the twentieth century: Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), a German-Jewish philosopher and social theorist and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), one of the most renowned German philosophers to have succumbed to Nazism. The subject of their romantic entanglement, in conjunction with their political trajectories over the course of forty years, from the mid 1920s to 1964, is the dramatic core of this play in a series of 23 concisely scripted scenes." --- Beate Hein Bennett, NY Theatre Wire

DAYLIGHT PRECISION, 2014

"Sweeps us back to an all but forgotten World War II and its tangle of moral questions that still won't go away"

– Jerry Tallmer, NY Theatre Wire

"Lackey's play and the direction by Alexander Harrington and fine work by the ensemble cast allow [General Haywood] Hansell to soar back in command as we appreciate his efforts and are reminded that bombing women and children serves no rational military purpose." -- Carole Di Tosti, NYC Skyline

"In light of today's stealth and drone bombings in the middle east, the play is a meditation on the value, or lack thereof, of collateral damage in war....One walks away from the experience feeling more intimately involved in the day-to-day anxieties of the war, from which there is now so much distance, and extremely grateful for not having had to been involved."--JK Clarke, Theatre Pizzazz

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