

La MaMa

Experimental Theatre Club
Presents



ABOVE GROUND – NOT EXACTLY A COMEDY

A performance about aging created by the senior acting workshop
YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO PLAY

Directed by Nancy Gabor & Paul Binnerts

WITH

Ilana Abramovitch - Susan Binet - Nora Galer - Jonathan Ned Katz
Christine Koenig - Lorraine Marx-Singer - Gloria Miguel
Sally Plass - Joanne Riel - Harold Thomas

Stage Manager: **Sally Plass**

Soundtrack - **Paul Binnerts**; Video Design - **Mourrice Papi**

Graphic Design - **John Turner**; Photography - **Ethan Mass**

Social Media - **Giancarlo Aquino**; Light Board Operator - **Henry Cruz**

Sound (La MaMa) - **Diego Las Heras**; Projection (La MaMa) - **Pearse Redmond**;

Light (La MaMa) - **Rodney Perez/Jack Reynolds**

La MaMa, The Club, 74 East 4th St, New York

Duration of the performance: 70 minutes

No intermission, Talk back: on Sundays

March 13-23, 2025

Director's Notes: Looking in the mirror, one of the players says: "I'm old... older... old..." She can't decide, as if she has a say in the aging process she is facing. Her performance is one of ten 'vignettes' about aging and getting older in ABOVE GROUND, NOT EXACTLY A COM-EDY. Ten stories about how the actors deal with this undeniable fact of life. They are their personal experiences with old age, illness and loss, mixed with childhood memories. These memories give their stories a lightness, that reflects their present vitality.

BIOS

PAUL BINNERTS After a study Dramaturgy, Paul explored the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht in experimental performances: *The Measures Taken* (w. composer Louis Andriessen), *The Exception and the Rule* (w. composer Heiner Goebbels).

As a director/playwright he won European awards with: *Black Box*, *The Same Sea* (based on Amos Oz' novels) and *Mephisto* (based on Klaus Mann's novel). *The Same Sea* (with composer Paul Lansky) was first produced in Toni Morrison's The Atelier at Princeton University, 2004.

Original plays in English: *A Very (c)old Case, Part I & II, Lost & Found, Scenes from the Flood*, Westbeth, Home to the Arts, NYC.

Teaching credits on acting and directing include Universities and Drama schools in The Netherlands, UK, USA, Germany and Japan. His book on acting: *Acting in Real Time* (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2012), describes the techniques and the history of this contemporary form of acting.

His last novel: *Labyrinth of Lies* is published in Dutch, 2021, and in German 2022

NANCY GABOR After a traditional conservatory training, Nancy joined Joseph Chaikin's Open Theater and was part of the ensemble which created *The Serpent*. At La Mama she was part of the company which created the original *Medea* with Andrei Serban and Liz Swados. She had a long relationship with Ellen Stewart who she loved and admired.

As a director Nancy went on to collaborate with Joseph Chaikin, directing him in *The War in Heaven* (Chaikin/Shepard) and *Struck Dumb* (Jean Claude-Van Itallie), at the American Place Theater. They collaborated on an adaption of Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* and played in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp.

Other representative plays as a director are *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, The Glass Menagerie, The House of Bernarda Alba*.

Nancy has taught acting at Amsterdam Theater School, Purchase Conservatory, Princeton University, Warren Robertson.

Nancy and Paul were master teachers in the La MaMa Summer Program in Umbria, Italy.

The Core Technique is the basis of Nancy's work. It stimulates the actor to become present on stage. She started *You're Never Too Old to Play* to explore the creative possibilities of older people. Nancy believes that everybody can play, and that age is no barrier.

MOURRICE PAPI A cinematographer who moves like a shadow, creating an atmosphere of quiet peace where stories unfold naturally, cultivating moments that feel effortless and intentional, whether with actors, during in-depth interviews, or while collaborating with clients, producers, and crew.

He has two decades of experience in commercial and narrative media – including features and short films and is renowned for mastery of handheld movement and precise camera focusing.

Mourrice thrives in environments where collaboration and technical precision elevate storytelling.

ACTORS' BIOS

ILANA ABRAMOVITCH Began performing with the Montreal Children's Theatre, and joined Teatro Arco Iris in Rome, and the Living Theatre on tour in Europe. Aside from her training as a Dance/ Movement therapist, Ilana has a Ph.D. from NYU in Performance Studies and teaches in the CUNY system.

SUSAN BINET Is an octogenarian player. Raised in Ohio and active in community theatre there in 1960's. She is one of the original members in 'You're Never Too Old to Play' group. Many thanks to Ellen Stewart for securing her family into Westbeth Artists Housing in 1970.

NORA GALER Nora Galer is an ethno-linguist who worked in the Amazon Basin and later joined the United Nations. She loves Shakespeare, Proust and her grandkids. Serendipity put the group You're Never Too Old to Play on her path, and she never looked back.

JONATHAN NED KATZ Is an independent scholar and visual artist. In 2013 a solo exhibit of Katz' visual art was held at the Leslie-Lohman Museum, New York City, and Katz published *Coming of Age in Greenwich Village: A Memoir with Paintings*. That show was curated by the noted art historian Jonathan David Katz who praised J. N. Katz's art for its "passion, sensuality, and immediacy," (the two Katz's are not related). He has been a proud member of You're Never Too Old to Play since 2021

CHRISTINE KOENIG Was part of the performance art movement in downtown Manhattan in the early 80's, working with The Sleazebuckets, the National Black Touring Company, and performance artists Diane Torr and Lizzie Olesker in the gender-bending performance art piece, *Girls Will Be Boys, Will Be Queens*. Koenig is one of the creators of *Cancer Cabaret*, awarded a Summer Play Lab Residency and Performance in July 2023 at the Ancram Opera House in Ancram, NY. She cherishes being a part of YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO PLAY.

LORRAINE MARX-SINGER Studied acting with Uta Hagen, Joseph Chaikin and Nancy Gabor and directing with Lee Strasberg. Debut in *Peter and the Wolf* as the Duck. Taught acting and directed plays on Long Island and in NYC and acted with Shakespeare & Company in Western Massachusetts.

GLORIA MIGUEL Is from the Kuna and Rappahannock nations and is an actor, playwright, and teacher. She is a respected elder in the Indigenous arts community in NYC. Gloria is a founding member of Spiderwoman Theater, the longest running women's Indigenous theater in the Americas. She has toured extensively throughout the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and to Beijing for the 4th World Conference on Women. Gloria was awarded an Honorary DFA from Miami University in Ohio and is a lifetime member of the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute.

SALLY PLASS Is an actor having spent five years with You're Never Too Old to Play, doing two of their shows at Little Island, One at Westbeth and Above Ground at La Mama. A great honor. She is also a member of The Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Her Off and Off-Off-Broadway life has been spent as a Production Stage Manager (even at La MaMa in the '70s) and props designer as *The Proper Ms. Plass*. She now, with Founder Casey Childs, is the Director of the Primary Stages Off-Broadway Oral History Project.

JOANNE RIEL Joanne has been making up songs since she was a little girl, and is the creator of *Flying Teapot*, musical playgroups with young children. It's a dream come true for her to be playing in *Above Ground* at La Mama and beyond grateful to Nancy Gabor, Paul Binnerts.

HAROLD THOMAS Fashion producer and Senior Curator/Programmer for Dwyer Cultural Center in Harlem. Facilitator of art, cultural and educational projects and events for over 50 years. Harold is thankful to work with Nancy and Paul and his sensational seniors at La MaMa.

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BIG THANK YOU'S

For their support over the 5 years of its existence to: George Cominskie; WARC - Westbeth Residents Artist Council; Peter Madden (Westbeth Management), Michael Wiggins of Little Island, Eric Bottcher, 3rd District Councilman of the New York City Council. And to MIA YOO, Artistic Director, and Staff of La MaMa, including Beverly Petty, Managing Director; Sarah Murphy, Production; Denise Greber, Publicity; Erick Alonso, Marketing.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE OF WESTBETH AND ALL THE DONORS WHOSE GENEROUS GIFTS HAVE MADE ABOVE GROUND AT LA MAMA POSSIBLE. THANK YOU!

Press Representative: Jonathan Slaff & Associates, www.jsnyc.com

A full program with information on this production can be found on the *Above Ground - not exactly a comedy* page of the La MaMa website.

In addition you can scan the QR code Poster located in the theatre lobby for access to the digital program.

LA MAMA



RESTORE A BUILDING REMAKE A WORLD



Rendering: 74 East 4th St.

La MaMa's historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street underwent an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit www.lamama.org/remakeaworld

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The Downstairs

Metamorphoses
March 7-23, 2025
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Above Ground
- not exactly a comedy
March 13-23, 2025
The Club

La MaMa Kids:
Travels to the South Pole
March 15, 2025
Community Arts Space

Infinity
March 20-23, 2025
The Downstairs

Swallows
March 28-April 6, 2025
The Downstairs

COMING SOON

Sur
March 29-April 6, 2025
Ellen Stewart Theatre

La MaMa Kids:
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April 5, 2025
Community Arts Space

La MaMa Moves! Dance Festival
April 10-May 4, 2025
All 4 La MaMa Venues

Class Dismissed
April 18- May 4, 2025
Ellen Stewart Theatre

EXAM
May 8-11, 2025
Ellen Stewart Theatre

Those Who Remained
May 8-18, 2025
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