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Theatre Reviews

**Lauren Gunderson's *The Revolutionists*, Produced by Santa Clara Theatre and Dance Department
Spring 2020
Directed by Michael Zampelli, S.J.**



Director's Notes from *The Revolutionists* Program

Michael Zampelli, S.J.

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When the Department of Theatre and Dance determined that the 2019–2020 season would feature the work of women playwrights in order to appropriately celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage in the United States, I chose to submit a piece by the wildly popular Bay Area playwright, Lauren Gunderson. *The Revolutionists* arrested me not only because of its reflections on the purpose of art and its comingling of contemporary and historical issues of justice but also because of the juiciness of the women's roles. I knew that these characters, both comic and dramatic, would

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be a feast for the young women in our department. I was so very excited to collaborate with them in staging what the playwright calls “a comedy, a quartet, a revolutionary dream fugue, a true story.”

I cast the play on March 16th, only a few hours before the shelter-in-place orders were to take effect. With the move to online instruction and the cancellation of large public gatherings, we knew that *The Revolutionists* could not happen—at least not in the way that we had anticipated. But all of us involved in the enterprise determined that we wanted to at least try to tell this story, try to give these characters “a local habitation and a name,” try to make whatever offering we could to our various communities whose lives were suddenly out of joint.

So here we find ourselves in a relatively unstable Zoom environment in which four intrepid and committed actors in rooms of their own (in California, Washington, Maryland, and New York) are experimenting with making connections with one another and with those willing to spend time with them. At a time when we are all hungering and thirsting for communion with one another, they invite us to play with them in generating a different kind of “presence” than we have come to expect from the theatre. We would rather be in the same room with you; there is no question about it. But given that that is not possible we reach out to see what is possible. In real ways, we (like the characters in the play) are living in a “reign of terror” and have a stake in the story they tell—a story about becoming more human, about being real, about finding one’s voice, about being sisters. After all, “Who are we without a story?”

Thank you for being here. And enjoy the story.