

THE RETURN OF BENJAMIN LAY

Playhouse Creatures Theatre Company



The Sheen Center for Thought & Culture
March 14 to April 6, 2025

PLAYHOUSE CREATURES THEATRE COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH QUINTESSENCE THEATRE GROUP PRESENT

THE AWARD WINNING LONDON PRODUCTION

MARK POVINELLI IN

THE RETURN OF BENJAMIN LAY

BY NAOMI WALLACE
& MARCUS REDIKER

DIRECTED BY
RON DANIELS

SET DESIGN
PATRICK BLANCHARD
BASED ON ORIGINAL CONCEPT BY
RICCARDO HERNANDEZ

LIGHTING DESIGN
YICHEN ZHOU

SOUND DESIGN
JOHN LEONARD

COSTUME & PROPS
ISOBEL NICOLSON

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR
BILL IRWIN

"MARK POVINELLI
IS AMAZING"
MICHAEL BILLINGTON,
THE GUARDIAN



"A RIVETING
PERFORMANCE
BY POVINELLI"
BROADWAY WORLD UK



MARCH 14 – APRIL 6, 2025 | SHEENCENTER.ORG

A play about **power**



A play about**RESISTANCE**



A play about change



Who was Benjamin Lay?

Benjamin Lay (January 26, 1682–February 8, 1759) was an English-born abolitionist, Quaker, vegetarian, sailor, farmer, animal-rights advocate, anti-racist activist, Little Person, writer and preacher.



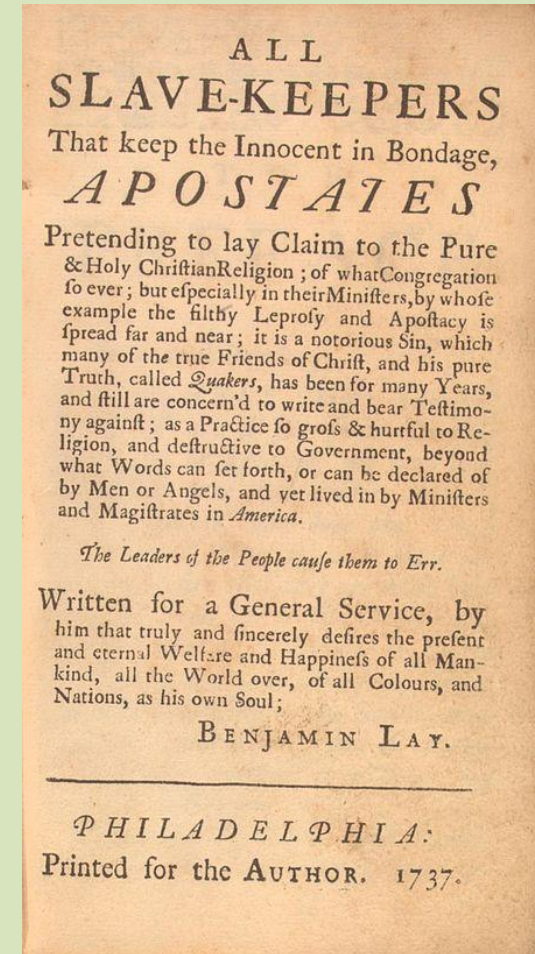
Who was Benjamin Lay?

He moved from England to Barbados, then settled in Pennsylvania in the American colonies. He was upset with his fellow Quakers owning slaves and **preached passionately against racism and slavery.**



Who was Benjamin Lay?

In 1738, he wrote
***“All Slave-Keepers
That Keep the
Innocent in Bondage:
Apostates”*** ~ one of
the first abolitionist
works published in the
Thirteen Colonies.



Who was Benjamin Lay?

“Disparaged and abandoned by his fellow Quakers, Lay eventually helped win the debate over slavery. He wanted to provoke, to unsettle, even to confound — to make people think and act. .. He asked everyone he met, **Which side are you on?**”



For more information on Benjamin Lay, see:

[Benjamin Lay – Wikipedia](#)

[Benjamin Lay | Smithsonian Institution](#)

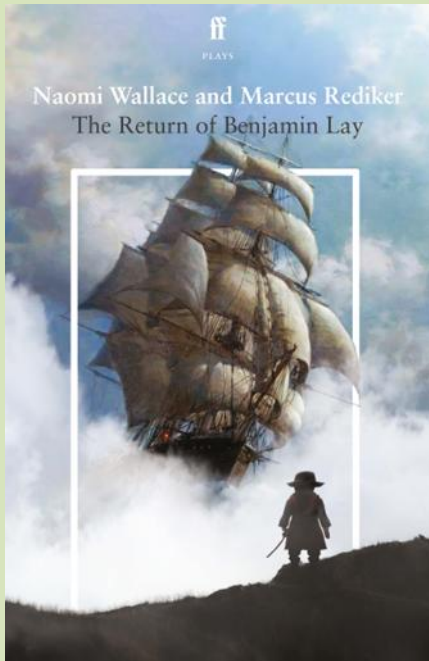
[Opinion | You'll Never Be as Radical as This 18th-Century Quaker Dwarf - The New York Times](#)

[03: Preach against Fighting, yet Receive the Plunder – BENJAMIN LAY](#)
[Speaking Truth to Power is as American as Apple Pie < Literary Hub](#)



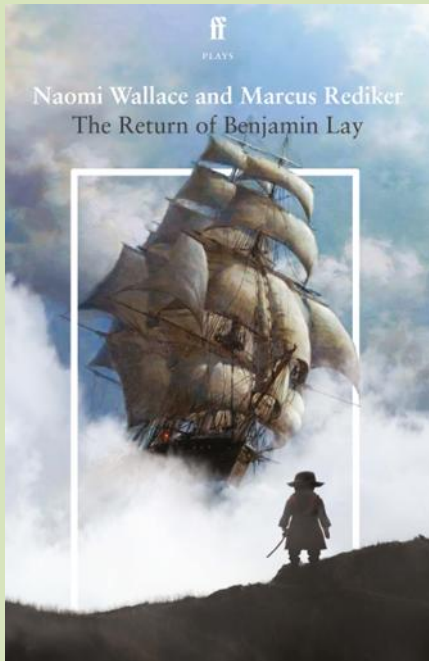
Why write a play about this long-forgotten figure from centuries ago?





“It is my hope that the play will inspire audiences to be, as Dr. King called it, ‘extremists...for the extension of justice.’”



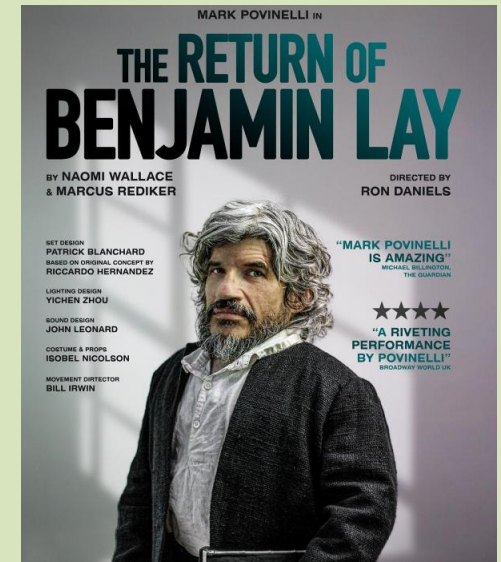


“He helps us to understand what was politically and morally possible in the first half of the 18th century — and what may be possible now. It is more than we think.”





A collaboration between Obie-award winning playwright **Naomi Wallace** and renowned writer and labor historian **Marcus Rediker**



What do these writers share in common?

... an interest in **social justice**

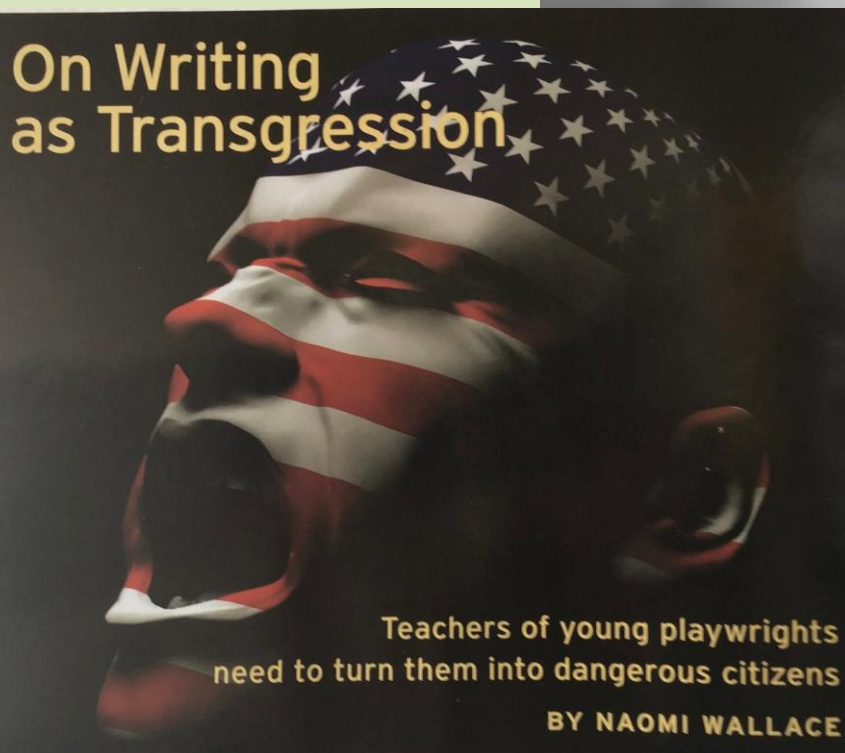
... a fascination with **resilience**

... a belief in the power of “ordinary people” to **change the course of history**

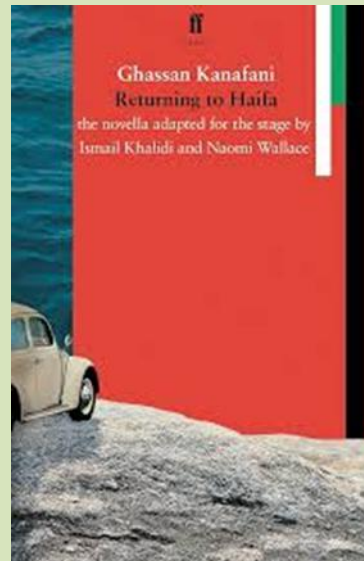


Naomi Wallace – playwright, poet, and screenwriter





Her award-winning plays range from
17th C England and “the heart of
America” to the contemporary
Middle East.





A fierce focus on the (marginalized)
body and what it reveals...



A focus on the (unexpected) power
of the “**least**” among us.

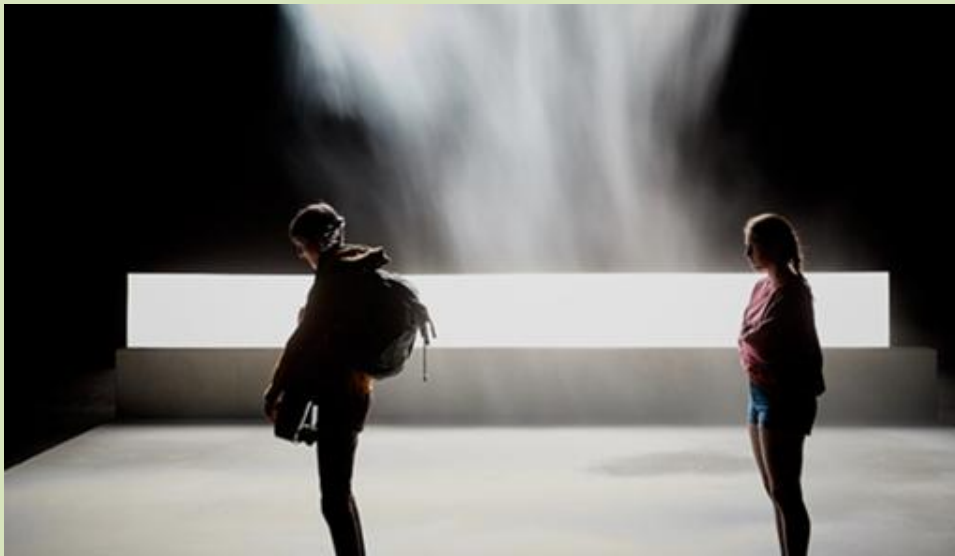


The process of finding voice...
forging connection ... and **pushing**
BACK!!

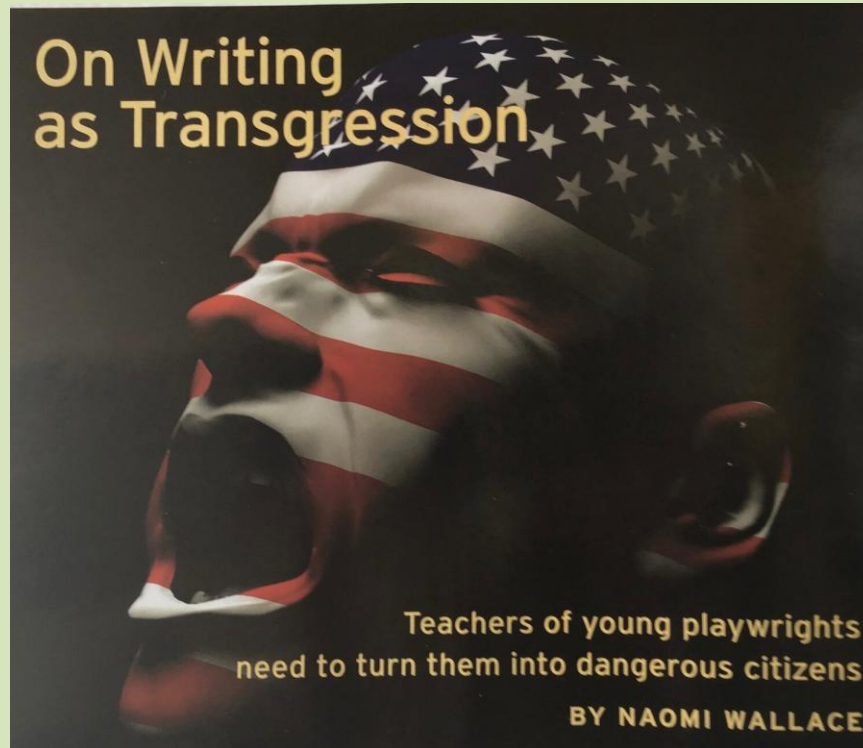


A fascination with **history**

“I like the notion of an **historically dimensioned space**.
...**Who rises up from that space?**” (Wallace qtd. in
Macdonald 94)



An advocate **for change...** in ART and in LIFE.



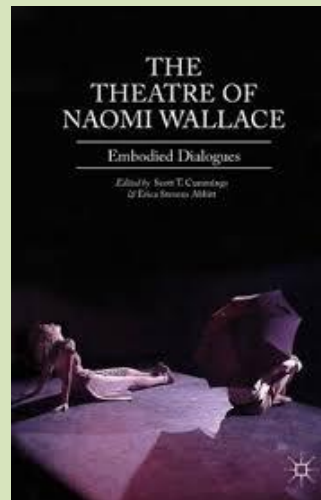
For more information on playwright Naomi Wallace, see:

[BIO — Naomi Wallace](#)

[AMERICAN THEATRE | Radical Vision and Form: A Conversation With Naomi
Wallace](#)

[AMERICAN THEATRE | Let the Right One In
On Writing as Transgression — Naomi Wallace](#)

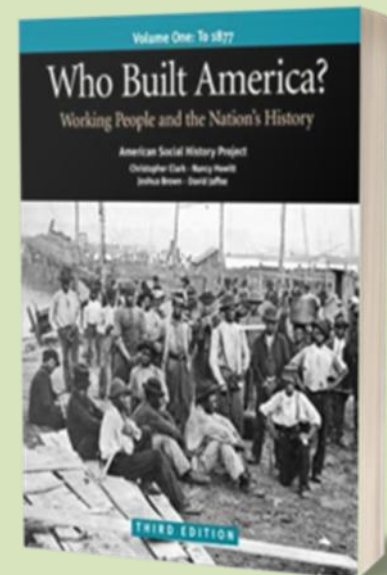
[AMERICAN THEATRE | Trump-ocalypse Now?](#)



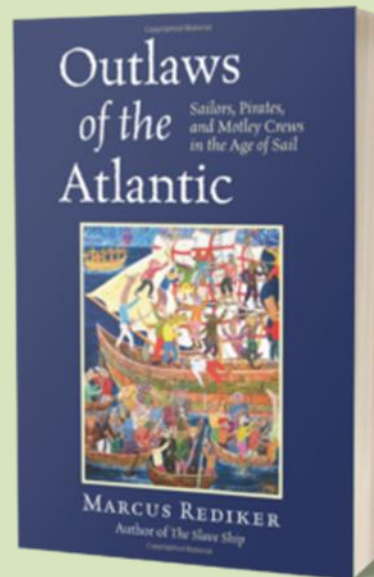
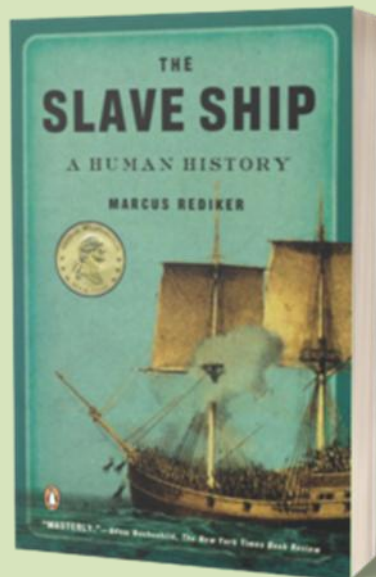
Marcus Rediker,
writer, historian,
activist, teacher,
playwright



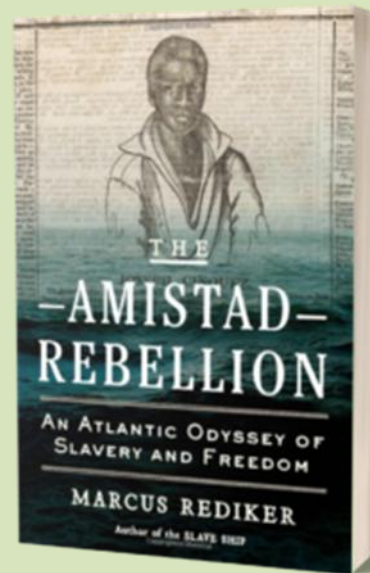
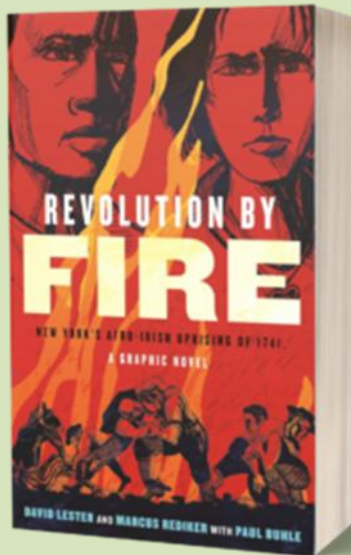
Dedicated to the notion of
“history from below”
the untold, hidden stories of the
working people who built this
nation..

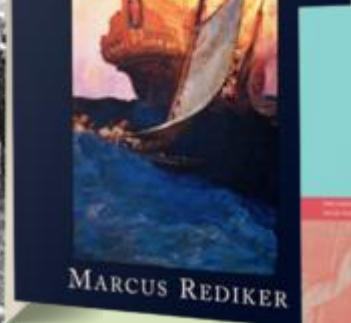
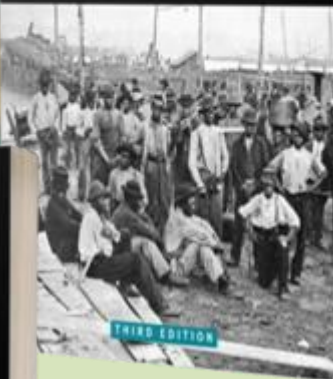
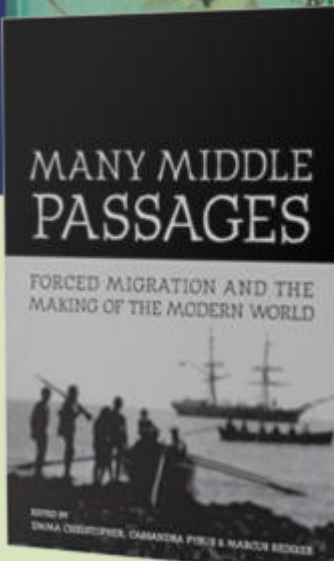
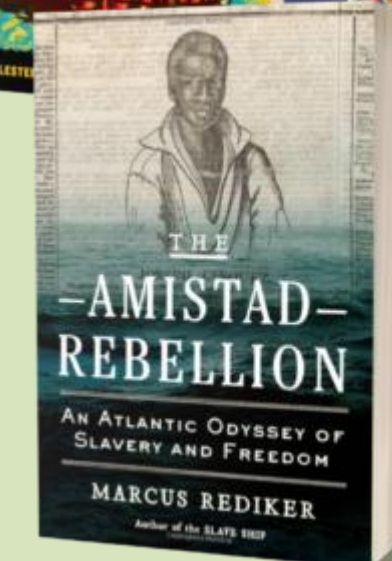
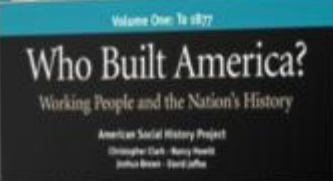
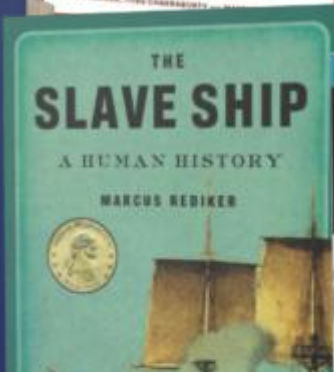
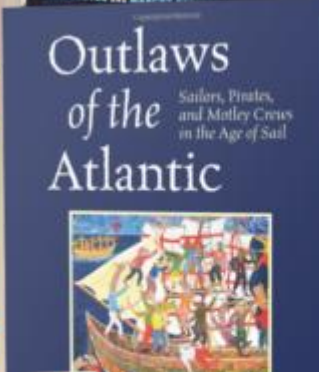
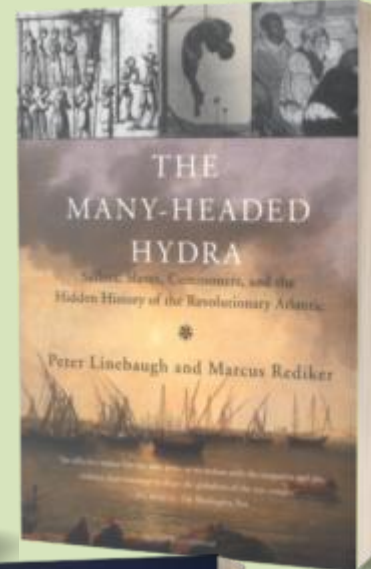
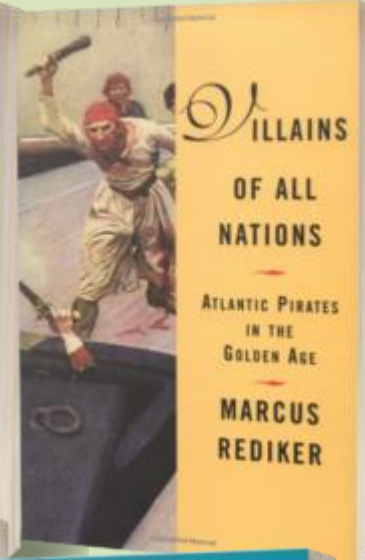
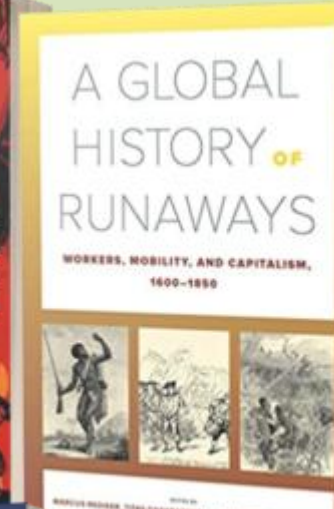
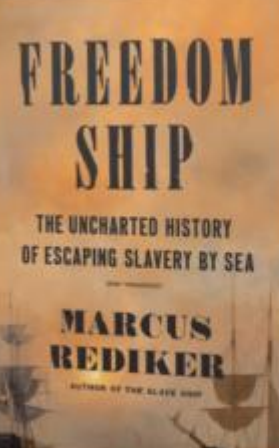


A fascination with history of the Atlantic: pirates, commerce and the “hidden” labor of enslaved people whose toil shaped this country.

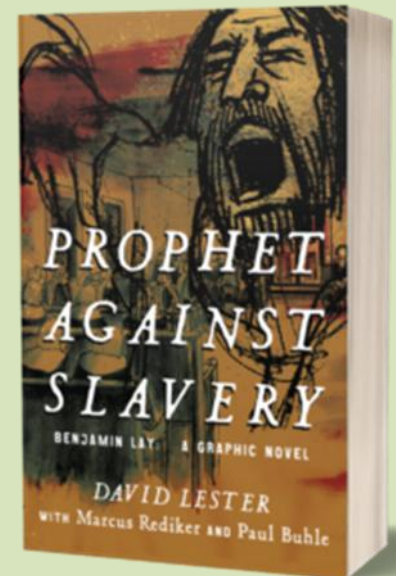
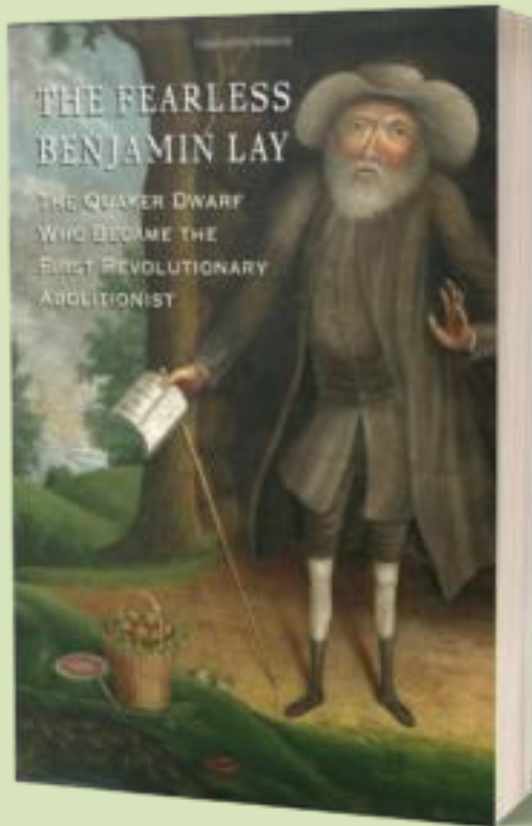


A focus on resistance and “speaking truth to power”





His writings on BEN LAY include a **book**, a **script** and a **graphic novel**:



Why the fascination with this man from the margins?

“He helps us to understand what was politically and morally possible in the first half of the 18th century — and what may be possible now.... **It is time to make a prominent place for Benjamin Lay in American history.**”



For more information on Marcus Rediker, see:



[Marcus Rediker - Wikipedia](#)

Books by Marcus Rediker:

[Freedom Ship – Marcus Rediker](#)

Links to articles on Marcus Rediker:

[Marcus Rediker – Historian | Writer | Teacher | Activist](#)

[Guest Blog: Marcus Rediker and Naomi Wallace, Creators of THE RETURN OF BENJAMIN LAY, on Bringing His Amazing Story to the Stage](#)

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DIRECTED BY RON DANIELS

STARRING MARK POVINELLI





PLAYS

Naomi Wallace and Marcus Rediker
The Return of Benjamin Lay



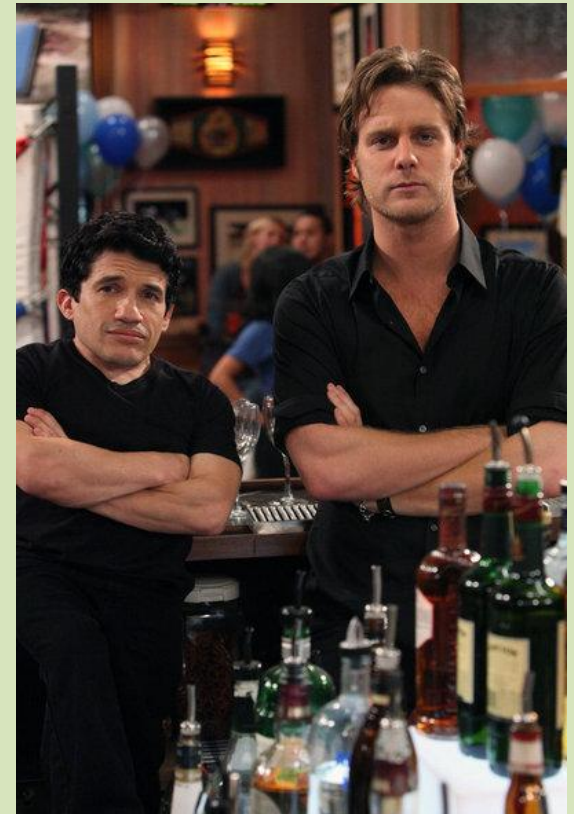
“With every cup of tea, you sip the life juice of tea-workers in India and sugar-workers in Barbados. You fill the fat, lazy bellies of slave-keepers who enclose and destroy the land, once the common treasury of all. **Beware rich men who poison the earth for gain!**”



Mark Povinelli, actor and activist



On stage & screen







Past President LPA



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For more information on actor Mark Povinelli, see :



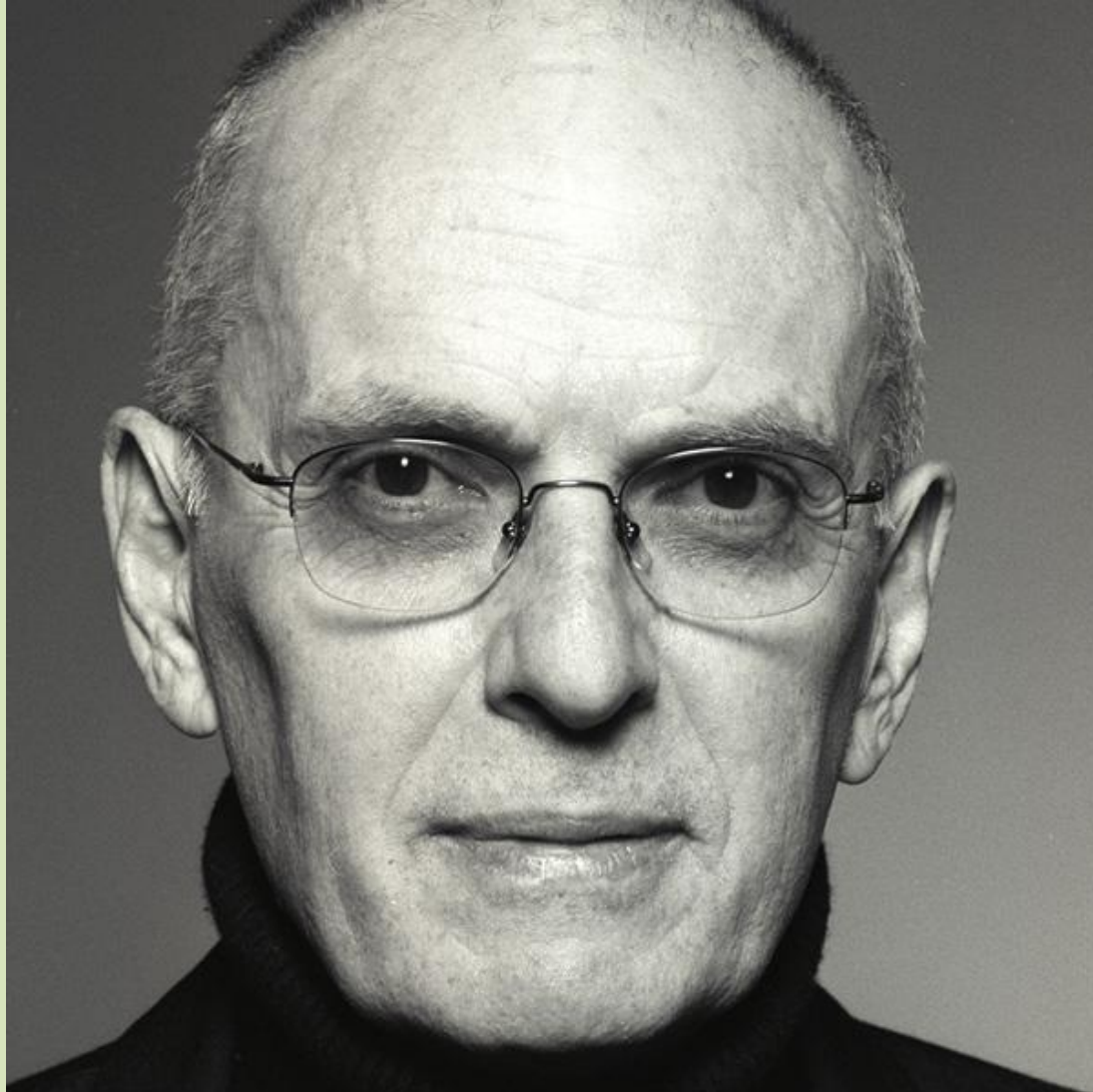
[Mark Povinelli - Wikipedia](#)

[Mark Povinelli - IMDb](#)

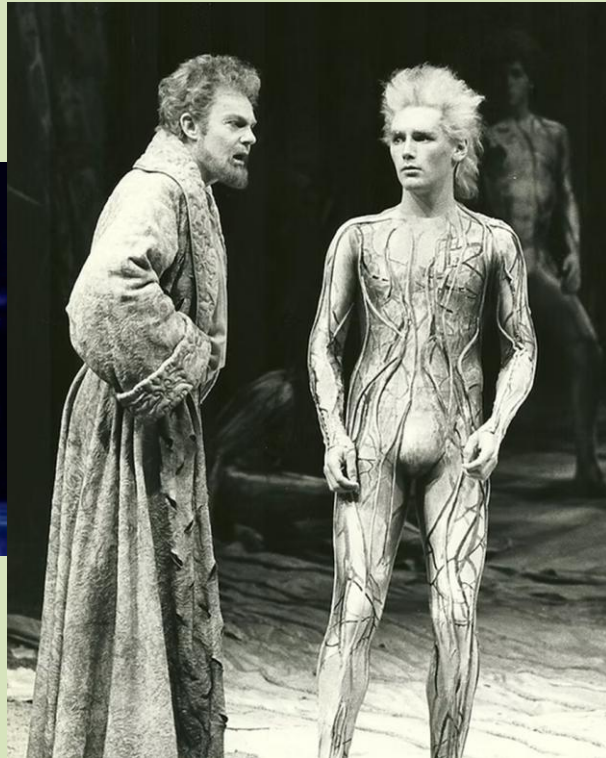
[Little People of America President on 'My Dinner With Herve'](#)

<https://youtu.be/wFpTuq313d0>

Ron Daniels, internationally-renowned
director of theatre, film and opera



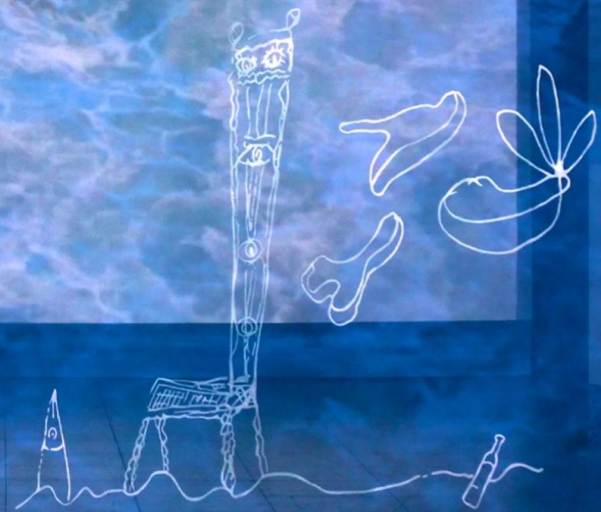
From Brazil to America and the UK, an artistic fusing innovative aesthetics and a focus on clarity, truthfulness and the power of the live event.





Allá por el mar...
 Cuando se dio esa espuma cuando quedaba...
 las rocas custodias, asiduas desde el comienzo del mar, agrietadas, conoides y fieras.
 Cada uno mira el mar a su manera, hacia cerca o hacia lejos,
 acobardando el viento, esperando o temiendo

Verónica







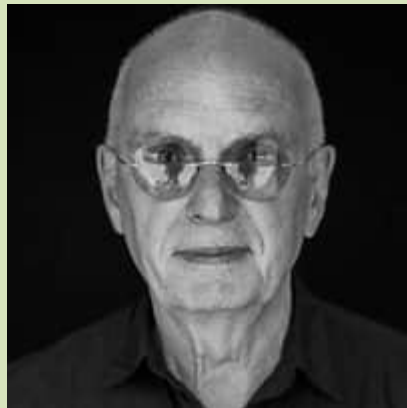
For more information on director
Ron Daniels, see :

[Home | Ron Daniels | Theatre & Opera Director](#)

[Ron Daniels \(director\) - Wikipedia](#)

[Ron Daniels - IMDb](#)

[About | Ron Daniels](#)



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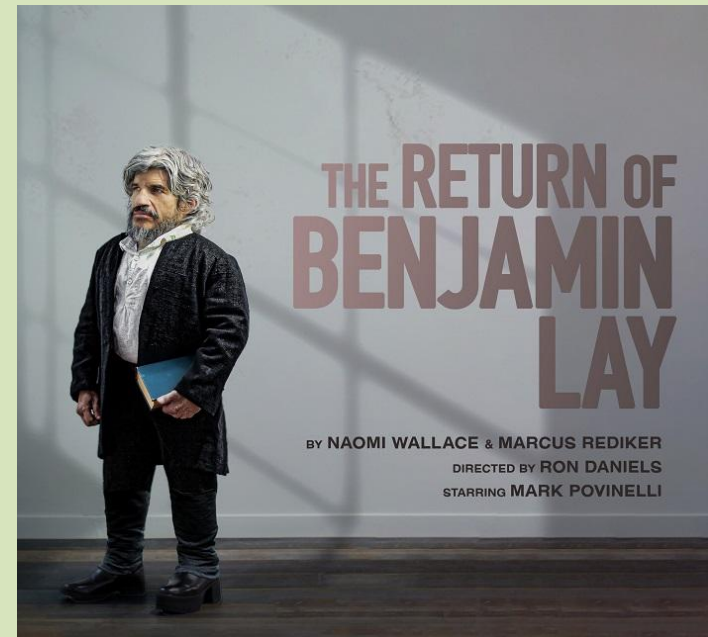
STARRING MARK POVINELLI



**A journey from
London to
Pittsburgh, New
York and then on to
Philadelphia...**



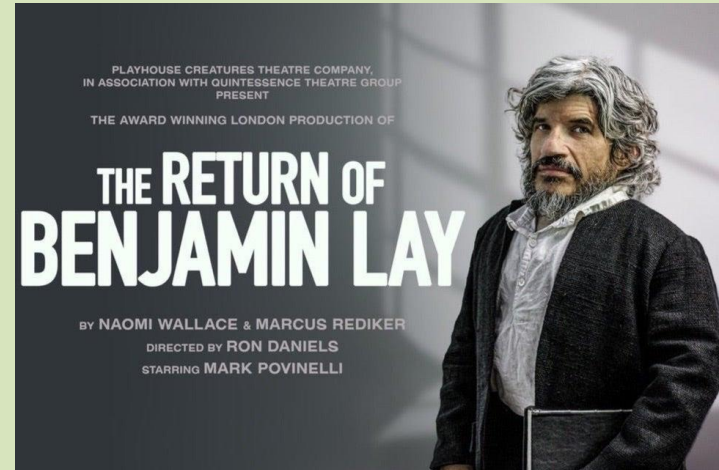
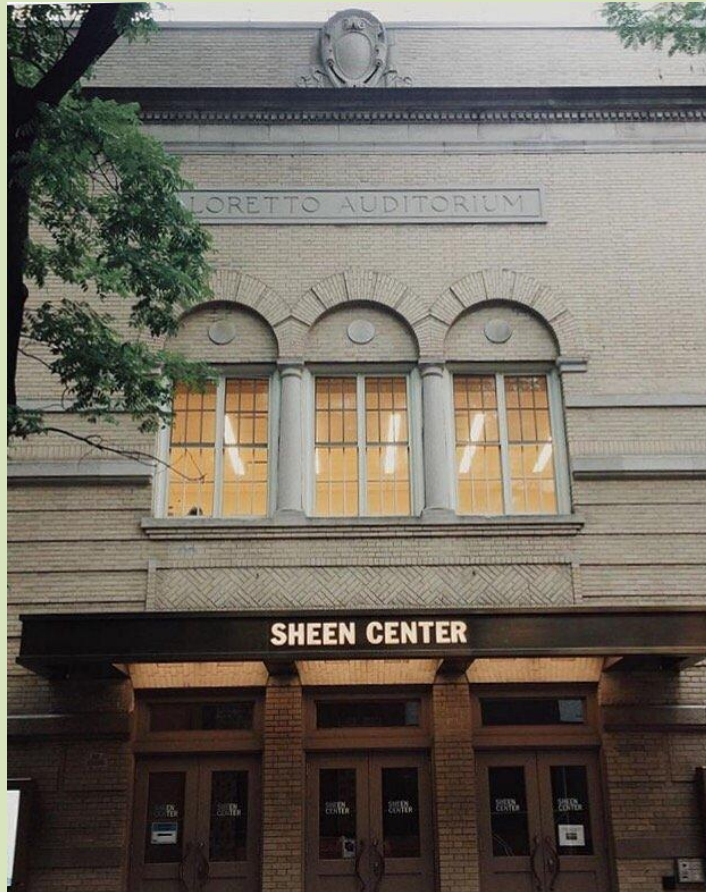
London 2023



Pittsburgh 2025



New York & Philadelphia 2025



Proudly presented in New York at the *Sheen
Center for Thought & Culture* by
PLAYHOUSE CREATURES THEATRE COMPANY
“dedicated to the Past, Present & Future of
American Theatre”

PLAYHOUSE CREATURES THEATRE COMPANY

About Us

We are a NYC-based, mission-driven, off-Broadway theatre company dedicated to strengthening the legacy of the American theatre, while serving the communities where we produce (both on and off stage). Since 2009, PCTC has produced 17 mainstage productions, seven new works series, 45 staged readings, four Tennessee Williams festivals, a world premiere of a Tennessee Williams play (“The Recluse and His Guest”), and several NYC premieres. PCTC has won and/or been nominated for 22 theatre awards, and received The Nazareth Housing 2018 Community Service Award.



Why Benjamin Lay? Why today???

As PCTC Producing Artistic Director [Joseph W. Rodriguez](#) explains: “When Naomi's powerful writing is coupled with that of the eminent writer and historian Marcus Rediker, the result is THE RETURN OF BENJAMIN LAY, a tale of a real-life 18th sailor-preacher-revolutionary. It is set in America's beginnings, but it's really a play for today, asking the questions: **What is integrity? What is vision? How far can we go in our politics before we go too far?**”



For more information on the PCTC
production of THE RETURN OF
BENJAMIN LAY, see:

[The Return of Benjamin Lay – Playhouse
Creatures Theatre Company](#)

For images, features and more info, see:

[The Return of Benjamin Lay | Sheen Center | Theater in New York](#)

[Companion Exhibition, Quaker Affinity Night, and Creative Team Talkback Set
For THE RETURN OF BENJAMIN LAY at Sheen Center](#)

[The Return of Benjamin Lay: a theatre of resistance tells the story of an 18th
century disabled activist - Disability Arts Online](#)

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Thank you for your interest in this production, and please stay in touch.

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now!

<https://playhousecreatures.org>

