

**PHILIP
LYNCH**
Theatre

LEWISUNIVERSITY

OFFSTAGE 2026

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WINTER EDITION



THEY PROMISED HER

By Laurel Ollstein

Directed by Kevin Trudeau

THE MOON

They Promised Her the Moon is based on the true story of aviator, Jerrie Cobb (1931-2019), a barrier-breaking, world record-holding pilot and almost the first American female astronaut.

The first American woman to test for spaceflight, Jerrie [Cobb], steps into an isolation tank for a record-breaking nine hours as her memories unfold—from learning to fly a plane as a child in Oklahoma to testifying in Congressional hearings about the under-the-radar all-female Mercury 13 program, a group of women who trained as astronauts but were denied spaceflight.

They Promised Her the Moon is a compelling drama about the dream of flight, the challenges of sisterhood and fighting for the greater good.

THEY PROMISED HER THE MOON - PLAYWRIGHT BIO



Laurel Ollstein is an award-winning playwright, director, and actor whose produced plays include *They Promised Her the Moon*, *Laughter, Hope and a Sock in the Eye*, *CHEESE*, *Esther's Moustache*, *Unhappily Married in Valencia*, *OPA! the Musical*, *Dorothy Parker Is in the Bath*, *Blackwell's Corner*, *The Dark Ages*, *Bias Cut*, and *Showing Our Age* (a play with music about aging). She has written commissions for the Getty Villa, About Productions, Virginia Ave. Project, New Jersey Repertory Company, and the Playwright's Arena, and developed plays with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, the Actors' Gang, Cornerstone Theatre Company, Ensemble Studio Theatre, New Jersey Rep,

the Barrow Group, Miranda Theatre Company and the Playwrights' Center. Her awards include grants from the NEA, California Arts Council, Ovation, Garland, and LA Weekly awards. Laurel also directs playwriting programs serving mature adults and teens, provides writing and arts education in schools, and creates plays on social justice themes. She has been an adjunct faculty for Cal Arts, UCLA, USC, LMU, University of Redlands, and OTIS College of Art and Design.

They Promised her the Moon ~ Dramaturgy by Morgan Gioia

Dramaturgy is a theatrical role that focuses on dramatic composition and context of a performance. A dramaturg is responsible for researching and relaying important information, either to an audience, the cast, or production crew of a play. Hello, my name is Morgan Gioia. I have had the pleasure of working on the dramaturgy of *They Promised Her the Moon*. I am a third year Psychology Major, with a newly added minor in theatre. I also am a member of the cross country and track teams at Lewis. I chose to participate in this dramaturgy practicum because I have always had a passion for the stage, and dramaturgy has allowed me to explore the show process through a different lens.



This is my first show I've worked on at the PLT, and I cannot wait to explore more of what this amazing program has to offer!

They Promised Her the Moon takes us back to the 1960's. We are in the midst of the cold war, and the Americans and Russians are both itching to one up the other. At the same time, women are beginning to fight more fiercely for rights in sexuality, marriage, and finances. Enter Jerrie Cobb, the best female aviator of her generation. She, with the help of others such as Jackie Cochran and Dr. William Lovelace work to get Jerrie to become the first woman to ever travel to space. This play explores the true story of Jerrie's efforts to break the glass ceiling and the physical, mental, and social challenges that she has to face while paving the way for all the women who follow her. This inspiring play contains strong themes concerning politics, feminism, and the experience of being a woman. *They Promised Her the Moon* was written by Laurel Ollstein and developed in 2017 by the Miranda Theatre Company. The first professional, off Broadway production was directed by Valentina Fratti for the Theatre At St Clements. Since its conception, *They Promised Her the Moon* has seen success in regional and educational theatres in the US.

I would like to thank Dr. Trudeau for informing me about this practicum, and for giving me his wealth of knowledge both on space and dramaturgy!

PLT ~ CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50th Anniversary Champagne Toast

Join us to kick off a year(plus) long celebration of the
PLT's 50 years producing theatre
on Sunday, February 24th
in the Wadsworth Family Gallery at 4:30pm
immediately following the end of our matinee showing of
They Promised her the Moon.

(This event will also be live-streamed, details TBA)

IN PREPARATION OF ~

We are looking for photos and videos of past PLT memories and/or events. Our goal is to compile as many as we can obtain, that we will ultimately share during a much larger anniversary event in the fall of 2026.



WE ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR ~

We are looking for any interested Lewis Theatre ALUMNI to either submit a video, or come in to be recorded, speaking on camera about your past experiences regarding your time while being a student in the theatre department. We would also be interested in having some of our long standing **Season Subscription Holders** record a memory or discuss an experience from your perspective as an audience member throughout the years.

We will also be revisiting plays that have been performed throughout our 50 years, to be performed during our upcoming season.

Any favorites that you would like to suggest?

We would love to hear from you!

~ CELEBRATING UPCOMING THEATRE STAFF RETIREMENTS ~

The Lewis University Theatre Department will celebrate the upcoming retirement of two long-time staff members; **Dave Pomatto** and **Celeste Mackey**, whose dedication and artistry have shaped generations of students and productions. After years of service to the department and the Lewis community, their impact will be felt long after their final curtain call.

A retirement celebration will be held on **April 26, 2026** immediately following the matinee performance of *Sister Act*. Alumni, colleagues, students, season subscription holders, and friends are invited to join us in honoring their remarkable careers and expressing our gratitude for their lasting contributions to Lewis University Theatre. More details to come in the April Offstage.

AUDITIONS for SISTER ACT



**Tuesday, February
24th at 6:00pm**

**Auditions are open to ALL
current Lewis students!**

In concert with our 50th Anniversary, we are opening auditions for Sister Act to ALL Lewis ALUMNI students, as well.

For additional information please contact the Box Office at (815) 836-5500 or email Roxiana Fuqua-Evans at Rfuqua@Lewisu.edu

Director, Annie Calhoun's email information is: Acalhoun@Lewisu.edu

UPCOMING PERFORMANCE



show dates:

April 24-26

April 30-May 1

Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Glenn Slater, Book by Cheri Steinkellner, Bill Steinkellner, Additional Book Material by Douglas Carter Beane, Based on the Touchstone Pictures Motion Picture, Sister Act, written by Joseph Howard.