
Why did he stop painting?

World Premiere

BAUER

By Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Bill English

March 18 to April 19, 2014

Previews March 18-21 8pm

Tuesdays through Thursdays at 7pm, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm
Saturdays at 3pm and (new this season) select Sundays at 2pm (3.23 and 4.13)

PRESS OPENING: Saturday, March 22nd at 8pm

San Francisco, CA (January 2014) – **San Francisco Playhouse** (Artistic Director Bill English & Producing Director Susi Damilano) presents the world premiere commission of *Bauer* by Bay Area playwright **Lauren Gunderson**.

Gunderson's play tells the compelling and controversial tale of world-renowned artist Rudolf Bauer, who was so driven to create, he sketched on scraps in a Nazi prison and yet eventually stopped painting forever when a feud erupted amongst himself, his patron and benefactor Solomon Guggenheim, and Bauer's lifetime love, Baroness Hilla Rebay – one of Guggenheim's most trusted curators.

The Guggenheim Museum, originally built to house Bauer's works, opened without a single Bauer exhibited. This January, **San Francisco Playhouse's** commissioned play presents a freshly imagined face-off between Bauer and the two women he loved most as they each confront the passions of his life and art.

Bill English directs a cast starring **Ronald Guttman*** as Bauer, **Susi Damilano** as his wife and former maid, Louise, and **Stacy Ross*** as his lifelong love, Hilla Rebay.

Rudolf Bauer is considered by many art historians and critics to have had a major impact on modern artists such as Jackson Pollock and William de Kooning, and yet his name and work mysteriously disappeared from the art world in the 1950s and many of his paintings remain banished to the basement of the Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue in New York City.

Bauer was also one of the originators of nonobjective painting, a genre commonly referred to as abstract or nonrepresentational art. His contemporaries include Piet Mondrian, Vasily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee.

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Bauer, cont'd:

Bauer's work was featured in the U.S. as early as 1933 and Solomon R. Guggenheim became his champion and patron, purchasing 300 works for his personal art collection. Guggenheim's first museum, The Museum of Nonobjective Painting that opened in 1939 was dominated by Bauer's artwork.

Concurrent with the world premiere of *Bauer*, [The Weinstein Gallery](http://www.weinstein.com) (383 Geary Street in San Francisco) will present a major art exhibit, **The Realm of the Spirit—a retrospective of Rudolf Bauer**, spanning five decades and including original oil paintings and works on paper, many on exhibition for the first time in over fifty years. The Bauer display runs **March 15 through April 30**. For more information on the exhibition, visit www.weinstein.com or call (415) 362-8151.

“For thirty years, from 1917 to the 1940's, Rudolf Bauer was considered one of the most important artists in the world,” explains Rowland Weinstein, owner of the Weinstein Gallery. “Now, very few people even remember he existed. Our retrospective is an in-depth exploration of this artist's extraordinary and groundbreaking work, while the play *Bauer* examines his struggles with the Guggenheim Foundation that led to his descent into obscurity. Together, these two complementary art events will unravel the mystery surrounding Rudolf Bauer and his place in art history.”

Lauren Gunderson (Playwright) An award-winning playwright living in San Francisco, Lauren Gunderson will have had 6 productions (including world premieres) in the Bay Area during 2013/14 including *Silent Sky* at TheatreWorks, *By And By* at Shotgun Players, *The Taming* at Crowded Fire, *I And You* at Marin Theatre (NNPN Rolling World Premiere heading to 4 other cities), *Bauer* at San Francisco Playhouse, and *Fire Work* at TheatreFirst. *Emilie: La Maruise Du Chatelet Defends Her Life Tonight* is published by Sam French, and *Exit, Pursued By A Bear* and *Toil And Trouble* are published by Playscripts. Her work has also been produced and developed at companies across the U.S. including Berkeley Rep, the Kennedy Center, South Coast Rep, the O'Neill Playwrights Conference, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Center Stage, Actors Express, Impact Theatre, Second Stage Theatre and Lark Play Development Center. She is a Playwright in Residence at The Playwrights Foundation. LaurenGunderson.com and @LalaTellsAStory

Bill English (Director/Artistic Director), an accomplished singer, pianist and composer, has spent his life producing works of art. He co-founded San Francisco Playhouse, and in ten years, has overseen its growth from a storefront to a major regional theater company, with a 6-play main stage series, a 2-play World Premiere series, an education program and a New Works program that has commissioned 10 playwrights. Bill's vision propels San Francisco Playhouse to stand out among its peers for making bold choices and taking artistic risks. Bill's work in the theater has been recognized with numerous awards for acting, directing, sound and set design. Under Bill's leadership The San Francisco Playhouse, has earned multiple nominations and awards.

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BAUER, cont'd:



Ronald Guttman* (Rudolf Bauer) Born in Brussels, Belgium, where he performed at The National Theatre in plays by Beckett, Schnitzler, Racine, Turgenev, and Camus, among others. In New York, he studied with Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler and has appeared at Second Stage, Circle in the Square, Long Wharf, The Mint, and as Woland in *The Master and Margarita* at Bard SummerScape 2013. Recent television credits: *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *Mad Men*, and HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce*. Movies include *The Hunt for Red October*, *Green Card*, *Avalon*, *Danton*, *13*, *Pawn and Girl Most Likely*. Coming in 2014: *Nina* (with Zoe Saldana portraying jazz icon Nina Simone) and *Welcome to New York* (dir. Abel Ferrara). He is also the founder of HIGHBROW, a production company for independent film and theater, recently *My Name Is Asher Lev*, winner of the 2013 Outer Critics Circle for best Off Broadway play, and *Satchmo*, opening this spring Off Broadway. Further acting credits can be found at IMDB.com, and production credits at www.highbrow.net.



Stacy Ross* (Hilla Rebay) At Cal Shakes: *Titus Andronicus*, *Macbeth*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *Arms and the Man*. In 2010. Ms. Ross capped a year of offbeat mother roles (*Back to Earth* at Best of PlayGround Festival, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Macbeth* at Cal Shakes) by playing the Other Mother in San Francisco Playhouse's west-coast premiere of *Coraline*. Less maternal but also enjoyable roles she's played in recent years include Major Barbara and Hannah Arendt (*Major Barbara* and *Hannah and Martin*, respectively, at San Jose Rep), Sharla and Hertha (*Killer Joe* and *Spring Storm* at Marin Theatre Company), Annie in *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play* at Berkeley Rep, *Hedda Gabler* at Aurora Theatre Company, and Olga in *Three Sisters* at Baltimore's CenterSTAGE.



Susi Damilano (Louise Bauer) is co-founder of the San Francisco Playhouse (SFPH); she is a four-time recipient of the Bay Area Theatre Critic Circle (BATCC) award for Best Female Performance in *Harper Regan*, *Bug*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, and *Reckless*. At SFPH she has performed leading roles in *Abigail's Party*, *Harper Regan*, *Coraline*, *Slasher*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Landscape of the Body*, *First Person Shooter*, *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train*, *The Crucible*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Our Town* and *The Smell of the Kill*. Her directing credits include *A Behanding in Spokane*, *Den of Thieves* and *Wirehead** and the West Coast Premieres of *Honey Brown Eyes**, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Coronado*, *The Mystery Plays* and *Roulette and the World*

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Bauer, cont'd:

Premiere of Daniel Heath's *Seven Days* in the 2010 Sandbox Series. (**nominated for BATCC Directing award.*)

Founded by Susi Damilano and Bill English in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** was described by *The New York Times* as "a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around" and deemed "ever adventurous" by the Bay Area News Group. Located in the heart of the city's Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is San Francisco's "Off-Broadway" company, a powerful, intimate alternative to larger and more traditional venues. **San Francisco Playhouse** provides audiences with the opportunity to experience professional theater close up, produced by top-notch actors and with world-class design. The company has been awarded a range of accolades for acting, design, and production including the *SF Weekly's* Best Theatre Award and *The Bay Guardian's* Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award. Presenting a diverse array of plays and musicals, **San Francisco Playhouse** produces new works as well as re-imagined classics, "making the edgy accessible and the traditional edgy." The company's 2012-2013 Season marked its 10th anniversary and as it moved to a newly renovated venue, *The San Francisco Chronicle* raved that "the company that lived a hand-to-mouth existence for its first few years has become the little playhouse that could. It quickly established a reputation for attracting some of the Bay Area's best acting and directing talent, as well as for its exciting play choices. And with its bold Sandbox Series, it's become a player in developing new works as well." **San Francisco Playhouse** is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, designers, directors, theatergoers and writers converge to create works that celebrate the human spirit.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

- WHAT:** The compelling and controversial tale of world-renowned artist Rudolf Bauer, who was so driven to create that he sketched on scraps in a Nazi prison and yet eventually stopped painting forever when a feud erupted amongst himself, his patron Solomon Guggenheim, and Bauer's lifetime love, Baroness Hilla Rebay – one of Guggenheim's most trusted curators.
- SHOWS:** March 18 to April 19th (Previews: March 18-21 at 8pm)
Tuesday through Thursday at 7pm, Friday and Saturday at 8pm
Saturday at 3pm and select Sundays (3.23 and 4.13) at 2pm
- WHERE:** **The San Francisco Playhouse**
450 Post Street (2nd Floor of Kensington Park Hotel, b/n Powell & Mason)
- TICKETS:** For tickets (\$30-\$100) or more information, the public may contact The San Francisco Playhouse box office at 415-677-9596, or www.sfplayhouse.org.