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**HERE** presents

## STAIRWAY TO STARDOM

Created by **Amanda Szeglowski/**  
**cakeface**

Written and Directed by **Amanda Szeglowski**

Choreographed by **Amanda Szeglowski** in collaboration with  
the company

Performed by **Ali Castro, Jade Daugherty, Ayesha Jordan,**  
**Nola Sporn Smith, Amanda Szeglowski**

Set Design by **Aviva Novick**

Lighting Design by **Amanda K. Ringger**

Live Music + Video: Prism House (**Brian Wenner + Matt O'Hare**)

Costume Design by **Oana Botez**

Stage Managed by **Alex B. West**

### A HERE Resident Artist Production

Approximate Running Time: 55 minutes

Commissioned, developed, and produced through the HERE Resident Artist Program. Development also supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation's Women Playwrights Commissioning program. Supported in part by Marble House Project, a not-for profit organization.

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## CREATOR'S NOTE

In February 2012, my friend Jeso emailed me a Youtube link to Michelle Sutlovich performing "Fame" in a fringed onesie on rust-colored carpet between two artificial plants. It was a scene from the '80s public access TV show, *Stairway to Stardom*. Watching one clip from the show was like a gateway drug. I clicked on another and another. The performers were mesmerizing.

Described by National Public Radio as "an amateur talent show... a low-rent precursor to *American Idol*," *Stairway to Stardom* was filmed "in what appeared to be a freshly carpeted Staten Island basement." Host Frank Masi would bring on amateur singers, dancers, actors, and comedians to show off their talents. The drive and emotion behind the performers' eyes was palpable and stuck with me. In 2014, I wrote a proposal for the HERE Artist Residency Program to make a piece inspired by that TV show. I conducted hundreds of hours of interviews with all kinds of people about their dreams, talents, hopes and regrets and began transforming that content into a script, interspersed with stories of my own life experiences. During the three years of my residency at HERE, my intrepid company of women, my gifted team of collaborators and I have developed this work together. The result is not a piece about the TV show or the people that performed on it decades ago, *Stairway to Stardom* is a piece about us - you and me and everyone in this room and not in this room, right now.

– Amanda Szegłowski

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

**Amanda Szegłowski** (Writer, Director, Choreographer, Performer Artistic Director of cakeface) is a writer, director, choreographer and performing artist. She is a HERE Resident Artist and a recipient of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation's Women Playwrights Commissioning program. Formerly a Company Dancer with the internationally acclaimed Ellis Wood Dance (NYC) over a span of four years, she performed with the company throughout New York and on tour in locations such as Portugal, Germany, San Diego and Washington DC, and set work/taught at UC Berkeley and New York University, among others, all while also serving as the company's Managing Director. Amanda launched her all-female company cakeface in 2008. As *Culturebot* describes, "cakeface is a group of fierce, funny, talented women," and later offered, "Think Monica Bill Barnes for the Amy Schumer Generation," in the *Culturebot*



## HERE25<sup>+</sup>membership

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- Early access to tickets for PROTOTYPE
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**We would like to thank the following adventurous individuals for making gifts to PROTOTYPE:**

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article "Eight Reasons cakeface's *Harold, I Hate You* Is Your New Favorite Downtown Dance/Theater Piece." cakeface projects thread together intricate choreography and original, abstract scripts, contemplating the uncomfortable through the use of grim themes and an inherently wry female wit. cakeface has been presented by En Garde Arts, Stony Brook University, Ars Nova, Dance New Amsterdam, AUNTS, Movement Research at Judson Memorial Church, Dixon Place, Triskelion Arts, RoofTop Dance with the Roger Smith Hotel, The Tank, Going Dutch (Chicago, IL), Smith & Tinker writers' group, Hillsborough Community College, Rebound Dance Festival (New Haven, CT) and the Florida Dance Festival (Tampa, FL). With cakeface, Amanda has guest lectured at the University of South Florida, and taught master classes at the University of Tampa, Hillsborough Community College and Howard W. Blake School for the Arts.

## PRODUCTION TEAM

**Aviva Novick** (Set Design) Aviva Novick is based in New York with interdisciplinary interests, pursuing work that extends into the realms of architecture, set design, industrial design, fine arts, and imaginary architecture. Aviva holds a BA in Fine Arts and a Masters in Architecture. She has collaborated with artists, acrobats, dancers, musicians, as well as other architects, and is passionate about the power of the built environment to move, transform, and reconfigure our perception of reality. Notable projects include: Scenic design for *Amerishowz: Circle of Champions* (American Realness 2017) and *g1br33l* (Gibney Dance Center, Double Plus Series 2014), the restoration of a 110 year old historical landmark hotel in the Manhattan's Garment District; the restoration of the Williamsburg Savings Bank in Brooklyn; furniture and interior design for all 3 Valley Nails locations in NYC, "jet blue Ring" at JFK Airport, and the Sony Wonder Technology Lab; a floating bookstore for the Armory Show in 2007 with Vito Acconci, and a one-of-a-kind, transportable aerial acrobatics apparatus for Circus Warehouse in Queens.

**Amanda K. Ringger** (Lighting Design) has lived in New York since 1997, designing locally, nationally, and internationally with artists such as Faye Driscoll, Doug Elkins, Cynthia Oliver, Jennifer Archibald, Antonio Ramos, LMnO3, Alexandra Beller, Deborah Lohse, Donnell Oakley, Molly Poerstel, Kota Yamazaki, Nora Chipaumire, Laura Peterson, Julian Barnett, 10 Hairy Legs, Tiffany Mills, Darrah Carr, and cakeface, among others. She received a BA from Goucher College in Baltimore, MD and an MFA in Lighting Design from Tisch School of the Arts at NYU. She is the recipient of a 2009 "Bessie" Award for her collaboration on Faye Driscoll's *837 Venice Boulevard* at HERE.



**Brian Wenner** (Composition, Sound Design, Live Mixing) is a New York City-based composer, sound designer, and audio engineer. His work as the musical half of Prism House relies heavily on the manipulation of found sound recordings, analog synthesizers, and Internet-sampled content. The result is a collage composition style that feels both controlled yet chaotic, as well as danceable and rhythmically diverse. His most recent work was a commissioned multichannel installation piece that debuted at Westwood Gallery in Manhattan in May of 2017 for the KAZ Shirane show "Evolve." He also recently completed a full-length album of ambient compositions entitled "Momentum" coming out in September 2017. His work has been covered by outlets such as The FADER, The Creator's Project, VICE, and XLR8R. He performs regularly in NYC and has toured throughout a large portion of the United States.

**Matt O'Hare** (Live Video Mixing) is a digital artist and performer based in and around New York City. Recent projects include creating tour visuals for the band 311, the sci-fi doom cult spectacle *We The New Community*, and his latest work *The Cure For All Disease*, which is basically a Satanic mass with interactive sound and video. Other clients include Skype, Chrome Sparks, and The Yes Men. He is currently a doctoral fellow of Electronic Arts at RPI, finishing his dissertation about acting within responsive environments. Matt is the recipient of a career development grant from TCG and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Thanks to Amanda, cakeface, and HERE.

::::: vimeo.com/oharema // Instagram: famous\_holograms\\

**Oana Botez** (Costume Design) is an international set/costume designer for film, theater, opera, and dance. She is a Princess Grace recipient, NEA/TCG Career Development Program recipient, and has received The Barrymore award, The Drammy Award, and was nominated for the Henry Hewes Design Award. Her designs have raised critical acclaim in New York's: BAM Next Wave, Bard SummerScape/Richard B. Fisher Center, Baryshnikov Arts Center, The David H. Koch Theater/Lincoln Center, Big Apple Circus/Lincoln Center, Classic Stage Company. Regionally: The Wilma Theater, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Hartford Stage Company, Long Wharf, Shakespeare Theater (DC), Berkeley Rep ArtsEmerson, Broad Stage, MCA (Chicago, IL), Shakespeare Theatre Company, ODC, The Walker Arts Center, Peak Performances, ADI, Academy of Music, Old Globe Theater, Curtis Institute of Music, Cutler Majestic Theater. Internationally, Oana has worked in Romania (Bucharest National Theater, Arad National Theatre), France (Theatre National de Chaillot, Les Subsistence, Le Quartz) and Turkey (International Festival of Contemporary Theater), Peru, Germany, Italy, Singapore and United Kingdom. She has been teaching costume design at MIT. [www.oanabotez.com](http://www.oanabotez.com)

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**Alex B. West** (Stage Manager) is a theatre artist currently based in Brooklyn. New York City credits include *This Time with Rising Circle*, *That Physic's Show* with Eric Krebs' Theatrical Management and *Genet Porno*, *Chang(e)* & *CasablancaBox* with HERE. Regional credits include *12 Dates of Christmas*, *Christmas Carol*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Unnecessary Monsters* & *Peter Pan: The Musical* with Aurora Theatre. Thanks to Mom, Dad, and all the friends for all the support.

## CAST

**Ali Castro** (Performer) is a Brooklyn-based creator and performer. Originally from South Florida, she holds a BFA in Dance, a BA in Journalism, and a minor in Entertainment Law from New York University. Upon graduating, Ali was named one of 100 Students to Watch by *Variety*. She has had the privilege to dance with and work as a rehearsal director/associate choreographer for pop artists Oh Land and Kimbra, and has appeared on Nickelodeon. As a company member with toUch performance art, she has performed in residency with American Repertory Theatre, and had the opportunity to open for Elton John at the Breast Cancer Research Foundation gala in New York City. More recently, Ali performed *Steppin' Out* at the Lortel Awards, an original piece choreographed by Tyce Diorio (*So You Think You Can Dance*, Taylor Swift), where she danced alongside Broadway great Shoshana Bean. She is a proud member of The BringAbout, a company of artists led by Jennifer Jancuska, which works to develop and bring to life new musicals and plays.

**Jade Daugherty** (Performer) is a comedy writer and performer. Originally from Chicago, Jade received dual BAs in Creative Writing and Dance from Beloit College. A company member, she has performed in cakeface's *alpha pups* and *Harold, I Hate You*. She has choreographed work for Chicago's Links Hall and Brooklyn's Triskelion Arts. Recently, she received a Finalist nomination for her original pilot in WeScreenplay's Diverse Voices Competition, Spring 2017. Jade has trained at Upright Citizens Brigade and Reckless Theatre and can be seen performing improv comedy with her indie team, CANNIBAL QUEENS, around New York.

**Ayesha Jordan** (Performer) is a multidisciplinary performer and creator. She recently collaborated with Charlotte Brathwaite on *Shasta Geaux Pop* at Under the Radar Festival (Jan 2017) and at The Bushwick Starr (Sept 2016). Other works include: *Come See My Double D's* (JACK), *Enter & Exit: Playing House* (JACK), *Enter & Exit: Family Reunion* (JACK), *Inter 1-to-1*, and *In the Tube*. Video

projects include: *Living Room Dance Breaks*, *Drunk & Famous*, and a host of other songs and videos. Jordan has also been seen as an actor in the Broadway production of *Eclipsed* by Danaï Gurira, directed by Liesl Tommy (The Golden Theatre/The Curran, San Francisco), *Ludic Proxy* by Aya Ogawa (The Play Company), *Platonov: Or the Disinherited* by Jay Scheib (The Kitchen), *Harold, I Hate You* by cakeface (Ars Nova & Triskelion), as well as in video work and photography by visual artist Carrie Mae Weems. [www.ayeshajordan.com](http://www.ayeshajordan.com)

**Nola Sporn Smith** (Performer) is a dance and theater artist from Brooklyn, New York. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan where she received a BFA Dance degree and a minor in the School of Kinesiology. Since returning to NYC, Nola has performed with cakeface, Stacy Grossfield, Kensaku Shinohara, Emily Smith/NOT for reTALE and others at venues including Danspace Project, Dixon Place, The Queens Museum, Brooklyn Studios for Dance, HERE, Center for Performance Research, and Gibney Dance Center. She has worked in assistant director and stage manager roles for directors Jim Findlay, Aaron Landsman, and Ben Williams, and has choreographed for students at Queens College. Nola also creates collaborative and solo performance art for theatrical spaces and music venues.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to all of our cakeface donors, friends and family. Special cake love to our superfans: Erin Loughran; Elle Chyun + Michael Gillman; Jody Demas + Greg Martin; Jamie Demas + Eugene Chang; Reary + Robert Demas; Reary Morris; Laurent Delly; Mitch Friedman; Trevor Martin; Markus Paminger; Dave + Emily de Vinck; Kieran Coscia; the Muars; the Winnebagans; Chris + Melanie Szeiglowski; Joan + Chet Szeiglowski; Mel, Lou-Ellen + Sara Barkan; Lillian Coscia; Julia + Sammie Barkan; and cake MVP Tony Barkan. Thank you to Kristin, Kim, Pete and the entire HERE staff (Marketing Brain Trust!) and production crew, The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, Marble House Project, and ART/NY. Mega thanks to all of the people that agreed to be interviewed for hours, to Frank Masi for being a visionary, to All The Kings Men, to the design team: Oana Botez, Aviva Novick, Matt O'Hare, Mandy Ringger, and Brian Wenner, founding company members Jeso O'Neill and Elle Chyun for their contributions, early stage *Stairway* cast members Julia Smith-Eppsteiner and Ambika Raina, the fiercest SM: Alex B. West, and the realest gems, these bosses: Ali Castro, Jade Daugherty, Ayesha Jordan, and Nola Sporn Smith.

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## TALK-BACKS

Following the performances on **Wednesdays, Sep 13 + 20**, join us for post-show conversations, and a complimentary glass of wine.

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## HEREart On View: No Tomorrow



**Curated by Dan Halm**  
**NOW – Oct 28**

The exhibition examines and explores the beauty and stillness of death; as a movement of rebirth, contemplation and an infinite stillness. Participating Artists: Katina Bitsicas, Sean Capone, Laura Murray, Richard Stauffacher, Tony Toscani, Conrad Ventur, and Kimberly Witham

Image: Tony Toscani, *Cats Circling Around A Woman*

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