Next on our stage:

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR
MAY 14-JUNE 14

WEST SIDE STORY
JULY 16-AUG. 23

DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE
SEPT, 17-OCT. 18

A Companion Guide to “Exit, Pursued by a Bear”
by Lauren Gunderson

Highlights is researched and written by City Lights dramaturg Rebecca Wallace.
Synopsis

Nan wants to teach her abusive husband Kyle a lesson. With her best friend Simon and a stripper named Sweetheart along for the fun, she tapes Kyle to a chair and forces him to watch as they reenact scenes from their painful past. For the pièce de résistance, she plans to cover the room in meat and honey, and leave Kyle to be mauled by a bear. After a night of emotional trials and ridiculous theatrics, Nan and Kyle are both freed from their past in this dark and delightful revenge comedy.

Characters

**Nan Carter (Sara Renée Morris):** A twentysomething woman whom playwright Lauren Gunderson calls “pretty and quick, like deer.” Nan is smart, resourceful, and poised to take back her life. Not related to Jimmy Carter, but wishes she was.

**Kyle Carter (Max Sorg):** Nan’s husband and, frankly, a bit of a brute. “A big messy boy, like a dumb dirty dog,” Gunderson calls him. But this doesn’t mean that his entire relationship with Nan has been a nightmare. Really, there have been some good times. Just ask him.

**Sweetheart / Peaches / SuperKyle (Laura Espino):** All the same girl, because this girl can play any part. A young stripper recruited by Nan to portray Kyle in the evening’s theater games, Sweetheart wears the same outfit as Kyle, only on her it looks a lot sexier. She becomes Simon’s pal and one of Nan’s biggest champions.

**Simon Beaufort (Jacob Marker):**
Team Nan! Decked out in a girl’s cheerleading outfit, Simon is an even bigger Nan fan than Sweetheart. “Pretty and strong and bitchy, like a slim cat,” Gunderson describes Simon. Fast-talking, funny, fiercely loyal, and oh so sassy.

“I am Nan Carter. I grew up here. I loved my parents. I went to church. I married a man I thought was gonna be good. He wasn’t. And my big decisions kinda stopped there.”

- Nan in Exit, Pursued by a Bear
About the playwright

Based in San Francisco, Lauren Gunderson originally hails from Atlanta — she set Exit, Pursued by a Bear in her home state of Georgia. Her plays have graced the stages of many theater companies across the country, and she’s a particular favorite at City Lights. CLTC will also present I and You, her poignant play about an unusual high school friendship, in the spring of 2016.

Lauren is the 2014 winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play award, and was also a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize (for I and You). She holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU’s Tisch School (where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship), and a BA in English/Creative Writing from Emory University.

Exit, Pursued by a Bear is one of a trilogy of comedies that Lauren wrote based on three Shakespeare works. She calls them the Will to Power Plays. (The others are Toil & Trouble, which she calls “basically an uber-capitalist hipster Macbeth”; and The Taming, inspired by, y’know, The Taming of the Shrew.)

On her research website for Exit, Pursued by a Bear, Lauren writes:

“This is a play I’ve always wanted to write — a violent play that glitters. A play that calls out the insipid denigration of women in America by laughing at idiots… before leaving them for dead.”

Want to watch playwright Lauren Gunderson talking about her Exit, Pursued by a Bear inspiration? Check out the video of our Skype interview with her: bit.ly/laurenonskype.
About the director

Steve M. Boyle has directed off-Broadway, but that’s only the start. He’s also built immersive installations for Google Chairman Eric Schmidt’s venture capital firm Innovation Endeavors, helmed San Jose Rep’s Emerging Artists Lab, collaborated on San Francisco’s hit immersive experience “The Speakeasy,” and trained in global theatrical techniques across South and Southeast Asia.

Recently, he ran the web and social media aspects of the million-dollar funding campaign that saved Santa Cruz Shakespeare. That campaign won the support of more than a few dignitaries, including Sir Patrick Stewart, Academy Award winner Olympia Dukakis, and Yale School of Drama Dean James Bundy. Last summer, he directed Amy Freed’s The Beard of Avon for the company.

Steve is CEO of Epic Immersive, which, together with Silicon Valley Creates and History San Jose, is presenting a large-scale immersive theatrical experience on May 31 at History San Jose. This spectacle of an event will feature acrobats, aerialists, military re-enactors, classic cars, live musicians, butoh, ballet folklorico dancers, opera, taiko drummers, and installations artists across three immersive worlds: an 1880s World’s Fair, the Roaring 1920s, and The Depression.

Steve holds a bachelor’s of fine arts from New York University, with training in India, Thailand, and Bali. You can learn more about him at SteveMBoyle.com.
What’s the significance of the play’s title?

In Act III of Shakespeare’s play *The Winter’s Tale*, Antigonus, a lord of Sicilia, is about to do something really bad. It isn’t his fault, totally. The jealous King Leontes has convinced himself that his wife cheated on him and that his baby daughter isn’t his. So he orders Antigonus to take the child somewhere in Bohemia and leave her there.

As Antigonus is leaving said daughter in the woods, he somehow infuriates a bear, who chases him away and eats him. Hence, the stage direction of “Exit, pursued by a bear.”

Don’t weep too much over the young princess. A shepherd rescues her, and she lives on into a few more acts. We’ll call this chapter in the story “Survive, saved by a shepherd.”

Shakespeare’s famed stage direction was a jumping-off point for Lauren Gunderson as she was writing *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*. Its tone was also a match for her play, she told the Boston Globe in 2011.

The stage direction “does what I wanted the play to do,” she said. “I wanted it to be scary, in the literal sense of ‘Oh my god, there’s bears,’ but because it is so bold and ferocious of a stage direction and kind of out-of-the-blue strange, it is also funny. I wanted the fierce and funny to meet each other and talk.”

---

### Bear sighting in Suffolk woods was 'promotional' hoax staged by theatre group

**By DAILY MAIL REPORTER**

**UPDATED: 08:24 EST, 31 March 2009**

Reports of a brown bear roaming through a Suffolk forest were part of an elaborate hoax dreamed up by a team of actors to promote a play, it has emerged.

Ramblers and dog walkers were urged to take care after bear sightings were reported around Rendlesham Forest near Woodbridge, Ipswich.

But the mystery of the alleged sightings was finally solved as bare-faced theatre bosses admitted they had dreamed the whole thing up.

Does a bear really show up in Nan’s house in *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*? You’ll have to see the play to find out.

We can tell you that we won’t be reporting bear sightings outside the theater: in St. James Park, say, or ambling down Second St.

We wouldn’t want to cause a bear scare like the one that happened in England in 2009, when people reported seeing brown bears in a Suffolk forest, and caused a panic.

Turned out the whole thing was a publicity stunt by a theater company doing *The Winter’s Tale*. 
Transporting us to the mountains of Georgia

In *Exit*, Nan has big dreams of escape. Wouldn’t you, with that decor? Her house, created by scenic designer Ron Gasparinetti, is not a candidate for *Southern Living*. Which is exactly how Ron planned it.

This small Northern Georgia house has a special aesthetic: double-wide. “The paneling, the ugly kitchen decorations, the border in the kitchen with an apple pattern,” Ron said. “These people are not rich. They don’t have an awful lot of class.”

Old wooden cabinets, which Ron found at a Habitat for Humanity store, crowd the kitchen. The Christmas lights are still up in July. Generally, things are just untidy. Not filthy, not unsanitary; just grubby, hot, sticky. “Think soda stains under the refrigerator. That’s the whole set,” Ron said.

This is a rural locale, so Ron has framed the set with trees. In places, branches encroach into the house, adding to the sense of being closed in, and going beyond the strictly realistic.

In another fanciful touch, there’s a hanging wooden panel where stage directions are projected to show the passage of time, or to make an observation.

Lauren Gunderson called for these projections (which are being created by lighting designer Nick Kumamoto) in her script. After all, she noted, “This is a play based on a stage direction, so we’re allowed to see them.”

The story behind the “Crisis of Confidence” speech

Our troubled Nan takes comfort in her last name, which she shares with her idol Jimmy Carter. She often bolsters herself by repeating the former President’s quotes for inspiration.

Those include quotes from Carter’s 1979 “crisis of confidence” speech. The President gave this televised address on July 15, during a gloomy period in history. An energy crisis was causing gas shortages and lines at the pump; the economy was down; and the U.S. had just suffered through the Vietnam War and Watergate. Americans, Carter said, had a “crisis of confidence.” Like a preacher, he exhorted them to turn it around, to believe in themselves and their communities again.

Nan would have appreciated the boost in approval ratings that Carter got right after the speech. Then came the backlash—from people who argued that Americans weren’t the problem: the White House was. The next year, Ronald Reagan was elected president by a landslide.
City Lights Theater Company presents *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* from May 14 through June 14, 2015. Shows are Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., and Wednesday, June 10, at 8 p.m., at 529 S. Second St., San Jose. Details: cltc.org, 408-295-4200

**Exit, Pursued by a Bear credits**

Director: Steve M. Boyle
Stage Manager: Michelle Marko
Assistant Stage Manager: Ivette Deltoro
Scenic Design/Production Manager: Ron Gasparinetti
Lighting Design: Nick Kumamoto
Costume Design: Anna Chase
Props Designer: Miranda Whipple
Sound Design: George Psarras

**Cast**

Nan: Sara Renée Morris
Kyle: Max Sorg
Sweetheart: Laura Espino
Simon: Jacob Marker