



MIRROR STAGE PRESENTS  
THE U.S. PREMIERE OF

# THE SQUIRREL PLAYS:

INFESTATION • COMPENSATION • ERADICATION  
BY MIA MCCULLOUGH



APRIL 27 - MAY 20, 2023  
THE STUDIO at 12th AVENUE ARTS  
MIRRORSTAGE.ORG



# Greetings from the Managing Artistic Director

Dear Mirror Stage patron,

Welcome to Mirror Stage's first fully-staged production since 2012! It hardly seems possible that 11 years have passed since we presented the West Coast premiere of *Odin's Horse* by Robert Koon. We were originally planning to present a different script by Mia's in 2021, and then the pandemic happened. An important part of Mirror Stage's mission is to use the power of storytelling to encourage more thoughtful reflection on today's issues, and the current battle over reproductive rights, as well as continuing gun violence and police brutality made this cycle of plays the more timely and relevant choice.



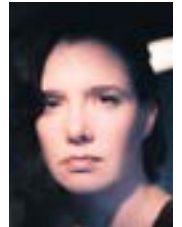
This is the sixth script by Mia McCullough that we have presented, and one of my favorite things about her writing is her ability to explore what can be very divisive contemporary social issues using humor, warmth, and intelligence, without losing sight of the very human complexities. It's a very challenging balance to strike, and she brings a real depth and heart to reflecting a multitude of perspectives, making complicated issues not only accessible, but also entertaining. I remain immensely grateful not only for our creative partnership, but also the deep friendship and mutual respect that we've developed over the years. This production has been a long time coming, and we definitely experienced many twists and turns along the way. I can't imagine taking this journey with anyone else, and am excited to have you join us for the ride. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne".

Suzanne M. Cohen, Managing Artistic Director

## A Note from the Playwright

The first thing to know about *The Squirrel Plays* is that they are not about squirrels. Many years ago, when I wrote the first in this series of plays, I named it *The Play About the Squirrel*. It was a nod to Edward Albee's *The Play About the Baby*, and I thought the title would make the metaphor of the play glaringly obvious. It did not. People can be very literal. And obtuse. Especially when choosing between acknowledging something uncomfortable or denying it.



When I asked early audiences at developmental readings to describe the metaphor to me, people were reluctant. I realized it wasn't because they didn't know. It was because they were afraid to say the word "abortion" out loud, in mixed company.

The Squirrels represent issues we have a very hard time facing and discussing in our culture. Unwanted pregnancies, racism, gun violence, police brutality. I use Squirrels because they're as omnipresent as people, but removed enough to make discussing these issues less threatening.

Ten years ago, when there were only the first two plays, people would ask, "Why are you introducing race?" What they meant was, "Why are you talking about racism in a play about women's reproductive rights?" As if racism isn't an intrinsic piece of everything in America. As I said in my Mirror Stage podcast interview: you can ignore racism or you can acknowledge it, but it's always there. I also suspected there was a third play coming.

Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile. Sandy Hook Elementary School, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, Pulse Night Club in Orlando. With each murder by police and each mass shooting I felt the call to address these plagues with the Squirrels, even though it was "off topic" from the other two plays. It felt the same. Life and death issues that we don't know how to talk about, or solve.

Do I solve anything with these plays? Definitely not. But maybe, after viewing, we can reexamine our own responses to these issues, and decide if we're helping move toward a solution, or if we're talking over, taking over, and ultimately making things worse.

—Mia McCullough

Mirror Stage presents  
the US Premiere of  
**THE SQUIRREL PLAYS:**  
INFESTATION • COMPENSATION • ERADICATION  
**BY MIA MCCULLOUGH**

Directed by Suzanne M. Cohen

*Scenic Design*.....Craig B. Wollam  
*Lighting Design*.....Savannah van Leuvan  
*Costume Design*.....Julia Logan Trimarco  
*Sound Design*.....Andi Villegas  
*Prop Design*.....Jessamyn Bateman-Iino

The Cast  
(in order of appearance)

*Wife*.....Valerie Ryan Miller  
*Realtor/ Exterminator/ Animal Control*.....Angie Bolton  
*Man*.....Jason Marr  
*Neighbor #1 (Amy)*.....Serin Ngai  
*Neighbor #2 (Alice)*.....Emily Hoffman  
*Neighbor #3 (Linda)*.....Caitlin Frances Branston

*Stage Manager*.....Nicola Krause  
*Assistant Director/Assistant Stage Manager*.....Christian Zumbado  
*Production Assistant*.....Sohrob Khojasteh  
*Dramaturgy*.....Celeste Mari Williams and QuiQui Dominguez  
*Fight Choreography*.....Stacey Bush  
*Master Electrician and light board operator*.....Nonabella Schroeder  
*Electrics Assistance*.....Andrew Gies, Adam Towers

*The Squirrel Plays* were developed in part at Chicago Dramatists, Eclectic Theatre Company, and Part of the Main. *Infestation* and *Compensation* were originally produced by Part of the Main Theatre in London, UK and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2018.

**Running time is approximately two and a half hours including one 15 minute intermission**

Mirror Stage gratefully acknowledges the support of:  
4Culture, the City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, the EPS Fund, Humanities Washington, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Posner-Wallace Foundation, and the Washington State Arts Commission.

Additional Production  
Support provided by:



# Notes from the Dramaturg

Threats to basic rights and calls for social justice come unleashed in the suburban neighborhood in *The Squirrel Plays*. As shown in the play, today's neighborhoods continue to reflect discriminatory housing policies and practices that have historically excluded Black and other racial/ethnic groups. Playwright Mia McCullough uses squirrels as an evolving allegorical presence that reflect larger social issues faced by a white couple in a suburban neighborhood.

The Eastern gray squirrel is highly adaptable and frequently seen in urban and suburban settings with green space. Just like humans are one species with various phenotypic traits, "black" squirrels are a gene variant of Eastern grays. While there is a folk belief that black squirrels are more aggressive than other color morphs, scientific evidence has disproven this. Unfortunately, unconscious bias of racist stereotypes of blackness continues to pervade.

The language used in the play to describe unwanted black squirrels echoes demonizing words and phrases used towards historically excluded communities. These "tree rats" infiltrate, infest, destroy, defile, steal, and spread disease. They are "menacing" animals with no self control and "do not belong". In contrast, gray squirrels "fit the image of the neighborhood." The play explores differences in how undesirable squirrels are managed. While gray squirrels are humanely trapped, poisoned, or relocated, black squirrels become eradication targets through violent means.

Humans have both positive and negative attitudes towards squirrels in general. While some think they are cute and enjoyable to observe, others see them as pests. Through squirrels as metaphor, McCullough examines unplanned pregnancy, reproductive rights, racism, housing discrimination, neighborhood segregation, negative perceptions of unwelcome racial/ethnic groups, gun violence, hate crimes, police brutality, and social justice movements.

—Celeste Mari Williams

## Mirror Stage Staff and Board of Directors

### **STAFF:**

QuiQui Dominguez, *Associate Artistic Director*  
Tycarius Cummings, *Media Arts Manager*  
Alexandra Cotutiu, *External Relations Assistant*  
Megan Carleton, *Production Manager*  
Jacquelyn Rardin, *Strategic Marketing and Communications*  
Caity Petterson, *Box Office Coordinator*

### **BOARD:**

Suzanne M. Cohen, *President and Managing Artistic Director*  
Elizabeth Calhoun, *Secretary and Treasurer*  
Angie Bolton  
Celeste Mari Williams

## Getting People Talking, as well as Thinking

**The mission of Mirror Stage is to use the power of storytelling to challenge assumptions, bias and prejudice, increasing equity and inclusion, while encouraging more thoughtful reflection on today's issues.**



**Angie Bolton**  
(she/her)  
– **Realtor,  
Exterminator,  
and Animal  
Control**

Angie is thrilled to perform

with Mirror Stage again. Previous Mirror Stage productions include: *The Penelopiad*, *Knock Me a Kiss*, *Bee-Luther-Hatchee*, and *The Story*. Angie has performed for UW School of Drama, Langston Hughes, Village Theatre, Seattle Public Theater, On The Boards, The Group Theatre, The Bathhouse Theater, and the Museum of History and Industry. She currently teaches for STG Dance as a Dance for Parkinson’s Instructor and for Spectrum Dance Theater as a fitness instructor.



**Caitlin Frances Branston**  
(she/her) –  
**Neighbor #3**

Caitlin is excited to be working with Mirror Stage for the

first time! In Seattle, she has worked with Live Girls!, Macha Theatre Works, Village Theatre, Sound Theatre, Balagan Theatre, Taproot Theatre Company, Seattle Musical Theatre, ArtsWest, SecondStory Repertory, Centerstage, Harlequin Productions, and Seattle Public Theater, among many others. Favorite roles include Maggie in *Smoke & Dust*, Fabiana in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, Flora in *Indian Ink*, Sylvia in *Sylvia*, Eliza in *My Fair Lady*, Ivy in *August Osage County*, Harpo Marx/Gino in *A Day in Hollywood*, *A Night in the Ukraine*, Kitty in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and Mrs. Harville in *Persuasion* the musical. Caitlin can be heard as Dena Rising in the radio drama *Phoenix Rising*. Much love to Connor and Scott.



**Emily Hoffman**  
(she/they) –  
**Neighbor #2**  
Emily is thrilled to be working with Mirror Stage for the first time!

Her previous stage appearance in Seattle was a staged reading of *Pontypool*, presented by Albatross Theatre Lab. Prior to her move to Seattle, Emily was a graduate of Ball State University’s theatre program. She has also worked with Columbus Children’s Theatre on numerous occasions. She would like to thank her parents, and her roommate Erika, for their constant support.



**Jason Marr**  
(he/him) – **Man**  
Jason is delighted to return to Mirror Stage, after previously

appearing in *In the Book of...* and *Maple and Vine* as part of the Feed Your Mind series. He has performed locally with ACT Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Village Theatre, and Seattle Shakespeare, and regionally with Shakespeare Santa Cruz and the Shakespeare Theatre Company in D.C., among others. Some favorite roles include Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Island Stage Left), Henry in *Henry V* (Harlequin Productions), and John McClane in *A Very Die Hard Christmas* (Seattle Public Theater). He’s also a company member with Unexpected Productions. He earned a BFA in Acting and Directing from UNC Greensboro, and an MFA from the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s

## Special Thanks

Tom Williams and Roosevelt High School Theatre, The Phinney Neighborhood Association, and Ballard Homestead

Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University. He is married to the lovely, extraordinary Jill Marr.



**Valerie Ryan Miller**  
(she/her) – **Wife**  
Valerie is delighted to be making her Mirror Stage debut!

Recent credits include *A Very Die Hard Christmas* (Seattle Public Theater), *The Nerd* (Taproot Theatre Company), *Dears in Headlights* (Dacha), *Robin Hood: A British Panto* (Centerstage), *The Producers* (Lakewood Playhouse), and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Tacoma Arts Live). A PNW transplant via NYC, Valerie became an official Seattleite appearing in Macklemore’s “Next Year” music video. An alum of Barnard College & Completely Ridiculous Conservatory, she also received a fellowship from Lucid Body House in NYC. Valerie is a recently certified Artistic Mental Health Practitioner.



**Serin Ngai**  
(she/her) – **Neighbor #1**  
Serin has performed with Book-It Repertory Theatre, ReAct,

NW Asian American Theater, ArtsWest, Seattle Public Theater, and SIS Productions where she also previously co-produced and wrote scripts for their episodic series, *Sex in Seattle*. Offstage, Serin has been practicing family law for the past 17 years, and she has been the owner of her own firm, Sound Family Solutions, PLLC, for nearly 10 years. She volunteers at two legal clinics, and served as President of the Asian Bar Association of Washington in

2020. She is excited to make her Mirror Stage debut and thanks the company, cast, and crew, and also Richard for his encouragement.

**Mia McCullough,**  
(she/her) – **Playwright**

Mia McCullough is a playwright, screenwriter/filmmaker, educator, performer, and visual artist. McCullough’s plays have been seen at theatres around the country including Steppenwolf, The Goodman, Stage Left Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, The Old Globe, Local Theater Company, and Red Fern Theater, as well as in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She created and co-produced *The Haven*, a web series centered around the staff and clients of a domestic violence shelter. McCullough taught playwriting and screenwriting at Northwestern University for 10 years, as well as playwriting classes at University of Illinois – Chicago, Carthage College, Chicago Dramatists and workshops in Chicago Public Schools. She’s written and published a book on the creative writing process called *Transforming Reality*. She is a member of Honor Roll!, a group of femme writers over 40, as well as a member of the Dramatists Guild.

**Suzanne M. Cohen,**  
(she/her) – **Director, Managing Artistic Director**

With more than 30 years of nonprofit arts experience, Suzanne has performed, directed, designed, and administrated at theatre companies across the country, as well as internationally, including 14/48, ACT Theatre, Empty Space, Festival Theatre USA, Infinity Box, Intiman Theatre, Western Stage, and The Group Theatre, among others. She earned a BA in Humanities/Drama with Creative Writing minor from University of Southern California, a Master of Not-for-Profit Leadership

from Seattle University, and an MA in Cultural Studies from University of Washington Bothell. Suzanne would like to thank playwright Mia McCullough, the Mirror Stage staff and board, as well as the cast and crew—for their support and assistance in bringing this production to the stage, and special thanks to Max for being such a love.

**Craig B. Wollam**  
(he/him) – **Scenic Design**

Craig is happy to return to Mirror Stage. As a freelance scenic and lighting designer, Craig’s work has been seen at Seattle Repertory, Seattle Opera, Seattle Public Theater, Gilbert & Sullivan, Village Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Spectrum Dance Theater, Empty Space, Alice B, NW Asian American Theatre, Seattle Childrens Theatre, ACT Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild, and Seattle Shakespeare here in Washington. Other theatres include The Colony in Miami, the Zephyr in LA, Atlanta Theatre, Spoleto Festival, Dance Theatre Workshop NY, Utah Shakespeare, the Lyric in Boston, and Chicago Theatre. Craig founded and was Executive Director and Technical Director of the non-profit Seattle Scenic Studios from 2000-2016. Craig has taught at Cornish College, Highline College, Evergreen, the Bush School, and Roosevelt High School. He is currently an artist in residence at Whitman College.

**Savannah Van Leuvan**  
(she/her) – **Lighting Design**

Savannah is excited to be designing her first show with Mirror Stage! Savannah has designed theater and dance around the United States, previously residing in Los Angeles before making the move up to Washington State. Some of her favorite designs include *Sweeney Todd*, *Cabaret*, *Urinetown*, *Living Out, I’m Still Here*, and *The Nutcracker*. Savannah graduated from the

University of Massachusetts, Amherst with a BA in Theater with a focus in Lighting Design. She has worked with the Charles Stewart Howard Community Playhouse, Contessi Ballet, Debatable Productions, Harlequin Productions, Cornish College of the Arts, among others. She proudly serves on the Board of Trustees for Imaginarium Theatre Company in NYC. Thank you to her family and friends that have tirelessly supported her in her work.

### **Julia Logan Trimarco**

**(she/her) – Costume Design**

This is Julia's first collaboration with Mirror Stage. Her designs were seen recently at Renton Civic Theatre in *A Day in Hollywood*, *A Night in the Ukraine*. A freelance costumer in Seattle since 2002, she has designed costumes locally for Greenstage, ArtsWest, Jet City Improv, Versatile Arts, Eastside Music Theater, and Seattle Public Theater. As a member of IATSE Theatrical Wardrobe Union Local 887, Julia has joined costume and wardrobe crews at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Opera, and Seattle Rep. Other local collaborations include Intiman Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Cornish Playhouse, Seattle Gilbert & Sullivan Society, and Taproot Theatre Company. Julia has costumed in eight states including her home state of New

York, where she earned an Off-Off Broadway Review Award in 2001 for *Moonchildren* at the Producer's Club II.

### **Andi Villegas**

**(she/her) – Sound Design**

Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Andi Villegas is a Seattle-based sound designer and audio editor. She studied sound design and received her BFA in Performance Production at Cornish College of the Arts in 2021. Prior credits include *Much Ado About Nothing* (CCA), *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* (CCA), *Tin Cat Shoes* (Washington Ensemble Theatre), *ALMA* (ArtsWest), *La Tofana's Poison Emporium* (Macha Theatre Works), and *The Forgotten History of Mastaneh* (Seda Iranian Theatre Ensemble).

### **Jessamyn Bateman-lino**

**(they/them) – Props Design**

Jessamyn is a Seattle area props designer and stage manager. Past favorite shows include *Cabaret* (Reboot Theatre Company), and *The Last World Octopus Wrestling Champion* (ArtsWest). They also make cute and creepy crafts, which can be found at [mutinyhall.com](http://mutinyhall.com).

### **Nicola Krause**

**(she/her) – Stage Manager**

Nicola is a recent graduate from Seattle University where she studied

Theatre and Anthropology. This is Nicola's first production with Mirror Stage, previously having worked at Book-It Repertory Theatre on *Austen Unbound*, *The Murder Of Roger Ackroyd*, and with Book-It's Arts Education Program as a touring Stage Manager for their adaptation of *Trying*. Other notable productions she's been a part of include *Sweeney Todd* at Village Theatre KIDSTAGE, SU's *Eurydice*, SU's virtual *She Kills Monsters*, and as the SM intern on *SWEAT* at ACT Theatre. Nicola gives thanks to her family who have always supported her dreams, and she hopes you enjoy the show!

### **Christian Zumbado**

**(he/him) – Assistant Director and Production Assistant**

Christian Zumbado is a Seattle based multi-hyphenate artist from SoCal. He is a graduate of PCPA and Cornish College of the Arts. Notable credits include Producing/Co-Directing *Water by the Spoonful* (Strawberry Theatre Workshop), *Jesus in Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, Lector in *Anna in the Tropics* (Tacoma Arts Live); Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* (Theatre 22), Tomas in *Shoe* (ACT Theatre), Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Larry in *Company*, Adolpho in *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Cornish). He is a proud member of Young Hot Thespians and thanks his friends for always showing support.

## **The Squirrel Plays Community Forums: Engaging Conversations with Leaders Making a Difference**

The Studio at 12th Avenue Arts - 1620 12th Ave, Seattle

7:30 to 9:00 pm • Doors Open: 7:15 pm

FREE and open to the general public • Masks required

### **Tuesday, May 2: Reproductive Justice and Maternal Health Panels with Rainier Valley Community Clinic**

Learn about our community's ability to maintain personal bodily autonomy, and access healthcare during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, as well as the many ways reproductive matters impact our community. This event will also be live-streamed on Mirror Stage's YouTube channel.

### **Wednesday, May 10: Alliance for Gun Responsibility**

Representatives from the Alliance for Gun Responsibility discuss their mission to save lives and eliminate the harms caused by gun violence in every community through advocacy, education, and partnerships. This event will also be live-streamed on Mirror Stage's YouTube channel.

### **Tuesday, May 16: Racial Restrictive Covenant Project: The History and Legacy of Racial Restrictions in Seattle Real Estate**

Learn about the University of Washington Racial Restrictions Covenant Project and how you can get involved. Speakers include UW researchers as they discuss the history of racial segregation in King County real estate. This event will also be live-streamed on Mirror Stage's YouTube channel.

### **PLUS: Wednesday, May 3: Writing the social and political play/screenplay Master Class with Mia McCullough**

Join playwright Mia McCullough in this free 90-minute class about working socio-political issues into dramatic writing. Mia will share some of the knowledge she has gained through years of writing and teaching, and guide you through writing exercises aimed at finding inventive and character-based ways of approaching social and political issues in a story. No writing experience is necessary.



# Mirror Stage

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