



MARIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 29th 2019

**MARIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRODUCES WEST COAST PREMIERE OF
MARY KATHRYN NAGLE'S SWEEPING AMERICAN EPIC**

Sovereignty

MILL VALLEY, CA—[Marin Theatre Company \(MTC\)](#) launches their 2019/20 season with the West Coast Premiere of **Mary Kathryn Nagle's** lyrical and powerful [Sovereignty](#), directed by MTC's Artistic Director **Jasson Minadakis**.

"What Mary Kathryn Nagle has given us onstage tonight is the history we don't learn."

—Gloria Steinem, Arena Stage Panel on *Sovereignty*

First premiering in 2018 at the [Women's Voices Theatre Festival in Washington, D.C.](#), *Sovereignty* follows Sarah Ridge Polson, a Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction as she confronts the ever-present ghosts of her grandfathers. With shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) through Andrew Jackson's Oval Office, along the fateful Trail of Tears, to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma—*Sovereignty* travels the powerful intersections of personal and political truths; bridging our country's distant past and imminent future.

"At a time when the current President of the United States thinks that the Trail of Tears is nothing more than a joke he can use as a political weapon, it is critical that Americans learn about the attempt, and failure, of President Andrew Jackson to completely eradicate my Nation and all Cherokee Nation citizens on the Trail of Tears. We are still here today, and I am so thankful that Marin Theatre Company is giving me the chance to share a story that most Americans have never heard." —Mary Kathryn Nagle

Balancing a full-time law career, Nagle has dedicated her work [onstage and off](#) toward protecting tribal sovereignty, the right of tribal nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault, and lifting up Native American voices. The characters and history explored within *Sovereignty* are [inspired by Nagle's own heritage](#): her great-great-great-great grandfather, Major Ridge, served as speaker of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council. Nagle's heritage especially resonates this week as principal chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. announced that the Cherokee Nation will [assert the right granted to them in the historic 1835 Treaty of New Echota](#) (of which Major Ridge was a signatory) and [appoint a delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives](#). It is the complicated history of this treaty, and its immediate and

lasting effects within both the Cherokee Nation and the United States, that *Sovereignty* explores.

“This story isn’t just about the redemption of a family name or the prolonged fight for tribal sovereignty, but it is about the exercise of Cherokee values by Major and John Ridge, and their progenitor in the play and the playwright herself. Mary Kathryn Nagle, the great (x4) granddaughter of John Ridge, had every reason in the world to listen to her grandmother and to stay away from the Cherokee Nation. But, Mary Kathryn is driven in the same way I am driven to exercise Cherokee values of the protection of our Cherokee communities and tribal governments, not only for our citizens today but for future generations. I am Eastern Band of Cherokee and I am a descendant of the 1,000 Cherokee people who remained in our homelands of North Carolina during and after the removal. We now number over 14,000 citizens. Even though Mary Kathryn didn’t have the benefit of growing up in a Cherokee community, she had her grandmother who shared both the horror of sacrifice and the beauty and values of the culture. Mary Kathryn, unlike others in her family, embraced her heritage and history and was determined to continue the fight for Cherokee sovereignty that had ended with her great grandfathers Major and John Ridge. Mary Kathryn’s determination is rooted in family and love for the Cherokee Nation.”—Brenda Pipestem, Cultural Consultant

Drawing from the playwright’s own court experience, *Sovereignty*’s Sarah Ridge Polson readies herself to defend the [Violence Against Women Act](#) (or VAWA). In 1978, a United States Supreme Court decision declared Tribal Nations could no longer exercise jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit crimes on tribal lands. Since then, violent crimes against Native women on tribal lands have skyrocketed. Today, Native women experience rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and murder rates [higher than any population in the United States](#). It is no surprise that the majority of these crimes, according to statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice, are committed by non-Indians, but because of the Supreme Court’s decision in [Oliphant](#), Tribal Nations were rendered unable to protect their women living on their own lands. Nothing in the U.S. Constitution prevents Tribal Nations from protecting their women and children, and in 2013, Congress re-authorized the Violence Against Women Act with a tribal jurisdiction provision that restores tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrated crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, and violations of protective orders. VAWA 2013, however, did not restore all of the jurisdiction that *Oliphant* eliminated. In April 2019, the House passed H.R. 1585, a bill that would restore tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrated crimes of violence against children and law enforcement, as well as sexual assault and sex trafficking. The bill has now stalled in the Senate and many advocates are concerned that the Senate version of the bill may not include the same critical provisions included in H.R. 1585.

*“If he can erase my sovereignty over my body, he can erase sovereignty over my nation.”—Sarah Ridge Polson”, *Sovereignty**

Helmed by MTC's Artistic Director Jasson Minadakis, *Sovereignty* features a spectacularly talented cast: **Elizabeth Frances** as Sarah Ridge Polson; **Andrew Roa** as Major Ridge and Roger Ridge Polson; **Kholan Studi** as Elias Boudinot and Watie; **Jake Waid** (Tlingit/Haida) as John Ross and Jim Ross; **Robert I. Mesa** as John Ridge; **Craig Marker** as Andrew Jackson and Ben; **Adam Magill** as Samuel Worcester and Mitch; **Ella Dershowitz** as Sarah Bird Northrup and Flora Ridge; **Scott Coopwood** as White Chorus Man.

The creative team for *Sovereignty* includes **Annie Smart** (Scenic Designer), **EB Brooks** (Costume Designer), **Brenda Pipestem** (Cultural Consultant), **Laura Brueckner** (Dramaturg), **Danny Osburn** (Lighting Designer), **Mike Post** (Projection Designer) and **Sara Huddleston** (Sound Designer).

More on Playwright, Mary Kathryn Nagle

Mary Kathryn Nagle is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. She is also a partner at Pipestem Law, P.C., where she works to protect tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of Indian Nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. Nagle has authored numerous briefs in federal appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court. Nagle studied theater and social justice at Georgetown University as an undergraduate student, and received her J.D. from Tulane Law School where she graduated *summa cum laude* and received the John Minor Wisdom Award. She is a frequent speaker at law schools and symposia across the country. Her articles have been published in law review journals including the Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, Yale Law Journal (online forum), Tulsa Law Review, and Tulane Law Review, among others. Nagle is an alumni of the 2012 PUBLIC THEATER Emerging Writers Group, where she developed her play *Manahatta* in PUBLIC STUDIO (May 2014). Productions include *Miss Lead* (Amerinda, 59E59, January 2014), and *Fairly Traceable* (Native Voices at the Autry, March 2017), *Sovereignty* (Arena Stage), *Manahatta* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Return to Niobrara* (Rose Theater) and *Crossing Mnisose* (Portland Center Stage). Nagle has received commissions from Arena Stage (*Sovereignty*), the Rose Theater (*Return to Niobrara*, Omaha, Nebraska), Portland Center Stage (*Mnisose*), Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Yale Repertory Theatre (*A Pipe for February*), and Round House Theater.

More on Artistic Director, Jasson Minadakis

Jasson Minadakis is in his 14th season as artistic director of Marin Theatre Company, where he has directed *Oslo* (SFBATCC Awards for Best Lighting Design, Best Ensemble, and Best Entire Production - Bay Area), *Shakespeare in Love*, *Thomas and Sally*, *Guards at the Taj*, *August: Osage County*, *The Invisible Hand*, *Anne Boleyn*, *The Convert*, *The Whale*, *Failure: A Love Story*, the world premiere of *Lasso of Truth*, *The Whipping Man* (SFBATCC Awards for Best Production and Best Acting Ensemble), *Waiting for Godot*, *Othello: the Moor of Venice*,

The Glass Menagerie, Edward Albee's *Tiny Alice*, the world premiere of Libby Appel's adaptation of Chekhov's *Seagull*, *Happy Now?*, *Equivocation* (SFBATCC Award, Best Director), the world premiere of *Sunlight*, *Lydia*, *The Seafarer*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *said Saïd*, *Love Song*, and *The Subject Tonight is Love*. As artistic director of Actor's Express Theatre Company, he directed *The Pillowman*; *Bug*; *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer*; *Echoes of Another Man*; *Killer Joe*; *Burn This*; *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*; *Blue/Orange*; and *Bel Canto*. As producing artistic director of Cincinnati Shakespeare Festival, he directed *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train*, *Chagrin Falls* (2002 Cincinnati Entertainment Award for Best Production), and numerous others, including 19 productions of Shakespeare. Regional credits include *The Whipping Man* at Virginia Stage Company, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Hamlet* at Georgia Shakespeare, *Copenhagen* at Playhouse on the Square (2003 Ostrander Theatre Award for Best Dramatic Production), and *Bedroom Farce* at Wayside Theatre.

CALENDAR LISTING

Theatre | Performing Arts

WHAT

[Sovereignty](#)

WHO

By Mary Kathryn Nagle

Directed by Jasson Minadakis

FEATURING

*Elizabeth Frances: SARAH POLSON

*Andrew Roa: MAJOR RIDGE / ROGER RIDGE POLSON

*Kholan Studi: ELIAS BOUDINOT / WATIE

*Jake Waid (Tlingit/Haida): JOHN ROSS / JIM ROSS

*Robert I. Mesa: JOHN RIDGE

*Craig Marker: ANDREW JACKSON / BEN

*Adam Magill: SAMUEL WORCESTER / MITCH

*Ella Dershowitz: SARAH BIRD NORTHRUP / FLORA RIDGE

*Scott Coopwood: WHITE CHORUS MAN

* Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association

WHEN

September 26th - October 20th

PERFORMANCES

OPENING NIGHT: Tuesday, October 1st, 2019

Evenings

Tuesday - Sunday, 7:30pm

Matinees

Sunday (Preview) September 29, 4pm

Thursday (Perspectives) October 17, 1pm

Saturdays: October 5, 12, and 19, 2pm

Sundays: October 6, 13, and 20, 2pm

WHERE

397 Miller Ave | Mill Valley, CA 94941

ABOUT

Sovereignty follows Sarah Ridge Polson, a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction as she confronts the ever-present ghosts of her grandfathers. With shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) through Andrew Jackson's Oval Office, along the fateful Trail of Tears, to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma—*Sovereignty* travels the powerful intersections of personal and political truths; bridging our country's distant past and imminent future.

Tickets \$25 - \$70

Discounts for seniors, under 35, teens, military families, and teachers are available.

Group Discounts: Purchase 8 or more tickets and receive a \$7 discount off each ticket. MTC will also waive any applicable order fees. As the organizer of a group, your ticket is free! Contact kater@marintheatre.org for more information.

Press Photos will be available for *Sovereignty* on **Friday, September 27th**.

MTC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- ***Panel Discussion:*** Join us following the 4pm preview performance on Sunday, September 29th for a panel discussion with playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle around *Sovereignty*. This discussion is free and open to the public, and attendance at the preview performance is not required. More details on additional panelists and discussion topics coming soon.
- ***Native American Trade Feast:*** On September 14th, Marin Theatre Company will be present at the [Native American Trade Feast](#) at Miwok Park in Novato, a celebration of the 52nd year of the Marin Museum of the American Indian. Admission is free, and chances are you might get to chat with *Sovereignty* playwright, Mary Kathryn Nagle!

- ***Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival:*** Stop by Mill Valley's [annual Arts festival](#) in Old Mill Park on Saturday (9/14) or Sunday (9/15) and visit Marin Theatre Company's booth! We'll be spreading the word about *Sovereignty*, as well as our Fall education class offerings.
- ***Young Professionals Night:*** Join us the Wednesday after Opening Night for a pre-show reception with wine and snacks, followed by a 7:30pm performance. For *Sovereignty*, the YPN event will take place on Wednesday, October 2nd with a reception starting at 7:00pm. Interns, apprentices, students, and other young professionals in *any* field are encouraged to attend, and are eligible for discounted tickets. To book, use promo code **PROFESH20** online, in person, or by calling MTC's Box Office.
- ***Window on the Work:*** Join members of MTC's artistic staff and cast of the show to discuss artistic and production elements of MTC's production of *Sovereignty* at 7:00pm on Thursday, September 5th, at the Mill Valley Public Library.
- ***Perspectives:*** The third Thursday of each show is the Perspectives matinee performance which includes a pre-show topical lecture. For *Sovereignty*, the Perspectives matinee is scheduled for Thursday, October 17th, with the pre-show lecture beginning at 12:30pm, and the performance beginning at 1:00pm.
- ***Pre-Show Discussions:*** Join members of MTC's artistic staff to discuss the play, playwright and play's themes on Wednesdays before the 7:30pm performances.
- ***After Words:*** Join a member of MTC's artistic staff (often with one or more members of the cast) for a Q&A talkback after every performance, except Saturday evenings and Opening and Closing Nights.

ACCESS

Marin Theatre Company provides open captioned performances of each of the plays in our mainstage series on the Thursday matinee. The open captioned performance for *Sovereignty* will be Thursday, October 17th, at 1:00pm.

For visually impaired patrons, Large Print playbills are available with one week's advance notice. To request a Large Print playbill, call MTC's Box Office, (415) 388-5208, or use the California Telecommunications Relay Service by dialing "711." For hearing impaired patrons, amplified sound Assistive Listening Devices are available. Our system will also work with personal assistive hearing devices equipped with a T-coil.

BOX OFFICE CONTACT

marintheatre.org | (415) 388-5208 | boxoffice@marintheatre.org

ABOUT MTC

Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area's premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay. We produce a six-show season focused on new American plays. We are committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the nation's best

emerging and established playwrights. Our numerous education programs serve more than 4,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. We believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community, and we believe that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

PRESS CONTACT

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