



A WORLD PREMIERE
**THE OCTOBER NIGHT
OF JOHNNY ZERO**
BY FRANCIS GERCKE

Thanks to a beloved anonymous production sponsor...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In Order of Appearance

FRANKY – Geoffrey Ulysses Geissinger

JOHNNY – Marcel Ferrin

BARBARA – Jessica John

PLACE

A home located in the wilds of the Delaware Valley in the mid-Atlantic region of the eastern seaboard.

TIME

1981. A late October afternoon.

(There will be a 10 minute intermission)

ABOUT BACKYARD RENAISSANCE



Backyard Renaissance Theatre Company is a non-profit 501(C)(3) with an "art to the gut" sensibility. Founded in 2015 in San Diego, CA, Backyard Renaissance believes that exceptional storytelling is rooted in a sense of joyful play, human connection and gutsy intensity. For more info: www.BackyardRenaissance.com

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PRODUCTION STAFF

Backyard Renaissance Executive Director

Jessica John Gercke

Backyard Renaissance Artistic Director

Francis Gercke

Backyard Renaissance Producing Director

Anthony Methvin

Backyard Renaissance Photographer

Daren Scott

The October Night of Johnny Zero Director

Richard Baird

The October Night of Johnny Zero Set Designer

Yi-Chien Lee

The October Night of Johnny Zero Lighting Designer

Kate Rose Reynolds

The October Night of Johnny Zero Sound Designer

Kevin Anthenill

The October Night of Johnny Zero Technical Director

Chad Ryan

The October Night of Johnny Zero Charge Artist

Julie Lorenz

The October Night of Johnny Zero Costume Designer

Lilymoon Perez

The October Night of Johnny Zero Stage Manager

Anna Younce

The October Night of Johnny Zero Assistant Stage Manager

Josh Navarro

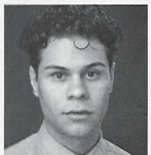
The October Night of Johnny Zero Dialect Coach

Susanne Sulby

The October Night of Johnny Zero House Manager

Nan Pace

ABOUT THE PLAYERS



Marcel Ferrin (PLAYING Johnny)

This is Marcel's third show with Backyard Renaissance. He was previously seen as Brett in BYR's *Witchland* and Bobby in BYR's *American Buffalo*. Other roles include Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, Steven in *Bring It On The Musical*, David (understudy) at the Old Globe for *El Borracho*. He wants to thank everyone for supporting Local Theatre.



Geoffrey Ulysses Geissinger (PLAYING Franky)

A San Diego-based actor and writer, Geoffrey earned his BA in Theatre Performance and Theatre Studies with a Creative Writing minor from Saint Mary's College of California. Before finishing his degree, he studied Drama at Queen Mary University of London. His original plays have been featured at the San Diego International Fringe Festival and Under 30: A Festival of One-Acts at Saint Mary's College. Recent Acting

Credits: Silvius in *As You Like It* (New Fortune Theatre Company), Armand Lumé in *Murder at Roland Manor* (Thunder Bay Theatre), Narrator in *Every Brilliant Thing* (Saint Mary's College), Phil/Dave in *Almost, Maine* (Solano College Theatre), Richard in *Fuddy Meers* (Solano College Theatre), Frank in *School for Lies* (Saint Mary's College), Tuzenbach in *Three Sisters* (Saint Mary's College), and Jean Verse in *...And Jesus Moonwalks The Mississippi* (Saint Mary's College). geoffreyulyssesgeissinger.com



Jessica John (PLAYING Barbara)

Jessica is the co-founder and executive director of Backyard Renaissance. She has performed as an actor in Backyard Renaissance's *Abigail's Party*, *Dry Powder*, *The Dazzle*, *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (SD Critics Circle - Outstanding Featured Performance), *Smokefall*, *Abundance*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Parlour Song*. Other select work includes *The Roustabouts: No Way Back*, North Coast

Rep: *Gabriel*, *School for Lies*, *A Shana Maidel*; Lambs Players: *Noises Off*, *The Explorer's Club*; Cygnet Theatre: *Private Lives*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Mauritius*, *Communicating Doors*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (SD Playbill - Best Actress), *Burn This* (SD Critics Circle - Outstanding Lead Performance); ion theatre: *Angels in America*; New Fortune: *Dangerous Liaisons*; New Village Arts: *The Playboy of the Western World* (Patte - Best Actress); and Renaissance Theatre: *A View from the Bridge* (SD Critics Circle - Outstanding Lead Performance).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION STAFF

Richard Baird (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO DIRECTOR)

RICHARD BAIRD is an award-winning actor, director and producer. He is thrilled to return to Backyard Renaissance where he played Teach in *American Buffalo* and directed *An Experiment with an Air Pump*. Mr. Baird is the Artistic Director of New Fortune Theatre Company where he co-directed *Henry V*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and directed *The Birthday Party*. He was Associate Artistic Director of Southwest Shakespeare Company in 2008-2009. At North Coast Repertory Theatre he has directed *Dancing Lessons*, *Amadeus*, *A Walk in the Woods* and *Of Mice and Men*. *Much Ado about Nothing* (Intrepid Theatre), *Edward II* (Diversionary Theatre), *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale* (Southwest Shakespeare Company), *The Changeling* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival Black Swan), *Julius Caesar* (Upstart Crow Productions) as well as over twenty productions of Shakespeare's plays for Poor Players Theatre Company. As an actor, Mr. Baird has been seen on regional stages throughout the United States. To learn more visit www.newfortunetheatre.com.

Yi-Chien Lee (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO SET DESIGN)

Born and raised in Taiwan, Yi-Chien is currently a San Diego-based set designer. Theatre design credits include *Life Sucks*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *The Great Leap* (Cygnet Theatre), *Eighty-Sixed*, *Girlfriend*, *A Kind of Weather* (Diversionary Theatre), *King of the Yeas* (Sierra Madre Playhouse), *Mother of the Maid*, *The Pleasure Trials* (Moxie Theatre), *The Winter's Tale*- globe for all (Old Globe). Projection design credits include *Everybody* (Antaeus Theatre). portfolio: yichienlee.com. Also, she wants to thank "The Mesa College Theatre Company" for all the support.

Anna Younce (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO STAGE MANAGER)

Anna Younce is a graduate of UC San Diego (BA-Theatre) where she developed her identity as a theatre maker with multiple areas of interest. Highlights include an award-winning Honors Thesis in Playwriting with her first full-length play *Self-Talk*; a staged reading of emerging playwright Dave Harris's *Incendiary* (Asst. Stage Manager); *Our Town* (Asst. Dir. under Kim Walsh); writing, directing, and designing a production of two one-act plays as a studio project (*Give Me Something/Whatever You Need*). Professional credits include *Steel Magnolias*, *Abigail's Party*, *Witchland*, *Dry Powder*, *The Dazzle*, *American Buffalo* (Stage Manager, Backyard Renaissance); *gUnTOPIA* (Stage Manager, The Roustabouts Theatre Co.); *Written in Stone* for Without Walls Festival 2019 ("Tour Guide," Backyard Renaissance & La Jolla Playhouse).

Kate Rose Reynolds (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO LIGHTING DESIGN)

Kate Rose Reynolds is an actor/director/designer, most recently seen on stage in *Iron* with Roustabouts Theatre Company. Lighting design credits include over 15 years with the Chequamegon Children's Theatre in northern Wisconsin, as well as technician and assistant-design work throughout San Diego. She is a founding member of Loud Fridge Theatre Group, and is directing their upcoming San Diego premiere of *Ripped* in January of 2023. She also stars in the independent horror film *Soul to Keep*, currently streaming on a variety of platforms. www.katerosereynolds.com.

Kevin Anthenill (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO SOUND DESIGN)

Sound Design credits include USD/Old Globe's *A Measure for Measure*, *Winters Tale*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Fathers and Sons*; Cygnet Theatre's *Gem of the Ocean*, *Shakespeare's R&J*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Travesties*; San Diego Repertory Theatre's *Zoot Suit*; Diversionary Theatre's *She-rantulas from Outer Space*, *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabbler*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Edward II*, *Next Fall*, *Harmony Kansas*, *Pippin*, and *Marry Me a Little*; Moxie Theatre's *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*. He composed original music for San Diego Repertory Theatre's *Boom* and *In the Next Room*, was the Sound Design Assistant at The Old Globe's Summer Shakespeare Festival three times, and worked with The Old Globe's education department sound designing their Summer Shakespeare Intensive four times. He holds a B.A. in Theater Design from San Diego State University.

Lilymoon Perez (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO COSTUME DESIGN)

This is Lilymoon's third time working with Backyard Renaissance. Prior costume assistance includes *Steel Magnolias* and *Witchland*. Lilymoon attended Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) right after high school. After attaining her Associates of Arts degree in Fashion Design, she was one of the chosen few to participate in FIDM's Debut Advanced Associates program. Only nine students are selected to participate. In this program, she designed an exciting collection for FIDM's Debut runway show that was live-streamed. Afterwards, she showcased her Debut collection at Vancouver Fashion Week. She always looks for new opportunities to challenge and expand her skills as a designer.

Chad Ryan (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO TECHNICAL DIRECTOR)

Chad is excited for this opportunity to work with Backyard Renaissance on his first production with the company! *Johnny Zero* marks a return to the technical side of theatre after many years on stage. As an actor Chad has appeared across the US from California to New York, most notably *The Munny*, *The Guthrie*, *Walnut Street Theatre*, *Carnegie Hall* - "Broadway Today" Concert Series. Broadway: *Phantom of the Opera*, *Beauty and the Beast*. Last 13 years have been spent working the real estate industry. Most fulfilling adventures have been as Technical Director Cedar Falls High School, technical advisor to Crystal Lake South High School and Jack-of-all-trades at The Old Creamery Theatre in Amana, Iowa. BA: Theatre. University of Northern Iowa.

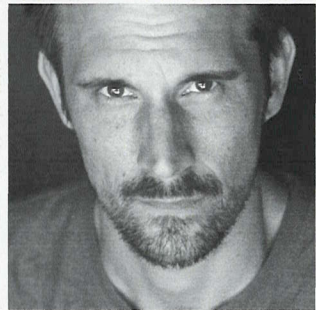
Susanne Sulby (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO DIALECT COACH)

Susanne is a voice & dialect coach and acting teacher. She is delighted to be working with The Backyard Renaissance theatre for the first time. Her most recent projects include coaching Emmy Award winning actors, Jean Smart, and Evan Peterson and the full cast of *Mare of Easttown*, Jared Harris in *Brave the Dark*, Jacki Weaver in *Silver Linings Playbook*, Sienna Miller, J.K. Simmons and the cast of *21 Bridges*. Susanne's theatre coaching credits include Ford's Theater, *1776* and *Violet*, (Washington DC), Theatre Horizon and People's Light and Theater. Throughout her career, Susanne has worked as an actor, teacher, and voice coach including with California Institute for the Arts, Muhlenberg College, University of the Arts, The Linklater Center and numerous theaters. She has performed in film and theatre and looks forward to telling great stories in the future.

Production Staff continued...

Julie Lorenz (THE OCTOBER NIGHT OF JOHNNY ZERO CHARGE ARTIST)

This is Julie's first time painting for Backyard Renaissance. She has worked as Charge Artist on 13 productions at Moxie Theatre, including *Mother of the Maid*, *Sapience*, and *Anne Frank*. She has also designed sets at Moxie for *The Children*, *The Niceties*, *Handbagged* and *Herland*. She painted on Cygnet's *La Cage aux Follies*, *Rock of Ages*, *King Hedley II/Seven Guitars*, and backdrops at Lambs Players on *See How They Run* and *Servant of Two Masters*. She was also Charge Artist for *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at Mt. Helix Amphitheater. Julie currently works at Aesthetics Inc. as Interior Designer and Art Consultant for healing environments. Julie thanks Jon Lorenz, Macy Flynn and Hudson Fox for their love and support.



About Playwright Francis Gercke

October Night playwright Francis Gercke has been an actor, director and producer in San Diego for the past 20 years. He is currently the artistic director of Backyard Renaissance which he co-founded with his wife Jessica John in 2015. He is a graduate of the Actors Studio Drama School. Recent roles include: *Noises Off*, *Camping with Henry and Tom*, *The Explorers Club*, *Equivocation*, *Freud's Last Session* (Lambs Players); *Stupid F***ing Bird*, *True West*, *Fool for Love* (Cygnet Theatre); *Abigail's Party*, *The Dazzle*, *American Buffalo*, *An Experiment with an Air Pump*, *Smokefall*, *The Zoo Story*, *Abundance*, *The Elephant Man*, *Parlour Song* (Backyard Renaissance); *The Behavior of Broadus* (Capital Stage Company); *In the Next Room*, *Honky* (San Diego Rep); *Accomplice*, *Suzette Who Set to Sea* (La Jolla

Playhouse WOW and POP Tour); *A Life in the Theatre*, *Time Stands Still* (NCRT); *The Pride* (Diversory Theatre). He is a resident artist with Cygnet Theatre and recipient of the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award for acting and directing. He teaches at Palomar College and privately through ActorsApproach. *The October Night of Johnny Zero* is his first produced play.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I never know what to write. Which is ironic given that I am the playwright of this particular production.

I think a play should be self-explanatory. It's meant to be experienced in 3D. Not only read. Or listened to. A combination of everything — lights, sound, set, script, the characters' clothing and personal possessions (I hate the words costumes and props).

Everything and everyone — actors, production team, the audience — come together in a single room, the lights dim down, then come up again, and boom! It's the best magic trick ever. We all know it's fake, it's pure fiction, that it's essentially a lie. The characters are just actors, the conversation is just a memorized text, the clothing is just a collection of costumes. But somehow, if it's done just right, the fiction — the bundle of lies — turns into this weird undeniable and maybe even surprising truth. It's like Peter Pan says: "If you believe...then everyone claps their hands. And Tink flies again!" (Sorry, that got away from me a little bit.)

The point is that this weird and somewhat silly exercise in theatrical fiction is actually an exercise in faith. A ritual that can restore faith. Or hope. Maybe both? Stories are magic. Someone somewhere once told me that the only single thing that really differentiates humans from animals is that we tell stories. *The October Night of Johnny Zero* is part of my story. It's based on actual events — real and imaginary. I hope you enjoy the magic act.

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SPECIAL THANKS

- Cygnet Theatre
- Mesa College Theatre Company
- Palomar College Performing Arts Dept.
 - Mark Arapostathis
 - Sophia Segerstrom
 - Josh Navarro
- Peter Pan Junior Theatre (*Oliver* runs March 26 - April 1
Tickets available at PPJT.org)
- Skyline San Diego Trade Show Exhibits
 - Rogelio Rosales
 - San Diego Musical Theatre
 - Clay Greenhalgh
- Set Crew: Christopher Ware, Anthony Garcia and Bill Carlton