

SALT & PEPPER

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An Introduction to the Spiral Theatre Studio and the Salt & Pepper Series



The Spiral Theatre Studio



The Spiral Theatre Studio
Our Green Rooms truly are

Paula J Riley
Artistic Director

4 Park Avenue 6G
New York, NY 10016
T: 212-689-4362
C: 917-544-4986

E: spiraltheatrestudio@gmail.com
www.thespiraltheatrestudio.com
www.paula@pjrileystudio.com

THE SPIRAL THEATRE STUDIO MISSION

The Spiral Theatre Studio is a premier incubator theater for off-off-Broadway plays, focused on the stories of characters grappling with issues related to growing older in a culture disrespectful of aging. Our *Salt & Pepper Series* promotes greater awareness of issues about the grace and grit of “seasoned” citizens. Each of our past four main-stage productions by established and emerging playwrights features a weekly Industry Night and performs on our innovative Spiral Stage that provides an emotional landscape for these poignant plays. We are proud to use environmentally conscious, green technology (recycled materials, LED lighting) for these showcase productions.

ABOUT THE SPIRAL THEATRE STUDIO STAGE

A unique aspect of The Spiral Theatre Studio is the stage. The stage consists of a hexagon divided into twelve carpeted modular pieces that move upon a fully carpeted floor. These modules can move within the context of the performance by the actors /characters. The hexagon is a form found quite readily in nature—such as crystals and snowflakes. Thus the stage enables performance that is a synthesis of the free “organic” and the structured “geometric”.

The acoustically optimized gray carpeted floor and modules create a unified “field” that forgoes the usual separation between audience, stage and actors. Productions on this environmental-friendly construct eliminate the use of sets. By not having set load-ins and load-outs, the studio can function in a controlled environment that has a small carbon footprint.

44.2 % of the theater audience in cities like New York are comprised of people 50 years or older.

The stage, once called The Chamber Theatre and since named The Spiral Theatre Studio, was conceived and utilized by Russian born Iza Itkin for the purpose of training and performance during 1966–1972. The reach of the Spiral Theatre Studio includes teaching, workshops, performance, seminars, readings and musical events.

ABOUT THE SALT & PEPPER SERIES

The *Salt & Pepper Series* consists of a series of short and full-length plays by mature writers, about mature themes, performed by mature actors, uniquely positioned to address a need that is lacking in today’s theatre for “seasoned citizens.”

The voice of this mature audience is not being heard in the majority of popular theater. This is surprising because 44.2 % of the theater audience in cities like New York City is comprised of people 50 years or older. The theatre is about story telling and senior writers and actors have stories to tell. In addition to profiling our artists and their current endeavors, we also look to cast light on their legacies and the contributions they have made over the course of their lifetimes. We feel it is vital to pass these stories— and their inherent wisdom— down to a younger generation. >>



Our *Salt & Pepper Series* addresses the declining stature of elders in American culture during our nation's history of nearly 240 years. The impact of elders has plummeted, but Boomers are reversing the trend. The Baby Boomer Generation (born 1946-64) with help from "Pre-Boomers" born during the War strives to have far greater impact as elders on our society than the preceding generation.

The *Salt & Pepper Series* illuminates this generational difference and gives voice to the Boomers claim to become an essential part of 21st century American culture. The transition of Boomers into "elder-hood" is a rapidly growing demographic shift that Spiral Theatre examines through thoughtful dramas. Our plays give voice to the vitality of the Boomer generation and its ambition to engage and create popular culture, rather than become passive consumers, warehoused in isolated communities.

As this baby-boomer generation ages the concerns that affect them make for fascinating theater. *Salt & Pepper* plays tackle issues like: health, sex, the loss of loved ones, loneliness, facing mortality, fitting in with a youth-orientated culture, job and money issues, as well as generational growth, acquiring peace and wisdom, enjoying leisure time, spending time with family and finding a voice within society.

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ABOUT PAULA J RILEY

Paula J. Riley is the artistic Director of The Spiral Theatre Studio and serves as director for the four previous plays of the series. As a passionate theater professional, she is following a forty-year career as a professional actor, director, teacher and acting coach in New York City. Paula was born in the proverbial theatrical trunk. Her parents were comedian Larry Best and singer Susan Brewster, who worked the Borscht Belt circuit after meeting on the Major Bowes radio show. Throughout her career, she has portrayed such characters as: Daisy Werthan, in *Driving Miss. Daisy*, Amanda in *Glass Menagerie*, Edna, in *Prisoner of Second Avenue* and Norma, in *'Night Mother*, just to name a few. Some of her Directorial credits include: *A Fake Fiasco* by Fred Timm *Come Back, Little Sheba* by William Inge, *Golden Boy* by Clifford Odets, *The Wreck on the 5:25* by Thornton Wilder, and *The Stronger* by August Strindberg. Paula is a member of Actors Equity, SAG-AFTRA and The League of Professional Theater Women. Paula has also directed all 5 of the Spiral Theatre Studio productions.

She developed the Primary Principles of Acting process (PPA) which she teaches in her acting classes in which she incorporates the Spiral stage.





PAST PRODUCTIONS

STORIES MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME

Performance Dates: Friday September 27th — Sunday October 20, 2013

WRINKLES

Performance Dates: Friday October 25th — Sunday November 17, 2013

CHRISTMAS GUEST

Performance Dates: Friday November 22th — Sunday December 29th, 2013

DEVIL DOG SIX

Performance Dates: Friday June 13th — Monday June 30th, 2014

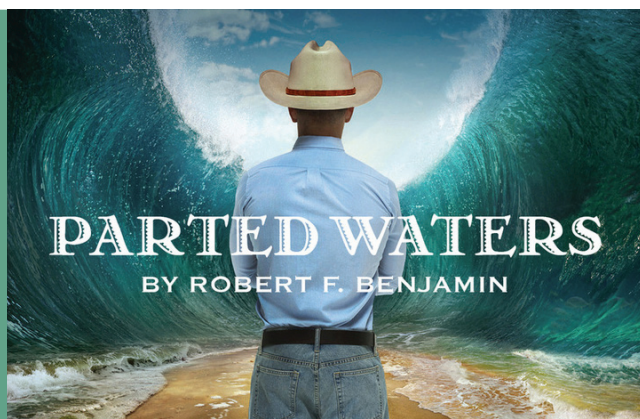
NO MOVES BACK

Performance Dates: Friday February 14th — Monday March 3rd, 2014

FUTURE PRODUCTIONS

The next play of the Series will be *Parted Waters* by Robert F. Benjamin, a resident playwright of Spiral Theatre Studio and Lead Artist. Our Project will premier this exciting play to the East Coast audience, unfamiliar with the culture of crypto-Judaism among Hispanics in the American Southwest. This upbeat family drama explores the role of the elder as wisdom-keeper in a family with a five-hundred-year-old secret. This play proclaims the rightful role of elders in society and it precisely targets the issue of generational differences, and the essential role of the elder generation in transmitting and articulating cultural identity. In addition, this drama raises poignant questions about assimilation and anti-Semitism. During Spiral Theatre's exploratory productions around the theme of aging with grace and grit, it produced the New York premiere of another of Benjamin's plays, *Wrinkles*. This play also highlight generational differences and the power of elders to serve as the society's wisdom-keepers.

The Spiral Theatre also has commitments for production rights of four more plays: *Parted Waters* and *Wrinkles Too* by Robert F. Benjamin, *Leonard and Daphne* by Felice Locker and *Brush Strokes* by Stephen Chinlund, Music- Bert Draesel, Lyrics - Jim Semmelman.



FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

The Spiral Theatre Studio is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization.



TESTIMONIALS / BLURBS

From Cindy Adams column in the New York Post

Who is doing what...

Dance's previous Grande Dame Marge Champion, 95, doing a live interview Oct. 5 at the Spiral Theater Studio, 5 p.m.

Judge Billie Colombaro (Ret.)

How does one possibly find adequate words to describe a dynamo like Paula J Riley? She took a vision and the love of a very unique stage and made them into a thriving reality in NYC. As the artistic director of The Spiral Theatre Studio, she directs and produces plays and musicals that are relevant—tackling difficult issues we all face or will struggle with and will inspire and lift you up. And she's created all of this on the back of sheer determination and resourcefulness. Especially gutsy about Paula is that she has not been afraid to give new works and new playwrights a shot and it's paid off. All one has to do is look at the success of her *Salt & Pepper Series*. Ah, Paula, such a privilege and joy to know you and be touched by your contagious enthusiasm, talent, and undaunted spirit!

Ted Swindley, Playwright

The Spiral Theatre presented a fantastic New York premiere of my play, *Stories My Grandmother Told Me* under the direction of the talented Paula J Riley and her *Salt & Pepper Series*. The quality of the production was excellent and the commitment and dedication of Ms. Riley and the actors were sensational.

I believe strongly in the vision of the Spiral Theatre and think that it is an extremely valuable cultural asset to the city's (and the American theatre's) cultural scene.

Kevin G Shinnick, Producer, Director

The Spiral Theatre is something that is quite needed in our chosen Art Innovative, which starts with their unique interlocking set that is both practical and economical—two important items in these frugal times, plus being quite eco-friendly. The productions that they stage also give emerging artists a forum for their voices to be heard.

Wendy Merritt, Actor/Director

It has been such a pleasure working with Paula Riley and the Spiral Studio Theatre. I am especially excited about the *Salt & Pepper Series* and playwright Robert Benjamin. This series looks closely at senior issues, with humor and insight and targets a demographic largely ignored in American theatre today.

Earl Wilson, Jr., Songwriter

I am well acquainted with Paula J Riley and her work with The Spiral Theater Studio. Over the last 2 years, I have enjoyed her work and am always pleasantly surprised by the professional productions, the caliber of the actors and the focus on senior citizen topics with the *Salt & Pepper Series*. There is clearly a need for these kinds of productions for an audience deserving to be served. >>

**Stuart Aion, Actor, Playwright**

It has been such a delight and pleasure to be affiliated with The Spiral Theatre Studio since its inception. Rarely do you find a combination of inspiration, dedication and perspiration all in the name of creating a fertile ground for discovery and brilliant theatre. Paula J Riley brings a passion and undying fortitude that is refreshing and downright exhilarating. I have had the opportunity to perform in a number of shows at The Spiral and as part of the *Salt & Pepper Series* The creating of illusion is so pronounced, with the different staging and profound messages of the chosen pieces, that the audience gets swept up in the energy and transported along with the cast, to new destinations. Audience members (and the actors) always leave with a sense of wonder and “food for thought”. The Spiral is fun, eclectic, creative, nurturing and thrilling.

Lenore Ritter, Lenore Ritter Property Styling

I have known Paula J Riley for a considerable length of time and looked forward to seeing The Spiral Theater finally come to fruition. I was very impressed with the quality of all of the presentations. I felt deeply moved by the plays that were both joyous and poignant. They speak to the very spirit of theater, drawing us, the audience, into that wonderful creative zone. Each show was unique and thought provoking, but, always, full of hope and spiritually fulfilling. I cannot wait to see more.

Dede Lyons, Founder *Feel Good Express/Mind Body Spirit Lifestyle*

I’ve had the honor of being part of The Spiral Theatre since the beginning. I am so impressed with the passion, dedication and inspiration that Paula J Riley has created in this theatre. Her high standard of excellence permeates every facet of the production. Whether it be the play, the stage, the settings, or the coaching, The Spiral Theatre performances, exude the heart and soul Paula instills in her work. I am so looking forward to watching The Spiral Theatre grow for the good of the community and for its highest good!

William Shuman, Actor/Playwright

The idea that good things come in small packages has never been more true than when it is applied to Paula Riley’s Spiral Theatre Studio. I had the pleasure of working with Paula this summer on Martin Halpern’s play *No Moves Back* and so enjoyed the whole undertaking. She is a knowledgeable professional committed to providing a meaningful theatrical experience for both artist and audience. And, with limited resources she was nonetheless able to achieve remarkable results. Her goal of serving the too often neglected “seasoned citizens” audience is important and she does it with style and grace.

Vivian Meisner, Actor

Cheers for The Spiral Theatre Studio—dedicated to plays featuring the *Salt & Pepper* and beyond generations. Cheers for The Spiral Theatre Studio—for its minimal sets, costumes and props that enhance the play, the actor and the audience’s experience. Looking forward to acting once again with the company in future productions. >>

**Alyce Mott , Playwright/Producer/Director**

Spiral Theatre has done an immense service by providing a venue for the voice of the older playwright in New York City. Their *Salt & Pepper Series* is, I believe, unique in the city.

Bernie Furshpan, Managing Partner/Metropolitan Room

I've had the extraordinary pleasure of working with Paula J Riley and her vision, The Spiral Theatre Studio. Before her grand opening, Metropolitan Room hosted several of her events and shows. My wife and I had the opportunity to see a show at The Spiral Theatre in its permanent location in the last year and we were very impressed with how Paula had made a reality of her vision. The Spiral Theatre offers opportunities to playwrights and producers who wouldn't ordinarily have an opportunity to share their work with an audience. Paula's work is truly a calling and I honor and support her.

Judy Stadt, Radio Host, Lunch And Judy Show

I've had the pleasure of working with Paula Riley as an actor at The Spiral Theatre Studio and enjoyed the experience totally. I admire her particular attention to a much needed demographic, our seniors, and her focusing particular attention on the *Salt & Pepper Series* which sheds some much needed light on the theatrical experience and lives of seniors. Looking forward to her new home and wishing all concerned much good luck!

CBS News, About The Spiral Theatre Studio, by Susan Richard

The 50 seat Spiral Theatre Studio, which opened in September on West 36th Street in Manhattan, is an eco-friendly theatre founded by actress and director Paula J Riley, who, at 70 years old, told 1010 WINS she's living a dream.

The concept for the space was inspired by Riley's mentor, actress and stage and television director Iza Itkin, who conceived and created a 12 piece modular stage that she used as a personal teaching studio in her home.

"I learned how to act on it, and by osmosis I learned how to direct", Itkin passed away in 1993, and Riley says she regretted that the stage died, in effect, when Itkin did. Ever since, Riley's had the dream of resurrecting the concept as part of a working theatre in Manhattan. "I created an acting process that was developed out of what I had learned from her on this stage, and so I felt the need to bring that back and make it more public than it had the chance to be under Itkin."

What makes it green? There's no scenery at all. Instead the stage is movable and overhead projections are used. In addition, the theatre features primarily LED lighting and carpeting that is sustainable. Riley says the setup makes for a "playground" for both actors and audience members, who get to use their imagination. "I don't think any two people in the audience see the same program. When we do productions I always hear, wow, that was so incredible. I never felt so intimate. I never felt so close to the story line". Riley says she hopes this space will inspire other eco-friendly theatres to be built both in New York and around the country.

The Spiral Theatre Studio offers several ongoing programs, including the *Salt & Pepper Series* which involves what Riley calls "seasoned citizens" (actors) in productions that aim to convey the grace and grit of aging with dignity and humor.

The Spiral Theatre Studio Presents:
An innovative collection of intertwined,
whimsical plays that celebrate aging with
grace, courage and humor.

SALT & PEPPER

By Robert F. Benjamin



Directed by Paula J Riley

With: Ashton Crosby,* Arlene Love, Jesse May,* Wendy Merritt*
Stu Richel,* Paula J Riley,* Judy Stadt*

At: The Dramatists Guild, 1501 Broadway, Suite 710
New York, NY 10036

When: Thursday, March 28, 2013 from 2-4pm

RSVP: spiraltheatrestudio@gmail.com

*Courtesy of AEA

SALT & PEPPER

www.thespiraltheatrestudio.blogspot.com



The Spiral Theatre Studio

Our Green Rooms truly are.

It's Sunday...time to visit Grandmother.




Suzanne Hayes as Gladys Elizabeth McPherson Sterling

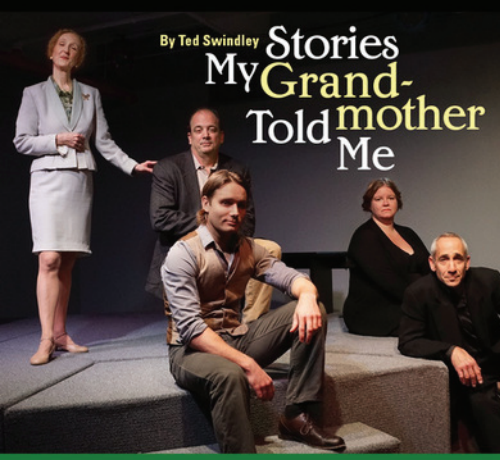
By Ted Swindley **Stories My Grand-Told mother Me**

TONIGHT
Sunday—October 20 at 6:00 pm

The Spiral Theatre Studio
The Network, 242 West 36th Street
(between 7th and 8th Avenues) NYC



By Ted Swindley **Stories My Grand-Told mother Me**




A warm and tender story of a boy's devotion and a man's acceptance of his beloved and eccentric Grandmother.

Directed by Paula J Riley
With: Stuart Aion, Michael Paul Carr, Angela Dirksen, Suzanne Hayes-Kelly, Chris Mixon

12 Performance Dates:
Fridays—September 27, October 4, 11 & 18 at 7pm
Saturdays—September 28, October 5, 12 & 19 at 7pm
Sundays— September 29, October 6, 13 & 20 at 6pm

The Network 242 West 36th Street
(between 7th and 8th Avenues) NYC 10018



www.thespiraltheatrestudio.com

Various promotion for productions



THE SPIRAL THEATRE STUDIO & JAMES V. O'CONNOR PRESENT

CHRISTMASGUEST


WRITTEN BY: JAMES V. O'CONNOR DIRECTED BY: PAULA J RILEY
With: Stuart Aion,* Marina Barry,* Jesse May,* Vivian Meisner,* Maria Silverman*

FRIDAY December 27 at 7 pm
SATURDAY December 28 at 7 pm
SUNDAY December 29 at 6 pm

THE SPIRAL THEATRE STUDIO, LOCATED AT THE NETWORK,
242 West 36th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues



www.thespiraltheatrestudio.com




GUARANTEED WHIMSICAL
WRINKLES
BY ROBERT F. BENJAMIN

An innovative collection of intertwined plays that celebrate aging with grace, courage and humor.

INGREDIENTS
Director: Paula J Riley
Actors: Anthony Robb, Ashton Crosby,* Bonnie Loren,* Arlene Love,* Wendy Merritt,* Barbara Miluski,* Stu Richel,* Judy Stadt.*
* Courtesy of AEA

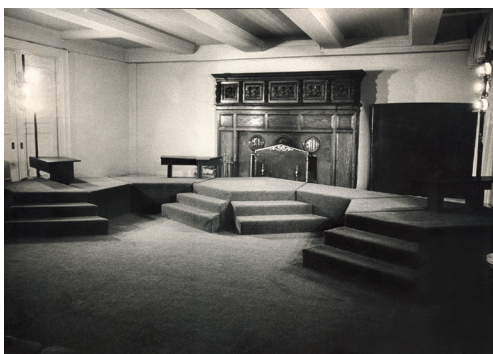
DIRECTIONS
12 performances will be held at The Spiral Theatre Studio located at The Network, 242 West 36th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues in Manhattan.

The dates are Fridays: Oct. 25, Nov. 1, 8, 15 at 7pm
Saturdays: Oct. 26, Nov. 2, 9, 16 at 7pm
Sundays: Oct. 27, Nov. 3, 10, 17 at 6 pm



www.thespiraltheatrestudio.com

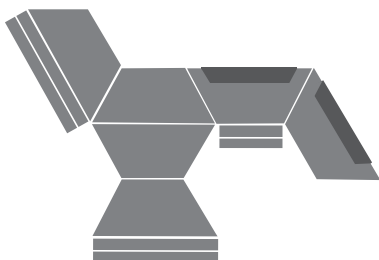
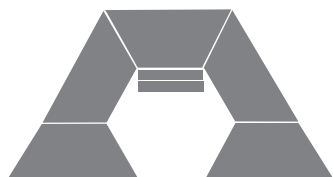
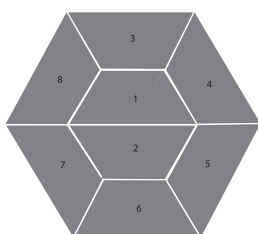
The Spiral Theatre Studio



Original stage—The Chamber Studio, 1971



Rebuilt stage at The Network, 2014



Various stage configuration diagrams

From *Wrinkles*



From *Stories My Grandmother Told Me*



From *Christmas Guest*



From *Wrinkles*

For more info and pictures visit:
www.thespiraltheatrestudio.com



From *No Moves Back*

Celebrity Interviews



Sondra Lee Interview



Anita Gillette Interview



Penny Fuller Interview



Marge Champion Interview



Lee Roy Reams Interview

