

### **Nava Sarracino, Actress/Storyteller**

Nava made her main stage debut in 2008, in her home country of South Africa, when she played Corrie Bratter in *Barefoot in the Park*. In small communities throughout the world she has performed the character Tahirih, about the first woman to give her life for Women's Rights in the East. Her first performance on American soil in 2009 was *The Big One: Chronicles of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill*. Hailed as a "tour-de-force." Nava's best known role in Anchorage was the one she played in *The Syringa Tree* in 2014. In this one-woman show, placed in South Africa, she seamlessly wove through multiple roles, portraying young, old, male, female, black, and white. Besides acting, Nava is also a storyteller and has performed in schools and at community events. While working as a project manager in rural Alaska, introducing theatre to schools, Nava discovered the power of childrens' participation in live theater.

Her most recent role was in the monodrama *Child Behind the Eyes*, in 2016, which was performed in Alaska and at the Victoria Fringe Festival (Canada). This production was directed by Vivian Melde, produced by RKP, and the original music was composed by Christel Veraart. While preparing for their Alaskan/Canada productions, actress, director and composer corresponded extensively with Nava Semel. Each one of them cherished her feedback and they were honored that Nava Semel wrote a Hebrew adaptation for Christel's song-lyrics that lead to *Shir Eres*, the title song composed for their production.

### **Vivian Melde, Director**

As a life-long dance and theater performer, Vivian debuted her skills as director in 1992 with the production of Ntozake Shange's play, for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow ain't enuf, at Cyrano's Off Center Playhouse in (Anchorage, AK). In 2010 she directed a premier staged reading of *The Black Cockerel*, by Nigerian playwright Ademola Bello at Out North Contemporary Art House (Anchorage, AK). For the same theater, she wrote and performed the one- woman show *Horse Tales*. In 2015, Vivian directed Eve Ensler's *Emotional Creature*, which brought together a multi-ethnic cast of seven talented women between the ages of 18 and 32. Also in 2015, she was one of the creators of *We Came to Stay: Anchorage Untold Stories*, a project celebrating the lives of immigrants who arrived in Anchorage during the centennial years. In addition to performing and directing, Vivian is responsible for the choreography, featured in *Emotional Creature*, *Nonsense*, *Big River* and choreographed *Enchanted World*, a holiday family show of robotic human dolls from all over the world, which ran for over ten years.

In preparation of *The Child behind the Eyes*, Vivian reached out to local non profit agencies that advocate for children and families with differently abled individuals such as the Alaska Down Syndrome Congress and Stone Soup Group, and organized audience discussions between them, the actress, director, and composer.

### **Christel Veraart, Composer**

Christel Veraart is a composer, musician and singer. Through her music she explores emotional connections with the natural world and how that shapes moods, dreams and interactions. She has recorded a number of albums and her music has been featured, in film, dance and stage productions, both in the USA as well as abroad. Christel is a recipient of the Connie Boochever Fellowship through the Alaska Arts and Culture Foundation, a Career Opportunity Grant from The Alaska State Council on the Arts, and a Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award. Her film scores and music videos have

won film industry awards and her music has been featured in the national (USA) broadcast of the radio program, Hearts of Space.

Inspired by the poetry and love portrayed in *The Child Behind the Eyes*, Christel was responsible for the sound design of the Far North and Pacific Northwest production of this monodrama. She also composed a soundtrack, a lullaby, with lyrics in both English and Yiddish. On hearing the Yiddish version of this lullaby, Nava Semel commented: *I was very moved by your lullaby. Your music is enchanting and it brought back memories from my grandparents with whom I spoke Yiddish as a child. Although Hebrew is now our language in Israel, the world of the Jewish past still beats within my soul. I'm glad not everything is lost.* Thank you for reviving this legacy through your music". Subsequently Semel adapted the lyrics into Hebrew, continuing the multilingual tradition characteristic of her work.