September 6 – October 9, 2016

**Time & place:** A middle class home in rural America. 2009.

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

**Study Guide**

*Spoilers ahead!*

Study guide prepared by Maddie Odegaard, Marketing & PR Intern.
Cast

John San Nicolas^......................................................Trevor
Sarah Lucht^..............................................................Sandra Morris
Vonessa Martin.............................................................Ashley
Jason Glick.................................................................Jim
Michael Mendelson^....................................................Oliver
Joseph Gibson.........................................................PA/Jerry
Jana Lee Hamblin.......................................................Morgan Fairchild

^Artists Rep Resident Artist

Creative Team

Scenic Designer............................................................Susan Gratch
Lighting Designer..........................................................Kristeen Willis Crosser^
Costume Designer..........................................................Gregory Pulver^
Sound Designer............................................................Rodolfo Ortega^
Props Master.................................................................Sarah Kindler
Voice & Text Director....................................................Mary McDonald-Lewis^
Dramaturg.................................................................Luan Schooler
Resident Fight Choreographer.......................................Jonathan Cole
Resident Stage Manager................................................Michelle Jazuk^
Assistant Stage Manager...............................................D Westerholm
Assistant Scenic Designer..............................................Adam Roy
Production Assistant..................................................Esther McFaden
ASL Coach.................................................................Dot Hearn
Board Op.................................................................David Peterson

^Artists Rep Resident Artist
Artists Repertory Theatre’s mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists of varied backgrounds to take creative risks. Artists Rep is Portland’s premiere mid-size regional theatre company and is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artist Rep became the 72nd member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in May 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).
Show Description

The star of this hilarious and heart-wrenching new comedy is Trevor, a 200-pound chimp intent on reviving his showbiz career. He worked with Morgan Fairchild, for crying out loud! He lives with his human “mom” — just a regular family, trying to get by in spite of neighbors who simply can’t understand. Swinging between reality and fantasy, TREVOR takes aim at the nature of humanity and the lies we tell ourselves.

"Plays like SYLVIA and THE BENGAL TIGER AT THE BAGHDAD ZOO have found humor in animals speaking like humans. But in TREVOR, the laughs (and there are many) have an edge."
- The New York Times

"For TREVOR is, at heart, a love story, but one which, by its nature, can’t end well."
- The Los Angeles Post

"Nick Jones’s writing is sharp and focused."
- The Los Angeles Post

"Original, unexpected and indelible."
- Los Angeles Times

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Nick Jones is a performer and writer for theater, television and film. The Los Angeles Premiere of TREVOR, starring Jimmi Simpson and Laurie Metcalf, won the 2015 Ovation Award for Playwriting, as well as the LA Drama Critics Circle Award. Prior to this, Nick premiered 2 plays at Lincoln Center/LCT3: VERITE, starring Anna Camp; and THE COWARD, with Jeremy Strong and Kristen Schaal, which was nominated for 4 Lortel Awards (winning 2). His show JOLLYSHIP THE WHIZ-BANG at Ars Nova, a puppet rock musical about pirates in which he also starred as a performer, premiered at Ars Nova in 2008, subsequently revived for the Under the Radar Festival at the Public Theater in 2010. He was a writer and producer on the first 4 seasons of the Netflix original series ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, and is currently working on the upcoming series GLOW, about 80s women’s wrestling. He is also developing a musical comedy series based on his play THE SPORTING LIFE with co-writer Rachel Shukert for Showtime, and an adaptation of THE COWARD for FX.
ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Dámaso is in his fourth year as Artistic Director of Artists Repertory Theatre. In 2001 he co-founded the Los Angeles-based Furious Theatre Company, where he served as Co-Artistic Director until 2012. From 2007-2010 he served as Associate Artistic Director of the Pasadena Playhouse. His directing credits include work at Artists Rep, the Pasadena Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Laguna Playhouse, A Noise Within, The Theatre@Boston Court, Naked Angels and Furious Theatre. Rodriguez is a recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, the Back Stage Garland Award, the NAACP Theatre Award and the Pasadena Arts Council’s Gold Crown Award. His productions have been nominated for multiple LA Weekly Theatre Awards and LA Stage Alliance Ovation Awards. In 2012, Rodriguez was honored by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation as a Finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).

Directing credits at Artists Rep include revivals of THE MIRACLE WORKER by William Gibson, THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD by J.M. Synge, THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH by Thornton Wilder, the world-premiere musical CUBA LIBRE featuring the music of three-time Grammy-nominated Tiempo Libre, the Portland premieres of David Ives’ adaptation of Pierre Corneille’s THE LIAR, Nina Raine’s TRIBES, EXILES by Carlos Lácamara, the U.S. premiere of Dawn King’s FOXFINDER, and the West Coast premieres of Dan LeFranc’s THE BIG MEAL and Jeffrey Hatcher’s TEN CHIMNEYS. Credits at other theatres include a mix of plays by contemporary and classic playwrights including William Shakespeare, Eugene O’Neill, Noel Coward, Bernard Shaw, Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams and Lillian Hellman.
Back in 2009, Trevor -- a 200 pound, 11-year-old chimpanzee -- comes home to his middle class home in rural America. He is greeted by his 56-year-old “mom” Sandra, who is a widow. Trevor, an actor and well-known in town, is upset that he did not book the latest commercial he thinks he has auditioned for. Sandra tries to understand why he is upset, but is more distracted that Trevor drove her corvette. Although frustrated with the event, Sandra hugs Trevor, who is still reeling from his audition upset. Trevor tries to talk himself through why he believes he is not being cast.

It is important to note that the audience is witnessing a communication breakdown. The audience can understand Trevor’s language, and Sandra’s of course, but the two don’t understand each other. Beyond body language, basic sign language and some rudimentary vocal commands, Trevor doesn’t understand what Sandra, and the other human characters, are saying to him. Same goes for Sandra who thinks she understand the chimp’s attempts at communication but, as we quickly find out, does not.

Meanwhile, Ashley, their 33-year-old next door neighbor, scolds Sandra for Trevor’s joyride. Ashley believes that it is very unsafe for Trevor to be living the way he is. She is also mad because the corvette has been parked on her lawn. Sandra brushes off the severity of the accusations and calls for a tow truck to fix the current mishap. Trevor is skeptical of Ashley because of a sound that often comes from her house, which we find out later are the cries of her newborn baby. Trevor, unaware of Ashley’s disapproval, continues to rant about his acting aspirations and unappreciated talents.

Eventually, Ashley tries to remind Sandra that Trevor is an animal -- a statement to which Sandra does not respond well. Sandra believes that if Trevor is treated like an animal and put into a cage, he will lose his love of performing … and possibly her. Sandra assures Ashley that once she gets to know Trevor, she will understand why Trevor should be treated as he is. Although hesitant, Ashley agrees to discuss the situation further over a cup of coffee.

Sandra explains that she and Trevor are going through a challenging time since the death of her husband. She is trying to keep things as normal as possible for Trevor. If he can just perform again, he will be in a much better place. Trevor, meanwhile, is causing little incidents here and there and it’s clear that he is in control in the house. Sandra works to calm him down. The prospect of contacting Morgan Fairchild, THE famous actress from the ‘80s and ‘90s, who has worked with him before, gives Trevor some hope. Ashley and Sandra give up on their conversation after failing to get through to each other.

The scene moves to a dream-like TV shoot, where Trevor is trying to navigate a fast-paced set, where he doesn’t understand what the humans are saying but is asked to do ridiculous things, which he does.
Later, Sandra is discussing the car situation with her longtime friend and county sheriff, Jim. He tries to understand Sandra’s perspective but agrees with Ashley ... he thinks Trevor needs to be handled differently. Even though Trevor is much loved in the town, or at least was when he was a baby chimp (there is a sandwich named after him!), Ashley wasn’t the only one in town complaining about the incident. Sandra agrees to put Trevor in a kennel at night and says that she will hide her car keys better, but Ashley does not believe that she will go through with it. Trevor is fascinated by Jim’s gun and grabs it, throwing everyone into a frenzy, but Jim eventually retrieves the gun and no one is hurt. Trevor does not know what he did that would warrant such a reaction. Trevor’s behavior puts him into his backyard enclosure for the night.

Oliver, Trevor’s imaginary chimp friend, appears to Trevor. Oliver says he is married to a human wife and they have three half-human children (huh?!). They discuss how it is hard to be successful after a chimpanzee hits puberty. Oliver has mastered the art of controlling himself, something that amazes Trevor. Meanwhile, Jim, Sandra, and Ashley continue to discuss the issue. No one thought Trevor would be a permanent member of the town and now that its safety has been threatened, his stay may no longer welcome. Sending Trevor to a chimpanzee sanctuary comes up as an ongoing option but Sandra continues her argument that Trevor is not going anywhere because she knows how to best help him live a satisfying life.

Sandra goes back to Trevor upset about the whole interaction and begins to cry, leaving Trevor confused. They sit down to dinner, complete with red wine in long-stemmed glasses. Sandra gets excited about the idea to build a stage in the backyard, so that Trevor has a place to perform. Trevor doesn’t quite understand the concept, but believes she is talking about a new TV show with Morgan so he is on board! Oliver appears again and tells Trevor that he is now out of work and his children were killed and his wife left him. Oliver asks to stay with Trevor so he can regain footing. It is revealed that Trevor isn’t aware that his “dad” has died but believes he just hasn’t come home yet.

The next day, Trevor is flipping through the TV channels, but Sandra doesn’t approve of what Trevor is watching. Sandra is stressed out because Jerry, an animal control officer, is arriving to assess Trevor and Sandra’s situation. Trevor believes that Jerry is actually someone from this “TV show that is in the works.” Trevor is a bit too eager with Jerry, even going to the extent of grooming him. Sandra is desperate to calm him. Jerry must give draw Trevor’s blood for tests, which makes Trevor both confused and nervous. Oliver and Morgan appear and encourage Trevor to be brave.

He has the courage to get the blood drawn because he believes he is being drugged to be taken on a plane to Hollywood. Trevor enters a dream sequence where he and Morgan are about to put on an act. He feels confident while performing. Morgan then exposes that this act is actually a competition to see which animal can act most like a man. Morgan flirts with Trevor and he is not opposed, but certainly confused.
Trevor comes back to reality, just as Jerry is preparing to leave. Jerry seems hesitant to leave the situation as it is. They all watch a reel of a show Trevor had done in the past, but he is frustrated when he notices himself. He sees himself quite differently. He throws something across the room, which is alarming. He then pushes Sandra away, not meaning to be aggressive, but it certainly appears that way. Jerry leaves, but assures Sandra he will be in touch when he gets the lab results. Trevor believes that he did not please Jerry enough to be put on a TV show and becomes more aggressive.

Trevor, in the midst of everything, has an "accident" and needs to be rushed to a shower, but Jerry returns with a tranquilizer gun. He shoots Trevor with it. Chaos ensues! Sandra tries to assure Jerry that this isn’t normal behavior, but Jerry calls for a truck to take Trevor away. Sandra is overwhelmed and grabs the tranquilizer gun and, desperate to protect Trevor, shoots Jerry with it. Jerry passes out and is unconscious.

Several hours later, Oliver has appeared and is comforting Trevor after the incident. Sandra is eager to get Trevor in the shower, pack them up and flee. Oliver reveals that he took the Trevor’s role. Trevor gives up and seems defeated. He realizes that chimpanzees have only ever been used as props in any show and are only there to make people laugh. Oliver claims that Trevor can have a role on a show, but Trevor does not want to hear about it. Trevor hears Ashley’s baby crying and goes over to her house, only to end up coming back holding the baby with a very distraught Ashley following. He begins looking for the keys to the corvette, to leave with the baby.

Ashley and Sandra try to reason with Trevor. He begins to become enraged and breaks things, eventually putting down the baby. He is enraged because his hopes have been taken away from him and he wants to take the baby to protect it from the same fate. He corners Ashley and with no other recourse Sandra takes a kitchen knife and stabs Trevor. Ashley takes her baby and goes home. Sandra is very apologetic as she takes Trevor to the kennel, but he outsmarts her. He steals the car keys, locks her in his kennel and drives off. End of scene.

Sometime later, we watch Jim apologizing to Ashley for allowing the situation to occur. Jim has since resigned. Trevor died from the stab wound after driving four miles from the family home, and Sandra is said to be away and sick. Considering all that had passed, Jim leaves us with his love of Trevor, his sadness of how his life ended and that he really was one amazing chimp. End of play.
A Message from the Artistic Director

“I don’t know if it's a good idea to try to understand what he did, in human terms.”
– Ashley, from Nick Jones’ TREVOR

Welcome to Artists Rep as we launch our 2016/17 season with the Northwest Premiere of Nick Jones’ absurdly funny and humane play about a chimpanzee, TREVOR. While the new theatre season is upon us, the master playwright and novelist Thornton Wilder, whose THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH just closed out our 2015/16 season, is still on my mind. It was Wilder who called theatre “the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.” In TREVOR, playwright Nick Jones engages his audience in an act of shared imagination as we seek to understand what a chimpanzee might be going through by endowing him with human emotions, fantasies, ambitions and frustrations.

TREVOR exemplifies the kind of storytelling experience that can only be achieved in the theatre: a bold marriage of comedy and tragedy, absurdity and realism that I hope will leave you with food for thought and discussion long after the final scene fades out. It’s this kind of provocative and entertaining work that you can always expect at Artists Rep.

Every play in our season lineup presents its own storytelling rules and unexpected theatrical conventions that engage your imagination, along with compelling characters and a strong narrative drive. If you enjoy today’s show, and aren’t already a season ticket holder, I invite you to make theatre-going at Artists Rep a regular part of your life by checking out our variety of ticket options.

Thanks for joining us and sharing in the very human experience of live theatre!

Warmly,
Dámaso Rodriguez
Artists Rep: What inspired you to write TREVOR?

Nick Jones: I was instantly obsessed with the story of Travis the Chimp, who mauled his owner's friend in 2009. I was fascinated with the details that came out, of Sandra and Travis’ life before the tragedy, more than I was interested in the horrible event itself. Here was a woman who had lost both her daughter and husband, and seemed to have nothing left but an overgrown animal...and animal she would eventually be forced to kill. That combined with the bizarre details: the show biz past, enjoying wine together out of long stemmed glasses, reports of Travis being allowed to drive the car.....I knew I wanted to write about all of this immediately, but I wasn't sure what tone or structure the play would take. It took a few years of gestation before I actually sat down to write it.

AR: Do you have life experiences of your own that fed into any of the characters or conflicts?

NJ: Although I wasn't really aware at the time, I think I can look at the play now and say I was relating deeply to what Trevor goes through on an artistic level, of having been fluffed up to have huge expectations for himself - being promised the world - and slowly realizing that none of that will ever come to pass. For whatever reason (and I choose only to note this honestly, and not dwell on it) I really connect to stories of artistic mediocrities. I love Amadeus, but I'm on Team Salieri. Also, Cutie and the Boxer, a doc about a struggling Japanese artist in New York...really hit me hard. I found myself suddenly weeping. Trevor is line with those stories, except for him the dream is even more unattainable, because it’s something promised to another species, a club to which he will never, ever belong.

AR: It seems the play is also a commentary on parenting (of humans, too), to what extent was that intentional?

NJ: It’s as much about a mother-son relationship as an animal-human one, because Trevor is Sandra's animal as well as her baby. In fact, she sees him as more human than chimp. I suppose that works metaphorically for the way a lot of people see their children. They can’t see what’s wrong or even dangerous about them because they never stop seeing them at their most vulnerable and loving, and that vision, as well as their unconditional love, gets in the way of any objective assessment.

AR: What do you think is the most challenging aspect of this play for audiences?

NJ: Knowing something really bad is going to happen, and then seeing it happen.
**AR:** In the play, only the audience fully hears what Trevor is thinking and what the human characters are saying – they don’t understand what each other are saying -- what are you trying to say with this incongruent communication on listening and hearing?

**NJ:** We’re all in different plays. We take cues from each other, but we never really fully know what’s going on in another person’s head. That’s why when we do get close - when we feel intimately understood - it’s so powerful. But there will always be a gulf. And within that potential for misunderstanding, and confusion, you also find your comedy, and your tragedy.

**AR:** Did you write TREVOR as a metaphor for something beyond the story presented?

**NJ:** All the things we’ve already discussed. I mean, I didn’t sit down to write the play as a metaphor or allegory. But the conceit encourages a metaphorical reading, and the good thing about metaphors is that they can suggest multiple interpretations at once. It doesn’t really make sense on a naturalistic level. I can truly show you what’s going on in an animal’s mind, because I don’t know, and it’s foolish to think it could be fully expressed with only a human vocabulary. I am fully aware there is a contradiction, in that we’re showing an actor playing a chimp saying “you’ll never know what animals are really thinking, but here is what they probably are thinking.” It’s definitely not reportage. So please, if you could interpret it metaphorically, that would be great.

**AR:** This play has been produced a few times. How have the productions differed from each other, and did those differences inform you in any way about your play?

**NJ:** I have’t been able to be involved in all the productions, but I was intimately involved in the New York premiere and the Los Angeles production. There is a lot of room for physical comedy and characterization, particularly from the actor playing Trevor. Actors tend to geek out early on studying primate behavior, then settle into something subtle. It works best that way. All you really need to do is find a few physical signifiers to remind us that the character is not human. We need to know that Trevor is dangerous, but it’s not because he’s waving his hand over his head. It’s because he’s frustrated, deeply, and because we know because we are told that he is incredibly strong. That compresses the spring for the end of the play, when things actually do get incredibly physical. In a bad way.

- **For information on Jones’ thoughts about TREVOR and his inspirations, visit [http://zackcalhoon.blogspot.com/2013/01/people-you-should-know-nick-jones.html](http://zackcalhoon.blogspot.com/2013/01/people-you-should-know-nick-jones.html)**
“How fun IS a barrel of monkeys?”

By Luan Schooler, Director of New Play Development and Dramaturgy

Travis the chimpanzee was a popular figure in his hometown, Stamford, Connecticut. He was charming and playful, with an impish sense of humor. He dressed himself, opened doors with keys, drank wine from stemware, worked as an actor, and often posed for pictures with babies in town. Purchased for $50,000, and taken from his mother at three days, Travis was raised by Sandra and Jerry Herold as part of their family. He was loved and pampered, and they outfitted their home and their lives to accommodate their ‘son’. It was all lovely and fun... until one day when everything changed.

Travis was just one of the estimated 15,000 non-human primates kept as pets in the U.S., along with 5,000-7,000 tigers, of which less than 400 are kept in accredited zoos. (The worldwide population of tigers living in their natural habitat is less than 4,000.) People keep exotic animals for a variety of reasons, including status, a desire to connect with the natural world, misguided ideas about preserving the species, and – particularly with Chimpanzees and monkeys – to raise as surrogate children.

Like puppies and kittens, baby chimpanzees are adorable. Curious, wide-eyed, and beguilingly dependent, they are at once intimately familiar and a window to a strange, enchanting world. Didn’t most of us dream of having a chimp for a pal as a child? Young chimpanzees have long been used as actors and entertainers – Cheetah, Bonzo, J Fred Muggs, Bubbles, and Lancelot Link were all TV and film stars. Travis was also an entertainer, performing in several commercials, including one with Morgan Fairchild for Old Navy.

But while cuddly and affectionate as babies, by the time they are 5 years old, chimps are much stronger than adult humans; by the time they reach adolescence at around 10 years, they can be 5-6 times stronger than a man. They may be irresistible dressed up as cowboys and riding tricycles, but they are also irresistibly strong – and are ultimately wild animals taken from their natural families and environment. Controlling them can be difficult and often leads to cruel or neglectful actions such as having their teeth removed, or keeping them chained up or caged. When people realize that their 150 pound ‘baby’ is beyond their control, there are few good solutions: the animal may be
sold to a roadside zoo or breeder, or if they’re lucky, a sanctuary. However, chimps can live over 50 years and the former owners rarely take on the financial burden (roughly $20,000 per year) of supporting them.

Twenty-one states (including Oregon) ban private ownership of primates entirely; limitations in other states range from requiring permits to no regulation at all. Still, it takes only a few seconds of Googling to find websites where one can buy monkeys and apes, sites that promise to ship anywhere.

To look into the eyes of another species and feel a deep communion is profoundly moving. We may yearn for such connections to the natural world, but is it right to purchase it at the expense of a sentient, sapient animal?

- For an excellent article on Travis and Sandra’s story, check out this article from the NY Daily News: [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/revisit-horror-travis-bloodthirsty-chimpanzee-article-1.1580690](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/revisit-horror-travis-bloodthirsty-chimpanzee-article-1.1580690)

**Debunking Domesticated Wild Animals**

*By Maddie Odegaard, Marketing & PR Department intern*

There is a divide between domestication and being tamed. Several factors are taken into consideration when determining if an animal can truly be domesticated: the factors of diet, growth rate, disposition, reluctance to breed in captivity, social hierarchies, and their tendency to panic or flee. The specifications have lead to only 14 large mammalian species with the label (sheep, goat, cow, pig, horse, Arabian camel, Bactrian camel, llama and alpaca, donkey, reindeer, water buffalo, yak, Bali cattle, and Mithan (gayal, domesticated Gaur). Nowhere in this list do we see the chimpanzee. There are many behavioral and biological components that contribute to why chimpanzees cannot be treated as a domesticated dog or cat. Really, the effort is wasted when it’s impossible to domesticate a wild animal.

Looking past the basic technicalities, a chimpanzee of Trevor’s size is roughly 5 to 7 times stronger than a person of that size. It’s also not uncommon for chimpanzees to attack each other. Though mostly vegetarian, they are not afraid to hunt others for food. They are also known to be reservoirs for disease. However, several states allow an individual to own a chimpanzee.
How do Oregon and Washington stack up? Both in Oregon and in Washington, the animal is banned from someone like Sandra from freely owning a chimpanzee. In Oregon, chimpanzees and related great apes are classified as exotic and can pose health and safety risks. There was a ban placed in 2010 that prohibited private possession of apes, but certain individuals are still allowed to keep pet apes with an Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) exotic animal permit. Washington’s stance is similar, but the one difference is that there is no sort of permit in place for people who want to keep a pet ape. However, those who were in possession of one before the law was created, are allowed to still keep their apes.


Animals Without Rights

By Luan Schooler, Director of New Play Development and Dramaturgy

Do animals have legal rights? Currently, no, not if they aren’t human: only entities acknowledged as ‘persons’ can have rights. In the U.S., humans and corporations are granted ‘personhood’, with specific inalienable rights to pursue their interests; animals are legally equal to things and thus incapable of having rights. Of course there are legal protections – there are laws against cruelty (although animal testing is allowed) – but that is different from animals having the right to things like bodily integrity or liberty.

There is a movement, led by the Nonhuman Rights Project, to pursue legal ‘personhood’ for animals that exhibit self-awareness, extraordinary cognitive capacity, and autonomy. This is not to say that animals are people or that they should have the same rights as people, but to establish a legal basis to answer questions like: Does an elephant have the right to not be kept in chains? Does a tiger have the right to live in their natural environment? Does a gorilla have the right to live at all?
Discussion Questions

- What would you do in Sandra’s situation? Is it for selfish reasons that she clung to Trevor or was she truly doing what she believed to be right for him?
- How does your outlook on Trevor change from the beginning of the story compared to the end? Do you feel sympathy for him?
- Do you see any need for a wild animal to be domesticated? If yes, under what condition?
- If you are familiar with the incident with the gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo, where a boy climbed into the enclosure and the zoo made the decision to kill the gorilla, how would you connect the story of Trevor to that incident? Do you feel that there was another way to handle the Cincinnati Zoo incident? Do you feel that there was another way to handle the Trevor incident? Do we immediately place blame on the animal?
- Do you know anyone who has owned a wild, exotic animal, such as Trevor? Have you ever felt any concern for the animal or the person in possession of the animal?