

# RADIO PLAY(S)

## EP 2. RAIL | | ROAD

Created & directed by Guy Mendilow & Regie Gibson  
Script: Regie Gibson, Alison James, Guy Mendilow  
Composition/Arrangement: Guy Mendilow & Chris Baum  
Produced by Guy Mendilow

### Musical/Narrative Performance:

Chris Baum — Violin

Ashleigh Gordon — Viola

Courtney Swain — Voice, Piano, Keyboard, Snare

Regie Gibson — Voice

Abigale Reiseman — Violin

Valerie Thompson — Cello

Guy Mendilow — Voice, Piano, Guitar

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

Sand storyboarding & research: Guy Mendilow

Theatrical Projection Design: Seághan McKay

Lighting Design: Tayva Young

Lighting Operator: Ryan LoPresti

Video Production: DeSant Productions

Camera Operators: Chris DeSanty, Justin Lahue and Seth Wood

Audio Recording: Ariel Bernstein

Mixing and Mastering: Dan Cardinal, Dimension Sound Studios, Jamaica Plain, MA

Filmed at the Stockbridge Theatre, Derry NH



### ABOUT THE RADIO PLAY(S) SERIES

Radio Play(s) is like a performed podcast. Each episode unpacks a timely theme through a collection of stories, told through the spoken word, musical segments and theatrically projected sand animation.

Gibson and Mendilow launched Radio Play(s) to address mounting civic and racial tensions compounded by COVID19. Both view genuine curiosity, together with generous listening inviting honesty, dignity and aliveness, as a way towards greater social health and resilience. Both wonder whether eliciting such curiosity and listening may be among the few actions that serve to engage with current conflicts without further aggravating polarized divisions.

The intent, and hope, for the Radio Play(s) series is to catalyze conversation: A coming together to listen to one another and share our stories in the service of exploring who we are and who we wish to be, building an understanding of how the other has come to see what they see, believe what they believe and know what they know. Conversation promotes a willingness to be vulnerable; to be surprised; to NOT have quick, easy answers; to suspend assumptions; to probe ambiguity. Conversation is not necessarily about agreement, or common ground on specific issues, other than the meta-issue that we are humans worthy of being heard and understood.

## DIRECTORS' NOTES

As I mused over the idea of this episode of Radio Play(s): Rail || Road, the conceit of the Canterbury Tales just wouldn't leave me alone. In Chaucer's magnum opus we are introduced to characters who tell each other entertaining stories. However, the stories in Radio Play(s): Rail || Road are not intended as mere entertainment. They are intended, at times, to produce a sense of discomfort.

In this episode, I felt compelled to explore the histories, identities, and prejudices we travel with daily — to look at the ways in which someone's perceived identity connects them to a history and may cause us to be prejudiced against them. This is something with which I wrestle. I find myself spinning a narrative about someone based on superficialities, and then closing off to them without knowing anything about them other than what I can quickly perceive. Radio Play(s): Rail || Road is an attempt to address this. I put some of my personal prejudices on display in hopes that being vulnerable and open about the less-shining aspects of my own character will open a space for others to do the same— and, perhaps, question the narrow narratives they might have created or accepted.

My offerings here are indeed flawed and laughable attempts at getting at the meat of such complexity. But, if anything I've done here sparks an honest and uncomfortable conversation, or causes one to pause and question just a bit before dismissing another human being—then, my fellow traveler, it is worth the risk.

Thank you for taking the journey with me.  
— Regie Gibson



For this episode, Regie and I were intrigued by the model of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. But things really took off when we hit when we began completing two prompts:

“If you saw me, but did not speak with me, you might think that...”  
and

“but what if you only knew that...”

The more I dug in, the more an underlying set of questions surfaced: What is the human cost of immigrating/naturalizing/being born into a legal system premised on the power-story of race? In what ways does the ideological/cultural/political/legal concept of race distort the stories we tell about one another? And what might it take to railroad such distortions?

On the one hand, it felt important to investigate these questions' historical implications for various immigrant groups, for example Levantine Jews from the former Ottoman Empire, on which I drew on the legal research of historicans like Dr. Devin Naar. On the other hand, it felt important to explore these questions' direct implications for me, as an immigrant to this country. At one point I asked Regie for permission to put myself on our train. The scene The Immigrant & the Young Man draws largely on my personal extemporaneously written journal. It is raw, and honest. And while it feels risky to be vulnerable, how are we to reckon with this baggage we have all in some way inherited if not by leaving our polished selves at the door, rolling up our shirt sleeves and getting into the mess?

Throughout this episode there may be stories that push your buttons. If that is the case, my only request is that you lean in, rather than simply walling off and turning away. Please, be willing to be curious, to ask questions, and to probe that experience, because what comes up may well be worthwhile.

Thank you for making the time for Radio Play(s)' stories and questions.  
— Guy Mendilow

## SCENES IN THIS EPISODE OF RADIO PLAY(S)

### 1. Ride

Music by Guy Mendilow

Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

### 2. Host's Welcome

Text by Regie Gibson & Guy Mendilow

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Guy Mendilow: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

### 3. The Railroad Station

Text by Regie Gibson

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Guy Mendilow: Piano  
Courtney Swain: Snare

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

### 4. The Immigrant & The Young Man

Text by Guy Mendilow

Music by Guy Mendilow

Guy Mendilow: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Courtney Swain: Keyboard

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

### 5. The Story of Onesimus

Text by Regie Gibson

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Courtney Swain: Keyboard  
Guy Mendilow: Piano

### 6. Felicita Rodríguez García

(Part 1)Text by Alison James

Music by Guy Mendilow

Guy Mendilow: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Courtney Swain: Piano

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

### *(Scene 6 Part 2) Runaway*

Music & lyrics by Aurora  
Arranged by Chris Baum

Courtney Swain: Voice, Piano  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

### 7. The Actor on the Train

(Part 1)Text by Alison James

Music by Guy Mendilow

Guy Mendilow: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Courtney Swain: Piano

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

*(Scene 7 Part 2) En Casa Del Rey León / In the Court  
of the King of León*

Trad. Jewish Romanza (Morocco)

Arranged by Guy Mendilow

Courtney Swain: Voice  
Guy Mendilow: Voice, Piano  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

**8. Just Call Me American**

Music & lyrics by Regie Gibson

Arranged by Chris Baum

Regie Gibson: Voice  
Courtney Swain: Voice, Keyboard  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Guy Mendilow: Piano

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

**9. The Young Man & The Almond Eyed Woman**

Text by Regie Gibson

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Courtney Swain: Keyboard  
Guy Mendilow: Piano

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

**10. León & Meliselde Covo**

(Part 1)Text by Alison James

Music by Guy Mendilow

Guy Mendilow: Narration, Guitar  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Courtney Swain: Piano

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

*(Scene 10 Part 2) La Cantiga Del Fuego/The Song of  
the Fire*

Trad. Ottoman Jewish (Salonica)

Arranged by Guy Mendilow & Chris Baum

Courtney Swain: Voice, Piano  
Guy Mendilow: Voice, Guitar  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

**11. Host's Thank You**

Text by Regie Gibson & Guy Mendilow

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Guy Mendilow: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello

**12. To My Fellow Travelers**

Text by Regie Gibson

Music by Guy Mendilow

Regie Gibson: Narration  
Chris Baum: Violin  
Abigale Reisman: Violin  
Ashleigh Gordon: Viola  
Valerie Thompson: Cello  
Guy Mendilow: Piano  
Courtney Swain: Snare, Keyboard

Sand Animation: Kseniya Simonova

## WHO'S WHO

### **CHRIS BAUM (Violin)**

CHRIS BAUM is a contemporary violinist, composer, and educator who “ushers the violin into fresh sonic territory” (NPR). A pioneer of modern string technique, his strength lies in his versatility, consistently pushing boundaries while molding his playing to fit ensembles and genres often deemed unsuitable for the instrument. The Boston Globe calls him “viciously talented... teemed with color and creativity.” Trained in a demanding classical environment, Baum expanded his musical vocabulary at Berklee College of Music, where he graduated with honors with a degree in film scoring and composition. Baum’s list of credits includes collaborations with Bent Knee, The Dear Hunter, Leprous, Ben Levin, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Amanda Palmer, Dropkick Murphys, Richard Henshall, Symmetry, Art Decade, Jherik Bischoff, and the Video Game Orchestra.

### **REGIE GIBSON (Host, Script Co-Writer, Creator/Director)**

REGIE GIBSON has lectured and performed widely in the US, Cuba, and Europe. In Italy, representing the US, Regie received both the Absolute Poetry Award (Monfalcone) and the Europa en Versi Award (LaGuardia di Como). He has also received the Walker Scholarship, a Mass Cultural Council Award, a YMCA Writer’s Fellowship, the Brother Thomas Fellowship from the Boston Foundation and two Live Arts Boston (LAB) grants for the production of his first musical, *The Juke: A Blues Bacchae*. (In *The Juke*, he uses Euripides’ tragedy to explore African American music and spirituality.) Regie has served as a consultant for the NEA’s “How Art Works” initiative and the “Mere Distinction of Colour”— a permanent exhibit examining the legacy of slavery and the U.S. Constitution at James Madison’s Montpelier home in Virginia. He is the author of *Storms Beneath the Skin*, and the creator of the Shakespeare Time-Traveling Speakeasy — a theatrical, literary-musical performance focusing on William Shakespeare. Regie has performed with, and composed texts for, the Boston City Singers, the Mystic Chorale, and Handel+Haydn Society. He was a poet-in-residence at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and is poet-in-residence at Lexington’s Cary Memorial Library.

Regie is currently the creative lead on a team of scientists and members of the Red Cross-Red Crescent Climate Center (Hague, Netherlands), helping to craft language regarding issues of climate change. He teaches at Clark University in Worcester.

### **ASHLEIGH GORDON (Viola)**

Described as a “charismatic and captivating performer,” ASHLEIGH GORDON has recorded with Switzerland’s Ensemble Proton and Germany’s Ensemble Modern; performed with Grammy-award winning BMOP and Grammy-nominated A Far Cry string ensemble; and appeared at the prestigious BBC Proms Festival with the Chineke! Orchestra. Comfortable on an international stage, Ashleigh has performed in the Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls (London), *Konzerthaus Berlin* and *Oper Frankfurt* (Germany), *Gare du Nord* and *Dampfzentrale Bern* (Switzerland), *Centre Pompidou* (Paris), the Lee Hysan Concert Hall (Hong Kong), and throughout Sofia, Bulgaria as part of the multi-disciplinary 180 Degrees Festival.

Ashleigh is co-founder, Artistic/Executive Director and violist of **Castle of our Skins** (<http://www.castleskins.org>), a Boston-based concert and educational series devoted to celebrating Black Artistry through music. In recognition of her work, she has presented at IDEAS UMass Boston Conference and 180 Degrees Festival in Bulgaria; has been featured in the *International Musician* and *Improper Bostonian* magazines as well as the *Boston Globe*; and was awarded the 2016 Charles Walton Diversity Advocate Award from the American Federation of Musicians. She is a 2015 St. Botolph Emerging Artist Award recipient, a 2019 Brother Thomas Fellow, a nominee for the 2020 “Americans for the Arts Johnson Fellowship for Artists Transforming Communities,” and named one of WBUR’s “ARTery 25”, twenty-five millennials of color impacting Boston’s arts and culture scene.

### **ALISON JAMES (Script Co-Writer)**

ALISON JAMES has been writing and translating books for children since 1990, when her first novel, *Sing for a Gentle Rain* came out to awards and rave reviews. Since then she has published a novel, two picture books, and translated over 150 books for children. Her latest will be published by Neal Porter in 2023. James’ awards include the highest honor for fiction

award (Society of School Librarians International), Young Adults Choice selection (Children's Book Council/International Reading Association), Book for the Teen Age honour (New York Public Library) and the Christopher Medal for translation of *The Rainbow Fish*. James has lived around the world, Japan, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Taiwan and Pakistan. In 1992, she founded Kindling Words with Mary Lee Donovan (Candlewick.) Alison James and her husband run a forest school for young wizards, and live in a grass-roofed cottage in Vermont.

### **SEÁGHAN MCKAY (Theatrical Projection Design)**

SEÁGHAN MCKAY is a Boston-based projection designer, production manager, and educator. His projection design work has been showcased in many of Boston's premiere performance venues, including The Boston Opera House, The Shubert Theater, Boston Symphony Hall, The Paramount Theatre and The Huntington Avenue Theatre. McKay's designs have earned him six award nominations from the Independent Reviewers of New England. McKay received the 2017 IRNE Award for Best Projection Design for the Lyric Stage production of *Sondheim on Sondheim* and the 2018 IRNE Award for Best Projection Design for the New Repertory Theatre production of *Golda's Balcony*. Highlights include The Boston Ballet *Swan Lake*, The Boston Lyric Opera *La Boheme*, *The Flying Dutchman*, The Boston Pops *Gershwin Spectacular: Promenade*, SpeakEasy Stage Company *Big Fish*, *Carrie: the Musical*, *Next To Normal*, *Nine*, *Striking 12*, [title of show], and *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, Florida Rep *Best of Enemies*, TheatreSquared *All The Way*, Merrimack Repertory Theater *The Heath*, *Little Orphan Danny*, *Memory House*. A full-time faculty member at the Boston University School of Theater since 2014, McKay lectures and leads master classes at universities across the US, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brandeis University and Emerson College to The University of Arkansas, and the Production Managers Forum Fall 2012 Meeting. He is a proud member of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local USA 829, which represents theatrical designers and scenic artists across the United States.

### **GUY MENDILOW (Host, Composer, Script Co-Writer, Creator/Director)**

GUY MENDILOW was raised in an academic immigrant family prioritizing continuous learning, disciplined curiosity and improving others' lives. His love of music and story reflects his family's multi-generational fascination with the unspoken ways we make meaning of an ambiguous world around us.

Through multimedia productions, Mendilow explores true tales of people's choices and chances as they navigate thresholds, whether personal or historical. He is especially intrigued by decisions of generosity and grace despite upheaval. These productions have received multiple funding awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Boston Foundation and Western Arts Federation for artistry, cultural preservation and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

Alongside show writing and performing, Mendilow designs and leads multifaceted residencies that engage people that, historically, have felt that the performing arts were not relevant to them. These residencies often result in long-lasting relationships between performing arts organizations and communities, from juvenile rehabilitation centers and K-12 schools to academic university departments. He has been a residency artist with Celebrity Series of Boston since 2014 and serves as part of Celebrity Series' Community Engagement Committee. The Association of Performing Arts Professionals featured his "from the ground-up" framework for residency design.

### **ABIGALE REISMAN (Violin)**

ABIGALE REISMAN is a violinist, composer, improviser, and educator. She is a co-founder of Thread Ensemble, an world-hopping experimental trio that creates music out of interactions with their audiences. She is a member of Tredici Bacci, featured in Rolling Stone's "10 Artists You Need to Know: November 2016" and a founding member of the International Jewish Music Festival Award winning Klezemer ensemble, Ezekiel's Wheels Klezmer Band. Reismna earned her Bachelor's degree at The Manhattan School of Music in Classical Violin Performance and her Master's degree at The New England Conservatory in Contemporary Improvisation. She has toured the world performing klezmer, classical, pop, and experimental music. Reisman has had the privilege to share the stage with great musicians such as Father John Misty, David Krakauer, Amanda Palmer, Jeffery Zeigler, Sarah Jarosz, Hankus Netsky, and Anthony Coleman.

### **KSENIYA SIMONOVA (Sand Animation)**

Winner of *Ukraine's Got Talent* (with 40 million+ views for her semifinal video), and Golden Buzzer winner on both *America's Got Talent: The Champions* and *Britain's Got Talent: The Champions*, KSENIYA SIMONOVA has astonished audiences in over 40 countries with her remarkable sand storytelling.

Simonova developed her sand animation technique by sifting volcanic sand through her hands over a lightboard. During her performances she creates, obliterates and morphs her images to create a flowing narrative.

She is a graduate of the Artistic School of Yevpatoria, the Tavrida National V.I. Vernadsky University and the Ukrainian Academy of Printing. In 2009, she catapulted into international fame when she won *Ukraine's Got Talent* — an unexpected victory for a humble artist who had no expectations of grandeur. Unlike more upbeat competition entries, Simonova felt compelled to use sand to tell the story of Germany's destruction of Ukraine during World War II, as experienced through the eyes of a young couple.

Since then, Simonova has been featured on Eurovision, has recorded with artists from Esperanza Spalding to the YouTube Orchestra and is invited to share her stories before presidents, heads of states and royalty. Simonova lives and works in Yevpatoria, Ukraine.

### **COURTNEY SWAIN (Voice, Piano, Keys, Snare)**

A native of Japan, COURTNEY SWAIN began her music career in 2008 when she landed in Boston, MA. Most recognized as the singer and keyboard player of Boston band Bent Knee, she has released five albums with the group, in addition to four albums under her solo project. In the last decade, touring and performing has taken her many times around North America, across the Atlantic to Europe, and to her native country, Japan. As a vocalist she has been featured in *Mortal Kombat 11*, as well as in collaborations with HAKEN, Car Bomb, Childish Japes, Gatherers, Apartment Sessions, Jocie Adams, Ben Levin Group, Elder Flux, Video Game Orchestra, Guy Mendilow Ensemble, and more. Based in Rhode Island since 2015, Courtney was recently selected for a prestigious fellowship with the Rhode Island Foundation. She actively writes and performs in many genres. Though her work with Bent Knee is rooted in rock and experimental music, her solo material is a mélange of styles in indie, singer-songwriter, folk, and electronic. Recently she has written and recorded contemporary classical pieces for chamber ensembles, and she is also a familiar face in the Rhode Island/Southern Massachusetts musical theater scene as a pit orchestra keyboardist and music director. Wearing the many hats of touring musician, composer, voice teacher, and accompanist, Courtney also entertains many non-musical interests: yoga, biking, meditation, mystery novels, cat mom, cooking, photography, drawing, watercolor, home fermentation... and the list goes on.

### **VALERIE THOMPSON (Cello)**

Boston-based cellist/composer/songwriter/improviser VALERIE THOMPSON performs nationally and internationally in rock bands, string quartets, chamber folk ensembles and as a cultural ambassador for the U.S. State Department. A cellist versed in multiple genres, Valerie tours with the indie-folk-pop band, Laura Cortese & the Dance Cards and is a founding member of the MIDI-Marimba and cello duo, Goli. Valerie earned her Bachelors of Music in Music Performance from the Berklee College of Music and Masters of Music in Contemporary Improvisation from the New England Conservatory. When not on tour she teaches at the Brookline Music School and maintains a private cello studio in Cambridge, MA. Fun Fact: Valerie can also be seen in the 100th episode of WB's *Gossip Girl*.

### **TAYVA YOUNG (Lighting Design)**

TAYVA YOUNG has been helping to bring stories to life for the last 25 years in both live Theatre and Architectural lighting. Her work in Museum lighting and theatrical design has brought her across the United States as well as overseas. Recently she has worked extensively around New England with various theaters and artists fully enjoying the challenges and adventures that come with each new play. Some of her favorite productions are: *Melancholy Play* by Sarah Ruhl, *Living in Exile* by Jon Lipsky, *Grounded* by George Brant and *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson. Tayva has her MFA in Lighting Design from Brandeis University and is a licensed Massage Therapist working out of North Bewick and Wells, ME. She has been honored with two NH Theater Awards for best Lighting Design. "Time Stands Still" and "Living in Exile."



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The Designers at this Theatre  
are Represented by  
United Scenic Artists • Local USA 829  
of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

Learn More about the Radio Play(s) Series:

[www.guymendilowensemble.com](http://www.guymendilowensemble.com)