

AND SO WE WALKED

AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY ALONG THE TRAIL OF TEARS

PRESS KIT



WRITTEN & PERFORMED by DELANNA STUDI

**AND SO WE WALKED:
AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY ALONG THE TRAIL OF TEARS**

Created and Performed by
DeLanna Studi (Cherokee Nation)

Produced and Directed by
Corey Madden

Set Design by
John Coyne

Lighting Design by
Norman Coates

Sound and Music by
Bruno Louchouarn
with
John-John Grant and Sarah Elizabeth Burkey
(Eastern Band of Cherokee)

Costume Design by
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Vocal Coach
Mary Irwin Furey

Dramaturg
Shirley Fishman

Cultural Consultant
Randi Byrd (Eastern Band of Cherokee)

The script of And So We Walked was developed in close collaboration with individuals and institutions within the Eastern Band of Cherokee and Cherokee Nation as well as with the support of Native Voices Theatre and the American Indian Center and Process Series at UNC-Chapel Hill. Major support was provided through the Arts and Society Initiative of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts.

Additional Project Partners and Funders

MAP Fund

Triad Stage

Eastern Band of the Cherokee

Cherokee Nation

Native Voices Theatre

American Indian Center, UNC-Chapel Hill

Process Series, UNC-Chapel Hill

National Trail of Tears Association

Museum of the Cherokee Indian

Autry Museum of the American West

Junaluska Museum

Remember the Removal Bike Ride

Cherokee Historical Association, Unto These Hills

Cherokee Preservation Foundation

University of North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Filmmaking

University of North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Drama

Center for the Study of the American South, UNC-Chapel Hill

American Indian Center, UNC-Chapel Hill

PlayMakers Repertory at Chapel Hill

Bob King Auto Group

As well as contributions from Sherri Foster Blake, Ed Harris, Bruno Louchouarn, Corey Madden, Randy Reinholz, Jean Bruce Scott, and Wes Studi

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SYNOPSIS

Delanna Studi, Cherokee artist and winner of the 2016 Butcher Scholar Award from The Autry Museum of the American West, has written *AND SO WE WALKED: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, a frank, heartwarming and inspiring story about a contemporary Cherokee woman and her father who embark on an incredible 900-mile journey along the Trail of Tears to truly understand her own identity and the conflicts of her nation. The six-week journey retraces the path her great-great grandparents took in the 1830's during the forced relocation of 17,000 Cherokee from their homelands. *And So We Walked* is a powerful, multi-faceted dramatic memoir that draws on extraordinary interviews, historical research, and the artist's personal experience to convey the complexities and conflicts with which the Cherokee wrestle.

PROJECT TO DATE

- In Summer 2014, initial research and partner development were conducted in Western North Carolina, Tennessee and Oklahoma.
- In Summer 2015, Ms. Studi completed a residency conducting interviews and participatory theater workshops. She also traveled along the Trail of Tears with her father, Thomas Studi, a Cherokee elder and native speaker.
- Ms. Studi completed residencies with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's [Process Series](#) (November 2015), which is dedicated to the development of new and significant works in the performing arts, and with Native Voices at the Autry Museum in Los Angeles, CA.
- The play was chosen for the Native Voices at the Autry's 16th Annual Playwrights Retreat and Festival of New Plays (Spring 2016).
- The Native American Theatre Project--a three-week long creative co-laboratory--was held in Cherokee July 18-August 16, 2016 with support from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation.

AWARDS & FUNDING

- The project received a grant from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation in Cherokee, NC to bring performers and leaders of two of the country's most important Native American theaters together (Unto These Hills of Cherokee, NC and Native Voices of Los Angeles, CA) along with drama faculty from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) to strengthen artistry and share best practices in a three-week long "creative co-laboratory" that took place in Summer 2016.
- The [MAP Fund](#) awarded *And So We Walked* funding in 2016 to stage performances of the play at Triad Stage, the American Indian Center and PlayMakers Repertory in 2017.
- The Autry Museum of the American West presented DeLanna Studi with the 2016 Butcher Scholar Award, which supports innovative projects that promise to deepen our understanding of the history of diverse women in the historical and contemporary American West.

USEFUL LINKS

- [And So We Walked Short Documentary](#)
- [And So We Walked on Facebook](#)
- [And So We Walked Triad Stage performance page](#)

ARTISTS' BIOS

DeLanna Studi

Author & Performer



DeLanna Studi (Cherokee) most recently starred in *Astoria: Part One* at Portland Center Stage and Indiana Repertory Theatre's *Finding Home: Indiana at 200*. DeLanna's Off-Broadway Debut in *Informed Consent*, at the Duke Theater on 42nd Street, was a *New York Times* Critics' Pick, which described her performance as "moving gravity." She was a company member of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for two seasons, where she was one of only 10 Native people (onstage and off) to have done so! She performed in the First National Broadway Tour of the Tony and Pulitzer Prize-winning *August: Osage County*. She has won awards for her performances in Hallmark/ABC's *Dreamkeeper* and Chris Eyre's *Edge of America*. DeLanna also tours in the Encompass "Compassion Play" KICK, a one-person show, written by Peter Howard, which explores the power of images, stereotypes, and Native American mascots. She recently starred in the short film *Blessed* and can be seen in ABC's *General Hospital*, Showtime's *Shameless* and Syfy's *ZNation*. She is the current chair of the SAG-AFTRA National Native American Committee. Her next project, in addition to *And So We Walked*, will be Portland Center Stage's *Astoria: Part Two*. This spring, she will begin writing the memoir counterpart to *And So We Walked*.

Corey Madden

Producer & Director



Over a 30-year professional career, Corey Madden has been the creator, director and/or producer of more than 300 site specific, interdisciplinary and new works that have premiered across the country and in Europe. Recent original works premiered by her company L'Atelier Arts include *Tales of the Old West* presented at the Autry, *Sol Path* and *Rain After Ash* commissioned by Pasadena's AxS Festival and *Day for Night* presented during Santa Monica's 2011 GLOW Festival and restaged for the 2012 Transatlantyk Film and Music Festival. Madden is currently Executive Director of the Kenan Institute for the Arts at the UNC School of the Arts and has been Associate Artistic Director of the Center Theatre/Mark Taper Forum, Producing Director of Performing for Los Angeles Youth, Director of Artist Programs for the Pasadena Arts Council, and on the Artistic Staff for the Actors Theatre of Louisville and its Humana Festival of New American Plays.

EXCERPT FROM THE END OF ACT ONE
And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey along the Trail of Tears
by DeLanna Studi

DELANNA

My dad, Emily and I head out just after dusk for another of my father's social engagements. Attending the local Stomp Dance. True, I had been hoping my father's Cherokee-ness would lend me credibility, but I had no idea his popularity would crowd my production calendar. Still, tonight, I am trying to be receptive. As we drive deep into the woods and up a mountain, my dad tells Emily:

DAD

The Ga-ti-yo, Stomp Dance, is a sacred event. Up until 1979, it was illegal for us to practice our religion, our songs, our dances, but we did anyway. We hid out in the hills and we kept the old ways. During the Trail of Tears, the Cherokees who were removed carried the embers of the First Fire to Oklahoma. One hundred and fifty years later, my Cousin John and some others brought that fire back here from Oklahoma. Tonight, we are going to the late Walker Calhoun's stomp grounds, one of the Ga-ti-yo where the fire was returned.

EMILY

Wow. He walked all the way back with the fire?

DAD

Walked? He drove it back in his pickup.

DELANNA

And then my father's laughter rocks our SUV. I see that mischievous glimmer and I know he's excited. The directions lead us to a small house, perched on the side of a mountain. We have never formally met any of the dozen or so people gathered, but they are family of the late Walker Calhoun, one of the greatest culture bearers of the Cherokee.

I won't lie. I'm ready for another Cherokee Inquisition like my meeting with the Cherokee Official... But instead...

An elderly woman named Ida says, "Miss Studi! Welcome. We were hoping you would make it."

We are whisked inside like long-lost family. Dinner is waiting on the table prepared by the women in traditional pot-luck style. The women are seated at one table, the men at another. My father takes his place among the silent men, assuming the stance that I identify only belonging to a Cherokee man: arms folded across the chest, relaxed mouth Not a frown, but not exactly a smile either. Emily and I are invited to sit with the women who are in the midst of a hushed conversation.

IDA

Annette's girl? Well... they released her from the hospital and into our rehab facility, but if she doesn't want to stay there, we can't make her.

DELANNA

A woman named Twila shakes her head and says...

TWILA

That's a shame. She's so young. 17.

IDA

(nodding) We need another facility to help them all...better programming in schools.

TWILA

Maybe if we had more cultural classes?

IDA

Well, I've planted a bug in many a councilman's ear. Hopefully one will listen.

TWILA

We'll see. If not, another election is coming up.

DELANNA

I chirp up. Have either of you thought about running for council?

IDA

Run for council? I don't want to participate in the political mud-slinging. Besides I have more power right here. Planting my bugs. That's how things get done.

TWILA

The men may be the representatives, but we know who's really in charge.

DELANNA

We finish our meals and clean the kitchen. "You ladies need help?" a round-bellied man named Bob asks.

IDA

Get out of our kitchen. We're bonding in here.

DELANNA

I want to bond, to join in with all the women's laughter, but my mind is elsewhere. Could I ever become a real leader? Do I have that in me? Right now I feel like I am failing to live up to those qualities that make Ida a quiet force to be reckoned with.

TWILA

It's time. Let's go to water.

DELANNA

I didn't grow up going to water. In fact, I wasn't sure what it was until a few years ago. I was visiting John, one of my Cherokee friends in Wisconsin, and we had walked down to the Green Bay.

JOHN

Let's go to water.

DELANNA

Ummm. I don't think we should get into the water.

JOHN

You've never gone to water? You're Cherokee and you've never gone to water? We won't be getting in the water. We just kneel down beside it and do this.

DELANNA

He scoops up a handful of water over his face. Four times.

(to John)

That's going to water? That's how we wash our face. Every morning. Ice cold water. Four times.

JOHN

Well, that's going to water.

DELANNA

My dad never told me that.

JOHN

He was forced to go to a BIA boarding school, right? He probably had to hide that he was keeping tradition. You can't get in trouble for washing your face.

DELANNA

Twila's voice brings me back.

TWILA

You ladies aren't on your moons, are you? Your cycle?

EMILY

No, why? Does that make us unclean?

TWILA

(gently laughs) It makes you more powerful than any medicine. Going to water is like smudging yourself with sage or cedar but with water. Some people do hands, feet, heart, head. Four or seven times. Your choice. But four OR seven. Those are sacred. We cleanse ourselves before we step on the grounds. If you want to say a prayer, well, that's between you and the Creator.

DELANNA

We crouch next to a mountain stream- water cascades down. The water's ice cold and as blue as blue could be!

TWILA

This stream comes down from Medicine Lake. Stories say when Yona (Bear) was wounded he made his way to Medicine Lake. He jumped in and swam across. When he crawled out on the other side, his wounds were healed.

DELANNA

Then Twila pulls out two broom-skirts from her bag.

TWILA

Put these on.

DELANNA

Night has fallen as Twila leads us silently down a trail towards the stomp grounds. We walk single file in the shadow of tall trees with only the sound of the stream following us. Though, I can't see the grounds yet, I smell the smoke. Here I am. At the foot of the Mountain that is home to Medicine Lake with the smell of the First Fire greeting me! We reach a grassy clearing and I can see foothills and the valley where Cherokee is below, lit by the full moon. I turn and look towards the stomp grounds and see lightening bugs dancing in the trees. I feel all my ancestors beside me and I wonder how I could ever feel lonely again. And I know without looking that my father is right there beside me.

DAD

It's beautiful. I wish I could bring our whole family here. C'mon. Let's see if this stomp is different from back home.

DELANNA

We follow the inviting aroma of burning oak. We enter the circular arbor, which sits in a grassy field. Out of the seven clans of the Cherokee, we sit with the clan of our host, The Deer Clan. We are guests after all. If I were home, I would sit with my father's clan. Since we're matrilineal and my mother is white, I am a woman without clan. I will always be a guest. I don't belong. As we sit down on a wooden bench, our neighbor is a handsome young man in a trade shirt. He approaches my father.

SAM

I'm Sam. Is this your first time to the stomp grounds?

DELANNA

Dad, arms folded, looking just past Sam says:

DAD

Yes.

SAM

I came for the first time two weeks ago. Have you stomped before?

DAD

Yes.

DELANNA

My dad. What a charmer.

SAM

Do you guys live here in Qualla Boundary?

DAD

No.

DELANNA

Seriously, how does my dad ever make friends?

(to Sam)

We're from Oklahoma.

SAM

Oh, Oklahoma Cherokee?

DELANNA

My dad grunts this time.

(to Sam)

Yes. We're Cherokee Nation.

SAM

(focused on Dad)

I'm part Cherokee... not enrolled, but I'm trying to find out my ancestry. I'm doing some interpretive work for the National Park Service over in Tennessee...at Red Clay...you know the Blue Hole? I'll gladly give you a private tour, sir. Just let me know.

DAD

Thanks.

(to DeLanna)

Lanna, give him my number.

DELANNA

You probably thought my dad didn't like Sam. Of course, my dad likes him. Sam was just like his children, like me. A young person of Cherokee descent trying to find his place in the world. Trying to walk that thin line between the traditional and the modern. Trying to prove something to ourselves that can't really be proven. Something that lies in our very bones, our blood memory.

We sit side-by-side listening as the ceremony begins: the fire crackling, the men singing, the women's turtle shells rattling, the laughter. Fireflies, our own private sentinels, skirt around the sacred circle, never entering. The beat of the water drum guides us and we dance as if we know instinctually all the steps. Even Sam joins in, but my father does not. He says his knee is hurting, but I know he is content taking in the

sights and smells. And I realize standing here, tonight with my dad at a stomp grounds that had ties to my family, we both know. We belong.

We are a thousand miles away from Oklahoma, but we are home.

KEY PRODUCING PARTNER



unca.edu/kenan

The Kenan Institute for the Arts is a catalyst that encourages and supports the exploration and development of new knowledge to transform the way artists, organizations and communities approach their creative challenges.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians

visitcherokeenc.com/eastern-band-of-the-choerokee (government website is under construction)

The Qualla Boundary is the home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Cherokee people do not live on a reservation, which is land given to a native American tribe by the federal government. Instead, in the 1800's, the tribal members purchased 57,000 acres of property. This land, called the Qualla Boundary, is owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and kept in trust by the federal government. Their government website is under construction.

National Trail of Tears Association - The Trail of Tears Association (TOTA)

nationaltota.org

A non-profit, membership organization formed in 1993 to support the creation, development, and interpretation of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. In 1993, the Association entered into a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service (NPS) to promote and engage in the protection and preservation of Trail of Tears National Historic Trail resources; to promote awareness of the Trail's legacy, including the effects of the U.S. Government's Indian Removal Policy on the Cherokees and other tribes (primarily the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole); and to perpetuate the management and development techniques that are consistent with the National Park Service's trail plan.

The Museum of the Cherokee Indian

cherokeemuseum.org

To perpetuate the history, culture and stories of the Cherokee People

Autry Museum of the American West

theautry.org

The Autry brings together the stories of all peoples of the American West, connecting the past with the present to inspire our shared future.

Native Voices Theatre

theautry.org/native-voices/theatre-native-voices

Native Voices at the Autry is the country's only Equity theatre company dedicated exclusively to producing new works by Native American, Alaska Native, and First Nations playwrights.

Center for the Study of the American South
south.unc.edu/

The Center for the Study of the American South serves UNC – Chapel Hill & the community through research, scholarship, lectures, conferences, and arts events. Extending the University’s historic role as a leader in regional service and scholarship, our diverse programs reflect our commitment to strong research and scholarship on the history, contemporary experience, diverse cultures, and global context of the South.

American Indian Center at UNC – Chapel Hill
americanindiancenter.unc.edu/

Bridging the richness of American Indian cultures with the strengths of Carolina's research, education and service.

Process Series at UNC – Chapel Hill
processseries.unc.edu/

The Process Series at UNC - Chapel Hill is dedicated to the development of new and significant works in the performing arts, The Process Series features professionally mounted, developmental presentations of new works in progress. The mission of the Series is to illuminate the ways in which artistic ideas take form, to examine the creative process, to offer audiences the opportunity to follow artists and performers as they explore and discover and by so doing to enrich the development process for artists with the ultimate goal of better art and a closer relationship between artists and audiences.

PlayMakers Repertory – Chapel Hill
www.playmakersrep.org/

PlayMakers is the professional theater company in residence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. PlayMakers Repertory Company is the successor of the Carolina Playmakers and is named after the Historic Playmakers Theatre. PlayMakers was founded in 1976 and is affiliated with the Dramatic and performing arts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Triad Stage – Greensboro, NC
triadstage.org/

Triad Stage is a professional not-for-profit live theater based in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina.

Map Fund – New York, NY
mapfundblog.org

The MAP Fund is founded on the principle that exploration drives human progress, no less in art than in science or medicine. MAP supports original live performance projects that embody a spirit of deep inquiry.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears: Actor's Dream Being Realized, One Step at a Time

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – Cherokee actress and writer DeLanna Studi dreamed of one day following the footsteps her ancestors were forced to travel along The Trail of Tears and then finding a way to share their tragic yet triumphant legacy with audiences around the country.

Now Studi is realizing that dream, with key support from the Kenan Institute for the Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and other cultural partners.

This summer, Studi embarked on a six-week journey to retrace the path her great-great-grandparents took during the forced relocation of more than 16,000 Cherokee from their homelands in the 1830s. As many as 6,000 perished along the way.

Accompanied by a documentarian and her father Thomas, a full-blooded Cherokee who speaks the language, Studi began the modern-day journey at her ancestral homestead in Murphy, North Carolina, which she discovered while doing research for the creative project a year earlier. Working in partnership with dozens of community organizations, they hosted workshops and storytelling circles at significant sites along the trail.

This fall, working alongside Kenan Executive Director Corey Madden, Studi began shaping the stories she documented into an original dramatic work, titled "And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears."

"We sat on the ground where they walked," she says of the experience. "And in some cases, we walked on the ground where they died. I thought I would need Dad to lift me up. But just by having my father there, I was a lot stronger than I would have been."

The feeling was mutual, says Thomas Studie, a retired machinist. "She kept me going. It was just heartbreaking to see where they went, coming down this way," he recalls. "You could still see the wagon tracks."

Madden, an award-winning writer and director with 25 years of experience in new play development, is directing Studi's performance in partnership with the Center for the Study of the American South at UNC-Chapel Hill, the Southern Oral History Program and the American Indian Center.

“I found myself standing next to someone who is a living example of a decision that wasn’t under their control,” recalls Madden, who joined Studi and her team on parts of the trail. “DeLanna’s ancestors were imprisoned, held all winter, not fed, then forced to walk to Oklahoma.”

“It’s a piece of art making,” she adds, “but it also is a piece of civic engagement.”

Growing up, far from home

Studi grew up in rural Oklahoma, where she did projects about the Trail of Tears as a child.

“For me, our lives began in Oklahoma,” she says. “But I was always fascinated with knowing where we came from before the trail.”

What Studi learned about the plight of her ancestors as a school girl didn’t jibe with the stories passed down among the generations of her people. “That’s usually what happens with history,” she notes. “The people writing it, they gloss over the accounts.”

During a difficult period in high school, Studi’s father encouraged his shy daughter to take drama, speech and debate classes, which fed an interest in acting. Although she originally studied to be an architect in college, she continued acting on the side and caught the eye of a director. He saw talent and pushed his student to pursue it.

With her parents’ permission, Studi headed to Los Angeles at age 22 with a list of five goals her father asked her to complete within a month: get an apartment, get a job, enroll in acting class, hold an Oscar and, yes, appear in a music video with 1990s alt-rock band The Smashing Pumpkins.

“I did all five in a month and I got to stay,” she says with a laugh. “My father believed that if something was meant to happen it would happen, you just had to put some energy into it. I’ve been in L.A. for over a decade now.”

A few years ago, the actress finally put her “dream project” on paper when she applied for a fellowship with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Her proposal: to walk the Trail of Tears with her father and collect stories along the way from native Cherokee culture bearers.

“It’s something I’ve always wanted to do,” she recalls. “As a native actor and artist, there is no formal schooling for us in traditional native theater. The way I would have to learn about the traditional storytelling techniques of my culture would be to go on the road and visit these culture bearers. Because most of them aren’t teaching at colleges.”

Studi didn’t win the fellowship. But soon after, she would meet Corey Madden. And a conversation between the two would change the course of their lives and their work.

Crossing paths

They met in 2013 on a project Madden co-wrote and directed in L.A. Studi auditioned for “Tales of the Old West” and won a role.

After a grueling rehearsal one day, the two went out for a bite to eat, Studi recalls. “Out of nowhere, she asked, ‘So what is your dream project?’ I told her about it and she said, ‘Oh, that sounds amazing.’”

Studi’s proposal resonated with Madden. So much so that six months later, after moving across country to take a job as the Executive Director of the Kenan Institute for the Arts in Winston-Salem, Madden reached out to the actress again. Madden continues to work as an artist as part of her creative research activities for UNCSA. And the Institute receives funding each year to promote creative leadership and innovation in the arts.

“Are you still interested?” the director asked.

“Of course,” the actress answered.

Finding family

The following July, 2014, the two embarked on a Kenan-funded research expedition to the town of Cherokee in search of Studi’s ancestral roots. Officials at the Museum of the Cherokee Indians opened the archives to Studi, and what she discovered among the documents was “equally fascinating and horrifying at the same time.”

The actress remembers a defining moment that would solidify her dream project:

“There was an anthropologist who had found these maps showing where the Army did surveillance on the Cherokee families in that area. They were appraising the properties to find out how easy would it be to remove these families quickly....

“I blindly reach for a black binder. I am looking at detailed excavations of two homesteads — they went through their trash to find out what the families were like. The family I was looking at was one of the wealthiest in the area — they had matching dishes, a beautiful beaded earring, peacock bones at this homestead. So we flip to the front of the page and it was my family. There were 30,000 pages, binders upon binders, and that’s the one I opened to.”

From there, the two traveled to Murphy and found where the homestead once stood along the Hiwassee River. “I felt the joy and excitement of actually being able to go home again,” Studi remembers. “I also felt the sadness and anger and bitterness because this was no longer our land.”

She wondered aloud: What would life had been like for her family had the Trail of Tears never happened?

Supporting the making of art

Studi's dream project has garnered support from more than half a dozen native American and cultural institutions.

Most recently, the Kenan Institute and the Cherokee Historical Association received a Cherokee Preservation Foundation grant to fund a three-week "creative co-laboratory" in Cherokee in the summer of 2016. The project will bring together performers and leaders of two of the country's most important Native American theaters — North Carolina's renowned outdoor drama *Unto These Hills* and L.A.'s *Native Voices* at the Autry National Center — with faculty from UNCSCA to share best practices.

Studi plans to return to Cherokee during that time to present a free public performance of "And So We Walked."

For Madden, it's a way to give back to the Cherokee people and the performers in "Unto These Hills."

"A potter can sell a pot all year long. An actor in that community only has a summer season. In the winter, everyone is out of work," she says. "If you could change the circumstances so the actors in Cherokee could be in TV shows or movies or theater projects in the Southeast, that could make a real difference for them."



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The Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts and the Cherokee Historical Association Announce Native American Theatre Project in Cherokee

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (JUNE 27, 2016) – The Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) and the Cherokee Historical Association will launch the Native American Theatre Project, a three-week “creative co-laboratory” in Cherokee, North Carolina beginning on July 18 and concluding on August 6, with support from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation.

As part of the project, Cherokee artist DeLanna Studi and co-laboratory faculty will host a storytelling workshop 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturday, July 23 at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. The workshop is free and open to the public, and is designed to introduce community members to creative processes to help contemporary Cherokee people to tell their own stories.

The Native American Theatre Project is a professional and creative development intensive that will bring performers, artists and leaders of two of the country’s most important Native American theaters — North Carolina’s renowned outdoor drama *Unto These Hills* and *Native Voices* at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. In addition, the project will help towards enhancing the artistry of the production of *Unto These Hills*.

Studi is currently completing *And So We Walked: An Artist’s Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, a dramatic retelling of her six-week journey to retrace the path her great-great-grandparents took during the forced relocation of more than 16,000 Cherokee from their homelands in the 1830s. As many as 6,000 people perished along the Trail of Tears.

Accompanied by a documentarian and her father, Thomas, a full-blooded Cherokee, Studi undertook the journey in the summer of 2015, partnering with dozens of community organizations and hosting workshops and storytelling circles at significant sites along the trail to explore the impact of the Cherokee removal on the people and their communities.

Corey Madden, executive director of the Kenan Institute as well as an award-winning writer and director with 25 years of experience in new play development, is directing and producing the play.

Madden believes the creative partnership with the Cherokee Historical Association, which seeks to facilitate opportunities for Cherokee artists to improve their skills so they can improve their quality of life, will increase the visibility of the Institute and UNCSA across North Carolina and

the United States and places the groups at the forefront of diversity and inclusion work in the arts and arts education.

Madden said the creative co-laboratory is a way to give back to the Cherokee people who helped Studi and her team conduct research for *And So We Walked*.

“A potter can sell a pot all year long. An actor in that community only has a summer season. In the winter, everyone is out of work,” Madden said. “If you could change the circumstances so the actors in Cherokee could be in TV shows or movies or theater projects in the Southeast, that could make a real difference for them.”

The Kenan Institute for the Arts is a creative catalyst that encourages and supports the exploration and development of new knowledge to transform the way artists, organizations and communities approach their creative challenges. *And So We Walked* and the Native American Theatre Project are part of the Institute’s Arts and Society initiative, which is dedicated to demonstrating the value and impact of the arts in society. For more information, visit uncsa.edu/kenan.

The Cherokee Historical Association, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1948 and is located in the heart of the Cherokee Cultural District with a mission to perpetuate and preserve the history and culture of the Cherokee People. Their mission is accomplished through the operation of two cultural attractions; the Oconaluftee Indian Village living history site and the renowned outdoor drama *Unto These Hills*.

Debuted in 1950, *Unto These Hills* has been performed for more than six million visitors in its 60+ years of operation. From the first contact with Europeans to the infamous and tragic Trail of Tears, *Unto These Hills* tells the triumphant story of the Cherokee through the eons.

The Oconaluftee Indian Village is more than just a place. It is also a time: Ancient Cherokee, transporting you back to a living, working Cherokee Village of the 18th Century. Here, centuries old techniques for survival have been passed down from generation to generation and preserved in this living history site.

For more information about *Unto These Hills* and the Oconaluftee Indian Village, please visit www.visitchokeenc.com.

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Fostering Collaboration: Partnership empowers Cherokee Creative Community

CHEROKEE, N.C. (SEPTEMBER 27, 2016) – It’s late on a Friday afternoon at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, North Carolina, and the artists gathered in the rehearsal room are about to bare their souls. At least that’s what it feels like in the room.

But first, Cherokee actress and writer DeLanna Studi asks everyone to remember the words of the renowned playwright Samuel Beckett, which are printed on a large white board up front:

Ever tried. Ever failed.

No matter. Try again.

Fail again. Fail better.

“I want you guys to go bigger — I want you to fill this space with your beautiful voice, your being, your intention,” Studi says. “If you think you went a 10 last time, I want you to go a 20. And I have seen you guys on stage, so I know you can do it.”

One by one, the actors, storytellers and musicians taking part in the professional-development workshop run through the traditional Cherokee stories they’ve been adapting and modernizing all week. And to much laughter and applause from their peers, each one takes Samuel Beckett’s words to heart.

Studi, who has been planning for this day for nearly a year, beams like a proud mother. It’s been a productive week in the room, this communal space where creative learning thrives.

Performances like these are the result of the Native American Theatre Project, a three-week “creative co-laboratory” that has brought together artists and leaders from two of the country’s most important Native American theatres — Unto These Hills of Cherokee and Native Voices of Los Angeles, California — to share best practices on the art and business of acting.

Sponsored by the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and the Cherokee Historical Association, with support from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, the project seeks to strengthen Cherokee artistry in North Carolina and nationally. It is an ambitious goal, but with modest beginnings.

The partnership is the brainchild of Studi and Corey Madden, who met several years ago while working on a play in L.A., where both theatre artists were based at the time. Only later, after Madden wrapped up a 30-year career in new play development and moved across the country to become Executive Director of the Kenan Institute, would their paths cross again, this time to collaborate on Studi's dream project: "And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears."

Written and performed by Studi, "And So We Walked" is the frank and funny story of a contemporary Cherokee woman who embarks on a six-week, 900-mile journey with her father to retrace the steps their ancestors were forced to travel along the Trail of Tears. Directed and produced by Madden, the dramatic memoir is shaped from the stories father and daughter documented during their travels last summer from their ancestral home in the North Carolina mountains to Oklahoma, where their family was forced to relocate in the 1800s.

For Studi and Madden, the Co-lab is a way to give back to members of the Cherokee community who welcomed them with open arms two years ago during the research phase of Studi's project. In addition to teaching at the workshop, Studi performed a free reading of excerpts from "And So We Walked" one evening for the community whose stories helped her create the work.

"No one ever came to my small town in Oklahoma and said, 'This is a career option — you can be an actor, a storyteller, a musician,'" Studi says. "For me, this is a dream come true. And every day I am just grateful to be in the room and see what these students bring. And every day my expectations are exceeded."

Studi credits her parents for teaching her the importance of giving back, no matter your wealth or circumstances in life.

"It's just ingrained in me — for every good thing that comes your way, you give back to someone," she explains. "In my family, we grew up impoverished. I learned that wealth wasn't measured by how much you had. We defined wealth by how much you can share — a meal, a cup of coffee, the gift of time, the gift of attention and support."

Giving back is equally as important to Madden, an award-winning writer, director and producer of more than 300 world premieres. In fact, she feels it is her duty. And opportunities like the Co-lab are key to the mission of both the Kenan Institute and UNCSCA to help strengthen creative communities in North Carolina, Madden says.

"Cherokee is remarkable — it has this incredible creative community. If we can help them identify what they need, and we can connect them to resources and help them build their capacity," she says, "they can create a self-sustaining way of life that celebrates their core cultural traditions on the one hand, but is also culturally growing. It's alive, rather than an artifact. So it's both."

"How many storytellers are there? Not enough. How many outlets are there for those storytellers? Not enough. How plugged in are they to the new forms of technology? Not enough. So the

question becomes: How can you make this place not only a mecca, but a beacon, so that you don't have to leave Cherokee to be a worldwide artist these days?"

Many of the 10 workshop participants, ranging in age from 21 to 61, are performers in "Unto These Hills," one of the nation's foremost outdoor dramas for more than half a century. Among the challenges they face is a lack of access to professional-development opportunities in performance and creative practices that can expand their artistic potential.

Each weekday afternoon during the workshop, they've gathered to study improvisation and movement, voice and text analysis, and acting and performance skills with Studi and two other L.A.-based professional actors. Mary Irwin, a voice and speech professor in the School of Drama at UNCSA, rounded out the teaching team.

They've also learned practical tips on topics ranging from how to prepare for a cold audition to how to effectively market themselves via social media.

For Sarah Elizabeth Burkey, a singer-songwriter of Cherokee descent who performs traditional roots music, the workshop couldn't have come at a better time. Following the birth of her second son, she had decided to take a hiatus from work this summer as a performer and assistant music director with "Unto These Hills" to concentrate on being a mom.

"I didn't even realize staying at home, being isolated, how much I was missing my creative work and writing and being around other creative people and having that stimulating interchange," she says. "It's turned out to really trigger my writing again — I'm just writing up a storm. As it turns out, being in this Co-lab is making me a happier person and a better mother."

Burkey, 36, is currently at work on her fifth solo album as well as a book about her life journey. Yet, like so many artists, she still battles what she calls her "inner critic."

"I've never been a part of anything like this. It's been 14 years since I graduated from college," she says. "It's actually teaching me to believe in myself again and to quit putting my creative abilities on the back burner."

Another bonus for Burkey: She's made new friends with people who share a love for cultural storytelling.

Kathi Littlejohn, a native Cherokee and longtime storyteller in town, believes community-building is critical to the survival of the tribe's cultural heritage. The elder in the workshop, she performs at the town's frequent bonfires and at annual events like Cultural Heritage Week.

But she worries that many of the tribe's storytellers are elderly. That's why she encouraged her 21-year-old son, Justice, who has performed in the outdoor drama, to attend the workshop alongside her.

“These stories are probably 11,000 years old and they are still vital in our lives today and will be for the next 11,000 years,” Littlejohn says. “They’re important because they tell us how things came to be in the Cherokee world and how we should act as Cherokee people. If no one learns them after we are gone, then it would be a loss that we could never recover.”

Felix Ortiz Cruz and Thao Nguyen, both performers in the outdoor drama, are trained actors drawn to the Co-lab because of the high caliber of training it offers.

“I met DeLanna and Corey last season when they were here, and they were so warm, so bright, so welcoming,” recalls Cruz, whose ancestors come from the Taino tribe of Puerto Rico. “I knew these two women really believed in what they were doing and knew I wanted to work with them in the future.”

“This is providing an opportunity for members of this community to do something they don’t regularly do,” adds Nguyen, who graduated from UNCSA in 2013 with a degree in vocal performance.

“The instructors are the finest in their craft and very skilled in what they do,” Nguyen says. “One of the big things is they individualized our time with the instructors. I told them what I needed and they supplied it.”

Cruz, whose plans include returning to Rutgers University this fall to finish his last year of studies, has found the Co-lab experience “invaluable.”

“It really has given me a lot of tools that I am actually able to translate into my professional career here in the drama — like the voice work and the storytelling techniques,” he explains.

That’s precisely what Jennifer Bobiwash and Robert Vestal had in mind when they agreed to join their friend Studi on the Co-lab teaching team. Both are members of the Native Voices ensemble in Los Angeles.

Vestal, a descendant of the Cherokee tribe on his father’s side, specializes in improvisation and acting.

“It’s gratifying to come in here and see the effects happen in such a short time,” he says. “It’s not the same for every student, but some have grown a lot in just a week.”

Bobiwash, whose session on social media was a big hit during the workshop, feels she learned as much from the students as they did from her. She hopes to one day return to her native Ojibwe community in Canada to do the same kind of teaching.

“It’s important just to show that there are other natives out there working — they see just a small sliver of them on TV,” she says.

“It’s showing them an opportunity to grow beyond the reservation, and not that they have to leave the reservation, but there is so much more that they can do from right here — they are brilliant people.”

Irwin concurs. “Seeing how far they came by that last presentation on Friday and how enthusiastically they were taking the training on board that we were all offering them was rewarding. I learned a great deal, too.”

Madden, for one, hopes this “unprecedented collaboration” in Cherokee continues beyond this summer. Indeed, there is already plenty of talk among this year’s workshop leaders about what the next phase could look like.

“These stories are very much in the hands of the Cherokee people — they are not lost,” Madden says. “The question is how do you connect them with a contemporary audience? Perhaps in three or four years this project will have created a group of leaders among the young Cherokee who can sustain the program itself and look for new ways for these stories to be shared.”

She also hopes the Kenan Institute and UNCSCA can continue to take a leadership role in the work — not just training actors for the theatre but for the diverse communities of North Carolina and across the country.

“I’m proud of what we are doing.”

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The Autry Announces 2016 Butcher Scholar Award

Cherokee writer, actor, and activist DeLanna Studi to receive \$5,000 to support the development of her play, *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*

Los Angeles, CA (April 27, 2016)—The [Autry Museum of the American West](http://theautry.org) announces **DeLanna Studi** (Cherokee) as the winner of the 2016 Butcher Scholar Award, which supports innovative projects that promise to deepen our understanding of the history of diverse women in the historical and contemporary American West. The Autry selected Studi for *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, a play she is developing to reveal the intergenerational impact of the Trail of Tears, a series of forced relocations of Native Americans following the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

“The Autry is thrilled to publicly recognize DeLanna’s talents, creativity, and dedication to exploring forgotten aspects of our shared American history. Her writing inspires us to take a deeper look at the Trail of Tears experience from a variety of community perspectives, truly connecting the past with the present to inspire our shared future,” said **W. Richard West, Jr.**, the Autry's President and CEO.



LEFT: DeLanna Studi **RIGHT:** Thomas Studie and DeLanna Studi

An award-winning actor and activist, Studi has served as the SAG-AFTRA Native Americans Committee National Chair and Assistant Field Director of The Cante Sica Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing the stories of individuals who experienced the American Indian Boarding School system. For Studi's first play, *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, she has

been traveling with her father, **Thomas Studie** (Cherokee), to collect oral histories along the trail's Northern route. Her goal is to create a one-woman play that can travel to schools, theatres, and community centers across the United States.

Studi is a member of the Artists Ensemble for [Native Voices at the Autry](#), the country's only Equity theatre company dedicated exclusively to producing new works by Native American, Alaska Native, and First Nations playwrights. She will continue to develop her play during Native Voices' 2016 Playwrights Retreat in May before presenting public readings of her script during the [2016 Festival of New Plays](#) at the Autry on June 4 and at La Jolla Playhouse on June 8.

"From an early age, my father advised me that wherever I went in the world, I should always seek out the Natives in that community, and among them I would find home. Native Voices and the Autry have been that home for me in Hollywood by supporting, encouraging, and challenging me to pursue my dreams, including walking the Northern route of the Trail of Tears with my father and bringing that story to a wider audience," Studi said. "I am deeply honored to receive this award and will always be grateful to these important arts and cultural organizations that helped shape me as an actor, advocate, and Native American woman."

Additional project partners for *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey along the Trail of Tears* include the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, in partnership with the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians; the American Indian Center and Center for the Study of the American South at University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill; Museum of the Cherokee Indian; National Trail of Tears Association; and Unto These Hills. As part of the 2016-2017 anniversary season of [Triad Stage](#) in North Carolina, *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey along the Trail of Tears* will be presented April 19-30, 2017, at Hanesbrands Theatre in Winston Salem, North Carolina, produced in collaboration with the Arts and Society Initiative of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts.

About the Butcher Scholar Award

Established in 2001, the [Butcher Scholar Award](#) provides up to \$5,000 to support innovative projects that promise to deepen our understanding of the history of diverse women in the historical and contemporary American West. Honoring the vision, leadership, and generosity of Jane and Charlie Butcher, the Award has supported public historians, academic scholars, writers, and artists. Originally offered by the Women of the West Museum, the Award has been presented by the Autry since 2002, when the Autry merged with the Women of the West Museum.

About the Autry Museum of the American West

The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry's collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant of Native American materials in the United States.

Hours

Museum and Autry Store:

Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Crossroads West Cafe:

Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The museum, store, and cafe are closed on Mondays. Visit TheAutry.org for more information.

PHOTOS

Digital files available upon request from Sunny Stewart (stewarts@unca.edu).



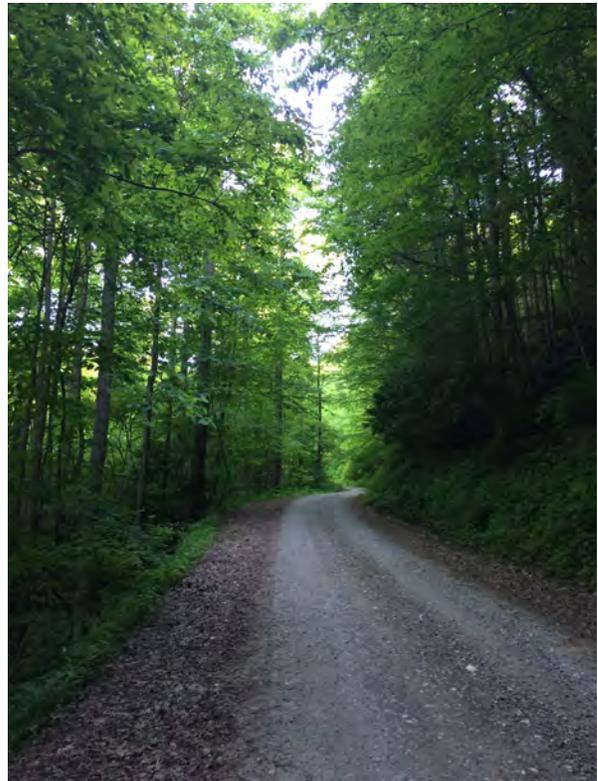
DeLanna Studi and her father, Thomas Studie, during their journey along the Trail of Tears.



DeLanna Studi interviews Barbara Duncan, education director at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian.



Thomas Studie observes what appears to be buckshot embedded in a Trail of Tears historic marker.



A portion of the Trail of Tears, which DeLanna Studi and her father Thomas Studie walked.

PHOTOS

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And So We Walked creator and actor DeLanna Studi with producer and director Corey Madden. (Photo by Christine Rucker)



Participants in the 2016 Native American Theatre Project, held in Cherokee, N.C. From left, Rob Vestal, Jen Bobiwash, Thao Nyguen, DeLanna Studi, Felix Ortiz and Sarah Elizabeth Berkey. (Photo by Kristy Herron)