

14th May 2016 A Ferry Ride into the Past: Rachel Kerry  
on Port Cities NYC



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sgCLcB/s1600/PortCities4\\_KellyStuart.jpg\]](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-1AcEYArnw-w/VzdlwXDND0I/AAAAAAAAAcs/Uj9qjk98omlbfTueKd4jv/mBNxuMZfz-sgCLcB/s1600/PortCities4_KellyStuart.jpg)

The Cast of Port Cities NYC- Photo Credit- Kelly Stuart

It's not every day you board a boat in order to get to the theatre. And it isn't every play that includes a gorgeous view of the Statue of Liberty in the price of the ticket. But really, what could be a more fitting start to a theatrical exploration of New York City's early history? Written and directed by Talya Chalef, Port Cities NYC is a strikingly site specific and visually engaging journey into New York City's early days as a trading hub.

Port Cities NYC's opening journey could stand alone as its own gorgeous performance piece. Audience members board a ferry to Red Hook while listening to a 25 minute audioscape. Providing lyrical context for the performance, the audio includes a woman reflecting on her childhood and a gorgeous musical score. Combined with the New York City skyline at sunset and the visceral feel of the boat coasting down the East River, it is an inspiring and enchanting start. Upon arriving at Red Hook, the audience is lead to the NYC Waterfront Museum and Barge. Once seated, the proper

performance begins.

Port Cities NYC follows Katie (Emma Meltzer), an archaeologist hunting for and haunted by 17th century New York. A trio of performers ebb and flow around her, alternating between Greek chorus, New Amsterdam historical figures, and contemporary people connected to Katie's life. Chalef uses engaging images to create novel ties between the past and present: An early sequence connects the Dutch tulip trade to Settlers of Catan and reality tv game shows; African slaves are placed parallel to Eric Garner; and the Economic collapse is seen through the eyes of an anxious day trader. Eventually, Katie realizes that she herself is deep in a rabbit hole of New York City's past.

As a site specific venue, the Waterfront Museum is a magical location. The smell of wood and gentle sway of water beneath beautifully underscore Port Cities NYC's historical tale. Weston G Wetzel's lighting design is eloquently orchestrated within the museum's rustic interior. Defining the dreamlike whimsy of the night is Cameron Orr's original score. It is a delicate and luminous mix of electronic and violin, a lovely extension of Port Cities NYC's theme of uniting past and present. Chalef's staging is equal parts reflective and dynamic, finding drama in both traditional and abstract moments. And although her text is explorative, it doesn't always tie its narrative threads neatly together. By show's end, the audience is left to draw their own conclusions about where Katie's journey may lead her.

Port Cities NYC captivates through its dreamy exploration of compelling historical subject matter. Once over, the audience is left to wander Red Hook and marvel at New York's untold past.

Port Cities NYC

Written and Directed and choreographed by Talya Chalef

Cast

Leah Barker, Marcus Crawford Guy, Elizabeth Gray & Nathaniel Ryan

It features a live musical score by Cameron Orr and generative projection visuals by Horus Vacui. The production team also includes: Liz Nielson (Production Manager); Ryann Howell (Scenic design), Weston Wetzel (LX & Media design) and Alison McClaughlin (Dramaturge)

Thursday, May 12 at 8pm

Friday, May 13 at 8pm

Saturday, May 14 at 3pm

Saturday, May 14 at 8pm

Wednesday, May 18th at 8PM

Thursday, May 19th at 8PM

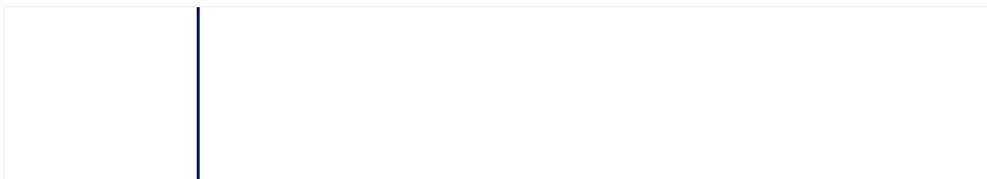
Audience meets at Pier 11 and ends in Red Hook, Brooklyn

<http://www.portcitiesproject.org/>

**Rachel Kerry** is a director, writer, and designer interested in innovative, transmedia storytelling. She is the artistic mastermind behind theatre/video company [Brain Melt Consortium](http://www.brainmeltconsortium.com/) [<http://www.brainmeltconsortium.com/>]. Her work emphasizes devised movement, immersive environments, and the exploration of popular culture. She is very proud to be the managing editor of New York Theatre Review.

Posted 14th May 2016 by [Ryan Hudak](#)

Labels: [audioscape](#), [NYC Waterfront Museum](#), [Port Cities NYC](#), [Red Hook](#), [Talya Chalef](#)



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