

From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks – Booking a Performance



“Harry Bridges is one of the most important labor leaders of the 20th century, and Ian Ruskin, in his one-man show, has captured him -- his persona, his ideas -- brilliantly. There were times when I forgot this was someone other than Harry Bridges speaking. It is a valuable piece of working-class history, presented colorfully and intelligently”.

Howard Zinn, Historian, Playwright and Social Activist

Thanks for your interest in booking a performance. The following information should answer most of your questions, but please contact me at 310-876-2494 in Los Angeles or by email at ianruskin@theharrybridgesproject.org to request any additional information. Also, watch scenes from our film of the play at <http://theharrybridgesproject.org/booking.html>

The play –

The play, a 65-minute multi-media production, is an entertaining and educational piece full of the wit and ironies of Harry’s life. Audiences find the story, of standing up against enormous odds and winning, to be inspiring to them in their own lives. And so many of the themes in the play – immigration, workers’ rights, a democratic labor movement, prejudice and discrimination, McCarthyism, issues of surveillance, a war on terror, the growing gap between rich and poor, and globalization – are more relevant to us every day. The performance is usually followed by an audience discussion, either a Q & A with Ian or a panel discussion.

The fee –

The fee structure for 2014 is based on the location, size of audience and your budget. Once agreed, a day of workshops with various classes can be added for an additional \$1,000 (see pages 7 and 8). Students can include those studying American history, labor history, political science, sociology, anthropology and drama and play writing. I did this as a Walker Ames Lecturer at the University of Washington, talking to five classes that then saw the play. Subjects included the specific historical issues in the play (immigration, the Depression, rise of unions, rise of McCarthyism, globalization) and the process of writing and performing the play (oral histories, character development, the soundtrack, promoting and producing your own work). The fee is plus economy class travel and ground transportation or, in California, usually mileage, and accommodation at the university, a hotel or a guest room in a private home. **Please note that I am always willing to discuss costs and ways to make a performance possible. I encourage the idea of a number of departments sharing the cost and bringing their students to the performance, preferably giving them some kind of credit to attend!**

The fee includes –

All props and costume, the play cues (sound effects, music and archival photos and footage) on DVD and hard drive, a CD of pre-show music, and coordination of technical requirements.

Promotion and Publicity

I will supply you with three templates – a personalized program, an 8 x 11 flyer and a 16 x 22 poster – for you to reproduce (please see the three samples below). I am also happy to do phone interviews for print and radio publicity or for your own newsletters and announcements, and there is a press kit on my web site that can be downloaded and sent to your local contacts, particularly for public performances.

Technical requirements

The play is designed for maximum performance versatility. Obviously a stage area and lighting are preferable, although not essential. A sound system, projector, DVD player and screen or white wall are required. I can supply the wireless mic if necessary, and, in California, a projector, DVD player and small speaker / amp, by arrangement. You will need to supply simple furniture (two chairs, a coffee table and a podium) and a person to run the cues, which is very easy. A "Performance Requirements" information sheet will be emailed to you once the booking is made, along with a contract and, once travel arrangements are made, an invoice.

I have performed in a wide range of situations, from hotel banquet rooms to high school classrooms to a 1500 seat theater, from the Saturday night entertainment at a labor conference to the Sunday morning sermon at a Unitarian church, and at many universities (see below).

I look forward to hearing from you
Ian Ruskin

Universities –

University of Washington (3 groups of performances)

Oregon State University

UCLA

Cal Poly, Pomona

Sonoma State University

University of Hawai'i

Evergreen State College

Murphy Institute for Worker Research & Labor Studies, New York

Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA

Center for Study of Working Class Life, SUNY, Stony Brook, Long Island

Comey Institute of Industrial Relations, Philadelphia

California Teachers Association and the California Federation of Teachers –
many performances at Leadership Conferences

All as Keynote Speaker –

California Teachers Association Urban Issues Conference, Los Angeles

National Education Association UniServe Managers Conference, San Diego

Center for Collaborative Solutions Conference, Anaheim

Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Seattle

California Federation of Teachers

“From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks” – quotes and reviews

“Unmistakable topicality and human interest infuses *From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks*...it is undeniably apropos for the corporatist-beleaguered present. Certainly Ruskin, whose versatility, innate affability and easy delivery lands directly between middle-period Geoffrey Rush and the late Roger Livesey, conveys the truth as he sees it, holding focus...maintaining intrigue...

David C. Nichols, Los Angeles Times

“Ruskin, a stellar storyteller, revivifies Bridges in both appearance and sentiment. Ruskin’s script is wonderfully didactic and his presence is compelling. Not only do we see this master stage craftsman in a sterling performance, we also are informed of an important and rarely broached part of America’s sordid labor history. For anyone who works for a living, or is dependent on workers to live (and that’s all of us), *From Wharf Rats to Lord of the Docks* is a must-see show”.

Ben Miles, showmag.com, Los Angeles

“Thank you for bringing your wonderful, riveting and highly entertaining performance to Harvard Law School for the 65th Anniversary of our Trade Union Program. It was the absolute highlight of our conference....with a sustained standing ovation and the audience insisting on staying to talk to you for over an hour. I was particularly impressed by your ability to reach our very diverse audience....from retirees to young college students and even a sprinkling of High School students....you managed to hold everyone’s attention and bring labor history to life”.

Elaine Bernard, Executive Director, Labor and Worklife Program
& Trade Union Program, Harvard Law School

“Ian Ruskin performed his one-man play for our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Members in our program have been awed by MacAuthur Fellows, top quality academics, Michael Krasny of NPR and other artists, performers and speakers. At no event did I hear a more resounding round of applause than at Ian Ruskin’s. He moved the audience in a way no other of our speakers have”.

Lou Miller, Emeritus Professor of Political Science and Interdisciplinary Studies
Executive Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

“I write to recommend an extraordinary presentation: “From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks: The Life and Times of Harry Bridges,” Ian Ruskin’s acclaimed, one-man play depicting the life of Harry Bridges, a visionary labor leader and unique personality from the 30’s, who, against all odds, fought against injustice, racial and religious discrimination, and the supposed threat of an “ism” – communism – and won; an inspiration for our struggles of today.

Reverend Judith Meyer, Minister, The Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Santa Monica

“Your performance was outstanding. It was a S.R.O. night! We have received countless accolades in the form of letters, emails, faxes and phone calls, and it is all thanks to you and an extraordinary performance that spoke to a rapt audience – to the union member and the academic and the student and everyone else in between”.

Christina Carella Waldeck, Programs Chair, San Francisco Museum and Historical Society

"Ian Ruskin's play about Harry Bridges and the West Coast dock workers brings to life the story of one of the most important leaders and one of the most militant unions in American Labor history. While the story primarily covers a period some 50 to 70 years ago, the message applies to the struggles workers face today. I wholeheartedly recommend this play to all trade unionists whether you are a seasoned organizer or just joined your first union."

Richard Trumka , Secretary-Treasurer, AFL – CIO

"We looked forward to an entertaining and historically educational evening, but what you brought to us was much more a phenomenal experience."

Tricia Boreta, Project Censored, Sonoma State University

"You might wonder what nurses and longshoremen have in common....the struggle for justice on the job, a decent standard of living and a society that works for those who labor. Ian Ruskin's play tells stories about events in the 1930's, 40's and 50's that have many lessons for us today. 500 nurses turned out to see this play and walked away entertained, educated and inspired."

Rose Ann DeMoro, Executive Director, California Nurses Association/
National Nurses Organizing Committee

"The play was not only exciting and inspiring, but provided an excellent educational experience to UCLA students....the story of Harry Bridges still has important lessons for us today, especially in this time of globalization and economic inequality".

Kent Wong, Director, UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education

"Everyone was thrilled with your ability to capture the essence of Harry Bridges and to create a piece that was entertaining, educational and very moving. It will be inspiring for all workers, the organized and the unorganized, to learn about these struggles and successes".

Elise Bryant, Senior Staff Associate, National Labor College/George Meany Center

"Ian gives an exciting and entertaining portrayal of one of the most important figures of the 20th century, and the issues explored – immigration, the rise of unions, prejudice and discrimination, McCarthyism and the coming of Globalization – make it remarkably relevant today".

Carolyn Doggett, Executive Director, California Teachers Association

"Your presentation on Harry Bridges was a superb window into a rather lost episode of American history. We were not only entertained and spellbound, but had a rare glimpse of an American all too often left untold. This is a production that must be seen".

Pat Allen, Los Angeles Faculty Guild

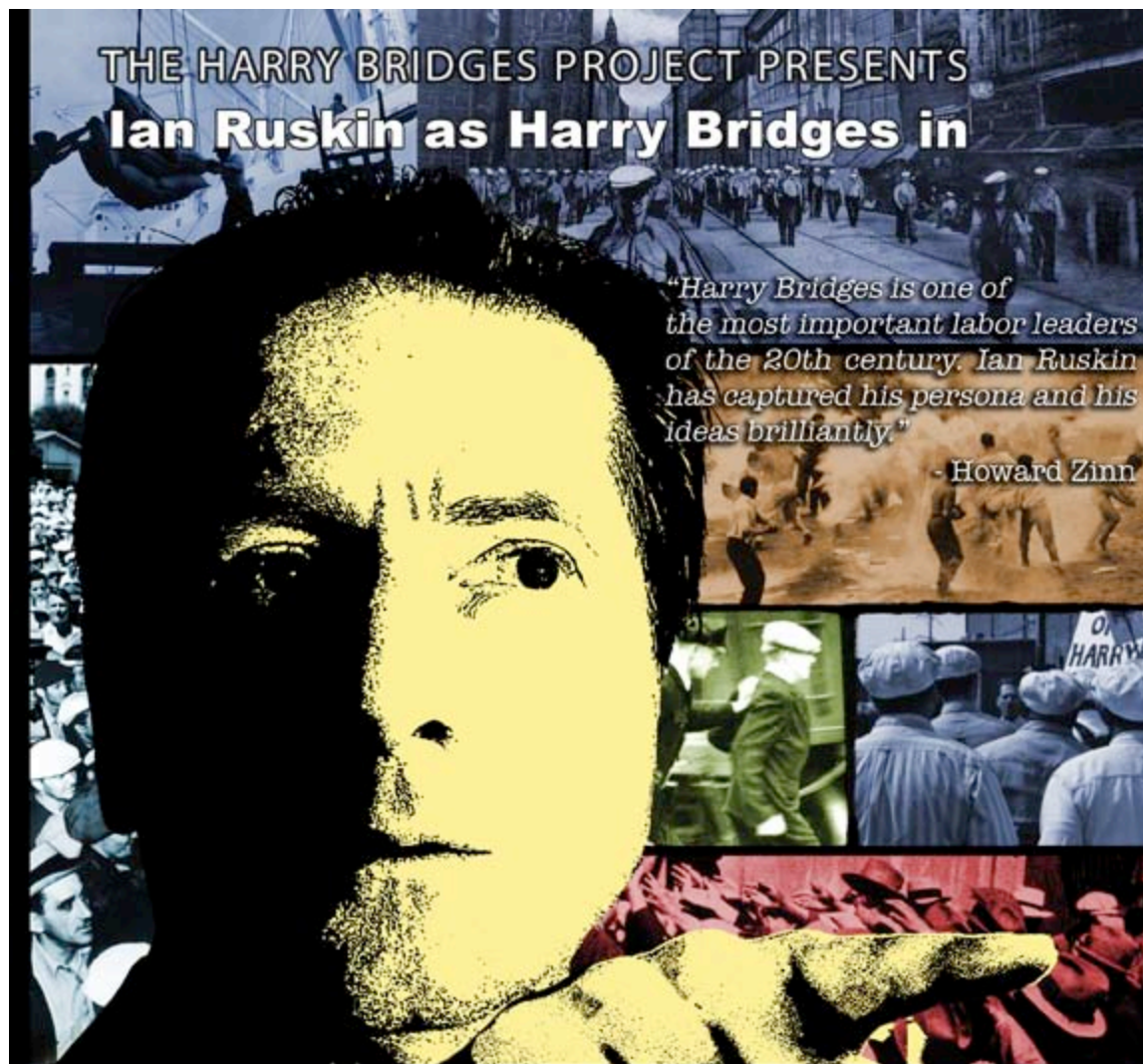
"You lit a fire in my soul"

Kevin O'Toole, Director of Sales, Delta Dental, California

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"

Czech writer Milan Kundera

Samples of templates plus a list of audience quotes)



THE HARRY BRIDGES PROJECT PRESENTS
Ian Ruskin as Harry Bridges in

"Harry Bridges is one of the most important labor leaders of the 20th century. Ian Ruskin has captured his persona and his ideas brilliantly."

- Howard Zinn

**FROM WHARF RATS
TO
LORDS OF THE DOCKS**

***on June 28th, 2008 at 7:30 PM
in the Wolfington Teletorium, Mandeville Hall
presented by
The Comey Institute of Industrial Relations
Saint Joseph's University***

Ian Ruskin

Ian trained at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. In England, he worked in Repertory Theater, London's West End (where work included the title role in *Jack the Ripper*), television (including the Laurence Olivier *King Lear*), and film. In Los Angeles, his work has ranged from *Murder She Wrote* to the acclaimed one-man play *The Man Himself*. He has also done extensive voice work in radio, commercials, and in over 100 films and television programs.



Photo by Veronica Puleo

He has performed the play over 200 times across America and in Canada, Hawai'i, Australia, and England. The film of a live performance in front of 1,000 longshore workers, directed by legendary filmmaker Haskell Wexler, has aired on PBS for the last three years and is available on DVD.

The New Play

Ian's new one-man play *To Begin the World Over Again: the Life of Thomas Paine* about America's one truly radical Founding Father is now available for bookings.

It premiered at the Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse, Seattle and on opening night of Grand Performances in Los Angeles. He has since performed it for the National Nurses United Convention in San Francisco and the California Federation of Teachers Conference in Los Angeles. Upcoming performances include The American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and Harvard Law School in Cambridge.

It was written with the support of a COLA Fellowship, The Thomas Paine Society, The Living History Centre, The University of Washington and many individuals.

The Harry Bridges Project

The Harry Bridges Project was created to develop programs that can fill an important void in the American public's understanding of their own history—the history of American 20th century workers. We aim to tell the story of workers' struggles to build better lives for themselves and of the struggles of the American labor movement to organize.

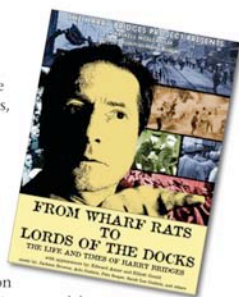
Our project takes audiences on journeys through some of America's most exciting, turbulent, and epochal years, with one of its most dynamic figures as their guide. It also demonstrates the importance of people uniting across all racial, ethnic, religious, and political lines and of working towards a world of justice and dignity for all.

For more information please go to: theharrybridgesproject.org
Contact us at: theharrybridgesproject@comcast.net

The One-Man Play

(San Francisco, sometime in the 1960s)

This one-act play is a human portrayal of Bridges' passion, struggles, and wicked sense of humor. It features many of his own words, and covers his life from his childhood in Australia until near his retirement in the 1970s. It includes the electrifying 1934 General Strike in San Francisco, the drama and comedy of his trials, the traumas of his marriages and divorces, the controversy of a union standing up for social and political issues around the world, and the impact of the groundbreaking Mechanization and Modernization agreement. The play features rare labor songs, political parodies, archival photographs, and film footage. And today, as we face globalization, massive job losses in manufacturing, wars and invasions, and the greatest threat to the American labor movement since the Cold War, Harry's story has become more relevant and inspirational than ever.



"I don't know of any way for working people to win basic economic justice and dignity except by being organized into a solid, democratic union."

—Harry Bridges, Bill Moyers Interview, 1974



THE HARRY BRIDGES PROJECT

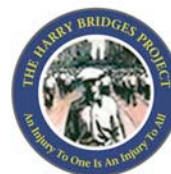
and

Grand Performances

present

"FROM WHARF RATS
TO LORDS OF THE DOCKS"

on Friday, August 17th at 8 PM at
California Plaza
Los Angeles



Harry Bridges

Bridges was a labor leader and social campaigner with a profound and far-reaching impact on the fabric of American life during the 20th century.

An international celebrity for 40 years—a hero or the devil incarnate, it all depended on your point of view—his work as a labor organizer in the forefront of change and his struggles to withstand 21 years of deportation trials (the longest in American history) made him a unique figure.

He fought to win basic rights and human dignity for all workers. He campaigned all his life against prejudice and discrimination and in support of justice for oppressed peoples around the world, principles as relevant today as they were during the harshness of the Depression.

Bridges' personal life was as vivid and compelling as his public life—three wives, two bitter divorces, and a "Hollywood era," with star-studded fund raisers for his trials.

He was always a "working stiff," but he met with presidents and toured Europe as a hero. He knew Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson, Billie Holiday, Pete Seeger, and Orson Welles. A radical working-class leader with a love of the American Constitution, he was truly unique, with a sharp sense of humor, a fearlessness in the face of controversy, and a very individual view of the world.



COURTESY EWU



Class Conversations to Accompany *To Begin the World Over Again: the Life of Thomas Paine* (and *From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks*).

Actor/writer Ian Ruskin is happy to have conversations with relevant classes prior to students seeing his play(s), and share his experiences researching and writing them.

For students of history, political science, sociology, anthropology, economics and other related subjects, the conversations can focus on:

- History as an objective or subjective understanding of the past
- Thomas Paine and Harry Bridges, as two of the most misunderstood figures in American history, can also be considered as prime examples of a systematic suppression of the impact and importance of individuals when they are seen as being contrary to American “principles.”
- Founding principles of the American Revolution re-examined, including issues of Deism/Christianity, separation of church and state and voting rights
- The roles of slaves and women in early American society
- The rise of the American labor movement and McCarthyism
- The 21 years spent by the federal government trying to deport Bridges
- The issues, prevalent from America’s founding up to today, of the balance between freedom, democracy and equality VS capitalism, individualism and economic power

For students of theatre, stage management, play writing, creative writing and other related subjects, the conversations can focus on:

- character development – the use of oral histories, interviews and research to compliment the imagination, and the value of specific props and costume in defining a character
- writing a one-person play – the arc of the action, the idea of three acts within the play, dramatic tension and variety, the world in which the play is set, etc.
- a detailed discussion about ways to create your own work, how to promote yourself and ways in which to get your own gigs
- arts as a tool in education

Ideally, students from all these disciplines would attend the play and take part in the Q&A following the performance(s)

As long as these conversations would entail only limited additional time on campus, there would not be any additional charge for them.

**Workshops to Accompany *From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks* and
*To Begin the World Over Again: the Life of Thomas Paine***

For students of theatre, stage management, play writing, creative writing and other related subjects, the workshops would focus on writing and performing a short one-person play/monologue.

Students would be sent advance written materials expanding on the ideas of –

- character development – the use of oral histories, interviews and research to compliment the imagination, and the value of specific props and costume in defining a character
- basic good practices for conducting interviews – relaxing the subject, open ended questions, using a script/improvising, etc.
- writing a one-person play – the arc of the action, the idea of three acts within the play, dramatic tension and variety, the world in which the play is set, etc.

They would interview someone from their lives – a family member, mentor, community figure – and write a first draft, approximately 10 minutes long, of a dramatic monologue based on the interview. It would have been made clear that this monologue could take any form, as long as the student presents the story of a character based on the interview. They would perform their drafts in a workshop run by Ian, followed by class critiques. There would also be discussion about performing monologues and how they differ from working with other actors.

Ideally these pieces would then be developed by faculty and presented as a short-play series.

The workshops would cost \$1,000 each, which would include all advance materials.