decides to offer his place to a young girl, Khit, whom he stumbles upon—a decision that sets off a delayed chain reaction. Later, in Spain, Khit has an extended conversation with Ali-sak, the only member of the book’s original trio to escape Laos. When the book’s brief final section leaps ahead to 2018 and finds Ali-sak contemplating this encounter and the wisp of paper Prany had told Khit to give to him, the paper’s fragility becomes a symbol of the fortuitousness of connection—strange, after all, to think that bodies might disappear, that buildings might collapse and regimes tumble, while a note might drift over continents and years to its proper recipient.

When composing this novel, Yoon had a particular structural metaphor in mind. “I looked at it as a kind of canvas,” he says. “The book has five parts, so each of them, to me, was like a different part of the canvas—and my hope was that the reader would fill in the rest.” This goal, along with his desire “to write the biggest possible story in the most minimalist way possible,” means that Run Me to Earth is a novel of gaps and elisions that, in its leaps backward and forward in time, manages to capture the emotional fracturing that strikes Yoon’s characters, and the peculiarities and paradoxical desires of their wounded hearts.

Setting the Stage
Joshua McTaggart leads London’s Chelsea Theatre into a new era.

by OLIVIA MUNK

LONDON’S CHELSEA THEATRE can be found off a main road in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a neighborhood where household incomes are typically three times the national average. By contrast, the theater itself is tucked into the World’s End Estate, a public-housing complex built in the 1970s that also includes a school and a church. The irony of affordable housing hidden away in an area rife with cafés bearing names like “Juice Baby” and antique shops selling £35,000 chandeliers is lost on no one; this is the borough where, in 2017, 72 people in the Grenfell Tower council flats lost their lives to a preventable fire and became the face of inequality caused by the British government’s austerity program.

The 30-year-old theater has just completed an 18-month, £2.5-million capital campaign refurbishment and now faces a new challenge. It seeks to reposition itself as a venue presenting work comparable to that of the prestigious Royal Court Theatre (just down the road in townhouse-lined Sloane Square), while remaining affordable and welcoming to the more than 2,500 residents in its backyard.

In 2018, Joshua McTaggart ’13 was recruited to lead the Chelsea into its second life as its joint artistic director and CEO.

At the time, McTaggart was the founding artistic director of another London theater, The Bunker, which he and a business partner had converted from an abandoned parking garage into a thriving off-West End locale. (Ironically, The Bunker lost its lease in 2019, a victim of the ever-shifting ecologies of London’s arts and real-estate industries, and is set to close this spring, just as the Chelsea prepares for its eventual opening.)

McTaggart discovered a love of theater, and directing in particular, at Harvard, thanks to campus extracurriculars. (He graduated before Theater, Dance, and Media became a concentration.) His most memorable shows included a 25-person production of Stephen Sondheim’s Sweeney Todd in Farkas Hall, and British writer Mark Ravenhill’s Pool (no Water), performed, fittingly, in the Adams Pool Theatre, a repurposed swimming pool with no water. These undergraduate productions represented a valuable time and environment in which artistic risks were not only possible but encouraged, he says, with support from the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club and the Office of the Arts.

After graduating from Harvard with a concentration in history and a secondary field in English, McTaggart plunged into London’s “fringe” theater scene, directing plays on shoestring budgets in rooms above pubs and managing theater festivals. Then came The Bunker. There, he says, “being an artistic director meant making sure the toilets got cleaned as well as picking plays.” He cares just as much about the lavatories at the Chelsea, but also has the additional role of CEO, providing financial guidance and strategy for what he deems a “civic space” rather than either a community center or theater. In the redesigned Chelsea—a modern, open building with high ceilings and natural light—studios are used for community projects like film clubs for women over 50 and pop-up offices for local housing associations. Programming for the fully flexible, 135-seat theater was set to start this fall, but will be delayed several months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

McTaggart intends for the Chelsea to en-
The “Messy Experiment”
From “female confinement” to “female liberation” at the Radcliffe Institute
by SUSAN WARE

On November 20, 1960, scientist Mary Ingraham Bunting unveiled her vision for the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study. Newly appointed as Radcliffe’s president, she made her announcement just weeks after the country had elected John F. Kennedy ’40, LL.D. ’56, its youngest president. Change was in the air, but Bunting was one of the foresighted few who realized women should be part of that changing equation. To provide an intellectual lifeline to talented women whose careers had been sidetracked by marriage and children, she proposed creating an institute where fellows would receive office space, access to Harvard’s resources, and a part-time stipend to pursue their creative and scholarly work. Nothing like this had ever been proposed before, certainly not at Radcliffe College. Even Bunting referred to it as a “messy experiment.”

Practically as soon as the program was announced, inquiries started to roll in. Prospective applicants were typically Boston-area women in their thirties and for-ties who were married with small children. After a rigorous selection process which they assembled at 78 Mount Auburn Street in September 1961, they were keenly aware of the high expectations placed on them to fulfill Bunting’s expansive mission statement. But mainly they just felt lucky to have been chosen.

In The Equivalents: A Story of Art, Female Friendship, and Liberation in the 1960s, Maggie Doherty, Ph.D. ’15, a literary scholar and critic, and a preceptor in Expository Writing, tells the story of how this small and privileged group “operated as a hinge between