

PLAYBILL®



WALNUT STREET THEATRE

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA





FOUNDED 1809

AMERICA'S OLDEST THEATRE — PHILADELPHIA'S MOST POPULAR THEATRE COMPANY

WALNUT STREET THEATRE

825 WALNUT STREET • PHILADELPHIA PA 19107

Dear Theatregoer,

Welcome to The Walnut. We are excited to bring you **Gore Vidal's *The Best Man***; a timely political story set in our very own city of Philadelphia.

Next up on the Mainstage, we will conclude our 211th season with the stage adaptation of the award-winning Whitney Houston film that produced the best-selling soundtrack of all time, ***The Bodyguard: The Musical!*** Our production will feature all of your favorite smash hits from the film, including **"I'm Every Woman," "Saving All My Love," "I Wanna Dance with Somebody,"** and one of the greatest songs of all time—**"I Will Always Love You."**

Upstairs in our Independence Studio on 3, we have the clever comedy, ***Popcorn Falls***. In a bid to save their town, the residents of Popcorn Falls must produce a play in just a week! Watch our two amazing actors (you'll recognize them both from *Young Frankenstein!*) frantically—and hysterically—transform into over twenty roles in this over-the-top comedy.

We are delighted to have our 212th anniversary season set—and on sale! All of the information is in the enclosed insert but let me briefly tell you about this season of romance.

- We'll kick it off with a Philly hometown hero in ***Rocky The Musical***, a heart-pumping romance and heart-stopping theatrical experience based on the iconic films.
- Our holidays will take audiences on a journey **"Under the Sea"** when the beloved Hans Christian Andersen story and classic film, ***Disney's The Little Mermaid***, is brought to life on stage!
- In January, love and marriage devolve into laughter and mayhem in Noël Coward's supernatural comedy classic, ***Blithe Spirit***.
- Following that, I am honored to direct one of the greatest American plays ever written, Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning story of love and sacrifice, ***Death of a Salesman***.
- Our season concludes with the inspiring love story that celebrates Gloria and Emilio Estefan's rise to music stardom in the exhilarating Broadway musical ***On Your Feet!***

I would also like to extend an invitation to our 2020 Gala. All are welcome. Join us on May 1 for a night of music performed by your favorite Philadelphia stars. This one-night-only event benefits our Education programs that now serve over 150,000 students and families each year. Tickets are available for purchase at the Box Office, online at walnutstreettheatre.org, and over the phone at 215-574-3550, 10am-10pm 7 days a week.

For now, sit back and enjoy an enthralling political game of cat and mouse!

Sincerely,

Bernard Havard, President and Producing Artistic Director

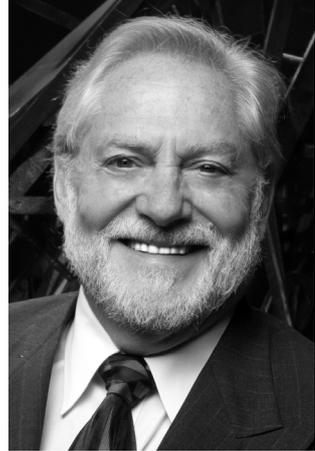


Photo: Mark Garvin



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BERNARD HAVARD

President and Producing Artistic Director

MARCH 10 – APRIL 26, 2020

THE BEST MAN

By Gore Vidal

Scenic Design

ROMAN TATAROWICZ

Costume Design

KAYLA SPEEDY

Lighting Design

JIMMY LAWLOR

Sound Design

JOHN GROMADA

Director of Production

SIOBHÁN RUANE

Stage Managers

LORI AGHAZARIAN

ANGELA CUCCO

Directed by

MICHAEL WILSON

Wig Design by The Wig Associates

SPONSORED BY

Louis & Bessie Stein Foundation Fund #2

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VAN FOSSEN, JR.**

Director of Education

**T.J.
SOKSO**

Director of Marketing

and Public Relations
ED GILCHRIST

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THE CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Don Blades DAMON BONETTI*
Reporter/Delegate SEAN CLOSE*
Senator Clyde Carlin JOHN P. CONNOLLY*
Mabel Cantwell JENNIE EISENHOWER*
Senator Joseph Cantwell SCOTT GREER*
Dick Jensen LEONARD C. HAAS*
Mrs. Sue-Ellen Gamadge JOILET F. HARRIS*
Ex-President Arthur Hockstader JOHNNIE HOBBS, JR.*
Catherine JESSICA M. JOHNSON*
Reporter/Delegate TRAVOYE JOYNER
Reporter/Delegate JERED McLENIGAN*
Reporter/Delegate CHRIS MORRISS
News Commentator/Dr. Artinian PAUL L. NOLAN*
Alice Russell KAREN PEAKES*
Sheldon Marcus FRAN PRISCO*
Reporter/Delegate T.J. WAGNER*
Secretary William Russell GREG WOOD*

EXTRAS

JAMES BOULD, KELLIE COOPER, JOHNNY FERNANDEZ, HANNAH WOLFF

UNDERSTUDIES

ANDREW BARR (Senator Clyde Carlin), JAMES BOULD (Secretary William Russell),
SEAN CLOSE* (Don Blades), KELLIE COOPER (Alice Russell),
OLIVER FEASTER (Reporter/Delegate), JOHNNY FERNANDEZ (Senator Joseph Cantwell),
MICHAEL GRUBB (Reporter/Delegate), JESSICA M. JOHNSON* (Mrs. Sue-Ellen Gamadge),
GEORGE McGRIFF (Reporter/Delegate), JERED McLENIGAN (Dick Jensen),
JASONICA MOORE (Catherine), CHRIS MORRISS* (Sheldon Marcus),
ANDREW MULLIN (Male Extra), SAM PALEY (Female Extra),
DARRYL THOMPSON, JR. (Ex-President Arthur Hockstader),
T.J. WAGNER* (News Commentator/Dr. Artinian), HANNAH WOLFF (Mabel Cantwell)

* The Actors and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the theatre union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

“The Best Man” is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

THE CAST



Damon Bonetti



Sean Close



John P. Connolly



Jennie Eisenhower



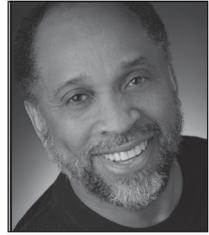
Scott Greer



Leonard C. Haas



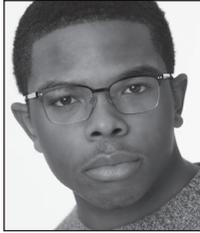
Joilet F. Harris



Johnnie Hobbs, Jr.



Jessica M. Johnson



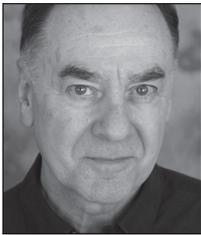
Travoye Joyner



Jared McLenigan



Chris Morriss



Paul L. Nolan



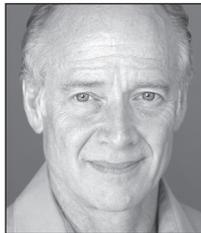
Karen Peakes



Fran Prisco



T.J. Wagner



Greg Wood

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

DAMON BONETTI (Don Blades) Philly born actor, director, musician and teacher in his 9th show at WST! Previous: *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *And Then There Were None*. As director: *The Stinky Cheese Man*. He has performed or directed at many area theaters and is Co-Founder of the Philadelphia Artists Collective. MFA FSU/Asolo.

SEAN CLOSE (Reporter/Delegate; u/s Don Blades) is thrilled to be making his Walnut debut! Sean is an actor, writer, director and teaching artist who's performed at the Arden Theatre Company, 1812 Productions, Delaware Theatre Company, Quintessence Theatre, Act II Playhouse, Montgomery Theater and others. Much love to S, P & Jessica.

JOHN P. CONNOLLY (Senator Clyde Carlin) South Philly native, has volleyed and thundered through 200 plays from Broadway (*Big River*, *Pap Finn*) to LA (*Only A Kingdom*, *Winston Churchill*, 20 movies (*Plague*, *Toothless*), 100 TV shows (*West Wing*, *Cop Rock*; Billy Crystal's *Sessions* [HBO]; *NYPD Blue*), and 500 commercials. WST favorites: *Noises Off*, *Chekov in Yalta*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Contrast*. Thanks: Bernard Havard, WST Family, Temple U's Theater MFA, Beloved Bronni, their Youngins, and his vast Philadelphia Irish clan.

JENNIE EISENHOWER (Mabel Cantwell) Walnut: *The Humans*, *Forbidden Bway* (Barrymore, Best Actress), *Forum*, *Mousetrap*, *Ideal Husband*. Recent: *Bullets Over Bway* (RTC), *Parade* (Arden), *Julius Caesar* (Media). Directing: *At Wit's End* (Bristol), *1776* and *Chicago* (Media), *Flat Stanley & Christmas Carol* (Walnut). Upcoming: *Pippin* (Act 2), *Dispatches from Elsewhere* on AMC. jennie-eisenhower.com

SCOTT GREER (Senator Joseph Cantwell) Favorites at the Walnut: *Laughter...* ('97 and '17), *Buddy*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. NY: The Pearl Theatre. Regional: Milwaukee Rep., Arizona Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville. 6 Barrymore Awards. 2014 "Best of Philly," Philadelphia Magazine. Thanks to Mark and Bernard. Love to Jen and Lily.

LEONARD C. HAAS (Dick Jensen) was last seen at the Walnut in *Noises Off*, and has been

performing in the Philadelphia theatre for over 30 years, getting his start at People's Light. Other credits include *The Little Prince* (Off-Broadway, New Victory Theatre, NYC), the title roles of *The Dresser* (Barrymore Best Actor nomination) and *Hamlet* (both at Bristol Riverside), and *A Doll's House* (Jo Strømgren Kompani, Norway).

JOILETF. HARRIS (Mrs. Sue-Ellen Gamadge) is happy to be returning to WST! Previous WST shows include: *How to Succeed in Business...* (Ms. Jones), *Hairspray* (Motormouth), *Finian's Rainbow* (Sharecropper), *Damn Yankees* (Doris), *The Sunshine Boys* (Registered Nurse), *The Buddy Holly Story* (Apollo Singer), *Streetcar Named Desire* (Neighbor), and *Twist* (Nannah). TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

JOHNNIE HOBBS, JR. (Ex-President Arthur Hockstader) is an Emeritus Associate Professor at the Ira Brind School of Theatre Arts at The University of the Arts and received the 2015 Barrymore Lifetime Achievement Award and is a four-time Barrymore nominee. Walnut Street Theatre credits: *Thurgood*, *Oleanna*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and *The Other Place*.

JESSICA M. JOHNSON (Catherine; u/s Mrs. Sue-Ellen Gamadge) is thrilled to return to the Walnut. Favorite recent credits: Rachel in *Rachel* (Quintessence Theatre Group), *The Color Purple* (Theatre Horizon), *Ragtime* (Arden Theatre), *Civil War Voices*, *Oleanna* (WST). Upcoming show: *Mary Jane* (People's Light). Ms. Johnson is the recipient of an Independence Foundation Fellowship, the Jilline Ringle Residency, and a Barrymore Award for Outstanding Lead Performer in a Musical (*Color Purple*). Follow @Intrigue1908

TRAVOYE JOYNER (Reporter/Delegate) Walnut debut! Regional: *Rachel* (Quintessence Theatre Group), *74 Seconds to Judgement* (GoKASH Productions/Arden). Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare Academy @ Stratford). Travoye is a graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts.

JERED McLENIGAN (Reporter/Delegate; u/s Dick Jensen) Walnut: *Baskerville*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Little Voice*, *Good People*. Recent appearances include *Fool for Love* as Eddie (EgoPo), *The Wizard of Oz* as Lion (Quintessence), and *Mr. Burns...* as Mr. Burns with the Wilma, where he is a member of their

WHO'S WHO

Hothouse Company. Up next, *Misanthrope* with Lantern. Jered is a 3-time Barrymore Award recipient.

CHRIS MORRISS (Reporter/Delegate; u/s Sheldon Marcus) is ecstatic to make his Walnut Mainstage debut! A few of Chris's favorite productions include the Synge Festival, *Pool Play 2.0*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Heathers: the Musical*, and *Next to Normal*. Chris couldn't be here without his family and Kristine. ChrisMorriss.com

PAUL L. NOLAN (News Commentator/Dr. Artinian) has been performing on stage, in front of cameras, and behind microphones on the right and left coasts and points in between since the Nixon administration and at the Walnut since 2006. Walnut favorites include: *Elf*, *Of Mice and Men*, *White Christmas* and *The Mousetrap*.

KAREN PEAKES (Alice Russell) Recent WST credits: *A Woman of No Importance*, *The Curious Incident...Night-Time*, *Comedy of Tenors*, and *Of Mice and Men*. She has been seen at many theatres in and around Philadelphia, including The Arden, People's Light, Act II Playhouse, InterAct, Delaware Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, 1812, The Wilma, The Peterborough Players, The Folger Theatre, and Lantern Theater Company. She is also an audiobook narrator, for Brilliance Audio. Love to Ian and Owen.

FRAN PRISCO (Sheldon Marcus) is thrilled to be a part of the Walnut Family! More than 35 WST productions as both an actor and director. Look for Fran next season in *Rocky* (Paulie), *Christmas My Way*, and *Tomfoolery* (Director/Actor). He will once again be directing and hosting this year's fundraising Gala, A MILLION DREAMS. Please consider attending, or donating to the exciting future of this great institution! Be sure to get out and VOTE this November!

T.J. WAGNER (Reporter/Delegate; u/s News Commentator/Dr. Artinian) is thrilled to be making his Walnut debut! Recent NYC credits: *Measure for Measure* (Bryant Park), and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Access Theatre). Recent regional credits: *Into the Woods* (Greenbrier Theatre), *25th...Spelling Bee* (Florida Repertory Theatre and Bristol Riverside), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Hangar

Theatre). Ithaca College BFA and a proud AEA member. Big thank you to T.J.'s family, Evan, and Agnes for their unwavering love and support. @tjwagner

GREG WOOD (Secretary William Russell) was recently at the Walnut in *Meteor Shower* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Other Walnut shows include *Noises Off*, *The Humans*, *Harvey*, and *Private Lives*. Recent credits include *A Christmas Carol* at the McCarter Theatre, *She Loves Me* and *Mornings at Seven* with the Peterborough Players. Film and Television credits include *The Sixth Sense*, *Signs*, *The Happening*, *How to Get Away With Murder*, *Law & Order*, *Ed*, *Hack and Homicide*.

MICHAEL WILSON (Director) is pleased to make his WST debut with *The Best Man*, which he directed on Broadway in 2012. Also on Broadway, Wilson directed Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* (Tony Award Best Actress, Cicely Tyson) as well as *Enchanted April* and *Dividing the Estate*. He received Drama Desk and Outer Critics' Circle Awards for his direction of *The Orphans' Home Cycle*. Artistic Director of Hartford Stage from 1998 to 2011, he has staged premieres by Eve Ensler, Marcus Gardley, Rebecca Gilman, David Grimm, John Guare, and Beth Henley among others. Recent projects include the North American premiere of David Seidler's *The King's Speech*, now on tour.

GORE VIDAL (Playwright) is an American writer known for many popular screenplays, plays and novels, as well as other literary works. He wrote and published more than 200 essays and 24 novels throughout his career, which included a venture into politics, a stint as a popular talk-show guest and even running for political office. Among Vidal's most famous works are the 1960s books *Julian* and *Myra Breckinridge*; the 1984 novel *Lincoln*; his 1993 political work *United States: Essays 1952-1992*, for which he won the National Book Award; and his 1995 memoir, *Palimpsest*.

ROMAN TATAROWICZ (Set Design) Walnut: *A Woman of No Importance*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Humans*, *Thurgood*, *Oleanna*, *Meteor Shower*, *Souvenir*, *Jerry's Girls*, *The Other Place*, *RED*, *I Love a Piano*. Selected Off-B'way: *The Banana Monologues* (Acorn Theatre); *Honky*, *27 Rue de Fleurus* (Urban Stages); *Mother*

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WHO'S WHO

Courage, The Importance of Being Earnest, The Threepenny Opera (Jean Cocteau Rep.). Many Off-Off-B'way including *Bee-Luther-Hatchee* (Audelco Award nom). Regional credits: Capital Rep., Merrimack Rep., Queens Theatre in the Park, Florida Studio Theatre, Azuka, Act II, InterAct, Bristol Riverside, People's Light, Pa. Shakespeare Festival and ETC (Santa Barbara). tatarowicz.com

KAYLA SPEEDY (Costume Design) is excited for her Mainstage debut design at the Walnut Street Theatre! She received a 2017 Barrymore Nomination for *LIZZIE!* (11th Hour). Other credits include *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (RTC); *Lend Me a Tenor* (RTC); *Evita* (RTC); *Bullets Over Broadway* (RTC); *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (WST); *Next to Normal* (RTC); *Spamalot* (RTC); *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (WST). Much love and many thanks go to my family, friends, and Kyle! Check out her work at kaylaspeedy.com

JIMMY LAWLOR (Lighting Design) WST credits: *Meteor Shower* and *Oleanna*. Jimmy is a Scorpio, new father, cat owner, and a music enthusiast. He only runs when chased. Jimmy designs lighting for opera, theatre, dance, corporate clients, architecture, interiors, and more. New York work includes Broadway, Off Broadway, and beyond. Jimmy's work has been seen internationally in Abu Dhabi, Sydney, Mexico, Canada, and Germany. MFA from NYU Tisch. Member of USA 829. lawlordesign.com

JOHN GROMODA (Sound Design) has composed music and/or designed sound for 40 Broadway productions, including *All My Sons*, *Trip to Bountiful* (Tony nomination), *The Best Man* (Drama Desk Award), *Twelve Angry Men*, the original *A Few Good Men*. NYC credits include *The Young Man From Atlanta*, *Harry Townsend's Last Stand*, *The Cake*, *Amy and the Orphans*, *Old Hats*, *Measure for Measure* (Delacorte Theater), *Orphans' Home Cycle* (Drama Desk and Henry Hewes Awards), *Shipwrecked!* (Lucille Lortel Award), *The Skriker* (Drama Desk Award), *Machinal* (OBIE Award) and many more. TV and film credits: *The Trip to Bountiful*, as well as *Showing Roots*.

LORI AGHAZARIAN (Stage Manager) This is Lori's fourteenth season here at the Walnut. Prior to joining WST, Lori spent seven seasons as PSM at the Prince Music Theater. Freelance

credits include Wilma Theater, Opera Co. of Phila., Pig Iron Theatre Co., 1812 Productions, PTC, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. In addition to stage managing, Lori spent five years as the box office manager for the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival/Philly Fringe. To my friends and family for their endless support. Glad to be back!

ANGELA CUCCO (Stage Manager) is happy to be back at the Walnut for her tenth season! Previously, she stage managed for six seasons upstairs in the Independence Studio on 3. Other stage management credits include Williamstown Theatre Festival, George Street Playhouse, Vineyard Playhouse, Skyline Theatre Company, New York International Fringe Festival and Philly Fringe. Many thanks to Mom, Dad, Laurie, Anthony, Dante and the WST family. Love forever to David.

SIOBHÁN RUANE (Director of Production) This is Siobhán's seventh season at the Walnut. With almost 20 years in the business, Siobhán has worked internationally as a Production Manager and Stage Manager. Previously, Siobhán held the faculty position of Stage Management Advisor at Florida State University's School of Theatre. Additional credits include Cirque du Soleil, Norwegian Cruise Line, Cirque Productions, and various regional theatres. Siobhán holds an undergraduate degree from Rutgers University, an MFA from the University of Delaware, and is (proudly!) originally from the Jersey Shore.

MARK D. SYLVESTER (Managing Director) Mark is proud to be celebrating his 26th season at the Walnut. His extensive career has spanned Summer Stock to Broadway as an actor, stage manager, box office treasurer, theatre manager, marketing and public relations director and general manager. After several years working with commercial theatre he has devoted his career to non-profit theatre companies since 1987. To date, Mark has been associated with more than 450 stage productions. An avid collector of musical theatre recordings, his collection contains over 3,000 cast albums from around the world. Widely regarded as a theatrical marketing expert, Mark lectures and consults with organizations internationally. He has served on several boards including seven years with the National Alliance for Musical Theatre where he now holds the honorary

WHO'S WHO

position of Board Emeritus and the Advisory Committee of Samuel French, the international play publisher and licensing company. With Bernard Havard he co-authored the book *Walnut Street Theatre*. Since he joined the Walnut in 1994 it has become the most subscribed theatre company in the world.

BERNARD HAVARD (President and Producing Artistic Director) *Vox Populi* (The Voice of the People) was written on the Walnut Playbills in the 1800s. Whenever the Walnut has strayed from a populist program, the theatre has gone bankrupt. When I came here 37 years ago, we had no programs and no audience. Today we enjoy the largest subscription of any theatre in the world. So, my thanks to our loyal audience and a warm welcome to newcomers who enjoy and believe in what we do. I have tremendous admiration for the artists who have dedicated their lives to the theatre and the Walnut, in particular. Our theatre is a non-profit 501-C3 institution and we rely on contributed income to extend our reach into the community. Last season we reached more than 150,000 students in our city schools. We have 30 trustees who give their time, wisdom and contributions to help guide this historical treasure. I came to the Walnut in 1982, and I am as excited now about our future as I was in the beginning. My heartfelt thanks to all who enter this theatre. For my biography, go to AboutUs on our web site at WalnutStreetTheatre.org.

COMING ATTRACTIONS AT THIS THEATRE!

MAINSTAGE

- *The Bodyguard*
(May 12 – July 12)

INDEPENDENCE STUDIO ON 3 Intimate Stories in an Intimate Space

- *Popcorn Falls*
(Through March 29)
- *Edward Albee's A Delicate Balance*
(April 14 – May 17)

WST FOR KIDS' SERIES

- *Junie B. Jones: The Musical*
(March 27– April 11)
- *Nate the Great*
(May 29 – June 9)

Buy a subscription or individual tickets
at **215-574-3550** (10am–10pm),
WalnutStreetTheatre.org
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WALNUT STREET THEATRE APPRENTICE APPLICATIONS

The Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia is now accepting online applications for 2020-2021 season apprenticeships. Apprenticeships begin as early as June 2020 and end as late as July 2021.

For more information or to apply today, visit walnutstreettheatre.org/about/apprenticeships.php

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Assistant to the Producing Artistic Director/
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Casting/Literary Apprentice..... Juliana Whelan

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Production Associate Megan Lampron
Production Management Apprentice ... Kat Margaret Phifer
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Stage Management Apprentices..... Patrick L. Johnson,
Christian Marshall
Studio 3 Stage Manager Kelly L. Schwartz
Studio 3 Stage Management Apprentice.. Julianna Holzmann
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Lead Dresser Alison Levy
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Hair and Makeup Coordinator..... Amari Callaway
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Stage Crew
Head Carpenter Mick Coughlan
Head Electrician Matthew Sanatore
Head Flyman Ron Mazzone
Head Sound Adam Orseck
Head Props..... Valerie Bannan
Seasonal Assistant Lighting John Szarka

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 Costume Stock Coordinator.....Katie Yamaguchi

Production Consigliere Matt DeMascolo
 Doctors..... Jeff. Fam. Med. Assoc., Jeff. Otolaryngology



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The Director is a member of the **STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



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The mission of the Walnut Street Theatre Company is to sustain the tradition of professional theatre and contribute to its future viability and vitality. It does so through the production and presentation of professional theatre; the encouragement, training and development of artists; the development of diverse audiences; and the preservation and chronicling of its theatre building, a National Historic Landmark.



Walnut Street Theatre is a member of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania, the National Alliance for Musical Theatre and the League of Historic American Theatres.



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