



AN ARTSLANDIA
PUBLICATION

CHOIR BOY



**A Co-Production of ACT — A Contemporary Theatre
& The 5th Avenue Theatre**

**THE
FIFTH
AVENUE
THEATRE**



A Contemporary Theatre

**SEPTEMBER 9 -
OCTOBER 23, 2022**

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THE FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE

2022/23 SEASON

THE GRISWOLDS'

BROADWAY VACATION

September 13–October 2, 2022

CHOIR BOY

September 9–October 23, 2022

THE WIZ

November 19–December 23, 2022

INTO THE WOODS

February 10–March 5, 2023

SWEENEY TODD

April 21–May 14, 2023

LES MISÉRABLES

May 24–June 17, 2023

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ACT and The 5th Avenue Theatre acknowledge that the land on which this theatre stands is part of the ancestral homelands of the **Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Duwamish, Snoqualmie, and Tulalip** peoples along the waterways of the **Salish Sea**. We honor the **29 federally recognized sovereign nations** within the state of Washington as well as the **many other unrecognized peoples in this area**.

As we gather and strive to share stories of our world with joy and clarity, **we honor with gratitude the original stewards and storytellers of these lands—past, present, and future**. We value the immense contributions, sacrifices, and **resilience of Indigenous People** here, and fully acknowledge the profound multi-generational impact that colonization has had on Native people everywhere, including ongoing disparities, racism, and political and social **INVISIBILITY**. **To heal, we need truth and understanding that everyone actively participates in, together.**

This land acknowledgement is one small act in recognizing the importance of continuing to care for the land and acknowledge our important relationship with the original people of this place we call home who are still here. **We are all in relationship to each other.**

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Creating a space for Black boys to become Black men

is the gargantuan task Headmaster Marrow, the leader of a prestigious all Black, all male boarding school, is tasked with. In a time when both of those groups are threatened, and their safety anything but guaranteed, the story you are about to watch offers up a vision of how to create that reality. Time and time again, when we are challenged by the biggest questions of our time, we've turned to artists. We have to look no further than the brilliant and award-winning Tarell Alvin McCraney to gain some insight into this pressing issue—*where is it safe to be a Black child?*

This play presents the idea that in curating spaces where Black boys can be soft with one another, we can provide opportunities for them to break free of the labels and perceptions that infringe on their lives the most. Studies show that Black children are perceived to look less

child-like and are most likely to be seen as older than their actual age. Aging up children can have huge consequences - look no further than the sordid history of how this country has treated young Black boys from Till, Trayvon, and Tamir.

In the soft spaces we create for these children, they will find that they are more than what the media portrays them to be. They can see that the layers of artifice they've been forced to wear to be perceived as less than a threat do not actually keep them safe, but rather, provide a temporary shield for others. The arm's length relationship that others have with the true hearts and minds of Black boys only continues to "other" them and perpetuates a vicious cycle even if it is done unconsciously.

Of course, this issue is of personal importance to me. I'll assume, by your presence here, you also have questions about this topic. If you and I share a similar background, I invite you to shed that artifice and enjoy what can be possible if we love and accept all of the ways in which Black boys want to experience the world. If you and I were raised differently, I ask that you take this opportunity to not be a voyeur, but to respect that you've been dropped into an intimate space. Respect the privilege to bear witness, engage with all of your senses, and lean in. As you leave the theater, I hope you engage in conversations that lead to towards something better. The future of my kids depend on it.

Jamil Jude

Director

**PLEASE DO NOT WALK ON THE STAGE BEFORE,
DURING, OR AFTER THE SHOW.**



Please wear your mask at all times except when eating or drinking. No food or beverages, except water, are permitted inside the theater.



Please turn off your cell phones and pagers prior to the beginning of the performance.



The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and photography with or without flash, during a performance is strictly prohibited.

ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS

ACT offers the Figaro MobiTXT® Closed Captioning System for audience members. This system is offered at all performances in ACT's Mainstage theaters. ACT is also equipped with the Williams Sound® Audio Equipment, which amplifies stage sounds with the aid of headsets and also provides sound for our Audio Description performances. All devices are complimentary and can be reserved at the time of ticket purchase and/or requested upon arrival to the theater (ask staff for assistance). Braille and Large Print programs are available upon request.

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Scan the QR code or visit **5thavenue.org/shows/2022-23/choir-boy** to learn about *Choir Boy* and access Show Talks, our Inside the Musical guide, interviews, and more!



**FROM BILL
AND JOHN**



OUR 10TH UNIQUE AND EXCITING COLLABORATION

The show you are about to watch is the result of 10 seasons of exceptional partnership between ACT - A Contemporary Theatre and The 5th Avenue Theatre. We couldn't be more thrilled that *Choir Boy*—a unique, powerful production that expands how music, movement, and drama come together to create musical storytelling—is taking its place in our collaborative canon.

In 2009, our organizations came together and discussed how it would be exciting to produce smaller-scale musicals, ones that would thrill ACT audiences but wouldn't necessarily be appropriate in The 5th's 2,000-seat venue, and would be challenging to produce in Seattle otherwise. This venture has become a way for both organizations to be adventurous in producing musical theater and highlight our amazing local talent for up to 10 week runs, all while fulfilling important aspects of our respective artistic missions.

For our partnership, this production is breaking new ground. Up until now, we'd only considered more traditional musicals: that is, shows that were either entirely sung, or employed a book to get from one musical number to another. Though it provides all the joy and open-hearted emotion we love about musicals, *Choir Boy* utilizes a different form for how music is used to uplift and explode open the emotion of the story being told. The songs live in the world as songs, not fantasy or rhythmic musical dialogue. This opens a whole new library of possibilities, and we are delighted to dream about what's next, as both our institutions are eager to explore the space of creators, not just interpreters.

On a more personal note: it has been a comfort and strength for both of our institutions to support one another through mutual investment in this partnership, one that has allowed us to lean on each other through the headwinds of the last few challenging years and we could think of no better leader to join forces with on our first co-production back than director Jamil Jude. We strongly believe our collaboration and innovative storytelling is integral to the evolution and expansion of the art form, and is vital to the future of both theaters. We can't wait to see where we go in the years ahead.

Bill Berry
Producing Artistic Director
The 5th Avenue Theatre

John Langs
Artistic Director
ACT - A Contemporary Theatre

Bill Berry headshot by Mark Kitaoka. John Langs headshot by Truman Buffett.

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BILL BERRY

Managing Director
BERNADINE C. GRIFFIN

and

ACT - A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Artistic Director
JOHN LANGS

Managing Director
ANITA SHAH

Present

CHOIR BOY

by

TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY

Featuring

NICHOLAS JAPPAUL BERNARD STEPHON JAMAAL DORSEY
NEHEMIAH HOOKS JESIMIEL JENKINS BILL JOHNS TRISTAN B. JOHNSON
DONOVAN MAHANNAH LARRY PAULSEN ARLANDO SMITH BRANDON G. STALLING
KYLE WARD JARRON A. WILLIAMS

Scenic Designer
TONY CISEK

Costume Designer
TREVOR BOWEN

Lighting Designer
ANDREW SMITH

Sound Designer
ERIN BEDNARZ

Fight Director and
Intimacy Choreographer
KAJA DUNN

Associate Director
SHERMONA MITCHELL

Production Stage Manager
ERIN B. ZATLOKA

Music Directed by
JADA CATO

Choreographed by
JUEL D. LANE

Vocal Arrangements by
JASON MICHAEL WEBB

Directed by
JAMIL JUDE

Choir Boy received a world premiere co-production by The English Stage Company and Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) at Royal Court Theatre in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs on September 4, 2012.

Choir Boy was originally commissioned by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director, Barry Grove, Executive Producer, Daniel Sullivan, Acting Artistic Director) 2007-08 Season with support from Time Warner Inc.

Choir Boy is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

THE 5TH AVENUE THEATRE PRODUCING PARTNER

Marleen and Kenny Alhadeff

RESTAURANT PARTNER



CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Headmaster MarrowARLANDO SMITH*
 Pharus Jonathan Young.....NICHOLAS JAPPAUL BERNARD
 Bobby MarrowJARRON A. WILLIAMS
 Junior Davis.....DONOVAN MAHANNAH
 Anthony Justin "AJ" JamesKYLE WARD*
 David Heard.....BRANDON G. STALLING*
 Mr. Pendleton.....LARRY PAULSEN*

UNDERSTUDIES

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.

Pharus Jonathan Young, Junior Davis—STEPHON JAMAAL DORSEY
 David Heard—NEHEMIAH HOOKS*
 Headmaster Marrow—JESIMIEL JENKINS
 Mr. Pendleton—BILL JOHNS
 Bobby Marrow, Anthony Justin "AJ" James—TRISTAN B. JOHNSON

VOCAL AND DANCE CAPTAIN

KYLE WARD*

FIGHT CAPTAIN

BRANDON G. STALLING*

ACT CORE COMPANY LIAISON

CHIP SHERMAN

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Production Stage Manager
 ERIN B. ZATLOKA*

Assistant Stage Manager
 ANNA VRANEY

Swing Stage Manager
 JR WELDEN*



* These actors and stage managers are members of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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THE WIZ

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**NICHOLAS JAPPAAL**

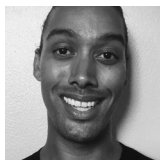
BERNARD (*Pharus Jonathan Young*) (he/him) is a native of Rochester, New York and a Seattleite of five years now. He has had the opportunity to work with many theaters

around town including The 5th, Seattle Rep, Seattle Children's Theatre, Sound Theatre, ArtsWest, Strawberry Workshop, and Book-It Repertory Theatre. As a disabled, queer, and Black artist, Bernard is interested in fostering an artistic world in which marginalized people have the space to both give breath to their own stories as well as not being regulated to that alone. We are more than our pain and more versatile than you've ever imagined.

**STEPHON JAMAAL**

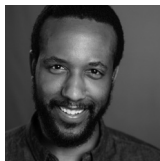
DORSEY (*Pharus Jonathan Young Understudy, Junior Davis Understudy*) (he/him) is a Detroit-based multimedia artist who encourages healing and empowerment for Black

and queer communities first, in hopes to one day create a more healthy, human dwelling place for all. Recent: Bobby in *Nacirema Society* (The Detroit Players) and Ensemble in *Little Shop of Horrors* (University of Michigan).

**NEHEMIAH HOOKS**

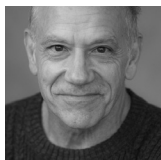
(*David Heard Understudy*) (he/him) is excited to join this co-production with ACT and The 5th Avenue Theatre. Recent: *And So That Happened...* and *Disney's Beauty and*

the Beast (The 5th), and *Shout, Sister, Shout!* (Seattle Rep). Nehemiah spent nine years performing on Norwegian Cruise Lines, has performed with New York Metropolitan Opera and *Beauty and the Beast* Disney World MGM.

**JESIMIEL JENKINS**

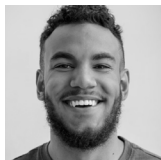
(*Headmaster Marrow Understudy*) (he/him) is a second year Acting MFA student at the University of Washington. UW Drama: *The Saint Plays, Father Comes Home from the*

Wars, Parts 1, 2, and 3. Regional: *Ragtime, Rent, Big River*. Commercial: Mitsubishi, Pedego, Foundation One, and Old Navy. BA in Sociology, University of Virginia. "Esse quam videri." IG: @jesimielross



BILL JOHNS (*Mr. Pendleton Understudy*) (he/him) is honored to both be back at ACT and to understudy a true Seattle theater icon, Larry Paulsen. Johns has worked in theater, film, and television in Atlanta and

throughout the Northwest, and has taught at The Overlake School, Cornish, and the Seattle Film Institute.

**TRISTAN B. JOHNSON**

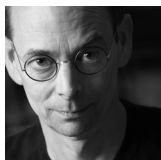
(*Bobby Marrow Understudy, Austin Justin "AJ" James Understudy*) (he/him) is thrilled to be making his 5th Avenue Theatre/ACT debut! Regional: *I and You*

(Anthony); *Caroline, or Change* (The Dryer/The Bus); *Hairspray* (Seaweed); *Ragtime* (Coalhouse); *Ripped* (Bradley). Favorites: *Othello* (Othello), *Bellwether* (Alan), *Spamalot* (Head Knight of Ni). Much love to Oma, Dad, Lisa, Braxton, Morgan, and Mark.

**DONOVAN MAHANNAH**

(*Junior Davis*) (he/him) is thrilled to be making his 5th Avenue Theatre/ACT Theatre debut! Recent credits: *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (u/s Schroeder) at Village

Theatre; *Puss in Boots* (Ensemble) at Centerstage Theatre; *Measure of Innocence* (Claudio) at Bag&Baggage Productions; and *Shattering* (Jonah) at Tacoma Little Theatre. Donovan sends love to his family for their endless support and gratitude to all of the amazing humans involved with this production!

**LARRY PAULSEN**

(*Mr. Pendleton*) (he/him) has appeared in many productions in Seattle (at ACT, Intiman, Seattle Rep, and SCT, among others). He has been a familiar face at theaters

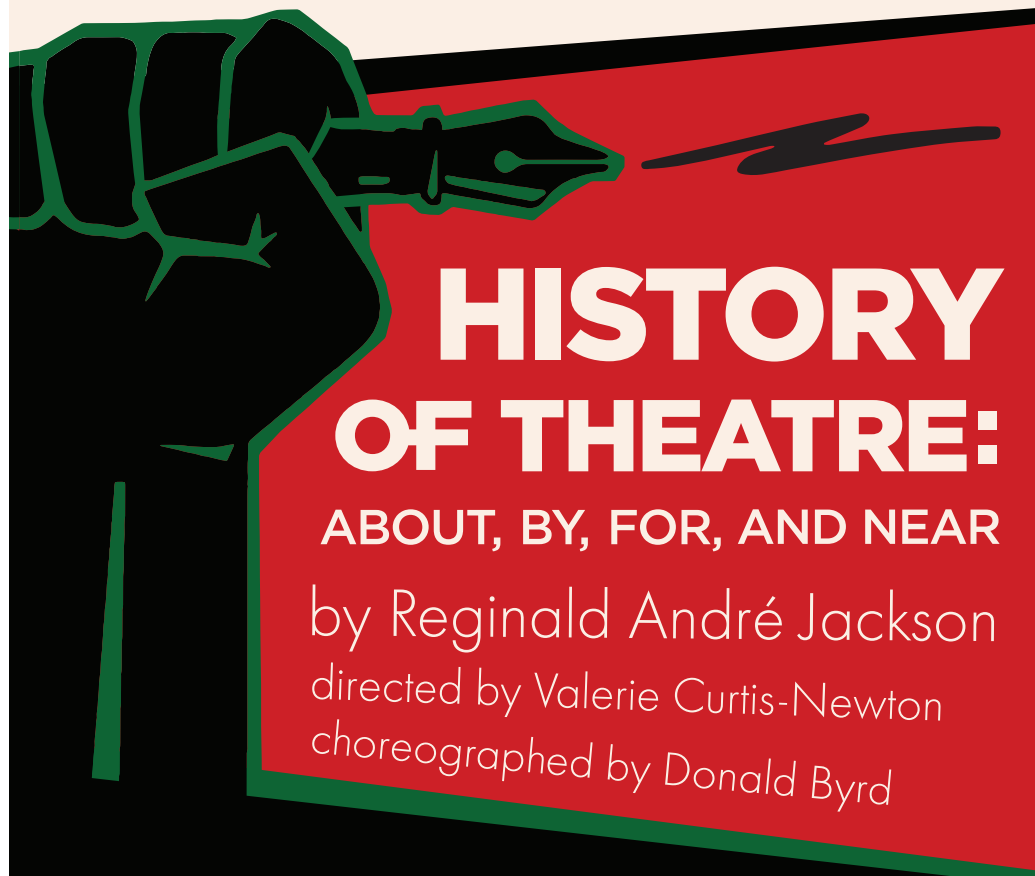
nationwide, including the Denver Center, Huntington Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Alliance Theatre, the Shakespeare Theatre (DC), Kansas City Rep, Gulfshore Playhouse, Classic Stage Company, New York Shakespeare Festival, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.



A Contemporary Theatre

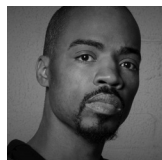
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The Hansberry Project



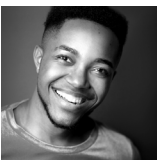
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**ARLANDO SMITH**

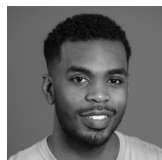
(*Headmaster Marrow*) makes his 5th Avenue Theatre debut with this production. Previously at ACT, he has worked on productions of *A Christmas Carol*, *Sweat*, and *History*

of *Theatre*. Elsewhere in Seattle, his work has been seen at Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle Opera, Seattle Public Theater, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Village Theatre. Further afield, he has worked at The Los Angeles Theater Center, New York's Public Theater, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. www.arlandosmith.com

**BRANDON G. STALLING**

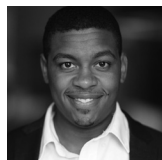
(*David Heard*) (he/they) is honored to return to Charles R. Drew Prep after recently stepping into David's dress shoes at Denver Center. Recent: US National Tour of

Hairspray (Seaweed J. Stubbs), vocalist at AIDA Cruises, and starring in the feature film *All We Have Is Now* as Danny. Alum of Oklahoma City University, BFA Acting '19. He'd like to thank his family and spirit family for their support and love, which flows with abundance! @live_eleutheromania



KYLE WARD (*Anthony Justin "AJ" James*) (he/him) Born and raised in Houston, TX, Kyle Ward ventured from the football field to the stage. He has been seen in *Hairspray* at Dallas Theater Center

and *Choir Boy* at Denver Center for the Performing Arts, where he received a nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor. Kyle dedicates his career to his intimate relationship with God, in hopes of inspiring new mindsets in the world.

**JARRON A. WILLIAMS**

(*Bobby Marrow*) (he/him), a St. Louis native, graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, where he pursued a degree in Drama. He was heavily involved in the

Spelman College Theater and Performance Department. Jarron currently attends the University of Washington as a candidate for an MFA in Acting, class of 2023. Credits: *Far Away*, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Hands Up: Seven Playwrights Seven Testaments*, *Baltimore Waltz*, and *A Very Die Hard Christmas*.

TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY (*Playwright*)

is best known for his acclaimed trilogy, *The Brother/Sister Plays: The Brothers Size*, *In the Red and Brown Water*, and *Marcus; Or the Secret of Sweet*. They have been performed at McCarter Theater in Princeton, The Public Theater in New York, Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, at a trio of theaters in the Bay Area: Marin Theatre Company, ACT, and Magic Theatre, as well as the Young Vic in London (Olivier Award nomination) and around the world. Other plays include *The Breach* (Southern Rep), *Wig Out!* (Sundance Theatre Institute, Royal Court, and Vineyard Theatre – GLAAD Award for Outstanding Play), and *American Trade* (Royal Shakespeare Company and Hampstead Theatre).

Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where he is an ensemble member, will produce the world premiere of his commissioned play, *Head of Passes*. Tarell was the Royal Shakespeare Company's International Playwright in Residence in 2008-2010, where he co-edited and directed the Young People's Shakespeare production of *Hamlet* which toured throughout the UK and was presented at the Park Avenue Armory in New York. He is the recipient of the prestigious Whiting Award and Steinberg Playwright Award, as well as London's *Evening Standard* Award for Most Promising Playwright, the inaugural *New York Times* Outstanding Playwright Award, and the inaugural Paula Vogel Playwriting Award. He is a graduate from the New World School of the Arts High School, the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago, and the Yale School of Drama. He is a resident playwright at New Dramatists and a member of Teo Castellanos/D-Projects in Miami.

JAMIL JUDE (*Director*) (he/him) is a highly accomplished director, playwright, and dramaturg focusing on bringing socially relevant art to the community. Jamil is the Artistic Director at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia, where he previously served as Associate Artistic Director. He co-founded The New Griots Festival, which is dedicated to celebrating, advocating, and advancing the careers of emerging Black artists in the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area in Minnesota. Before joining True Colors, Jamil served as the Artistic Programming Associate at Park Square Theatre, a Producer in Residence at Mixed Blood Theatre, a New Play Producing Fellow at Arena Stage, and co-founded the Colored People's Theatre. Among his many awards, Jamil has received the Captain of Industry Award (21/22), Turn The Spotlight Fellowship (18/19), Andrew W. Mellon/TCG Leadership U Fellowship (2015/17), Nautilus Music Theater Management Fellowship (2014/15), NNPN Producer Residency (2011/12, 2012/13), Jerome Foundation/The Playwrights' Center Many Voices Mentorship (2013/14), and the Allen Lee Hughes

Fellowship at Arena Stage (2009/10, 2010/11). Jamil received his Bachelors of Arts from Colgate University.

JADA CATO (*Music Director*) (she/her) is a country recording artist preparing to release her debut record this fall. A theater graduate from Birmingham-Southern College, she loves any opportunity to perform, direct, and design. Recently making her Broadway debut at the Lincoln Center, Jada is a GLAAD Rising Star Grant recipient and represented Playbill on their NYC Pride stage in Times Square, where she debuted her upcoming single, "CowBoy." Jada also performed on the CMA Fest Stage in Nashville and GLAAD's Concert For Love and Acceptance on CMT. Both were produced by Grammy nominee and Dove award winner Ty Herndon, who Jada completed her first residency with in Nevada this past spring. Jada recently served as Associate Music Director for the DCPA production of *Choir Boy*. Visit jadacatomusic.com for tour information and merch!

JUEL D. LANE (*Choreographer*) (he/him) *Dance Magazine* 25 to Watch. Commissions: Ailey II, Dallas Black Dance Theater, Atlanta Ballet, Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company. Company member of Camille A. Brown & Dancers and Executive Artistic Associate with the Black Acting Methods Studio. Theater credits: *Spunk* (True Colors Theatre), *I Dream* (Alliance Theatre), *Once* (PCLO, Associate Choreographer), *Choir Boy* (Denver Center). BronzeLens Film Festival award winner for *The Maestro*. Recently seen as a dancer in the Amazon Prime series *Harlem*. @jueldlane

KAJA DUNN (*Fight Director and Intimacy Choreographer*) (she/her) is an intimacy professional, diversity consultant and this fall began as an associate professor of Drama and Anti-Racism at Carnegie Mellon University. Kaja is an actor, director, and activist with performances in over 40 productions in five countries. Current favorite intimacy work includes *American Prophet* (Arena Stage), *Harlem* (Amazon), *A Strange Loop* (Broadway, Associate Intimacy Director), *The Best Man*, *The Final Chapter* (Peacock). She is a recipient of the Kennedy Center's National Medallion for her work on theater and race. She has published in several journals and co-authored a chapter in *Arden Research Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Performance*.

JASON MICHAEL WEBB (*Vocal Arrangements*) is a director, composer, lyricist, musical director, producer, and arranger. Mr. Webb received a 2019 Special Tony Award for "outstanding arrangements" in Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy* (MTC), which also earned him a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Original Music. He was nominated for a 2020 Tony Award for his original score for Tennessee

Williams' *The Rose Tattoo* (Roundabout). Mr. Webb's directorial debut, a 2021 film of the Jason Robert Brown musical, *The Last Five Years*, was lauded by *The New York Times* as "impressively freed by its physical and creative limitations." He was most recently nominated for a 2022 Tony for his orchestrations on *MJ THE MUSICAL*.

TONY CISEK (*Scenic Designer*) is a DC-based scenic designer who has collaborated with companies across the US. Recent and upcoming productions include the premieres of *Show Way* (Kennedy Center), and *In His Hands* (Mosaic Theatre), *Toni Stone* (Milwaukee Rep and Alliance Theatre), *The Great Leap* (Round House Theatre), *The Color Purple* (Signature Theatre), *Choir Boy* (Denver Center), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Folger Theatre at the National Building Museum). Other regional credits include: Roundabout, Arena Stage, Guthrie, Goodman, South Coast Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, Ford's, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Baltimore Center Stage, Indiana Rep, Syracuse Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, Cleveland Play House, Peoples Light, Woolly Mammoth. Tonycisek.com

TREVOR BOWEN (*Costume Designer*) (he/him) This is Trevor's first production at ACT. Credits include: *Ragtime* (The 5th); *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1962*, *Black Beauty*, *Edward Tulane* (SCT); *Brothers Size* (American Players Theatre); *Ride the Cyclone* (McCarter Theatre); *Champion* (Boston Lyric Opera); *The Knock*, *Taking Up Serpents*, *Holy Ground* (Glimmerglass Opera Festival); *Albert Herring*, *The Fix*, *Fellow Travelers* (MN Opera); *Sweat* (Asolo Rep); *True West*, *BLKS* (Steppenwolf); *Redwood* (The Jungle Theater); *Corduroy*, *Something Happened in Our Town* (CTC); *Blacklight re:Search* (Cowles Center). Trevor Brown is a 2021-22 McKnight Theater Artist Fellow at The Playwrights' Center. www.trevorbowendesign.com

ANDREW SMITH (*Lighting Designer*) is a Seattle-based Lighting Designer, most recently lighting *Pass Over* and *Dracula* at ACT. National work includes Arizona Theatre Company (*Native Gardens*), Indiana Repertory Theatre (*The Diary of Anne Frank*), Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Cornerstone Theatre Company, Flint Youth Theatre, Horizon Theater Company, and Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. Seattle work has been seen at Seattle Rep, Seattle Children's Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, New Century Theatre Company, Washington Ensemble, Azeotrope, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Seattle Public Theater, Theater Off Jackson, ArtsWest, On the Boards, Velocity Dance Center, and Broadway Performance Hall. Andrew holds a BA from Duke University and an MFA from the University of Washington, where he currently teaches.

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ERIN BEDNARZ (*Sound Designer*) (she/her) tells stories through sound, music, performance, and production. She holds a Gregory Award for Outstanding Sound Design, is a founding member of the PNW dramaturgy group Umbrella Project, and dramaturg for Cheat Day Collective. Press mentions: *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*. Nominations: Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel. Residencies: Centrum, Sou'Wester, 2+U Studios. TV: Band In Seattle. Off-Broadway: *Mac Beth* (Red Bull, Hunter Theater Project, Seattle Rep), *The Convent* (Rattlestick). Regional: *A Few Good Men* (Pittsburgh Public), *Dragon Cycle* (American Rep), *Teenage Dick* (Seattle Rep), *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *The Thin Place* (ACT), *Wonder Boy* (The 5th). @play__pranks

SHERMONA MITCHELL (*Associate Director*) (she/they) is an actor, director, educational artist, adaptor, and artist-activist transplanted in Seattle by way of Kentucky. After spending almost 20 years in Seattle, Shermona has had a myriad of opportunities to share their artistic abilities in Oregon, Canada, and Turkmenistan, in addition to Washington. Shermona is an Associate Artistic Director for Seattle Public Theater and Board President for Sound Theatre Company.

ERIN B. ZATLOKA (*Production Stage Manager*) (she/her) was most recently at ACT Theatre where she stage managed *The Thin Place*. Also this past season was the swing stage manager on *Afterwords* and stage manager for the radio play *Wonder Boy* at The 5th. Some previous show favorites: *Ragtime*, *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, and *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*. Grateful for the love she receives from Greg and Zoey.

ANNA VRANEY (*Assistant Stage Manager*) (she/her) is thrilled to be working on this 5th Avenue Theatre/ACT co-production. She is an alumnus of Western Washington University's Theatre Program and Seattle Rep's Artist Training Program. Select previous credits include *Always...*, *Patsy Cline* (Taproot Theatre), *The Light in the Piazza* (Showtunes), and *Fannie* (Seattle Rep).

JR WELDEN (*Swing Stage Manager*) (he/him) The 5th: *Afterwords*; *West Side Story*; *Austen's Pride*; *Rock of Ages*; *Hunchback...*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *The Pajama Game*. Other credits: *Daisy*, *Mary Stuart*, *The Female of the Species*, *Eurydice*, *A Marvelous Party*, *Souvenir*, *The Underpants*, *Miss Witherspoon*, and 16 productions of *A Christmas Carol* at ACT. He stage managed for Intiman for 10 seasons and 10 productions at Seattle Rep. He adopted his beautiful son, Travis, after becoming a licensed foster parent.

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION ("Equity"), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional actors and stage managers nationwide. Equity seeks to foster the art of live theater as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, working conditions, and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. #EquityWorks

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Lead Dresser and Stitcher..... K.D. SCHILL
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The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



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BILL BERRY (*Producing Artistic Director*) served as The 5th Avenue Theatre's Associate Producing Artistic Director and Casting Director from 2002-2009, when he

became the Producing Artistic Director. During that time, he directed productions of *West Side Story* (Seattle Times Footlight Award, 2007), *Wonderful Town* (Seattle Times Footlight Award), *Wizard of Oz*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. He made his Broadway directorial debut in 2014 with *First Date* at the Longacre Theatre. Berry has directed productions across the country, including *Beatsville* (Asolo Repertory Theatre), *On the Town* (Paper Mill Playhouse), and *Cabaret* (The 5th, Ordway Center (Ivey Award), American Musical Theatre, and Theatre Under the Stars). From 2002-2009, he was also the Producing Director for The 5th's education and outreach programs for which he spearheaded Fridays @ The 5th and The 5th Avenue Theatre Awards: Honoring High School Musicals, and substantially increased the reach of the Educational Touring Company which combined now serves nearly 75,000 students annually throughout the Northwest. He serves on the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre is a proud SDC member.



BERNADINE (BERNIE) C. GRIFFIN (*Managing Director*) first joined The 5th Avenue Theatre in 2002 as Director of Theater Advancement and Development. She was

appointed Managing Director in 2010 and is responsible for the administrative, marketing, fundraising, information services, and facility operations, as well as oversight of all activities related to the Board and external affairs. During her tenure, The 5th has grown from a \$10 million to a \$25 million organization. Prior to The 5th, she served as Director of Development for the Geffen Playhouse and The Laguna Playhouse; and worked at the Seattle Symphony, where she is proud to have been part of the team that built Benaroya Hall, Tony Award®-winning Seattle Rep, and Tony Randall's National Actors Theatre. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Martin's University in Lacey, WA, and is proud to have been born and raised in Walla Walla, WA. She is a member of Theater Communications Group, the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, and an executive board member of the Downtown Seattle Association, Visit Seattle, and the Washington State Cultural Alliance. Griffin was named one of Puget Sound Business Journal's 2013 Women of Influence. She is married to award-winning actor Seán G. Griffin.



JOHN LANGS (*Artistic Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 2016. He joined ACT in 2013 as Associate Artistic Director. Langs' 16-year freelance career afforded him the

opportunity to work with many prestigious theater companies across the country. He has directed productions at Playwrights Horizons NY, Ensemble Studio Theater NY, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Lookingglass Theater Company in Chicago, Circle X in Los Angeles, The Resident Ensemble, New Century Theatre Company, Washington Ensemble Theatre, and Seattle Shakespeare Company. Some of his favorite directing credits include *The Shaggs Philosophy of the World* (Los Angeles Drama Critic Circle Award for Best Original Musical and Nominated NY Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel award), *Brothers Karamazov* (seven LADCC Awards including Best Production of the year and Best Direction), and directing Kurt Beattie in *King Lear*. Langs received the first annual Seattle Gregory Award honoring excellence in direction for *The Adding Machine*. As a dedicated fan of original work, Langs has shepherded over a dozen projects to their premiere production. Langs received his directing degree from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.



ANITA SHAH (*Managing Director*) is a recent transplant to Seattle from New York City where she worked with organizations such as Lincoln Center, Blue Man Group, Good

Morning America, New York Live Arts, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and on numerous Broadway productions. Anita has had a long career in the theater, beginning as a technician and then transitioning into production management, producing, and organizational leadership. Anita brings her experience as a team-builder, organizational planning, and venue management background to ACT. Anita has toured nationally and internationally with both dance and theatre, and is proud to have worked on a variety of shows and events including the Tony Award winning productions of *Once* and *Clybourne Park*, the first Presidential Debate of 2000, and the New York City bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. Anita received her BFA from Emerson College. "I am excited to be joining the passionate team of theater-makers at ACT. ACT has a rich history, and I am honored to be a part of its ongoing story. I look forward to working with my dedicated colleagues as we rethink what it means to make theatre, as we challenge ourselves and our audiences, and find new ways to deepen connections to our community."

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ACT's Staff and Board of Trustees are proud to have jointly begun a board restructuring process that is firmly centered around service to the organization, equity, and empowerment. It is a deeply thoughtful decision made to better align with our mission and values, and empower all to more strategically work in service of our storied institution. We are proud to do this work in partnership with our Trustees who have taken proactive steps to implement change in ACT's board structure and constituency.

By doing so openly, we hope to be part of a cultural shift in our field that is long overdue. Over the next few months, ACT Staff in collaboration with Trustees will execute a plan the organization has pioneered to allow ourselves to stand in alignment with our stated values.

"As the sole Trustees during this restructuring, we are excited by the potential we see for a more equitable organizational structure that will empower our staff and board to bring a more collaborative approach to addressing the opportunities and challenges of the next generation of performing arts in Seattle. The partnership between board and staff that has made this shift possible underscores the strength of the organization going forward."

- Dr. Eric Bennett, Maribeth Harper, and Gary Houlahan

We look forward to sharing more information with you in the coming weeks here on our website.

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