

NOVEMBER THEATRE  
ARENSTEIN STAGE

VIRGINIA  
**rep**

MISS BENNET:  
**CHRISTMAS**  
AT PEMBERLEY



By Lauren Gunderson  
& Margot Melcon

Celebrating  
A Beautiful Friendship

# ANYTHING GOES *Gala*

The Jefferson Hotel  
February 25, 2023  
6:00 pm

Cocktails + Dinner  
Silent + Live Auctions

Entertainment  
from our Summer '23 Production of  
*Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*

Black Tie

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AT VIRGINIA REP CENTER  
FOR ARTS AND EDUCATION

VIRGINIA **rep**



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VIRGINIA  
**rep**

MISS BENNET:  
**CHRISTMAS**  
AT PEMBERLEY

By **Lauren Gunderson**  
and **Margot Melcon**

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY  
is presented by special arrangement with  
Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York

SCENIC DESIGN  
**Mercedes Schaum**

COSTUME DESIGN  
**Carolan Corcoran**

LIGHTING DESIGN  
**Lynne M. Hartman<sup>+</sup>**

SOUND DESIGN  
**Jacob Mishler**

STAGE MANAGEMENT  
**Justin Janke\***

DIRECTION  
**Sharon Ott^**

SARA BELLE AND NEIL NOVEMBER THEATRE | MARJORIE ARENSTEIN STAGE

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 **Altria**



**CAST** (in alphabetical order)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Jane Bingley . . . . .                        | <b>Patricia Austin*</b>                           |
| Lydia Wickham . . . . .                       | <b>Naomi Bertha</b>                               |
| Arthur de Bourgh . . . . .                    | <b>Lukas D’Errico</b>                             |
| Elizabeth Darcy . . . . .                     | <b>Ally Farzetta*</b>                             |
| Mary Bennet . . . . .                         | <b>Emily Franch*</b>                              |
| Fitzwilliam Darcy . . . . .                   | <b>Britt Michael Gordon*</b>                      |
| Charles Bingley . . . . .                     | <b>Cameron Nickel</b>                             |
| Anne de Bourgh . . . . .                      | <b>Tatjana Shields</b>                            |
| Maid . . . . .                                | <b>Nicole Boisseau, Emma Tolley</b> (alternating) |
| Jane Bingley u/s, Lydia Wickham u/s . . . . . | <b>Reese Bucher</b>                               |
| Charles Bingley u/s . . . . .                 | <b>Robert McNickle</b>                            |

**FOR THIS PRODUCTION**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Dialect Direction . . . . .            | <b>Karen Kopryanski</b>                  |
| Intimacy Choreographer . . . . .       | <b>Raja Benz</b>                         |
| Assistant Director/Dramaturg . . . . . | <b>Mia Richards</b>                      |
| Assistant Stage Manager . . . . .      | <b>Courtney Holmes</b>                   |
| COVID Saftey Manager . . . . .         | <b>Hannah Hoffert</b>                    |
| Deck Crew . . . . .                    | <b>Tavares Centeio, Jason Winebarger</b> |
| Wardrobe Supervisor . . . . .          | <b>Sassy Rychalski</b>                   |
| Audio Engineer . . . . .               | <b>Will Fisher</b>                       |
| Light Board Operator . . . . .         | <b>Dennis Cheeks</b>                     |
| Photographers . . . . .                | <b>Ben White, Aaron Suttan</b>           |
| Videographer . . . . .                 | <b>Austin Lewis</b>                      |

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>^The Director is a member of the <b>STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY</b>, a national theatrical labor union.</p> |  <p>*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the U.S.A.</p> |  <p>+Member of USA, United Scenic Artists’, local 829</p> |
|---|--|---|

**DEDICATION**

**Agnes Cain**

With great affection and respect, this production is dedicated to the memory of Agnes Cain. When Bruce and Phil founded Theatre IV in 1975, their first “customer” was the Richmond Dept. of Rec and Parks. On behalf of the City, Agnes Cain managed that first contract. Theatre IV produced *Where’s Charley?* at Dogwood Dell, and toured *Brer Rabbit!* and *Jubilee* for outdoor performances in every municipal playground within the city limits. Having recently graduated with a theatre degree from VCU, Agnes worked tirelessly with Jean Alfred and Margaret Eddington to ensure that the new upstarts at Theatre IV served the citizens of Richmond well. In the late 70s, Agnes joined Theatre IV’s first Board. We will always treasure the memory of this energetic woman who, in sync with the spirit of Mary Bennet, used her intelligence and independent thinking to advance both culture and community.



## COMPANY BIOS

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**Patricia Austin** (Jane Bingley) Patricia Austin is delighted to make her Virginia Rep debut. She is grateful to be making theatre again with other artists of such talent, integrity, and heart. Trish was last seen in San Francisco Shakespeare's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other recent credits include *Autobiography of a Terrorist* (Golden Thread Productions), *A Tale of Autumn* (Crowded Fire's Matchbox Reading Series), *On the Wonderverse* (Bay Area Playwrights Foundation), *Taming of the Shrew* (San Francisco Shakespeare), and *Mutt* (Impact Theatre). Special thanks to Sharon and Virginia Rep for this fabulous opportunity and Tripp for everything else!



**Naomi Bertha**, she/her/hers, (Lydia Wickham) is elated to be making her Virginia Rep debut! Naomi is a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University pursuing a B.F.A. in Theatre Performance. Naomi believes theatre has the tremendous ability to inspire while challenging preconceived notions. Her past credits include: Brooke in *Noises Off* (VCU research grant), Satan/Porter/Doctor/Guard in *Macbeth3* (VCU Mainstage), Bradley in *Men on Boats* (VCU Mainstage), Mollie Ralston in *The Mousetrap* (Company of Moment Makers), #46, 13, 11 Understudy (performed) in *The Wolves* (Nextstop Theater). Naomi would like to thank her family and roomies for all their love and support!



**Nicole Boisseau** (Maid) is super excited to be a part of her first production at Virginia Rep! Seeing Virginia Rep's production of *In the Heights* a few years ago was part of what made her want to come study theatre here in Richmond, so she is very grateful to get to work with them on *Miss Bennett*. Nicole is currently in her junior year at VCU, pursuing a double major in Theatre and Psychology in the Honors College. She wants to move on to study drama therapy in graduate school, but hopes to never stop working in the theater as an actor, costumer, and director.



**Lukas D'Errico** (Arthur de Bourgh) is excited to be making his Virginia Rep debut! A third-year theatre student at Virginia Commonwealth University, he recently made his professional debut starring in Richmond Triangle Player's production of *The Inheritance Part 1 & 2* as Adam/Leo. Outside of acting, Lukas is an improviser under the direction of Elizabeth Byland with VCU Improv, as well as an avid skateboarder, guitarist, and singer-songwriter. As always, he'd like to thank his parents, Chris and Marielle, for their unending love and support.

## COMPANY BIOS

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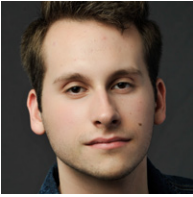
**Ally Farzetta**, she/her/hers, (Elizabeth Darcy) is pleased to be making her Virginia Rep debut this Holiday Season. Most recently Ally appeared in Shakespeare's *Measure For Measure* at Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, MA. Other regional credits include *Sense and Sensibility* (Virginia Stage), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *Living on Love* (Asolo Rep), *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* (Shadowland Stages), *Boeing, Boeing* (Theater at Monmouth), and two seasons with the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, VA. M.F.A.: FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Most ardent love to her Mr. Darcy.



**Emily Franch**, she/her/hers, (Mary Bennet) is thrilled to be in her hometown for the holidays! Virginia Rep debut. Select New York credits: Vicki in *A Chorus Line* (New York City Center Encores!), Associate Choreographer on *The Bedwetter* (Atlantic Theatre Company). Select Regional Credits: Bebe in *A Chorus Line* (City Springs Theatre Company), Judy in *White Christmas* (Prather Productions), MainStage performer for Disney Cruise Line. B.F.A. in Drama from The New Studio on Broadway at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Thank you to my Mechanicsville family for all of your love! Thank you to James for following me anywhere, you inspire me endlessly.



**Britt Michael Gordon**, he/him/his, (Fitzwilliam Darcy) Regional credits include *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Florida Studio Theatre); *Camelot* (Actors Playhouse); *Around the World in 80 Days* (Savannah Repertory Theatre); *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Good People*, and *The Pitmen Painters* (American Stage); *Assassins* (freeFall Theatre); *Tribes*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, and *Cabaret* (Florida Repertory Theatre); and *Arcadia* (Palm Beach Dramaworks). Britt is especially excited to share the stage in this production with his wife, Ally Farzetta! [www.brittmichaelgordon.com](http://www.brittmichaelgordon.com)



**Cameron Nickel**, he/him/his, (Charles Bingley) is a Pittsburgh, PA/Richmond, VA actor, writer, director, and educator. He received his B.A. Theatre Performance from Seton Hill University in Greensburg, PA, where he played a wide variety of roles on the Seton Hill Mainstage including Jason (*Medea*), Man in Chair (*The Drowsy Chaperone*), Faulkland (*The Rivals*), Karl/Steve (*Clybourne Park*), Edward Angkatell (*The Hollow*), and Peter (*Company*). He has also been seen in productions at Little Lake Theatre Company (*A Little Hotel on the Side, Our Town*), and South Park Theatre (*Alone Together, Seasonal Allergies*). Cameron is currently a graduate student and adjunct faculty member at VCU (M.F.A. Theatre Performance and Pedagogy).



**Tatjana Shields** (Anne de Bourgh) is excited to be making her Virginia Rep debut as Anne de Bourgh! A recent graduate from VCU, her credits include Somebody u/s in *Everybody* (Cadence Theater/Virginia Rep) and Mrs. Dickson in *Intimate Apparel* (VCU Theater). She'd like to thank her family for the continued support, and her pup Moira for all the giggles.

## COMPANY BIOS

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**Emma Tolley** (Maid) is a senior B.F.A. Theatre Performance major at VCU. She was previously seen in VCU Mainstages, *Men on Boats* as Old Shady and in the ensemble of *James and the Giant Peach*. Emma is also a member of two VCU improv teams: *Wait, Did They Just Kiss?* and *Toxic Shock*, and is host of the VCU late night variety show, *No Shame*. She is so excited to be a part of this production, and she hopes you enjoy the show!



**Reese Bucher** (Jane Bingley u/s, Lydia Wickham u/s) is a Junior B.F.A. Theatre Performance major at VCU. She was recently seen as Selsdon in *Noises Off*, which was funded by the VCUarts Undergraduate Research Grant, and the Understudy for Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (VCU Theatre). She is also a proud member of two of the VCU Improv Teams, “Running AMok” and “Toxic Shock.” Reese

would like to thank Sharon Ott for allowing her to be a part of this incredible opportunity. She would also like to thank her family and friends, especially her parents, for their endless love and support in all that she does.



**Robert McNickle** (Charles Bingley u/s) is a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University pursuing a B.F.A. in Theatre Performance and a B.A. in English. Recent credits include Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (VCUarts Theatre), Dennis in *This is Our Youth* (VCU SALT), as well as being a proud team member of the VCU improv team, “Wait, Did They Just Kiss?”. Robert would like to thank Sharon Ott for

her continuing support, as well as Liza Minnelli for being Liza Minnelli. He dedicates everything to his mother, Cathy.

**Sharon Ott**, she/her/hers, (Director) is thrilled to return to Virginia Rep after directing *A Doll's House, Part 2* last year. She has directed 11 plays by Shakespeare at theaters across the country (including American Shakespeare Center, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Idaho Shakespeare Festival), four plays by George Bernard Shaw, as well as plays by Chekhov, Ibsen, Lope de Vega, and Bertolt Brecht. Her work with 20th and 21st century authors as a director or producer includes world premieres by such noted authors as Nilo Cruz, August Wilson, Phillip Kan Gotanda, Jose Rivera, Jessica Dickey, Amy Freed, Beth Henley, and Eve Ensler. She was the Artistic Director of the Berkeley Repertory Theater (for 13 years), and the Seattle Repertory Theater (for 8 years) and has won many awards for her directing and producing, including 3 Bay Area Theater Critics' Awards, several Hollywood Dramalogue awards, and an Obie Award (with Theatre X, Milwaukee). During her final season as Artistic Director at Berkeley Rep, the company received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. Other directing work includes productions at Playwrights Horizons, the Public Theater, Manhattan Theater Club (all in NYC), Arena Stage, Milwaukee Repertory, Missouri Repertory, the Huntington Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, Ford's Theatre, and many others. She has also directed operas for San Diego Opera, Seattle Opera, and Opera Colorado. She is an Associate Professor and served as the Chair of the Dept. of Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University from 2017-2021. She currently serves as the Artistic Director of the department. Prior to VCU, she was a Professor

## COMPANY BIOS

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at the Savannah College of Art and Design, and served as the Artistic Director for the Performing Arts Dept. She is a proud member of SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Union), served on the SDC Executive Board for 13 years. and is currently the Treasurer of the SDCF Foundation.

**Mercedes Schaum** (Scenic Designer) is excited to be back kicking off the holiday season designing this lovely show for Virginia Rep. Working on this show has been like a family holiday adventure with familiar folks you trust to make the journey fun while adding new folks to spice things up! She's been designing and painting in Richmond for 20 years. Her credits include *Annie*, *Honk!*, *A Christmas Story*, *Mame*, *The BFG*, *Song of Mulan*, *Into the Woods*, *Hay Fever*, *The Drawer Boy*, *The Magic Flute*, *It's A Wonderful life*, *Beehive*, and so many more for Virginia Rep. The *Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Merry Widow*, and others for VCU Opera. *Peter and The Starcatcher* and *Little Shop of Horrors* for SPARC, and *Daddy Long Legs* for Swift Creek Mill Theatre. She has a B.F.A. from JMU in theatre and an M.F.A. in set design from the University of Illinois. When she's not working in the theatre, Mercedes is raising four kids, with her husband, Jason Alley, and looking for new challenges and prepping for crazy family adventures!

**Carolan Corcoran** (Costume Designer) graduated from VCU with her B.F.A. in Costume Design in December of 2021 and is honored to be working with so many fellow VCU alumni and students in this production. She has been working in the DC and Richmond areas since graduating designing *Host and Guest* at Synetic Theatre, *Hero Zone* and *Guys and Dolls* at Imagination Stage, *Collect Rage* at RTP, as well as assistant designing *Dracula* with the incredible Kendra Rai at Synetic Theatre. She's excited to help bring the holiday spirit to the November Theatre stage and hopes you enjoy the show.

**Karen Kopryanski** (Dialect Director) is the Head of Voice and Speech at TheatreVCU. She has taught and led workshops in Canada, Italy, Russia, and Singapore, and has coached more than 75 productions in the US, including *It's A Wonderful Life*, *The 39 Steps*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *River Ditty*, and *Crimes of the Heart* (all for Virginia Rep); *Milk Like Sugar* (Huntington Theatre); *Cabaret* and *La Dispute* (American Repertory Theatre); and *The Sugar Syndrome* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). In Virginia, she has been seen onstage at the American Shakespeare Center and in the Cadence/Theatre VCU joint production of *The Wolves*. She received her M.F.A. from the ART/MXAT Institute at Harvard University, is an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework, and was recently appointed to a three-year term as a United States Fulbright Specialist.

**Lynne M. Hartman** (Lighting Designer) Lynne has been designing for Virginia Rep since 1993, and she is delighted to be a part of the *Miss Bennet* creative team. Virginia Rep designs include *Beehive: The '60s Musical*, *A Raisin In The Sun*, *Beauty and The Beast*, *Gypsy*, *Mame*, *Other Desert Cities*, *Shrek!*, *The Music Man*, *Red*, *The Producers*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Spring Awakening*, *Legacy of Light* (2011 RTCC Award), *The Sound of Music* (2010 RTCC Award). Based in Norfolk, Lynne's designs for Virginia Stage Company include *Hold These Truths*, *Dear Jack Dear Louise*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Venus In Fur*, *All My Sons*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Honky Tonk Angels*. Richmond: TheatreVirginia, CenterStage, Richmond Ballet, Carpenter Science Theatre Co., and Dogwood Dell among others. Regional credits include



## COMPANY BIOS

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Company of Fools, Virginia Shakespeare Festival, The Lost Colony, McCarter Theatre, Kings Dominion, Carowinds, and Porthouse Theatre. Member: USA, Local 829. To my wonderful family for their loving support!

**Jacob Mishler** (Sound Designer) has been involved in live production for 25 years, moving into theatrical sound design in 2004. Most recently, Jacob's work was heard in Virginia Rep's production of *Mamma Mia!*, winning the Artsie Award for Outstanding Sound Design of a musical. Other selected credits include: *42nd Street* - Palace Theatre New Hampshire; *Cabaret*, *Rent*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* - Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre; *Gypsy* (Broadway World Award Central PA), *Woman in Black*, *Ghost* (World Premiere), *Million Dollar Quartet* - Fulton Theatre; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, and *The Bridges of Madison County* (Henry Award) - Fine Arts Center at Colorado College. All my love to Julie and our new addition, Amelia Joy. Happy Holidays!

**Justin Janke** (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be spending another holiday season with Virginia Rep. He's been consistently working with the company since 2016 and has most recently Stage Managed the productions of *Pipeline*, *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, and *Mamma Mia!*. Justin is a 2018 alum of TheatreVCU and is thrilled to be working with Sharon again along with several current students and other alumni. He sends his love to his family, especially Austin. Merry Christmas!

**Courtney Holmes** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a Richmond native who has worked as backstage crew for two seasons with Virginia Rep and for four seasons with Cadence Theatre. The most recent show credits are wardrobe dresser for *Beehive: The '60s Musical* and Assistant Stage Manager for *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* for Virginia Rep, as well as backstage crew for *Small Mouth Sounds* and *Everybody* for Cadence/Virginia Rep.

**Mia Richards** (Assistant Director) is a senior pursuing Theatre and Mass Communications at VCU. Recent directional credits include *Measure for Measure* (VCU's SALT) and *El Eterno Feminino* (Firehouse Theatre). Currently, Mia is editing a short film they wrote and directed and assistant stage managing the Nutcracker at the Richmond Ballet. They hope you enjoy our interpretation of this classic's sequel!

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## ABOUT THE WRITERS

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### Lauren Gunderson

Lauren has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including 2019/20. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her newest play *The Catastrophist*, about her husband virologist Nathan Wolfe, premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the *Miss Bennet* plays with Margot Melcon, and her audioplay *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* is available on Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*, *Exit Pursued by a Bear*, *The Taming*, and *Toil and Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists*, *The Book of Will*, *Silent Sky*, *Bauer*, *Natural Shocks*, *The Wickhams*, and *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book "Dr. Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon" is available from Two Lions/Amazon. She is currently developing musicals with Ari Afsar, Dave Stewart and Joss Stone, and Kait Kerrigan and Bree Lowdermilk. [LaurenGunderson.com](http://LaurenGunderson.com)



“With the exception of Shakespeare, Gunderson has been the most produced playwright in the United States in recent years, according to a tally by *American Theater* magazine.”

—*The New York Times* Jan 2021

### Margot Melcon

Margot Melcon is a theater artist, administrator, and writer. She was the Director of New Play Development at Marin Theatre Company for seven years, where she dramaturged over 30 productions — including six world premieres — and administered the company's two annual new play prizes and commissioning program. She has developed plays with TheatreWorks, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, the Kennedy Center, the New Harmony Project, and the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She is currently the Program Executive for Promoting Culture at the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Margot is a graduate of California State University, Chico.

*Writer biographies supplied by Dramatists Play Service.*



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## LEADERSHIP



**PHIL WHITEWAY**  
*Managing Director*

Phil is a key leader in Virginia's nonprofit arts management community. He co-founded Theatre IV in 1975 as Virginia's first

professional theatre for young audiences. In 2001, he assumed the role of Managing Director of Barksdale Theatre. In 2012, he provided staff leadership as Theatre IV and Barksdale merged to form Virginia Rep, Central Virginia's flagship professional theatre. Under his management, Phil's companies have received the first *Excellence in Instruction Award* from the Virginia Board of Education, the *Dominion Shining Star Award* from Virginians for the Arts, and the *50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Award* from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

Phil was a founding member of the boards of the Richmond Arts Consortium and the Broad Street

Association. Under his staff leadership, Theatre IV purchased and renovated our historic November Theatre, receiving the *Community Builders Award* from the Central Richmond Association for its contribution to downtown revitalization. Phil is a graduate and past board member of Leadership Metro Richmond. He has served on the Governance Board of Partners in the Arts and as treasurer of Virginians for the Arts.

Phil has received the *Voice of the University Award* from his alma mater (University of Richmond), the Theresa Pollak "Lifetime Achievement Award" from *Richmond Magazine*, and the *Governor's Award for the Arts* from Tim Kaine. In 2000, Phil was included by *Style Weekly* among the "100 Most Influential Richmonders of the 20th Century."

Phil consults on arts management both locally and nationally. He is forever grateful for the love and support of his wife, Donna, and their four adult children—PJ, Jennings, Alex, and Gordon.



**DESIRÉE ROOTS**  
*Artistic Director  
of Community*

Desirée has showcased her triple threat talent for over 35 years as an active member of the Gospel,

Jazz, and Theatre scenes regionally, nationally, internationally, and in Richmond, VA where she grew up. She started singing in church when she was four, and started her professional theatrical career at age 13. Growing up in a musical family, it was only natural that she follow in her performing parents' footsteps.

Desirée has performed throughout the East Coast with orchestras, jazz ensembles, and as leader of her own ensembles. She's been the opening act for internationally renowned artists including Boney James, Brian McKnight, the late Phyllis Hyman, and B. B. King. She is a Grammy nominated recording artist and has produced shows she wrote including *Ella at 100* in honor of the First Lady of Jazz, Ms. Ella Fitzgerald's 100th birthday. She received the Theresa Pollak award for "Vocal Excellence" in 2014.

Along with performing, Desirée has had a long standing career in the corporate and nonprofit sectors. Upon receiving her B.A. from Virginia Union University, she initially embarked on a teaching path. This quickly evolved into other opportunities such as a Programming Manager for Richmond Jazz Society, Inc., Booking Manager for Downtown Presents (now Venture Richmond), and client liaison for Drake Beam & Morin, a Fortune 500 corporation. She has also been an educator and music facilitator privately and within the Henrico and Richmond Public school systems for over 20 years.

Desirée began her association with Virginia Rep as a high school intern when the company was Theatre IV with the unique mission "to seek national-caliber excellence equally in four areas: the arts, education, children's health, and community leadership."

These four pillars of service are what drew her to become *Artistic Director of Community* — "working with the theatre company I love to serve the community I love."





### **RICK HAMMERLY**

*Artistic Director  
of Programming*

Rick has worked as an award-winning, DC-based actor, director, filmmaker, and arts manager for

over three decades.

He received a 2018 Helen Hayes Award for his direction of *Lela & Co.* and a 2020 Helen Hayes Award nomination for his direction of *Agnes of God*, both for Factory 449. Other directing credits include *Dizzy Miss Lizzie's Roadside Revue's The Brontes* (New York Musical Theatre Festival), *Reykjavik* (Rorschach Theatre), *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (WSC Avant Bard), *Driving Miss Daisy* featuring Karen Grassle (Riverside Center for the Performing Arts), *Junie B. Jones Is Not a Crook* (Adventure Theatre MTC), *Dead Man Walking* (American University) and *Closet Land* (Factory 449). In 2015/16, he was selected to participate in The Shakespeare Theatre Company's inaugural Directors' Studio program.

As an actor, he has performed Off-Broadway and regionally, receiving a Helen Hayes Award for his turn as Hedwig in Signature Theatre's production



### **TODD D. NORRIS**

*Artistic Director  
of Education*

Todd is an American theatre director, educator, writer, and actor. He recently served as president of

the International Museum Theatre Alliance and continues to act as an advisor.

Todd comes to Virginia Rep from the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, IN — the world's largest children's museum — where he worked since 2013, serving as Director of Interpretation and then Associate Vice President of Interpretation and Family Programs. In these roles, he was responsible for fiscal management, artistic direction for its professional children's theatre seasons, coordinating holistic approaches to gallery performances, and overseeing quality for hundreds of daily programs.

From 2003-2013, Todd worked at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, eventually becoming Senior Manager of Performance Interpretation. While at Colonial Williamsburg, he also acted in several episodes of their Emmy-Award winning

of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, as well as nominations for his work in *Angels in America* (Signature Theatre), *Me and Jezebel* (MetroStage) and *Oliver!* (Adventure Theatre MTC). For ten years, he played Mr. Fezziwig in Ford's Theatre's annual production of *A Christmas Carol* and was most recently seen as Miss Tracy Mills in Round House Theatre's *The Legend of Georgia McBride*.

His debut film, *signage*, which he wrote, directed, and produced, has screened in over 60 film festivals worldwide, receiving 6 film festival awards and was subsequently licensed by MTV's LOGO Channel.

He is a founder and the current Producing Artistic Director of Factory 449, the recipient of multiple Helen Hayes Awards, including the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company, and the Executive Director of the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive (WAPAVA).

Rick is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) and Actors' Equity Association (AEA). He received a B.A. in Theatre from the University of Virginia, an M.A. in Film & Video Production from American University, and has completed the coursework for an M.A. in Arts Management, also from AU.

*Electronic Field Trips* and directed and performed in many evening programs and special events.

Favorite previous directing assignments include *Humble Boy*, *Tales of Olympus*, *Eleemosynary*, and *The Santa Clues*.

He has taught and directed at several schools including The College of William and Mary, Christopher Newport University, Alice Lloyd College, and Wright State University.

He was born in Columbus, OH, and received his M.F.A. in Acting from University of Louisville and his B.A. in Theatre Performance, with a minor in music, from the University of Findlay. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

Todd will focus on programs for children, families, and schools including touring programs and arts in education. He and Desirée Roots will co-lead Virginia Rep's award-winning Community Health + Wellness program, which creates, implements and assesses model projects that demonstrate how theatre can be used as an effective tool in addressing critical educational and societal challenges.

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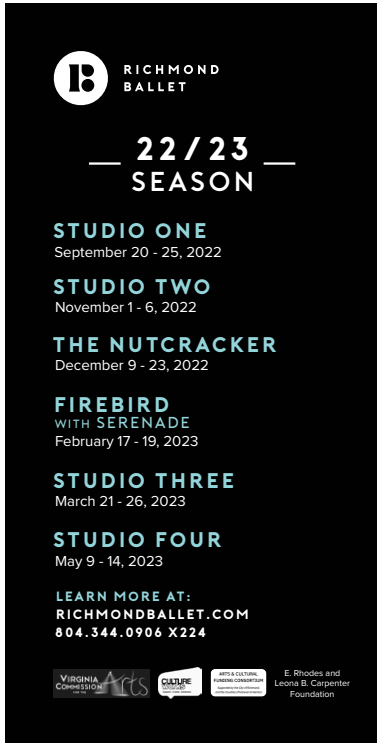
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## Virginia Repertory Theatre's History of Action in Support of Racial Equity

Since its founding as Barksdale Theatre (1953), Virginia Rep has maintained a steadfast commitment to racial equity. We proudly acknowledge the roles of our audience, artists and Boards in this hard-won legacy of progress toward inclusion, diversity, equity and access.

- 1954** In partnership with VUU, and in open defiance of Virginia's Jim Crow Laws, Barksdale welcomes Virginia's first fully integrated audience since Reconstruction.
- 1968** Barksdale casts Carl Lester as Persil-le-Noir in *Irma La Douce*, marking RVA's first hiring of a Black actor in a major supporting role, not as a servant, in a major theatre.
- 1973** To critical acclaim and sold-out houses, Barksdale stages Lorraine Hansberry's *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* as RVA's first major production focusing on Black experience.
- 1975** Theatre IV's founding mission commits to excellence in "four equal areas: the arts, education, children's health and community leadership," putting EDA front and center.
- 1978** Barksdale welcomes a guest production of *The River Niger*, a realistic family drama firmly rooted in contemporary Black experience — another first.
- 1980** Theatre IV places *A Raisin in the Sun*, staged by Black director Amini Jahari, in its inaugural season — again, a first. In subsequent seasons, we produce 42 additional mainstage shows focusing on Black or Latin experience.
- 1981** Theatre IV produces its first touring instructional play based on Black History, *Bound for Freedom*, casting Tony Cosby, Kelvin Davis and Eloise Libron in its resident touring company. In subsequent years, we create 12 additional Black History instructional titles, touring them to schools statewide and nationally.
- 1986** Theatre IV purchases and renovates the historic Empire Theatre, formerly the Booker T, as our permanent home.
- 1997** Martha Gilbert elected President of the Theatre IV Board of Directors, the first Black Board President of a major nonprofit arts organization in Virginia.
- 2002** Theatre IV presents *Buffalo Soldier* as the first professional theatre production to be staged in the Pentagon, as a morale booster following 9/11.
- 2009** Barksdale and Theatre IV jointly stage Virginia's first Hispanic Theatre Festival.
- 2020** Virginia Rep Board creates IDEA Committee: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access.
- 2021** Katrinah Carol Lewis named Interim Co-Artistic Director, followed by the permanent appointment of Desirée Roots as Artistic Director of Community.

The rest of Virginia Rep's Social Justice efforts, including our Anti-Racism Statement, can be found on our website at [va-rep.org/anti-racism.html](http://va-rep.org/anti-racism.html).

## OUR MISSION

Our Mission: To entertain, challenge and uplift our communities through the power of live theatre. To that end, we seek national caliber excellence in the arts, education, and community health and leadership.

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Roger & Barbara Whiteway *in honor of Phil Whiteway*  
Suzanne P. Wiltshire *in memory of Charles F. Wiltshire*

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

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Festival Fare Rentals  
Jayne Flowers  
John Frawner  
Hannah Hoffert  
Pete Low  
Gerald & Sharyn Milsky  
Walter Parks  
Gail Ridgeway  
Susan Scott  
The Supply Room

## MATCHING GIFTS

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## GREAT STAGES CAMPAIGN DONORS

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The following donors have made generous commitments to our **Great Stages Campaign** in support of the acquisition of the former Scottish Rite Temple as the new home of Virginia Rep Center for Arts & Education. With this facility, Virginia Rep is establishing a nationally prominent home for our programming for children, families, and schools. The list below reflects campaign gifts made through October 31, 2022. To learn more about the campaign, or to make a pledge, please contact Emily Cole-Jones, Director of Development, at (804) 783-1688 x1238.

Anonymous  
Brad & Jan Booker  
The Robert G. Cabell III & Maude Morgan Cabell Foundation  
Mr. J.P. Causey, Jr.  
Laura Lee & Ted Chandler  
Donna T. Douglas  
Tom & Brenda Eggleston

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Ms. Adrienne Whitaker  
Phil & Donna Whiteway



## GIVING

Like most professional nonprofit performing arts organizations, Virginia Rep relies on the generosity of our donors for over one-third of our annual operating revenue. Since our founding 70 years ago, donor support each season allows us to produce high-quality theatre productions for Virginia audiences of all ages, while addressing critical community needs through the power of live theatre.

See how donations are used, and please consider giving at [virginiarep.org/donate.html](https://virginiarep.org/donate.html) or scan this QR code with your phone ►



If you would like more information, contact Emily Cole-Jones, Director of Development, at 804-783-1688, ext. 1238 or [ecole-jones@virginiarep.org](mailto:ecole-jones@virginiarep.org).

## QCD? RMD? IDK!

We aren't talking about Quality Character Development or Riveting Musical Drama, but **Qualified Charitable Distribution** and **Required Minimum Distribution**.

Did you know that if you are at least age 70½, these acronyms can help you save on your taxes through a gift to Virginia Rep?

To discuss a gift, or for more information, contact Emily Cole-Jones, Director of Development, at **(804) 783-1688 x1238**, or [ecole-jones@virginiarep.org](mailto:ecole-jones@virginiarep.org).



## ABOUT THE HISTORIC NOVEMBER THEATRE

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Having opened its doors on Christmas Day, 1911, the November Theatre is the state's oldest major stage house and a linchpin in Virginia history. Built by Moses Hofheimer the November was named the Empire Theatre from 1911 through 1914. The Empire opened in 1911 on the final day of the century of mourning that followed the horrific Richmond Theatre fire of Dec 26, 1811. Seventy-two Richmonders had died in that blaze. That tragic event had been considered the worst urban disaster in America in its time.

Hofheimer modeled his Richmond Empire on the world-renowned Empire Theatre in New York, which had opened in 1893, and is credited today with starting what we now know as Broadway. The Empire was Richmond's first "air conditioned" theatre, allowing it to be open during the summers. Small tunnels can still be found inches beneath each aisle. Large blocks of ice were placed under the stage at the mouths of these passageways, and powerful electric fans blew across this ice sending chilled breezes up through floor vents situated near the ends of each row.

When the Empire opened in 1911, it operated as a legitimate theatre, presenting live performances of great plays instead of vaudeville or silent movies. The renowned actress Lucille La Verne, a veteran of seven Broadway hits, presented 80 performances in four months, selling 147,000 tickets! Edith Lindeman, *Times-Dispatch* theatre critic, wrote that the Empire "was a popular theater with audiences, especially on Wednesday matinees when each woman in attendance received a quarter-pound box

of Huyler's chocolates and a dainty linen handkerchief to wipe her eyes during the sad scenes."

In December 1914 the Empire was refitted for the emerging art form of film, and renamed the Strand, copying the name of the lavish NYC movie palace. The Strand served until 1927 as one of Richmond's most prominent and popular homes for film and vaudeville.

In 1927, a fire damaged the space, and it lay dark until it was re-opened in 1933 as the Booker T Theatre, which featured films and vaudeville performances until 1974.

In 1977 Theatre IV (now known as Virginia Rep) rented the Empire Theatre, launching its first main stage (non-touring) season of major productions designed to serve elementary age children and their families.

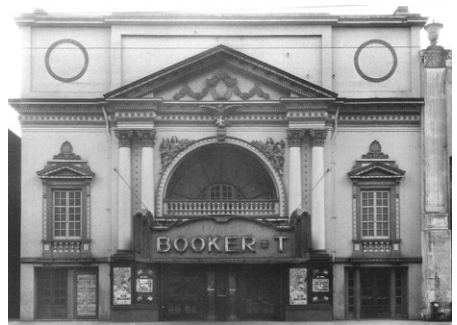
Theatre IV purchased the theatre and its neighboring Walker Theatre (which later became the Little Theatre and finally, Theatre Gym) in 1986. Restorations were completed in 1990, and Theatre IV presented performances for children and families in the renovated space, which they renamed the Empire Theatre.

Twenty-one years later, with the Empire in need of new renovations, Sara Belle and Neil November made a \$2 million gift for restoration, and in 2012 the Empire Theatre was renamed the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre.

Barksdale Theatre and Theatre IV merged in 2012 to become Virginia Rep, and we continue to present performances at this downtown, historic theatre.



The Strand c. 1920



Booker T. Theatre 1933



Brunch | Lunch | Dinner | Happy Hour

# TARRANT'S DOWNTOWN

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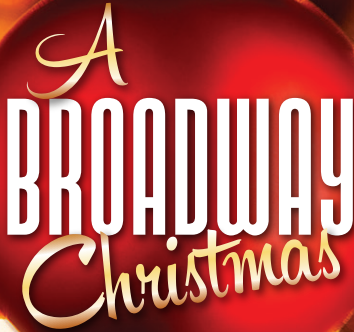


  
Max's

**BARKSDALE SEASON**  
HANOVER TAVERN

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*A*  
**BROADWAY**  
*Christmas*

Just in time for the holidays, our ensemble of musical theatre all-stars celebrates timeless Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa songs from Broadway, Hollywood, and Virginia Rep musicals. Warm your heart and set your toes to tapping with this rousing performance.

**VIRGINIA REPERTORY THEATRE | 804-282-2620 | VIRGINIAREP.ORG**

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Honor your loved one this holiday season — or anytime — with a **Celebration Sponsorship** of an upcoming Virginia Rep performance! Choose one of two levels and receive the following benefits:

**\$500**

- **Two complimentary tickets** to the performance
- **Verbal recognition** in the pre-show curtain speech at selected performance with a special birthday wish, anniversary greeting, or other personalized message
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- **\$100 Max's/Tarrant's/Bar Solita gift card**
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Email [jwilson@virginiarep.org](mailto:jwilson@virginiarep.org) to secure your preferred Celebration Sponsor performance date today!

