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Veterans Overcome Trauma Through Feast of Crispian Acting Program

Military veteran Carissa DiPietro struggled to get out of bed each day due to her major depression. Finally, in 2014 she made a New Year’s resolution to start participating in life again.

About a week after this resolution she saw a flyer posted in the women’s clinic at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center. The posting advertised Feast of Crispian, a non-profit organization that brings together professional actors with post deployment service veterans. Little did DiPietro know that this organization was about to change her life.

“This is the first group of people that I was able to tell that I was raped in the military,” DiPietro said. “I was also able to talk about my daughter who passed away. I hadn’t been able to speak about either of those things for decades. It’s been incredible to find my people and this sense of camaraderie.”

Feast of Crispian formed in 2013 under the direction of professional actors Nancy Smith-Watson, Bill Watson and Jim Tasse. The goal of the program is to teach and strengthen emotional resources that veterans need to overcome traumatic and reintegration issues. Feast of Crispian provides an alternative to traditional treatments and allows veterans to use Shakespeare to work through their issues.

“In therapeutic programs in the VA, (the veterans) are expected to talk about things that they’ve been through,” Smith-Watson said. “When they come and work with us it’s strictly about expressing whatever it is they want to express.”

Smith-Watson explained that Watson (her husband), Tasse and herself initially wanted to recreate a program out in Lenox, Massachusetts called Shakespeare in the Courts. The program gives adolescent offenders the opportunity to study, rehearse
and perform Shakespeare as an alternative to more punitive measures.

“While we were trying to find our way through the maze of the judicial system in 2012, we kept hearing stories about this enormous need in the veteran community, in particular for arts programs,” Smith-Watson said.

Initially, the group thought they were going to work at the VA temporarily until an opportunity within the court system opened up. However, they quickly developed a strong passion for working with the veterans.

“I love their nasty, ridiculously ruckus sense of humor, I absolutely love it,” Smith-Watson said. “I also love who I am when I’m with the veterans. I love having the ability to sit in the room with them and truly not judge anything that comes out of their mouths and keep my heart open.”

Feast of Crispian now hosts 10 weekend intensives, a weekly class and performs at least one show a year for a public audience.

So what is it about Shakespeare specifically that makes this program effective? Smith-Watson explained that in today’s world we tend to use modern language to cover up what we are truly feeling. However, in Shakespeare whatever a character says is the truth, they explain what is going on inside of them.

“One thing about PTSD is that when something gets stressful those struggling with the disorder just want to get out of there,” Smith-Watson said. “They can’t do that here because they have to make it all the way through the stressful situation in the script. In the end they feel good about themselves for making it through those emotions.”

Tim Schleis, another veteran and Feast of Crispian participant agreed that this ability to express himself is what keeps him coming back to the program.

“In the military you are taught you can’t have emotions, emotions are no good, so you push them down, bury them in your duffel bag, and move on,” Schleis said. “Here you are allowed to take your emotions out and play with them. I get way more out of coming to a three-day weekend intensive here then speaking to a counselor.”

If you are interested in working with Feast of Crispian, call 414-203-1960 or email info@feastofcrispian.org. Learn more about the organization at feastofcrispian.org.
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When Brad McKendry first stepped into In Tandem Theatre's current space at the Tenth Street Theatre, water leaked onto the floors and there were no walls to enclose the theater, which is located on the ground floor of a 150-year old church. “My first reaction was ‘oh god this is going to be an expensive build out,’” McKendry said while chuckling.

McKendry became friends with In Tandem founders Chris and Jane Flieller through seeing their shows while they were a traveling theatre company. Although In Tandem started producing shows in 1998, the Tenth Street Theatre was the first permanent space the organization obtained. The theater is located below the Calvary Church on the corner of 10th and Wisconsin.

McKendry has a background in carpentry and decided to give the Fliellers a hand with helping to rebuild the space. More than 55 other volunteers lent their expertise in dry walling, painting and remodeling along with McKendry. Build out costs went from an original estimate of $350,000 to $150,000.

“I’ve always admired people who work for the passion of what they are doing versus having to make a buck,” McKendry said. “That’s how I describe small theatre groups, that is definitely what they represent.”
Aileen Smith – Milwaukee Repertory Theatre

Aileen Smith volunteered for her first Sundown Supper at The Rep with a friend and felt immediately drawn to the level of excitement and appreciation from the actors. Sundown Suppers provide a home-cooked meal to The Rep's company members in between performances so they don’t have to worry about running out and getting food.

Ten years later, Smith is now president of Friends of The Rep, a membership volunteer organization that plays a vital role in helping The Rep produce world-class productions.

“When people talk about what’s important to them as a community, one of the things they always mention is a strong arts program,” Smith said. “Making sure that the arts community stays strong and vibrant for people living in Milwaukee is worthwhile for me.”

Smith feels proud to be connected to The Rep not only for the work it produces, but for the strong intentional focus the staff puts into selecting shows that reach out to a diverse audience.

“Milwaukee is a very segregated city,” Smith said. “One of the most important things The Rep does is try and improve the conditions of all people in Milwaukee by reaching out to audiences and groups that have been marginalized over the years.”

Mary Jo MacDonald & Karen Aaron – Milwaukee Chamber Theatre

After retiring from their jobs, Mary Jo MacDonald and Karen Aaron started volunteering for Milwaukee Chamber Theatre as a way to stay involved with the community.

Although they didn’t know each other prior, the two became great friends through volunteering. In fact, when I called MacDonald to interview her for this story, Aaron just happened to be on her way to MacDonald’s home to get ready for a screening at the Milwaukee Film Festival, allowing me to talk to both ladies at once.

“Volunteering keeps me busy and keeps me out of trouble…well, most of the time it keeps me out of trouble,” Aaron joked.

MacDonald and Aaron do a little bit of everything for MCT, from preparing Sundown Suppers to putting together directories and creating flyers.

“Most of the companies in town are small, they need volunteer help because they can’t afford to have a large paid staff,” MacDonald said. “We are lucky to have so many productions in Milwaukee that we can’t make it to them all. That’s not possible in cities where arts programs aren’t supported from volunteer time and money.”

Contact your favorite arts organization and see what you, too, can do to help.
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POES

ANNIE

Book by THOMAS MEEHAN
Music by CHARLES STROUSE
Lyrics by MARTIN CHARNIN

Original Broadway Production Directed by MARTIN CHARNIN
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November 17 - December 27, 2017
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STAGE DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER Molly Rhode
MUSIC DIRECTOR Bill Busch
SCENIC AND LIGHTING DESIGNER Peter Dean Beck**
COSTUME DESIGNER Jason Orlenko**
SOUND DESIGNER Zack Berinstein
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER Daniel J. Hanson*

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Presented on Broadway by Mike Nichols

Produced by
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Productions

Annie is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).
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Annie opened on Broadway in 1977, the year I was born. The show turned 40 this year and so did I. I was 5 years old when the 1982 film came out with a star-studded cast of actors that became my idols. I had a small obsession with it. A story with a kid at the center, and that kid was a girl, and that girl had a fierce and fiery spirit. That girl was tough as nails, and though the world had only given her hardship, she remained full of optimism. She persisted.

Annie is her own agent of change. She doesn’t wait for things to happen to her, she seizes opportunity. What a stunning role model for my generation of girls.

Fiction though it may be, when our musical places our heroine in the Cabinet room of the White House, this story shows us a girl who is not afraid to speak her mind. The optimism of one child inspires the New Deal.

Revisiting this show as an adult has been a joy but also a little painful. The music and characters are as glorious as ever, but there is also an enormous amount of social commentary in Annie that went right over my head as a young fan. In 40 years time, the issues presented in Annie remain all too relevant.

2017 has been a rough year. It’s been downright biblical out there: hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and wildfires. The sun better come out tomorrow. We need Annie’s optimism now more than ever.
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Ray Jivoff (Artistic Director) has been working at Skylight since 1990, when he appeared in *Girl Crazy* back at the “old space” on Jefferson Street. In 1999, he joined Skylight staff as Education Director and started Enlighten, Skylight’s education program, which includes the Partner School Program, which offers in-depth, curriculum based music theatre education to students in 8 MPS schools; two touring shows—The Standard Songbook and KidsWrites; Insights, our pre-show talk series and The High School Musical Celebration. As an actor, shows at Skylight include *La Cage Aux Folles, Animal Crackers, Adding Machine, Guys and Dolls, The Mikado, Pirates of Penzance, HMS Pinafore and The Producers*. He directed *Hair, Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris and Sing Me a Story* at Skylight; *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged, Revised* and *The Sum of Us* at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre; *West Side Story* at UW-Milwaukee and *Anything Goes, Little Shop of Horrors* and *Into the Woods* at Marquette University.

Jack R. Lemmon (Executive Director) joined Skylight two seasons ago having worked in the performing arts for over 30 years. He has served as Executive Director of the Joffrey Ballet, Louisville Ballet and Colorado Ballet to name a few. He also worked at the National Endowment for the Arts. He has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Michigan Arts and Cultural Affairs. He served on the board and executive committee of Dance/USA and was a board member of the Partnership for Creative Economies (KY). He also chaired the board of the Arts and Cultural Attractions Council in Louisville, KY, and the Chicago Dance Alliance. Lemmon currently is president of the board of the Historic Third Ward Association. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Coe College in Cedar Rapids (Iowa) and an M.F.A. in Theatre from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.
CAST OF ANNIE

Annie (SKY Cast) .............................................................................................................. KyLee Hennes
Annie (LIGHT Cast) ........................................................................................................... Eloise Field
Oliver Warbucks .................................................................................................................. Andrew Varela*
Grace Farrell ...................................................................................................................... Diane Lane
Miss Hannigan ................................................................................................................... Carrie Hitchcock*
Rooster .............................................................................................................................. Matt Crowle*
Lily St. Regis, Ensemble ...................................................................................................... Samantha Sostarich
Drake, Ensemble ................................................................................................................ Alex Campea
Bert Healy, Ensemble ......................................................................................................... James Carrington
Bundles, Ensemble ............................................................................................................. Christopher Elst
Cop, Ensemble .................................................................................................................... Dylan Bolin
Star to Be, Ensemble .......................................................................................................... Katie Berg
Mrs. Greer, Ensemble ......................................................................................................... LaChrisa Grandberry
Mrs. Pugh, Ensemble ......................................................................................................... Kelly Doherty

Orphans (SKY Cast)

Molly ...................................................................................................................................... Taylor Arnstein
Kate.......................................................................................................................................... Paisley Schroeder
Tessie......................................................................................................................................... Tess Hennes
Pepper ...................................................................................................................................... Avery Holmes
July .......................................................................................................................................... Lorelei Wesselowski
Duffy ......................................................................................................................................... Phinlee Clarkin
Sandy ......................................................................................................................................... Skippy

Orphans (LIGHT Cast)

Molly ...................................................................................................................................... Gabrielle Henderson
Kate........................................................................................................................................... Maddie Dixon
Tessie........................................................................................................................................ Abby Straub
Pepper ...................................................................................................................................... Miranda Cecsarini
July ............................................................................................................................................ Emily Harris
Duffy ......................................................................................................................................... Evie Patrick
Sandy ......................................................................................................................................... Shiloh

Youth Ensemble (Both SKY and LIGHT casts):
Riley Halpern, Lily Miller, Harper Navin, Maya O’Day-Biddle

Dance Captain:
Samantha Sostarich

Fight Director:
Christopher Elst

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**ORCHESTRA**

Reeds

.................................................Curt Hanrahan
Reeds

.................................................Blair Bielawski
Trumpet

.................................................Tom Schlueter
Trombone

.................................................Kyle Samuelson
Violin

.................................................Cathy Bush
Guitar/Banjo

.................................................Steve Lewandowski
Bass

.................................................Tom McGirr
Keyboard

.................................................David Bonniglio
Drums and Percussion

.................................................Michael (Ding) Lorenz

**PRODUCTION SUPPORT**

Assistant Music Director

.................................................Ryan Cappleman
Assistant Stage Manager

.................................................Teresa McCarthy
Stage Management Apprentice

.................................................Nicholas Bader
Young Performer Supervisor

.................................................Margaret Bridges
Properties Lead, Run Crew

.................................................Rachel Zembrowski
Properties Artisans

Maddy Yee, Meghan Savagian, Tayler Varney, Joe Picchetti
Scenic Artists

Nerissa Eichinger, Catherine Lottes, Malvy Clark Westbrook
Scenic Carpenters

Joe Jansvig, Tyler Guynes
Wig Designer

.................................................Dana Rochester
Wardrobe

Molly Mason, Lisa Quinn, Sydonia Lucchesi, Rose Grizzelle
Stitchers

Carie Bronson, Katlin Kobernick, Susanne Maroske, Jeanne Schrank
Electricians

Ashley Devos, Colin Gawronski, Christine Isbell, Anna Janicek, Steve Tonar, Kat Whitaker
Light Board Operator

.................................................Steve Tonar
Followspot Operators

Ashley Devos, Nerissa Eichinger, Anna Janicek
Run Crew

.................................................Nathaniel Fessler
Sound Operator

.................................................Justin Ryan
Synthesizer Programmer

.................................................David Bonniglio
Production Photos

.................................................Mark Frohna

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Special thanks to Paul Helm, First Stage Costume Shop, Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Costume Shop, American Players Theatre Costume Shop, Mike Sieger
Act One

On a cold morning in December, 1933, a group of orphans are asleep in the Girls’ Annex of The New York City Municipal Orphanage. Molly, the youngest, wakes up, crying for her mother and the others wake up and begin arguing. Annie stops the fight and comforts Molly by reading the note Annie’s parents left when they abandoned her. They also left Annie one-half of a silver locket and kept the other half, with a promise to reclaim her one day. Annie sings about the parents she imagines, but has never known (Maybe).

Annie tries to run away, but Miss Hannigan, the villainous director of the orphanage, catches her. As punishment, Miss Hannigan makes all the orphans get up to scrub floors and strip beds (Hard-knock Life). In the morning, Mr. Bundles, the laundry man, comes to pick up the laundry, and Annie escapes in a laundry bag.

Out on the street, Annie befriends a stray dog and names him Sandy. She explains her philosophy that things are bound to get better in the future (Tomorrow). Later, Annie comes upon Hooverville, a Depression-style shanty town. The homeless residents blame the former president, Herbert Hoover, for their plight (Hooverville). A police raid drives the squatters away. Sandy escapes, but Annie is taken by the police.

Back at the orphanage, Miss Hannigan complains about her lot in life (Little Girls). The policeman returns Annie and as Miss Hannigan is threatening her, Grace Farrell enters. She is the private secretary of billionaire, Oliver Warbucks, who wants to invite an orphan to his mansion for Christmas. Grace is drawn to Annie and over Miss Hannigan’s objections, escorts Annie to a waiting limousine.

Annie arrives at Mr. Warbucks’ mansion and is in awe of her new surroundings (I Think I’m Gonna Like It Here). Oliver Warbucks is surprised by Annie, as he had expected the orphan to be a boy. He is unsure how to deal with a little girl, but Annie’s spunk and personality, which remind him of his own humble beginnings, wins him over. Contrary to his usual behavior, he decides to take a night off. He and Grace take Annie to see a movie at the Roxy (N.Y.C.).

Grace returns to the orphanage to tell Miss Hannigan that Mr. Warbucks wants to adopt Annie. She leaves just as Miss Hannigan’s brother, Rooster, arrives with his girlfriend, Lily. Rooster hopes to borrow money from his sister. When he hears the news of Annie’s pending adoption by Warbucks, Rooster is determined to take advantage of the situation (Easy Street).

Back at his estate, Warbucks is talking on the telephone to the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, when a package from Tiffany & Co. arrives. It contains a silver locket for Annie. Warbucks considers the ways adopting Annie will change his life (Why Should I Change a Thing?).

Warbucks tells Annie that he wants to adopt her and gives her the locket. Instead of the happy response he expected, Annie cries, explaining the secret of the half-locket that she hopes will help her find her parents. Warbucks orders an exhaustive search for Annie’s parents (You Won’t Be an Orphan for Long). Annie hopes that she will find her parents soon (Tomorrow – Reprise).
Act Two

Annie and Warbucks are guests on Bert Healy’s radio show to announce Warbucks offer of $50,000 to anyone who can prove that they are Annie’s parents. The show ends with a song and dance number (You’re Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile). The orphans are listening to the radio and sing their own version of the song (You’re Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile – Children).

Rooster and Lily visit Miss Hannigan, disguised as Annie’s parents, Ralph and Shirley Mudge. They need her help to claim the $50,000 reward. They plan to do away with Annie and live in the lap of luxury (Easy Street – Reprise).

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., President Roosevelt and his cabinet are listening to a radio commentator attack the President’s policies. Warbucks and Annie arrive and as Warbucks discusses the economic situation with the cabinet, Annie inspires them to stay optimistic (Tomorrow – Reprise). When Warbucks and Annie hear the news that there are hundreds of people claiming to be Annie’s parents outside Warbucks’ mansion, they rush back to New York. Inspired by Annie’s optimism, the cabinet members and the President invent the New Deal.

At the mansion, Annie and Warbucks discover that Grace has already interviewed and dismissed the throngs of people since no one mentioned anything about a locket. The maker of Annie’s locket has also reported that the purchasers cannot be traced. It appears that Annie’s quest cannot have a happy ending.

Finally, Warbucks’ plans to adopt Annie and they celebrate the idea of becoming father and daughter (I Don’t Need Anything but You). As they are about to finalize the adoption, Rooster and Lily, disguised as Ralph and Shirley Mudge, appear with the other half of Annie’s locket and her birth certificate, both supplied by Miss Hannigan. They say they want to take Annie home to live on a pig farm in New Jersey. Warbucks convinces them to let Annie spend Christmas with him. When Grace remembers having seen Mr. Mudge before, Warbucks asks President Roosevelt to help him investigate.

The next morning, Annie waits apprehensively for the Mudges to claim her. President Roosevelt arrives with the news that the FBI has analyzed the handwriting on her parents’ note to trace their identity. The investigation reveals that her real parents were David and Margaret Bennett... and that they are dead. They realize that the Mudges are impostors and that only Miss Hannigan could have given the Mudges the locket and birth certificate.

Miss Hannigan arrives with the orphans to celebrate Christmas, followed by the Mudges. Another communication from the FBI reveals their true identities. Miss Hannigan denies any association with Rooster and Lily, but all three are hauled off to jail. Annie introduces the orphans to Warbucks, who promises that they will have a much better life in the future (A New Deal for Christmas).
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST

Katie Berg (Star to Be, Ensemble) is thrilled to be making her Skylight debut in Annie! She trained in voice, acting and dance in the BFA Musical Theatre Program at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, and is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a dual degree in Theatre and Business. Katie is a private vocal and acting coach and the Director of Education and Marketing for Lake Country Playhouse in Hartland. She’s passionate about educating the next generation of young artists, helping them build important life skills through their involvement in the arts. Love to my husband, Jake and son, Henry!

Dylan Bolin (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ensemble) is making his second appearance with Skylight Music Theatre. He previously appeared as Dindon in last year’s La Cage Aux Folles. Recently he played Gibson in Luminous Theatre’s production of Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play, and Senator Ryan Martin in the Milwaukee premiere of The Burials by Caitlin Parrish at Cardinal Stritch University.

Alex Campea (Drake, Ensemble) is thrilled to return to Skylight Music Theatre having previously appeared in Fidelio and Beauty and the Beast. A Carthage graduate, Alex has lived in Chicago before recently settling in Milwaukee. Alex most recently appeared in his third season with Door County’s Northern Sky Theater playing Hugh Fiedler in Oklahoma in Wisconsin. Enjoy the show!

James Carrington (Bundles, Ensemble) is delighted to return to Skylight after appearing this fall in Hot Mikado! Some favorite roles include: Matt in Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play at Luminous Theater, Donner in Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer, The Musical, Man 3 in The Ballad of Emmett Till, and Francis Flute in A Midsummer Nights Dream. James has worked with First Stage, Renaissance Theaterworks, Milwaukee Repertory Theater and In Tandem. Regional work includes: The Ordway Center for the Arts, Childrens Theater of Madison, Door Shakespeare. Next, James will be appearing in First Stage’s The Wiz as the Lion! Thank you for coming!

Doug Clemons (Bert Healy, Ensemble) Ecstatic to be back at Skylight, Doug has been seen in I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change; Wizard of Oz (Tin Man), and Hair (Claude). Doug is also regularly seen on local stages including Fireside Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theater, First Stage, and Third Avenue Playhouse. Regional and concert credits include the New York Musical Theater Festival, Chicago Musical Theater Festival, Utah Light Opera, Florentine Opera, Racine Symphony Orchestra, Door County Opera Festival, and backup for Michael Bublé. Upcoming: [title of show] at Greendale Community Theatre and The Tales of Hoffmann at Skylight. Love and thanks to Matt. www.DougClemons.com

Matt Crowle (Rooster) hails from Chicago and is delighted to be making his Skylight debut. Chicago theatre highlights include Bert in Mary Poppins at Paramount Theatre, Cosmo Brown in Singin’ In The Rain at Drury Lane Oakbrook, Leo Bloom in The Producers at Mercury Theater Chicago, and Hysterium (Jeff
Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role) in *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* at Porchlight Music Theatre. Crowle also performed in the Broadway company of *Monty Python’s Spamalot* and tap-danced with Tommy Tune in the national tour of *Doctor Dolittle*. Love to Ma, Pa, Sis, and Erin. www.mattcrowle.com

**Kelly Doherty (Mrs. Pugh, Ensemble)** Since graduating from UW-Whitewater, Kelly has become a familiar face to Milwaukee audiences. Favorite roles include Bodey in *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Odysseus in *The Penelopiad* with Luminous Theatre, and Pish Tush in *The Mikado* with Milwaukee Opera Theatre. Most recently she appeared as Maria/Homer in Luminous Theatre’s production of *Mr. Burns*, and Williamina Fleming in *Silent Sky* at Next Act. When not onstage, Kelly enjoys watching made-for-TV romantic comedies, and singing to her cat. For Jimmy B.

**Christopher Elst (Cop, Ensemble, Fight Director)** A Certified Teacher and Secretary of the Governing Body with the Society of American Fight Directors, an Associate Instructor with Dueling Arts International, and one-half of the dynamic duo behind Milwaukee’s acclaimed Theater RED, Christopher has performed, directed and designed violence and intimacy for theaters across the country, including Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival, Renaissance Theaterworks, Ogunquit Playhouse, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre and Milwaukee Opera Theatre. He thanks his wife, Marcee, for tolerating late nights and joint locks. www.christopherelst.com

**Eloise Field (Annie, LIGHT Cast)** is thrilled to be making her Skylight debut! Recent favorite credits include *Loveabye Dragon, Just A Little Critter Musical*, and *Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars* at First Stage. As part of the UPAF Campaign, she has visited several Milwaukee businesses giving speeches and performances. Besides performing, she enjoys spending time with friends and cousins doing anything creative. She would like to thank everyone at Skylight, especially Molly, Sam and Ray, for this amazing opportunity and wishes you all Happy Holidays!

**LaChrisa Grandberry (Mrs. Greer, Ensemble)** is delighted to make her Skylight debut with the cast of *Annie*. She’s a Milwaukee native, living her dream as a professional actress and teaching artist. Her credits include Gloria in *Madagascar the Musical* at Children’s Theater Madison, Zed in *Black Nativity* with Black Arts MKE, Grouchy Typing Lady in *Junie B. Jones*, Cleopatra Johnson in *Welcome to Bronzeville* at First Stage, and Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* at CUW, among others. Lachrisa is an alumna of Wisconsin Lutheran College. She give thanks to God, her family, friends and Paonessa Talent Agency for their continued love and support.

**KyLee Hennes (Annie, SKY Cast)** is very excited to return to Skylight after appearing as ‘Young Violet’ in *Violet!* Credits: *The Magic Flute, The Sound Of Music* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Gypsy* (Northwestern University & Capitol City Theatre), *Les...*
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST

**Misérables, Annie Get Your Gun, A Wonderful Life, Peter Pan, The Wizard Of Oz and Scrooge: The Musical** (Fireside Theatre). KyLee also enjoys rocking out on her guitar with her three sisters in The BAND Hennes and even had the opportunity to perform at Madison Square Garden! She would like to thank her family, friends, coach Michelle Wolf, Skylight staff and team at Stewart Talent. AGMA/EMC.

**Carrie Hitchcock (Miss Hannigan)** is thrilled to return to Skylight for this production of *Annie*. Carrie is a native of Milwaukee and a graduate of the Historic Professional Theatre Training Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her recent theater credits include *Bloomsday* (Cait) with Next Act Theatre, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Masha) and *Dear Elizabeth* (Elizabeth Bishop) with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, *Romeo and Juliet* (Nurse) with Door Shakespeare, *A Walk in the Woods* (Irina Botvinik) with Third Avenue Playhouse, *Lettice and Lovage* (Lotte Schoen) with Renaissance Theaterworks and *Outside Mullingar* (Aoife) with Forward Theatre.

**Diane Lane (Grace Farrell)** last appeared on Skylight’s stage as Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Favorite roles with SMT include Isabella in *The Italian Girl in Algiers, Prince Orlofsky in Die Fledermaus, Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi, the Fox in The Little Prince, and Mrs. Malaprop in The Rivals*. Diane has performed over 50 characters with companies such as Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Opera Omaha, Orlando Opera, Toledo Opera, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, and Stadttheater Biel in Switzerland. She looks forward to returning to Skylight this winter as Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

**Samantha Sostarich** *(Lily St. Regis, Ensemble, Dance Captain)* is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she received a BA with distinction as a Theatre Acting Specialist. Favorite roles include Lady of the Lake in *Monty Python’s Spamalot* with Four Seasons Theatre, Fortuna in *Fortuna the Timebender vs. The School Girls of Doom* with Milwaukee Opera Theatre, Prudie Cupp in *Pump Boys and Dinettes* with Skylight Music Theatre, and Gretchen in *Boeing Boeing* with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. She has also worked with First Stage, Children’s Theater of Madison, In Tandem Theatre, Music Theater Works, and Madison Repertory Theater. [www.samanthasostarich.com](http://www.samanthasostarich.com)

**Andrew Varela** *(Oliver Warbucks)* returns to Skylight after playing the title role in *Sweeney Todd*, which Milwaukee Magazine named “Most Beloved musical of 2017”; also at Skylight: The Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance*; Cowardly Lion in *Wizard of Oz*; Javert in *Les Misérables*. Broadway and National tours: Javert in 25th Anniversary tour of *Les Misérables*; The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*; Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*; *Sunday in the Park with George*; *Cats*; *Little Women*. TV: Chicago Justice; The Chi; commercials for Steinhaels, Wisconsin Dental; many others. Next up: The Fantasticks at In Tandem. Visit AndrewVarela.com Instagram: AndrewVarela525 For Oscar and Susan.
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST CONT.

SKY CAST

**Taylor Arnstein (Molly)** is a 6th grader in Bayside and this is her Skylight debut! Taylor thanks her family and friends, especially Tommy Hahn, for all their support.

**Lorelei Wesselowski (July)** is currently in 6th grade at Milwaukee School of Languages. She thanks her family, friends and her piano teacher, Jack Forbes Wilson.

**Paisley Schroeder (Kate)** A nine-year-old fourth grader, Paisley Schroeder has been in productions at Waukesha West High School. She plays 4 sports but theater will always be #1!

**Phinlee Clarkin (Duffy)** is a 4th grader at Milwaukee German Immersion School. She has performed with First Stage, Milwaukee Ballet and enjoys playing violin and swimming.

**Taressa Hennes (Tessie)**, third grader at St. Gabriel, enjoys basketball, being on stage with sister, KyLee, and playing bass in The BAND Hennes.

**Skippy (Sandy)** Played “Toto” in *The Wizard of Oz* at The Fireside Theater (in all 55 shows) and at The Mukwonago Village Players’ *The Wizard of Oz*.

**Avery Holmes (Pepper)** a Shorewood High School junior, is thrilled to be at Skylight. Recent credits: *Sweeney Todd, The Secret Garden* at SHS, and *Rudolph* at First Stage.

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WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST CONT.

LIGHT CAST

Gabrielle Henderson (Molly) is a third grader at Parkway Elementary. She’s excited to get an opportunity to be a part of this awesome production of Annie.

“Maddie” Dixon (Kate) is 10 years old and is excited to be a part of the Annie cast. This is her 14th production since the age of 4.

Abby Straub (Tessie) Oh My Goodness! Abby’s excited to play Tessie in her debut performance at Skylight. She’s in 6th grade and enjoys curling, golf, and family time.

Miranda Cecsarini (Pepper) is a freshman at WFB High School and a violinist. She’s worked at Milwaukee Rep, First Stage, Sim Productions, and is thrilled to join Skylight!

Emily Harris (July) This is Emily’s first appearance at Skylight. Emily has performed at First Stage, most recently in Mockingbird. Emily is a sophomore at Rufus King High School.

Evie Patrick (Duffy) is a 6th grader at Whitefish Bay Middle School who loves acting, piano and dogs! She is thrilled to be a part of the cast.

Shiloh (Sandy) enjoys belly rubs and long strolls with his humans. Shiloh is also skilled at protecting his family’s house from squirrels and rearranging the living room.

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WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST

WHO’S WHO IN THE CREATIVE TEAM

Molly Rhode (Director and Choreographer) has a wide and varied theatrical career in Wisconsin as an actor, choreographer, director, and theater educator. At 14, she was one of the first students to attend First Stage Theatre Academy, and she later graduated as a Theatre Major from Milwaukee High School of the Arts. She earned her B.F.A. in Theatre Studies with a double emphasis in Playwrighting and Directing from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. She’s currently the Associate Artistic Director of Northern Sky Theater in Door County where she focuses on the development of new musicals. She has directed productions at Northern Sky, Skylight Music Theatre, First Stage, Forward Theater Company, Children’s Theater of Madison, and most recently Milwaukee Chamber Theatre’s Great Expectations.

Bill Busch (Music Director) is thrilled to make his Skylight conducting debut with Annie. He has served as music director/conductor for numerous theatre companies in the Midwest, including Children’s Theatre of Madison (CTM), Madison Theatre Guild, MATC Theatre, First Stage, Sunset Playhouse and the Marriott Lincolnshire. His credits include Most Happy Fella, Working, Full Monty, Secret Garden, Finian’s Rainbow, Tap Dance Kid, and the world premiere of Anatole. Since 2001, Bill has served as Director of Music Ministries at Hales Corners Lutheran Church. His favorite role is that of father to Emily & Adam and husband to the lovely and talented Rhonda Rae.

YOUTH ENSEMBLE

Riley Halpern (Youth Ensemble), a freshman at DSHA, is thrilled to make her Skylight debut! She’s performed at the Rep, First Stage, Interlochen, DSHA, St. Monica, and MYT.

Lily Miller (Youth Ensemble) is a freshman and homeschooled. Her favorite past role was Mabel in Pirates of Penzance. She says thank you to her mom and dad!

Harper Navin (Youth Ensemble) loves performing at Skylight, First Stage, Sunset Playhouse and school. When not on stage, Harper enjoys reading, dancing, softball and skiing. Happy Holidays!

Maya O’Day-Biddle (Youth Ensemble) an 11 year old at Hales Corners Elementary. Maya performed in The Rep’s The Color Purple, A Christmas Carol, Fences, and First Stage’s production of Rudolph.

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WHO’S WHO IN THE CREATIVE TEAM CONT.

Peter Dean Beck (Scenic and Lighting Designer) designed scenery and/or lighting for over three hundred productions around North America. Opera credits include Falstaff, Turandot, Manon, Don Giovanni, Madama Butterfly, Hansel and Gretel, Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Romeo et Juliette for such companies as Atlanta, Florida Grand, Glimmerglass, Virginia and Chautauqua Operas. He has designed Andrea Chenier, Macbeth, Elektra, and Tristan and Isolde for Hawaii Opera Theatre, where he has been principal designer for 32 seasons. Skylight designs include Into the Woods, Les Misérables, Sound of Music, Music Man, Fiddler on the Roof, and four G&S operettas. Dance work includes Indigo Girls Project for Atlanta Ballet and Nutcracker for Ballet Hawaii.

Zack Berinstein (Sound Designer) is a Chicago-based sound designer, audio engineer, and composer who is excited to be back at Skylight! In addition to recording and producing artists in the Midwest, other recent sound design credits include Hot Mikado and La Cage Aux Folles with Skylight Music Theatre, Souvenir with Milwaukee Rep, Forty Two Stories with City Lit Theater, and Little Flower of East Orange with Eclipse Theatre. You can find him on the internet at ZackBear.com.

Ryan Cappleman (Assistant Music Director) is a performer, choreographer, music director, director, and teacher from Milwaukee. He is the Resident Education Music Director here at Skylight, and just finished appearing as Pooh-Bah in Hot Mikado. Other appearances at Skylight include Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz, Woof in Hair, Into the Woods, La Cage Aux Folles, and My Fair Lady. He choreographed Sweeney Todd, won an inaugural Footlights Award for choreographing Pirates of Penzance, and will choreograph Urinetown later this season. Piano was Ryan’s first love and first career. As always, love to husband Dr. Gio.

Daniel J. Hanson (Production Stage Manager) previous Skylight credits include Hot Mikado, Sweeney Todd, Beauty and the Beast, I Love You You’re Perfect Now Change, La Cage aux Folles, Violet, and Tosca. Recent stage management credits include: Spamilton: An American Parody (Royal George Theatre, Chicago, IL); Guys on Ice (Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee, WI); The Snow (First Stage, Milwaukee WI); The Producers, The Addams Family, Avenue Q and The Color Purple (Mercury Theatre Chicago); Big Fish, All Shook Up (Theatre at the Center, Munster, IN). Dan received his MFA in stage management from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and is a proud member of Actors’ Equity Association.


Thomas Meehan (Book) is a three-time Tony Award-winning book writer for the Broadway Musicals Annie, The Producers, and Hairspray. In addition, he has written the books of a dozen or so other Broadway musicals including Richard Rodgers’ I Remember Mama, Cry-Baby, Mel Brooks’ Young Frankenstein, Elf, and most recently Chaplin. A long-time contributor of humor pieces to The New Yorker magazine and an Emmy Award-winning TV comedy
writer, he has also written a number of screenplays, most notably for *To Be Or Not To Be* and *Spaceballs*. He is a member of the Council of the Dramatists Guild.


**Martin Charnin (Lyrics)** In 1970, he secured the rights to *Chicago Tribune’s* comic strip. In 1976 Goodspeed produced the first *Annie*, which moved to Broadway in 1977 and ran for 2,377 performances, with Charnin directing. He subsequently directed every first-class U.S. production, including the 20th and 30th anniversary productions, Holland, Australia and three in London. He has also written with Richard and Mary Rodgers, Marvin Hamlisch, Alan Jay Lerner and Harold Arlen and directed, among others, Barbara Streisand, Jack Lemmon, Fred Astaire, Anne Bancroft, Chita Rivera, Larry Kert, Bebe Neuwirth, Bernadette Peters, Carol Burnett, Sutton Foster, and his wife Shelly Burch, star of the original *Nine*.

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**Actors’ Equity Association** (“Equity”), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 50,000 actors and stage managers. Equity seeks to foster the art of live theatre 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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### PAST PRESIDENTS

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<td><strong>ARTISTIC DIRECTOR</strong></td>
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Skylight gratefully acknowledges the following individuals, foundations, organizations, businesses and government agencies who provided support within the last year and helped us to deliver high quality music theatre productions to the Greater Milwaukee community. Our thanks to the many donors below $250 whose gifts are vital to Skylight’s continuing success; we regret there is not space to list them all. Please refer to our website for a complete listing. This list is current as of October 30, 2017.

Skylight Music Theatre acknowledges and thanks United Performing Arts Fund, our single largest donor, for its generous annual support of nearly $600,000.

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<td>Amy S. Jensen</td>
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YESTON & KOPIT’S PHANTOM
The Fireside Dinner Theatre
Hailed as “the finest PHANTOM of them all,” this tragic love story filled with luxurious music is, quite simply, an unforgettable theatrical experience!

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