



presents

THE BOY WHO GREW FLOWERS

MAR 4 / Pasant Theatre

Written & Directed By
Mara McEwin

Choreography By
Emily Bunning

Live Music By
Martyn Axe

Puppets &
Costumes
Patti Gilstrap

Lighting Design
& Production
Management
Ben Demarest

Scenic Design
Cody Grey

This performance is sponsored by Jackson National Life Insurance Company; L.O. Eye Care; Sutton Advisors, PLC; and Wharton Center Inner Circle.

Media Sponsor: WKAR

Today's performance will run approximately 45 minutes, with no intermission.

CAST

Rink

Ryan Byrne

Angelina, Family Member & Townsperson

Katie Montoya

Ms. Pennywinkle, Family Member, Townsperson

Ashley Chavonne

Gertrude & Mama

Miranda Wilson

Fuster & Uncle Dudd

Hayden Kerzie

Understudies

Hayden Kerzie (Rink)

Reginald Keith Jackson (Fuster)

Kaila Burritt (Mama, Gertrude, Angelina, Ms. Pennywinkle and Townspeople)

This play was adapted from Barefoot Book's *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*, written by Jen Wojtowicz.

This performance was originally devised by the original cast.

Adapting *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*

Since 1997, Treehouse Shakers has created original works. *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*, written by Jen Wojtotwicz, is our first literary adaptation. Years ago, I gave this picture book as a parting gift at my daughter's 5th Birthday. Parents stopped me in our neighborhood to thank me for this beautiful and kind story, saying this book was now their children's favorite. Years later, upon company reflection, we decided to adapt a children's picture book. Although this is a standard practice in the field of Theater for Young Audiences, we have always shied away from practicing norms. Emily Bunning first approached the idea; why not do an adaptation of one of our favorite and most beloved children's picture books. It was the perfect idea.

Writing an adaptation was harder than expected. I wanted to make sure the characters were portrayed the way so many people loved them in the story. Also, I had to take a short picture book and stretch it to a full theatrical production. *The Boy Who Grew Flowers* is a delightful and thoughtful story that lends itself to exposing young people to diversity, navigating adversity, creating empathy and celebrating individualism. We tried to portray this through the theatrical telling as well. At times, the characters are portrayed through shadow puppetry, other times rod puppets, and sometimes as real people. These puppets also reflect the feeling of some of the folk puppets used in traditional Appalachian oral storytelling, where our production is set. *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*, thematically and artistically celebrates the differences among us, while

artistically and visually exploring varying theatrical styles. –
Mara McEwin

BIOS

EMILY BUNNING (*Artistic Coordinator, Co-Founder, Choreographer*) graduated from Stephens College in Missouri and is a Wyoming native. As a co-founder of Treehouse Shakers, she has choreographed, created and produced almost all of the original work. Her work has been presented in the New York area at the BAM Fisher, The Ailey Citigroup Theater, GK Arts Center, Queen's Theater, TPAC, DanceNow at Joyce SoHo, HERE Arts Center, Tribeca Film Festival, Westhampton Beach PAC, LICM as well as various theaters across the nation including Jacob's Pillow (MA), Alden Theater (VA), and the Aronoff Center (OH). Emily danced with Aviva Geismar/Drastic Action Dance Company for nine years, with whom she toured to Germany and performed in Canada, Milwaukee, and at West End Theater, Joyce SoHo, and Symphony Space in NYC, as well as attending Djerassi Artists Residency in CA. Emily has also performed with Gotham Group Dance, Dura Mater and Valerie Green/Dance Entropy, which included a tour of Serbia in 2001. She was invited back to Serbia in 2003 to choreograph/perform with the ERGstatus Dance Theatre. Her teaching experience includes workshops in schools across the U.S. while on tour with Treehouse Shakers, and guest artist at Western Wyoming College. Emily has a master's degree in traditional Chinese medicine.

MARA McEWIN (*Artistic Director, Co-Founder, Writer/Director*) has produced, written, directed and sometimes performed in all of Treehouse Shakers' 19 original

dance-plays including *Hatched*, which is recognized as being the first dance-play for babies to tour the U.S. by an American artist/company. She has created ongoing arts in education programming from preschools to colleges, and led numerous teaching artist and classroom trainings throughout the country for the past 25+ years. During the pandemic, she helped to quickly transition the company to virtual programming. During this time, Treehouse Shakers created *Pillow Fort*, for ages 3-7, a nine-part mini-series to engage young people through the arts at home. Also a storyteller, Mara was named "Best Storyteller of New York" by *NY Press* and has performed throughout the nation's schools, festivals, theaters, colleges, and community events. She is the featured teller for F.I.T's Toy Design Department and Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling, as well as Baby Gap, Miramax, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Turtle Pond Publications, Chocolate Sauce Publishing, The Tribeca Film Festival, to name a select few. She is a writer, voice-over artist and story consultant for Activity Works, an interactive educational video-web series for classrooms across the U.S. She was the subject for a qualitative dissertation on the inclusion of storytelling in the classroom by Dr. Barb O'Neill and a featured 2019 speaker for O'Neill's Transform Challenging Behavior Conference, the AATE 2021 National Conference, and the Theatre and Dance for the Very Young Conference in 2022. Mara co-created Niñopalooza, an all-day rock concert for kids and Niño Nada, a summer festival of children's work that was acclaimed by *The New York Times*. Favorite acting credits include *Bloomsday* on Broadway with Stephen Colbert and Alec Baldwin, which aired on NPR as well as *The Sandpiper* at Symphony Space, NYC. She has performed with companies

such as Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Theater, Eugene O'Neill By-the-Sea-Festival, Chekhov Festival, among many others. She has worked in film, print, television and commercials. Mara is a former long-term board member of the International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY), NYC Storytelling Center, and is serving a second term as the chair of the School Leadership Team at NYC's Metropolitan Expeditionary School Leadership School. To read more about life with Treehouse Shakers, living the artists' life, or raising a creative family, visit her on Insta @maramcewin or her blog at marastreehouse.blogspot.com

KAILA BURRITT (*Understudy*) is excited to be joining Treehouse Shakers in *The Boy Who Grew Flowers!* Kaila is a professional dancer, singer, and actress, as well as a children's dance teacher. Kaila grew up in Austin, Texas, where she studied dance since the age of two. After discovering musical theater in high school, Kaila went on to receive her BFA in musical theater from The University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Since graduating in 2019, Kaila has been a part of various professional productions as well as teaching in various parts of New York. Favorite credits include *Cabaret* and *Catch Me if You Can* at The Candlelight Theater in Delaware, *Infernal* at the Flea Theater in NYC, and most recently *Rocky Horror Show* at the Zach Theater in Austin, Texas. Kaila has a passion for teaching with two teachers as parents, and she looks forward to spreading joy through art with Treehouse Shakers!! Keep up with Kaila at kailaburritt.com.

RYAN BYRNE (*Rink*) is excited to be joining Treehouse Shakers as a performer in the production of *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*, playing Rink Bowagon. Originally from the

Chicagoland area, Ryan is a graduate of Syracuse University Department of Drama with a BFA in musical theatre. Favorite shows he has been in include *The Wild Party* (Burrs), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Seymore Krelborn), and *Cabaret* (Emcee). Ryan has performed professionally under the Goodman Theatre and Lookingglass in Chicago and appeared in the Broadway in Chicago production of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* from First Stage & Emerald City Theatre Company. While at Syracuse, Ryan studied under Shakespeare's Globe and worked as an education associate for Paramount School of the Arts in Aurora, IL.

ASHLEY CHAVONNE (*Ms. Pennywinkle, Townsperson, Family*) is a THS performer and teaching artist from Detroit, MI. She received her early dance training in ballet, jazz, modern and techniques of the African diaspora, continuing her studies at The Ohio State University and earning a BFA in dance performance and BA in strategic communication. She has worked with Detroit Dance Collective as a featured performer and teaching artist, NYC-based company Jazz Ain't Dead as a featured artist, and with Jana Hicks, Marijke Eliasberg, The Next Stage Project and ModArts Dance Collective. Currently a member of The Feath3r Theory, Lauren Beirne Dance Works and Vissi Dance Theater. Ashley has been a company member of Treehouse Shakers since 2010.

BEN DEMAREST (*Lighting Designer & Production Manager*) is a New York-based lighting designer, production manager, and theater maker. He has created lights for several Treehouse Shakers productions. His lighting design work has been featured in every contemporary theater production venue; many you've heard of and many you have not.

Current projects include work with TRUX a performance-based art collective making devised and site-specific work all over NYC. Ben very much enjoys working with the incredible group of fellow makers, Treehouse Shakers.

PATTI GILSTRAP (*Costume Designer, Puppet Creator*) holds a BFA in dance and choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University. In 1996 and 1997 she attended the American Dance Festival on scholarship as the costume assistant. In 1997-1998 she toured for the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble. She has designed costumes for many choreographers, including: Sharon Kinney, Judith Steele, Incidents Physical Theater, Heather Harrington, Alan Danielson, Heidi Latsky, Teresa Wimmeer, Ali Kenner, Pat Cremins, Sue Bernhard, Dana Doggett and Chris Ferris. She has worked extensively with Treehouse Shakers designing costumes, headdresses, and puppet pieces for *Hatched*, *Coyote's Dance*, *Desert Travels*, *Let's Talk About IT!*, *Under Covers* and *Lost Arroyos*. Her designs can also be seen in Brooklyn at her three clothing boutiques, Flirt. Her new book with business partner, Seryn Potter, *Flirt Skirts: Learn How to Sew, Customize, and Style Your Very Own Skirts*, was released in May 2011. She has also created two McCall Patterns, in stores now.

REGINALD KEITH JACKSON (*Understudy*) is a NYC-based actor, poet, fitness enthusiast, and avid gamer. Born in Denver, CO, he moved to New York to attend the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) where he studied acting, voice, and dance. Since then, Reginald has been found performing all around the city in various mediums from theatre to indie film to voiceover work. One of his most notable credits includes an Off-Broadway debut in *Puffs!*

playing the role of Oliver Rivers. Reginald dreams of sharing his passion for entertainment with the youth through means of voice, body, mindset, creativity, and positivity. He is happy to join Treehouse Shakers as a company member in both *The Littlest Cove* and *The Boy Who Grew Flowers*. Insta: @reginaldkeithj.

HAYDEN KERZIE (*Fuster, Uncle Dudd, Rink Understudy*) is thrilled to be joining the Treehouse Shakers family. Growing up in a military family, Hayden calls Hawaii, Florida, California, and Georgia home. He recently graduated from Syracuse University with a BFA in musical theater in 2021. Some of his favorite credits include *Cabaret* (Emcee), *Amadeus* (Livery), *The Wild Party* (Oscar), *Spring Awakening* (Georg). While in school, he toured with Syracuse Stage in the children's tour, performing weekly at various elementary schools in *Suzette Who Set to Sea* (Conroy). He is so excited to be back in the world of theater for young audiences and can't wait to bring to light the magic of theater to so many young minds.

KATIE MONTOYA (*Angelina, Townsperson, Family Member*) is a performer and the rehearsal coordinator for THS. She is a native of Santa Fe, NM, and attended the University of California, Irvine where she received a BA in dance and drama in 2011. Her studies took her to many parts of the world, including Ecuador with Dramatic Adventure Theater in 2009, and Ghana, West Africa, in 2010 where she studied both traditional and contemporary African dance with the Ghana Dance Ensemble. She is currently in her sixth season with Sarah Berges Dance, a bicoastal modern dance company. Other company credits include Arcos Dance, Beth Soll and Company, and VencI Dance. Montoya is a certified

Pilates instructor under the instruction of Roberta Kirschenbaum. She is very grateful for her early training at the National Dance Institute of New Mexico. Katie is thrilled to be performing her seventh season with Treehouse Shakers touring in all of their current repertory.

MARTYN AXE (*Composer*) is a professional composer/orchestrator and musical director. Born in England, he studied and worked at the Royal Academy Of Music where he was awarded the prestigious A.R.A.M. for his work. He has conducted/orchestrated on the West End/Broadway. Based in New York City, Martyn has worked with numerous companies including music directing, conducting and arranging from rock bands to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London. Credits include *School of Rock*, Roy Orbison Symphony Concert, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Mamma Mia*, *Nine To Five*, *Tarzan*, *Dirty Dancing*. He's also worked in Japan orchestrating and music supervising. Martyn also works in Los Angeles at the IMN studios where he arranges music for movies, concert tours and contemporary dance companies. He has also created the music for Treehouse Shakers' *Under the Tangle* and *The Deepest Breath*, which premiere in 2023.

MIRANDA WILSON (*Gertrude, Mama, Townspeople*) has been a proud company member of Treehouse Shakers since 2010 and can be seen in all of the current Treehouse repertoire. A native of Kansas City, MO, Miranda graduated with her BFA in theatre performance from the University of Evansville. As an actor, singer, dancer, and puppeteer in NYC, she performs in a wide variety of performances across the city. Most recently, Miranda appeared in the critically acclaimed cabaret, *The Rise and Fall and Rise (again) of*

Martha Stewart, which performed to sold-out audiences at Joe's Pub as well as in Los Angeles. Other favorite roles include: Liz in the world premiere of *Every Good Girl Deserves Fun (and other misremembered things)* with Clutch Productions; Lucy in *Three-Day Hangover's Dracula*; Anderson Cooper and Kim Richards in the critically acclaimed cabaret, *Watch What Happens Live On Stage* (NYC and LA); and as Anna Wintour's assistant in the popular cabaret *Ryan Raftery is the Most Powerful Woman in Fashion* (NYC, LA, Philadelphia). Miranda has also starred in a new short film, *How You Are to Me*, which will begin hitting the festival circuit this spring, and as the lead in the psychological thriller, *The Eve*, which won her a Best Actress award for her work. www.mirandanoellewilson.com.