

# Holidays Under a Forest Moon

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Virtual Holiday Play Series

Presented by:



Wake Forest Community Theater

# Virtual Vignettes

## ***Night of All Nights***

Written and directed by Maribeth McCarthy

*ALLISON* Carla Reck

*TED* Alex DeVirgilis

## ***The Fruitcake Cometh***

Written and Directed by Mike Brannon

*STELLA* Shelly Stolaroff Segal

*STEVE* Clinton Festa

*STAN* Pete Turner

## ***Hanukkah Socks***

Written by Rachel Horowitz

Directed by Jorie Slodki

*EMMA WILLIAMS* Sophia Fisher

*LINDA KATZ* Lisa Merrit

*RUTH KATZ* Shelley Segal



## ***Home for Christmas***

Written by Sarah Richardson

Directed by Robert Richardson

*AMY LYNN* Kylee Sylvas

*BECKY* Kirsten Ehlert

*KEVIN* Joey DeSena

*JOHN* Patrick Earl

## ***I am Santa***

Written by Teddy Durgin

Directed by Bonnie Webster

*SANTA CLAUS* David Bartlett

*MRS. CLAUS* Wende O'Reilly

*THERAPIST* Stan Williams

*MACLUNKEY* Tony Heffner

## ***Star of Wonder***

Written by Andy Rassler

Directed by Sean A. Brosnahan

*LEVONA* Audrey Jones

*NOA* Benji Taylor Jones

*BINA* Staci Sabarski



# ***The Johannssen Family Annual Cookie Fest***

Written and directed by Chloe Anderson

*HEATHER* Benji Taylor Jones

*VICTORIA* Marisa Jones

*NOAH* Conner Greg

*ALICE* Joanna Laforgia

## **Lang Syne**

Written and directed by Maribeth McCarthy

*ALLISON* Carla Reck

*TED* Alex Divirgilis

*SAM* Danny Mullins

*CODY* Liz Webb

## **Special Thanks to**

Mia Peters

Tyler Elrod

Michael Lester



# *Night of all Nights/Lang Syne*

**Maribeth McCarthy** (playwright/director) is so freaking excited to be a part of this festival! By day she is the voice of One Federal Credit Union, and by night she works with any theatrical outlet that needs a loud ginger in their production. So she's basically thespian Batman. She came to prominence as a playwright in North Carolina with her play *Sweet Tea and Baby Dreams*, which has since been performed in three other venues. As a playwright, she has written 13 plays, all of which have been produced either locally or in her homeland of Pennsylvania :) She is also the author of the *Best Day Ever Series*, a series of children's books which follow the adventures of her teddy bear Colby.

**Alex DeVirgilis** (Ted) a veteran of community theater, originally from Northeast Pennsylvania, with acting and directing credits including *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*; *Oliver*; *1776*; *Glengarry Glenn Ross*; *The Weir*; *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Proof*, and most recently in *The Royale* in Raleigh, NC with Burning Coal Theater. Thanks to all for your creative work and support!

**Danny Mullins** (Sam) is excited to be spending this holiday season with all of you under the Forest Moon. Danny has proudly acted in several Forest Moon shows as well as serving on the FMT Board of Directors. When Danny is not acting this holiday season, he is either practicing law in Raleigh or at home wearing a Christmas sweater. He is excited to take on the challenging role in *Night of All Nights/Lang Syne* of marrying Liz Webb, which he will attempt to do in real life in Fall 2021.

**Carla Reck** (Allison) is excited to be ringing in the holiday season with this talented cast and playwright/director Maribeth McCarthy. Past roles include: Cora in *The Girls of the Garden Club*, Dr. Armstrong in *And Then There Were None*, Margaret Hill in *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, and Anne in two productions of McCarthy's *Sweet Tea and Baby Dreams*.

**Liz Webb** (Cody) is thrilled to be performing again this odd Holiday season! Liz was last seen with Forest Moon Theater as Annelle in *Steel Magnolias*. Other recent roles: Mother/Grace in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (Cary Players), Alex Klein in *Church & State* (NRACT), Charlotte in *The Revolutionists* (RLT), and Ginette/Gayle in *Almost, Maine* (Cary Players). Through this pandemic, Liz has enjoyed spending time with her fiancé Danny, and their adorable puppy Kodi!



# *The Fruitcake Cometh*

**Mike Brannon** (playwright/director) is a full-time computer programmer and part-time dramatist and director born and raised in Greensboro, NC. Since he began writing plays two and a half years ago, he's had over 20 plays produced in virtually every type of medium, from stage plays to Zoom plays, radio plays to plays-in-a-day. He'd like to dedicate his play *The Fruitcake Cometh* to his mother, who truly did use to make the worst fruitcakes in the world, but who he still loves with all of his heart.

**Clinton Festa** (Steve) lives in Greensboro, NC with his wife and children in a house that is gradually becoming a sanctuary for tuxedo cats. He first began writing comedy and cartooning in college for The Cornell Lunatic, his campus humor magazine. He has written two novels - Ancient Canada and The Enchanted Harp. Clinton is a member of the Greensboro Playwrights' Forum and runs an online book drive for prisoners called Sentences Book Donations. *The Fruitcake Cometh* is his second time acting.

**Shelley Stolaroff Segal** (Stella, Ruth) is a playwright, performer, and essayist living in Greensboro, North Carolina. She received her theater training at The Drama Studio London and the CSC Conservatory in New York. International and regional stage credits include performances at the Bloomsbury Theatre in London, the Classic Stage Company in NYC, North Coast Repertory Company in San Diego, Main Street Theater in Houston, and the Bailiwick Theatre in Chicago. Local credits include The Little Theater of Winston-Salem, Twin City Stage, The Broach Theater, The Stephen Hyers Theatre, CTG, and The Comedy Zone. She's also performed in her own plays, including *Sidney in Focus*, a trilogy of solo one-acts, *My Son*, which was also presented as a TED talk in NYC, *Not Strictly Vaudeville*, and *Bliss*. Recently, she created the character of Barb in the world premiere of *Shades of Valor*, an AACT winner, and *Edna in Our Lady of Perpetual Donuts*.

**Pete Turner** (Stan) has performed professionally in over 80 productions at a variety of theaters including The Alliance, Tennessee Repertory, Theater in the Square, Horse Cave Theatre, A.R.T. Station, and Nashville Children's Theatre. Mr. Turner has originated roles in several premieres: Calvin in *Starbright*, Jody Lee in *Raindrop Waltz*, Bubba in *Bubba and the Three Moons*, and Wesley in *Killer Diller* (based on Clyde Edgerton's novel).

# *Hanukkah Socks*

**Rachel Horowitz** (Playwright) has acted in theatrical productions for nearly 20 years, but rarely gets to step into the playwright role. Her creative writing consists of short stories, a local newspaper column, and random journal entries. She grew up in the North Raleigh/Wake Forest area and am so excited to see *Hanukkah Socks* come to life at Forest Moon Theater.

**Sophia Fisher** (Emma) is so excited to participate in *Hanukkah Socks*. She loves to be performing and she is so grateful to everyone who has allowed her to get back to doing what she loves.

**Lisa Merritt** (Linda) is thrilled to be part of *Holidays Under a Forest Moon* virtual play series. Most recently, Lisa was seen as Aunt Dorothy in the Forest Moon production of *Prelude To A Kiss*. Lisa has been seen on many stages over the past 30 years, from Chicago, Virginia, New Jersey and North Carolina.

**Jorie Slodki** (Director) is the Community Engagement Coordinator for The Justice Theater Project and on the Board of Directors for Cary Playwrights Forum. This is the 3rd Zoom play she has directed since \*waves hands\* all this started, and she is excited to bring some Hanukkah cheer to audiences.

# Home for Christmas

**Sarah Richardson** (playwright) is excited for her 1<sup>st</sup> play to be produced. The idea originated from her husband and also director. She has been active in theatre in the Chicago area and her first production in North Carolina was with Forest Moon Theater. She was most recently on stage as Bridgit in *Death By Design* at Cary Players. She can't wait to see the final product and thanks her husband, Tom, cast, and crew members for all their hard work. She lives in Morrisville, NC with her husband and 2 amazing dogs.

**Robert Richardson** (director) is very excited to be directing for the first time with Forest Moon Theater. This year has brought so many changes, but also wonderful opportunities. Prior to COVID, Robert traveled too much to be able to participate in local theater. He is grateful for this opportunity. "I am absolutely in love with this script as it gives so much depth to these characters in a such a short amount of time. The actors involved are truly amazing and do an excellent job at demonstrating the intricacies of these relationships." Robert is grateful for his wife, family, friends and FMT and wishes everyone a safe and joyous holiday season.

**Joey DeSena** (Kevin) is glad to get back to (virtual) theatre for this ambitious project! He was last seen in person on the Raleigh Little Theatre stage earlier this year as Voice #4 in *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Other favorite roles include Adult Ralph in *A Christmas Story*, and Randy/Steve in *Almost, Maine* (both with Cary Players, where he also serves on the Board of Directors). Thanks to this community for staying strong through the toughest of times and having open hearts. Hopefully these holiday plays can bring a bit of normalcy to these tough times.



# *Home for Christmas (cont)*

**Patrick Earl** (John) is originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan and got his B.S. in Theatre and Biology from Aquinas College. He continued his studies at the University of Houston's PATP where he received his MFA in Acting. Some of his regional credits include Hamlet in *Hamlet*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Andrew Jackson in *Bloody, Bloody, Andrew Jackson*, Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Crumpet in *The Santaland Diaries*, and many more for the American Shakespeare Center. For the Alley Theatre in Houston, TX he played Nana, Chay Turley, Bill Jukes in *Peter Pan*. For Mainstreet Theater in Houston, TX he played Aslan in *The Magician's Nephew*, and King Charles, William Scot in *Or.* Patrick is also an adjunct professor of theatre at Randolph College.

**Kirsten Ehlert** (Becky) is thrilled to be working on this production. She most recently appeared in *The Old Man in the Old Moon* (Theatre in the Park). Favorite productions include *The Taming* (Justice Theatre Project), *Baskerville* (Raleigh Little Theatre), and *Almost, Maine* (Cary Players). Kirsten has her MA in educational theatre from NYU and BA in dramatic arts from UNC Chapel Hill.

**Kylee Silvas** (Amy Lynn) has been studying the histories and ever evolving conventions of Theatre Arts for twelve years. She is in her seventh year of teaching high school Theatre Arts. Her theatrical skills include performance technique and technical design/construction. She graduated from WTA&M University in 2014 earning a B.A. in Theatre with an Emphasis in Design and Technology. Her most recent performance work includes the role of Mariana in Raleigh Little Theatre's *Measure for Measure* directed by Rebecca Blum and Sylvia from *Sylvia* at Forest Moon Theatre directed by Mike McGee.

# *I am Santa*

**Teddy** (playwright) and **Bonnie Durgin** (director) have been married for 17 years. And, until this year, they had never collaborated on a theatrical project. It all started earlier in the year before performance venues went dark. She was teaching eight elementary school-age students at the North Raleigh Arts and Creative Theatre (NRACT), and they were going to put on a play. She told Teddy that she couldn't find anything that was a good match for this particular class. He said, "How about I write you one?" She was pretty surprised. Teddy has been a journalist for almost 30 years -- a movie reviewer, as well as a columnist. They had talked about him writing more creatively and how he longed for it, but now he was really going to do it! He wrote her a play called *Remembering Frosty*, and it was super fun. After that, he wrote a short film called *Paws* that she directed this summer, using her advanced acting students. They ended up taking 2nd place in the Zombiepaloosa Film Festival. When Teddy entered *I Am Santa*, they were both really hoping it would be picked and she could direct it. He's her favorite writer, and they have found something new and exciting to do during pandemic that really stokes their passion and creativity.

**David Bartlett** (Santa) is many people. In this particular case he is an actor portraying Santa, but he has also been Santa for 52 consecutive years starting in 1969. He is also a world traveled clown and balloon sculptor/designer. He is also a musician/lyricist of dubious notoriety, an author of 3 books and also wrote a one man play called *In The Boots Of St Nick* covering many happy and sad experiences the average local Santa faces each year. Ho Ho Ho!

**Tony Hefner** (MacLunkey) is excited to return to Forest Moon for this production. He enjoys wearing many hats as seen in *Baskerville!* (Actor 1) and *The 39 Steps* (Clown 2) at RLT, and in Forest Moon Theater's *Sylvia* (Tom/Phyllis/Leslie). Thank you Fred for your love and support.

# *I am Santa (cont)*

**Wende O'Reilly** (Mrs. Claus) is based out of New York City. She has a BA in Theater from Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles and is a Graduate of the Neighborhood Playhouse, NYC. After being an elf at *Macy's Santa Land* many years ago, the next logical step would be playing Mrs. Claus! Many thanks to Bonnie for the fun opportunity and Happy Holidays to all!

**Stanley A. Williams, III** (Therapist) is beyond humbled for the opportunity to be a part of this production! This Fayetteville, NC native will gladly trade you egg nog and fruitcake for canned cranberry sauce. Other credits include *Tosca & Carmen* with the NC Opera, Chad in *Who's Zoomin' Who?* (Goodly Frame Theatre), Andre in *Ain't Misbehavin'* (NRACT), The Waiter in *First Date* (NRACT), The Sergeant in *Dogfight* (NRACT) and Sky Masterson in *Guys & Dolls* (Cary Players). Thanks to God, Teddy D., Bonnie, this amazing cast & crew, Forest Moon, family, friends, ZT, and YOU. Way to go, Sparky.

# Star of Wonder

**Andrea (Andy) Rassler** (playwright) has been involved in various aspects of theatre all her life. With roots in community theatre, Andy has acted and directed in many venues in both her home state of Minnesota and in North Carolina. She has held the position of theatre instructor and director at Northwest Cabarrus High School for most of her teaching career. Playwriting began for Andy as a natural outgrowth of acting and directing and she has seen local, regional, and international productions realized. Her hope is to continue exploring all aspects of theatre, as it is her love. Andy lives in Concord, NC and is married with two children.

**Sean A. Brosnahan** (director) has been acting, directing, and producing theatre in the triangle for over 20 years. He is thrilled to have been able to work on this production with these three incredible artists and humans. Thanks so much, Benji, Audrey, and Staci for joining me on this ride, and to Mia for asking me to come play with Forest Moon Theatre for the first time.

**Audrey Jones** (Levona) is a sophomore at Saint Mary's School. She performs regularly with RLT Teens on Stage and trains at Moonlight Arts & Entertainment and at The Comedy Conservatory. Most importantly, Audrey LOVES LOVES LOVES Christmas and has been listening to holiday music since mid-October. Her biggest wish is for a white Christmas!

**Staci Sabarsky** (Bina) is a professional actress, singer, educator, and director. She earned her degree in Dramatic Arts from UNC-Chapel Hill, but her love of theatre began as a teenager in high school. Favorite roles include: Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (The Gilbert Theatre), Maureen in *Rent* (The Gilbert Theatre), Debra in *The Smell of the Kill* (Temple Theatre), Annabella/Pamela/Margaret in *The 39 Steps* (Raleigh Little Theater), Belinda/Flavia in *Noises Off* (Theatre in the Park), Nancy in *Frozen* (Raleigh Ensemble Players), and Diana in *Lend Me a Tenor* (Actor's Comedy Lab). Since relocating to Florida, she founded Innovocative Theatre and serves as the Producing Artistic Director. Visit [www.innovocativetheatre.org](http://www.innovocativetheatre.org) to learn more. Much love and many thanks to Sean for including her in this project and to her husband, Leon, for his eternal love and support.

**Benji Taylor Jones** (Noa) is on the next page.

# *The Johannssen Family Annual Cookie Fest*

**Chloe Andersen** (playwright) is a transplant from New England now living in Durham. She has experience in arts administration, directing and playwriting. Past work in the Triangle includes Assistant Directing *Be More Chill* (NRACT), *Love and Information* (WTF), and Producing/Directing the 2020 NC10by10 Festival. She is on the board of Cary Playwrights' Forum, a Triangle Rising Stars judge and was part of Women's Theatre Festival's first director's lab! When she is not obsessing over theatre, you can find her reading at local coffee shops (Pre-Covid) or cuddling her Chiweenie, Fosse.

**Joanna LaForgia** (Alice) was a global systems training consultant until moving to Raleigh two years ago. She always blooms where she's planted; she loves North Carolina—and its playwrights—as much as she misses New York.

**Conner Gregg** (Noah) grew up in Charlotte and graduated from Elon University. He started his performance journey 3 years ago by doing improv with Charlotte's Comedy Theatre. He made his theatrical debut last year as the Mad Hatter and recently performed virtually in the NC10by10 festival.

**Marisa Jones** (Victoria) is a multi-hyphenated artist with a passion for gardening and environmental education. Next year she will be co-leading a course at the Bushwick Starr in Brooklyn, NY titled, "Playwrighting for Climate Change." Curious about ways you can help save our planet and reduce greenhouse gases? Check out [drawdown.org](https://drawdown.org)! Connect and follow Marisa's journey at: [www.marisajones.net](http://www.marisajones.net) @marjogogo (Insta & Tik Tok)

**Benji Taylor Jones** (Heather) is a veteran of Raleigh stage and rapidly is mastering this Zoom-enhanced medium of performing. Most recent VIRTUAL performances include Johnnie Faye in TIP's *The Wild Women of Winedale*, Willmore in Brave New Classic's reading of *The Rover*, Remington in Brave New Classic and WTF Fringe production of *He/She*. You will also see her as Noa in *Star of Wonder* in this 10-minute play festival. Stay safe and live life, yall!



# Friends of Forest Moon



2020-2021

## Now More Than Ever We Need Our Friends

Because of the ongoing conditions with the pandemic, much of our 2020-21 season has been cancelled. Instead, we are refocusing on virtual events, like this one, for the upcoming season with a hoped-for stage production in June of 2021, which we'll be announcing in the next several months.

It's been a tough year for everyone in so many respects, but we are determined to see this through and to come out on the other end with on-stage performances "waiting in the wings." With careful planning and reductions to our operating expenses that we've already enacted, we hope we can survive as a theater, but we know it will be touch-and-go for us to pay our bills for fixed expenses we can't eliminate. Our one source of income during these times—the voluntary monetary contributions from our supporters—could determine our fate.

We ask that you please consider making a donation to our theater by joining with Friends of Forest Moon. Showing your support for our community theater will help ensure our continued presence and growth in Wake Forest

<https://forestmoontheater.org/donations/>