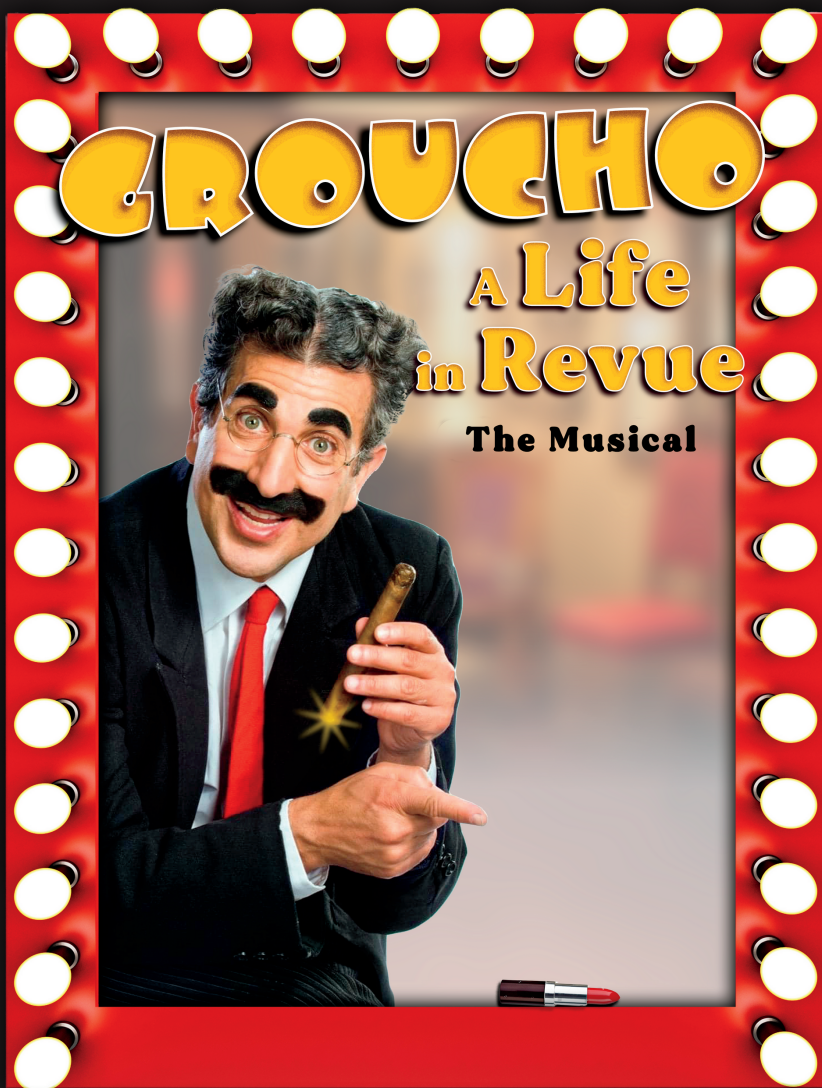


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# WALNUT STREET THEATRE

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Dear Theatregoer,

Welcome back to the Walnut! Thank you for joining us for GROUCHO: A Life in Revue.

Next up on our Mainstage, we'll close out our 215th season with the smash-hit Broadway sensation, BEAUTIFUL – THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL. The inspiring true story of King's remarkable career, BEAUTIFUL takes you on the ride of a lifetime. Featuring hits like "Natural Woman," "I Feel The Earth Move," "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," and more. This celebration of a living legend features the songs you remember – and a story you won't forget!

I am thrilled with our lineup for our 216th season! Our season begins with JERSEY BOYS, the musical phenomenon that will take you along on the electrifying journey of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. From the streets of New Jersey to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, this is the musical that's just too good to be true!

As the magic of the holiday season arrives at the Walnut, so will the delightful story of Buddy, the human raised by elves. Find your inner elf with ELF The Musical and follow Buddy from the North Pole to the magical land of New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity!

Next, we'll step into the charming world of DRIVING MISS DAISY, where an elderly Jewish widow and an African American chauffeur establish a true friendship. This Pulitzer Prize-winning play demonstrates that love can overcome preconceptions.

Just in time for spring is Noël Coward's HAY FEVER, where misjudged meetings, secret seductions and scandalous revelations run riot at the most outrageous of all house parties.

Closing out the season is the sensational Broadway musical, DREAMGIRLS, inspired by Diana Ross and the Supremes, where stars rise and fall but dreams live forever! Full of onstage joy and backstage drama, this inspirational show combines pop, R&B, gospel, disco, and more!

For now, sit back and enjoy the hilarious GROUCHO: A Life in Revue. We love having you at the theatre and look forward to seeing you again soon!

Sincerely,

Bernard Havard,  
President and Producing Artistic Director



Photo: Mark Garvin



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# THE WALNUT: GROUCHO'S FAVORITE

“...the most important thing that ever happened to me.”  
- Groucho Marx on playing the Walnut Street Theatre

One hundred years ago, the legendary Marx Brothers performed their musical-comedy revue, I'LL SAY SHE IS, at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre. The engagement ran from June 4th through September 1st, 1923 and to this day holds the record for the Walnut's longest running show. The following spring, after a national tour, the brothers returned to the Walnut for three weeks. On May 19th, 1924, two days after the Philadelphia closing, Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Zeppo Marx debuted I'LL SAY SHE IS on Broadway.



The four Marx Brothers. From left to right, Zeppo, Harpo, Groucho and Chico

For Groucho, who toured seedy small time vaudeville circuits from the age of 14, Philadelphia represented a turning point that led him to Broadway and cinema history. Throughout his life, Groucho remained sentimental regarding Philadelphia. In 1974, when in town for a Mike Douglas Show appearance, 84 year-old Groucho made a special trip to the Walnut - to relive memories of sold out houses, rave reviews, and countless laughs.

In 1993, the 70th anniversary of I'LL SAY SHE IS, I had the honor of directing and performing in GROUCHO: A Life in Revue at the Walnut. During that run a patron shared, "I'm 87 years old and 70 years ago I saw Harpo drop hundreds of knives from his sleeve right on this stage." Later that week, mid-performance, plaster from the proscenium arch fell all around me. The audience gasped. Without pause, I channeled my hero, Groucho, "I've heard of bringing down the house but this is ridiculous."

In honor of this centennial anniversary, scenic designer David Gordon, and the talented Walnut staff, have replicated the theatre's 1923 proscenium arch featuring an eagle as its centerpiece. The original eagle resides on the second floor lobby outside the Langworthy Lounge.

At the tender age of 23, I performed GROUCHO: A Life in Revue off-Broadway and on London's West End. The collaboration with Groucho's son, my dear friend, and playwright Arthur Marx, was life-changing. Nearly 40 years later, I have the profound privilege of returning to the work.

It is heartening to know that the comedy of the Marx Brothers, Philadelphia's favorite comedians, still delights audiences of all ages. As Groucho said, "There's no such thing as an old joke...if you've never heard it before."





— Frank Ferrante



Groucho Marx as Napoleon in "I'll Say She Is" outside the Walnut Street Theatre stage door on 9th Street in 1923. The building behind Groucho still remains. Photos from the Groucho Marx Collection courtesy of Mr. Ferrante

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**BERNARD HAVARD**

President and Producing Artistic Director

February 13 – March 10, 2024

## *Groucho: A Life in Revue* *The Musical*

Book, Lyrics, and Music by

**ARTHUR MARX and ROBERT FISHER**

Set Design

**DAVID P. GORDON**

Costume Design

**DEBRA BEAVER BAUER**

Lighting Design

**MATT DEMASCOLO**

Sound Design

**CHRISTOPHER COLUCCI**

Wig Design

**CLAIRE WAID**

Director of  
Production

**SIOBHÁN RUANE**

Stage Managers

**MICHELE BEGLEY  
ABIGAIL STURGIS**

Associate

Artistic Director  
**BRIAN KURTAS**

Music and Vocal Direction by

**GEOFFREY LANGLEY**

Directed by

**FRANK FERRANTE**

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# CAST

*(in order of appearance)*

Groucho Marx ..... FRANK FERRANTE\*  
Harpo/Chico ..... MATT ROPER\*  
Citizen of Freedonia ..... DAVE JOHNSON\*  
The Women..... DREYA WEBER\*

## ORCHESTRA

Piano/Conductor: Geoffrey Langley  
Reeds/Associate Conductor: Bob Quail  
Drums/Percussion: Kevin Blanke

## UNDERSTUDIES

THOMAS ROBERT IRVIN (Groucho Marx), CHARLIE NICOLINI (Harpo/Chico),  
JAMES OFALT (Citizen of Freedonia), EMMIE PARKER (Girl),  
THOMAS SMITH (Citizen of Freedonia)

Signed DVDs of Mr. Ferrante's currently running PBS special "Frank Ferrante's Groucho"  
are available at the lobby gift shop.

\* The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity  
Association, the theatre union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

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### Groucho: A Life in Revue

Is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.  
[www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)

#### ACT I

Groucho's Memories, The Early Years

*There will be one 20-minute intermission.*

#### ACT II

Groucho's Memories, The Later Years

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# CAST



Frank Ferrante



Dave Johnson



Matt Roper



Dreya Weber

## WHO'S WHO

**FRANK FERRANTE** (*Groucho, Director*) first played the Walnut in *Groucho: A Life in Revue* 31 years ago. Since then, Walnut audiences enjoyed Frank as Pseudolus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (*Wall Street Journal* top ten performance), Tito Merelli in *A Comedy of Tenors* and Max Prince in Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* (1997 & 2017) - all directed by Mr. Ferrante. At the Walnut, Frank directed the Simon trilogy—*Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound* and subsequently Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* and *The Sunshine Boys*. At Walnut's Independence Studio, Frank directed the world premiere of *Old Wicked Songs* which became a Pulitzer finalist. At 23, Frank debuted off-Broadway in *Groucho: A Life in Revue* earning New York's Theatre World Award and Outer Critics Circle nomination. A London West End production and Laurence Olivier Award nomination followed. For 20 years, Frank hosted cirque/cabaret shows in Seattle, San Francisco and Amsterdam and was picked as a top ten by the *Chicago Tribune*. He can be heard on *SpongeBob SquarePants* and seen as a talking mime on Emmy-winning *Children's Hospital*. His one-man *Frank Ferrante's Groucho* currently airs on PBS television, available to stream on the PBS app. Frank would like to thank Bernard Havard for the many opportunities and decades of joy and laughter. @thefrankferrante

**DAVE JOHNSON** (*Citizen of Freedonia*) is thrilled to return to the Walnut after having last appeared as Bruno in *Shipwrecked*. Regional: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*; *Sideways Stories from the Wayside School*, *The Cat in the Hat* (Arden Theatre Company); *Peter*

*and the Starcatcher*; *One Man Two Guvnors* (Delaware Theatre Company); *Tartuffe*; *Hound of the Baskervilles* (Lantern Theater Company); *Microcrisis* (InterAct Theatre Company). Film/Television: *We Own This City* (HBO). Education/Training: University of the Arts, Ecole Phillippe Gaulier Intensive Master Course in Clown. Love to my three ladies.

**MATT ROPER** (*Harpo/Chico*) is a British-born creature of the night. His diverse career in comedy has led him from the muddy fields of the Glastonbury Festival to the damp backrooms of the Edinburgh Fringe, and from the cafés of Central Europe to New York's Lincoln Center and beyond. He first came to the attention of New Yorkers in the revival of the Marx Brothers Broadway show *I'll Say She Is* at the Connelly Theater. He then appeared alongside Mr. Ferrante and Ms. Weber in *The Cocoanuts* at the Heritage Theatre Festival, before contributing his voice to the album *Giraffes On Horseback Salad*, which also featured Mr. Ferrante. Marxism aside, his comic performances in Mat Fraser and Julie Atlas Muz's radical pantomimes at New York's Abrons Arts Center (the first major pantomimes to be presented in the city for over a century) have won him much acclaim. He is also noted for his appearances with the Coney Island Circus Sideshow, the House of Yes, and for his rambunctious late-night performances at the Slipper Room in Manhattan's Lower East Side. @MrMattRoper

**DREYA WEBER** (*The Women*) last played the Walnut in Ken Ludwig's *A Comedy of Tenors*. Recently, she appeared in Opera Zuid's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Puck. As artistic director for Chicago's Cabaret ZaZou, she

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# WHO'S WHO

directed and wrote the cirque spectacular. Dreya directed the stage and film versions of *Frank Ferrante's Groucho* airing nationwide on PBS. She produced and starred in films *The Aerialist*, *A Marine Story*, and *The Gymnast*, winners of 48 festival awards including seven 'best actress' nods. Dreya choreographed aerials for P!NK's ongoing world tour and conceived her renown Grammy Award performance of *Glitter In The Air*. Dreya is currently developing her solo show, *Hexen*, an ancestral exploration of 'witch' archetypes. @dreya\_weber

**ARTHUR MARX** (*Playwright*) After serving in World War II, Arthur Marx enjoyed a prolific writing career, both as an individual and as a collaborator. With Robert Fisher, he co-authored *The Impossible Years*, which starred Alan King and ran for 645 performances on Broadway; Broadway's *Minnie's Boys: The Story of the Young Marx Brothers* starring Shelley Winters, *My Daughter's Rated X*, a comedy that won the Straw Hat Award in 1970 for The Best Play of the Summer Season, and the libretto for the musical, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. By himself, Mr. Marx wrote the books: *The Ordeal of Willie Brown* (a novel); *Life with Groucho* (a biography of his father); *Not as a Crocodile* (a collection of short stories); *Son of Groucho* (an autobiography); *Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime Especially Himself* (the story of Martin & Lewis) which was made into a CBS TV movie starring Sean Hayes as Lewis, *Goldwyn* (a biography of the film mogul); *Red Skelton* (a biography of the comedian); and *The Nine Lives of Mickey Rooney*. For the off-Broadway production of *Groucho: A Life in Revue*, Mr. Marx was nominated for a New York's Outer Critics Award for 'Best Play' and subsequently the Laurence Olivier Award for London's West End production. Mr. Marx wrote for print, radio, film and television—most notably with Mr. Fisher on the CBS series, *Alice*, often serving as executive script consultant. Arthur Marx passed away in 2011 at age 89.

**ROBERT FISHER** (*Playwright*) enjoyed a prolific writing career in radio, film and television for over 40 years. With his partner of 22 years, Arthur Marx, he co-authored the Broadway hit *The Impossible Years* and the musical *Minnie's Boys*. He also co-authored four screenplays for Bob Hope films with Mr. Marx. His work with Mr. Marx on *Groucho: A Life in Revue*, was more than fitting, since it was Groucho Marx who gave Mr. Fisher his first job

on Groucho's "Pabst Blue Ribbon" radio show when Mr. Fisher was only 19 years old. For the off-Broadway production of *Groucho: A Life in Revue*, Mr. Fisher was nominated for a New York's Outer Critics Award for 'Best Play' and subsequently the Laurence Olivier Award for Comedy Production of the Year for London's West End version. Mr. Fisher was awarded the Emmy, Sylvania, and St. Christopher awards. He is the author of the book, *The Knight in Rusty Armor*. Robert Fisher passed away in 2008 at 85.

**GEOFFREY LANGLEY** (*Music and Vocal Direction*) is honored to be a part of *Groucho*. Favorite credits: WST: *South Pacific*; *The Wizard of Oz*; *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*; *Mamma Mia!*; *Shrek*; *Beehive The 60's Musical*; *Disney's The Little Mermaid*; *Cinderella*; *Elvis - A Musical Revolution*; Bristol Riverside Theatre: *Ragtime*; *Man of La Mancha*; *The Rivals*. Geoffrey continues to travel worldwide as a member of the progressive rock band Renaissance. He also has played with musical legends such as Darlene Love, Eddie Holman, and Jim McCarty. He loves creating original music with his own band The Twenty Committee. Many thanks to his extremely supportive family, lovely wife Laura, and son Oliver!

**DAVID P. GORDON** (*Set Design*) is happy to return to WST, where he previously designed Frank Ferrante's productions of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Trilogy*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, and Ken Ludwig's *A Comedy of Tenors*. He has worked extensively on and Off-Broadway and has designed over 300 productions for theatres and opera companies in the US and abroad. David has received 5 Barrymore Awards and the 2003 Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Scenic Design, and currently serves as Director of Design & Production at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts. [www.davidpgordondesign.com](http://www.davidpgordondesign.com)

**DEBRA BEAVER BAUER** (*Costume Design*) is a Costume Designer in the SF/Bay Area. She began her career as a performer, writer, set, and costume designer for the Angels of Light, a mythical radical theatre company in the early 1970s, continuing until 1984. Afterward, she started designing costumes for all the theatre and dance companies in the Bay Area. Her journey took her to major floor shows in Las Vegas and an international circus in Japan. She has designed costumes for the NBC Brian

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Clockwise from top left: Musician from The Ambling Band; Kathy and Stella Solve a Murder Mystery. Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic; Traditional Dancer, Royal Mile; Fringe Festival Crowd, Royal Mile; Feeling Afraid As If Something Terrible is Going to Happen. Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic; Mass Effect, HIMHERANDIT Productions.



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# WHO'S WHO

Boitano Skating Spectaculars for many years and became the resident costume designer for Teatro Zinzanni in Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago. She is opening a premiere at The Magic Theater in January and is delighted to come to WST to design *Groucho: A Life in Revue*, collaborating with her dear friend, director and actor Frank Ferrante.

**MATT DEMASCOLO** (*Lighting Design*) is excited to be working with Frank Ferrante on this production of *Groucho: A Life in Revue*. His past shows at the WST include *Beehive The 60's Musical*; *Always, Patsy Cline*; *Cinderella*; *Escape to Margaritaville* and *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*. For the last 18 years, Matt has been the Lighting Systems Manager at Production Express, Inc. but is now the Technical Supervisor here at the WST. His other theatrical work includes lighting productions at the Fulton Theatre and Maine State Music Theatre such as *Elf The Musical*; *Always, Patsy Cline*; *Million Dollar Quartet*; *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Grease*. His freelance lighting design work for local high schools includes shows like *West Side Story*, *Les Misérables*, *Hairspray*, and many more. He enjoys working with students in the educational environment and teaching young adults about theatre.

**CHRISTOPHER COLUCCI** (*Sound Design*) Recent work: *Tartuffe* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Lantern Theater Company); *Noises Off* (Delaware Theater Company) and *Camp Siegfried* (Theatre Exile) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* here at the Walnut. Upcoming projects: *The Lehman Trilogy* (Arden Theatre Company); *The Last Yiddish Speaker* (InterAct) and *The Comedy of Errors* (Lantern Theater Company). 2016 Pew Fellowship in the Arts; 8 Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Original Music and Sound Design; Independence Fellowship in the Arts (2012, 2019); MA in Philosophy from Western Kentucky University. BA in Philosophy/Theology from Eastern University. Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/cmsound>); YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/yd89tm64>); IG @christopherm\_colucci. Thank you, Frank; Congratulations Adam Orseck!

**CLAIRE WAID** (*Wig Design*) Happy to be back designing at the Walnut! Wig design credits include WST: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Legally Blonde* and *Civil War Voices*; Rutgers University: *The Moors*. Other work as a wig stylist includes positions at Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Riverside Theatre,

Weston Playhouse, and Auburn University. She currently is the in house Wig and Makeup Coordinator here at the Walnut and hopes to continue collaborating with talented artists in this field!

**MICHELE BEGLEY** (*Stage Manager*) is so excited to be returning to WST! She started out here as a stage management apprentice for the main stage under Lori Aghazarian and Angela Cucco Jenkins in the 2017-2018 season. This season, she has had the pleasure to work on Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, and *Elvis - A Musical Revolution*. Before returning to the Walnut, she held a resident position at the Bristol Riverside Theatre, both as ASM and PSM. Other regional credits include Theater at Monmouth, Penobscot Theatre Company, First Stage, and The Barnstormers Theatre. Special thanks to the cast, crew, apprentices, production, creative staff, Abby, Matthew, and Mackenzie who make this show possible. Proud member of AEA. Enjoy the show!

**ABIGAIL STURGIS** (*Stage Manager*) Thrilled to be back at WST! Select stage management credits: WST: *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*; *Moana, Jr.*; Media Theatre: *Rent*; Quintessence Theatre Group: *Flyin' West*; *The Skin of Our Teeth*; Opera Philadelphia: *10 Days in a Madhouse*; Act II Playhouse: *A Couple of Swells*; *Really Good Tidings*. She is a proud graduate of Temple University. Love to Jon and Minnie.

**SIOBHÁN RUANE** (*Director of Production*) This is Siobhán's 11th season at WST. With over 20 years in the business, Siobhán has worked internationally as a Production Manager and Stage Manager. Previously, Siobhán held the faculty position of Stage Management Advisor at Florida State University's School of Theatre. Additional credits include Cirque du Soleil, Norwegian Cruise Line, Cirque Productions, and various regional theatres. Siobhán holds an undergraduate degree from Rutgers University, an MFA from the University of Delaware, and is (proudly!) originally from the Jersey Shore.

**BRIAN KURTAS, CSA** (*Associate Artistic Director*) has been associated with WST since 2007. He began his career here as a performer and in the professional apprenticeship program and has since dedicated himself to bringing artists together. He now serves our artists and audiences in the various capacities of casting,

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# WHO'S WHO

directing, programming, and literary management, as his function is to identify the highest quality of artists for our historic theatre. His vision behind unforgettable live experiences and storytelling has become a creative solution from the stage to the screen - He spent 4 seasons as the Executive Producer of Gretna Theatre, has worked on television networks and films including TLC and HGTV, and helped create events and entertainment for brands such as T-Mobile and Walmart while at Live Nation. Originally from Lancaster, Brian is a proud Temple alum and a member of the Casting Society of America.

**MARK D. SYLVESTER** (Managing Director) Mark is proud to be celebrating his 30th season at WST. His extensive career has spanned Summer Stock to Broadway as an actor, stage manager, box office treasurer, theatre manager, marketing and public relations director and general manager. After several years working with commercial theatre, he has devoted his career to non-profit theatre companies since 1987. To date, Mark has been associated with more than 500 stage productions. An avid collector of musical theatre recordings, his collection contains over 3,500 cast albums from around the world. Widely regarded as a theatrical marketing expert, Mark lectures and consults with organizations internationally. He has served on several boards including seven years with the National Alliance for Musical Theatre where

he now holds the honorary position of Board Emeritus and the Advisory Committee of Samuel French, the international play publisher and licensing company. With Bernard Havard he co-authored the book *Walnut Street Theatre*. Since he joined WST in 1994, it became the most subscribed theatre company in the world.

**BERNARD HAVARD** (*President and Executive Producing/Artistic Director*) *Vox Populi* (The Voice of the People) was written on WST Playbills in the 1800s. Whenever WST has strayed from a populist program, the theatre has gone bankrupt. When I came here 42 years ago, we had no programs and no audience. Today we enjoy one of the largest subscription bases of any theatre in the world. So, my thanks to our loyal audience and a warm welcome to newcomers who enjoy and believe in what we do. I admire the artists who dedicated their lives to the theatre and WST, particularly. Our theatre is a non-profit 501-C3 institution, and we rely on contributed income to extend our reach into the community. Last season we reached more than 41,000 students in our city schools. We have 19 esteemed trustees who give their time, wisdom, and contributions to help guide this historical treasure. I came to WST in 1982, and I am as excited now about our future as I was in the beginning. My heartfelt thanks to all who enter this theatre. For my biography, go to About Us on our website at [WalnutStreetTheatre.org](http://WalnutStreetTheatre.org)

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The Director is a member of the **STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



The mission of the Walnut Street Theatre Company is to sustain the tradition of professional theatre and contribute to its future viability and vitality. It does so through the production and presentation of professional theatre; the encouragement, training, and development of artists; the development of diverse audiences; and the preservation and chronicling of its theatre building, a National Historic Landmark.



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Walnut Street Theatre is a member of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania, and the League of Historic American Theatres. Walnut Street Theatre receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



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"Anyone who has built a program from scratch knows that it's a giant task."

—Brad Gumbel

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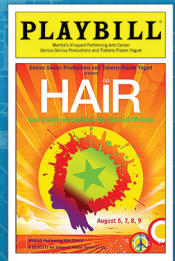
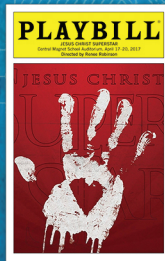
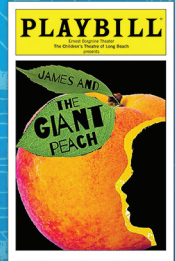
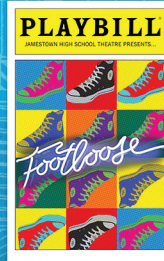
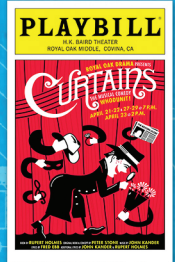
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