

**WORLD  
PREMIERE**

A bewitching new comedy!



**THE  
ATTALA COUNTY  
GARDEN CLUB**

Written and Directed by **Topher Payne**

**APRIL 7-19, 2026**

Sponsored in part by

Bill McCarty and  
Paul Vanderberry

Eudora Welty New Play Series Endowment Fund of  
the Community Foundation for Mississippi

**NEW STAGE**  
*Theatre*

Costume Designer  
**Caroline Martin**

Lighting Designer  
**Anna Dunbar**

Co-Scenic Designer/Technical Director  
**Richard Lawrence**

Co-Scenic Designer  
**Jimmy Robertson**

Production Manager  
**Casey Nelms**

Stage Manager  
**Rachel Boudreaux**

Sound Designer  
**Callie Jackson**

The New Stage Theatre  
Production of

# THE ATTALA COUNTY GARDEN CLUB

by  
Topher Payne

THE ATTALA COUNTY GARDEN CLUB is produced by special arrangement  
with Best Idea Wins, Inc.

## WARNING

This performance contains theatrical fog and haze.

## SETTING

Aunt Polly's house, Kosciusko, Mississippi

## TIME

Spring, 1987

Any video and/or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

There will be a 15-minute intermission

# CAST

ROSE CHIPLEY ..... Mahri Emma McLean  
TAMARA THWEET..... Kerri Courtney Sanders  
BETTYE LITTLE-LANDRUM ..... Jessica Wilkinson  
DANITA DIXON..... Ashia Benford  
ALICE HODGE ..... Viola Dacus  
EUPHROSINA “EFFIE JO” PICKLE..... Iliana Lucero Barron  
JOLENE GLADNEY ..... Jo Ann Robinson\*

## UNDERSTUDIES

**Understudies never substitute for listed performers unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.**

For Rose Chipley: Hannah Beth Rollman<sup>+</sup>; For Tamara Thweet: Anna Dunbar; For Bettye Little-Landrums: Mandy Kate Myers; For Danita Dixon: Michaela Williams<sup>+</sup>; For Alice Hodge: Wendie Sheppard; For Euphrosina ‘Effie Jo’ Pickle: Reese Overstreet; For Jolene Gladney: Kymbrianna Griggs<sup>+</sup>

\* Appears through courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

<sup>+</sup> Member of the Associate Artist Company

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## Topher Payne

a native of Kosciusko, Mississippi, began his theatrical career at New Stage Theatre as a production intern at age seventeen. His first works for the stage were produced in The Hewes Room after mainstage shows,

performed by the staff and Artistic Associates, as well as his coworkers from The Java Parlor.

Topher is now the author of more than a dozen plays, including ***Perfect Arrangement***, which was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, and the winner of the Osborn Prize from The American Theatre Critics Association. ***Perfect Arrangement*** had its Off-Broadway premiere in 2015, and has since been produced in forty-six states and eight countries. Other notable works include ***The Baby Shower*** (produced by New Stage as ***Morningside*** in 2018), ***Tokens of Affection***, and the recent hit comedy ***A First Lady's Guide to Killing the President***.

Topher is a seven-time nominee and three-time winner of The Gene-Gabriel Moore Playwriting Award, and his holiday comedy ***Let Nothing You Dismay*** received the Suzi Bass Award for Outstanding World Premiere. Readers of Creative Loafing named him Atlanta's Best Local Playwright nine times, and he was selected as one of "Ten Playwrights You Should Know" by Southern Theatre magazine.

As a screenwriter, Topher has scripted six films for The Hallmark Channel. His most recent, ***The Christmas Baby***, was a 2026 GLAAD Media Award Nominee for Outstanding Film for Television. In 2018, Topher was inducted into The Georgia Theatre Hall of Fame.

Topher and his husband, writer and artist Charlie James Cote, currently live outside Atlanta with a dog named Arlo and a cat named Fred.

# *From the Playwright*

My first exposure to a play was the annual outdoor Passion Play at First United Methodist Church in Kosciusko. ***His Last Days*** was a production of epic scale involving the efforts of the entire congregation. The performance culminated in Jesus ascending into heaven in one of those cherry pickers the phone company uses, accompanied by strobe lights, fog, and the Hallelujah chorus. For three nights a year, my home church became a theatre.

This, as you might imagine, had a rather profound impact on me. First, I learned the lesson I've taken with me throughout my professional life- whether you're getting paid or not, all theatre is community theatre. We come together in the service of a story worth telling, and the only way it works is if we welcome each other agree to work as one. That includes the audience as well- you're our most essential collaborator, and we must consider where you're coming from, what you need from us, and what we hope to offer you.

The second lesson I learned watching the congregants at First Methodist was the thing that sealed my fate as a playwright and screenwriter- if you have something important to say, don't tell people a story, show them a story. Give them characters they care about in a world they'd want to visit for a while. The connection you forge with the story is the whole point of me doing this. I love my movies a whole bunch, but I'm not in the room when an audience receives them. For that, I gotta come to the theatre.

Thirty years ago, when New Stage Theatre founder Jane Reid Petty was directing a production of ***Molly Sweeney***, she took me aside during a rehearsal break and explained the impulse behind the motto hanging on the wall of the green room- "We have this hope." It was a reminder to always enter a theatre with hope- not stress, nor frustration, nor the illusion of perfection. Just... hope. I try to do that every time I walk into a theatre, but particularly when I walk into this one. I encourage you to do the same. It's a wonderful feeling.

So I accepted Francine's challenge to write "a very Mississippi story," which for me meant it would be centered on very strong, witty, complicated women, concerning matters of faith, community, and how we make peace with our shared history. I wanted to celebrate outsiders. And above all, it had to be a comedy- because in this place I will always call home, maintaining a sense of humor is the magic ingredient that makes everything else flourish.

Thank you for coming to see the story I wrote for you. It's good to be home.

Sincerely,  
Cleve and Sheryl's Son

## THE CAST



**ILIANA LUCERO BARRON** (Euphrosina "Effie Jo" Pickle) (she/ella/her) is thrilled to make her New Stage Theatre debut! Credits include: *On Your Feet!* (Town Hall Arts Center), *The Colorado New Play Summit*, *The Shakespeare in the Parking Lot Tour* (Denver Center for the Performing Arts); *You Enjoy Myself* (Local Theatre); *The Taming of the Shrew* (Theatreworks); *ALMA* (Curious Theatre); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare in the Wild). She primarily works as a teaching artist for the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, but also directs, writes, and advocates in her community. Barron would like to thank the New Stage team, her castmates, her incredible partner, and Topher for believing in her work. Enjoy the show!



**ASHIA BENFORD** (Danita Dixon) is a local actor, director, and theatre educator. Her stage credits include *Race*, *9 Parts of Desire*, *Mahalia: A Gospel Musical*, *Hairspray*, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Is God Is*, *Chicken and Biscuits*, and *We Need to Talk*. Her directing credits include: *Matilda the Musical*, *Pipeline*, *Sunset Baby*, *For Colored Girls...*, and *Top Dog/Underdog*. She has recently joined the theatre department at Wells APAC, where she teaches elementary, middle, and high school students. Benford also holds an M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and is a therapist at Progressive Counseling, where she utilizes theatre and therapy to help clients rewrite their stories, express their feelings, and create meaningful change. She is excited to join this talented cast and is grateful to Topher for this opportunity.



**VIOLA DACUS** (Alice Hodge) was most recently seen at New Stage Theatre as Aunt March/Mrs. Kirk in *Little Women*. She has also appeared with New Stage as Julia in *Lend Me a Soprano*, Princess Dragomiroff in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Mrs. Van Daan in *Diary of Anne Frank*, Emily Brent in *And Then There Were None*, Ouiser Boudreaux in *Steel Magnolias*, and Lady Bird Johnson in *All the Way* among others. As a concert vocal soloist, Dacus has performed throughout the Southern U.S., New York and London, as well as cities in Israel, Jordan, and Greece. She is Professor of Music and Voice Area Coordinator at Mississippi College.

## actor chat

Stay and meet the cast after *The Attala County Garden Club* following the show on Wednesday, April 8, Saturday, April 11 and Thursday, April 16, after the evening performance. Audience members may ask questions of the actors, directors and designers in an informal setting.



**ANNA DUNBAR** (Lighting Designer/Co-Properties Designer/Tamara Thweet U.S.) is a performer, theatre/film technician, sketch comedian, and writer originally from Madison, MS. She's worked several shows here at New Stage in many capacities and is so excited and thankful to be a part of this magical, super(natural) show! She's studied, performed, and worked at theatres and studios including The Second City, Blue Man Group, Broadway in Chicago, Acting Studio Chicago, iO Chicago, The Annoyance Theatre, and the Neo-Futurists. She's also worked in the UK for a

show, *Ubu Cocu*, that was accepted into two London theatre festivals and is now being submitted to fringe festivals around the UK. She's written, produced, designed, and directed multiple independent film projects including two of her very own web series *Scratch That!* (YouTube) and *Bottled Up* (winner of two film festival awards and participant in five film festivals). You are enough. You are loved. You matter.



**KYMBRIANNA GRIGGS+** (Jolene Gladney U.S.) is a recent BFA acting graduate from the University of Southern Mississippi. Their USM performance credits include *Sense and Sensibility* (Fanny), *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* (Shea), *Is God Is* (Racine), and more. Born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, Griggs is deeply grateful to their family and friends for their continued support and wisdom as they begin this new journey!



**MAHRI EMMA MCLEAN** (Rose Chipley/Box Office Manager) is a 2023 graduate of Belhaven University's theatre performance program. Favorite acting credits include *Lost Girl* (Wendy), *The Moors* (Emilie), *Mamma Mia!* (Sophie Sheridan), and *The Spitfire Grill* (Shelby Thorpe). McLean has worked for New Stage Theatre in various capacities for five seasons, and is now in her second year as Box Office Manager. She is eternally grateful for the opportunity to both work in and perform in live theatre full time. Thank you to the wonderful team of this show, my family

back home in Colorado, and to my partner Corey for his unwavering love and support.



**MANDY KATE MYERS** (Bettye Little-Landrum U.S.) is delighted to return to New Stage Theatre, where audiences last saw her in *Disney's Frozen*. Other notable New Stage appearances include Beulah in *Come From Away*, Marilyn Wald in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music*, Mrs. Peacock in *Clue*, and Babette in *Disney's Beauty & The Beast*. Additional favorite credits include *54/54/54* at Feinstein's/54 Below in New York, The Witch in *Into the Woods*, Kate Monster in *Avenue Q*, Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, Amy in *Company*, and Kate in *All*

*My Sons*. A graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Myers serves on the boards of Fondren Theatre Workshop and Cheshire Abbey. She also works as Assistant Show Choir Director and Theatre Instructor at Jackson Academy, and as Talent Coordinator/Workshops Coordinator for BroadwayCon in New York.



**REESE OVERSTREET** (Euphrosina 'Effie Jo' Pickle U.S.) is so happy to be back at New Stage Theatre, where she was last seen on the main stage as Susan in *Wait Until Dark*. She earned her BFA in Acting for Stage and Screen from the University of Mississippi. Recent credits include Cora in *Lost Girl*, Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods*, Pilar in *Legally Blonde*, Daughter in *The Trail to Oregon!*, and Meg (u/s) in *Little Women*. When not on stage, she teaches theatre to preschoolers, lower schoolers, and middle schoolers at Jackson Academy, where she also serves as the Assistant Director

of Afterschool.



**JO ANN ROBINSON\*** (Jolene Gladney) has worked professionally for more than 50 years in television, film, and regional theatres across the U.S. From 1978-1989, she was based out of Los Angeles where credits included co-starring roles in *The New Love American Style* and the nationally syndicated *Comedy of Comedies*. She appeared as a stand-up comedienne at Hollywood's Laugh Factory and The Ice House. She was also a founding member of the comedy group Half-A-Deck, named as 'Best Bet' by the LA Times. Robinson has been a regular at New Stage since 1990. Some New Stage credits

include *Noises Off*, *Lend Me a Soprano*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Lombardi*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *Idols of the King*, *Marvin's Room*, *Grace & Glorie*, *Misery*, and *Rumors*. Other regional theatre credits include *Always*, *Patsy Cline*, *Angels in America I and II*, *Lips Together*, *Teeth Apart*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which earned her a Best Actress nomination by the Austin, TX. Cities Circle. Robinson has several movies out that can be streamed. Two include *Hitman*, playing opposite Glen Powell, and *We Have a Ghost*, playing opposite David Harbour and Anthony Mackie. Upon initial release, both films were rated #1 Worldwide on Netflix.



**HANNAH BETH ROLLMAN**<sup>+</sup> (Rose Chipley U.S.) is a graduate of Belhaven University, where she earned her B.A. in theatre performance and her B.S. in biology. Her favorite roles from Belhaven include Susy in *Glimpses of the Moon*, Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and Guard in *The Burial at Thebes*. She has also previously performed at New Stage in *Little Women* (Troll/Amy U.S.) as well as in the Unframed shows *The Grown-Ups* (Maeve) and *Fairview* (Suze). Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Rollman finds joy outside of the theater in creating digital collages, finding new favorite songs, and playing a nice session of D&D. She is thrilled to join the team at New Stage and plans to use the knowledge and experience she accumulates to pursue a career in film acting. Philippians 1:6.



**KERRI COURTNEY SANDERS** (Tamara Thweet) is thrilled to be back at New Stage Theatre. She is a Mississippi-based actor, director, and playwright with such recent New Stage credits as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Silent Sky*, and *The Great Gatsby*. Additional acting credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Quiet on the Set*, and MPB's *Job Hunter* series. Sanders currently serves as Director of Performing Arts at Jackson Academy. When she isn't onstage, she's seeking out new adventures with her husband, Michael.



**WENDIE SHEPPARD** (Alice Hodge U.S.) is a native of Clarksville, TN and now resides in Richland, MS. Her more recent credit includes Old Sarah in the newly developed, newly performed show *We Need to Talk* by John Maxwell as part of New Stage's Eudora Welty New Play Series. Other favorite roles include, Pat Nixon in the 2019 award-winning show, *Tea for Three*, and Lizbeth Taylor in *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, where she was recognized for her "Outstanding Feature Performance" at the 2023 MS Theatre Festival. She holds a B.S. in Criminal Psychology from Liberty University, VA. She is excited to be a part of this production and encourages you to laugh out loud and enjoy!



**JESSICA WILKINSON** (Betty Little-Landrum) is a SAG-AFTRA actor, former educator, and a lifestyle host for WLBT. With over 30 mainstage credits, she has been a regular actor at New Stage Theatre since 2001. Some favorite roles include Mother Superior in *Sister Act*, Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*, Annie Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker*, and Percy in *The Spitfire Grill*. Other favorite shows include *Best of Enemies*, *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, *Hairspray*, *The Foreigner*, *Boeing Boeing*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *9 to 5*. Select feature film/tv credits include *The Livingston Gardener*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Starve* (Syfy), *Boots* (Netflix), *Every Time a Bell*

*Rings* (Hallmark) and *I Killed My BFF* (Lifetime), working with actors such as James Franco, James Kyson, Tim Blake Nelson, James Caan, and David Spade. Wilkinson has a master's in English and taught at Florence High School and Jackson Prep for 13 years. She currently anchors *Today at 11* on WLBT and is the field reporter for *Studio 3*. She's mom to Belle Grace, Noble, and schnorkie Boo Radley, and wife to Lenny, who serves as the Wing Commander of the 172nd Airlift Wing. She dedicates this show to her Granny Lou— the original nurse Betty, who taught me everything I know about jelly-making and putting up garden goodies.



**MICHAELA WILLIAMS**<sup>+</sup> (Danita Dixon U.S.) is an actor from Columbus, Georgia, with a passion for fashion and a flair for the dramatic! She is a graduate of Auburn University with a BFA in musical theatre. Her previous roles include *Ordinary Days* (Deb), *Natasha Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812* (Fedy Dolokhov), *Barbecue* (Marie), *The Wolves* (#00), *Violet* (Lula Buffington), and more! Williams' artistry also includes draping in the costume shop, writing new works, and exploring various styles of dance.

When she's not performing, she enjoys reading and relaxing with a cup of coffee. She is so excited to begin her professional career at New Stage, and to embrace all of the opportunities yet to come!

## PRODUCTION TEAM

**RICHARD LAWRENCE** (Technical Director/Co-Scenic Designer) serves as the vice president of Fondren Theatre Workshop and has appeared in *A Christmas Memory* at New Stage, FTW's *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Buck Nekkid for Jesus*, directed FTW's *Every Christmas Story Ever Told*, and most recently appeared as Trekkie Monster in *Avenue Q*. He was also the director of the widely successful productions of *Cabaret* and *Company*, which were joint productions of FTW and Actor's Playhouse of Pearl, with support from New Stage. Lawrence has been seen in New Stage productions of *The Trip to Bountiful* and UnFramed's *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Weir*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, and *Dublin Carol*. Lawrence has won three Best Set awards at Mississippi Theatre Association conferences and has also won Best Set at Southeastern Theatre Conference.

**RACHEL BOUDREAUX** (Stage Manager) is thrilled to join New Stage Theatre as their Resident Stage Manager. Rachel is a member of the Stage Managers' Association and received their Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from the University of Southern Mississippi. Past work includes *Frozen*, *Wait Until Dark*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Come From Away*, *Big Fish*, *Into The Woods*, *Is God Is*, and *Macbeth*. Boudreaux is passionate about stage management and theatre education and can often be found monologuing or reading. [www.rachelboudreauxsm.com](http://www.rachelboudreauxsm.com)

**JIMMY ROBERTSON** (Co-Scenic Designer) has been involved in set design work since high school and at New Stage since college. He also has designed sets for Millsaps College, Mississippi College, Mississippi Opera, Actor's Theatre, Black Rose Theatre, Hinds Community College, Pearl Community Theatre, and for the Galloway UMC Players. Among his favorite designs were those for *LuAnn Hampton Laverty Oberlander*, *Talley's Folly*, *Some Rain*, *And Then There Were None*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. His "real" job was in the field of education where he has served, until retirement, as a teacher, curriculum assistant, principal, and personnel director.

**CALLIE JACKSON** (Engineer) is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a B.A. in Political Science and is from Madison, MS. She began working at New Stage Theatre in 2024 as a board operator and is now the Resident Sound Designer and Engineer. She enjoys working with different schools and community theaters in her free time. Some of her regional credits include: *Million Dollar Quartet Christmas*, *Little Women*, *Come From Away*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, and *Frozen*.

**CAROLINE MARTIN** (Costume Designer) is new to New Stage Theatre. She has designed and assistant designed for many productions such as *Pinkalicious*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Big Fish*. She has experience in stitcher and wardrobe positions, as well as a B.A. in theatre from William Carey University. Her husband and her have recently moved back from the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky to the pine forests of Mississippi.

**ANTONIO JUAREZ** (Assistant Technical Director/Lead Electrician) has worked in theatre for 6 years, beginning from when he was the technical director in his senior year for Northwest Rankin's production of *Zombie Prom*. His first professional role was here at New Stage sewing phantom cloaks and board operation for *A Christmas Carol* in 2021. Juarez's favorite shows that he has worked on are *Clue*, *Fences*, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, and *The Play that Goes Wrong*. Juarez is also pursuing a BFA in theatrical design at the University of Mississippi.

**LAMANA STRINGFELLOW** (Wardrobe Supervisor) has a B.A. in Theatre Performance and in Traditional/Digital Art from Belhaven University. Past credits include *Frozen* (Lead Dresser/Costume Assistant) at New Stage Theatre, *Tuck Everlasting* (Director) and *Four Old Broads* (Stage Manager) at Black Rose Theatre, *Seussical* (Director) at Brick Street Players, and *The Wizard of Oz* (Props Designer) and *Silent Sky* (Makeup/Hair Designer) at Belhaven University.

**CASEY NELMS** (Production Manager) is a proud Mississippian born and raised in Pearl, MS. She received her Bachelor of social work from Belhaven University followed

by her master of social work from the University of Southern California. While living in Los Angeles, she transitioned from a robust therapy career to producing and supervising productions in the film industry. Nelms has been fortunate enough to work with companies such as Lionsgate, Patriot Pictures, and Convoke Media, as well as many others, and now happily serves as production manager at New Stage Theatre, where she has worked on productions such as *Little Women*, *Come From Away*, and *The Play That Goes Wrong*. She lives on the Ross Barnett Reservoir with her husband, Joey, and daughter, Cleopatra, and their two droopy-faced beagles, Olive and Mabel.

## CREW

Assistant Technical Director/Lead Electrician . . . . . Antonio Juarez  
 Properties . . . . . Rachel Boudreaux, Anna Dunbar,  
 Richard Lawrence, Topher Payne, Tyler Russell  
 Wardrobe Supervisor . . . . . Lamana Stringfellow  
 Light Board Operator . . . . . Michaela Williams+  
 Sound Board Operator. . . . . Tarvorious K. House+  
 Running Crew . . . . . Kymbrianna Griggs+, Seth Rodivich+, Hannah Beth Rollman+  
 Construction. . . . . Dave Ellis, Jimmy Robertson  
 Scenic Charge Artist . . . . . Michael Montgomery  
 Painter. . . . . Jessica Farris

+Associate Artist Company Member

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**FRANCINE THOMAS REYNOLDS** (Artistic Director) has been the artistic director at New Stage since 2006 and has worked as a theatre artist for 38 years. She recently directed *Wait Until Dark*, *Come From Away*, *Noises Off*, *Gaslight*, *Beautiful*, *The Carole King Musical*; *The Secret Garden*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, *I Just Stopped By to See the Man*, *The Debate for Democracy*, *Bright Star*, *Hell in High Water*, *Sweat*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Silent Sky*, and *Best of Enemies*. Favorite acting roles include Dr. Katherine Brandt in *33 Variations*, Polly in *Other Desert Cities*, Lucille in *Dividing the Estate*, and Edna Earle in Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart*. She has directed a variety of shows including *All The Way*, *The Whipping Man*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Our Town*, *Red*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Hairspray*, *Mahalia: A Gospel Musical*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Lombardi*, *Boeing, Boeing*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Gee's Bend*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Annie*, *A Soldier's Play*, and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. Reynolds is a 2022 recipient of a Directing Fellowship from the Mississippi Arts Commission. She served three terms on the board of directors for the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and several terms on the Mississippi Theatre Association Board of Directors. Reynolds has served on grant panels for the National Endowment of the Arts and the Mississippi Arts Commission and has enjoyed

adjudicating for Poetry Out Loud and the Southeastern Theatre Conference. Recently she served as a member of the 2025 Governor's Arts Awards Selection Committee for the Mississippi Arts Commission. Originally, from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Reynolds enjoys living in Jackson with her husband, Chuck.

**DAWN BUCK** (Managing Director) has worked on staff at New Stage for more than 20 years. She began her career at New Stage in the fall of 1981 as a box office assistant. Since that time, she has worked as box office manager, audience services director, house manager, bookkeeper, business manager and marketing director. Buck's other professional artistic credits include the USA International Ballet Competition, the Thalia Mara Arts International Foundation – World Performance Series presenting a series of performing artists including American Ballet Theatre, Aquila Theatre of London, Joshua Bell, Alvin Ailey, Cirque Eloize, Wynton Marsalis, and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. She attended Belhaven University and is an alumnus of Leadership Jackson and a graduate of Dale Carnegie. Buck also completed a residency on theatre management at the Eugene O'Neill Center through a grant from the Foundation for the Extension and Development of Professional American Theatre (FEDAPT). Prior to serving on the staff of the USA International Ballet Competition, she also worked with America Reads – Mississippi, and with Imageworks – Films for Business, where she assisted with the production of commercials, documentaries, and training videos. She resides in the Heatherwood neighborhood with her husband David and has two sons who live in the big “N” cities of New York and Nashville.

**BILL MCCARTY III** (General Manager), a graduate of the University of Mississippi, has an extensive background in wholesale and retail sales and real estate property management with the Jitney Jungle supermarket chain. The company was founded by his Grandfather Will McCarty and two Holman cousins in 1919. The families grew the business into a profitable billion-dollar Mississippi-based company led by Bill McCarty Jr, his father, Henry Holman and many talented associates which sold in 1996. During his grocery career, Jack Stevens and Ivan Rider recruited Bill in 1973 to run a follow-spotlight for *The Gershwin Show* at the theatre's original Gallatin Street location. He has continued to volunteer with New Stage for more than 51 years in all areas including production, lighting and sound design, back-stage, and for New Stage fundraising events. He is involved in the day-to-day management, maintenance, and production for the theatre and serves on the Board of Trustees as a lifetime member. His favorite design credits are *A Christmas Carol* (1984), *Greater Tuna* (1986), *The Gin Game* (1987), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1990).

**MELISSA TILLMAN** (Director of Business Services) is a graduate of Belhaven University where she received a B.A. in technical theatre. She served as the audience services director and marketing director at New Stage, has worked as a box office associate at Lawlor Events Center in Reno, Nevada, and assisted with many box office activities at Belhaven University. Tillman has stage managed many shows in several parts of the country,

including Las Vegas and Tennessee. Her stage managing credits include *Oklahoma!*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Love's Labours Lost*; and *Noye's Fludd* and *La Boheme* with the Mississippi Opera. This is Tillman's ninetieth season with New Stage. She currently resides in Madison with her husband, Kyle, their son, River, and their dog Vash.

**JERIANNA SHAW** (Marketing Director) is a proud 2016 graduate of Mississippi State University with a passion for theatre and a love for good pizza. When she's not at New Stage, you can find her at Poppy Pies—her and her partner's family-run pizza shop located at the Belhaven Town Center named after their daughter Poppy. In 2025, The Shaw-Welch family welcomed their second daughter, Penny, into the world. Shaw believes life is best served with a side of laughter, a dash of drama, and, of course, plenty of pizza.

**BETTY WONG** (Box Office Assistant/Education Assistant) begins her 18th season at New Stage. She continues to enjoy traveling to schools and towns throughout the state with the Professional Apprentice Company to provide live theatre experiences for students and adults of all ages. When not on the road, you can find her in the box office. She has also served for many years as a volunteer in other areas of the theatre. Her professional work experience in education and her passion for live theatre have contributed to the growth and expansion of New Stage's Education Department. She has served as a consultant to school districts throughout the state of Mississippi. Wong has a B.S. in educational psychology from Mississippi State University, a M.Ed. from Delta State University, and recently won the 2019 Exemplary Arts Service Award from the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education.

**CARLA MARSH** (House Manager) received her B.A. in criminal justice with an emphasis in juvenile justice from Jackson State University. She is pleased to be returning to New Stage for her twenty-first season. Marsh is employed full-time with the Hinds County Sheriff's office.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of New Stage Theatre wishes to thank the following individuals and companies for the generous donation of time and resources to this production and the 60th season.

Greg Campbell

Charlie James Cote

Ashleigh Duncan

Kaylyn Johnson

Timothy Kimbell II

Joey Nelms

Sheryl Payne

Ron Rodenmeyer

Amy Smith

Connie Taylor

COMING  
NEXT

# Ragtime

Book by Terrence McNally; Music by Stephen Flaherty; Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens. Based on the novel “Ragtime” by E. L. Doctorow

May 26 – June 7, 2026

Set against the backdrop of early 20th-century America, *Ragtime* weaves together the lives of three families—each struggling to navigate the rapidly changing world around them. From the confines of suburban New Rochelle to the bustling streets of New York City, this powerful musical explores themes of race, class, and the pursuit of the American Dream. As historical figures like Henry Ford, Emma Goldman, and Harry Houdini intersect with fictional characters, *Ragtime* becomes a vibrant tapestry of hope, turmoil, and transformation. With its soaring score and unforgettable characters, *Ragtime* is an epic story that still resonates today. “When the world is changing, will you change with it?”



**Find us on Facebook and Instagram** or sign up to receive our newsletter at [newstagetheatre.com](http://newstagetheatre.com) to get updates on events, casting, and more!

# ALL THAT GROWS

An Exhibit of Oil Paintings  
by Students of Julie McCartney  
located in the Hewes Room

## About the Artists

**Claudia Addison** is from Jackson, Mississippi and has been interested in art since she was a little girl. Her mother, Helen Yoste, was a watercolor artist and influenced her love of art and painting. Addison took her art to a more serious level in 2009, when she began to take a drawing portrait class with Jerrod Partridge along with color and painting workshops with him. He asked at one of the workshops to give thought to what you want to communicate when you paint, which she has given much thought to. She has studied under the amazing Henry Hensche painters, Julie McCartney, Camille Przewodek, Richard Kelso, John Ebersberger and Sammy Britt. Hensche believed in painting what you see using light and shadow to create your color masses. Her landscapes, still lifes and portraits are painted paying close attention to light and shadow and the way color is seen in that context. The subjects she paints are scenes that make her feel at peace and content, trying to reflect a bit of God's amazing creation. Addison is also a member of the Mississippi Oil Painters Association, and the Mississippi Artist Guild.

**Susan Cobb** has been painting for a decade, taking workshops from Henry Hensche trained artists and studying under Julie McCartney. Cobb has participated in Plein Air events, painting for growth and enjoyment while attempting to capture the beauty in All that Grows!

**Durden Moss** states that when she was very young, her grandfather drew pictures for her. She fell in love with art then. When she was in college, she studied art history in Italy for a semester. Go forward 20 years and her husband Jim asked her to make him a quilt. She took a class from Millsaps College and has been making art quilts for 35 years. A friend once said that Moss painted with a needle. Moss has been taking art from Julie McCartney for the past three years.

**Wilma Vanlandingham** has enjoyed creating things since an early age. Vanlandingham spent many hours making projects from the Childcraft Make and Do, published by Worldbook Encyclopedia, as well as other craft books. Her mother was an artist and encouraged her to color outside the lines! Vanlandingham took an art class in college, but her art pursuits really took off when a friend (who is also in this group of artists) insisted she go to a class with her taught by Julie McCartney. Vanlandingham has never looked back!

**Leigh Buckner** smith has enjoyed studying with Julie McCartney for a number of years, focusing primarily on Henry Hensche's method of painting. While Julie is an incredibly skilled artist in her own right, she is also a passionate and gifted teacher. Additionally, Smith has been fortunate to attend workshops led by Jerrod Partridge, Richard Kelso, and John Ebersberger. Painting with this lovely group of friends brings her great joy, and she is very thankful for the opportunity to learn and create alongside them!

— ■ —

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