



FULTON COUNTY ARTS & CULTURE
WEST END PERFORMING ARTS CENTER AND
ESSENTIAL THEATRE PRESENT

2015

ESSENTIAL THEATRE PLAY FESTIVAL

TWO WORLD PREMIERES BY GEORGIA PLAYWRIGHTS!
+ BARE ESSENTIALS READING SERIES

JULY 24-AUGUST 23



THE OLD SHIP OF ZION

BY NATALIA NAMAN
DIRECTED BY PETER HARDY



LILLIAN LIKES IT

BY JOSHUA MIKEL
DIRECTED BY SHANNON EUBANKS

As our current cultural moment is buffeted on one side by the claims of virtual reality and electronic presence, and on the other by a politicized and commodified spirituality (from Christian fundamentalism to new age gurus), it behooves us to think more seriously about what theatre and performance have to teach us about the possibilities and perils of summoning the incorporeal. To what end are we seeking an escape from bodies?

Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex:
Performing Public Memories* (1997)

From the very first, theater has been haunted by spirits—by gods, legendary heroes, ghosts, and their tales: contradictorily, a gathering of actors before a living audience invokes, amid all those concrete, physical bodies sharing space in the present moment, those spiritual forces that inspire or haunt or threaten. The theater begins with the mismatch of body and spirit, of our wills and our physical natures. This is human identity: a struggle between our intractable physical presence and something not-present, something immaterial, that compels us toward the selves we desire to be.

Essential Theatre's 2015 plays, Joshua Mikel's *Lillian Likes It* and Natalia Naman Temesgen's *The Old Ship of Zion*, both position themselves at the division between flesh and spirit, between the body and the will. Both stories are haunted by death, premised on it—the death of a man too-little known and understood, who reaches out beyond the grave with an appeal to be seen, understood, noticed in a way he never was in life, and the dying-off of a small church congregation, as figured in the slow death of its oldest, and most beloved congregant. In each story, the dramatic action begins in the refusal of the inevitable: Mikel's Lillian desperately tries, with contemporary internet magic, to conjure the dead man, while Temesgen's congregation places all of its hopes on a ritual of revival even as Mama Gwen and her church slip further and further away.

In both plays, lost individuals turn to community, struggling to find there the magical power to resist the inevitable triumph of the body—in all its stubborn defiance of our (possibly misdirected), desires. Lillian turns to a Facebook-like cyber-community, where every passing detail of a life might be affirmed by a thoughtless keyboard click, and, in this ungrounded space of gratuitous affirmation, attempts the impossible—communicating with the dead. And Quincy, seeking spiritual solace for an identity being torn apart by unexpected and compelling needs, turns to a dying church, hoping for a revival of answers that no longer provide real solutions. Both playwrights ask us to believe in the mad hope of these doomed dreamers—and yet to see the inevitability that the reality of the body, of death and of unbidden desire, must, in the end, be accepted. Thus, each play is, in its essence, a work of theater—an art that may transcend, but can never escape, the physical, human body.

THIS PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY:



This program is supported in part by the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs.



Funding for this program is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners.



THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED OUR
FALL 2014 POWER2GIVE CAMPAIGN

Bob Smith	Jane B. Kroessig	Kevin Renshaw	Vynnie Meli
Kathy Manning	Jo Howarth Noonan	Caroline Kelso	Maryanne Gaunt
Ellen McQueen	Susan M. Bledsoe	Lauren Gunderson	Hank Kimmel
Doug Kaye	Leslee Sinclair	Rozanne Stark	Mark Perloe
Johnny Thigpen	Cheryl Shaw	Mary Wellington	Jessica Linden
Karla Jennings	Mark Perloe	Barbara O'Haley	Christine Carlsten
Melinda Wood	Cindy Dover	Jill Patrick	Jennifer Kimball
Rial Ellsworth	Cathy Jamison	Judith Beasley	
Katherine Brokaw	Annie Harrison Elliott	Barbara Cleveland	
William Hardy	Charles Swint	Amie Kroessig	

SINCE 1987, THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE HAS BEEN DEDICATED TO PRESENTING CHALLENGING AND ENTERTAINING NEW WORKS TO ATLANTA AUDIENCES – ALL SOUTHEASTERN AND WORLD PREMIERES. DURING THAT TIME WE'VE PRODUCED THE WORLD PREMIERES OF THE FOLLOWING PLAYS BY GEORGIA PLAYWRIGHTS:

<i>Only Children</i> by Karen Wurl (1999)	<i>Jim Crow and the Rhythm Darlings</i> by Vynnie Meli (2009)*
<i>Images In Smoke</i> by Karla Jennings (2000)	<i>Qualities of Starlight</i> by Gabriel Jason Dean (2010)*
<i>A Lovely Undertow</i> by Peter Hardy (2000)	<i>A Thousand Circlets</i> by Theroun D'Arcy Patterson (2011)*
<i>Parts They Call Deep</i> by Lauren Gunderson (2001)*	<i>Evelyn in Purgatory</i> by Topher Payne (2012)*
<i>Warts</i> by Bill Gibson (2002)*	<i>The Local</i> , developed by Ellen McQueen (2012)
<i>Speaking Nazi</i> by Karen Page (2003)*	<i>Bat-Hamlet</i> by Jordan Pulliam (2012)
<i>Background</i> by Lauren Gunderson (2004)*	<i>Mysterious Connections</i> by Peter Hardy (2013)
<i>Miss Macbeth</i> by Karen Wurl (2005)*	<i>Stray Dogs</i> by Matthew Myers (2013)*
<i>Charm School</i> by Larry Larson and Eddie Levi Lee (2006)*	<i>Swimming with Jellyfish</i> by Katie Grant Shalin (2013)
<i>Leaving Limbo</i> by Valetta Anderson (2006)*	<i>Ravens & Seagulls</i> by Karla Jennings (2014)*
<i>Fix Me So I Can Stand</i> by Jean Sterrett (2007)*	<i>That Uganda Play</i> by Theroun Patterson (2014)*
<i>Night Travels</i> by Fleck, Wurl, McQueen and the Company (2007)	
<i>West of Eden</i> by Letitia Sweitzer (2008)*	

*Winners of the annual Essential Theatre Playwriting Award, the only such competition that is dedicated exclusively to the work of Georgia writers.



THE OLD SHIP OF ZION

By Natalia Naman

Directed by Peter Hardy

CAST

Quincy	James Gerald Smith
Siblie	Jimmica Collins
Mama Gwen.	Sharon Mansfield
Juanita	Lydia Frempong
Sister Marlowe.	Cheryl Booker
Reverand	Sundiata Rush
Darryl.	Lemond Hayes

TIME: The present

SETTING: Columbus, GA.

A full-length play in one act and runs 90 minutes with no intermission.

Director	Peter Hardy
Dramaturg	Michael Evanden
Stage Manager	Amanda Taylor Brooks
Lighting & Set Designer	Harley Gould
Music Director	Lydia Frempong
Sound Designer	Rial Ellsworth
Costume Designer	Jane B. Kroessig
Propsmaster	Kathy Manning
Technical Director	Danyale Taylor

ADVISORY: Adult themes and situations

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: NATALIA NAMAN

Natalia Naman is a playwright writing and teaching in her hometown of Columbus, GA. Her plays include *The Old Ship of Zion*, *Lawnpeople*, and *Crossing Over*. Her work has been produced at Princeton University, The Cherry Lane Theatre, HERE Arts Center, and Boston Playwrights' Theatre. She is a Cherry Lane Mentor Project Finalist, a three time nominee for the Wendy Wasserstein Prize, and a Lark Play Development Center alumna. She graduated from Princeton University with a BA in English and NYU Tisch with an MFA in Dramatic Writing.



CAST BIOS

Peter Hardy (Director) is the Founding Artistic Director of the Essential Theatre, and has directed over 100 productions in Georgia, North Carolina and New York. He has acted or directed with many of the theatre companies around Atlanta, and was Artistic Director of the North Carolina summer outdoor drama *Unto These Hills* from 1990-2005. He recently won a Suzi Bass Award for his direction of the Theatre for Young Audiences show *And Then They Came for Me*, produced by Georgia Ensemble Theater. He's had over 30 productions of his plays done around the country, and has won playwright awards from the Festival of Southern Theater and the New Southern Theatre Festival, as well as having his play *Mysterious Connections* chosen for development at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference. His play *Sally and Glen* at the Palace was produced by Essential in 2010, and he was named Creative Loafing's Critic's Pick for Best Atlanta Playwright that year. *Sally and Glen* was recently produced again at Out of Box Theater in Marietta.

Amanda Taylor Brooks (Stage Manager) did her professional training as a stage management apprentice at the Alliance Theatre. She has worked with the Down Right, Stage Door Players (where she was the Production Manager), and Theatre Gael, among others. She currently serves on the board of directors for Aris Theatre.

Cheryl Evette Booker (Sister Marlowe) is an Atlanta, Georgia native and has recently performed in: *Ina's Loft* by Jacqueline Clay Chester; The Southside Theatre Guild's Productions of *August Wilson's Fences*, S.M. Shephard-Massat's *Waiting to be Invited* and Lorraine Hansbury's *A Raisin In The Sun*; and The Essential Theatre's 2012 Play Festival Production of *The Local*.

Jimmica Collins (Siblie) is excited to be taking it to church for her Essential Theatre debut! She received a B.F.A in Theatre from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a concentration in Experimental Theater. Jimmica is also a proud graduate of the Horizon Theater Apprentice Company. Favorite acting credits include: *Milk Like Sugar* (Margie), *The 21st Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Marcy), and *Lyle the Crocodile* (Ensemble). Jimmica is forever thankful to God for His many blessings, and to her family and friends for their constant encouragement.

Lydia Frempong (Juanita/Music Director) is a native of Louisville, Kentucky. She graduated in 2013 from Western Kentucky University with B.A. in Theatre, and minored in Broadcast Journalism. Her stage credits include: *Best*

Little Whorehouse in Texas (Miss Mona), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Beneatha), *Stinkykids*, *The Musical* (Skye) among other great shows. This is her first production at Essential Theatre and she is thrilled to have to be a part of introducing this new work! Many thanks to God, her family, and close friends for always believing she could get this far.

Lemond Hayes (Darryl) is a native of Gramercy, Louisiana. He was trained at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. Upon completion of his college education. Lemond was invited to join Total Dance Company of Atlanta, where he studied dance and performed signature company pieces. He recently completed work as Choreographer and Principal Dancer for *Breathe: The Musical*, which debuted in Atlanta and is presently being slated for tour. He has also been a part of several stage plays and productions since moving to Atlanta. Lemond has plans to continue acting, singing, and dancing as a professional career, in addition to one day premiering his very own original musical.

Sharan C. Mansfield (Mama Gwen) is a native of Columbus, Ohio where she worked with Stage Center, Center Stage and Jifunza theater companies. Since moving to Georgia she has worked with Ansley Park Playhouse, Southside Theatre Guild, and Newnan Theater Company. Her current film credits include *To Hell and Back* and *Bessie*.

Sundiata Rush (Reverend) is excited to work with Essential Theatre again, having previously appeared in *Darker Face of the Earth*. He has prior stage and film credits via Philadelphia and Washington D.C., including the movie *A Diamond in the Sky* with Diamond Entertainment Productions, and the play *Outdoor Recess* with the Metropolitan Ebony Theatre. Sundiata was last seen on the Atlanta Stage in Pinch 'N' Ouch Theatre's *Water by the Spoonful*. He wishes to thank his family and friends for all their love and support.

James Gerard Smith (Quincy) is excited and honored to be making his Essential Theatre debut in this year's play festival! He is a graduate of Kennesaw State University with a B.A. in Theatre & Performance Studies. Recent credits include the *One Minute Play Festival* (Actor's Express), *Night Blooms* (Arts Revive), *South Pacific* (Aurora Theatre), and *Ruined* (KSU). Outside of acting, James also has plans to write and direct for theatre and film. James would like to thank his family, friends, and mentors for always supporting, pushing, and encouraging!

bare essentials

Curated by
Founding Artistic Director
Peter Hardy

Join us for our **2015 Bare Essentials Play Reading Series**. All readings will take place at the West End Performing Arts Center and will start at 7:30 p.m., followed by a discussion. The readings will be open to the public with no admission charged.

august 4 DELI by Diane Dexter, directed by Joan McElroy
Managing change at the family-run deli is a struggle, no matter how you slice it.

august 10 THE WAYFARERS by Hillary Simpson Bolle, directed by Elin Rose Hill
Reality mixes with passionate remembrances to spin a tale of seven extraordinary characters, filled with love, manipulation and an intricate web of human relationships.

august 18 WASH, DRY, FOLD by Nedra Pezold Roberts, directed by Barbara Hawkins-Scott
Themes of loss and family secrets unfold in a laundromat run by two sisters as a bad loan threatens their livelihood.

All readings in the Bare Essential series are free and open to the public.
Be sure to stay after for exciting conversation with the director, cast and playwright!

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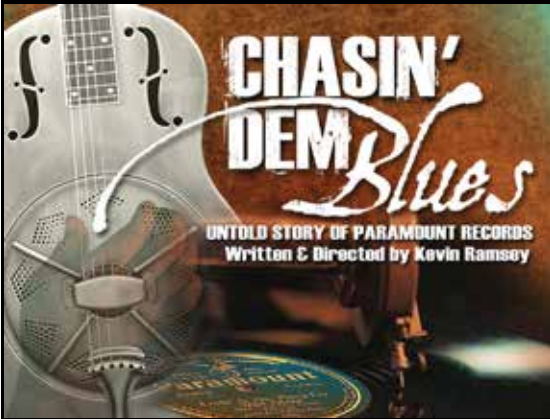
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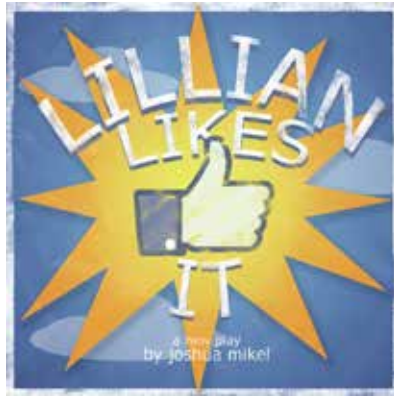
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LILLIAN LIKES IT

By Joshua Mikel

Directed by Shannon Eubanks

CAST

Lillian	Alyssa Caputo
Ernie	Tyler Hayes
Babs/Gatekeeper/EE.	Antonia LaChé
Larry and Ed Pickler.	Ben Silver
Lynne	Christine Vozniak
Knife	Pat Young

TIME: The present

SETTING: In a city like Atlanta, GA.

There will be one ten-minute intermission.

Director	Shannon Eubanks
Dramaturg	Michael Evanden
Assistant Director/Propmaster	Julie Skryzpek
Stage Manager	Xander Sok
Lighting & Set Designer	Harley Gould
Sound Designer	Rial Ellsworth
Costume Designer	Jane B. Kroessig
Technical Director	Danyale Taylor

ADVISORY: Adult language, adult themes

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: JOSHUA MIKEL

Joshua Mikel is an actor, playwright, and music video director from Conyers, GA and a graduate of Florida State University's Theatre and Creative Writing programs. A six time published playwright, Josh is known primarily for his theatre for young audience works *Good Good Trouble on Bad Bad Island* and *The Monster Hunters*. As a director, Josh has created videos for the bands Against Me!, Neon Trees, American Authors, and Waxahatchee. As an actor he has made (albeit small) appearances in the films *We're the Millers*, *The Good Lie*, *Million Dollar Arm*, and can be seen as Stanton Beachhead in VH1's new scripted series *Hindsight*. He is the resident playwright at Endstation Theatre Company (Amherst, VA).



CAST BIOS

Alyssa Caputo (Lillian) received a BA in Theatre and Performance Studies from Kennesaw State University after studying with University of Cincinnati's conservatory program. Her college credits include *Twelfth Night*, *Red Badge of Courage*, *Ulysses*, *Coram Boy*, and *The Collapsible Space Between Us*. She was last seen in the 1MPF at Actor's Express.

Shannon Eubanks (Director) has been a professional actor/director since 1974, performing and directing in repertory theatre across the United States from Alaska to Florida. She became a noted fixture of the Los Angeles theatre scene as an actor and director for fifteen years, receiving multiple nominations in both categories from the Los Angeles Drama Critic's Circle. Along with husband James Donadio and daughter Kate Donadio MacQueen, she loves being part of the Atlanta stage community.

Tyler Hayes (Ernie) is excited to make his Essential Theatre debut. He graduated with a BA in Theatre from Kennesaw State University. Other credits include *The One Minute Play Festival* at Actor's Express, *Bloody Pulp*, *The 24 Hour Play Festival*, and *The Good Person of Szechwan* at KSU.

Antonia LaChé (Babs/ Gatekeeper/ EE) is proud to be part of this cast! Select credits: National Players *Tour 65: Comedy of Errors* (Dromio of Syracuse), *Macbeth* (Banquo), *Homer's Odyssey* (Eurycleia/ Polites) REGIONAL: Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern: *Coriolanus* (Volscean Adrian), Impulse Repertory Company: *The Darker Places Trilogy* (Doctor/Jane) Thank you mother for your support!

Ben Silver (Larry and Ed Pickler) is excited to be teaming up with the Essential Theatre once again! He was recently seen on stage at the Alliance in the World premiere of *Tuck Everlasting*. His favorite credits include Ben in *Six Degrees of Separation* and Adam in *Complete Works of Shakespeare [Abridged]*. Thanks to Jessica de Maria, Matt Huff, and of course his parents, for their love and support.

Xander Sok (Stage Manager) is a student of Georgia Perimeter College. He was playwright in GPC's *Plays In A Day*. He was in Theatre's Art Guild's *The Canterbury Tales* (Reeve) and *Experiment With An Air Pump* (Tom). He was assistant stage manager for Theatrical Outfit's 2014 production of *Gifts of the Magi*.

Danyale Taylor (Technical Director) is excited about her third season with Essential Theatre. She has had the opportunity to work with numerous theatres around Atlanta. She is also currently working on *Chasin' Dem Blues* with Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre. She would like to Thank YOU for supporting LIVE Theatre.

Christie Vozniak (Lynne) is happy to be performing in her first production with Essential Theatre! Christie was last seen in Pinch n' Ouch Theatre's production of *Wall Street Wedding* and understudied with GET in *One Slight Hitch*. When she is not acting, Christie is modeling, dancing, or working at the famous Fox Bros BBQ on Dekalb Avenue.

Pat Young (Knife) is an actor, improviser, and entertainer here in Atlanta. He runs a trivia company called Trivial Matters, which prides itself by doing "trivia that matters." He is a current Guinness World Record holder. Ask him about it sometime.

★ NEW THIS SUMMER ★

essentialmarketplace

Be sure to visit the *Essential Marketplace* in the lobby when you come to see the show. Our company members and friends have many talents in addition to the ones you get to see onstage.

PRODUCTION STAFF BIOS

Jennifer Kimball (Managing Director) first worked with Essential in 2003. She has been involved in various aspects of local and national theatre for years, to include locally with 7Stages Theatre, Theatre du Reve and several other dance and theatre companies. Most recently, she joined the Office of the Arts at Georgia Tech as Student & Artist Engagement Coordinator in the fall of 2013. Thank you for supporting Essential Theatre and live theatre. Enjoy the show!

Barbara Gantt O'Haley (Production Manager) is excited to be returning for her sixth season with the Essential Theatre Festival, after four summers as a stage manager with Essential. Other stage management credits include The Alliance Theatre, The Atlanta Lyric Theatre, and Theatrical Outfit. Love to Patrick.

Danyale Taylor (Technical Director) is excited about her third season with Essential Theatre. Over the past year, she has had the opportunity to work with numerous theatres around Atlanta. Up next she is working on _____. Thank you for supporting LIVE Theatre.

Carter Bevis (Box Office Manager) has been either running a box office or ushering at theaters throughout Atlanta for 20 years, so at some point in time there is a good chance she's either sold you a ticket or given you a program. But she always looks forward to her summer home with Essential.

Harley Gould (Lighting and Set Designer) designs lights, hangs lights, directs lighting for video, runs lighting equipment, designs sets, builds sets, paints sets, loads the damn things in, loads them out, works out all kinds of theatrical special effects. He also creates art (of various disciplines), and sometimes acts (if you can call it that). Oh yes, and sometimes he writes short stories.

Rial Ellsworth (Sound Designer) is primarily known to Atlanta's theatre community as an actor, but he also has a dark side as a sound designer. He is currently the resident sound designer for Stage Door Players in Dunwoody where he has designed numerous shows for the past two years.

Jane B. Kroessig (Costume Designer) is thrilled to be celebrating her 9th year with Essential. She has been honored with 3 Metropolitan Atlanta Theater Awards and 9 nominations, as well as 2 Suzi Bass Award nominations. In the words of famed costumer, Edith Head: "A designer is only as good as the star who wears her clothes." Thank you to my great actors for making me look good.

Julie Skrzypek (Assistant Director, Propsmaster, *Lillian Likes It*) is excited to be back with Essential Theatre! Her previous credits include stage management at Synchronicity, StageDoor Players and Jonah Boaker (New York). She also loves spending her time working with her Life Sentence Family as Associate Producer. Many thanks to Jennifer Kimball for her constant kindness and mentorship.

Kathy Manning (Propsmaster, *The Old Ship of Zion*) is delighted to be back for the 6th year with Essential! Kathy has worked as a props designer, stage manager, and occasionally crosses the boards for such theatres as Stage Door Players, Actors Express, Habima Theatre, Center Theatre, Kudzu Playhouse, Process Theatre and Big Top Theatre.

Libby Mickle (Bare Essentials Stage Manager) is happy to be returning to Essential Theatre again this summer. Recent credits include *Marisol*, *A Pinter Kaleidoscope*, and *FREE/FALL* at Theater Emory, and *Gifts of the Magi* at Theatrical Outfit. Thanks to all of you for supporting live theatre!

Michael Evenden (Festival Dramaturg) is Resident Dramaturg of Theater Emory and is professionally associated with WORDbridge Playwrights' Lab (Baltimore) and Native Voices (Los Angeles/San Diego); in Atlanta: Essential Theatre, Actor's Express, the Alliance, Theatrical Outfit, and Georgia Shakespeare.

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A CALL FOR BOARD MEMBERS

The Essential Theatre is very proud of its reputation for presenting high quality productions of new works and wants to leverage its 25 years of success and harness its expertise to foster strategic growth. This is a very exciting time for Essential and we invite you to join us. Essential Theatre is an equal opportunity organization and seeks Board Members without regard to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation.

YOUR SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL

Essential Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so your donations are tax deductible! Please help us to support new work by Georgia playwrights by visiting our website at www.EssentialTheatre.com/support-us to make a donation or become a Festival sponsor, or by making a donation in the lobby tonight. Thank you!

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Catch up with some Essential Theatre playwrights during Synchronicity Theatre's 2015-2016 Season!



Beyond Reasonable Doubt: The Troy Davis Project

By Lee Nowell

April 8 - May 1, 2016

Bold Voices Series

Commissioned and developed by Synchronicity, this powerful world premiere is a balanced investigation of our divergent and deeply held beliefs on the death penalty.



The Heath

By Lauren Gunderson

May 20-21, 2016 – One weekend only!

Part play, part personal essay, part banjo musical, *The Heath* grapples with mortality, madness and regret while celebrating life, memory, music and the power of a good story.

Also playing this season...



In the Next Room, or the vibrator play

By Sarah Ruhl

September 25 - October 18, 2015

Bold Voices Series

Sarah Ruhl's comedy about intimacy and equality is back by popular demand for a limited four-week run on Synchronicity's new stage. In the Next Room, or the vibrator play was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and three 2010 Tony Awards, including Best Play.



A Year with Frog and Toad

Book & Lyrics by Willie Reale | Music by Robert Reale

December 4-27, 2015

Family Series

Based on the classic children's books by Arnold Lobel, *A Year with Frog and Toad* is an ode to friendship that weathers all seasons, and a delight for all ages. Nominated for three 2003 Tony Awards, and winner of the 2007 Suzi Award for Outstanding Production - Musical.



Fancy Nancy the Musical

Book & Lyrics by Susan DiLallo | Music by Danny Abosch

February 19 - March 19, 2016

Family Series

Based on the wildly popular books written by Jane O'Connor and illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser. Nancy believes anyone can be fancy! But can she bring sophisticated flair to her small role in the school's ballet? And when misfortune strikes right before the big show, who will step into the spotlight?

For tickets and information: 404.484.8636 | www.synchrotheatre.com