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## **Lantern Theater Company Concludes 2025/26 Season with *FRANKLINLAND* by Lloyd Suh, Directed by Charles McMahon, May 7 – June 7, 2026**

PHILADELPHIA (April 6, 2026) – **Lantern Theater Company** concludes its 2025/26 season with the Philadelphia premiere of *Franklinland*, by Lloyd Suh. Led by Lantern Artistic Director Charles McMahon, *Franklinland* features longtime Lantern collaborators Frank X and Dave Johnson, alongside Gavin Spiewak in his Lantern debut. *Franklinland* runs **Thursday, May 7 through Sunday, June 7, 2026**, at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia; a complete schedule of performances and audience enrichment events is included in the fact sheet below. Theater critics and members of the press planning coverage are invited to request press tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, May 13 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Emily Wilson at [ewilson@lanterntheater.org](mailto:ewilson@lanterntheater.org).

Benjamin Franklin played many roles: publisher, inventor, political agitator, diplomat – and he wanted his son to follow him into the sciences. When William rebels and becomes the Royal Governor of New Jersey, the stage is set for a father-son conflict of international proportions. Join us for the Philadelphia premiere of Lloyd Suh's endearing and insightful play of revolutionary consequences, in the city where it happened.

In preparing to direct *Franklinland*, the Lantern's Artistic Director Charles McMahon immersed himself in all things Franklin. McMahon's observations will inform the Lantern's production: "Benjamin Franklin is a fascinating riddle: a man who had no formal schooling after age eleven who went on to found the University of Pennsylvania. He became one of the world's greatest scientists, writers, businessmen, statesmen, and the founder of innumerable civic institutions which still operate some hundreds of years after his death. Perhaps his greatest invention was himself: sui generis American renaissance man. It is understandable that his son might find him a hard act to follow. Lloyd Suh has given us a refreshing new take on this icon of history, juxtaposing his role as founding father with that of father to a foundling. *Franklinland* is a gently comic story of a father and son trying and often failing to connect as they end up on opposite sides of a great struggle."

Lantern Theater Company will explore the world of *Franklinland* on its **Lantern Searchlight on Medium**, available online at [lanterntheater.org/searchlight](http://lanterntheater.org/searchlight). Articles will be published throughout the production's run, including background on the play, its themes, and behind-the-scenes conversations with the artists.

Tickets for *Franklinland* are \$31 – \$48 and are available online at [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org) or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and up, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. All performances will take place at **St. Stephen's Theater**, located at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia.

## About the Playwright

Lloyd Suh is an award-winning playwright and educator whose works include *The Heart Sellers*, *The Chinese Lady*, *Bina's Six Apples*, and *American Hwangap*. He was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2023 for *The Far Country*. His plays have been produced widely at theaters including The Public Theater, Atlantic Theater Company, Alliance Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and with Ma-Yi Theatre Company and Ensemble Studio Theatre. Outside the United States, his plays have received international productions at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and at the Guerilla Theatre in Seoul, Korea. Suh has served as Artistic Director of Second Generation, a Co-Director of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab, and Director of Artistic Programs at The Lark. Suh is a Professor of the Practice at Princeton University and a resident playwright at New Dramatists, a playwright center in New York. His work often focuses on the human stories at the center of historical moments.

## About the Lantern Artists

*Franklinland* director **Charles McMahon** co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as artistic director in addition to directing, writing, and acting for the company. McMahon has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including recent productions of *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus*. Other Lantern directing credits include *The 39 Steps*; *Tartuffe*; *Travesties*; *The Plague*; *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*; *As You Like It*; *Henry V*; *New Jerusalem*, *The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza at Talmud Torah Congregation: Amsterdam, July 27, 1656*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Hamlet*; *La Ronde* (also translator and adapter); *Richard III*; *King Lear*; *The House of Bernarda Alba*; and *A Doll's House*. His acting credits include Heisenberg in the Lantern's production of *Copenhagen*, and his writing credits include *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* and co-creating an original adaptation of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

*Franklinland*'s cast includes **Frank X** as Ben (Lantern credits include *Macbeth*, *Tartuffe*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*) and **Dave Johnson** as William (*The 39 Steps*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Tartuffe*, *Travesties*). **Gavin Spiewak** will make his Lantern debut as Temple.

The creative team for *Franklinland* includes scenic designers **Scott Cassidy** and **Kate Coots**, who also serve as the Lantern's co-production managers, as well as costume designer **Marla Jurglanis** (*Much Ado About Nothing*, *Faith Healer*, *Travesties*), lighting designer **Tyrell Williams** (*Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *Tartuffe*) and sound designer **Michael Hahn** (*An Iliad*, *As You Like It*). **Maya Nguyen-Haberneski** will serve as Stage Manager.

## **About Lantern Theater Company**

Founded in 1994 and now in its 32nd season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 people in 15 countries and all 50 states.

The Lantern's recently announced 2026/27 season will include ***Summer, 1976***, **David Auburn's** touching portrait of unexpected friendship, directed by **Kate Galvin (Press Opening: Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 7 p.m.)**; ***The Weir***, **Conor McPherson's** masterful and haunting exploration of storytelling, directed by **Matt Pfeiffer (Press Opening: Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 7 p.m.)**; ***Hamlet***, **William Shakespeare's** timeless tragedy of revenge, morality, and madness, directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon (Press Opening: Wednesday, February 10, 2027, at 7 p.m.)**; and the Philadelphia premiere of ***Wild with Happy*** by **Colman Domingo**, a vibrant and deeply moving journey through grief and self-discovery (**Press Opening: Wednesday, May 12, 2027, at 7 p.m.**). More information is available online at **[www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org)**.

**Lantern Theater Company – 2025/26 Season**  
**FACT SHEET**  
*Franklinland*

**WRITTEN BY:**

Lloyd Suh

**DIRECTED BY:**

Charles McMahon

**CAST:**

Dave Johnson as William  
Gavin Spiewak as Temple  
Frank X as Ben

**CREATIVE TEAM:**

Scott Cassidy, Scenic Designer  
Kate Coots, Scenic Designer  
Marla Jurglanis, Costume Designer  
Tydell Williams, Lighting Designer  
Michael Hahn, Sound Designer  
Maya Nguyen-Haberneski, Stage Manager

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**TICKET INFORMATION:**

Online: [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org)  
By Phone: (215) 829-0395

**TICKET PRICING:**

\$31 – \$48 / Students: \$25

**PERFORMANCES:**

Thursday, May 7 – Sunday, June 7, 2026

**PREVIEWS:**

Thursday, May 7 at 7 p.m.  
Friday, May 8 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, May 9 at 8 p.m.  
Sunday, May 10 at 2 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 12 at 6:30 p.m.

**OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE:**

Wednesday, May 13 at 7 p.m.

**REGULAR RUN:**

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on May 20 [AIC], May 27 [AIC], and June 3  
Wednesday at 7 p.m. on May 20, May 27, and June 3  
Thursday at 7 p.m. on May 14, May 21, May 28, and June 4  
Friday at 7:30 p.m. on May 15, May 22, and May 29 (no performance June 5)

Saturday at 2 p.m. on May 16, May 23, May 30, and June 6

Saturday at 8 p.m. on May 16, May 23, May 30, and June 6

Sunday at 2 p.m. on May 17 [AIC], May 24 [AIC], May 31, and June 7

**CLOSING PERFORMANCE:**

Sunday, June 7 at 2 p.m.

**ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION [AIC]**

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, May 17; Wednesday, May 20; Sunday, May 24; and Wednesday, May 27. Lantern Resident Dramaturg **Meghan Winch** will lead the discussions.

**PLAY SYNOPSIS:**

Benjamin Franklin has big plans – for diplomacy, for science, and especially for his son. But William Franklin has ideas of his own, veering sharply off his father’s carefully imagined path by embracing a very different future in service of the British Crown. As the colonies inch toward revolution, father and son find themselves on hilariously opposite sides of history. *Franklinland* takes a comedic look at ambition, legacy, and what happens when your child refuses to follow the blueprint you designed.

**PERFORMANCE VENUE:**

St. Stephen’s Theater at 10<sup>th</sup> and Ludlow Streets (923 Ludlow Street) in Center City Philadelphia