

LANTERN
THEATER
COMPANY

special
digital
event

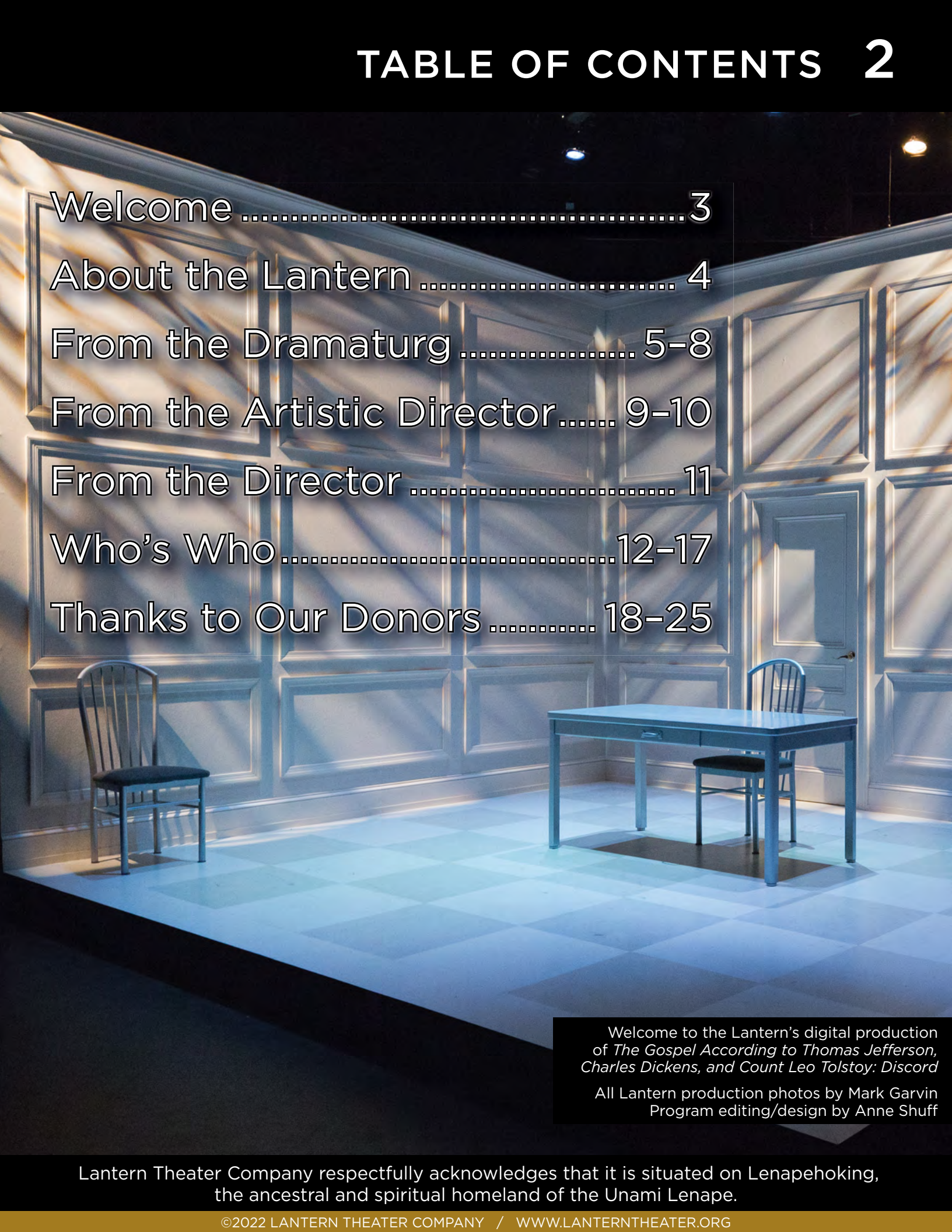
The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson Charles Dickens & Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord

by
SCOTT CARTER

directed by
ARMINA LAMANNA

STREAMING JANUARY 11 – FEBRUARY 27, 2022

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Welcome to the Lantern's digital production
of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson*,
Charles Dickens, and *Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord*

All Lantern production photos by Mark Garvin
Program editing/design by Anne Shuff

Lantern Theater Company respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on Lenapehoking,
the ancestral and spiritual homeland of the Unami Lenape.

LANTERN THEATER COMPANY

Charles McMahon
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Stacy Maria Dutton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

presents

The
Gospel
According to
Thomas Jefferson
Charles Dickens &
Count Leo Tolstoy:
Discord
by Scott Carter

Lance Kniskern
SCENIC DESIGNER

Millie Hiibel
COSTUME DESIGNER

Shon Causer
CO-LIGHTING DESIGNER

Isabella Gill-Gomez
CO-LIGHTING DESIGNER

Christopher Colucci
SOUND DESIGNER
& ORIGINAL MUSIC

Hannah Spear
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Rebecca Smith
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

DIRECTED BY
Armina LaManna

This digital premiere production was filmed in September 2021
at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia.

We are deeply grateful to all the artists, staff, and medical experts
who helped make it possible for us to safely create this production.

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Gregory Isaac as Jefferson

About the Lantern

**LANTERN
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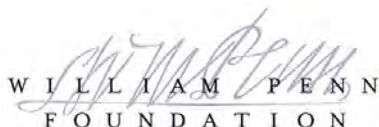
Lantern Theater Company produces plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. We seek to be a vibrant, contributing member of our community, exposing audiences to great theater, inviting participation in dialogue and discussion, and engaging audience members about artistic and social issues.

Illumination Education Program

Our *Illumination* education program complements and expands on the work of classroom teachers to bring an essential artistic lens to curricular material, allowing students to connect to classic stories in a dynamic way and empowering teachers with new approaches to traditional literature. Our lessons are designed to support student development in three key areas: the ability to think critically and problem solve, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to collaborate. Following a decade of providing arts-integrated instruction in the classroom, we have found that exposure to the theatrical discipline deepens student understanding of assigned material and fosters empathy and positive collaborative habits – essential skills that will provide long-term benefits to students into their adult lives.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals, foundations, corporations, and government partners listed here and on the following pages whose generosity provides critical support for our award-winning artistic, education, and community programming. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation by visiting us online at lanterntheater.org/support.

MAJOR SUPPORT PROVIDED BY



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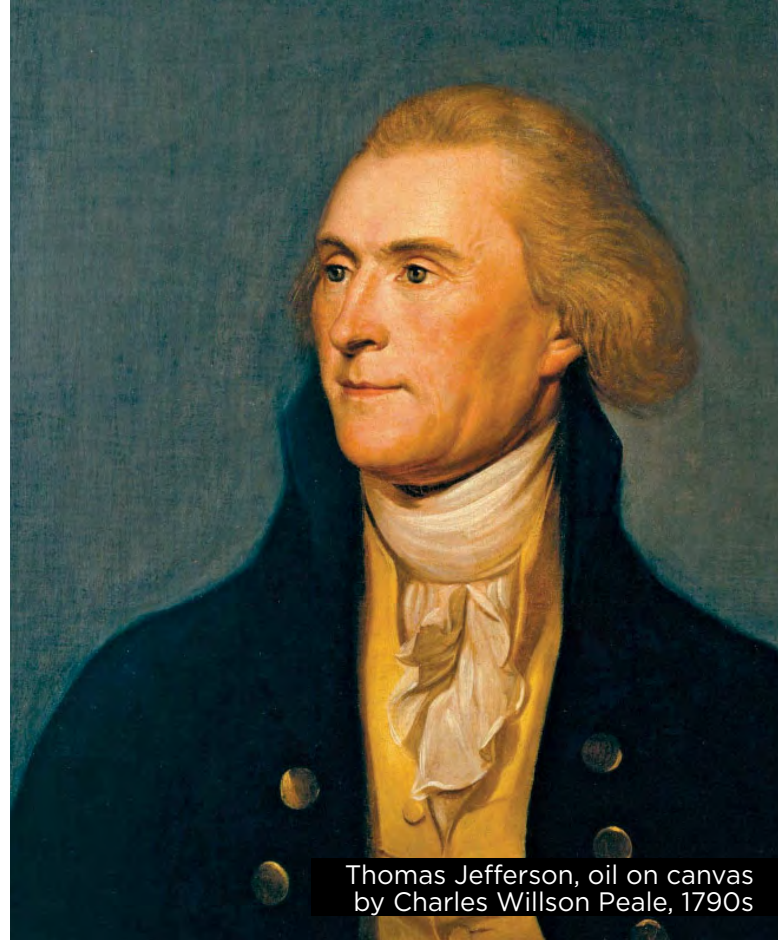
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“So we three were gospelists!”

—Charles Dickens in *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, CHARLES DICKENS, AND COUNT LEO TOLSTOY: DISCORD*

Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens, and Leo Tolstoy lived thousands of miles and decades apart from one another. Their work was likewise divergent: one was a Founding Father enthralled with science and the Enlightenment, another was a prolific and imaginative story crafter, and the third a sweeping chronicler of his time and an anarchist. Playwright Scott Carter invents a situation for these three singular men to find themselves in a room together. What Carter does not invent, however, are the gospels that each man wrote during his life, whether for himself or for a wider public.

Thomas Jefferson's gospel was assuredly the former. Though his political opponents accused him of atheism in an attempt to discredit his presidency, he steadfastly refused to discuss his religious beliefs publicly. For Jefferson, an individual's relationship with the divine was private and inviolable, “a matter between every man and his maker, in which no other,



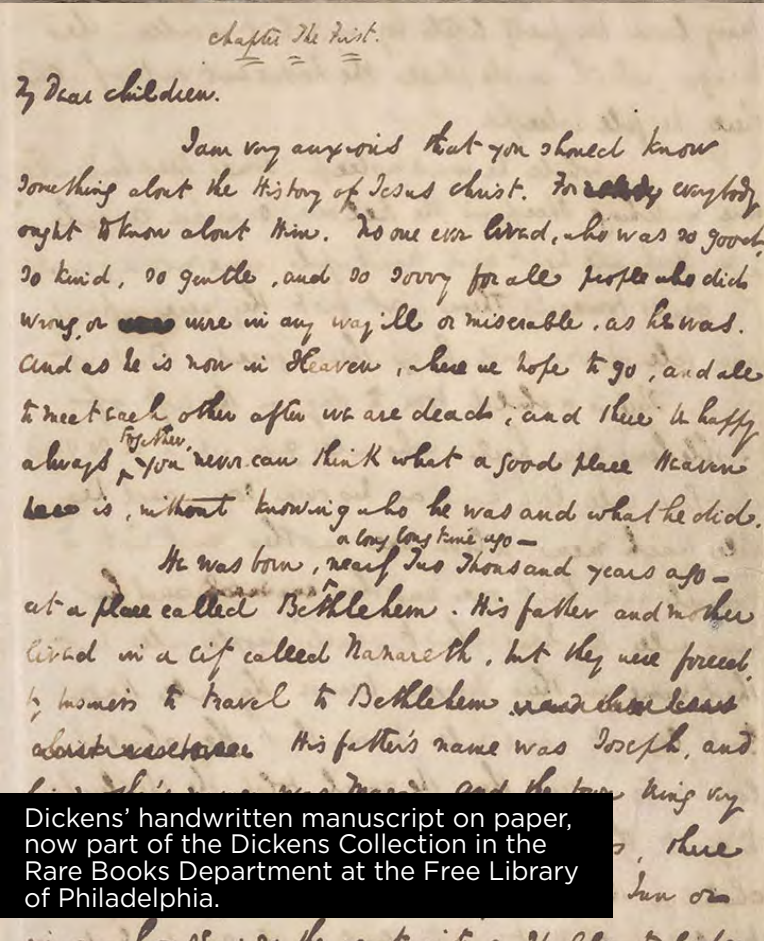
Thomas Jefferson, oil on canvas by Charles Willson Peale, 1790s



Jefferson's source bible
Photo by Hugh Talman, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History



Charles Dickens with his two daughters
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery



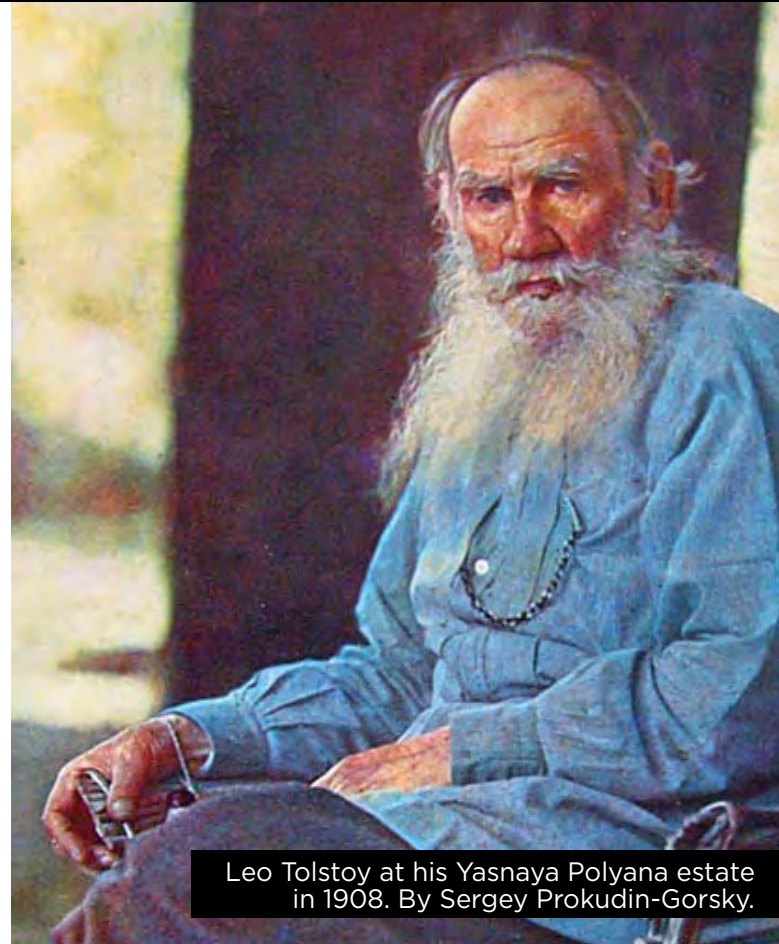
Dickens' handwritten manuscript on paper,
now part of the Dickens Collection in the
Rare Books Department at the Free Library of
Philadelphia.

and far less the public, had a right to intermeddle." He did believe, however, that the teachings of Jesus could be used to promote social harmony, something Jefferson saw as essential to the survival of the young nation. To that end, he made two versions of his gospel, each constructed with verses cut from the full Bible and pasted into a journal. The first, aimed at promoting social harmony, has been lost to time; the second survives, pasted in four columns of English, French, Latin, and Greek. It emphasizes the facts of Jesus' life and the specifics of his teachings, serving as a manual for the ways in which Jefferson believed life should be lived – whether he followed those tenets or not. The book's existence remained a secret until 1895, when Jefferson's great-granddaughter sold the work to the Smithsonian.

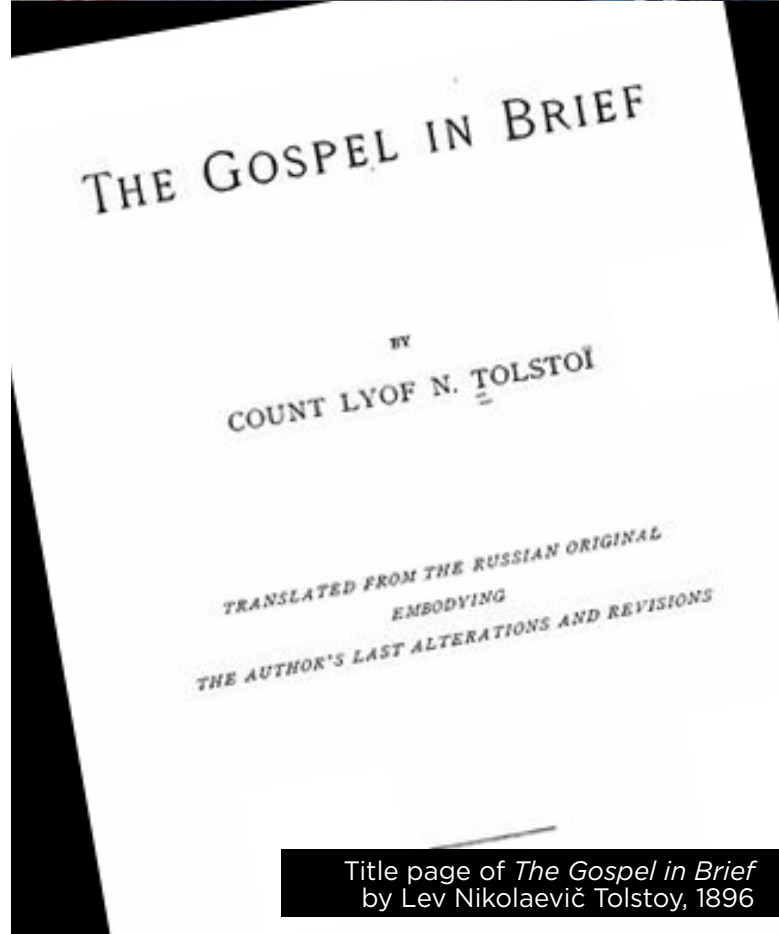
Charles Dickens had one thing in common with Jefferson: his gospel was never meant to be seen by the public. Though he was a ferociously prolific writer who published more than 40 works in just 34 years, his gospel was written only for his family and opens with the exhortation: "My dear children, I am very anxious that you should know something about the History of Jesus Christ." The brief, simple retelling of the gospel story displays little of Dickens' usual verbosity; instead, he

presents a short story full of heroes, like “John, the good man,” and villains, like “Bad King Herod.” He also includes the miracles that Jefferson’s gospel excluded. Despite his legions of fans and a lucrative publishing career, Dickens asked that the handwritten manuscript be kept secret and separate from the public during his and his children’s lifetimes. Indeed, it only came to light after his youngest child died, decades after Dickens himself, and the manuscript is now part of the Dickens Collection in the Rare Books Department at the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Of the three, only **Leo Tolstoy** wrote his take on the gospels with the intention of publication. The author of the sweeping epics *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* had undergone an emotional crisis and found meaning in Christianity; he then endeavored to live simply and to worship purely, without the rituals and mysteries of the Russian Orthodox Church. His gospel reflects his move toward simplicity and clarity. Like Jefferson’s version, Tolstoy’s removes the miracles and other aspects of the story he deemed incompatible with modern understandings, choosing instead to focus on Jesus’ teachings. In his preface, Tolstoy defends his deletions and edits, calling the church’s urge



Leo Tolstoy at his Yasnaya Polyana estate in 1908. By Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky.



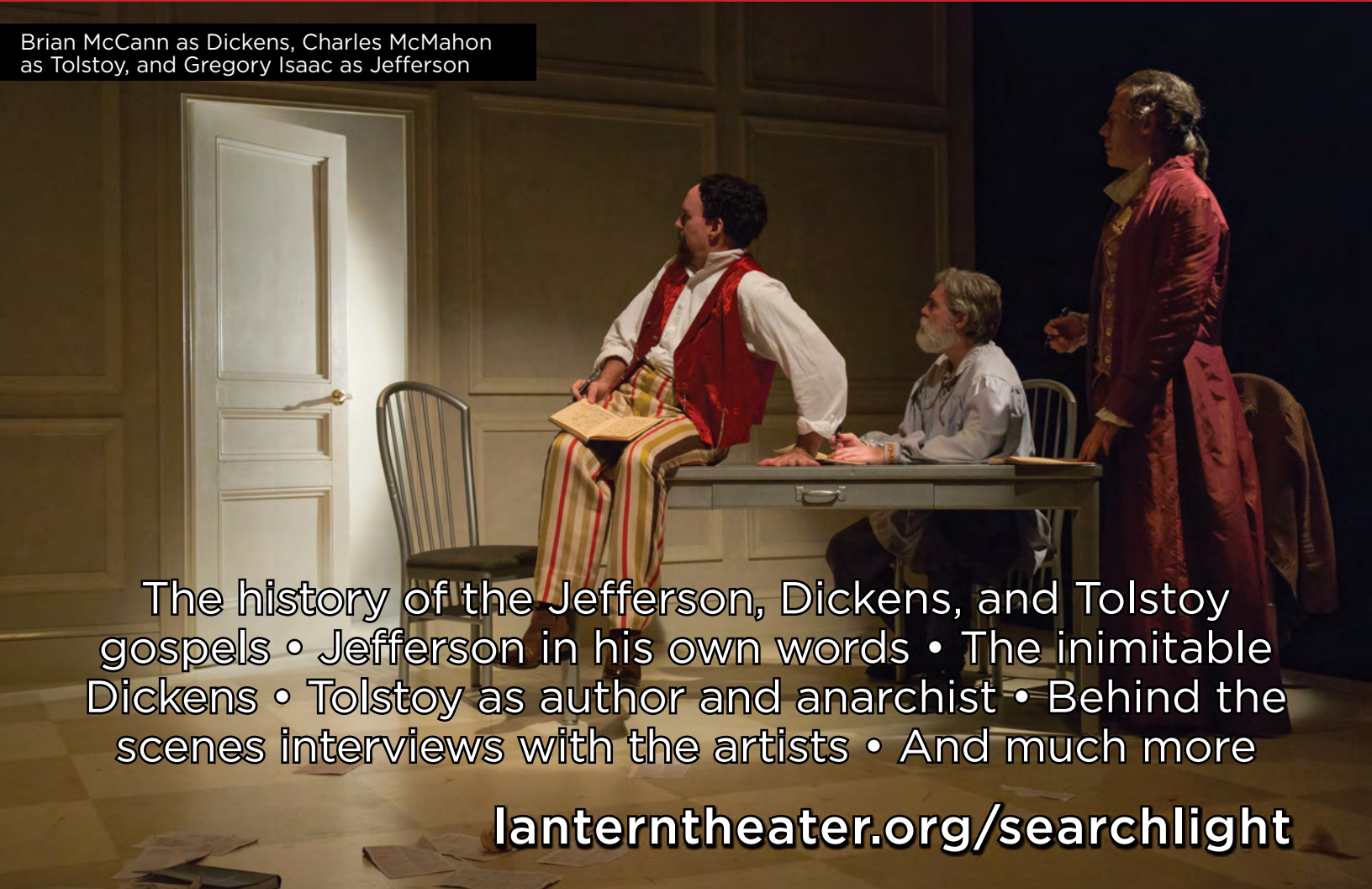
Title page of *The Gospel in Brief* by Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, 1896

to hold the gospels as holy and untouchable “reprehensible and godless.” Where Jefferson used the physical pages of the Bible to build his version with the words of the King James translation, Tolstoy instead taught himself Greek, studied the original texts, and wrote his version as both a fusion of the gospels and a new translation. He did this with a stated desire to write a gospel that was understandable by ordinary Russian people, but could not publish the book in Russia for 25 years after he wrote it due to government and church censorship. Instead, he sent it out into the world, seeing French and English translations published well before his Russian version, and reaching a wider audience sooner than his fellow gospelists Jefferson and Dickens ever hoped to.

—Meghan Winch

DELVE INTO THE PLAY WITH LANTERN SEARCHLIGHT

Brian McCann as Dickens, Charles McMahon as Tolstoy, and Gregory Isaac as Jefferson



The history of the Jefferson, Dickens, and Tolstoy gospels • Jefferson in his own words • The inimitable Dickens • Tolstoy as author and anarchist • Behind the scenes interviews with the artists • And much more

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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 9

Does the good that we intend through our public actions excuse the harm we cause to those close to us?

Dickens, Jefferson, and Tolstoy – three of the modern world’s most influential minds who expressed the highest ideals of their respective generations – inspired movements of reform and an awakening of social conscience in nations around the world. All three of them also failed spectacularly to show even simple decency to those in their own immediate spheres, the people over whom they had almost total power to either help or hurt.

Stories are all around us of famous, powerful, and accomplished people who are discovered – sometimes at the heights of their influence and sometimes decades after their deaths – to have despicably mistreated their colleagues, their families, or others in their close orbits, degrading their human dignity and shattering their peace of mind. How do we grapple with these towering figures from our past who had such an influence in shaping our present?

As the graven images of the once mighty fall around us, perhaps it is worth asking why we ever put them up in the first place. People are infinitely fallible, and those who display great



Charles McMahon as Tolstoy

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 10

ambition for worldly things too often prove to be hopelessly compromised in their personal ethics. We all hate hypocrisy, but we live in a society that incentivizes hypocrites all the time – and people are all too happy to exploit those around them as long as they feel they can keep their sins from coming to light.

It is an irony that the three characters in this play wrote their own versions of the gospels. I grew up with these stories, and I still feel the simple power of their message in my life today. They exhort us above all to treat the people around us as we would wish to be treated. It is a small and simple step to take the decency we practice with neighbors to everyone else in the world. These are not hard things to grasp. Every child knows when they have done well by others and when they have done wrong. Why did these great men feel the need to restate from their own lofty perspectives the simple humble truths that would ultimately indict their own conduct? Did they perhaps suspect somewhere in their hearts that to be great is not as important as to be good?

I still read Dickens, and I still admire Tolstoy's power as an artist and appreciate his contribution to making the world a more peaceful place. With Jefferson it is harder. If Jefferson had exemplified in his own actions the ideals he put on paper, if he had freed the people whom he knew he had no right to keep in bondage, if he had used his enormous influence in life to push for the natural and inalienable rights of human beings to be extended to every individual American, then it is possible that our wounded nation would be better today. Less factious, more humane, and less susceptible to lies and self-deception. One thing, though, is certain: 600 enslaved people were denied the freedom that was their birthright. The fact that Jefferson never lived up to his words and gave them the freedom that should have been theirs to begin with puts him in a kind of historical purgatory from which there may be no escape.

I hope future generations learn to stop making graven images of the powerful and elevating the ambitious to the status of demigods – and to base their own achievements on actions guided by true respect for the freedom and dignity of their fellow human beings.

—Charles McMahon



Armina LaManna on set, September 2021

Should repentance erase a lifetime of moral failings? If so, why would anyone live a life sculpted by a moral compass? Why would anyone make sacrifices to do the right thing? These are the questions I thought about as I worked on Scott Carter's sharp, erudite, and witty play, in which the afterlife and judgment of lives lived makes up the world of the play.

Carter's triumvirate of iconic characters is intimidating. After all, one of these men birthed a democracy; another was a literary figure responsible for creating the foundation of popular culture and

social reform through writing; and a third preached views so influential, the church and government of his country feared and censured him (even now, one hundred years after his death). All this is true. What is also true, however, is that these men were deeply flawed and not at all true to the ideals they proselytized. As they found themselves in the afterlife forced to face their true legacies and to admit to the roles that they played in history, the playwright implied (through actions in the play) that perhaps forgiveness of their monstrous actions was a possibility. That forgiveness could happen even when redemption occurs not in life, but after death.

Why then would anyone make sacrifices to live a life governed by a code of ethics when saying sorry can get you to the same place, as fictitious as it may be, for the price of saying you are sorry? No person lives a fully ethical life, of course. We all push and stretch the boundaries of that code of ethics. And yet, still.

Here I ask myself again. Should repentance, even sincere repentance, erase a lifetime of moral failings? We are talking about slavery, domestic abuse, psychological abuse, etc. A complicated query, indeed. I do not have answers to these questions, only leanings. Where do you stand on forgiveness? How will this play inform your answer to that question? I wonder if watching this production will change your opinion about forgiveness.

Fortune allowed me the opportunity to meet Scott Carter and to ask him these very questions. While I won't go into the details of our private conversation, I will leave you with this: he is a man of deep generosity, and kindness is the flag under which he marches.

Enjoy the play!

—Armina LaManna



Gregory Isaac
Thomas Jefferson



Brian McCann
Charles Dickens



Charles McMahon
Count Leo Tolstoy

This digital premiere production was filmed in September 2021 at St. Stephen's Theater.

Lantern Theater Company originally produced the 2017 Philadelphia premiere of this play with Gregory Isaac as Thomas Jefferson, Brian McCann as Charles Dickens, and Andrew Criss as Count Leo Tolstoy, under the direction of James Ijames.

GREGORY ISAAC (Thomas Jefferson) has previously worked with the Lantern in *Betrayal* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, as well as the Lantern's original production of *Gospel* four years ago. Other notable work around Philadelphia includes *My Fair Lady*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Mother Courage*, and *Waiting for Godot* (Quintessence Theatre Group); *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Delaware Shakespeare); *Hope and Gravity* (1812 Productions); and *A Christmas Carol* (Walnut Street Theatre). He was a Barrymore Award nominee for his work in *Iphigenia at Aulis* (Philadelphia Artists' Collective). He also spent a number of years performing in New York City, Atlanta, and Chicago. You can find him next on stage this winter in *Fabulation* at the Lantern. He wishes you good health and the joy of community. www.gregory-isaac.com

BRIAN MCCANN (Charles Dickens) was most recently seen in *Gem of the Ocean* at Arden Theatre Company. He will be returning to the Arden for *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Recent favorites include *Murder in the Red Barn* with the Philadelphia Artists' Collective, *Twelfth Night* at the historic Powell House, and *Waiting for Godot* at Curio Theatre Company. This is Brian's eighth production at the Lantern. Much love and thanks to Charles and Stacy for keeping the doors open in every sense of the word. "The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again." -Charles Dickens

CHARLES MCMAHON (Count Leo Tolstoy / Artistic Director) co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as artistic director in addition to directing, acting, and writing for the company. He has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including recent productions of *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, *Coriolanus*, and *As You Like It*. Other Lantern directing credits include *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*; *New Jerusalem*, *The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza at Talmud Torah Congregation: Amsterdam, July 27, 1656*; *La Ronde* (also translator and adapter); *Richard III* (Barrymore Award, Outstanding Production of a Play); *The Comedy of Errors* (Barrymore nomination, Outstanding Direction of a Play); *The House of Bernarda Alba*; and *A Doll's House*. His acting credits include reprising the role of Heisenberg in *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*, which was honored with two Barrymore Awards and five nominations, including a nomination for Outstanding New Play. A native Philadelphian, he is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where he studied acting and directing.

SCOTT CARTER (Playwright) has been nominated for two dozen Primetime Emmys as E.P./Writer of the first 1,100 episodes of *Politically Incorrect* (Comedy Central, ABC) and the first 18 seasons of *Real Time with Bill Maher* (HBO). He has created and produced talk shows for Lewis Black (Comedy Central), Candice Bergen (Oxygen Media), and Kevin Nealon (Spike TV). He has won both PGA and WGA awards. *Discord* has been produced in 27 cities in four countries. His latest play is *Wilde Man*.

ARMINA LAMANNA (Director) is a director, playwright, and the founding artistic director of Imagine Theatre in Los Angeles. Armina is delighted to return to Lantern Theater Company where her translation and co-adaptation of *The Government Inspector* was produced in 2008. She is a 37-year veteran of the stage whose career in theater began in the former USSR. Her U.S. theater credits include work at theaters in Los Angeles and Philadelphia. Armina is a recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Women Honor from the International Armenian Chamber of Commerce and the Samuel S. Fels Fund Grant in Dramaturgy. In 2008, Armina taught a workshop on Scene Analysis of American Plays at the Arlekin Theatre in Moscow, Russia. She is a dedicated advocate to bringing gender parity to the theatrical industry, and to ensuring fair and living wages to all artists in the theater. Armina is on the adjunct faculty at Glendale College, prior to which she taught at Temple University in



Brian McCann as Dickens

Philadelphia, where she also got her MFA in directing. Armina is a member of SDC, AEA, and the Dramatists Guild.

LANCE KNISKERN (Scenic Designer) is a freelance set designer in the Philadelphia area. Design highlights with the Lantern: *The Last Match*, *The Heir Apparent*, *The Tempest*, *The Taming of The Shrew* (2015 Barrymore Award nomination for Best Set Design), and the original stage production of *The Gospel According To...* in 2017. Other design credits include *The Roommate*, *Intimate Exchanges*, *Shoplifters*, and *Broken Biscuits* with 1812 Productions; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* with Delaware Shakespeare; *A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play* and *Spamalot* with Resident Theater Company; *Godspell* with Drexel University; *Two Gentlemen of Verona* with Shakespeare in Clark Park; and *Hairspray: The Musical* (BroadwayWorld's Best Set Design in Philadelphia, 2012) with The Media Theatre. You can see more of his work at www.lancekniskern.com.

MILLIE HIIBEL (Costume Designer) is thrilled to revisit *The Gospel According To...* at the Lantern. Recent Opera Philadelphia: *Tak Tak Shoo*, *Soldier Songs*, *We Need to Talk*, *Denis & Katya*. Music Theatre of Wales and Opéra National Montpellier: *Denis & Katya*. Opera

Maine: *Elixir of Love*, *Magic Flute*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *La Traviata*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Bohème*. Upcoming: *Choir Boy* (Philadelphia Theatre Company). NYC: *I Love You Because* (Village Theatre), *The Little Prince* (New Victory Theater). Regional theater: Philadelphia Theatre Company, Delaware Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, The Wilma Theater, Lantern Theater Company, The Playhouse Square, Bristol Riverside Theatre, Enchantment Theatre Company, and many more. Dance collaborations: Jessica Lang, Camille A. Brown, Kate Watson-Wallace, Miro Dance, and Chien-ying Wang. She is also a stylist for photo shoots and commercials and has designed costumes for many historical films including the Emmy Award-winning *History Making Productions*. Millie is the costume director for Opera Philadelphia as well as a part-time lecturer at University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers University, and Temple University.

SHON CAUSER (Co-Lighting Designer) Previous Lantern designs: *The Plague*, *Me and The Devil*, *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *The Tempest*, *The Gospel According To...*, *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* (Barrymore nomination), *Photograph 51*, *Doubt*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Barrymore nomination), *The Liar*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *New Jerusalem*, *Scapin*, and *A Skull in Connemara*. Other recent designs: *A Woman of No Importance*, *God of Carnage*, and *Comedy of Tenors* (Walnut Street Theatre); *Annie* and *I Love a Piano* (Maples Rep); *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Fulton Theatre); *Driving Miss Daisy* and *I Am My Own Wife* (Penobscot Theatre); *Oliver!* (Gretna Theater). MFA in lighting design, Temple University. Many thanks to Armina, Charles, Iz, Beckah, Stacy, and the whole Lantern family. Love to Christine.

ISABELLA GILL-GOMEZ (Co-Lighting Designer) is a freelance electrician and designer, as well as a recent Temple University graduate. She'd like to thank the Lantern and her loved ones for the endless love and support.

CHRISTOPHER COLUCCI (Sound Designer / Original Music / Mixer) Recent work: *The Plague* and *Molly Sweeney* here at the Lantern. Pre-pandemic regional theater sound design collaborations include The Wilma Theater, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, People's Light, 1812 Productions, Walnut Street Theatre, Azuka Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, Inis Nua Theatre Company, Gulfshore Playhouse, Milwaukee Rep, Portland Stage, Weston Playhouse, and the National Constitution Center. Christopher has recently attended the International Freedom Theater Festival in Narva,

Estonia. 2016 Pew Fellowship in the Arts. BA in philosophy/theology from Eastern University. MA in philosophy from Western Kentucky University. Eight Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Original Music and Sound Design. Independence Fellowship in the Arts (2012, 2019). Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/cmsound>). YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/yd89tm64>). Instagram @cmcolucci.

REBECCA SMITH (Associate Producer) has been the stage manager at the Lantern for 14 years, although none have been quite like this. A proud member of Actors' Equity Association, she has previously worked with Theatre Exile, New Paradise Laboratories, and Brat Productions, among others. She is a graduate of Temple University with a BA in European history and a minor in theater.

HANNAH SPEAR (Assistant Director) was a season apprentice at Lantern Theater Company for the 2019/20 season and is now in her second year as artistic associate. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2019 with a BA in theater arts. Selected stage management work: *Sweetwater*, *In Defense of Ourselves*, *America's Favorite Feminist*, and *Ain't (Y)Our History* (Philadelphia Women's Theatre Festival); *Crossover* (Green Light Group Productions); *A Virtual Cocktail Carnival* (Paper Doll Ensemble); *Cornucopia* and *Summer Shorts* (ArcheDream for Humankind); and *Take Apart Your Houses* (White Box Theatre). Many thanks to the Lantern, Armina, Charles, and Stacy for this wonderful opportunity.

STACY MARIA DUTTON (Executive Director) has served as executive director of Lantern Theater Company since 2016, after serving on the company's Board of Directors for over a decade. Her prior career in investment management spanned 25 years, including serving as managing partner of Brandywine Global Investment Management and as co-founder and chief operating officer of Hygrove Partners. She served on the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Orchestra Association from 2007 to 2019, including service as Audit Committee Chair and Investment Committee Chair. In 2011, she was named Business on Board Member of the Year by the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia. She earned an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a BA in philosophy from the University of Chicago, and pursued graduate studies at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University.

ARTISTIC & EDUCATION

Artistic Director	Charles McMahon
Education Director	Craig Getting
Artistic Associate	Hannah Spear
Artistic Operations Associate	Arthur Lee Robinson
Resident Dramaturg	Meghan Winch
Commissioned Artists	Steve H. Broadnax III, Christopher Colucci, Anthony Lawton, Forrest McClendon, Thom Weaver
Teaching Artists	Ang Bey, Carly L. Bodnar, Donovan Lockett, Taylor Mitchell, Katie Pelensky, David Pica, Rebecca Posner, Lillian Ransijn, Matt Tallman, Ryan Walter, Camille Young
<i>Illumination</i> Actors	Benjamin Brown, Tyler Elliott, Victoria Aaliyah Goins, J Hernandez, Dave Johnson, Travoye Joyner, Annette Kaplafka, Keith Livingston, J Paul Nicholas, Krystal Ortega, Ebony Pullum, Melissa Rakiro, Nick Schwasman, Jahzeer Terrell, Frank X

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Finance & Communications Consultant	Anne Shuff
General Manager	Mary Beth Simon
Development & Ticketing Operations Manager	Ileana Fortuño
Grants Manager	Ali Nebistinsky
2021/22 Season Professional Apprentices	Leah Brockman, Maria Carroll, Gabe Moses, Jennifer Spencer

PRODUCTION

Technical Director	Stephen Peterson
Video Production	Natural Light Films
Video Director and Editor	Andrea Campbell
Audio Recordist and Dialogue Editor	Chad Kinsey
Cameras	Andrea Campbell, Marlin Bert, Christopher Colucci
Assistant to the Associate Producer	Alex Donnelly
Costume Supervisor	Kelly Myers
Scenic Charge	Brian McCann
Master Electrician	Alex Dossantos
Master Carpenter	Scott Cassidy
Carpenters	Noah Donahue, Nick Schwasman
Costume Construction	Austin Ginsberg, Patrick Mulhall
Electricians	Tim Laxton, Stephen Minder

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THANK YOU!

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