

The plane of the second second

From La Peste by ALBERT CAMUS

Adapted by NEIL BARTLETT

Directed by CHARLES MCMAHON

STREAMING EXTENDED THRU NOVEMBER 21, 2021

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> Anthony Lawton in *The Plague* 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.

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This U.S. premiere production was filmed in July 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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Amanda Schoonover

About the Lantern

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.

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FROM THE DRAMATURG 5

Albert Camus

The Plague, adapted by contemporary British playwright Neil Bartlett, is based on the 1947 novel of the same name by French writer, journalist, and philosopher Albert Camus. Camus was born in 1913 in Algeria during the 1830–1962 period of French rule. Though he and his family were poor, they were the beneficiaries of the colonial system and accorded the privileges of French citizenship that Arab and Berber Algerians (the majority of the population) were denied.

Camus moved to France as an adult. A staunch opponent of totalitarianism and fascism, Camus returned to Nazi-occupied Paris in 1943 after escaping it two years earlier and began working for the Resistance. He wrote for and edited the underground Resistance paper *Combat*, using a pen name and fake ID cards to avoid capture by German forces. Over the rest of his life, he was a pacifist and opponent of capital punishment, and he leaned toward anarchism in his beliefs about the role and power of the state.

Camus won the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at age 44, the second-youngest winner ever in that category. The Nobel Committee gave him the award "for his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times." His oeuvre, which includes plays, novels, and essays, is often categorized



as absurdism and existentialism (though he rejected the latter label) and deals with what he once called the "confrontation between human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." His belief in individual human morality and freedom kept him from nihilism, and he believed that people should accept the essential absurdity of existence and go on to live ethical lives of self-determined meaning.

After World War II, European fascism had been largely obliterated; its interwar popularity in Europe was blighted by the memories of privation, cruelty, and devastation it wrought on the world. It is in this period of relief, reconstruction, and renewal that Camus wrote *The Plague*. People saw the world fascism had made, and they rejected it. But in *The Plague*, Camus warns that something in human nature will allow an outbreak to happen again. Like a virus and its victims, the conditions and hosts may change, but the disease can always infect again. True to his belief in human morality and freedom, he also argues that if we remember and are vigilant against the ways in which fascism infects, we can also make a better, freer world.

Two Plagues: Biological and Political

In writing the novel *The Plague*, Camus was inspired by a cholera outbreak that struck the Algerian city of Oran in 1849. But Camus set his story in the 1940s for a particular reason: He was using the metaphor of a biological plague to warn against the rise of political fascism.

A disease that can infect and destroy a population – and that can only be defeated by the survivors banding together to act in community – is fertile artistic ground to explore worrying trends in national and global relations. In a biological plague, any individual could be a carrier before their symptoms appear. So too could anyone be a fascist or a white nationalist – or the enemy of one – without seeming so from the outside. And both biological and political plagues often result in similar patterns of behavior: distrust in institutions and fear of foreigners or outsiders. These are then used by political opportunists to create enemies and scapegoats to be attacked and destroyed.

For centuries, artists have used plagues as metaphors for political infection and rot. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* was first performed in ancient Athens in 429 BC – one year after an outbreak of plague ravaged the city. In the play, a similar plague is decimating Thebes. In *Oedipus*, the plague is a direct metaphor for political and religious degradation; anxieties about the legitimacy of rulers manifest as disease, and it can only be remedied by Oedipus taking responsibility for his errors.

William Shakespeare used plague as a constant undercurrent and metaphor for a variety of anxieties in his plays. Curses like "a plague on both your houses" or "all the contagion of the south light upon you" reflect a society well-used to the horrors of plague, of which there were many outbreaks throughout Shakespeare's life, forcing strict quarantine and theater closures. In *Macbeth*, a play that deeply explores legitimacy of rule, authoritarianism, and power at a time when those same anxieties were focused on England's royal succession, Scotland is described as a country so used to extreme suffering brought on by plagues that the political upheavals are natural outgrowths and reflections of it: "Alas, poor country, / Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot / Be called our mother, but our grave, where nothing / But who knows nothing is once seen to smile."

While Camus was inspired by both 1849 Oran and 1940s Paris, the specific time and place is never specified in Neil Bartlett's stage adaptation. His play asks us to map a plague, both biological and social, onto our own cities and times, wherever and whenever they may be. When Bartlett adapted *The Plague* for the stage in 2017, many countries were in the midst of a new fascist and nationalistic swell – one we are still wrestling with today. *The Plague* asks us to see the ways in which these nationalistic movements are themselves as virulent as any disease, and how, like viruses, they can only be defeated if we act with and for the best interests of our neighbors.



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The Bubonic Plague, 1918 Influenza, and Today

Neil Bartlett's *The Plague* is an allegory for the social ills that infect our society like a virus. But that metaphor is effective because it builds upon a phenomenon that has happened repeatedly over the course of human history, with several recognizable behavioral patterns.

The title plague of the play is the Bubonic Plague, a highly communicable illness also responsible for the Black Death – a pandemic that killed anywhere from 30 to 60 percent of Europe's population between about 1346 and 1353, and many more in the centuries that followed. In 1918, an influenza pandemic infected one-fifth of the world's population and killed between 50 and 100 million people; in the United States, over 670,000 people died – more than all the wars of the 20th century combined. And in September 2021, we surpassed this grim milestone in Covid deaths, making Covid-19 our country's most deadly pandemic ever.

In America: Remember, an exhibit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., commemorating the 700,000+ Americans who have died of Covid-19 as of early October 2021. Photo by Stephen Wilkes for National Geographic.



In all three of these plagues – and in Bartlett's play – information and misinformation are problems. During the Black Death, little was known about bacteria or viruses, and there was no mechanism to share information widely. The 1918 influenza was called the Spanish Flu, not because it originated there, but because Spain was the first to report on it. Most Western governments, embroiled in World War I and not wanting to further harm morale, never publicly mentioned the disease, hampering newspapers like the ones in *The Plague* from reporting the scale of the outbreak. The scale of misinformation surrounding our current pandemic – and leadership's early refusal to honestly address its scope – is a painful echo of these earlier plagues.

Mitigation efforts, and their refusal, is another common thread. Quarantine was used at varying levels during all three plagues; later outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague famously shuttered theaters in Shakespeare's London. 1918's public health measures also included a push for increased sanitation, hand washing, mask wearing, and social distancing. And like today, a faction of the population rejected those efforts. In Philadelphia, the U.S. city hardest hit by the 1918 flu, 200,000 people gathered for a parade at the beginning of the epidemic, driving a spike in infections and death. Schools, theaters, and other gatherings shut down a week later.

All three plagues share social outcomes as well. By reducing the population, the Black Death contributed to an increase in worker wages and options as survivors found themselves with more leverage over employers who were often property owners. Likewise, both 1918 and today witnessed historic labor uprisings, in part



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because of what the pandemics revealed about the value of workers. In addition, there is some evidence of "revenge spending" – purchases and travel incurred to make up for the lost time – during and after all three pandemics.

Sadly, both the Black Death and the 1918 flu were also characterized by a tendency we have not overcome today: the urge to scapegoat migrants or marginalized groups as somehow responsible for the plague, and to shun or harm them in imagined retaliation.

In *The Plague*, Dr. Rieux and his compatriots face many of these challenges: leaders unwilling to meet the crisis, difficult mitigation methods, and a sickness that cannot be mastered or soundly defeated. In the world of *The Plague*, another catastrophe is always possible; another illness is always ready to infect an unprepared populace. It is our duty to inoculate ourselves from their worst effects, and to stand ready to band together to fight them when they reemerge. For even in the face of terrible repetition and lessons unlearned, as Dr. Rieux says in the play, "there is more to admire about people than to despise or despair of."

—Meghan Winch

DELVE INTO THE PLAGUE WITH LANTERN SEARCHLIGHT

The cast of The Plague

 Plague as a metaphor for political movements
Behind the scenes interviews with the artists
Parallels in historical plagues
Albert Camus and the plague of fascism
Post-World War II Paris
And much more

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Albert Camus' *La Peste* has often been interpreted as an allegory for the wave of fascism that swept over Europe in the lead-up to World War II. While it certainly works in that context, the novel's direct story – that of an outbreak of plague in the Algerian city of Oran – stands on its own as a work of great insight into how a catastrophe affects the psyche of a people.

Written in an austere style, Camus' novel seeks to create a feel of objective reporting. We watch as a city in quarantine slowly comes unglued under the social and psychological pressures of the outbreak and the lockdown. Before long, the situation begins to reveal the character of the city. At first it is weak, vain, materialistic, and unprepared.

The outbreak is an unimaginable event for such a society, and despite the evidence, it takes weeks before people are able to accept what is happening. Institutions are slow to respond. Experts disagree about exactly what is going on, and authorities are paralyzed precisely when they need to be decisive.

As the lockdown descends, we see the events through the eyes of a small group of characters whom circumstances bring into the orbit of Dr. Rieux. The various ways in which people respond to the plague in the story – both immediately and over time – have become heartbreakingly familiar and recognizable over the past year and a half in the real world. Camus' point in the end is that we must remember and value the lessons about ourselves and each other for which we have all paid so dearly.

The past year has been a time of enforced reflection for all of us. Questions that are always present become insistent when the bustle of everyday life is no longer present to drown them out. For those of us who tell stories for a living, the most urgent question is: "How can we make those stories as meaningful as we can for the people in our communities?" A common narrative is the glue that binds a people together and makes them feel that – despite their differences – they are part of a common project. Dr. Rieux speaks of the need to "bear witness" for those who cannot speak for themselves. I hope that in our own way we are bearing a faithful witness to the experience of our own times.

-Charles McMahon



KIRK WENDELL BROWN (Grand) is thrilled to contribute to the Lantern's latest project. He last performed here on stage in *Measure for Measure*, *Hapgood*, *Coriolanus*, *As You Like It*, and *The Train Driver*. He recently appeared as Shylock in Delaware Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Other productions include Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival (*Love's Labour's Lost* and *Henry V*), Arden Theatre Company (*Henry V*), and People's Light (*As You Like It*), along with contemporary works at

Walnut Street Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, and The Wilma Theater, among others. He has produced and instructed theater curricula from Lawrenceville, NJ to St. Denis, France. Theater training includes Boston University College of Fine Arts and Royal Academy of Dramatic Art/King's College-London (text and performance). Thank you, Charles & Co.



PETER DELAURIER (Jean Tarrou) started as an acting apprentice at Missouri Repertory Theatre in the spring of 1968. He has earned his living in professional theater for the last 53 years. At the Lantern, he has played in *The Tempest, Underneath the Lintel* (twice), *Skylight, QED* (twice), *Uncle Vanya, Emma, Heroes, The Train Driver*, and *An Iliad*; and directed *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, The Island, Vigil, 36 Views, Red Velvet, Hapgood*, and this season's streaming production of *Molly Sweeney*. He will direct the upcoming Lantern

production of *A Man for All Seasons*. Peter is a longtime member of the resident ensemble at People's Light. He has worked at many of Philadelphia's regional theaters and acted/directed at theaters around the country, including serving as artistic director of New Stage Theatre in Jackson, MS. He has won and lost Barrymore Awards in all non-musical acting categories. He played Off-Off and Off-Broadway and toured the country in the original Tony Award-winning production of *Equus*. He is a published (and Barrymore nominated) playwright and, with his late wife Ceal Phelan, a co-founder of the Delaware Theatre Company.



J HERNANDEZ (Raymond Rambert), a multiple Barrymore and Haas Award nominee, is coming up to close to ten years working in the Philadelphia area and this will be his fourth production with Lantern Theater Company. In and around town he's also worked for Philadelphia Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, InterAct Theatre Company, Quintessence Theatre Group, Delaware Shakespeare, Philadelphia Artists' Collective, and Shakespeare in Clark Park, along with a list of others. J would like to

give his sincerest thanks and express the hugest of appreciation to Charles, Stacy, our stage manager Rebecca Smith, and both crews (theatre AND film) for their courage, their care, unwavering support, expertise, and know-how in keeping theater alive in 2020 AND beyond.



ANTHONY LAWTON (Dr. Rieux) has acted in Philadelphia for 29 years. Favorite roles include George in *Of Mice and Men* (Walnut Street Theatre); "man" in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1812 Productions); Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* (Arden Theatre Company); and Austin in *True West*, Coleman in *The Lonesome West*, and Storyteller in *A Christmas Carol* (Lantern Theater Company). In 2005, Lawton, in partnership with the Lantern, wrote and developed *The Foocy*, which garnered five Barrymore

nominations including Best New Play. In 2016, his adaptation of *The Light Princess* (with music by Alex Bechtel) was nominated for eight Barrymores, winning for Best Original Music (for which Lawton shared credit as lyricist). *Philadelphia City Paper* named him the city's "Best One-Man Theatre" for his solo productions of *The Devil and Billy Markham, The Great Divorce*, and *The Screwtape Letters*. For more information on these shows, go to www.anthonylawtonactor.com.



AMANDA SCHOONOVER (Cottard) is best known as the sassy eavesdropping Waitress on the GLAADnominated *Dispatches From Elsewhere* on AMC, where she co-starred opposite Jason Segel, Sally Field, Andre (3000) Benjamin, and Eve Lindley. She is a two-time Barrymore Award recipient and ninetime nominee, as well as being a Jilline Ringle Solo Performance Program Artist in Residence at 1812 Productions and an F. Otto Haas Emerging Artist finalist. Television: NBC's *Do No Harm* opposite

Phylicia Rashad and *We Need to Talk* with James Maslow. Regional theater: Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, Pig Iron, Lantern Theater Company. Follow her on Instagram @amandabethschoonover.

ALBERT CAMUS (Author) (1913-1960) was a French-Algerian writer, journalist, and philosopher. He was awarded the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 44, the second-youngest recipient in history. His best-known works include *The Stranger, The Plague, The Myth of Sisyphus, The Fall,* and *The Rebel.* For more on Camus, see "From the Dramaturg" beginning on page 5 of this program and visit our Searchlight Blog at lanterntheater.org/searchlight.

NEIL BARTLETT (Adaptor) has been making rule-breaking theater and performance since 1983. After a controversial early career he was appointed artistic director of the Lyric Hammersmith in London in 1994. Since leaving the Lyric in 2005, major cultural producers he has worked for include the National Theatre; the Abbey Theatre in Dublin; the Bristol Old Vic; the Manchester Royal Exchange; the Edinburgh International, Manchester International, Brighton, Aldeburgh, and Holland Festivals; the Wellcome Foundation; and Tate Britain. Neil is also an acclaimed author, with a whole shelf of novels, plays, adaptations, and translations to his name. His most recent novel, *The Disappearance Boy*, earnt him a nomination as Stonewall Author of the Year in 2014, and his very first novel, *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall*, was republished in 2017 by Profile as a Serpents Tail Classic. www.neil-bartlett.com

CHARLES MCMAHON (Director / 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, The Taming of the Shrew, Henry V, New Jerusalem, Romeo & Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, Othello, 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), Much Ado About Nothing, King Lear, 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 theater department where he studied acting and directing.

JAMES F. PYNE, JR. (Scenic Designer) last worked at the Lantern on *Me and the Devil* and *Othello*, which played to one extremely enthusiastic audience before Covid-19 closed all of us down. James is honored to be a part of the amazing production team that created *The Plague*. James served as director of design for 40 years at People's Light, designing some 300-plus shows and earning ten Barrymore nominations with two wins for Outstanding Scenic Design. Next up is a to-be-announced project at the Lantern.

LEIGH IVORY CLARK PARADISE (Costume Designer) (she/her/hers) is happy to be a part of this project. A graduate of The College of William and Mary, Leigh followed a wandering career path that eventually led her to People's Light in Malvern, PA, where she has been the cutter/draper since 2014. Recent design credits include *Molly Sweeney* here at the Lantern and *The Way I Walk* at 1812 Productions. Her hobbies include hoarding yarn and matching patterns for fun. She lives in southeastern PA with her husband, their son, and an everevolving set of long-term critter companions.

SHON CAUSER (Lighting Designer) is excited to be part of this project. Previous Lantern designs: *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, 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 Charles, Iz, Stacy, Beckah, and the whole Lantern family. Love to Christine.

CHRISTOPHER COLUCCI (Sound Designer / Original Music / Mix Engineer)

Pre-pandemic regional theater sound design work includes Lantern Theater Company, 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. 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). Special thank yous to Lantern Theater Company for their pandemic-era support and encouragement. Soundcloud (https://soundcloud.com/cmsound). YouTube (https://tinyurl.com/yd89tm64). Instagram @cmcolucci.

ISABELLA GILL-GOMEZ (Associate 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.

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, Charles, and Stacy for this wonderful opportunity.

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

who's who 17

graduate of Temple University with a BA in European history and a minor in theater.

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 cofounder and chief operating officer of Hydrove 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.





Amanda Schoonover and Peter DeLaurier



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