

Providing quality local community theatre since 1984, the all-volunteer Prince William Little Theatre is partly funded by grants from the Prince William County Park Authority, the City of Manassas, and private contributions. PWLT has won NVT A One Act Festival Awards, Virginia Theatre Association awards, and Washington Area Theatre Community Honors (WATCH) awards.

Original Works Festival July 27, 28, 29



Becca Harney spearheaded the Original Works Festival.

PWLT is presenting 11 original plays. These performances range from drama to comedy, and while most are short vignettes, others are one-acts. One thing is for certain – they are all masterful works of theatre and art. We are presenting these shows free of charge (but donations are always welcome!), and performances will be streamed via Facebook and YouTube.

Becca Harney was the board member who spearheaded this new adventure. "I always knew that there were multiple playwrights in the DMV area and always wanted to showcase their work, and what better way to do that than through a virtual setting with PWLT." She was keenly aware that we weren't doing a summer production and raised the idea to present the festival in July 2021 in lieu of our summer musical. "The amount of works we had received was staggering, and we were so impressed with the quality of each of the works. They all included a lot of heart!" Becca pointed out that pulling this together required the help and collaborative efforts of the Play Reading and Online Content



Shayne Gardner wrote Cupid Strikes. Photo by Todd Gardner.

Committees. "Meeting with them to discuss ideas of how we would review submissions and hold auditions for both the actors and directors was super helpful for keeping this festival organized and efficient!"

Shayne Gardner wrote *Cupid Strikes*. She wrote her first play in the 3rd grade, "which was terrible, but the next, written in the 4th grade, was a success." She didn't write again until about ten years ago. "The



Melanie Marie McGuin directs Cupid Strikes. Photo by David Harback.

whole play came to me in a flash, and I wrote most of it while working backstage on a show." I asked her about her writing process, and she told me that she usually sits down to write in order to avoid doing something else, like vacuuming. However, she said, "being involved in theater as an actor, director, and stage manager have been key assets, as it leads me to think about interesting characters, how the whole show hangs together, while being aware of scene changes, costume changes and lighting effects." Shayne said the challenge of writing 10-minute plays is how to create a full story arc in a short amount of time.

Melanie Marie McGuin is directing *Cupid Strikes*. She met the playwright participating in an online play reading group during the pandemic. "Cupid Strikes is sweet and silly, and Shayne has brought both of those energies to rehearsal. As of writing this, the cast and playwright have met together once so far and got along swimmingly. A lot of excitement and heart have been expressed." She is also direct-



Chrissy's Corner



Photo by Mark Moorstein

Greetings theatre lovers! It's great to see everyone getting out and enjoying the sunshine. Summer is a fun time to enjoy the

great outdoors. Here at PWLT, our directors for the Original Works Festival are working with their casts and rehearsing and preparing their works.

Don't forget to mark your calendars! The festival will stream July 27th – 29th. Check out the article in this edition.

Do you have a talent for marketing and social media? We'd love to hear from you. We're looking for people to join our committees. If you're interested, please email, info@pwlt.org.

Let us know if you have any ideas. What would you like to see? We'd love to hear from you. Reach out to us at info@pwlt.org.

Thank you for keeping up with PWLT. Stay safe, take care, and keep performing. See you at the theatre! (soon)

Chrissy Mastrangelo, PWLT President

Auditions – Dial M for Murder

We will be holding auditions for our first live show since 2019. Directed by Susy Moorstein for our November show at the Hylton Center for the Performing Arts. Auditions will be at the Hylton on August 2nd and 3rd from 7:00 to 9:30.

Member Spotlight: Christine Maxted



Photo by Dave Harback

Like many of us in theatre, our love of the boards starts early. Christine auditioned for productions in high school. Her school participated in CAPPIS (Critics and Awards Program) which gave her the opportunity to perform a duet at the Kennedy Center when she was 16. "It was an incredibly special moment sharing the stage with my best friends and to know my grandparents and parents were in the audience seeing me perform." That experience encouraged Christine to audition for other productions and she was hired for her first paid production at the young age of 18.

Christine attended Catholic University and studied musical theatre. At her graduation, she was awarded the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music Service Award. However, three years after graduation she had an epiphany. "I realized that I experienced more joy bringing others to the stage rather than myself. I wanted to give students the opportunities my theatre teacher gave me so I returned to school to earn my Master of Arts in Theatre

Education." Two years ago, she had the privilege of seeing her students perform on the Kennedy Center stage with the same CAPPIS program she participated in while in high school. "It was the greatest moment of my teaching career to know I had done the same as my teacher." Theatre experiences come full circle.

Her resume extends far beyond community theatre and teaching, including performing at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Harman Center for the Arts, Wolf Trap, international venues in Prague and Budapest, as well as televised concerts for EWTN and PBS. In addition, she has performed with Broadway performers and also sang for Pope Francis during his visit to Washington DC in 2015. Teaching is in her blood though and Christine currently works as a theatre professor with Northern Virginia Community College and operates a private musical theatre voice studio in her my home.

One of her favorite memories of working with PWLT is being a vocal director/assistant director for *Annie*. In fact, her whole family, kids and husband were involved in this production. "I loved assisting another director with their vision and working with the orphans in *Annie* brought me immense joy. They're wonderful kids!" On stage with PWLT, Christine performed in *9-5* and was in *Jesus Christ Superstar* where she met her future husband, James. She worked with him again as a scenic designer for *Sherlock Holmes and the West End*. This is a true theatre family and PWLT is thrilled they are a part of our theatre family.

Christine's favorite quote about theatre is "The curtain descends, everything ends...too soon." Ogden Nash from *One Touch of Venus*. She says, "This Kurt Weill song is a reminder that everything has a closing night, so hold on to the moment while it lasts." We at PWLT cherish our time with Christine and look forward to many more opening nights with us before the curtain closes on another production she has brought magic to our stage.

Prince William Little Theatre Newsletter

Newsletter Editor: Terri Ritchey

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2021 Membership News

We are starting our new membership roster this month. At this time PWLT is accepting renewals. Dues remain at \$15.00 and you can register directly at the website using venmo! We look forward to welcoming you back.

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Andrea Fine Carey wrote *The Offering*.
Photo by H.G. Carey.

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ing *Strong* by Tyierra Henderson. "This is a spoken word piece, and it hits you right in the heart." She started her rehearsals with a lot of discussion about the meaning of the words, not just on the paper, but in relation to ourselves, our communities, and greater society. "What is brilliant about this cast and this piece is that everyone's interpretation is a bit different, and we have the opportunity to feature all angles of meaning in the performance."

Melanie Marie said she volunteered to direct because she has been doing choreography for more than ten years, and it was time to try something different. She also credits Pat McInerney with giving her that push because he told her she was good at telling people what to do. This past Christmas Melanie Marie produced and directed the online variety show, *Best Little Christmas Show*, with Zeus McGuin Productions with Melissa Jo York-Tilley and Laura Mills. However, film is a different storytelling medium than stage. She pointed out that in film, the camera and director choose what the audience sees and when. On stage, an audience member can look wherever they choose at any point. Furthermore, in film, "An actor's performance can be more subtle because a camera can do a close up on their face, but on stage, your performance needs to be seen by your grandma with cataracts in the back row. I want to try to keep my pieces with more of a theatrical feel."

Andrea Fine Carey wrote *The Offering* after seeing yet another story on the evening news of a police shooting of a young, black man. "I felt so helpless and



Tina Mullins is in three works, *The Offering*, *Superstition and Espionage*, and *Rosa and Leo*

wished I could offer some comfort to that poor, grieving mother. I would have reached out to her, if only I had (my character) Ellen Goldblum's initiative and courage." She wrote her first play seven years ago after being disappointed by a popular musical at the Kennedy Center. Andrea felt the set was magnificent and the singing voices were beautiful, but the story itself was weak. "After hearing my complaints, my husband challenged me to write a better one, and that began my journey into playwriting".

Tina Mullins plays Ellen in *The Offering*. She commented that she likes being able to perform in this short one-act because it allows her to be creative and do the work she enjoys without the pressure of memorizing a whole 90 minute show. "I can relate to Ellen in many ways since I am an older, Jewish, white woman who has experienced lots of loss." Tina is also in *Superstition and Espionage*. In that play she is a wealthy Southern socialite who is described as highly talkative, highly alcoholic and highly superstitious. "I really need to switch gears to do this character."

Tina is such a versatile actor, she is actually in one of the other original works as well. In *Rosa and Leo*, "I play the role of Rosa, a frail woman with a Polish accent." In the play, Rosa and Leo reconnect after more than five decades. They originally met and fell in love in a Nazi concentration camp but were separated suddenly. As you can see, these plays span the gamut of locations, timeframes and emotions. I asked Tina if she enjoyed originating a role for the first time, and she said, "I have always loved watching others



Corisa Myers plays Tesa in *The Offering*.

perform roles on YouTube or in movies so I can lift from their ideas. However, it feels kind of freeing to do a role that has never been done before. I can play around with her more, and I don't need to worry because my performance can't be compared to anyone else."

Corisa Myers plays Tesa in *The Offering*, and she also loves taking on original pieces. "The freedom that comes with bringing a playwright's vision to fruition is motivating." She describes Tesa as a woman dealing with the worst thing that can happen to a mother and at the same time trying to trust that there is still an ounce of humanity in the world after her son is killed. "This brief encounter she has on her doorstep seems to provide her an expectant moment of sanity in a world of chaos."

Like many of us in the theatre world, our biggest regret is that we are not doing these plays live. Actors miss performing with an audience. Tina pointed out that "even rehearsals via Zoom are not like in person, since the timing seems altered and fluidity seems stifled, but at least we get a chance to bring these new scripts to life." PWLT is proud to have kept theatre alive in new venues, as well as provided an outlet for creativity. We hope you tune in to support our writers, directors, actors and producers.

Call for Directors

PWLT is calling for directors for our December show, *A Christmas Carol*. If you are interested, please visit the website: <https://www.pwlt.org/directorscall.html>