



WordPlayers
Theatre
Company

presents...

SILENT SKY

by Lauren Gunderson

sponsored by...

*Leslie A.
Hull*



scan for full Playbill

wordplayers.org



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by Lauren Gunderson

sponsored by...

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Hull*

*Commissioned and first produced
by South Coast Repertory
with support from the
Elizabeth George Foundation.*

*Original Music by Jenny Giering
SILENT SKY is presented
by special arrangement
with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing
the Dramatists Play Service collection.
(www.dramatists.com)*

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of my favorite quotes about Lauren Gunderson's Silent Sky calls this play "an intellectual epic told on an intimate scale" (Atlanta Journal-Constitution). Both the story and the process of bringing it to life has hit all the notes of The WordPlayers' quest for unity, integrity, and the pursuit of excellence as we tell culturally-relevant stories from a faith-based perspective. If I had to choose something about the cast and crew that stuck out the most to me, it would be this: Work ethic always trumps talent. The amount of talent involved in this production in the cast, projections design, costume design, stage management, set – all of it – was top tier. However, the biggest factor was not so much "talent" as it was the work ethic and determination everyone displayed. It was nothing short of inspiring.

If I had to choose one thing about the story, it would be difficult. The struggle for equality in all its forms is certainly dear to my heart beyond words. But, perhaps, what hits me most deeply is the reminder that whatever your idea of the Creator may be, the extent of the universe clearly shows the Creator's lavish disregard for efficiency. Because of what I believe about the Creator, I find this comforting. It seems gracious and fatherly to surround one livable planet with more discoveries than its creatures could possibly make. I seek to give my sons opportunities to discover that, though the world may be dark, creation is beautiful. I want them to make their own discoveries, be filled with their own wonders, with me by their side to guide and encourage. On both the epic and intimate scales, Silent Sky sparks my hunger for discoveries, from star filled skies to close relationships. May we all take the time.

Lastly, an important note: you may notice, in the play, some words or phrases that to some folks are perfectly normal, and yet to others are potentially offensive. In our effort to tell "culturally relevant stories," especially in the case of true history, we find that we must honor the characters and meet them where they are at the time of the story. Some of these characters might say things that you, or I, might not say. Yet to force them to speak like us, or follow our own personal rules, robs us of the chance to learn from the actual story at hand. Thus, if you wonder why we have not altered the words given to us by the playwright, it is because of this. This is a discussion that I, of course, am willing to continue if needed. In the meantime, enjoy discovering.

*Yours,
Ethan Norman*

PLACE

The play takes place in various settings from 1900-1920

CAST

Annie Cannon – Michelle Castleberry

Peter Shaw – Caleb Leach

Willamina Fleming – Jennie Lee-Pace

Margaret Leavitt – Michala Plato

Henrietta Leavitt – Christi Watson

Women's understudy - Raine Palmer

Peter understudy - Ethan Norman

The Production Team

Director - Ethan Norman

Stage Manager - Robbin Paige Sharp

Projections Designer - Cole Liles

Scene Designer - Stephen F. Krempasky

Costume Designer - Ariana Dotson

Special Thanks

Our Production Sponsor: Leslie A. Hull

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Fifth Avenue Baptist Church

The Artists



Michelle Castleberry (Annie Cannon) has been involved with the arts through dance, music, and theatre since she was young. She has directed several productions, such as *Steel Magnolias*, *The Dining Room*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *School House Rock, Jr.* Michelle has performed in *Mame*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Sound of Music*, and her favorite role, M'Lynn, in *Steel Magnolias*. She has previously been seen as Elizabeth in a WordPlayers' original production, *Sleeper's Wake!*, once as a touring show and once as a film. Michelle has served on the board for two community theatres and choreographed musicals for many schools. "I am honored to be telling this amazing story with such an amazing cast. Thank you, Ethan, for challenging me and helping to grow in my craft. The process has been incredible and I can't wait to share what we've created." In the words of Annie Jump Cannon: "In our troubled days, it is good to have something outside our planet, something fine and distant for comfort."



Caleb Leach (Peter Shaw) is thrilled to be returning to the stage with The WordPlayers. He has spent the last few years working with CAK as technical director for their musicals and working on film projects. You could have seen Caleb cutting loose this summer as Willard in The WordPlayers' production of *Footloose*. Caleb is excited to shift gears from the summer into this thoughtful and moving story. He wants to thank Ethan for this great opportunity, his daughter Emilia for her inspiration, and his wife Kristen for her love and support.



Jennie Lee-Pace (Williamina Fleming) loves theatre more than her luggage. Some of her favorite performances include Kate Keller, *All My Sons*; Maudie Atkinson, *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Carrie Watts, *The Trip to Bountiful*; and M'Lynn Eatenton, *Steel Magnolias*, for which she won a Georgie Award as "Best Supporting Actress." She has performed in several E. TN theatres including *Suffrage* at the Flying Anvil and *Second Samuel* at Tellico Playhouse. Her performance as lead role Fern Herrington Miles in the world premier play, *Captive Community*, earned her a Best Actress award. Jennie is grateful to God for his ever-present love and grace, and Bob for his love and support.



Raine Palmer (women's understudy) is an East Tennessee native and actor of voice, theatre, and film. Some of her regional theatre acting credits include Honey in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Edith Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Richard II in *Richard II*, Gretchen in *Boeing Boeing*, and Marcia in *Cato*. Raine would like to thank her family, friends, and loving husband Caleb for their everlasting support.



Michala Plato (Margaret Leavitt) is making her debut performance with The Wordplayers and is excited to work alongside this incredible team of actors and creatives in *Silent Sky*. Michala graduated from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with her BA in theatre. Her recent theatrical roles include Farrah the Faerie/Puppeteer 1 in Clarence Brown Theatre's production of *She Kills Monsters* and Sabrina in the original cast of *Soft Animals* at the Clayton Performing Arts Center. Although theatre is her first love, Michala has enjoyed transitioning her career over to film. Over the past year, she has worked nationally with Pilot Company, filming and recording commercial and voiceover work. (You can also currently see her on the front door of any Pilot gas station.) She has also enjoyed getting to film the intro videos for Gatlin's Escape Games in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as well as multiple short films and commercials. Michala would like to thank her friends, family, and mentors for their continued support. Proverbs 16:9. www.michalaplato.com



Christi Watson (Henrietta Leavitt) is thrilled to be working with The WordPlayers once again. As the Director of Middle School Theatre Arts at Webb School of Knoxville, Christi believes that doing what she teaches is the best professional development. Christi appeared as Shelby in The WordPlayers' production of *The Spitfire Grill*. She studied Musical Theatre at Palm Beach Atlantic University and has performed as an actor and singer all over the United States. "Thanks to my husband, Matt, for being the 'advanced creature' that Henrietta never found. Thank You to my children, William & Isaac. You are my greatest wonder." James 1:17

The Production Team

Ariana Dotson (Costume Designer) is a recent graduate from UTK's Theatrical Tech and Design Program and this is her first time working with The WordPlayers. While she has always enjoyed working in theatre, this is only her second time doing costume design and she is so excited for the opportunity. She'd like to thank Lauren Roark for mentoring her, and The WordPlayers for taking a chance on a young professional.

Stephen F. Krempasky (Scene Designer) is the Executive Director of the Farragut Business Alliance, promoting retailers, restaurants and service providers in the Town of Farragut. His next major Community event is HarvestFest on October 22nd – Free to the public – featuring live music, Halloween Costume Contest, food trucks and over 50 Vendors at the Village Green Shopping Center. <https://www.shopfarragut.com/events/farragut-harvestfest/> Additionally, he is President of MASSKUS Productions, a special events consulting agency. Steve has designed over 340 theatrical and corporate stage productions and is currently designing *The Music Man* for Bearden High School. He is looking forward to working on *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* for The WordPlayers and *The Addams Family* at Hardin Valley Academy this season. Steve is a "Fellow" of the American Association of Community Theatre with over 40 years of industry service.

Cole Liles (Projections Designer) is a realtor with Realty Executives. Buying or selling a home? Go to colelilesrealtor.com. Cole has also served as a freelance video producer and a creative programming director for OneLife Church. Originally from Nashville, he graduated from UTK and decided to lay down roots in East Tennessee. He resides in the Oakwood Lincoln Park area of town with his wife, young daughter, and two cats.

Ethan Norman (Director) is the newly appointed Artistic Director for The WordPlayers. Ethan is thrilled to be making his MainStage directorial debut with *Silent Sky*. Ethan has been acting, writing, and directing in community and professional theatre for over 25 years, and with The WordPlayers for the last decade. This story is dear to his heart, and he couldn't be more thrilled with the cast. When he's not doing theatre or music, you'll find Ethan outside running, swimming, or climbing something with his wife and two boys.

Robbin Paige Sharp (Stage Manager) has had the privilege of stage managing several shows for The WordPlayers and is happy to return to work on this special project. Robbin has a BS and MA in Education, a K-12 Theatre Arts Degree, and an MFA in Theatre Performance. She has also performed in numerous shows in the greater Knoxville area and the Eastern United States. Robbin hopes you enjoy the show as much as she has enjoyed working with these wonderfully talented folks. She resides in Maryville with her three fur-babies: Tilly, Josie, and Mattie. Go Vols!



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We are thankful for the support of our
2023-2024 Season Contributing Players!

(Gifts given between August 1, 2023 and Oct. 1, 2023)

**ALL WORLD PLAYERS
(\$1000+)**

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Patricia Cappiello
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Our 202-24 Season is being supported, in part, by federal award number 21.027
awarded to Knox County by the U.S. Department of the Treasury
and the Arts & Culture Alliance.

The WordPlayers is impacting the greater Knoxville community for the K
ingdom of Christ! Your support is needed and greatly appreciated!

The WordPlayers is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization.

Please send your tax deductible gifts to P.O. Box 50451, Knoxville, TN 37950-0451.



Our 2023-24 Season

Fall MainStage Show

Silent Sky by Lauren Gunderson

October 5, 6, 12, 13 @ 7:30 PM & Oct. 8 & 15 @ 2:30 PM
at Erin Presbyterian Church, 200 Lockett Rd., Knoxville

Advent Touring Show

West of Bethlehem by Ethan Norman

Available November 26-Dec. 20, 2023

Holiday Mainstage Show

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

by Joseph Robinette

Public Performances: Dec 8: 7.30 PM, Dec 9: 2.30 PM, Dec 10: 2.30 PM

School Shows: Dec 8: 9.30 AM, Dec 11: 9.30 AM and 12 Noon,

Dec 12: 9.30 AM, Dec 13: 9.30 AM

at Pellissippi State Community College,
10915 Hardin Valley Rd., Knoxville

History Tour

Jackie Robinson Steals Home by Peter Manos

Available Feb. 5 - March 5, 2024

Spring Mainstage Show

King Lear

April 5, 6, 12, 13 @ 7.30 PM, April 7 & 14 @ 2:30 PM

at Pellissippi State Community College,
10915 Hardin Valley Rd., Knoxville

Summer Musical

TBD

July 12, 13 & 14 @ The Clarence Brown Theatre

For more information regarding our season,
please visit our website: www.wordplayers.org

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and mailing list. Also, follow us on Facebook (The WordPlayers),
Twitter (@wordplayers) and Instagram (wordplayers)