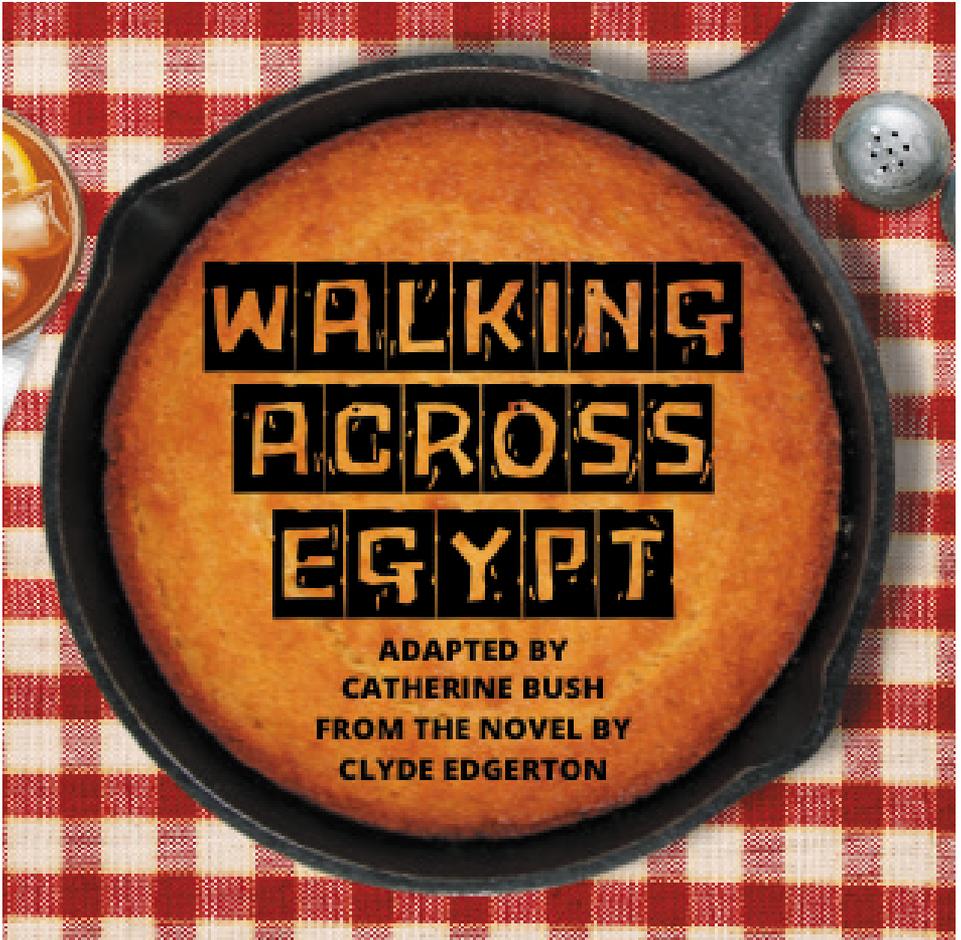




WordPlayers
Theatre
Company

THE WORDPLAYERS PRESENTS



MAINSTAGE SEASON
SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 5, 2025

WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

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Hope Arnold, Leslie Arnold (Leslie Claire Photography), Steve Arnold, Jim and Leann Dickson, Erin Presbyterian Church, Caleb Leach, , William McKibbin, John Thomas Oaks, Lisa Stockton, Jeni Weber, and Terry Weber

Location: the small town of Listre, North Carolina. 1984.

Setting: Mattie Rigsbee's kitchen and living room and a common area that represents the church, the Swanson's house and the prison yard, among other things.

THERE WILL BE ONE FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERMISSION.

WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

First and foremost... myself, my cast and crew are so appreciative that you have come to see our heartfelt interpretation of *Walking Across Egypt*. I have returned to the theater after twenty years of being a mom, wife, mimi, and entrepreneur. A return that has only been scripted by God and in His divine timing and plan. As a new widow of seven months, I could not have fathomed God's plan this time last year. However, I'm very blessed He did have a plan for this very broken soul to bring black typewritten words on paper to life. Words on paper that have guided my own fears, tears, and overwhelming thoughts of what the future would bring in this season of my life.

I thank Ethan Norman for handing me this script and seeing something in me that I was not sure was there anymore. In addition, each and every cast and crew member has made an imprint on my heart that I could not be more thankful for. In fact, each cast member's heart is bigger than any character they could possibly portray on stage. I also could not resonate more with the characters in this cast from my own life experiences.

I pray that you will also feel each character's fears, hopes, and dreams. I also pray you will reflect back on each character's struggles and successes when you find that you are in need of the same. That you too... when all seems more than you and your heart can bear... remember Mattie... and know that your "upside down waterfall" is only one conversation with God away.

Smiles and laughs,

Sheri Lynn

WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

CAST

Mattie Rigsbee.....Lisa Slagle
 Robert Rigsbee.....Patrick Minton
 Wesley Benfield.....Griffin Gilbert
 Alora Swanson.....Christi Watson
 Finner Swanson.....Gabe Potter
 Lamar Benfield.....Aaron Hinds
 Reverend Bass.....John Cherry
 Sheriff Tillman.....Jae Campbell
 Choir Member / Understudy for Robert Rigsbee.....Red Paint Spilman
 Choir Member / Understudy for Reverend Bass.....Ernie Roberts
 Choir Member / Understudy for Wesley Benfield.....Gregory Powers
 Choir Member.....Alyse Troutt
 Choir Member.....Maddie Gravitte
 Choir Member.....Cooper Fuson
 Choir Member.....Kim Chaney-Bay
 Choir Member.....Wendy Potter

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director - Sheri Lynn Younkin
Music and Choir Director - Casey Maxwell
Stage Manager - Lucy Wright
Scenic Design - Steve Krempasky
Sound Design - Lucy Wright, John Thomas Oaks
Lighting Design - Bailee Boisclair
Costume Design - Ari Dotson
Properties Master and Set Dressing - Lucy Wright, Sheri Lynn Younkin
Social Media - Charity Walton
Sound & Light Board Operator - Gareth Volmar
Follow Spot Operators - Terry Weber, Brad Hood

STAFF

Leslie Arnold, Managing Director
 Caleb Leach, Programming Coordinator
 Charity Walton, Marketing Coordinator
 Lucy Wright, Production Coordinator
 Joe Jaynes, Webmaster

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Lorna Keeton	

CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT



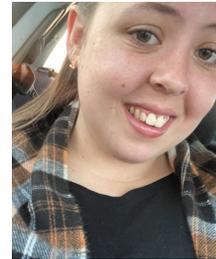
Sheri Lynn Younkin
DIRECTOR



Lucy Wright
STAGE
MANAGER



Casey Maxwell
MUSIC & CHOIR
DIRECTOR



Bailee Boisclair
LIGHTING
DIRECTOR



Jae Campbell
SHERIFF
TILLMAN



Kim Chaney-Bay
CHOIR MEMBER



John Cherry
REVEREND
BASS



Ariana Dotson
COSTUME
DESIGNER



Cooper Fuson
CHOIR
MEMBER



Griffin Gilbert
WESLEY BENFIELD/
ASST. SM



Maddie Gravitte
CHOIR
MEMBER



Aaron Hinds
LAMAR
BENFIELD



Steve
Krempasky
SET DESIGNER



Patrick Minton
ROBERT
RIGSBEE



Gabe Potter
FINNER
SWANSON

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wordplayers.org



CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT



Wendy Potter
CHOIR
MEMBER



Gregory Powers
CHOIR MEMBER/
WESLEY US



Ernie Roberts
CHOIR MEMBER/
REVEREND US



Lisa Slagle
MATTIE
RIGSBEE



Red Paint
Spilman
CHOIR MEMBER/
ROBERT US



Alyse Troutt
CHOIR
MEMBER



Christi Watson
ALORA
SWANSON

CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

Bailee Boisclair (LIGHTING DESIGNER) is a freelance lighting designer and theatrical electrician based in Knoxville, TN. A 2018 graduate of the University of Tennessee, she works regularly with several local high schools and crews at the Clarence Brown Theatre. Her design credits include *A Doll's House* (The WordPlayers), *Mary Poppins* (Bearden High School), *Little Shop of Horrors* (William Blount High School), *Driving While Black* (Marble City Opera), *Newsies* (Seymour High School), *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *A Bucket of Blessings* (The Rose Theater) and many more.

Jae Campbell (SHERIFF TILLMAN) is a longtime friend of the theater and has been on the stage and behind the stage as an actor, playwright, director, and a part of technical crews for the last 30 years. She has performed in a variety of shows such as children's theater, comedy shows, musicals, improv and Shakespearean plays. Titles include: *Matilda*, *Seussical*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Newsies*, and *Trailer Park Trash*. Her most recent work was *A Doll's House* and *Jackie Robinson Steals Home*, both with The WordPlayers. Jae is excited to be a part of such an amazing story and looks forward to opportunities to work with these cast and crew members again.

Kim Chaney-Bay (CHOIR MEMBER) is delighted to be back performing after a long hiatus from the stage. Kim currently sings in her church choir. She also enjoys writing short plays and teaching a Sunday School class on Christmas hymns. During

CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

the day, Kim works full-time for the University of Tennessee Extension Service, Family and Consumer Sciences. Coincidentally, Kim grew up in the same town as Clyde Edgerton, author of the book, *Walking Across Egypt*; they also share a university alma mater!

John Cherry (REVEREND BASS) is a local actor and director, a 1984 graduate of UT Theatre, and a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Air Force. Since 2005, he has volunteered as the Artistic Director for the Primary Players Children's Theatre Group in Blount County. He does have a day job as the Vice President of Community Leadership for Leadership Knoxville. Among his favorite roles: Prof. Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, Sidney Bruhl in *Deathtrap*, and Tateh in *Ragtime*. He lives in Maryville with his wife Melanie. Their daughter Alex works in L.A. for Disney Studios...proud papa.

Ariana Dotson (COSTUME DESIGNER) is beyond grateful to be working with The WordPlayers again. Since graduating from UTK with a major in Theatrical Tech and Design, she has been working consistently with various theatre companies in the Knoxville area. This will be her sixth production doing costume design for The WordPlayers and she would like to thank her past mentor and professor, Lauren Roark, for getting her involved with them! Some past notable productions include, *SWEAT*, *Trouble in Mind*, *HAIR*, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, *A Doll's House*, and *Freaky Friday*. Ariana would also like to thank her boyfriend Owen, her parents, and her family for their continued support of her work in the arts.

Cooper Fuson (CHOIR MEMBER) is extremely excited to be performing in his first WordPlayers performance. He graduated this year from Heritage High School. In that time he was a part of the Heritage Singers for two years. His most recent performance was in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, where he played Quasimodo. He hopes to continue his performance and singing career!

Griffin Gilbert (WESLEY BENFIELD/ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER) is so excited to be doing his second show with The WordPlayers. He was most recently seen in their production of *Freaky Friday* as one of Savannah's Minions. He is a sophomore at West High School where he is currently in their production of *All Shook Up*. He has been a part of several shows in the Knoxville area. He would like to thank Lucy Wright, Sheri Lynn Younkin, Ari Dotson, Joe Jaynes, and the rest of the amazing cast and crew in this show. He would also like to thank his friends and family for their constant support and guidance. Enjoy the show!

Maddie Gravitte (CHOIR MEMBER) is so excited to be working with The WordPlayers again! She currently attends the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, majoring in Public Relations. Recent productions include: *Finding Nemo* (Bloat), *High School Musical* (Ms. Darbus), *Anastasia* (Dowager Empress), *Our Town* (Stage Manager), and most recently, *Freaky Friday* (Teen Ensemble, US). She wishes to thank her friends and family for their continued support, and The WordPlayers' creative team for this opportunity.

Aaron Hinds (LAMAR BENFIELD) is excited to join The WordPlayers for the first time! He was recently seen as Wilson in TKD's *Harvey* and Dogberry in RSCC's *Much Ado about Nothing*. When not on stage, Aaron enjoys cosplaying, crocheting, and not following the rule of threes. He wants to thank the rest of the cast and all the crew, his family and friends, and his forever cat-video-watching companion, Elizabeth.

Steve Krempasky (SCENIC DESIGNER) is the Executive Director of the Farragut Business Alliance; promoting retailers, restaurants and service providers in the Town

IN THESE DARK STREETS



TOURING IN DECEMBER

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CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

of Farragut. Additionally, he is President of MASSKUS Productions, a special events consulting agency. During his career, Steve has over 360 theatrical and corporate stage credits. He recently designed Bearden High School's *HAMLET*, and Hardin Valley Academy's premiere of *BIG FISH*. He is delighted to work again with The WordPlayers, after this past Summer's, *Freaky Friday*. He is a "Fellow" of the American Association of Community Theatre with over 40 years of service to the organization.

Casey Maxwell (MUSIC AND CHOIR DIRECTOR) last appeared with The WordPlayers as Christina Linden in last fall's *A Doll's House*. Previously, she's accompanied for auditions, served as music director or piano/keys player for summer musicals, and played Jane (*Jane Eyre*) and Jo (*Little Women*) at the Bijou. Casey enjoys pickleball, Lagree fitness, and all things musical theatre. IG: one_sea_rae.

Patrick Minton (ROBERT RIGSBEE) is very excited to be back on stage with The WordPlayers! Most recently Patrick could be seen in The WordPlayers' production of *Freaky Friday* and Marble City Opera's production of *Il Tabarro*. He is also the music director at Colonial Heights UMC in South Knoxville and is a librarian at the University of Tennessee. Patrick would like to thank his wife Lisa and kiddo Henry for supporting him and being his biggest fans and all of the folks at The WordPlayers for allowing him to be a part of this production!

Gabe Potter (FINNER SWANSON) is so grateful to be back with The WordPlayers, reprising his role as Finner Swanson. Past roles include Mr. Beaver in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Grimsby in *The Little Mermaid*, the Narrator in *Into the Woods*, and Dad in *Leaving Iowa*. When Gabe's not onstage protecting the neighborhood from the criminal element, he ministers with the Farragut Church of Christ, loves ballroom dancing with his wife, and stops at every Buc-ee's on the interstate.

Wendy Potter (CHOIR MEMBER) is excited to be joining the talented cast of *Walking Across Egypt* and working with The WordPlayers again after many years. Her last stage role was Jack's Mother in the Palace Players' performance of *Into the Woods* last October. Wendy teaches English and Creative Writing at Powell High School and sings with the worship team at the Farragut Church of Christ; she also enjoys baking and pretending that she is on *Dancing with the Stars*. Wendy would like to thank her family and friends for their support and encouragement in her return to the stage.

Gregory Powers (CHOIR MEMBER, UNDERSTUDY FOR WESLEY BENFIELD) is ecstatic to be making his Debut with The WordPlayers! He is a sophomore at West High School. In his most recent show, he played a Hyena in *The Lion King Jr* at Niswonger Performing Arts Center. Some of his favorite roles he's played are The Genie in *Aladdin Jr*, Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast Jr*, and Pinocchio in *Shrek: The Musical Jr*. Gregory would like to thank his family and friends for all the support they have given him. He would also like to thank Lucy Wright, Sheri Lynn, and everyone else putting their time and effort into making this show happen. Ephesians 5:20

Ernie Roberts (CHOIR MEMBER, UNDERSTUDY FOR REVEREND BASS) has been involved with The WordPlayers as a performer and former Board Member for a long time. He has also been seen and heard in many past Knoxville Opera productions as a member of the KO Chorus, commercials and various crime re-enactment shows. Ernie currently serves as Logistics Coordinator for East TN PBS Scholars' Bowl productions, math teacher at Bearden High, and director of the Knoxville Nativity

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CAST & CREW OF WALKING ACROSS EGYPT

Pageant. He would like to thank Sheri Lynn for the opportunity to be a part of this awesome show.

Lisa Slagle (MATTIE RIGSBEE) is excited to be appearing again with The WordPlayers. She is grateful to her family for their support. Lisa has appeared in over 75 productions throughout the Southeast. Favorite roles include Mama Rose in *Gypsy* and M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*. She leads fitness classes (SAIL) at the O'Connor Senior Center & would love for you to join her. She loves the play's message of caring for the least of these.

Red Paint Spilman (CHOIR MEMBER, UNDERSTUDY FOR ROBERT RIGSBEE) is grateful for the opportunity to join The WordPlayers as an actor. He has enjoyed several productions as an audience member and wants to bring that enjoyment to others. Thank you.

Alyse Troutt (CHOIR MEMBER) is incredibly excited to be making her WordPlayers debut! She is currently a sophomore at West High School and is participating in their musical, *All Shook Up*. She was last seen in Company West's production of *Cinderella* as Ensemble and Queen u/s. Alyse is extremely grateful to Sheri Lynn Younkin, Lucy Wright, Casey Maxwell, and the rest of this wonderful cast and creative team for being so kind. She also wants to thank her family and friends for supporting her in everything she does!

Lucy Wright (STAGE MANAGER) is thrilled to be working with The WordPlayers again as a stage manager. She most recently stage managed their summer production of *Freaky Friday* and worked on several shows prior to that including *Bright Star*, *The Fantasticks*, *Hello, Dolly*, *Footloose*, *King Lear*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. She also directed their Winter Production of *Junie B. in Jingle Bells*, *Batman Smells* in 2024 and is gearing up to direct *The Lion*, *The Witch*, and *The Wardrobe* and *Hairspray* for their 2025-2026 season. This past August, she also joined The WordPlayers' staff as their Production Coordinator. In addition to working with The WordPlayers, she has worked with various other theatre companies and is currently directing *All Shook Up* at West High School. She would like to thank Sheri Lynn for directing, Leann Dickson for always being there, and her family and friends for their constant encouragement and support.

Christi Watson (ALORA SWANSON) is a theatre educator, director, actor, singer, and writer in Knoxville, TN. She has two sons and is married to an extraordinary man named Matt. In her "spare time" Christi enjoys reading and drinking coffee. @christi_watson_

Sheri Lynn Younkin (DIRECTOR) The theater has always been a passion of Sheri Lynn's... from plays in grade schools to adult life, she has worked in all aspects of the theater. In addition to theater, she enjoys acting for film, directing, and producing film projects. Her first time with The WordPlayers, she stage managed *The Magician's Nephew* back in 2002. After a full life of being a mom, wife, and entrepreneur, she has returned to the theater and The WordPlayers. Sheri Lynn is also a new board member for The WordPlayers, as well as directing this production.



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