

108th Season

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S

Witness

FOR THE
PROSECUTION



JAN. 5 - 28, 2024



VAGABOND PLAYERS



VAGABOND PLAYERS

The Best of Broadway on Broadway

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VAGABOND PLAYERS PRESENT
AGATHA CHRISTIE'S

Witness
**FOR THE
PROSECUTION**

by Agatha Christie

Directed by Robert W. Oppel
Cast

Carter/Thomas Clegg	Andy Belt
Greta	Peri Walker
Mr. Mayhew	Xander Conte
Leonard Vole	Matthew Payne
Sir Wilfrid Robarts, Q.C.	Toby Hessenauer
Inspector Hearne	William Darden Jr.
Plain Clothes Detective/Court Officer/Warder/Usher.....	Lou Otero
Romaine	Autumn Koehnlien
Justice Wainwright	Brian Douglas
Mr. Myers, Q.C.	Joey Hellman
Dr. Wyatt	Ruta Douglas Smith
Janet Mackenzie	Kathryn Winship
Other Woman/Stenographer	Morgan Wenerick

Understudies

Peri Walker (The Other Woman/Stenographer), Morgan Wenerick (Greta), Thomas Peter (Sir Wilfrid Robarts), Ruta Douglas Smith (Inspector Hearne), Tammy Oppel (Janet McKenzie/Dr. Wyatt)

Setting
Act I

Afternoon in the Chambers of Sir Wilfrid Robarts, Q.C.
There will be a fifteen minute intermission

Act II

Six Weeks Later. Morning in the Central Criminal Court,
London – better known as The Old Bailey.
There will be a ten minute intermission

Act III

Scene One – Same Evening in the Chambers of Sir Wilfrid Robarts, Q.C.
Scene Two – The Next Morning in The Old Bailey.

Cast Biographies

Andy Belt (Carter/Thomas Clegg) is excited to be returning to Vagabond Players for his eighth show with the company. Recent productions at the theater include *Chess*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Broadway Bound*. In Baltimore, Andy has also appeared in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Mousetrap* (Spotlighters Theatre); and *The Mineola Twins* (Fells Point Corner Theatre). He earned his degree in theater from Wake Forest University.

Xander Conte (Mr. Mayhew) a Pittsburgh native, is happy to be in his first Vagabond Players performance. Recent director credits: *Annie* (SHS), *Almost Maine* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (REACH). Recent actor credits: Jamie in *Last 5 Years* (CJ), Robbie Hart in *The Wedding Singer* (SS), Calogero in *A Bronx Tale* (DCT), Trent Oliver in *The Prom* (ST), Oscar Lindquist in *Sweet Charity* and Shakespeare in *Something Rotten* (CCST). He holds a Theatre Minor (Penn State) and is pursuing a Master's in Education (Johns Hopkins University). He currently teaches chemistry and theatre for the Baltimore City Public School System. His proudest accomplishment is being the father of three beautiful kittens. He would like to thank everyone involved in this production and his students, friends, and family for their priceless support. Xander has worked effortlessly with his business partner Sammy Jungwirth to cofound their company: @cj_productions0104. Xander is Al Tony.

William Darden Jr. (Inspector Hearne) is performing with Vagabond Players for the first time. He studied theater at Salisbury University and previously performed at Spotlighters Theater in *Circle Mirror Transformation* and at the Montgomery Playhouse in *The Laramie Project*. He has appeared on television with *Lioness* (Paramount+) and will appear on the forthcoming show *Lady in the Lake* (Apple TV+).

Brian Douglas (Justice Wainwright) has been working steadily in the entertainment industry as an actor, director, lighting, set, and effects designer for almost 50 years, sometimes even making a living at it. Most recently, he designed the set and lighting for *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* for Vagabond Players. He has tackled such iconic roles as Dracula, Lancelot, and Snoopy, and appeared as The Baker from *Into the Woods*, Pseudolus in *...Forum*, and Sancho in an award-winning production of *Man of LaMancha*. For many years, he performed at the Maryland Renaissance Festival portraying a member of the Royal Court.

Ruta Douglas Smith (Dr. Wyatt) has not crossed the boards of this venerable site for almost a decade acting in the Carver School playwright's workshop. She has spent nine years in the cast of the Maryland Renaissance Festival, and has dabbled as an assistant director for *Vinegar Tom* at Spotlighters and *Little Women* at the Strand. Favorite roles have been Yente in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Maria Josepha in *House of Bernarda Alba*, and most recently as Elizabeth in *Gaslight*.

Joey Hellman (Mr. Myers) Vagabond Players credits: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Company*, *Cabaret* and *And Then There Were None*. Lead/ featured roles: *The Secret Garden*, *Lucky Stiff*, *High Society*, *The Foreigner*, *Curtains*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, *The Leader of the Pack*, *The 1940's Radio Hour* and *Cabaret*. Ensemble roles: *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Anything Goes*, *No, No, Nanette*, *Hello Dolly!*, *A Grand Night for Singing* and *Mame*. Directing credits: *The Little Foxes*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Daddy's Dyin' Who's Got the Will?*, *Plaza Suite*, *Butterflies are Free*, *Agatha Christie's Go Back for Murder* and *Towards Zero*. He has also worked as backstage dresser and running crew on several shows around town. He is a Sr. Administrative Coordinator at the Johns Hopkins' School of Medicine.

Toby Hessenuer (Sir Wilfrid Robarts) is making his debut with Vagabond Players but is no stranger to the Baltimore/Annapolis theater scene - this is his 95th production in the region. Recent credits: *Intimate Apparel* and *The Graduate* (Dundalk Community Theater) and *Night Watch*, *Nice Work if You Can Get It*, and *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* (Cockpit in Court). Other credits: Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, Uncle Max in *The Sound of Music*, and Max Bialystock in *The Producers*. A graduate of the University of Rochester, he also studied under members of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Folger Shakespeare Library. Screen Actors Guild (SAG) credits: the award-winning HBO film *Something the Lord Made*, HBO's acclaimed series *The Wire*, and *My One and Only* starring Renee Zellweger. He may also be seen briefly in episodes of *Veep* and *House of Cards*.

Autumn Koehnlein (Romaine) is excited to be performing her first role with Vagabond Players! Her former credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Chaste Maid* at Cheapside, *Macbeth* at Baltimore Shakespeare Factory and *Love and Information* at Fells Point Corner Theatre.

Lou Otero (Plain clothes detective/Court Officer/Warder/Usher) is happy to be returning to the Vagabond Players stage after assistant directing this season's opener, *Chess*. Some favorite roles include Martini in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Vagabond Players), Victor/Gorilla in *Cabaret* (Vagabond Players), Oliver in *Puffs* (ASOB), Col. Matterson in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Spotlighters). Back half of cow in *Gypsy* (Cockpit in Court), and Pirate in *Pirates of Penzance* (Suburban Players). When not involved in shows he enjoys making sure people know he's in the room and multiple naps throughout the day. He wants to thank his wife Jenn for all her support.

Matthew Payne (Leonard Vole) Education: Moscow Art Theatre (MXAT) Summer Stanislavsky School 2015. Theater: Cheswick in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Vagabond Players); Matthew - *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged* (Vagabond Players); Chet - *Dirty Pictures* (Rapid Lemon); Riff Raff - *The Rocky Horror Show* (Haute Patooties); Clov/George - *Endgame/Voices in the Rubble* (Rapid Lemon); Jonathan Harker - *Dracula* (East Lynne Theater Co.); Mr. Croup/Tooley - *Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere* (Cohesion Theater Company); V. - *The Mesmeric Revelations of Edgar Allan Poe* (Submersive Productions); Marcel - *Thirteen Dead Husbands* (Cohesion Theater Company); Franz Kafka - *The Trap* (Ambassador Theatre Company). Film: Jordan - *Thespian* (Mindblank Productions).

Cast Biographies

Peri Walker (Greta) is delighted to make her onstage Vagabond Players debut after stage managing *Stop Kiss* in 2022. She most recently appeared as Charity Hope Valentine in *Sweet Charity* with Bmore Broadway Live. Other local credits: Hermia in *Ill Met by Moonlight* (The Rude Mechanicals), Buckingham/others in *Henry VIII* (Baltimore Shakespeare Factory), Boy Hamlet/Marcus in *The Book of Will* (The Colonial Players of Annapolis), and Persephone in the world premiere production of *Her, Across the River* (Rapid Lemon Productions). Peri thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2019 and hopes to thru-hike the Pacific Crest Trail in 2024.

Morgan Wenerick (Stenographer/Other Woman) is returning for her second production with Vagabond Players, after appearing in 2022's *Stop Kiss* directed by Belle Burr. Morgan graduated from Towson University in May 2020 with a B.F.A. in Acting and is so happy and grateful to be back with the Vagabond Players for the second time. She dedicates her performance to her loving life partner. Have fun figuring out "whodunit!"

Kathryn Winship (Janet MacKenzie) is delighted to be making her Vagabond Players debut. Prior to her recent return to Baltimore, Kathryn performed with Recovery Works Theater (*I Am Responsible*, *Macbeth*, and one heck of a *Rocky Horror* shadow cast) and various improv and sketch comedy groups in San Francisco and NYC. Kathryn holds an M.A. in Drama Therapy (California Institute of Integral Studies), a B.A. in Theater (Oberlin College), and is a survivor of the Eugene O'Neill National Theater Institute. When she's not creating drama onstage, she enjoys her job helping others work through their own.



VAGABOND PLAYERS

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Crew Biographies

Agatha Christie (Playwright) is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time and, in many languages, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 66 crime novels, 150 short stories, over 20 plays, and six novels written under the name Mary Westmacott. Her work includes *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, and the genre-defining *And Then There Were None*. Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was written towards the end of the First World War, in which she served in the VAD. In it she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. It was published by Bodley Head in 1920. In 1926, after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her first masterpiece. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was the first of her books to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship that lasted for 50 years and well over 70 books. *Ackroyd* was also the first of Agatha Christie's books to be dramatized – under the title *Alibi* – and to have a successful run in London's West End. By 1930, Agatha had introduced a new character to act as detective. When she created Miss Marple, Agatha did not expect her to become Poirot's rival, but with *The Murder at the Vicarage*, Miss Marple's first full-length outing, it appeared she had produced another popular and enduring character. *The Mousetrap*, her most successful play of all, opened in 1952 and is the longest-running play in history. Agatha Christie was made a dame in 1971. She died in 1976. Agatha Christie Limited (ACL) has been managing the literary and media rights to Agatha Christie's works around the world since 1955, working with the best talents in film, television, publishing, stage and on digital platforms to ensure that Christie's work continues to reach new audiences in innovative ways and to the highest standard. The company is managed by Christie's great grandson James Prichard. Visit www.agathachristie.com for more information.

Jess Corso (Stage Manager) is back for her second production at Vagabond Players after her ensemble/choir conducting role in *Chess*. Once described as a "theatrical Swiss Army Knife", she is exceedingly excited to expand her skill set as she makes her stage managing debut. She is honored for the opportunity to further her involvement with Vagabond Players and wants to thank everyone for letting her stick around. Enjoy the show!

Sammy Jungwirth (Set Design) is an award-winning 19-year-old theatre artist who has worked on over 180 productions in the Baltimore area and been called a "Theatre prodigy" by MDTheatreGuide. Though mostly a scenic designer, he also works in lighting, sound, and props design and stage management in the DMV area. He recently graduated from G.W. Carver Center where he studied design and production and now works as a theatrical carpenter. He directed the US premiere of the West End musical *Zelda*, a biography musical about the life of Zelda Fitzgerald that resulted in a 54 Below performance in New York. He is the co-founder of CJ PRODUCTIONS, a brand new theatre company where he is the current resident director.

Crew Biographies

Robert W. Oppel (Director) is very excited to make his Vagabond Players directorial debut, having previously worked at here as a stage manager for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, fight choreographer for *Moon Over Buffalo*, and on stage as a cast member of *Sweeney Todd*. During the day he is the theatre educator for Friends School of Baltimore, where he serves as the director of the theatre program. He holds a B.F.A in Acting from UMBC and is very active in Baltimore theatre as both a director and an actor. Director: *A Bronx Tale*, *Sylvia!*, *Side Show*, *Catch Me If You Can*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Crucible*, *The Addams Family*, *Legally Blonde*, *Complete Works of William Shakespeare abridged!*, *Proof*, *All Shook Up*, *Spring Awakening*, *Company*, *The Shadowbox*, *Lost In Yonkers*, *Crazy For You*, *The Full Monty*, *Urinetown*, *Songs For A New World*, *Assassins*, *All in the Timing*, and *The Life*. Actor: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (McMurphy), *Proof* (Hal), *Dog Sees God* (C.B.), *The Shape of Things* (Adam), *Curtains* (Johnny Harmon), *A Chorus Line* (Zach), *The Mercy Seat* (Ben), *Mr. Roberts* (EnsignPulver), *Lost in Yonkers* (Uncle Louie), *Hamlet* (Horatio), *An Actors' Nightmare* (George Spelvin), *MacBeth* (Malcolm), *Children of a Lesser god* (James Leeds).

Tammy Oppel (Costume Designer) has worked throughout the Baltimore theater community for over 30 years. Vagabond Players credits include *Something's Afoot*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. While usually found onstage, Tammy is also the resident costumer for the middle and high school productions at Friends School of Baltimore. Favorite roles include Mrs. Wormwood in *Matilda*, Ms. Andrew in *Mary Poppins*, Little Sally in *Urinetown*, Bella in *Lost in Yonkers*, Paulette in *Legally Blonde*, Logainne in *Spelling Bee*, CB's Sister in *Dog Sees God*, Carol Strong in *Catch Me if You Can*, Prudy Pingleton in *Hairspray* and Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*. Tammy holds a B.A. in Theatre Arts (Towson University), an M.A. in Arts Administration (Goucher College), and is a grants administrator with the Maryland State Arts Council.

Kerry Simons (Assistant Stage Manager) is very excited to be working with this amazing group of creative and wonderful people! She's also just a teensy bit exhausted after having worked on the last two Vagabond Players productions, last season's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Assistant Director) and this season's opener *Chess* (Stage Manager). She is so blessed to call Vagabond Players home and is very much looking forward to the next theatrical adventure! Enjoy!

The History of VAGABOND PLAYERS

The years that followed the great fire of 1904 were a time of great bustle and activity for Baltimore, and the commencement of World War I in 1914 helped to intensify this mood. During 1915 and 1916, Baltimore's industrial growth surpassed that of any similar period. [Also] during the war, a renaissance in the arts took place, led by Baltimore's mayor, Walter Preston. In 1915 Preston told the city council, "Baltimore's citizens have as much right to organizations that provide for aesthetic development as they do to a sanitation department."

Thus, by 1916 the city had its own symphony and community park concerts, and work had begun on a public art museum. Curiously enough, though, no one had been able to establish any kind of successful, progressive theater. This seems especially odd when one considers the great theatrical ferment that was then sweeping the country. Despite this national movement, however, attempts to organize permanent dramatic groups in Baltimore had failed. In 1916, three people decided to alter this situation: Constance D'Arcy Mackay, a New Yorker who specialized in directing elaborate pageants; Adele Gutman Nathan, a Baltimorean who had directed plays while attending Goucher College; and Carol Sax, a former student of theater and art at Columbia University and teacher at the Maryland Institute of Art.

In 1947, Mrs. Nathan recalled the circumstances that led to the founding of Baltimore's first little theater:

Constance Mackay, Carol Sax and I were waiting for a streetcar at the corner of Charles and Centre Streets...Weary from rehearsal, we leaned against a store window while we talked — good talk about the Little Theatre Movement that was spreading across the country...We agreed that Baltimore should have a Little Theatre. The town was loaded with talent. The question was, where to put the playhouse.

Carol Sax noticed that Miss Mackay and I were leaning against a store window. Directly above our heads was sign, "For Rent—Apply St. James Hotel." Eagerly the three of us cupped our eyes with our hands and peered through the darkened glass. The store was empty. It was about two stories high, just right for a theatre, and by some miracle there was a raised platform across the back wall...

Early the next morning, Carol Sax went to the St. James Hotel and paid the first month's rent. \$19.

Constance Mackay did not remain in Baltimore to participate in the actual founding of the theater. However, Carol Sax and Mrs. Nathan proceeded enthusiastically with the project, managing to throw Baltimore into a tizzy of excitement with their oblique publicity.

To learn more about our history, check out ***The Vagabonds: America's Oldest Little Theatre*** by Linda Lee Koenig or visit our website:
<https://www.vagabondplayers.org/history/>

Production Staff

Director Robert W. Oppel
Stage Manager Jess Corso
Assistant Stage Manager Kerry Simons
Lighting Design Sammy Jungwirth
Set Design Sammy Jungwirth
Costume Design Tammy Oppel
Set Construction Bruce Kapplin
Jay DeMarco
Booth Technician Jess Corso
Photographer Shaelyn Jae Photography
Marketing/PR Audra M. Mullen
Kerry Simons
Graphic Design Sarah Hepworth
Box Office/Front of House Michael Kranick
Producers Thomas Peter
Bruce Levy

It is with great sadness that I let everyone know of the passing of John Blair on December 2, 2023 after a long illness. He participated in Baltimore's community theater for many years as an actor, director and Vagabond Players Board member. For Vagabond Players, he directed such plays as *Local Talent*, *Bad Habits*, and *Night Watch* to mention just a few. The performance of *Witness for the Prosecution* on January 21, 2024 will be dedicated to his memory.

- Marylee Barnes, President

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VAGABOND ANGELS

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Anne Belcher

Gary Belt

Peter Bodde

Candice Chesno

David Graham

Linda McEwen

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest

Cast and Crew

Dana Senior

Sheldon Shugarman

Susan Steele

Kimberly Swartz

Vagabond Players is a recipient of grants from the Maryland States Arts Council and Mayor Brandon Scott and the Baltimore Office of Promotion and The Arts



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FEB. 16 – MAR. 10, 2024

HOW I LEARNED *to Drive*

Written by Paula Vogel

Directed by Tessara Morgan Farley

A wildly funny, surprising and devastating tale of survival in which Li'l Bit, now a woman in her 30's, comes to terms with the complex childhood relationship she had with her Uncle Peck. Vogel's Pulitzer Prize-winning thunderbolt of a play brings theatre back to its roots in storytelling and personal and social history.

APR. 5 – 28, 2024

DOUBT, A PARABLE

Written by John Patrick Shanley

Directed by Steve Goldklang

In this Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning 21st century American classic, Sister Aloysius, a strict, uncompromising Catholic middle school principal in the early 1960's, takes matters into her own hands when she suspects the charismatic and highly popular Father Flynn of improper relations with one of the male students — who happens to be the school's only African American student.

MAY 17 – JUNE 9, 2024

LOVE, LOSS AND *What I Wore*

Written by Nora Ephron and Delia Ephron
Based on the book by Ilene Beckerman

Directed by Belle Burr

An evening of hilariously funny and often poignant short scenes and monologues that depict how an item of clothing can hold a past identity, body shape, and hopes seized or abandoned. In this delightfully dishy trip down memory lane a dress, a shoe, a hat can serve as a jumping off point for bigger themes such as falling in and out of love, familial relationships, or a same-sex marriage.

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WWW.VAGABONDPLAYERS.ORG

