

# ARSENIC

*and Old Lace*



**110<sup>TH</sup>**  
1916-2026 *Season*

FEB. 20 – MAR. 15, 2026



VAGABOND PLAYERS



# VAGABOND PLAYERS

*The Best of Broadway on Broadway*

806 South Broadway  
Baltimore, MD 21231  
410-563-9135  
www.vagabondplayers.org

## *Board of Directors*

Audra M. Mullen ..... President  
Jay Demarco ..... Vice President  
Steve Goldklang ..... Secretary  
Stephen Deininger ..... Artistic Director

Marylee Barnes  
Michael Kranick  
Bruce Levy  
Sydney Marks  
Thomas Peter  
Anthony Rufo  
NJ Saroff

Comptroller – Sara Estes  
Legal Advisor to the Board – Marvin Schein

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices during the performance.  
No food or drinks are allowed in the theatre.

The recording or distribution of this production on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited and a violation of the author's copyrights and actionable under United States copyright law.



**baltimore  
playwrights  
festival**

Vagabond Players is a founding member of the Baltimore Playwrights Festival. For more information, visit <http://www.baltplayfest.org>.

VAGABOND PLAYERS PRESENT

# ARSENIC

*and Old Lace*

by Joseph Kesselring

Directed by Katie Sheldon

Assistant Directed by Bex Hoover

## *Cast (in Order of Appearance)*

Abby Brewster .....	Melissa Banister
The Rev. Dr. Harper .....	Chris West
Teddy Brewster .....	Stephen M. Deininger
Officer Brophy .....	Andrew Syropoulos
Officer Klein .....	Adam Abruzzo
Martha Brewster .....	Andrea Myles-Hunkin
Elaine Harper .....	Audrey Brooks
Mortimer Brewster .....	Adrian Bagarić
Mr. Gibbs .....	Tim Van Sant
Jonathan Brewster .....	Judah-Isaac Canizares
Dr. Einstein .....	Thomas Peter
Officer O'Hara .....	Sydney Marks
Lieutenant Rooney .....	John Dignam
Mr. Witherspoon .....	Colin Davies

## *Setting*

The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Brewster home in Brooklyn, 1941.

Act I: An afternoon in September

Act II: That same night

Act III: Scene 1: Later that night

Scene 2: Early the next morning

There will be a fifteen-minute intermission after Act II

*Arsenic And Old Lace is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection ([www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com))*

*Arsenic and Old Lace was presented by Howard Linsay and Russel Crouse at the Fulton Theatre in New York, on August 18, 1941.*

# 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...Wearied 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/>

# Cast Biographies



**Adam Abruzzo** (Officer Klein) is appearing in his first production at Vagabond Players but has been relatively active in the local community theater scene for the past decade. He was most recently Gary/Roger in a production of *Noises Off* at Coppermine Players. Other roles include Oscar in *Sweet Charity* and Jean Michel in *La Cage Aux Folles*. Love always to my family: Rachel, Cillian, and Scarlett (and Moony).

**Adrian Bagarić** (Mortimer Brewster) is happy to return to the Vagabond Players stage, this time as Mortimer. Recent credits at Vagabond Players include *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* (Picasso) and *Room Service* (Leo Davis), *Machinal* at FPCT (Ensemble), and many more in his home country of Croatia, where some of his most memorable performances include *Sickness of Youth* (Petrell), *The Decameron* (Panphillo), *Ubu Roi* (Captain MacNure), and *The Maids* (The Mistress). He majored in Acting and Puppetry at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek and has received two years of training in Classical Antiquity Theatre.



**Melissa Banister** (Abby Brewster) is excited to return to Vagabond Players, where she was previously seen in *Pipeline*; *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*; and *How I Learned to Drive*. Additional recent credits include *Deathtrap* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Spotlighters Theatre) and *Machinal* (Fells Point Corner Theatre). She is thankful for the foundational training she received from Mr. Tom Buck, who inspired generations of Baltimore actors. Melissa earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater and Dance from Trinity College. She currently teaches theatre arts to high schoolers. Melissa is forever grateful to Nicholas and Matthew for their support, inspiration, and love.

**Audrey Brooks** (Elaine Harper) is excited to be returning to Vagabond Players for her second show! Last season, she appeared in *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* as Suzanne. She also previously performed at Spotlighters Theatre in *Laughing Stock* as Susannah. Audrey holds her BFA in Acting from Towson University, where she performed in several student productions and the devised piece *Icarus at the Border*. She is so excited to once again have the opportunity to work with such amazing people and hopes you enjoy the show!



**Judah-Isaac Canizares** (Jonathan Brewster) is thrilled to be playing in his first Vagabond Players production. Recent works include Cheever in *The Crucible* (SS), General Genghis Khan Schmitz in *Seussical* (SS), and Dennis in *The Play That Goes Wrong* (TAP). Judah wants to thank his family, The Scales of Fate, and all his wonderful friends for their support. He would not be where he is without them.

# Cast Biographies

**Colin Davies** (Mr. Witherspoon) is delighted to be making his Vagabond Players debut. Based in Washington, he has performed with many theatres in the DC area. Roles include Galileo, Woodrow Wilson, Isaac Newton, King David, an Ugly Sister, Kafka's Father, Charles Dickens, Merlin, a neo-Nazi grocer, and the Wizard of Oz. He has appeared in several films and on TV in *House of Cards*, *Veep*, *The Wars*, and *Lady in the Lake*. He loves travel (last year he visited England, France, Italy, India, Turkey, and Uzbekistan) and early rock 'n' roll.



**Stephen M. Deininger** (Teddy Brewster) is a prolific director, actor, and pianist across the Baltimore area. The Vagabond Players' Artistic Director and board member, his Vagabond credits include actor and pianist in *Hair*, *Room Service*, *Into the Woods*, *Doubt*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Pillowman*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Avenue Q*, *Cabaret*, and *Our Town*; and director for *The Crucible*, *God of Carnage*, *Chess*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, and *The Shark Is Broken*. He would like to thank his wife, Samantha, for being supportive of him and this theatre.

**John Dignam** (Lieutenant Rooney) joins Vagabond Players for a fourth strut. He appeared previously in productions of *And Then There Were None*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. *Arsenic* brings his total number of productions with Vagabonds and several other Baltimore-area troupes to an even three dozen in only the past 10 years. He dedicates his performance to his late father, John Sr., who played Lieutenant Rooney to John's Mortimer in a 1992 production of *Arsenic* in Philadelphia, their hometown. He offers many thanks and kudos to Katie, Bex, and the rest of this wonderful cast and crew.



**Sydney Marks** (Officer O'Hara) is thrilled to return to the Vagabond Players stage after having previously performed in *Room Service*, *Into the Woods*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Chess*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *12 Angry Jurors*. Before moving to Baltimore, Sydney graduated with a degree in Theatre and Teaching from Eastern Kentucky University. She is a proud ELA teacher at Towson High School. Love to DMDTMM, and thank you to Samantha Deininger for being her inspiration.

**Andrea Myles-Hunkin** (Martha Brewster) is back in town after 28 wonderful years living in Maine. Thank you, Vagabond Players, for giving me this Martha Brewster-tunity! Past roles in Maine community theatre include Dr. Gorgeous in *Sisters Rosensweig*, Carmen Bernstein in *Curtains*, and two different productions of *Calendar Girls*—one as the lead and the other as Cora, the church organist. My big talents include accents, fake-playing the piano (done this five times), and the lowest humor of all: puns. Thank you to my new husband, Jake, for being the best partner for running lines.





**Thomas Peter** (Dr. Einstein) is delighted to return to Vagabond Players, having recently understudied in *Room Service* and *Witness for the Prosecution*. Pre-pandemic Vagabonds' credits include Herman in *Cabaret*; the Rev. Lionel Toop in *See How They Run*; and stagemanager for *The Complete History of America (abridged)* and *The Normal Heart*. Other credits include Chris in *Becky's New Car*, Mr. Marks in *Intimate Apparel*, Shetland Houndstooth in *Thirteen Dead Husbands*, Christopher Wren in *The Mousetrap*, Jeff in *Ittle of showl*, and Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*. He would like to thank the cast and crew, and his parents and friends for all their love and support.

**Andrew Syropoulos** (Officer Brophy) is excited to be making his Vagabond Players debut. A graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts, he holds a BFA in Theater. Past credits include: appearing in *Outward Bound* at Spotlighters Theatre in 2023; directing *A Few Good Men* and appearing as a Cagelle in *La Cage Aux Folles* for Stand Up for Theater. Other favorite credits include: *ART* (all three roles, rotating), Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, John in *BASH: The Latterday Plays*, Andrew in *Southern Baptist Sissies*, and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*. He would like to thank his friends and family for all their love and support, especially in the last two years. Progress, not perfection.



**Tim Van Sant** (Mr. Gibbs) has been involved with community theatre for nearly thirty years and is thrilled to be making his Vagabond Players debut and thanks Katie and the team for the opportunity. He directed *Mister Roberts* (2022) and *The Trial of the Catonsville* (2018) for Salem Players in Catonsville. Newly retired as a civil service project manager, he fills his free time with cycling, guitar, and golf. He thanks his wife, Janet, for understanding his affinity for performing and theatre.

**Chris West** (The Rev. Dr. Harper) is back on stage after a 40-year hiatus (crazy how life gets in the way of passions). He is grateful for this opportunity to dip his toe back into the acting world and is thrilled that Vagabond Players is the place to do it. Chris's life has focused on advocacy work, trying to make the world a better place. He thanks his wife, Debbie, and daughters Addi and Rori for supporting his passions. He's hopeful that Broadway will start calling once the reviews roll in.



## *Crew Biographies*

**Katie Sheldon** (Director) is thrilled to be making her Vagabond Players directorial debut with a show that has been on her bucket list since high school! She has previously directed for Heritage Players: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *A Few Good Men*, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *Steel Magnolias*, and *The Odd Couple*. Thanks to my wonderful cast and crew for making this such a wonderful experience, and to Vagabonds for giving me the chance to direct again!

**Bex Hoover** (Assistant Director, Elaine U/S) is thrilled to be making their Vagabond Players and directorial debut. A devoted theatre volunteer both on and off stage for over 20 years, Bex most recently worked in stage management for *Legally Blonde the Musical* (2nd Star) and *Evita* (Silhouette Stages), performed in the ensemble for *Dreamgirls* (2nd Star), and served for two years on Silhouette Stages' Board of Directors as Volunteer Coordinator. When not in a theatre, Bex can be found reading, gaming, or listening to 2000s emo music. Special shout-outs go to Katie for the trust and experience, Tyler for the calendar template and overall lovely friendship, and their mom, Kristen, for being the best support system around.

## *Special Thanks*

**Our heartfelt thanks to Fell's Point Corner Theatre and Milford Mill United Methodist Church** for their generosity in providing rehearsal space for this production. Your support, hospitality, and commitment to the arts gave our cast and creative team a welcoming place to collaborate, grow, and bring this show to life. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and for the vital role you play in sustaining our theatre community.



BALTIMORE PREMIERE!

**DANCE NATION**

BY CLARE BARRON

DIRECTED BY GENEVIEVE DE MAHY

**FEB. 13 – MAR. 8, 2026**

**[www.fpct.org](http://www.fpct.org)**

# Production Staff

Director .....	Katie Sheldon
Assistant Director .....	Bex Hoover
Stage Manager .....	Lauren Sayles
Lighting Design .....	Brad Ranno
Sound Design .....	Brad Ranno
Costume Design .....	Katie Sheldon
Set Design .....	Ryan Geiger
Set Build .....	Bruce Kapplin Jay Demarco
Photographer .....	Shealyn Jae Photography
Marketing/PR .....	Audra M Mullen Sydney Marks Su Kim
Graphic Design .....	Sarah Hepworth
Box Office/Front of House .....	Michael Kranick
Producers .....	Stephen Deininger Bruce Levy

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Patron support allows us to offer our artists stipends and has helped us with several major projects over the years including:

- Renovation of our auditorium
- Replacement of the theatre's aging heating and air conditioning systems
- Complete overhaul of our lighting and sound systems, including the installation of hearing assistive technology for our patrons.

Every dollar you contribute goes toward assuring we can continue to bring you high-quality productions and a grand experience at the Vagabond Theatre.

TO MAKE A DONATION, VISIT  
[WWW.VAGABONDPLAYERS.ORG/DONATE](http://WWW.VAGABONDPLAYERS.ORG/DONATE)





For more than a century, Vagabond Players has been powered by the passion, creativity, and dedication of local artists and audiences. We celebrate the vibrant connection between this historic theatre group and the community that built it — and continues to sustain it

From actors stepping onto our stage for the first time to audience members who have filled our seats for generations, Vagabond Players remains a living testament to Baltimore's artistic spirit. As one of the oldest continuously operating community theatres in the country, we are proud to provide opportunities for local talent while presenting compelling, accessible theatre for our community.

## Shining the spotlight on two extraordinary leaders whose dedication ensured Vagabond Players' survival and growth for nearly a century:

**Helen Penniman** joined the board in 1917 and guided the organization through decades of growth, serving as board president until her retirement in 1961. During a time when many theatre groups transitioned toward professional models, Penniman remained steadfast in her belief that Vagabond Players should remain rooted in community theatre. Her unwavering commitment to showcasing local talent helped establish the artistic foundation that still defines the company today.



Penniman's vision was carried forward by **John Bruce Johnson**, who joined Vagabond Players as an actor in 1960 and soon became one of its most influential leaders. Serving as board president for 30 years, Johnson oversaw the theatre's move to its current historic home in Fells Point and helped define its signature programming style — presenting innovative, popular productions while occasionally introducing bold and adventurous works.

The leadership, passion, and dedication of Penniman and Johnson ensured that community theatre would not only survive in Baltimore — it would thrive.

***We Are Vagabonds. We Are Baltimore.***  
***Share your story with us: [www.WeAreVagabonds.org](http://www.WeAreVagabonds.org)***



# VAGABOND ANGELS

Become an Angel today!  
Support the arts, remember a loved one,  
or honor a fellow theatre lover.

## *Broadway Angels*

(Contributions of \$1,000 or more)

Betsy Narrow  
Cathy Shipley, *In Loving Memory of  
Terry J. Long*  
Josh and Mary Shoemaker  
Tom Smith and Joann Bodurtha  
Chuck and Ruth Spivak

Julie Press, *In Memory of Bruce Press*  
Michael B. Styer  
Doris Sweet, *In Memory of Don Sweet*  
William Walther  
Bill and Joan Woodward

## *John Bruce Johnson Memorial Angels*

(Contributions of \$500-\$999)

Kathleen Barber and Barry Feinstein  
Lisa Breslin and Paul Fulton  
Carol and Tim Evans  
David Dunn  
Dave Guy  
Geoffrey Hart  
Barbara Hawkins  
The Ann Horwitz and Bertha N. Oppel  
Charitable Trust

Robert Kass  
Katie Marcotte  
Joy Morrell  
The Estate of Jack Strong Smith  
The Suberi Family

## *2024-2025 Anniversary Angels*

(Contributions of \$100-\$499)

Janet Allen  
Martha and Robert Armenti  
Dennis Betzel  
Candice Chesno

Anita Corso  
Jerry Gietka  
Larry Lambert  
Maria Wawer

## *2024-2025 Angels*

(Contributions of \$50-\$99)

Anne Belcher  
Sally Bogucki  
Suzanne Keilson  
Bruce McPherson  
Michelle Melicosta  
Rhett Murphy

Julie Spokus  
Christopher Weglein

Vagabond Players is a recipient of grants from the  
Abell Foundation and the Maryland State Arts Council.





# JOIN US FOR THE REST OF OUR SEASON!

APR. 10 – MAY 3, 2026

## *The Heidi Chronicles*

**Written by Wendy Wasserstein**

Directed by Lee Conderacci

As society continues to grapple with gender roles, work-life balance, and the meaning of progress, this Pulitzer Prize-winner offers a deeply human look at the costs and complexities of forging one's own path. *THE HEIDI CHRONICLES* isn't just a portrait of a woman in transition—it's a mirror held up to generations still navigating the same questions.

MAY 29 – JUNE 21, 2026

## *The DIVINE SISTER*

**Written by Charles Busch**

Directed by Steve Goldklang

An outrageously campy satire of nun-themed cinema, this fast-paced, genre-blending farce follows the indomitable Mother Superior as she confronts visions, school scandals, and long-buried secrets. In a world still wrestling with the boundaries of belief, identity, and tradition *THE DIVINE SISTER* reminds us how humor can be a divine force in itself.



Learn more about our  
**110<sup>TH</sup> SEASON**  
at [vagabondplayers.org](http://vagabondplayers.org)



*Celebrate*  
**110** YEARS  
OF BALTIMORE  
THEATRE