HAPPENSTANCE THEATER

PRESENTS



COLLABORATIVELY DEVISED BY

HAPPENSTANCE THEATER

DIRECTED BY

MARK JASTER &
SABRINA MANDELL

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MARK JASTER & SABRINA MANDELL

— CAST —

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

MARK JASTER • STEPHANIE BAIRD (Musician) • SABRINA MANDELL

GWEN GRASTORF • SARAH OLMSTED THOMAS • JAY OWEN

— CREATIVE TEAM —

Directors	MARK JASTER & SABRINA MANDELL
Costume Design	SABRINA MANDELL
Props	MARK JASTER & SABRINA MANDELL
Lighting Design	KRIS THOMPSON
Music Direction and Arrangements	STEPHANIE BAIRD
Music Composed/Arranged for Original Production	KAREN HANSEN
Production Stage Manager	DARIELLE SHANDLER
Lead Production Support	TORI MARTIN
Assistant Production Support	DANIEL WEISSGLASS & ZEE HANNA
Ghost Puppet	ALEX & OLMSTED

— HAPPENSTANCE ENSEMBLE —

Producing Artistic Co-Directors	MARK JASTER & SABRINA MANDELL
Managing Director/Visionary Tornado/Deviser	SABRINA MANDELL
Structure & Ground/Deviser	MARK JASTER
Social Media Maven/Deviser	GWEN GRASTORF
Minister of Thoughtfulness/Deviser	SARAH OLMSTED THOMAS
Lead Tinkerer/Deviser	ALEX VERNON

Run time: 75 minutes with no intermission

CO-DIRECTORS' NOTE

In 2010, Happenstance Theater premiered ***Cabaret Macabre***, a series of dark, comedic vignettes and music inspired by the works of Edward Gorey and other Victorian musings. Its success launched a series of 3 more versions and a cinematic homage, ***Cabaret Noir***.

Cabaret Macabre IV (which has now been adapted into ***Dreadful Episodes***) garnered 3 Helen Hayes Award nominations, toured twice to Louisiana (where it sold-out at the New Orleans Fringe Festival), and has played the Baltimore Theatre Project 3 times. Our long-time musical collaborator, Karen Hansen, retired in 2018, so Stephanie Baird now tickles the ivories with us, and the inimitable Jay Owen is filling in for the roles originated by our momentarily absent ensemble member Alex Vernon. We are overjoyed to be premiering this show for NY audiences at 59E59 Theaters on the serendipitous occasion of Edward Gorey's Centennial Year and hope that you will take it in as though strolling on a windy promontory at dusk.

Memento Mori,
Sabrina Mandell & Mark Jaster

PARTICULAR INSPIRATIONS, REFERENCES & SONGS

Amphigorey, Amphigorey Too, Amphigorey Also, Amphigorey Again
Edward Gorey

"Overture"
Karen Hansen

"Swiftly Fades My Life Away"
Ludwig von Beethoven

"Who Killed Cock Robin Quartette"
Music Jack Sparrow (1880)
Lyrics Traditional English

"Twa Sisters"
A traditional ballad common among many Northern European cultures, rendered for our production by Mark Jaster

"Zweites Dreigroschenfinale (What Keeps Mankind Alive?)"
Music Kurt Weill
Lyrics Bertolt Brecht

"The Bells of Farewell"
Scottish Skipping Song

"Little Drop of Poison"
Tom Waits

"La Triviata"
Karen Hansen

"Dancing the Devil Away"
Music Harry Ruby,
Lyrics Bert Kalmar, Otto Harbach

"Cadenza"
Stephanie Baird

"Danse Macabre"
Karen Hansen

We dedicate this show to the Deceased.

MARK JASTER
(Ensemble)



Mark Jaster has appeared in, co-created and co-directed, all Happenstance Theater productions since its founding in 2006, winning the Helen Hayes/Robert Prosky Award for his performance in ***IMPOSSIBLE! A Happenstance Circus***. He studied mime with Étienne Decroux and served as teaching assistant to Marcel Marceau. Teaching and consultation credits for mime, movement, and physical comedy include the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland, The Shakespeare Theatre, Catholic University, Round House Theatre, Center Stage, Theater J, and Olney Theatre. For 20 years he performed with the Big Apple Circus' Clown Care program at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC as "Dr. Baldy." His long performance career also includes many appearances with the Washington and the Cambridge Revels, and 40 seasons at the Maryland Renaissance Festival as ***A Fool named 'O'***. He is happy to haunt the comic shadows cast by the works of Edward Gorey, and as always to share the stage with this beloved ensemble.

www.MarkJaster.com

STEPHANIE BAIRD
(Musician/Ensemble)



Stephanie Baird is a multi faceted pianist, music educator, and collaborative performer. In addition to maintaining a full studio of piano students, Stephanie performs regularly with vocalists and ensembles. Premiering a new work for the 2025 NYC *song*SLAM Competition earlier this year, her team was awarded 3rd place overall by virtual vote as well as the 2025 Commission Prize. She received her master's degree in Vocal Accompaniment from the Peabody Institute. Stephanie is delighted to be returning to Happenstance Theater for ***Dreadful Episodes*** after previously appearing in ***Cabaret Macabre*** and ***Cabaret Noir***.

SABRINA MANDELL
(Ensemble)



Sabrina Mandell is the founder, artistic co-director, executive director, and "visionary tornado" of Happenstance Theater. Sabrina has written, produced, and performed prolifically since founding the company in 2006. She was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Actress in 2017 and has won two Helen Hayes Awards for Outstanding Costume Design. Sabrina performed for 10 years with the Big Apple Circus' Clown Care Program in DC and Baltimore and has taught Theatrical Clown and Physical Comedy at the Shakespeare Theatre DC, Everyman Theatre in Baltimore, Round House Theatre, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. She is also a poet, visual artist, graphic designer, and vintage clothing enthusiast. She is overjoyed to be back at 59E59 Theaters, shrouded in darkness and the macabre for a spell.

www.SabrinaSelmaMandell.com

GWEN GRASTORF
(Ensemble)



Gwen Grastorf is a performer and actor based in the DC metro area. She has been a company member with Happenstance since 2012, as well as the social media maven. Gwen has worked in the DC area with Constellation Theatre, Taffety Punk, We Happy Few, Rorschach Theatre, Faction of Fools, the Tarot Reading, Washington Revels, and others. Raised in Maryland, Gwen has a strong background in dance and music and loves working on physical, ensemble-based shows. She holds a BA in Theatre Performance from the University of Maryland, College Park.

www.GwenGrastorf.com

SARAH OLMSTED THOMAS

(Ensemble)



Sarah Olmsted Thomas is a fifth generation performing artist. She has been a company member with Happenstance Theater since 2012. She is also half of the award-winning puppet theater company Alex and Olmsted which has toured festivals around the world. Sarah trained with the Pig Iron Theatre Company in Philadelphia, Bread and Puppet in Vermont, and Le Samovar, École de Clowns, in Paris. BA, Sarah Lawrence College.

www.AlexAndOlmsted.com

JAY OWEN

(Ensemble)



Jay Owen is a director, choreographer, actor, and teaching artist. As a performer, Jay has worked with Simon McBurney on ***Weimar Nightfall*** (LA Philharmonic) and ***Die Zauberflote*** (The Metropolitan Opera, other int'l venues). He has worked Off Broadway, Off-Off Broadway, regionally, and internationally with companies & theaters including The Barbican, Maison de Metallos (Paris), Pig Iron Theatre Company, rainpan43, Geoff Sobelle, Atlantic Stage 2, Arena Stage, Folger Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Quintessence Theatre, and Edinburgh Fringe (Assembly & Summerhall). Most recently, he played Ambrogio in The Metropolitan Opera's ***Il Barbiere de Siviglia***. As a director/choreographer, selected credits include ***Music at the Close*** world premiere (Carnegie Hall), ***Spoolie Girl*** Off Broadway world premiere, ***Village of Vale*** world premiere (Lincoln Center Education), ***The Tempest*** (Catskill Mountain Shakespeare), and a libretto reading of ***Rev 23*** (White Snake Projects/Beth Morrison Projects). Jay is currently working on physical comedy with Les Ballets Trockadero at their Choreography Institute. Jay is a graduate of L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq and currently teaches acting, movement, and physical comedy at SUNY Purchase's BFA Acting Conservatory. LCT Directors Lab '18 and SDC Observership alum.

www.Jay-Dunn.com

HAPPENSTANCE THEATER

Happenstance Theater is a professional company founded in 2006 by Sabrina Mandell and Mark Jaster. *The Washington City Paper* says, **"Happenstance Theater's ensemble comedy is a gut-busting kind of funny."** *The Washington Post* describes our work as **"visually striking and whimsical without being precious,"** and calls Happenstance Theater **"DC's leading peddler of whimsy."** We are committed to devising, producing, and touring original, performer-created visual, poetic Theatre. Our ensemble is made up of multi-talented performers who craft all aspects of our work from concept to realization. We harvest imagery from the past and re-contextualize it in works that address universal themes of ephemera and mortality. With the simplest means - humor, whimsy, music, silence, text, physical comedy, object manipulation, vulnerability, and generosity - we seek to elevate the moment when the performers and audience meet, to lift the encounter beyond the daily and pedestrian into the realms of dreams, poetry, and art. Meaning is often found by happenstance. We are a Co-Op Resident Company at 59E59 Theaters, where our two previous productions, ***BAROCOCO*** and ***ADRIFT | A Medieval Wayward Folly***, were each nominated for a Drama Desk Award in the Unique Theatrical Experience category. We have also won five Helen Hayes Awards for Outstanding Ensemble, Outstanding Lead Actor, and twice for Outstanding Costume Design.

www.HappenstanceTheater.com

SPECIAL THANKS

The Morgan Fund, The Share Fund, The Nora Roberts Foundation, the incredible staff of 59E59 Theaters, Round House Theatre, Washington Revels, April and Jerry Blum, Nancy Rodrigues, Nancy Mendez, Sandra Thomas, William D. Ling, Karen Hansen, Dandy Wellington, Leah Huete, and thanks to all those who have donated to Happenstance Theater through Fractured Atlas.

CURATOR'S NOTE

We are always excited to have our Co-Op Resident Company, Happenstance Theater, shaking things up around here. For many years, Edward Gorey's amusingly macabre books with their distinctive illustrations were always on my coffee table, much to the delight of any visitors who were unfamiliar with his oeuvre.

With their blend of whimsy and darkness this imaginative company is a natural fit to create new stories inspired by Gorey's satirical take on social mores and a subversive glee in the existential misfortunes of innocents.



Val

VAL DAY
Artistic Director,
59E59 Theaters

59E59 THEATERS STAFF

Founding Artistic Director
ELYSABETH KLEINHANS

Artistic Director
VAL DAY

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MICIAH WALLACE

Box Office Associates
ALANIS MOLINA-GARNELO
BECK SEGURA
CONNOR SPRING

Assistant House Manager
BIONDYS DURAN-MENDOZA

Ushers
ALANIS MOLINA-GARNELO
ANNE RUTTER
ARCHER ROSENBLOOM
BENJI SILLS
CHRISTIAN MIRANDA
CHRISTIE SPESSARD
ELLA PIZZO
ELLIOT JACOBS
ERIC BERKELEY
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ISRAEL ORENGO
ITAI ADAM VAGNER
KAIA PARNELL
NIA BLIZZARD
PAOLA GOYCO-VÈLEZ
SANTIAGO AGUILAR
TAVIAN TEAGE
THERESA YONASH

Bartenders
JULIA MELLONI
KEVIN MOLICA

Theater Technicians
JOHN D. IVY
KAT KHELLBLAU
JAMIE JOHNSON

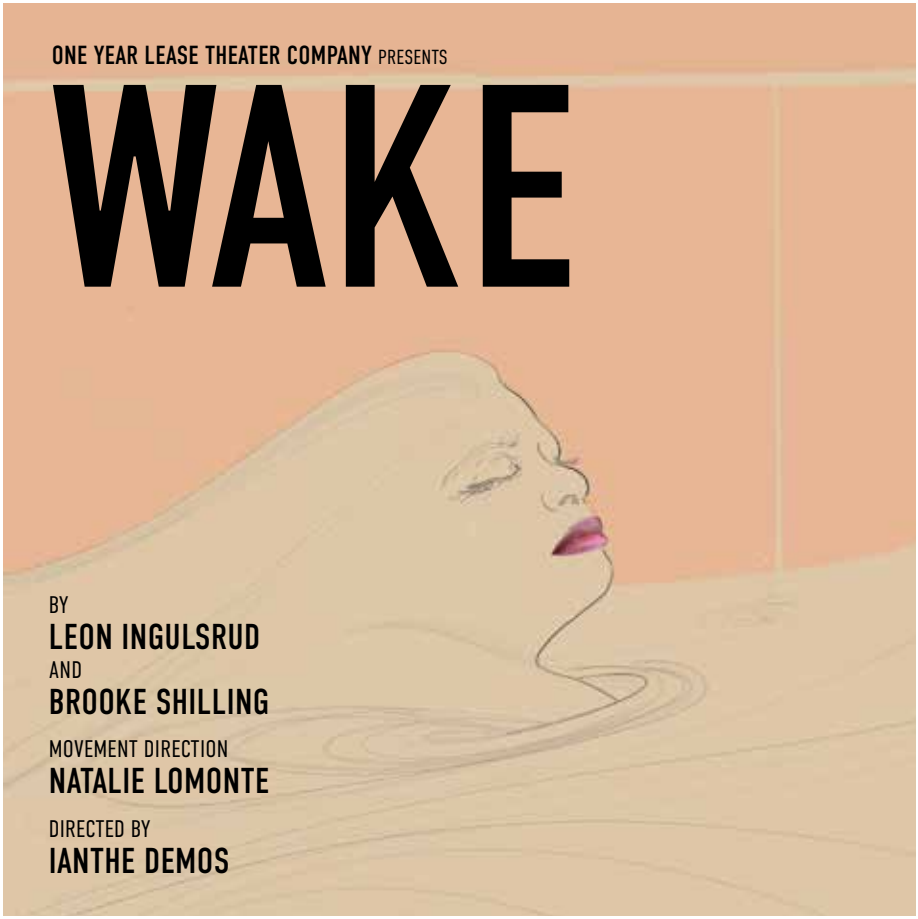
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OUR MISSION

59E59 Theaters was established by the Elysabeth Kleinhans Theatrical Foundation in 2004 to grant professional space and expertise to non-profit theater companies premiering their work in New York City. Under the leadership of Val Day, Artistic Director, and Brian Beirne, Managing Director, 59E59 Theaters presents a year-round curated program of Off Broadway plays and musicals that are nurtured and supported by providing performance spaces and equipment as well as production, ticketing, FOH, marketing, and press support. These theater companies receive 80% or more of the ticket revenue and pay no weekly rent to 59E59.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

59E59 Theaters reside on the traditional homelands of the Lenni-Lenape People on the Lenape Island of Mannahatta. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of the land who were forcefully removed during colonization resulting in erased and excluded peoples and culture. We are grateful for the opportunity to work on the land and honor their elders, past and present alongside future generations for their stewardship and continuing relationship with their territory.

This presentation is not a production of the Elysabeth Kleinhans Theatrical Foundation, Inc., which offers its facilities, when available, for productions by not-for-profit theater companies. For further information regarding licensing this theater or other theaters in this Theater Building, contact Brian Beirne, Managing Director. The use of cameras and other recording devices in the Theater is prohibited by law. There is no smoking in this Theater or any part of the Theater Building.