



BALTIMORE CENTER
STAGE

MAY 9 - MAY 26

BY OSCAR WILDE

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY **JENNY KOONS**

WORLD PREMIERE ADAPTATION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PITTSBURGH PUBLIC THEATER

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Honor Native Land

Responding to a call from our Indigenous colleagues, collaborators, and neighbors, Baltimore Center Stage is working toward building meaningful and accountable relationships with the land we occupy. As a first step on this path, you'll see a land acknowledgement in each of our programs. Acknowledgement is itself a small gesture, and we look forward to continuing our efforts toward decolonization in a meaningful way. If you're interested in more information feel free to visit the US Department of Arts and Culture's "Honor Native Land" guide.

Baltimore Center Stage acknowledges that the land beneath us, this place, this community, owes its vitality to generations who have come before. Some were brought forcibly to this land, some came here in search of ownership or simply a better life, and some have lived and stewarded this land for countless generations. In a spirit of making erased histories visible, we acknowledge that we are standing on the ancestral and occupied lands of the Piscataway peoples. The Susquehannock, Lenape, and Lumbee peoples have also cared for this land. These peoples are not relics of the past. They continue to steward this land today with care, vitality, and tradition. Their relations are numerous throughout Turtle Island, and they continue to grow. We pay respects to their elders: past, present, and future. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.

Additionally, in the spirit of reconciliation, you can honor the Indigenous peoples of this land by donating to Native American Lifelines, donating to or visiting the Baltimore American Indian Center & Heritage Museum, and supporting local Indigenous artists. These are only a few suggestions of the many ways we can move towards reconciliation.



INDIGENOUS ART GALLERY

Free to the public, open during regular BCS box office hours, Tue - Fri 12PM to 5PM



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Season Artwork by Brandon J. Wallace

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MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY:









We are pleased to present to you all The Importance of Being Earnest, adapted and directed by the incredible **Jenny Koons**, as the closing production of our season. This classic comedic tale, a high farce set in late Victorian London, has come alive once again here at Baltimore Center Stage. Since our beloved theater was formed in 1963, we have been honored to present this show, one of Oscar Wilde's most famous and innovative plays, on our stages three times before its inclusion in this season: in our second-ever season (1963-64) under the leadership and direction of Artistic Director Ed Golden, in our 1988-89 season under the leadership and direction of Artistic Director Stan Wojewodski, Jr., and again in our 2009-10 season under the leadership and direction of Artistic Director Irene Lewis. We are thrilled to see the brilliant ways that Jenny Koons has reimagined this story for our present-day audience.

As we close this beautiful 23/24 season, we can't help but marvel at how far we've come as an institution, as individuals, and as a society. Just a few years ago, we were all thrust into a world steeped in isolation and fear that distanced us from the community-forward mindset that the world so desperately needs. While the world doesn't look the same as it once did, we are all tasked with championing the future that we need to see. In times of darkness, we choose to seek the light. In times of rain and storms, we're eager for the glimmer of a rainbow. In times of despair, we long for joy. Reflecting on our history and progress as a theater through the years, we think *The Importance of Being Earnest* exemplifies that reach for joy. We're proud to produce art that sparks conversation, critiques convention, and indulges in comedy that keeps you on your toes.

It is an honor to share with you all the luminous talent of this cast of actors who, under Koons' skilled direction and with the partnership of our friends at Pittsburgh Public Theater, have created a truly delightful theatrical experience for all to enjoy. We couldn't have put on such an incredible season without the continued support of our audiences and community here in Baltimore, and for that, we sincerely thank you.

Now is the time to subscribe to Baltimore Center Stage! Keep an eye out for an announcement coming soon with our lineup for 2024-2025, **a season of new works** and classics that we know will make you proud to renew, come back, or make a commitment for the first time. And in the meantime, join us for our **"Baltimore** Renaissance" Gala on June 1, 2024, celebrating the beauty, creativity and history of this incredible theater and city (details on the back of the program!). A million thanks for joining us this year, and we'll see you again soon.

Stevie Walker-Webb

Adam Frank

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE MANAGING DIRECTOR, BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

BY OSCAR WILDE

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY JENNY KOONS

WORLD PREMIERE ADAPTATION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PITTSBURGH PUBLIC THEATER

— This production runs **2 hours** with a **15 minute intermission** —

CAST

VERONICA DEL CERRO GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX

PAUL "PAULIE" DEO, JR. JACK WORTHING

SUSAN LYNSKEY
MISS PRISM

ALEX MANALO
CECILY CARDEW

JOSEPH MCGRANAGHAN
CHASUBLE/LANE/
MERRIMAN

DYLAN MARQUIS MEYERS ALGERNON MONCRIEFF

DAVID RYAN SMITH LADY BRACKNELL

THE CREATIVE TEAM

OSCAR WILDE PLAYWRIGHT

JENNY KOONS
DIRECTOR / ADAPTER

B KLEYMEYER

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

JASON ARDIZZONE-WEST SCENIC DESIGNER

EMMA ANTENEN
ASSOCIATE SCENIC
DESIGNER

SEAN SANFORD
ASSOCIATE SCENIC
DESIGNER

HUGH HANSON COSTUME DESIGNER

KATHY MATHEWS WIG DESIGNER

ANNMARIE DUGGAN LIGHTING DESIGNER

JOE BORSCH
ASSISTANT LIGHTING
DESIGNER

UPTOWNWORKS SOUND DESIGNER / ADDITIONAL MUSIC REBECCA SATZBERG
ASSISTANT SOUND
DESIGNER

NATALIE HRATKO
PRODUCTION STAGE
MANAGER

KELLY HAYWOOD

ASSISTANT STAGE

MANAGER

SHAQUAN PEARSON PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

CEDRIC KHALIL
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

ADAPTATION:

Ripping or Riffing?

by MIGDALIA CRUZ APRIL 13, 2024 ADAPTATION/ADAPTION conjures visions of iguanas dealing with the cold by seeming to be dead until thawed and the 'corpse flower' emitting the stench of rotting flesh to attract pollinating flies. Adaptation is how all living things are modified to improve their chances of survival, making them more fit for existence.

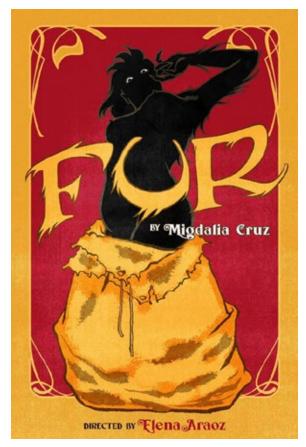
In the arts, adaptation is how a writer, composer or painter adjusts and resets a composition to create a new form and explore a new condition that enlivens or reinterprets an original composition for a new time.

As the adapter of a play, I consider: why is it necessary to adjust or re-set the original? Can I make it more contemporary, more concise, more illuminating, and thereby create a unique work that resonates for a modern and diverse audience? If I am riffing off another's work, should I call it an adaptation, or is it a work "inspired by another's original work"-based on how close my adaptation is to the original, and how far I stray from it? Can I protect and honor the rights and voice of the originating author while putting my own spin on the characters, plot, or place? Is re-invention an art or a heist? Like Dizzy Gillespie said, "You can't steal a gift. Bird [Charlie Parker] gave the world his music, and if you can hear it, you can have it."

l've written 65 plays, several while studying with the master dramatist María Irene Fornés, and nine are adaptations or works inspired by other works: Welcome Back To Salamanca (inspired by Cervantes' short play La Cueva de Salamanca; Fur (a re-telling of Barbot de Villeneuve's fairy tale La Belle et la Bête); Another Part of the House (a re-setting of García Lorca's La Casa de Bernarda Alba); Salt (a re-imagining of Ford's 'Tis Pity She's A Whore); Yorick's Last Laugh: a dead comedy jam wherein he



spills the "T" about the Danish Royal Family (a retelling of Shakespeare's Hamlet); Never Moscow (a play inspired by Chekhov's Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard); Satyricoño (inspired by Fellini's film and the original Roman text by Petronius); FRIDA: The Story of Frida Kahlo (an opera inspired by the Herrera biography of Frida Kahlo); and Gribiche (a dramatization of a short story by Colette). I draw my inspiration from many places, including other plays,



short stories, songs, and paintings, often allowing my characters to speak of the things the original author did not or could not allow.

For instance, in Welcome Back To Salamanca, a Salsa/R&B musical commissioned by Artistic Director Max Ferrá of INTAR Theatre in New York City, I wrote a heightened ascension story for a woman who turns all the men who did her wrong into meat she then feeds to her nightclub patrons. Max wanted me to be inspired by a Spanish Golden Age writer, but to create my own version written from my Nuyorican woman's point-of-view. The piece that resonated for me was La Cueva de Salamanca by Cervantes, an "entremés" or short play meant to be presented during

intermissions. His story was about a woman who betrayed her clueless husband with other men and the Cave is a place where the devil may live. I set my musical in an underground nightclub of the future run by an abused woman named María. People come to her club to speak Spanish and eat meat. In seeking liberation from her pimp-husband, she cooks and turns him into food to feed the meat-hungry patrons of her club. A true revenge play! Fur, a tragicomic love triangle with a hirsute woman at the center, is a Beauty & the Beast story except that who is the Beauty and who is the Beast constantly shifts. Very early in the life of my play, Fornés noted that there was a resonance with the original French fairy tale. Who would worship a woman covered in hair exhibited in a sideshow? Who exoticizes their object of desire? Who truly understands love—the "traditional/western"

Beauty or the "romantic/POC" Beast? Once I recognized the symbiotic nature of my play and the fairy tale, I embraced the idea that adaptation is an homage to and a uniquely personal view of the source material. I was in a direct conversation with the original author, Gabrielle Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve in 1730, who based her work on the true story of a 16th-Century romance between a hirsute man from the Canary Islands and a French woman.

So, is it a heist or an homage? I continue to check myself whenever I find something inspiring, beautiful, or even sometimes something so ugly I can't look away—anything that moves me to re-examine history with my art. I

am compelled to re-tell these stories, re-visit characters, re-engage with themes that people still need to hear to re-establish their connection to the storytellers of the past. Artists' roots have a vast reach. Adaptation creates a resonance with the past awakening the future. We may not be growing new ears or extra legs when we need them, but we can adapt stories in unique ways to reach a new generation. My favorite poet, Julia de Burgos, wrote, "Meanwhile your life and my life have kissed, and the souls are getting closer!" When two artists share the same dream, adaptation becomes a genuine, visceral collaboration that spawns artistic evolution.





A NOTE FROM JENNY KOONS

Adaptation is a conversation with an artistic ancestor. It is being in dialogue with the bones and questions of a time you will never know. It is secret and intimate, as two humans speak with one another through the words and phrases of the past. It is a gift to adapt another artist's work. One joins a lineage of thousands of artists through the decades who have read, wrestled with, and celebrated each word and line and comma of a text with tenderness and care and intention. My dream is that an adaptation is invisible, that you have to go back to the script to see what was there and what was cut or changed, that the work retains its self-hood and heart and tempo. For me, the magic is uncovering the heartbeat of a text. What was this artist grappling with and questioning? What was the context of the work within the year it premiered?

I've always loved that we use the word "adaptation" to describe the process of revisiting and reimagining a play. As humans we constantly adapt ourselves and the world around us to suit our dreams and desires. We reinvent ourselves and manifest new versions, each one an adaptation of what came before. The Importance of Being Earnest is a play about people who have learned to adapt to the rules of their time, what they can say, who they present as, and how they can love and be loved. The rules and etiquette and constraints of 1895 London feel deeply resonant to today's social mores and conversation. Only now, rather than devouring a seasonal etiquette book, we are told the rights and wrongs, the dos and don'ts, through endless scrolling on social media. Just like the characters in the play, we also live in a time when one etiquette misstep can end a career, a marriage, a future. There is no way to adapt Earnest without taking a hard look at our own constraints and invisible dos and don'ts. But the characters in the play choose a different path from the rules. Through love, each other, and comedic kismet, they shed the restraints and rules, and choose each other.

Six weeks after *Earnest* opened, Wilde was arrested for "gross indecency." Only six weeks after that, he was convicted and sentenced to two years of hard labor, which would ultimately lead to his untimely death at 46. During a sensational run of a hit play about humans finding themselves authentically through love and partnership, Wilde would be imprisoned for living his own love.

He would never write another play.

Adaptation is an act of imagination. All I know of Oscar is through his words on the page. I imagine he was an artist who was obsessed with the double-standards of his time. I imagine he was an artist who would rather laugh at his oppression than be silenced. I imagine he would look at today's rules and invite us all to take a risk and leap into love because it's worth it, even if the world is telling us otherwise.

— JENNY KOONS

DIRECTOR/ADAPTER, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

BIOS



VERONICA DEL CERRO* GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX

DC Theatre: Arena Stage Angels in America (u/s), Shakespeare Theatre, Othello, Constellation Theatre: Arabian Nights, GALA

Theatre: El Paso Blue, Ana en el Trópico, Everyman Theatre: August: Osage County, Kennedy Center Adventures of Homer; MetroStage: Savage in Limbo, Theatre J: Andy and the Shadows, The Seagull on 16th, Studio Theatre: My Children! My Africal, Rock n' Roll: Roundhouse Theatre: How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents. International: Café de las Artes, Movimiento en Red (Spain) Proyecto Bicefalo, Teatro del Mundo (Mexico) Training: Virginia Tech, Studio Theatre Conservatory, MA RADA. Film: See You on Venus (SUR FILMS) (2023) @mia.moca @vronnv



PAUL "PAULIE" DEO, JR.* JACK WORTHING

Recent credits include a Romeo & Juliet collaboration with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Gentleman Caller in

Arizona Theater Company's *The Glass Menagerie*, and Claudio in Shakespeare Theater Company's *Much Ado About Nothing*. BA Wesleyan University, MFA NYU-Tisch Graduate Acting.



SUSAN LYNSKEY* MISS PRISM

Susan Lynskey is a multi-Helen Hayes-nominated actress celebrating her 25-year AEA career which spans Off-Broadway,

Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, Berkeley Rep, ACT, DC Theatres and leading Regional theaters coast to coast. (Full credits: susanlynskey.com. Agent: HCKR. IG @lynskeylenz). Susan is Earnestly grateful for her loving Parents ('to the Moon and back'), Susie, LBR, Jenny K, Metsy&Walker, and delighted to return to beloved Baltimore Center Stage (Indecent, Hostage) with this wonderful full-hearts-forward Company.



ALEX MANALO* CECILY CARDEW

Manalo is a Fil-Am theatermaker based in Pittsburgh, making her debut at BCS! Recent credits: Guys and Dolls, A Christmas Carol (PCLO);

Christmas At Pemberley, (City Theatre); Khuraki (RealTime Art); Buoyant Sea (Hiawatha Project); Morning Reckoning (New Hazlett CSA). Point Park University Grad. Rep: Docherty Agency. Much love to this cast & crew; family & fiancé. Mabuhay! @alexmanalo_



JOSEPH MCGRANAGHAN* CHASUBLE/LANE/ MERRIMAN

Previous credits for Pittsburgh Public Theater: Billy Strayhorn: Something to Live For, Barefoot in

the Park. Select credits: Pittsburgh: City Theatre, Quantum Theatre, Bricolage. NYC: SITI Company, Mabou Mines, Fault Line Theatre. Regional: Asolo Rep, Baltimore Center Stage, McCarter Theatre. Film/TV: American Rust, Mayor of Kingstown, Liberte: A Call to Spy. All my love to the talented and tireless Lily. josephmcgranaghan.com



DYLAN MARQUIS MEYERS ALGERNON MONCRIEFF

University of Pittsburgh: Compleat Female Stage Beauty (Kynaston); Machinal (Lover); Agamemnon

(Chorus). Pittsburgh International Classical Theater: Great Expectations (Pip); Observe the Sons of Ulster (Martin Crawford); Lion in Winter (King Phillip); Romeo & Juliet (Romeo). Standalone Production: Orphans (Phillip). Quantum Theatre: Collaborators (Sergei); Hamlet (Marcellus/First Player/Fortinbras). CSA: Himbos (Beauregard).



DAVID RYAN SMITH* LADY BRACKNELL

Broadway: One Man Two Guvnors, Passing Strange. Off Broadway: New York Theater Workshop, Lincoln Center, Public

Theater, Classical Theater of Harlem, Women's Project, Soho Rep, Signature Theater Company, Playwrights Horizons, City Center Encores!, BAM. Film: Relay, The Amazing Spider-Man 2, Medal of Victory, Bee Season. Faculty: Playwrights Horizons Theater School/NYU.



OSCAR WILDE PLAYWRIGHT

Oscar Wilde was an Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and critic. He is regarded as one of the greatest playwrights of the Victorian Era. In his

lifetime he wrote nine plays, one novel, and numerous poems, short stories, and essays. Wilde was a proponent of the Aesthetic movement, which emphasized aesthetic values more than moral or social themes. This doctrine is most clearly summarized in the phrase 'art for art's sake.' Besides literary accomplishments, he is also famous, or perhaps infamous, for his wit, flamboyance, and affairs with men. He was tried and imprisoned for his homosexual relationship (then considered a crime) with the son of an aristocrat.



JENNY KOONS DIRECTOR / ADAPTER

Credits include: The Whitney Album (Soho Rep); Regretfully, So the Birds Are (Playwrights Horizons); Head

Over Heels (Pasadena Playhouse with Sam Pinkleton); Hurricane Diane (Huntington); Men on Boats (Baltimore Center Stage); Speechless (Blue Man Group National Tour); A Midsummer Night's Dream (The Public Theater); Burn All Night (American Repertory Theatre).

B KLEYMEYER ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Credits: I Think I'm Starting to Want to be a Mother and Adult Things (Carnegie Mellon University); The Real Girls (Project Y); I'm Not Done with This Body (Kelly Strayhorn Theatre); Kiss Me Mr. Musk (Single Carrot Theatre); We Broke Up. (Rochester Fringe); Safe Space (Single Carrot Theatre). John Wells Directing Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University. bkleymeyer.com

JASON ARDIZZONE-WEST SCENIC DESIGNER

Jason Ardizzone-West is an Emmy award-winning designer whose work spans live theater, dance, TV/film, concerts, immersive, and architecture. Recent/notable projects include Redwood (La Jolla), Phish Gamehendge (MSG), Jesus Christ Superstar Live (NBC), Monsoon Wedding (St Ann's), Wedding Band (Theatre for a New Audience), "Blue Man Group," "Florence + The Machine," "Usher" (tours), and more.

HUGH HANSON COSTUME DESIGNER

Hugh Hanson has designed for the Pittsburgh Public Theater (Murder on the Orient Express, A Few Good Men, Marjorie Prime). Other credits: Christmas at Pemberley (City Theatre); Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Portland Stage Company. Hugh teaches at Carnegie Mellon University. hughhanson.com

KATHY MATHEWS WIG DESIGNER

Kathy Lynne Mathews is a native of Pittsburgh, PA, where she has been a hairstylist for nearly 30 years. Kathy is a member of IATSE Local 3 and has had many opportunities to work in various plays and musicals. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is particularly special because it is her first opportunity to be a Hair Designer for a production. The entire experience has been extremely rewarding.

ANNMARIE DUGGAN LIGHTING DESIGNER

Regional Credits: American Girl
Theatre, Chicago, LA, and New York,
Skylight Music Theatre, Maine State
Music Theatre, Pittsburgh Playhouse,
Athens Theatre. Ms. Duggan is a
Professor at the University of Pittsburgh.
Ms. Duggan works in application
development for theater professionals.
amddesignonline.com

UPTOWNWORKS SOUND DESIGNER / ADDITIONAL MUSIC

UptownWorks is a collaborative design team specializing in theater, film, podcasts, installations and other media. This design was led by Daniela Hart (uptownworksnyc.com), Bailey Trierweiler (btsounddesign.com) and Noel Nichols (noelnicholsdesign.com).

NATALIE HRATKO* PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

Current: Sammy Miller and The Congregation, And So We Walked, Underground Railroad Game, On Beckett (Octopus Theatricals). Credits: Illinoise (Justin Peck); HOME (Fin Productions); Ballet Idaho, Ballet Met, Tulsa Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, The Ailey School, The Lucky Ones, KPOP, The Wildness (Ars Nova); Oh, Hello! (Cherry Lane Theatre).

KELLY HAYWOOD* ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Past Pittsburgh Public Theater productions: Steel Magnolias, A Tell-Tale Heart, Noises Off, Dragon Lady, An Iliad, Slow Food, Little Shop of Horrors, Barefoot in the Park, A Raisin in the Sun, A Christmas Story. Kelly has also done several productions with Pittsburgh CLO, Pittsburgh Opera, and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC THEATER

Pittsburgh Public Theater strives to be a true public theater to the Pittsburgh region and welcomes more than 70,000 guests through the doors of the O'Reilly Theater every year. The Public is renowned for its exceptional mix of programming, featuring American classics, world premieres, new adaptations, and favorite musicals. Its commitment to education and engagement initiatives is a cornerstone of its mission and includes the signature Shakespeare Monologue & Scene Contest and innovative community partnerships. The O'Reilly Theater is a project of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Pittsburgh Public Theater is under the leadership of Artistic Director Marya Sea Kaminski and Managing Director Shaunda McDill and celebrates its 50th season in 2024.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by

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Baltimore Center Stage operates under an

agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director and/or Choreographer is a member of the Society of

Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



See more of Brandon's work and learn more about him at **brandonjwallace.com** or follow him on instagram **@bwallzart**.

WHERE TO EAT

Recommendations from the BCS staff

UPSCALE/FINE DINING

TOPSIDE

101 W Monument St, Baltimore, MD

ASH-BAR

2 E Read St #6, Baltimore, MD

MIDSCALE DINING

THE OWL BAR

1E Chase St, Baltimore, MD

AKBAR INDIAN RESTAURANT

823 N Charles St # B, Baltimore, MD

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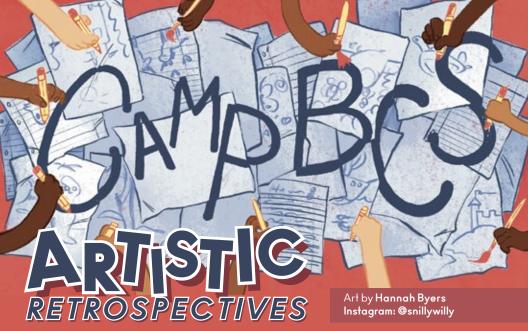
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Campers will spend two weeks creating artistic work for a retrospective to be shared at the end of each session. Throughout their time at Camp BCS, students will practice artistic skill building through theatre games and exercises, writing, visual arts, movement with music and STEAM workshops.

CAMP DATES

Session 1: June 24-July 5 *NO CAMP THURS, JULY 4

Session 2: July 8-July 19 Session 3: July 22-August 2

Each session runs from 8:30 AM - 4:15 PM

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The Virtual Student Matinee Library is a FREE online repository of filmed versions of some of Baltimore Center Stage's plays and programs with corresponding program material such as curricula and program guides to prompt questioning and classroom discussion.

Students can view productions in the classroom environment and collaborate with their peers to further their artistic learning in a creative way. Our curriculum is aligned with MSDE common core standards to support learning goals meaningfully while uplifting aspects of the creative artforms and social emotional skills inherent in theater.

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ABOUT BCS

Founded in 1963 and designated the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage provides the highest quality theater and programming for all members of our communities, including youth and families, under the leadership of Artistic Director Stevie Walker-Webb and Managing Director Adam Frank. Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations and imaginations by producing an eclectic season of professional productions across two mainstages and an intimate 99-seat theater, through engaging community programs, and with inspiring education programs. Everything we do at Center Stage is led by our core values—chief among them being Access For All. Our mission is heavily rooted in providing active and open accessibility for everyone, regardless of any and all barriers, to our Mainstage performances, education initiatives, and community programming.

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