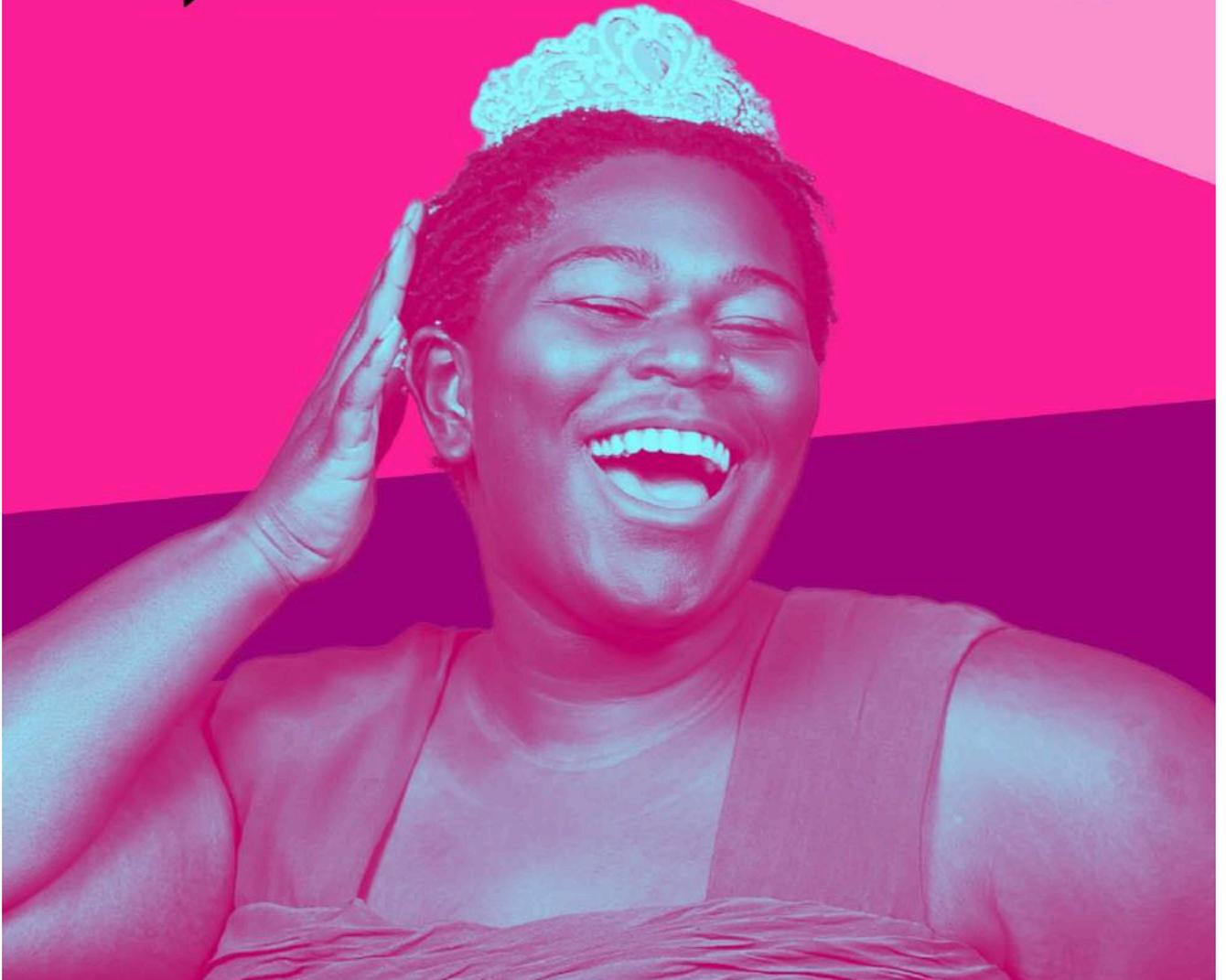


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Presents

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY





Presents

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

By Jocelyn Bioh

Directed by Rikki Howie Lacewell

March 8 - April 7, 2024

World Premiere at the MCC Theater, October 16, 2017
(Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, & William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director)
Originally developed as part of The New Black Fest at The Lark, 2016
Additional development as part of the MCC Theater PlayLabs series, 2016
"The Greatest Love Of All" By Linda Creed and Michael Masser
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The Cast

Simone Brown - Ama
Edima Essien - Mercy
Caitlin Frazier - Ericka
Aja Goode - NaNa
Khanner Hancock - Paulina
Pauline Lamb - Eloise
Brenda Parker - Headmistress
Nicole Ruthmarie - Gifty
Gifty Amponsem - Swing
Shayla Beckman - Swing
Angela Whittaker - Swing

Creative Team

Rikki Howie Lacewell - Director
Jack Golden - Scenic Designer
Hailey LaRoe - Lighting Designer
Imari Pyles - Costume Designer
Martin Bernier - Properties Designer
Brandon Cook - Sound Designer
Nana Ekua Brew-Hammon - Dialect Coach
Ryan Anthony - Stage Manager
Valeria Rodriguez - Assistant Stage Manager
Jack Wilson - Technical Director
Suzy Alden - Scenic Artist
Sarah Usary - Scenic Artist
Emma Smith - Electrician
Alex Parish - Electrician

School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play is approximately 1.5 hours with no intermission.

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Vicki Kile

Director of Development

Tomoko Azuma

Director of Education

Jessi Shull

Technical Director

Jack Wilson

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Yumna Iqbal

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Next Up at NextStop!



Reefer Madness - A tongue-in-cheek, musical comedy satire, based on the 1936 film of the same name. Reefer Madness tells the cautionary tale of Jimmy Harper and Mary Lane, a wholesome pair of all-American teenager sweethearts, who fall victim to the dangers of the drug menace...MARIJUANA!!! The musical chronicles their downward spiral, filled with evil jazz music, sex, and violence! **May 3 June 2, 2023**



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Summer Theatre Adventures 2024 - Dive into weeks of imagination, laughter, and creative exploration tailor-made for budding performers in 1st through 10th grades. From drama to dance, your young stars are in for an unforgettable journey on the stage!



Student Theatre Escapes - Is your student belting out tunes from Hamilton, Newsies, or other Broadway hits? Look no further! Introducing Student Theatre Escapes – one-day standalone classes designed to give young Broadway lovers the chance to listen, learn, and love on a different show each day. Coinciding with FCPS teacher workdays and student holidays, these classes will include singing, dancing, acting, and more. No experience? No problem-- all levels are welcome. From Golden Age classics to the latest box office smash, come get to know a musical with us!

Upcoming:

April 1 (Teacher Work Day) - *Lion King*

April 2 (Teach Work Day) - *Matilda*

April 10 (Eid al-Fitr Observed) - *Wicked*

May 3 (Teacher Work Day) - *Suessical*

The Cast



Gifty Amponsem (Understudy) is proud to be making her NextStop debut with this production of *School Girls!* Recent credits include *Sister Act* (LTA) *Stickfly* (RLT) *South & Saints* (Maryland Ensemble Theatre) and *The Tempest* (Prince George's County Shakespeare in the Parks). She has performed with Sandy Spring Theatre Group in *Godspell* and Encore Theater Company in *Incognito* and has done staged readings with The Essential Theater and 1st Stage Theater. Gifty completed the Honors Acting Conservatory at The Theatre Lab in DC. Gifty is honored to share her passion for performance with you all and hopes everyone leaves this performance knowing how to pronounce her first and last name (sort of).



Shayla Beckman (Understudy) is grateful for this opportunity to work with NextStop Theatre. She had an absolute blast working with this amazing cast of talented women. Shayla is so thankful to my parents for always supporting my acting dreams. She hopes everyone loves the show as much as she does!



Simone Brown (Ama) is a Maryland native and Sherwood Highschool Alum with both a BM and MM from Xavier University of Louisiana and Peabody Conservatory. Last seen on the Operatic Stage with Charlottesville Opera in *The Sound of Music* and *The Merry Widow*, at the Kennedy Center with Opera Nova's Black History Concerts, in recital and concert with The Denyce Graves Foundation, at Good Shepherd Church, and Lyrica Classic Entertainment. Simone has also performed with Olney Theatre Center's Helen Hayes nominated regional premiere of *Fela!*, the Helen Hayes nominated cast of *Into The Woods* with Signature Theatre, Keegan Theatre as Kate in *Good People*, at Toby's Dinner Theater as an ensemble member and understudy for Rachel Marron in *The Bodyguard*, Heather Chandler in

HCC's *The Heathers*, and the Kensington Arts Theater production of *Sweeney Todd* as Johanna. Her upcoming performances include *Reefer Madness* with NextStop Theatre and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* with Olney Theatre. Simone also works as a Princess Performer with the children's entertainment company she founded, Black Princess Parties DMV. Follow her career at <http://www.simonebrownsoprano.com/>



Edima Essien (Mercy) is ecstatic to be making her NextStop debut! DC Area Credits include Constellation Theatre Company: *Once on this Island*; Kennedy Center: *Beastgirl*; Imagination Stage: *Hula Hoopin' Queen*, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, *Spy Academy*; Round House Theatre: *Adia and Clora Snatch Joy (workshop)*; ArtsCentric at Baltimore Center Stage: *Dreamgirls*; Infinity Theatre Company: *Broadway Cabaret*, *The Fantasticks*. Edima has a BA in Theatre from University of Maryland. Gratitude to her family, chosen and biological, the creative team, and her mentors! Instagram: @edimaessien



Caitlin Frazier (Ericka) is thrilled to be making her NextStop (and professional theater) debut! She is an alum of Signature Theatre's Overtures Summer Musical Theatre Institute and a recent graduate of Georgetown University with a BA in English and a minor in Theater and Performance Studies. She would like to thank her mom for getting her this far!



Aja Goode (NaNa) is thrilled to be sharing the stage alongside this amazing cast and crew during her first production with NextStop. Aja has a background in dance and musical theater, with a strong passion for equity, anti-racism, and social justice work. She has been seen in various productions across the DMV including: *Sister Act*-Little Theater of Alexandria; *Stick Fly*-Rockville Little Theatre, *POTUS*- City of Fairfax Theatre Company, and *Playing Juliet/Casting Othello*-Providence Players. Instagram: aja_symone



Khanner Hancock (Paulina) is delighted to be making her NextStop debut through the lens of Paulina Sarpong! Affectionately known as a "Jill of all Trades", Khanner is an artist, advocate, educator, and the former Miss North America 2022. This D.C. Metropolitan native has been performing across the nation's capital since the age of 9 and continues to let her life do the singing. She has been on platforms ranging from local theater to the White House and Black Entertainment Television (BET). Favorite credits include *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* (DGPAC), *The Color Purple* (SMP) and *Hairspray* (RCP). Her platform of H.O.P.E was founded in 2016, striving to Help Others Persevere Everyday by diminishing the stigma surrounding mental wellness and providing suicide prevention education. Combining her passion for arts and advocacy, she holds a B.A. in Music from Hampton University and a M.A. in Pastoral Counseling from Liberty University, while pursuing an Ed.D. in Community Care and Counseling. #KatchKhanner ΣΑΙ ΔΣΘ



Pauline Lamb (Eloise) designs props, sets, and costumes throughout the DC area while also performing, choreographing, and teaching. She has a BA in Performance Studies from UNC Chapel Hill. Previous acting credits include Mama in *The Bluest Eye* (Theatre Alliance), Daisy in *Diagnosed* (Creative Cauldron) Woman 2 in *From the Mississippi Delta* (The Essential Theater), Simone in *Weep* (Nu Sass), and Sylvia in *Blight* (Pinky Swear Productions). Upcoming performances include *Chicks in Heaven* at Creative Cauldron and *Postcards from Ihatov* at 1st Stage. She is elated to be making her Nextstop debut and sends her love to the cast and crew! Instagram: @Pauli_No



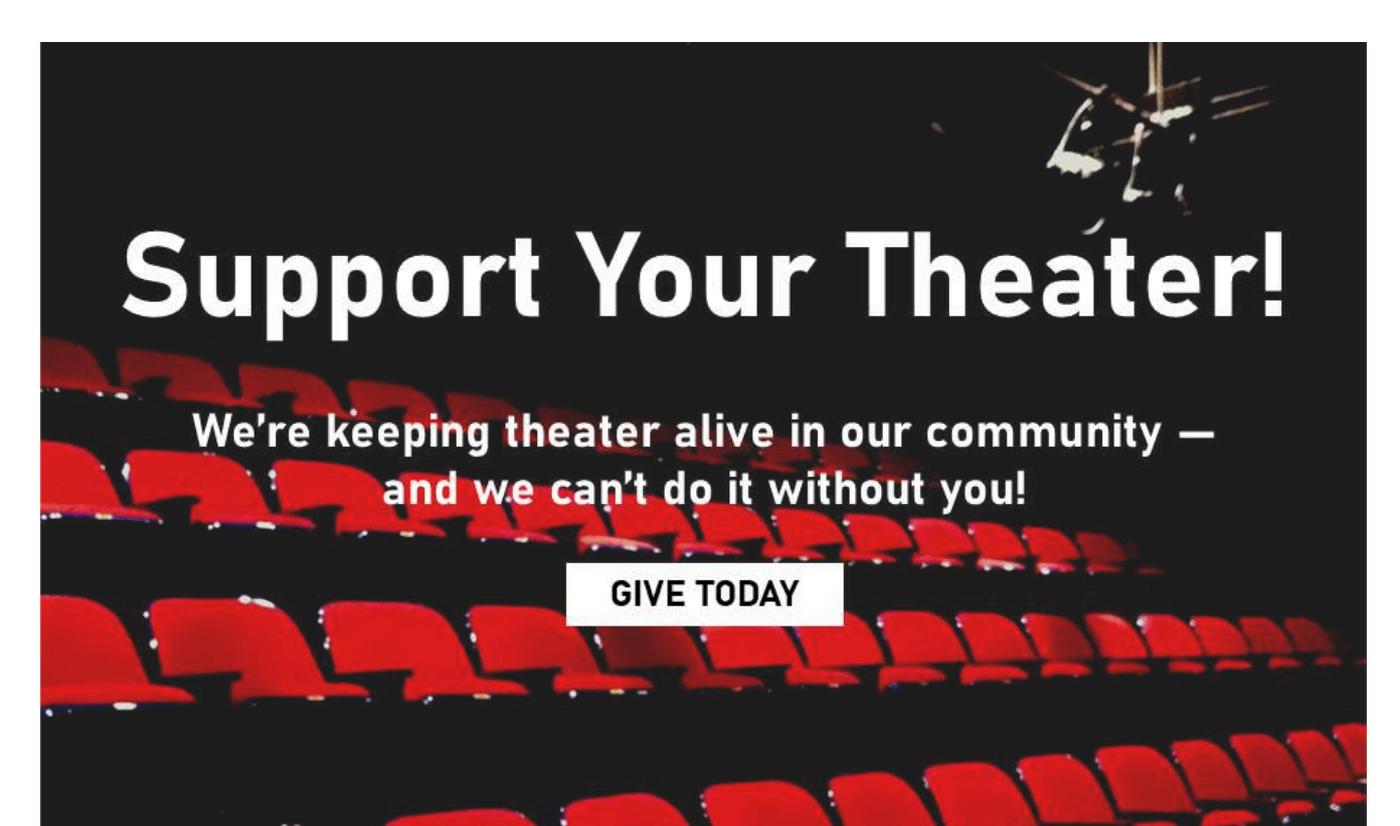
Brenda Parker (Headmistress) is happy to return to the NextStop stage in her second performance in this space. The first was *Caroline or Change* under Elden Street Players. Most recent credits include *Freaky Friday* at The Little Theatre of Alexandria. Also, the W.A.T.C.H award nominated production of *The Color Purple* under the direction of Rikki Howie with Saint Mark's Players. Brenda would like to thank her husband, James, for his tireless help and the phenomenal cast for their patience and support. Enjoy the show!



Nicole Ruthmarie (Gifty) (she/her) is elated to be back at NextStop Theatre Company! NextStop Theatre Company credits include: *46 Plays for America's First Ladies* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other DC credits: *Bell Wringer* (Capital Fringe Award for Best Musical) with Pinky Swear Productions; *Oleanna* at Perisphere Theater; *Unprotected* at Pipeline Playwrights; *Can't Complain* at Spooky Action Theater; *The Trojan Women Project* (Helen Hayes Award nominated for Supporting Actress in a Play and Best Ensemble) at Brave Spirits Theatre; *Shakespeare's Histories Rep* company member at Brave Spirits Theatre. Upcoming work: *A Jumping Off Point* at Round House Theatre. IG @nicoleruthmarie www.nicoleruthmarie.com



Angela Whittaker (Understudy) is an actor/singer born and raised in Washington D.C. She graduated from Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Berklee College of Music. She has showcased her craft since then by performing on "The Voice", "Good Morning America" and TV One. She has also developed her craft in the realm of theatre by performing in productions like: *A Raisin in The Sun* (Sterling Playmakers), *The Color Purple* (St. Mark's Players), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company), and *The Gold Night* (Baltimore Rock Opera Society).



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Creative Team

Ryan Anthony (Stage Manager) is a DMV based theatre and film artist. He is very excited to be working with NextStop for the first time! Recent Stage Management credits include: *Baño De Luna* (Gala Hispanic Theatre), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Olney Theatre's National Players Tour), *Fences* (Olney Theatre's National Players Tour), along with performing credits: BrightStar Touring Theatre, along with *And Then There Was* (NovaCat Films). So thankful for the opportunity to be working with such an amazing group of women in this cast and a supportive team with the designers and staff. "My favorite part of being a stage manager is watching the actors work and they're all so great it makes coming in every night worth it" - Ryan.

Marty Bernier (Properties Designer) is a DMV based Props Designer and Technical Director, and received their BA at George Mason University for Design & Technical Theater, and Performing Arts. Marty is very excited to be working with NextStop for their first time! Recent Prop Design credits include: *The Who's Tommy!* (Workhouse Art Center), *9-5!* (Co-Designed, George Mason University), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Synetic Theatre), with an upcoming production of *Migraaaaaants or There's Too Many People on This Damn Boat!* (ExPats Theatre). Recent Technical Directing Credits include: *Kill the Ripper* (We Happy Few), as well as working as Technical Director for Acting for Young People. Marty would like to thank everyone at NextStop for a wonderful experience, and for the opportunity to design with them, as well as their friends and family for their love and support.

Nana Ekua Brew-Hammon (Dialect Coach) (nanabrewhammond.com) is the author of the NAACP Image Award-nominated *BLUE: A History of the Color as Deep as the Sea and as Wide as the Sky*, *RELATIONS: An Anthology of African and Diaspora Voices*, *My Parents' Marriage*, and *Powder Necklace*, a novel loosely based on her experience attending a girls' boarding school in Ghana. She had too much fun putting on some of the voices that buoyed and bullied her--and laughing at her younger self who never could have imagined the accent she once made fun of would bring her so much pride, not to mention a paycheck! She'd like to thank her family, Kwame Alexander for the referral, Evan, Jasmine, Ryan and the cast for welcoming her so warmly, and God for EVERYTHING.

Brandon Cook (Sound Designer) Brandon Cook- local Washington DC Sound Designer is thankful for the amazing opportunity to work with the wonderful and talented Cast and Crew of Nonsense A-Men! (Recent credits include *Tell Tale Heart* Synetic Theatre 2023, *Look Both Ways* Kennedy Center 2023, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* Adventure Theatre 2023, *Seussical The Musical* Keegan Theatre 2023 *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* Theatre Alliance 2023, *Lifespan Of A Fact* Keegan Theatre 2023, *La Revoltosa* Gala Theatre 2022, *Tis Pity She's A Whore*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Hedda Gabler* Shakespeare Theatre Company ACA Rep 2022)

Jack Golden (Scenic Designer) is a young, award winning, designer based out of Manhattan. Jack is delighted to be returning to Nextstop after having been a staff member and having designed over ten productions! Favorite Nextstop designs include: *Beehive*, *Urinetown*, *Bad Jews*, and *Crimes of the Heart*. Recent designs include: *Powerhouse* (Off-Broadway), *Winnie the Pooh* (Takeover, Chicago, Off-Broadway, Tour), *Driving Miss Daisy* (Bristol Valley Theatre), *End of the Rainbow* (Curtain Call Theatre), *Archies Weird Parody Musical* (Off-Broadway), *Life's Work* (Vivid Stage), and *The Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help* (Curtain Call). Assistant/Associate: *Fat Ham* (Upcoming Huntington/Alliance), *Sesame Street* (Off-Broadway), *On Your Feet* (National Tour), *Macbeth* (Merrimack Rep), *Art of Burning* (Huntington/Hartford Stage). Currently teaching at University of the Arts in Philadelphia and Ramapo College in New Jersey. MFA University of Maryland, College Park. www.jackcgolden.com.

Rikki Howie Lacewell (Director) Rikki is delighted to be making her NextStop directorial debut. Recent credits include *Wednesdays in Mississippi* (Pipeline Playwrights), *Ms Story's Living History / The Mountaintop* (Greenbelt Arts Center), and *The Color Purple* (St Mark's Players). As a Theatrical Diversity Consultant with her own company <https://www.confidencetheatrics.com/>, she is excited to see theaters take the plunge into diverse works across the DMV. Next up for Rikki are *Dreamgirls*, *Memphis*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Quadroon and the Dove*, among others . Rikki would like to thank her husband, "family," and friends for supporting her theatrical endeavors. To the cast and crew she has admired for years. Many many thanks to Rex Boateng for his additional help with Ghanaian insight.

Hailey LaRoe (Lighting Designer) is thrilled to be working with Next Stop again on this fabulous show! Hailey is a Lighting and Projection designer, based in the DC area since 2018. Her recent Lighting designs include; *Golden Fish*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and *Bloom* (Synetic theatre), *Fuego Flamenco 2023* (Gala Theatre), *Hazardous Materials* (Perisphere theatre), *Ride the Cyclone* and *The 39 Steps* (NestStop Theatre), and *Monstress* (Flying V). Her recent projection designs include; *Bathing in Moonlight*, and *Kumanana* (Gala Theatre), and *Monsters of the American Cinema* (Prologue Theatre). Enjoy the show! Haileylaroedesigns.com.

Imari (Mars) Pyles (Costume Designer) is a DC/Baltimore based theatre and film costume designer. Imari has always loved the language of clothing and its unique power to tell our stories without saying any words. She would like to thank the amazing cast and crew at NextStop Theatre Company for their hard work, creativity, and consistent warmth. Last, but certainly not least, she would like to thank her friends and family for their support and love!

Valeria Rodriguez (Assistant Stage Manager) started her journey in the arts by working on short films and commercials on and off camera. She was offered to help produce a play for Silver Spring Stage in the fall of last year and that is how her journey in theatre began. Valeria is happy to work in her second production as an ASM and hopes to expand her skills and bring great enthusiasm to NextStop Theatre Company.

Jack Wilson (Technical Director) is a fine artist with vast experience as a carpenter who signed on as Technical Director in June of 2023. Since joining the NextStop staff he has worked on *The Marvelous Wonderettes '58*, *The 39 Steps*, *Ride The Cyclone*, *A Steampunk Christmas Carol* and *Nonsense A-Men!*. He is excited to be a part of the NextStop team as their Technical Director and looks forward to wow-ing NextStop patrons with the builds of the 2023-24 season!



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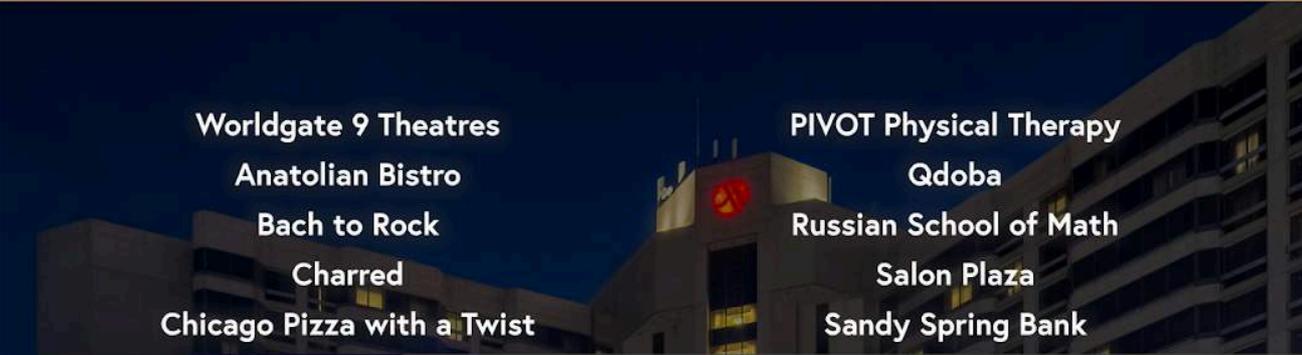
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