



32ND SEASON
ANNUAL REPORT

2016-17

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ABOUT WORKING THEATER

Founded in 1985, Working Theater's mission is to produce plays *for, about* and *with* working people (the wage and salaried workers of modest means working in factories, stores, offices, hospitals, classrooms, and other workplaces throughout America). We believe that theater should not be a privilege or a luxury, but a staple. We want working people who may not be able to afford commercial theater or who feel that it does not resonate with their lives and experience to make play-going a regular part of their cultural activities. Toward that goal, we offer stories that reflect a diverse population of the working majority, acknowledging their complexity and often-denied power in an increasingly complex world. By creating theater of interest to working people and by bringing this constituency to our productions, we aim to change the composition of New York's theater audience to reflect a full range of socio-economic diversity. In a nation that is frequently divided by cultural and class distinctions and where economic disparity continues to widen, Working Theater is committed to making theater that can bridge those divisions, expanding the reach of theater's impact to all people, uniting us in our common humanity.

For the past two seasons the Company has been immersed in a multi-year community-based theater project, the Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, in which five teams of commissioned writers and directors collaborate with working people in each of the five boroughs of New York City to devise, script, rehearse and premiere an original play firmly rooted in the cultural identity of each neighborhood.

Working Theater has commissioned and produced more than 60 world premieres of culturally diverse new plays. The company has garnered widespread recognition and critical acclaim for its writing, acting and directing, and pioneering efforts in audience development. The Company has had over 30 original plays published, (three featured and fully reprinted in *American Theater Magazine*), six Drama Desk nominations, three Audelco Awards and a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Ensemble for *Tabletop*.

Our 32nd Season ran from September 2016 to June 2017 and featured the development, workshopping, and production of new plays specifically aimed at reaching our audience of working men and women. We continued our Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, working with over 145 theater artists and serving over 2000 audience members across the 5 boroughs of New York City.

LETTER FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

At its core, theater is a conversation between an audience and a play. Working Theater's Five Boroughs/One City Initiative grew out of and is designed around that concept. The project aims to inspire dialogue between communities throughout this vast and varied city of New York, a conversation about the issues that are facing all of us, fulfilling the Company's mission to bridge the divide of culture and class through theater. In light of the deep divisions facing America at this moment in our history, I am proud to be part of Working Theater's efforts to address those divisions. I hope that all of you, Working Theater's family of artists, audiences, board members and supporters, feel proud as well.

2016/17 was packed with community events, performances, workshops and conversations. It began back in November when we took part in a collaborative presentation of *The Every 28 Hours Plays* with New Group and Labyrinth Theater. Please check out www.every28hoursplays.org for more on this inspiring national theater project, a collection of 72 one-minute plays, that shines a bright light on racial inequities in policing and society in this country. In December we took a deep dive in the development of *Alternating Currents*, producing a workshop of the play by Adam Kraar and directed by Tamilla Woodard. *Alternating Currents* explores the extraordinary community spirit of Electchester, a housing development created in the late 1940's by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers as affordable housing for its members. In early March we had the pleasure of watching the final performance of our TheaterWorks! class at 32BJ SEIU. The members of this union -- building service workers -- are all passionate

about the program and really good writers and performers, so it's always a great evening!

The main event of the season was the production and borough-wide tour of *Bamboo in Bushwick*. The play explores the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Bushwick through the lens of several long-term residents of the neighborhood reacting to the changes in a variety of ways. This narrative is juxtaposed with a surreal exploration of gentrification inspired by the psychedelic murals that cover many walls in Bushwick. These scenes portray a more direct vision of gentrification and the resulting displacement of individuals based on an historical/ demographic interpretation of the trend. This juxtaposing dramaturgical structure made the play an ideal vehicle to inspire a deep, non-confrontational conversation about the real effects of gentrification and displacement on neighborhoods and communities of color.

In the lead up to the production the Company, under the leadership of community engagement coordinator Chelsea Gregory, held a number of community events in Bushwick. These included art-making workshops, community dialogues, a "community shine" event and a reading of the play engineered for community feedback. All activities centered around a conversation about gentrification and how outside groups and newer residents could support local efforts to halt the worst aspects of the trend. In addition to local artists we worked closely with many local community groups engaged in the gentrification struggle, including Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, Make the Road/NY and El Puente.

Bamboo in Bushwick opened in its home community on April 13th at the Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center. It then moved on to a 2 ½ week off-Broadway run before touring our venue partners in Queens, the Bronx and finally Staten Island. Each and every performance was followed by a guided conversation on gentrification inspired by the play. Hundreds of New Yorkers took part in these conversations. This is from Manhattan audience member Arturo Diaz, who is a Bushwick native and wrote for a blog on the TDF website: “At the end of the show, the entire audience and the actors had a conversation about communities like Bushwick. I, of course, had to say something about my community and how gentrification is affecting it in a negative way. It honestly felt good just speaking about it and getting to hear the opinion of others, but also hearing how my community is not the only one that’s going through this. *Bamboo In Bushwick* made me extremely proud of where I come from.”

And this reaction from an online review: “Cardona Jr., in a completely inspired stroke of the pen, creates another play-world based upon a real art-washed mural in Bushwick. The brilliance of this move lies in both the safety of discussing painful realities in fantasy settings, but also in using a gentrifier’s mural as a subversive jumping off point. The point of great theater is to strike at our feelings and leave us wondering why. *Bamboo in Bushwick* definitely leads that conversation” -Victoria Santos.

We ended our season with a standing room only final performance of our TheaterWorks! class with the retirees of Local 1180, Communication Workers of America and the next night a home-coming of sorts, a reading of Rob Ackerman’s *Dropping Gumballs on Luke Wilson*, which the playwright describes as a “spiritual sequel” to Working Theater’s hit, *Tabletop*. Both of these nights were exceptional and capped a truly inspiring season of theater and community dialogue.

As always I am extremely grateful to Working Theater’s Board of Directors for enthusiastically embracing the Five Boroughs/One City project. I am equally grateful to all the artists involved, my partner and the Artistic Director of the project, the insanely talented Tamilla Woodard and our extraordinary venue partners for taking the leap with us. But none of this work could happen without the support of YOU: our sponsors, contributors, audience members and volunteers. Thank you for partnering with us in creating theater for and about working people and presenting it in communities where working people live. I look forward to sharing our plays about Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island and the community conversations at the core of each play with you in subsequent seasons!



- Mark Plesent, Producing Artistic Director

THE EVERY 28 HOURS PLAYS

Monday, November 7, 2016 at the Bank Street Theater, New York, NY



Every 28 hours a Black person is the victim of systemic violence in America. In collaboration with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the One-Minute Play Festival, 72 contributing artists from across the country created one-minute plays in response to this widely shared and contested statistic. Working Theater collaborated with the New Group and Labyrinth Theater Company to present staged readings of a selection of these plays that honor the ongoing work of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The evening featured plays by Dominique Morisseau, David Henry Hwang, Lynn Nottage and many others performed by a company of volunteer directors and actors.

Participating Directors:

Christopher Burris, Kareem Fahmy, Rebecca Martinez, Candido Tirado, Kat Yen

Participating Actors:

Ngozi Anyanwu, Eshan Bey, Mark Brystowski, Jimmy Dailey, Samantha Debicki, Dantonio Demarco, Stephen Drexter, Samuel Gates, Jacqueline Guillen, Stephanie Chloe Hepner, Heather Hollingsworth, Kayla Jackmon, Marjorie Johnson, Dylan Kammerer, George Katt, Benjamin Manno, Michael Markham, Damond Mcfarland, Melissa Mutch, Devin Nelson, Toni Ann De Noble, Lori Parquet, Angela Polite, Xiomara Rolo, Brandon Rubin, Keith Randolph Smith, Dawn Stern, Calvin M. Thompson, Jude Tibeau, Victoria Wallace

Performances were followed by a discussion of issues raised by the plays and how art/activism can impact the local and national conversation around Black Lives Matter. Talkbacks were led by Chelsea Gregory (Working Theater) and Sarita Covington (Artists Co-Creating Real Equity) with members of People's Justice, October 22nd Coalition, and The People's Institute.



Photos from the November 7th performance of *The Every 28 Hours Plays*: Lindsay Comstock

FIVE BOROUGHS CONTINUED PLAY DEVELOPMENT

In 2016/17 Working Theater continued development and community outreach for the remaining plays in the Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, with the aim to produce and tour the boroughs of NYC with each in a future season.

This season included further development of the Brooklyn play, *Bamboo in Bushwick* by Ed Cardona, Jr., directed by Ana Margineanu; the Staten Island play, *Breaking Bread* by Chisa Hutchinson, directed by Kristin Horton, and a workshop and public reading of the Queens play, *Alternating Currents* by Adam Kraar, directed by Tamilla Woodard.



ALTERNATING CURRENTS

by **Adam Kraar**, directed by **Tamilla Woodard**

developed with **GT Upchurch**

commissioned by Working Theater as part of its Five Boroughs/One City Initiative,
developed in partnership with members of **IBEW Local 3** & residents of Electchester, Queens.

Free Public Reading **December 15, 2016** at **New Georges' The Room**

with **Rheume Crenshaw, Dan Dominguez, LeeAnne Hutchison, Lou Liberatore,**
Clinton Lowe, Calaine Schafer, Stage Directions: **Lauren Karaman**
Stage Manager: **Sarah Devon Ford**

When two newly married electricians move to Electchester everything seems perfect: spacious apartment, low rent, friendly neighbors, and an incredibly close-knit community. But as they settle in, they discover how much they may need to give up in order to really belong.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In partnership with our community partners Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council in Brooklyn, Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) in the Bronx, and other community service organizations across the boroughs, Working Theater engaged communities in workshops, readings and full productions. In addition to the touring production of Ed Cardona, Jr.'s *Bamboo in Bushwick* we presented:

“THE ART OF SOLIDARITY/EL ARTE DE LA SOLIDARIDAD”

Nov. 3, 2017 at **MayDay Space**, Bushwick, Brooklyn

A participatory evening of dialogue with housing rights organizers, artists and Bushwick community members using education-style sharing, circle process and artistic work, exploring the role of the arts in gentrifying neighborhoods.

“ARTISTIC RESPONSES TO GENTRIFICATION”

Feb. 8, 2017 at **Make the Road**, Bushwick, Brooklyn

A performance and activism workshop in collaboration with **Make the Road's Youth Power Project**

“BRONX VOICES: EMPOWERING COMMUNITY IN THE FACE OF REZONING”

Feb. 25, 2017 at **New Settlement Community Campus**, Bronx

A community conversation, performance and open mic event featuring artists and community members of Jerome Avenue, Bronx, in collaboration with Bronx Rising and CASA.

Featured Artists: **Crystal Valentine, Brother North from Division X, Demi Vera, Tonya Ingram, The Peace Poets, Elle Perez, Dakota Santiago**

FINAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGED READING OF *BAMBOO IN BUSHWICK*

Mar. 1, 2017 at **Mayday Space**, Bushwick, Brooklyn

BUSHWICK “COMMUNITY SHINE” EVENT

Mar. 30, 2017 at **Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council**, Bushwick Brooklyn.

Bushwick Shines!

Featuring long-term resident artists of Bushwick as well as a community open mic!

Featured Artists: **Taína Delamar, Adi Pimentel, Anthonywash Rosado, El Puente Bushwick Center's** youth-made film about the impacts of gentrification on their community, **Mi Casa No Es Su Casa: Illumination Against Gentrification**

Photos page 8, clockwise from top left: “The Art of Solidarity” event; Anthonywash Rosado performs at Bushwick “Community Shine” with installation by Mi Casa No Es Su Casa; “Artistic Responses to Gentrification” with Youth Power Project; WT Producing Artistic Director Mark Plesent and Social Media Wiz Camila Perez at Bronx Voices Event; WT Community Engagement Coordinator Chelsea Gregory leads a workshop at “the Art of Solidarity” event.

OFF-BROADWAY PREMIERE & BOROUGH TOUR

BAMBOO IN BUSHWICK

by **Ed Cardona, Jr.**

directed by **Ana Margineanu**

a **Five Boroughs/One City** Commission

featuring **John J. Concado, Edna Lee Figueroa, Clinton Lowe,
José Antonio Melián, Arisael Rivera, Michelle Sui**

April 13-14: Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center, Brooklyn

April 18-May 3: Urban Stages, Manhattan

May 5-6: Local Union No. 3 IBEW, Queens

May 9-10: Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island

May 13: New Settlement Community Campus, Bronx



SET DESIGN **RAUL ABREGO** · COSTUME DESIGN **SARITA FELLOWS** · LIGHTING DESIGN **HARRY FEINER**
SOUND DESIGN **LAWRENCE SCHOBER** · VIDEO DESIGN **AARON MINERBROOK** · PROPS DESIGN **THERESA PIERCE**
CHOREOGRAPHY **JOYA POWELL** · FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY **GERARDO RODRIGUEZ**
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER **DANIELLE TEAGUE-DANIELS** · ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER **SARAH BROWN**
PRODUCTION MANAGER **NILUKA HOTALING** · LINE PRODUCER **MARK BRYSTOWSKI** · CASTING **CARLY J. BAUER**
GRAPHIC DESIGN **MIKEY CORDERO** · PRESS REPRESENTATION **DAN DEMELLO**
BAMBOO IN BUSHWICK PRODUCTION PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL BLASE**



Bushwick was called home by locals long before any magazine called it hip. *Bamboo in Bushwick* explores gentrification in this suddenly trendy neighborhood from divergent angles. As a group of old friends gather for a round of dominoes, outside forces converge on their street corner. In an alternate reality, inspired by the psychedelic murals that have taken over many walls in the neighborhood, a turf war breaks out on the icy tundra. Is there room in Brooklyn for both penguins and polar bears?... When your community is threatened, every block is worth fighting for.



Bamboo in Bushwick is part of Working Theater's Five Boroughs/One City Initiative. The play was developed in partnership with Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council (RBSCC), and through conversations with their members and members of Bushwick Salvation Army Community Center, El Puente Bushwick, Make the Road New York and the general Bushwick community. The production was presented in English and Spanish with super-titles in both languages.



Bamboo in Bushwick was made possible with an award from the **National Endowment for the Arts**, funds from the **New York State Council on the Arts** with the support of **Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature**, public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the City Council, the **Howard Gilman Foundation**, the **Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation**, the **Shubert Foundation**, and the **One World Fund**. Performances of *Bamboo in Bushwick* in Queens were generously supported by a grant from **City Council Member Rory Lancman**, facilitated through New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs.

Special thanks to our venue partners and hosts: **Angela Battaglia, Brigitte Blood, Robert Santos** & the staff at **Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council & Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center**; **Christopher Erikson, Michael Yee, Joseph Docetti** & everyone at **IBEW Local 3**; **Jack Doyle, Vivian Vazquez, Susanna Blankley** & everyone at **New Settlement Community Campus**; **CASA** and **Larry Anderson** & the whole crew at **Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Gardens**.

And thank you to all of the Bushwick Residents who shared their stories.

THEATERWORKS!

In our 32nd Season, we hosted our 16-week playwriting and performance class for members of 32BJ SEIU (buliding service workers) and retirees of CWA Local 1180 (communications workers). Students wrote and performed in their own short plays alongside professional playwrights, professional directors & professional actors.

32BJ SEIU Final Performance

Monday, March 6, 2017 at Urban Stages

Member Playwrights: **Carlos Cotto, Anthony A. Delfi, Angelo James, Peter Mergel, Stephanie Nyameke**

Guest Actors: **Bob Arcaro, Kaliswa Brewster, Clinton Lowe, Anna Weng**

Directed by 32BJ resident TheaterWorks! Instructor **Joe Roland**



CWA Local 1180 Retirees Final Performance

Monday, June 12, 2017 at the Five Angels Theater at the 52nd Street Project

Member Playwrights: **Ed Adomaitis, James Bell, Alma Brothers, Marlita Brown, Gem Brutus, Arlene Drayton, Patricia Faison, Doretha Foggie, Pat Funches, Michelle Lewis, Julia McCraw, DJ Watson**

Guest Actors: **Lynnette R. Freeman, Daron Ross, Kris Sidberry, Jaron Young**

Stage managed by **Eric Szkarlat**

Directed by **David Smilow** and TheaterWorks! Instructor **Joe White**



Photos: The 32BJ TheaterWorks! Class (top); the CWA 1180 Retirees TheaterWorks! Class (bottom)



The CWA 1180 Retirees TheaterWorks! Final Performance photos by P. Kevin O’Leary



Council on the Arts

NYC Cultural Affairs

The TheaterWorks! Program is made possible in part by the **New York State Council on the Arts** with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the City Council; and the **Axe Houghton Foundation**.

STAGED READING

DROPPING GUMBALLS ON LUKE WILSON

a new play by **Rob Ackerman**

directed by **Connie Grappo**

June 13, 2017 at the Mary Rodgers Room at the Dramatists Guild

with **Marc Koeck, Dean Nolen, Katie Paxton, Jeanine Seralles, Jeremy Webb, Lee Wilkof**



Directors direct and workers work -- until things get dangerous... and then what? This spiritual sequel to Rob Ackerman’s Working Theater hit TABLETOP takes us to the lethal intersection of art and advertising and asks us if and when we need to take care of each other.

Photos: Rob Ackerman, Connie Grappo

2017 ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY



honoring **Vincent Alvarez**,
President, NYC Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
for bridging the gap between the arts, labor & community

April 3, 2017 at Sardi's Restaurant, NYC

Featuring cocktails, dinner, dessert, a silent auction and a
“feel good auction” (in which participants bid to donate
tickets to community members for our touring production
of *Bamboo in Bushwick*)

Entertainment: **“American Songs of Protest”**
curated by Elise Goyette & Connie Grappo

Singers: **Brian Collazo, Lee Wilkof, Syndee Winters, Abe Velazquez & the Peace Poets,**
Paul Loren (Piano/ Musical Direction), **Ty Tuschen** (Guitar)

Appearing courtesy of the Performers' Unions through Theatre Authority, Inc.



2017 Annual Awards Ceremony Photos by P. Kevin O'Leary.

Thanks to all who supported the 2017 Annual Awards Ceremony:

VIP Tables:

1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East • Belluck & Fox

Patron Tables:

Rodger Belknap & Mark Plesent • United Federation of Teachers • New York Hotel Trades Council

Tickets and Ads:

32BJ SEIU • Actors' Equity Association • Alan and Elaine Weiler
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Essex-West Hudson Labor Council • Faith Ryan • General Vision Services, LLC
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IUOE Local 94-94A-94B, AFL-CIO • Kate Doyle • Levy Ratner, P.C. • Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW
Local 751 IATSE • Local 802 AFM • Local One IATSE • Mason Tenders' District Council PAC
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And our generous friends and volunteers:

Lee Alderson • Rodger Belknap • Connie Coddington • Zachary Moody • Steve Monarque
Karen Rothstein • Jose Vargas, Hector Ruiz & the team from UFT

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*Working Theater is extremely grateful to all of the individuals,
foundations and companies that have supported our 32nd Season!*

(Fiscal Year 2017: July 1, 2016– June 30, 2017)

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NYC Central Labor Council | Segal Company

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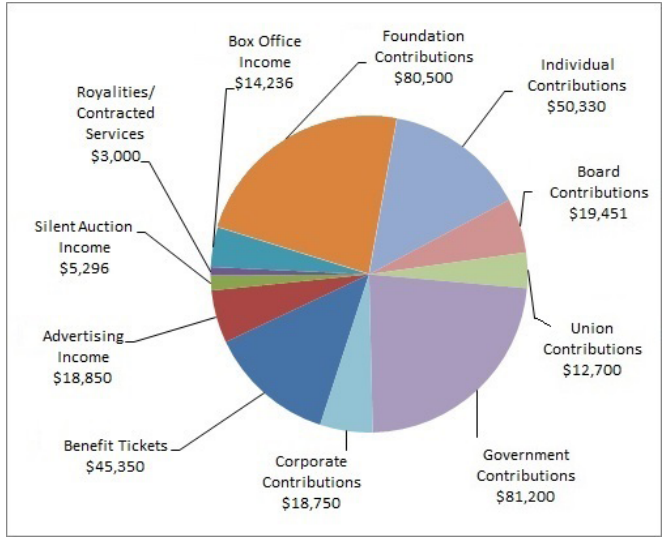
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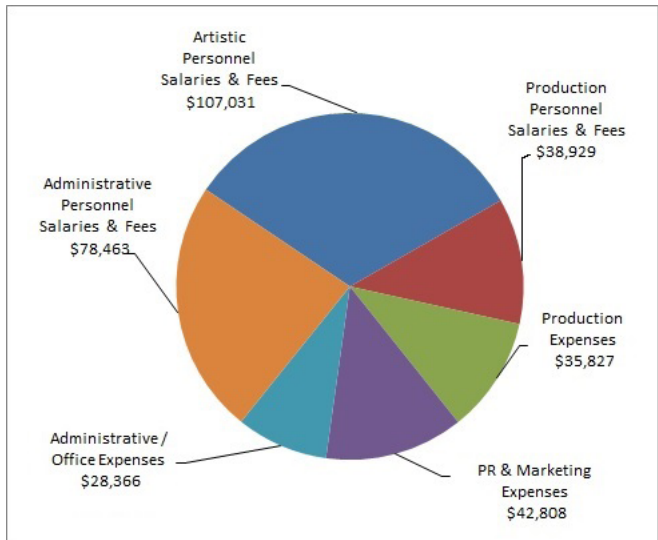
FINANCIALS

The Working Theater Co., Inc
 Fiscal Year 2017: July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017
 (unaudited figures)

| INCOME | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Benefit Tickets | \$45,350 |
| Advertising Income | \$18,850 |
| Silent Auction Income | \$5,296 |
| Royalties/Contracted Services | \$3,000 |
| Box Office Income | \$14,236 |
| Foundation Contributions | \$80,500 |
| Individual Contributions | \$50,330 |
| Board Contributions | \$19,451 |
| Union Contributions | \$12,700 |
| Government Contributions | \$81,200 |
| Corporate Contributions | \$18,750 |
| | |
| Total Income | \$349,663 |



| EXPENSES | |
|--|------------------|
| Artistic Personnel Salaries & Fees | \$107,031 |
| Administrative Personnel Salaries & Fees | \$78,463 |
| Production Personnel Salaries & Fees | \$38,929 |
| Production Expenses | \$35,827 |
| PR & Marketing Expenses | \$42,808 |
| Administrative / Office Expenses | \$28,366 |
| | |
| Total Expenses | \$331,424 |



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Peter Bernstein

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Michael Goodwin

Wynn Handman

Dolores Huerta

Denis Hughes

Kathleen Hughes

Woodie King Jr.

Barbara Kopple

Hon. Jerrold Nadler

Jorge Ortoll

OyamO

Ralph Peña

Eleanor Tilson

Randi Weingarten

William Wise

Working Theater Staff:

Mark Plesent: *Producing Artistic Director*

Laura Carbonell Monarque: *Managing Director*

Tamilla Woodard: *Artistic Director, Five Boroughs/One City*

Joe Roland, Joseph White: *TheaterWorks! Program Directors*

Chelsea Gregory: *Community Engagement Coordinator*

Camila Perez: *Social Media Associate*

Mark Brystowski: *Line Producer*

Ryann Bieber: *Event Manager*

Ted Dawson, Mikey Cordero: *Graphic Design*

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