



THEATER

Flyin' West



Pearl Cleage

Directed by Terrance Afer-Anderson
September 8 - October 1, 2023



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The Generic Theater

PRESENTS

Seven Venues

Flyin' West

Pearl Cleage

Featuring

Jennifer Kelly-Cooper

Billie D. Wilbert II

Acquanetta Spencer

Ashlee Rey

KaJohnna Johnson

Kiyante Malik Smith

Cynthia Tademey

Jeffrey Phillips

Sharon Smith

Ethan Marten

Stage Manager

Billie D. Wilbert II

Assistant

Stage Mangers

Shelby Barrette

Lucy Fox de Uribe

Sound Design

Derrion L. Hawkins

Set Design

Sandra Epperson

Lighting &

Projection Design

Dillon Bates

Production Producers

Sherman McDaniel

Kathy Strouse

Associate Producer

Billie D. Wilbert II

Costume Design

Meg Murry

Property Master

Loretta M. Dunn

Hair/Makeup Design

Becky Styles

Directed by

Terrance Afer-Anderson

FLYIN' WEST was originally commissioned and produced by the Alliance Theatre Company, Atlanta, Georgia. Kenny Leon, Artistic Director and Edith Love, Managing Director, in association with AT&T: On Stage. The play was developed with support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Resident Theatre Initiative.

SHOW SYNOPSIS

Following the end of the Civil War, many former slaves, anxious to leave the South and the increasing disappointments and dangers of Reconstruction, took advantage of The Homestead Act and went West to build new lives for themselves and their families. Many of these homesteaders were black women who overcame tremendous odds to work their own land and make a place for themselves in an often harsh and forbidding environment. Set in 1898, FLYIN' WEST is the story of some of these African-American female pioneers who settled together in the all-black town of Nicodemus, Kansas.

NICODEMUS CAST

Sophie Washington	Jennifer Kelly-Cooper
Miss Leah	Acquanetta Spencer
Fannie Dove.....	KaJohnna Johnson
Wil Parish.....	Billie D. Wilbert II
Minnie Dove Charles	Ashlee Rey
Frank Charles.....	Kiyante Malik Smith

N., KANSAS CAST

Sophie Washington	Jennifer Kelly-Cooper
Miss Leah	Cynthia Tademey
Fannie Dove.....	Sharon Smith
Wil Parish.....	Jeffrey Phillips
Minnie Dove Charles	Ashlee Rey
Frank Charles.....	Ethan Marten

PRODUCTION CREW

DirectorTerrance Afer-Anderson
Stage ManagerBillie D. Wilbert II
Assist. Stage Managers..... Shelby Barrette, Lucy Fox de Uribe
Set Design..... Sandra Epperson
Lighting & Projection Design Dillon Bates
Sound DesignDerrion LaZachan Hawkins
Costume DesignMeg Murray
Property MasterLorretta M. Dunn
Hair & Makeup Design Becky Styles
Running Crew..... Rebecca Loy, Kamryn Wheeler
Production Producers..... Sherman McDaniel, Kathy Strouse
Associate ProducerBillie D. Wilbert II

Graphic Design & Publicity

Victoria Farr, Wina Giddens, Randy Miller, Julianne Baker,
Becky Styles, Jason Baker

Props Team

Loretta M. Dunn, Anne Odell, Anne Ward, Bob Sauls,
Gail Bergstrom, Wina Giddens, Matt Gilbert

Board Operator Team

Jake Pruitt, Thomas Trumbauer, Danial Narva

Front of the House Managers Adonis Bastin, Kyle Brown,
Drake Johnston, Ayesha Oliver, Teren Miller, Noah Titus

Front of House Workers: Julianne Baker, Rebecca Boncal, Brad
Breckenridge, Jasmin Caldwell, Cristie DeCarmo, Wina
Giddens, Amee Hidalgo, Cleveland Jackson, Veronica James,
Randy Miller, McKenzie Morse, Anne Odell, Quincy Stewart,
Trina Stewart, Anne Ward, Elwynda Wiggins, Paul Williams

PRODUCTION CREW

Set Build & Production Preparation

**Sam Albers, Stewart Bailey, Cassie Baker, Julianne Baker,
Adonis Bastin, Gail Bergstrom, Tabitha Blanton, Ashley Blocker,
Anthony Bobb, Brad Breckenridge, Kyle Brown, Makayla Brown,
Kaleb Cabell-Peebles, Nick Calabrese, Billy Clark,
Shannan Crayton, Josylyn Eller, Kimmy Eller, AV Epperson,
Sandra Epperson, Lynn Evans, Victoria Farr, Clarke Flemming,
Lucy Fox de Uribe, Hollie Fuller, Wina Giddens, Matt Gilbert,
Alonzo Green, Colin Harrison, Rashad Huley-Morris,
Walt Jameson, Drake Johnston, Mikeila Kakiuchi,
Debbie Kleeger, Paul Lasakow, Rebecca Loy, Sherman
McDaniel, Tyler McKisson, Randy Miller, Jenny Nguyen, Kaitlyn
Nowell, Anne Odell, Jake Pruitt, Javius Richardson, Kathy
Strouse, Becky Styles, Ian Thompson, Noah Titus, Tom
Trumbauer, Thomas Trumbauer, Jr., Raphael Vincent,
Anne Ward, Shara Wertz, Sammy Wetherbee, Kamryn Wheeler,
Logan Wheeler, Eric Williams**

SPECIAL THANKS

**To Bob Sauls for the countless props
he loaned for this production, to the Fisher
Family for loaning us the wood stove,
and to Parul Patel for our show photography.**

**And we would like to extend a
very special thank you
to the exceedingly large group of dedicated volunteers
who have committed time and energy to making this
show a reality!**

MEET THE DIRECTOR

Terrance Afer-Anderson

After 36 years, Terrance is returning home with this production of Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West*. It is a noteworthy homecoming, as his directorial debut, at a theatre he helped found, was Samm- Art Williams' *Home*. Since those early days, Terrance has gone on to direct more than 50 productions for the stage and screen. These include Generic productions of *Extremities*, *Hunter!*, *Steal Away*, *Pantomime*, *The Red Shoes*, and *The Tinderbox*. His community work as a director includes *The Elephant Man*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Dutchman*, *The Island*, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, and his own works *The Tribesman*, *Cast in History*, *The Outlyers*, *The Sidon Six*, *Railings!*, *Hiram & Nettie*, and *For the Love of Jazz*. In 2019, Terrance began directing films. His first two feature films have garnered much international attention. His most recent *The Angels in the Details* has won honors in Rome, London, Paris, Cannes, Greece, India, and a U.S. Telly Award.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ever since I was a small child, I have been at once fascinated and humbled by African American history, the irrepressible spirit and distinctive resourcefulness of people who define my very own roots. I had personal experiences in my youth that, while a reflection of what Black people who came before me endured, pale in comparison to the rabid inequities that assailed those giants. I have made efforts to pay tribute to them as an artist and have been especially interested in sharing obscure stories of genuine pioneers. In 2010, I was commissioned by the City of Norfolk to write, produce, and direct a stage drama on African American history. Entitled *Cast in History*, it was staged at the Historic Attucks Theatre, featuring the stories of more than a dozen notables from Norfolk's compelling history. I also wrote, produced, and directed *The Outlyers*, the tale of a ragtag group of runaway slave children who take a dangerous foray into the Great Dismal Swamp. And when asked to direct Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West*, I jumped at the opportunity. African American women are the unheralded heroes of American might and the extraordinary story of Nicodemus, Kansas is one worthy of perpetual re-telling. Having the cast join me in researching the incredible story of this oldest African American settlement West of the Mississippi has been a wonder and a joy. We invite you to take this powerful and emotional journey with us.



MEET THE CAST

The Nicodemus Cast is scheduled to perform on the following dates:
9/8, 9/9, 9/10, 9/15, 9/16, 9/22, 9/30

The N., Kansas Cast is scheduled to perform on the following dates:
9/17, 9/23, 9/24, 9/29, 10/1



Jennifer Kelly-Cooper as *Sophie Washington (both casts)*
Flyin' West marks Jennifer's return to the Generic stage. She previously appeared in *Jar the Floor* as Vennie. Recently Jennifer served as choreographer for LTVBs *Escape to Margaritaville*. Also a director/choreographer, she has choreographed Sharon Cook's *Black Girl Magic: The Musical* for the last three years and directed *Iola's Letter* for LTN. Regional performances include LTN's *Sweet Charity* (Helene)

and *Chicago* (Liz/ Judge), Hurrah Players: *The Lion King Experience* (Sarabi), *Once on This Island* (Mama Euralie), *The Wiz* (Aunt Em); Generic Theatre: *Jar the Floor* (Vennie); and Venue on 35th Street: *Refraction of Light* (Nettie). Jennifer was featured in the 2020-21 Super Bowl commercial for Priority Automotive as well as the Cappuccino Bros. television and print campaign "Capp the Night" during the 2017 Oscar/Emmy award season. Jennifer enjoys spending time onstage or in dance classes with her children while her husband runs the Venue on 35th Street.



Acquanetta Spencer as *Miss Leah (Nicodemus Cast)*

Acquanetta is honored to be a member of the cast of *Flyin' West* at the Generic Theater. Most recently she appeared in *Iola's Letter* as Mrs. Johnson and as a member of the ensemble in the production of *The Earth Remembers*. Acquanetta has been on stage since childhood. She performed at the Lake Wright Dinner Theatre in productions of *South Pacific* and *Promise, Promises* and was in a local production of *West Side Story*. After years of

performing at 35,000 feet as a flight attendant for major airlines Acquanetta has landed. Fasten your seatbelts!



KaJohnna Johnson as *Fannie Dove (Nicodemus Cast)*

KaJohnna is glad to be joining the cast of *Flyin' West* this season at the Generic Theater! Working mostly as a voice-over actress and a writer, she is excited to be back on stage in person again! In her free time, she spends time with her family enjoying the outdoors, gardening, and cooking. She wants to thank her husband for always encouraging her to dream big, and her children for being the inspiration to pursue her passions for theater and film.

MEET THE CAST



Billie D. Wilbert II as *Wil Parish (Nicodemus Cast)*

Billie D. is a seasoned and versatile actor with a passion for storytelling through the art of performance. Hailing from Norfolk, Virginia, he brings a unique blend of creativity, dedication, and authenticity to every role he takes on. Having started his acting journey at Norfolk State University, Billie's talent and commitment quickly caught the attention of audiences and directors alike. His diverse background in theater,

film, and television has allowed him to portray a wide range of characters, from captivating leads to compelling supporting roles. Beyond acting, Billie is an English teacher in Portsmouth Public Schools, contributing his time and expertise to support the growth of young minds and aspiring artists. He believes in the transformative power of storytelling and its ability to inspire, educate, and entertain.



Ashlee Rey as *Minnie Dove Charles (both casts)*

Hailing from St. Clair County, IL, Ashlee got her start as Raynell in August Wilson's *Fences* at the St. Louis Black Rep and continued stage performances throughout high school. She has performed in numerous productions here in Hampton Roads, including *Iola's Letter* as Ida B. Wells at the Little Theater of Norfolk.



Kiyante Malik Smith as *Frank Charles (Nicodemus Cast)*

Kiyante was born & raised in Norfolk, VA. Educated at Virginia Commonwealth University he has worked in independent and short films. A writer himself, his portfolio includes multiple screenplays and poems.



Cynthia Tademey as *Miss Leah (N., Kansas Cast)*

Cynthia is a local actress who has retired from the United States Navy after 20+ years. She has sung and acted all around the world, from Naples, Italy to Honolulu, Hawaii. Cynthia received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of California – Irvine, California. She has performed in many of Hampton Roads' theaters in shows such as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *To Catch a Mocking Bird* (PCT); *Big River*, *Aida* (Theatrix); *WORKING!* (LTN), *A Few Good Men* and *South Pacific* (LTVB). She directed *The Miracle Worker* for Little Theater of Norfolk. Cynthia has appeared in movies *Un-Lawfully Yours* filmed in Virginia Beach and *American Dreamer* filmed in Norfolk. She is the author of *The Actor's Guide Hampton Roads* (Amazon CreateSpace). Cynthia is grateful to GOD for her returning to the stage after 2 years.

MEET THE CAST



Sharon Smith as *Fannie Dove (N., Kansas Cast)*

Sharon is amassing an impressive list of credits to include having appeared as “Lady in Green” in the TerraVizion Entertainment Network production of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf* and as Vivian Carter Mason in the TerraVizion’s film version of Terrance Afer-Anderson’s *Cast in History*, “Evillene” in Hurrah Players *The Wiz*’, “Old Harriet” in Hurrah’s *Freedom Train*, and several Atumpan Edutainment productions, including the dual roles of “Delilah” and “Sister Caroline” in *From Pimp To Preacher: Petey Wheatstraw’s Revival*, “Jodeci Watkins” in *Harambe for the Holidays*, “Elephant” in Mother Africa’s *Gift*, and “Onini” and a “Villager” in *Tales of the Twisted Stick*. She also appeared in Broadway in the Hood’s production of *The Color Purple*.



Jeffrey Phillips as *Wil Parish (N., Kansas Cast)*

Born in Oahu, Hawaii, Jeff was raised in Hampton, VA. This comedic actor is making strides in the Hampton Roads area. He made his first start on a professional stage in 1999, playing the role as Deacon Sneed in the stage play *Will A Man Rob GOD?* He has also done film work in the area with the talents of actor Daphne Reid (Fresh Prince of Bel-air) in the movie *Out of Gas*. He has had the honor of being under the direction and tutelage of Terrance Afer-Anderson in the true story stage play *The Face of Emmitt Till*. He has worked with great talents in the entertainment field such as Aunjenue Ellis (King Richard, Quantico), Wendy Raquel (Steve Harvey Show), Miguel Nunez (Harlem Knights), Charnele Brown (A Different World) and more. As he climbs up the ladder of success in this field, make way for this up-and-coming talented performer.



Ethan Marten as *Frank Charles (N., Kansas Cast)*

Ethan has appeared in more than 80 stage and screen productions. His stage credits span more than thirty years and have included sketch, improv, and standup comedy with the Comedic License to Festival Productions of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Equity Productions of *Hamlet*, and New York's Emelin Theatre Productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Oberon and Bottom. This will mark his sixth time walking the boards of the Generic Theater, the last time playing Andrew Fastow in *ENRON*. The stage is a special place for him, for as Ms. Cleage reminds us, “Out here, nothin' stands between you and your soul.” He is proud to be a member of this devoted team of creatives, and wishes to dedicate this performance to all the strong, proud, free women in his life and the men who have loved them. He wishes to thank Colleen, Hannah, Jacqueline, Albert, Richard, Jonathan, and Seth for all their love and support. He extends a loving welcome to the newest family production - Liam. “Break a leg, young man!”

MEET THE CREW

Shelby Barrette — *Assistant Stage Manager*

Shelby will be making her debut at Generic Theater with *Flyin' West*. This past year, she stage managed The Little Theatre of Virginia Beach's *Dracula*, and worked as the assistant sound technician for *Something Rotten*. She previously attended Stephen F. Austin State University's School of Theatre, pursuing a degree in Stage Management. She has worked on an array of productions in the past such as *Macbeth* as an Assistant Stage Manager, as well as *By the Bog of Cats*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *These Shining Lives*, and multiple One Act Play and Playwright festivals as the Stage Manager. She has also worked as a Stage Manager for The Houston Repertoire Ballet Company.

Dillon Bates — *Lighting Design*

Dillon is excited to once again work with this group which embodies the spirit of community theatre. Thanks to Terrance for the opportunity. He's a UMaine theatre alum now doing lighting design and directing in the Hampton Roads area. Love to Luca, Evangeline, Brutus, and Maxwell.

Loretta M. Dunn — *Property Master*

Loretta (Lori) is honored to be working with Terrance Afer-Anderson and this incredible team of people. After jumping into props at Generic Theater for *Jack Goes Boating* (made a burning casserole dish!), she was hooked! Prior to her last LTVB shows, *Escape to Margaritaville* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (props, some set painting and dressing), there was *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *Miss Firecracker Contest*, and *One Slight Hitch*, and *Agnes of God* at LTN. Additionally she served in the role as props master for a Regent Endowed Film and special effects and props for many local films. Huge thanks to Dave Hobbs for always encouraging her. You recognized the "artist" and voluntold her to "go for it"! And to her children and grandchildren for their constant support!

Sandra Epperson — *Set Design*

Sandra defines a play as "a Story told by Actors on a Stage before an Audience". Having spent most of the last 55 years directing 114 professional, educational, and community theatre productions, she had more or less lost touch with the satisfaction derived from bringing a strong visual element to the Stage. Many thanks to the Generic Board for giving her the opportunity to renew her love of set design and to Terrance Afer-Anderson for his unstinting collaboration and support. And most especially Sandra wants to thank the unbelievably dedicated volunteer corps who have shown up every weekend to craft this set. You have proven to be dedicated, patient, obliging, and creative beyond words!

Lucy Fox de Uribe — *Assistant Stage Manager*

While new to the Generic crew, Lucy is no stranger to the theater. With over 8 years of experience on and off of the stage, she delights in all things dramaturgical and is thrilled at the chance to be a part of the Generic team. Lucy is a Navy veteran and a transient of the states, originating in California. A bachelor's in fine arts major at Old Dominion University, she enjoys frequenting museums, art shows, and festivals. Lucy is excited to continue to expand upon her tech work in San Diego, CA in the fall of 2023 upon the completion of this production.

MEET THE CREW

Derrion LaZachan Hawkins — *Sound Design*

Derrion is honored to be back with Generic Theater for yet another production! He has been seen both on and off stage in countless Generic shows since 2016. Upcoming projects include: *Radium Girls* (Lighting Design, LTN), *The Little Mermaid* (VMT), *The Motown Christmas Tour* (Director, UPAC) Congratulations to everyone on an amazing production tonight. For more information or booking visit: DesignedByDerrion.com; FB: [Facebook.com/IAmDerrion](https://www.facebook.com/IAmDerrion); IG: [@MH_IYN](https://www.instagram.com/MH_IYN)

Rebecca Loy — *Running Crew*

Rebecca will be making her debut at Generic Theater with *Flyin' West*. This will be her first time working behind the scenes. Rebecca is currently pursuing degrees in mechanical engineering and applied mathematics. She's had an interest in theater as well as science and performed in high school plays and was involved in competition dance growing up. She's very excited for the opportunity to be involved in a production again.

Meg Murry — *Costume Design*

Meg has been happily costuming her way around Hampton Roads for over twenty years. Many thanks to the Generic and Terrance Afer-Anderson for this opportunity and the cast for being awesome. Love you, B. Miss you, Jane.

Becky Styles — *Hair & Makeup Design*

Who say stars only shine on Broadway? This season Becky Styles, owner of TANGLeS CUSTOM WIG BOUTIQUE is shining right here at Generic Theater. Becky is serving as the premier hair and makeup stylist for *Flyin' West*. New to the Generic theater family, Becky offers an added dimension to wig mastery and character creation bringing over 25 years of wig mastery and makeup expertise to the stage. Currently, Becky is a senior broadcast journalism/theater arts honor student at Norfolk State University and the sole proprietor of TANGLeS FANCY WIGS & HAIR BOUTIQUE, the best wig shop in town. She feels truly blessed to be working amidst award winning director/film maker Terrance Afer-Anderson, and the awe inspiring talents of these master stage production creators. Thank you Generic Theater!

Kamryn Wheeler — *Running Crew*

Kamryn is a high school sophomore at a Performing and Visual Arts Academy in Hampton Roads where she has had the pleasure of participating both on stage as an actor and behind the scenes for various academy productions. Kamryn and her theater program were recognized by the Virginia Beach School Board for winning the VHSL One Act Play Championship with their rendition of *Unmuted*. This summer, she attended Spotlight Productions summer camp at Wesleyan University and was cast in their production of *The Prom*. Kamryn plans to study theater in college is excited to be a member of the running crew at Generic. She plans to continue volunteering and learning all she can in hopes of becoming a staple in the Generic family.

Billie D. Wilbert II — *Stage Manager / Assistant Producer (see cast page)*

Message from our Board

We are so very excited to be able to bring this marvelous script by Pearl Cleage to life for your enjoyment and enrichment.

What makes this story so enthralling is the fact that Nicodemus, Kansas is a real place, where descendants of the original founders still live today. It is a National Historic Site and as such, will continue to be a living example of the contribution made by African American women and men to the development of this nation. They carved out towns and built communities in places few thought possible to survive. These stalwart women and men accomplished what few had the temerity, the strength or the gumption to even try. Their effort and commitment demands our admiration and respect.

These are the stories Generic has become best known for. Plays that have an important, timely and moving story to tell, but that other theaters pass over, for one reason or the other. Generic's Mission takes us beyond the standard fare of musical comedy, mystery or stylized drama. Our Mission is to deliver innovative productions of contemporary works, new plays, and reinterpretations of the classics. We explore issues of importance to our diverse community while challenging our audience with provocative work. Our artistic vision is realized through a season of plays, special group outreach projects, a developmental new play program, and encouragement of related art forms. Nurtured by a core of committed volunteers, Generic Theater provides a home for both experienced and emerging theater artists.

We can only do this through the generosity of our grantors and you our loyal audience. We most sincerely appreciate every donation received, regardless of the dollar amount. Your contribution goes beyond funding a much-needed piece of equipment or costumes. Your contribution encourages us to continue to work tirelessly to meet the demands of our Mission Statement and to help Generic not only survive, but to thrive for another 43 years.

Thank you most sincerely!

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Brad Brenkenridge, *Member at Large*
Jake Pruitt, *Member at Large*
Thomas Trumbauer Jr., *Member at Large*
Ron Stokes, *Founder Emeritus*

So glad you could join us for this impactful performance of *Flyin' West*. We invite you to join us for the rest of our season:

***The Weir* by Conor McPherson**

Running November 17—December 3, 2023

Auditioning September 17 & 18 from 7-9 pm

Set in a small, remote pub in rural Ireland, three local men gather one night to share their usual gossip, lies, and a pint or two. On this particular evening, their close-knit group is joined by a newcomer to the area. As the night becomes dark and stormy, their stories take the same path, following the rural Irish tradition of faeries and folklore. The tables are turned, however, when Valerie the newcomer, tells a tragic tale of her own.

***The Viewing Room* by Mark Edward Smith**

Running February 9—25, 2024

Auditioning in December 2023

Saying good-bye to the dearly departed has never been so funny. The show centers around a stern patriarch who has recently passed away before he's had a chance to make amends with his very dysfunctional family. The play—while loaded with laughs—is timeless due to its themes of reconciliation, family, and paying tribute to the departed.

***INDECENT* by Paula Vogel**

Running May 17—June 2, 2024

Auditioning in December 2023

A deeply moving play inspired by the true events surrounding the controversial 1923 Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance*—a play seen by some as a seminal work of Jewish culture, and by others as an act of traitorous libel. *INDECENT* charts the history of an incendiary drama and the path of the artists who risked their careers and lives to perform it.

**We hope to see you at our upcoming shows and
thank you for your patronage.**



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ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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BY MARK SHANAHAN, ADAPTED FROM THE NOVELLA BY CHARLES DICKENS

NOVEMBER 25 - DECEMBER 24, 2023

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BY PEARL CLEAGE

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BY FREDERICK KNOTT

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MAY 8 - 19, 2024

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Seven Venues

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Katt Williams:
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Wheel of Fortune LIVE!
November 3 • Chrysler Hall



Colson Whitehead: The Norfolk Forum
November 14 • Chrysler Hall

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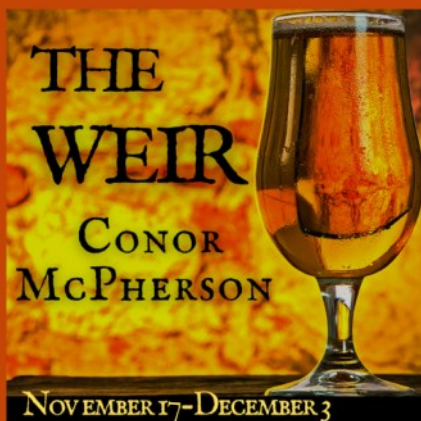
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THEATER
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PRESENTING OUR 2023-2024 SEASON



Advance **Flex Ticket** Discount Package

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any combination throughout the 2023-2024 Season