PEOPLE'S LIGHT

subscriber INSIGHTS

The Diary of Anne Frank

Hello Friend,

Our upcoming production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* has been well over a year in the making. I know the timing rather viscerally, with the marking of my daughter's first year of life (she's 11 months.) I recall the "cover" for my surprise baby "sprinkle" at the office was a planning meeting for the surround programming and intersections of this production. From early in *last* season to now, we have had very curious, honest, challenging, soul-searching, and affirming discussions drawing on the insights and expertise of community members, faith-leaders, scholars, cultural directors, artists, and our own staff and company about identity, about representation, about inclusion, about exclusion, about intentional invitations, about the many possible points of entry to and points of departure from the contents of young Anne's diary.

In this process, we wondered just how this persecuted 13-year old's voice would resonate in our present moment. Through these intensive, and often ongoing conversations, we have learned about the needs and wishes of many neighbors and community partners. We have also learned more about *ourselves* and each other – the individuals on our staff, in our company, and on the team for *Anne Frank*. In fact, two individuals, each grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, felt compelled to share their personal stories because of the nature of these conversations and our approach to this production. All of these conversations directly inform the shaping of this production. What we have learned has inspired the scope and content of our expanded surround programming as well.

We also recognize this is the beginning. We look forward to continuing these conversations and invite you to lend your voice in whatever way feels most meaningful to you throughout the run and beyond.

Be well,

Marcie Bramucci,
Director of Community Investment

Inside *The Diary of Anne Frank*

Anne Frank's story and our upcoming production call for radical inclusivity. In producing this play, we asked ourselves: How might we open this story for the broadest possible audience while honoring the actual people, preserved in Anne's diary and Anne herself, who were persecuted for one aspect of their identity? With the many events, accommodations and conversations surrounding this play we actively encourage and invite those who have not previously seen themselves in this story – whether because of their race, religion, age, historical proximity or a feeling of "that could never happen today" – to step into this story with us, alongside those who have long identified with it and engage more deeply.

Our new website features insightful responses from individuals with whom we've connected, offering their own ways in to the story and its current relevance. David Bradley shares aspects of his inspiration - highlighting a call for empathy - in the Director's Note. Producing Director Zak Berkman reflects on the invitation of the Frank family's story here.

Company Member **David Bradley** directs a cast of new and familiar faces. You likely know company members **Melanye Finister**, **Christopher Patrick Mullen** and **Pete Pryor**. **Brian Anthony Wilson** (*All My Sons, Fences*) returns to join them.

Making their People's Light debuts are: **Tyler S. Elliot, Jeff Gorcya, Deborah Green, Mark David Kaplan, Danielle Lenee, Brittany Anikka Liu, Jacob Schrimpf, Caroline Strang**, and **John Zak**. Check out the production page for detailed cast bios.

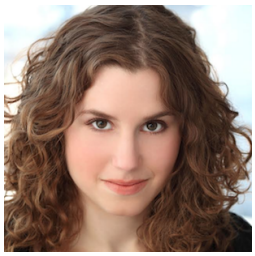
In the rehearsal room

Set Designer **Luke Cantarella** and Lighting Designer **Dennis Parichy**, both fresh off of *Morning's at Seven*, team up once more to translate the historical annex for our stage. **Devon Painter** (*Tom Sawyer*) and **Fabian Obispo** (*Stargirl, Holes*) return to People's Light to lend their expertise in Costume and Sound Design, respectively.

Also making her People's Light debut is Production Dramaturg **Alix Rosenfeld**. **Kate Fossner** stage manages with her usual dedication.

Surrounding *The Diary of Anne Frank*

Engagement



Scoop on Wednesdays at 6pm Production Dramaturg **Alix Rosenfeld** hosts a member of the artistic team for a lively and informal conversation in the Haas lobby. Join us for a light bite at this freshly reimagined pre-performance program, beginning 2/28. Tickets just 5 bucks, and now available online: register here.

AfterWORDS Join us for facilitated discussions with the cast following Thursday evening performances, beginning 3/1.

EXPANDED! Sunday Lobby Chats and Panel Discussions

In addition to small group chats in the upper lobby following the 2pm performances on 2/25 and 3/11, we are thrilled to welcome community leaders for 3 full (free!) panels on a variety of relevant topics.

Group Chat led by Judy Myer, Anti-Defamation League
February 25th

Group Chat led by Rabbi Peter Rigler, Temple Sholom, Broomall, PA
March 11th

Adolescence, Trauma & Resilience
March 4th, 4:30-6:00pm

- Allie Dolan, Center for Excellence in Advocacy Training Coordinator, Support Center for Child Advocates
- **Nina Guzman**, Founder & Executive Director, Alianzas de Phoenixville
- **Karen Moon**, Clinical Social Work/Therapist, MSW, LCSW
- **Rebecca A. Tavangar**, Psychotherapist, Trauma Counselor; Greater Phoenixville ACEs Committee member; Chester County ACEs Coalition

Identity & Tradition
March 18th, 4:30-6:00pm

- **Rabbi Tiferet Berenbaum**, Temple Har Zion (Mt. Holly, NJ)
- **Randi Boyette**, Director of Education, Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Philadelphia

Anne Frank: Why Now?
March 25th, 5:00-6:30pm

- Lisa Hoffstein, Executive Director, Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect
- **Jared Jackson**, Founder & Executive Director, Jews in ALL Hues
- **Cathryn Miller-Wilson**, Esquire, Executive Director of Hebrew International Aid Society Pennsylvania (HIAS)

- Robert Nosanchuk, Senior Rabbi, Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple, Cleveland, OH

Attendance at all panel discussions is free, but space is limited. To RSVP, please call the box office 610-644-3500 or email me at Bramucci@peopleslight.org.

Access

EXPANDED! Open Caption performances will feature an LED screen above the stage that displays dialogue in real-time every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday performance, beginning 2/25. If you are interested in the Open Caption services, please notify the box office when reserving your tickets so we can seat you in the ideal section.

Service Animals are welcome at all performances, and we offer a designated relief area for their comfort. Canine Partners for Life will host a pre-performance demonstration session of their work training service animals at 1pm on 3/31, prior to the 2pm matinee

Audio-Description and Sensory Tours will be available at all Saturday 2pm matinees (3/10, 3/24, & 3/31). Pre-performance sensory tours allow patrons the opportunity to experience key props and costume pieces up close. Ticketed patrons will receive notification for sensory tour start time in advance.

Assisted Listening Devices, as well as T-Coil compatability, are available at the box office to enhance your experience of the performance.

Large Print Programs are always available at the Will Call desk for your convenience.

Wheelchair Accessibility The Leonard C. Haas Stage is fully wheelchair accessible through the lower lobby entrance. An elevator carries patrons to the second floor to visit the Will Call Desk, coffee and concessions bar, and dramaturgy display.

Around Town & Beyond

with company artists

Happy Philadelphia Theatre Week!

Theatre Philadelphia has launched a ten-day celebration of the artists, organizations, and audiences that have made ours one of the most vibrant theatre regions in the nation. Click here for details and discounts for programming across town.

Ken Marini's "revelatory production" of *Waiting for Godot,* with scenic design by **James F. Pyne, Jr.** runs through this weekend at Quintessence Theatre Group. Read the full Philly Mag review HERE.

As the Blake family Patriarch, **Greg Wood** appears in *The Humans* at Walnut Street Theatre until 3/4.

Claire Inie-Richards is among the #WomenWhoDare in *The Revolutionists* at Theatre Horizon, now through 2/25.

This month, **Mary Elizabeth "MB" Scallen** travels to Ludhiana, Punjab to lead professional development workshops with international medical educators on behalf of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) – her sixth visit to India on behalf of the foundation.

Eisa Davis (NPF Playwright) is in previews for *Kings,* a new Off-

Stage Manager **Audrey Brown** embarks on the quirky comedy *Buyer & Cellar* at Riverside Theatre in Vero Beach, FL 3/20-4/8. She promises to bring the sunshine back with her when she's in town to stage manage *Skeleton Crew* this spring.

NPF Playwright **Dominique Morisseau's** hometown trilogy – the Detroit Plays – makes its way home. Read the NYTimes coverage HERE. *Skeleton Crew*, the third of these plays, takes the Steinbright Stage this June.

Closing

Morning's At Seven

After many sold-out performances and a five-play extension(!), we bid a fond farewell to the Gibbs sisters in *Morning's at Seven* last weekend.

If you missed the glowing *Wall Street Journal* review, click here to enjoy!

Next On Stage

I Will Not Go Gently

March 21 - April 15, 2018

Broadway production directed by Thomas Kail (*Hamilton)* at the Public Theatre, which will run through 3/25.

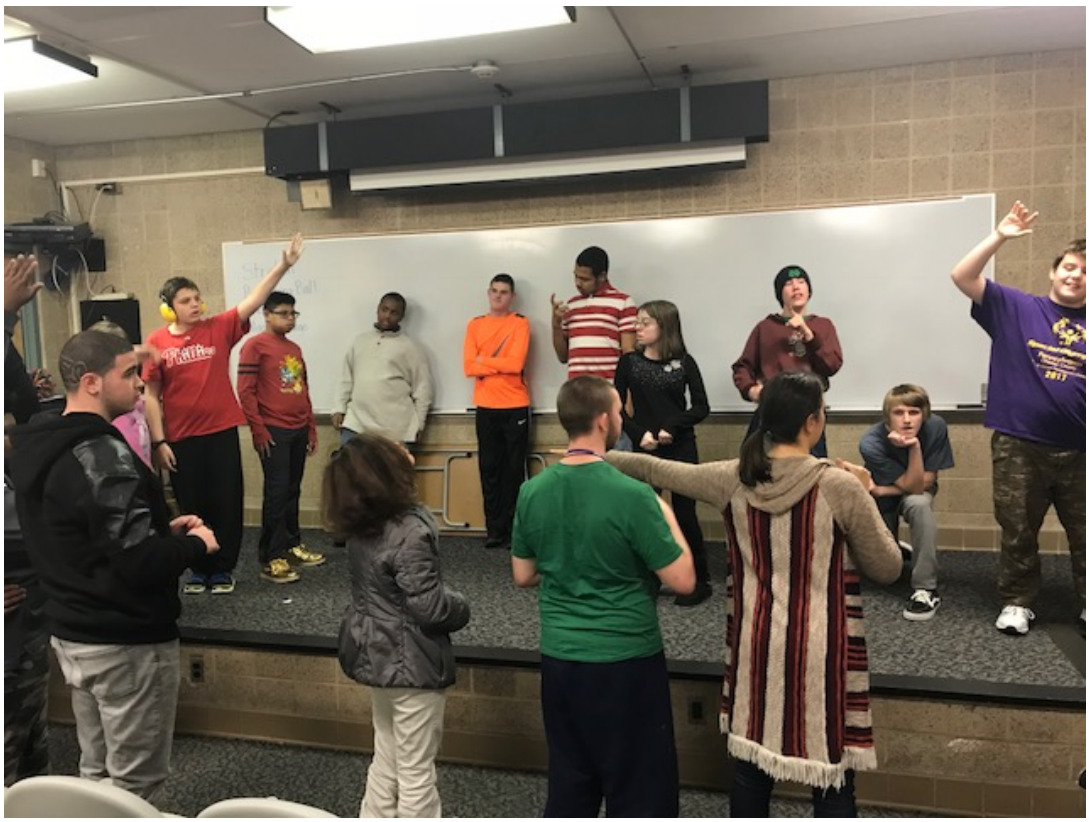
Tom Teti directs Neil Simon's *I Ought to be in Pictures* at Act II Playhouse. Though they haven't opened yet, they've already extended the production due to popular demand! Performances now run 2/27-3/31.

Philadelphia's Queen of Comedy **Jennifer Childs** brings her one-woman show to Malvern next month, along with the talented creative team of 1812 Productions. Want a sneak peek? Check out this podcast, which originally aired in advance of the world premiere of *I Will Not Go Gently*.

Residency Spotlight: Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU)

Our second intensive residency with the **Child and Career Development Center** at CCIU just ended last month. Throughout December and January, we engaged several groups of students with a range of needs - over 60 students total, ages 6-16 - in a myriad of creative and social exercises. Interim Producer for Arts Discovery Programs **Devon Laudenslager** led each class through fun-filled, Panto-themed sessions, from group breathing exercises and warm-up games (practicing focus and eye contact) to recreating the story of *Aladdin* and making magic lamps!

From our residencies with the Pathway School and General Wayne Elementary, we know theatre can be a vehicle to teach social communication and other soft skills, and teachers involved with this residency saw the difference: one commented, "*The students really lit up and were engaged in the lessons... it was great to see them be so creative.*" Another elaborated, "*The program provided our special education students with hands on, sensory based opportunities to explore their own space while relating to a story and its characters. They were motivated to participate, and were engaged in every new activity presented. Thank you for a truly meaningful experience!*" The teachers also credited Devon's dynamic personality, which made it easy for the students to learn from the behavior that she modeled. We hope to return again next season.



Devon leads a group of eager students in our residency with CCIU this winter.

Theatre News

Toasting the "Jeepster"

Last week, we gathered to celebrate **James F. Pyne, Jr.** — AKA Jeep — in honor of his retirement from the position of Director of Design. With 40 years of stunning sets (who remembers *Hamlet* in '87?) — and 40 tons of baseball infield dirt — the Jeepster has left his enduring mark on our theatre community. For photos of Jeep's many sets and tales of his many escapades, visit the blog.

Auction Update

On April 13th, Jen Childs will provide the musical entertainment at *Laughter and Light*, the People's Light auction to benefit Arts Discovery education programs. **Samantha Reading** will co-host the Auction proceedings along with **MB Scallen** (a reprise of her role as auctioneer from 2015's *Auctioning the Ainsleys*?) For attendance information and more, contact Dawn Elyse Warden at warden@peopleslight.org.

People's Light

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