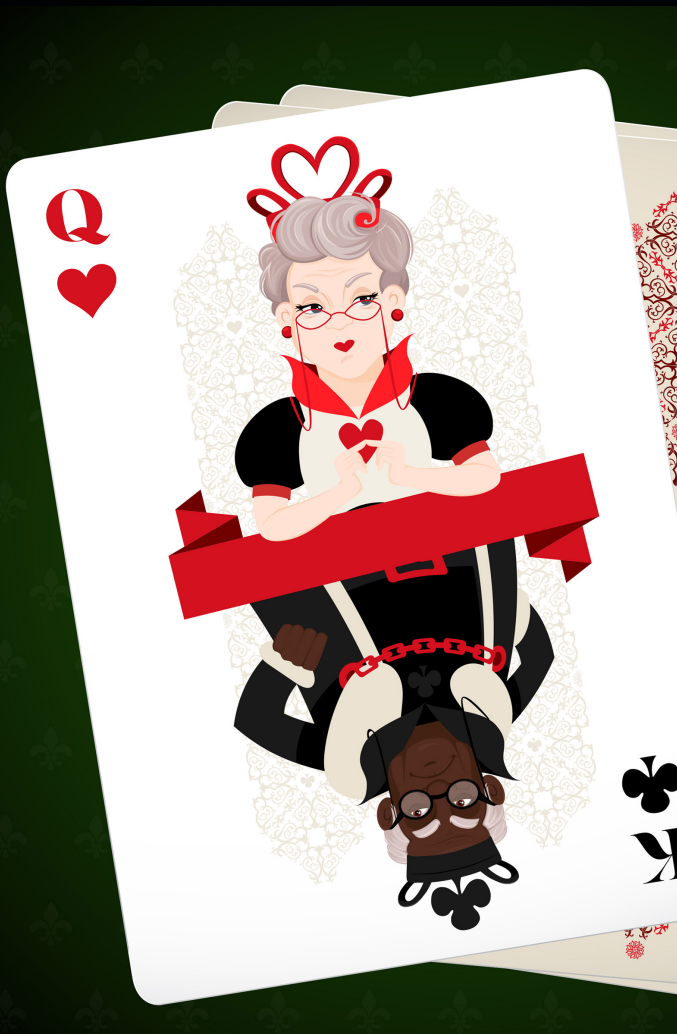


# PLAYBILL

# CIRCLE THEATRE



## *The Gin Game*

2021 SEASON

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## BOX OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY - FRIDAY | 12PM - 5PM

MONDAY - FRIDAY PERFORMANCE DAYS | 12PM - CURTAIN

SATURDAY | 2PM - CURTAIN

SUNDAY | 12PM - CURTAIN

## LATE ARRIVALS

Patrons arriving late will be seated at the House Manager's discretion.

## NO STANDING

No standing is permitted in the back of the theatre. If you become uncomfortable and/or have to move out of your seat for any reason, you may stretch your legs in the upper or lower lobby.

## ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please turn off all electronic devices that light up or make noise. Please, no texting. The taking of pictures and/or recordings (audio or video) is prohibited; the device may be taken from you and held until after the show.

## EMERGENCY CALLS

If you anticipate the need to be reached in the event of an emergency, you may leave your name and seat number with the House Manager. A House Manager will also be available in the House during the run of the show. Our emergency contact number is **616 632 2996**. In the event that someone is not available at this number, Aquinas College Campus Safety's number is **616 632 2462**; a dispatcher is available 24/7.

## YOUNG AUDIENCE

Most Main Stage productions are geared toward mature audiences and may not be appropriate for younger audiences. Our Magic Circle productions provide wonderful family entertainment and an introduction to the live theatre experience. Please call the box office at **616 456 6656** for information on age appropriateness of any of our shows. Children below school age may not attend our Main Stage productions. Please, no babes in arms or toddlers. At no time can a child enter the auditorium without a ticket.

## SPECIAL PATRON SERVICES

An induction loop is provided for the benefit of hearing aid users. To use, please switch your hearing aid to "T." Handicapped and wheelchair seating is available and easily accessible. When reserving tickets, please notify the box office personnel of any special needs or seating requirements.

## SMOKING

Aquinas College is a smoke-free campus.



CIRCLETHEATRE.ORG | 616 456 6656

BOX OFFICE | 1703 ROBINSON RD SE

# WELCOME TO OUR CIRCLE

Welcome Back Friends!

We are so happy to be back together live and in-person for our 68th season! 2020 is almost in our rear view mirror and we are starting 2021 with renewed energy and enthusiasm. We are proud to begin our 68th season with *The Gin Game*. Our season this summer promises to be a great one, and we have great productions and concerts lined up for you!

I want to personally thank all of you for your support last summer, we could not have continued without your generosity. We are asking that you please continue your amazing support again this year. In order to sustain us during these challenging times and make this season possible, Circle Theatre set a fundraising goal last year of \$200,000. Thanks to the generous support of The Wege Foundation, a matching grant from Steelcase Inc, the support of our loyal sponsors, and donations from YOU our loyal supporters, we were able to surpass our goal by nearly \$36,000. We hope that you will partner with us again this season as we strive to reach our new goal of \$150,000. Your continued support will ensure that Circle Theatre will remain a vibrant part of the community and will be here to provide the same great programming for generations to come.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for all that you have done and continue to do in support of Circle Theatre!

Best,



Lynn Atkins-Ryker  
President of the Board of Directors

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**Ashlee McGreevy**

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Production Photographer

**Lisa Mathias**

Financial Accounts Coordinator

**John Vesbit**

Experience Manager

**Don Wilson**

Resident Scenic Designer  
and Technical Director

**Bill Duncel**

Costume Shop Manager

**Izzy Dowell**

Marketing and Outreach Intern

**Jessica Trenshaw**

Experience Coordinator

**Shannon Heldt**

Experience Intern

**Zach Avery, Hunter Denkema, Jordan  
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# THE GIN GAME

PLAY BY  
D. L. COBURN

DIRECTOR  
JOHN VESBIT

STAGE MANAGER  
ALEXA FINKLER

SCENIC & PROPERTIES DESIGNER  
DON WILSON

COSTUME DESIGNER  
BILL DUNCKEL

SOUND DESIGNER  
SAM JOHNSON

SOUND TECHNICIAN  
KYLE APINALL

LIGHTING BOARD TECHNICIAN  
HANNAH DERWENT

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
JORDAN MALONE

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# CAST

WELLER MARTIN ..... Stathi Afendoulis  
FONSIA DORSEY ..... Shelley Irwin



STATHI  
AFENDOULIS



SHELLEY  
IRWIN

# PRODUCTION STAFF

DIRECTOR ..... John Vesbit  
STAGE MANAGER ..... Alexa Finkler  
SCENIC & PROPERTIES DESIGNER..... Don Wilson  
COSTUME DESIGNER ..... Bill Dunckel  
SOUND DESIGNER ..... Sam Johnson  
SOUND TECHNICIAN ..... Kyle Aspinall  
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER ..... Jordan Malone  
LIGHT BOARD TECHNICIAN ..... Hannah Derwent

# A NOTE ABOUT THE SHOW

A note about the language in the show. There’s no way to sugar coat it. Weller Mar-  
tin curses like a sailor. He is a man of a certain generation, and doesn’t make any  
excuses for it. If you are someone who doesn’t appreciate a salty tongue, like  
me, I look to Fonsia Dorsey who is the foil to Weller’s dirty mouth. I weigh  
everything within the context of the show. The language remains intact because  
that is who Weller is as a character, and there is really no way around it. It is not  
meant to shock, but to give an honest and human portrayal of his character.

*The Gin Game* is performed with a 15 minute intermission  
and runs approximately 90 minutes.

# PRODUCTION STAFF



JOHN  
VESBIT



ALEXA  
FINKLER



DON  
WILSON



BILL  
DUNCKEL



SAM  
JOHNSON



KYLE  
ASPINALL



JORDAN  
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# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

"Loneliness" says Weller Martin, "it's as simple as that," is one of the opening lines of *The Gin Game*, and for me, is ultimately the thesis. If we live long enough in The United States there's a pretty decent chance that we will end up in a facility like Bentley Home where Weller Martin and Fonsia Dorsey find themselves in *The Gin Game*. Even though I am in my thirties, my father was born in 1936, and a few years ago, because of failing health, and a Dementia diagnosis, my family made the wrenching decision to move him from his home to a local care facility. He did not want to go, and for years after, he repeatedly pleaded with us to go home, to buy a car so he could leave, to go anywhere but the static, monotonous environment we had placed him in. And like Fonsia's son and family members, no matter how much we tried to make time to visit my dad, it was never enough.

The environment of nursing home facilities (at least for those with limited income) is not a welcoming environment for their residents, employees, or guests. They are seemingly designed to dissuade you from spending too much time there, when all their residents have is time. To add insult to injury, unless you are a person of means (like those who can afford to live at the Presbyterian Home in the play), these facilities will drain your remaining savings and income. What is left for these residents then? In the absence of independence, family, and financial resources, all that remains is the facility, and the people in it. And that is the sliver of hope we find here in *The Gin Game*. Weller and Fonsia befriend each other against all odds. They share their stories, their triumphs, their pain and losses. They find confidants in one another all over a game of cards, but running beneath the surface of this innocent game is that looming loneliness, and the pressure and longing that every human experiences in trying to connect with another human being. And many times we fail miserably in those quests.

Like my father, and I am sure, many of yours, Weller is hesitant to express emotion or weakness. He would rather express himself through playing cards and bluster. Fonsia, on the other hand, while much better at conversation, is also struggling with certain aspects of pride; parts of her life she would prefer to hide, or even keep secret. These very real human flaws are what stand in the way of Weller and Fonsia deepening their relationship, but are also what make this play continually relevant.

I've been thinking a lot in recent years about the importance of catharsis in theatre. It is something that we are losing touch of in favor of lighter fare and escapist entertainment. I love a good farce as much as the next person, but what separates comedy from tragedy in its ability to provide catharsis. When Weller makes his final exit at the end of the play, Fonsia utters "oh no". It is perhaps the most powerful "oh no" in theatre history, and can be interpreted many ways.

What has been lost at the end of *The Gin Game*? What have these characters lost? What have we lost? And, what can we do as a society to ensure that those in care facilities still have a voice? I hope that these are the conversations you will partake in at the end of the play. The late, great Leonard Cohen once sang "take this longing". In the end, when all else is stripped away, what we are left with is longing—longing for human connection, longing to be heard just once more.



John Vesbit  
Director, *The Gin Game*

# WHO'S WHO | CAST

## **STATHI AFENDOULIS** *He/Him (Weller).*

Stathi began his Theatre career at the age of 10 in 1966. Since that time, Stathi has appeared in several shows with Circle Theatre and Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. His most recent appearance on the Circle stage was in *It Shoulda Been You*. Stathi holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Aquinas College and a Master's degree in Theatre from New York University. Stathi, who has a long history with Circle, currently serves on Circle's Board of Directors. *Circle Theatre provided me the opportunity to grow as an actor, and inspired my decision to move to New York and become a theater professional. Forty-two years later, I'm back home, on the stage that launched my career. Thank you Circle! Special thanks and love to all my family and friends, who have constantly supported my love of the theater. And a special shout out to my partner Joann, for helping me memorize all those lines!*

## **SHELLEY IRWIN** *She/Her (Fonsia).*

Circle Credits: *Spoon River Anthology* (Mrs. Meyers and Lydia Puckett). Other local credits include *Diary of Anne Frank* (Grand Rapids Civic Theatre). North Carolina credits include *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Curtain Up!*, *Murder on the Nile*, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. West Michigan audiences will recognize Shelley as Host/Producer of The WGVU Morning Show. Shelley is also a Circle Theatre Board Member. She holds a Master of Science in Physical Therapy University of Indianapolis and enjoys participating in triathlons, running, and anything with an endorphin opportunity!



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# WHO'S WHO | PRODUCTION STAFF

## **JOHN VESBIT** *He/Him/His (Director).*

John recently directed Circle's virtual *Spoon River Anthology* series. Other directing credits include *War of the Worlds* (Grand Rapids Civic Theatre), *Frankenstein in Love* (Eastern Michigan University) *Mourning Becomes Electra* (Lenawee Historical Museum) and *Bug* (Siena Heights University). John holds a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from Eastern Michigan University and is a familiar face to patrons as he is also Circle's Experience Manager. *Circle Theatre is special to me because we are determined to serve and reach out to all parts of the community in the form of theatre. We also place a huge emphasis on engagement and collaboration through our board, staff, volunteers, businesses and community organizations and schools. 'The Gin Game' is not only a powerful and prescient story, but will also be one of the very first live play performances in West Michigan since before the pandemic.*

## **ALEXA FINKLER** *She/Her/Hers (Stage Manager)*

Credits: *As You Like It* (virtual). Assistant Stage Manager credits include *The Vagrancy*, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Frozen Jr.*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Newsies* (Grand Rapids Civic Theater). Acting Credits include: *Fiddler on the Roof* (Master Arts Theater) and *The Neverending Story* (Grand Rapids Civic Theater). Alexa, a Homeschool Graduate currently studying theatre at Grand Rapids Community College, enjoys long-boarding and tennis when not working on a show.

## **DON WILSON** *(Scenic Designer and Technical Director).*

Don started at Circle in 2005. He has 26 years of Scenic Design experience in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Minnesota, along with numerous theatres in Grand Rapids. A Siena Heights University grad with a degree in Theatre and Speech Communication, Don loves LEGO, comic book art, and Mountain Dew. *Thanks to my lovely wife and wonderful kids.*

## **BILL DUNCKEL** *He/Him (Costume Designer).*

Bill's first experience with Circle was as a cast member in *LA Cage Aux Folles* in 2005. Since that time, Bill (a Visual Merchandising Coordinator for Meijer and a

Grand Award winner for his costume designs) has gone on to design numerous shows at Circle and also serves as Costume Shop Manager for Aquinas Performing Arts Center. In addition to designing for Circle Theatre, Bill has also designed at several area theatres and colleges, including *On The Town* (JATATDC) and Aquinas College Theatre.

## **SAM JOHNSON** *He/Him (Sound Designer).*

Sam has designed 200+ productions. Select favorites include *Les Miserables* and *Newsies* (Grand Rapids Civic Theatre), *If/Then* (Actors' Theatre), *Freaky Friday*, (Circle Theatre). Sam studied music and recording technology at Grand Rapids Community College and is the resident sound designer for Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. *Special thanks to my partner Dez and son Ean for putting up with my hectic schedule and being my biggest supporters.*

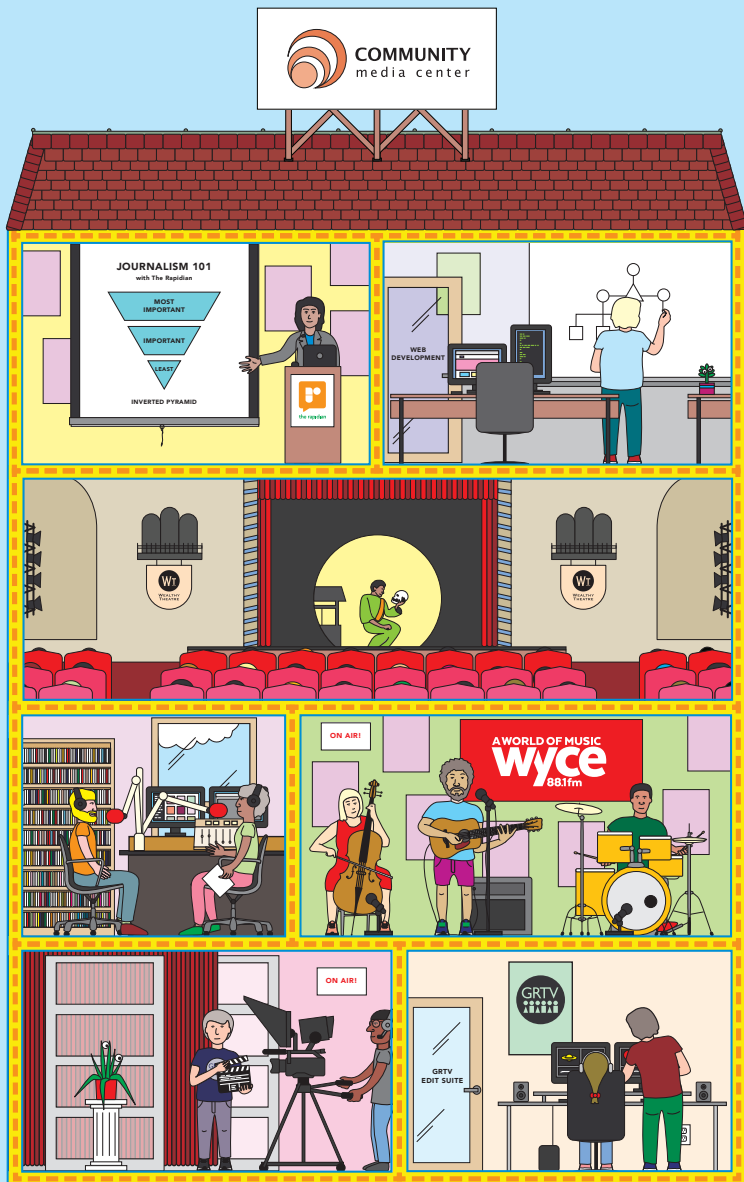
## **KYLE ASPINALL** *(Sound Technician).*

Circle credits include *A Few Good Men*, *A Chorus Line*, and Circle's Summer Concert Series for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 seasons. Stage managing credits include *All The Way* (Civic Theatre). He attended Central Michigan University and is employed by Karona by Jeld-Wen. *Thanks goes to everyone who I have worked with in a production. We together create shows.*

## **JORDAN MALONE** *He/Him (Assistant Stage Manager).*

Jordan has served as Stage Manager/Assistant Music leader for Grand Rapids Catholic Central High School Musicals and is currently a Liturgical Music major at Aquinas College. Jordan also serves as the Director of Music Ministries at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church and as an Experience Associate for Circle Theatre. Jordan enjoys Organ and Vocal Performance as well as video design and editing when not working on a show.

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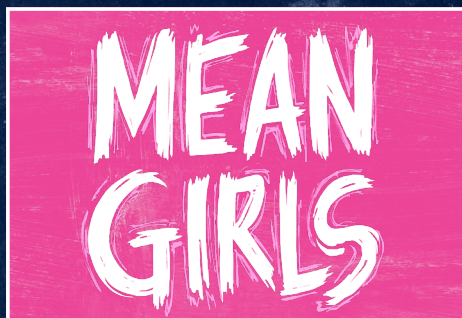
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Derrick & Michelle VanAllsburg  
Sue Vandyke  
Darren & Amy Wenzlick  
Richelle Witbrodt & Hannah Whyte  
Susan Williams  
*In Memory of Cait Williams*  
Donald & Sandy Williams  
Christopher Wilson  
Barbara Wisse  
Peter Woodfield  
Tom & Nancee Woudstra  
Heather Yerrick  
Roger & Carol Zinnecker

# THANK YOU

Your generous donations have enabled Circle Theatre to continue to bring high quality plays, musicals, and children's theatre to West Michigan.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued support of local performing arts.

[CIRCLETHEATRE.ORG/DONATE](http://CIRCLETHEATRE.ORG/DONATE)

# THE WAIT IS OVER

# LIVE THEATRE

# IS BACK!

LIMITED TICKETS ARE GOING FAST!



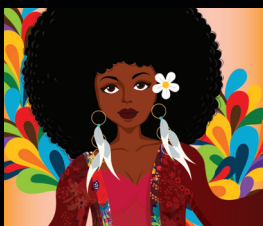
*Always...  
Patsy Cline*



**CABARET**



**NOISES  
OFF**



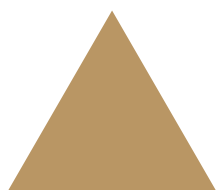
**HARR**



*American Graffiti*  
IN CONCERT

DETAILS & TICKETS AT [CIRCLETHEATRE.ORG](http://CIRCLETHEATRE.ORG)

PROUD SPONSOR OF  
CIRCLE THEATRE'S 2021 SEASON



**Mercantile**<sup>®</sup>  
Bank of Michigan

# New Jerusalem



The Interrogation of Baruch  
de Spinoza at Talmud Torah Congregation:  
Amsterdam, July 27, 1656

By David Ives  
Live outdoor  
performance at  
Temple Emanuel

June 9-13th

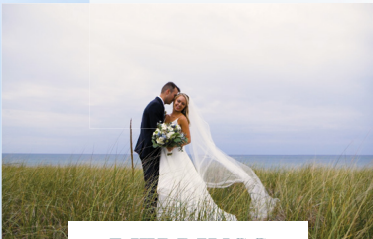
More info at: [jtgr.org](http://jtgr.org)



## SJK

PRODUCTIONS

We are proud to support  
**Circle Theatre**



WEDDINGS



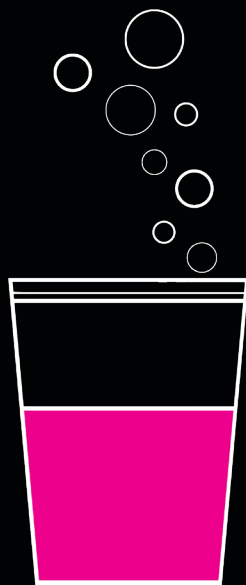
EVENTS

COMMERCIAL

# LOBBY BAR

JOIN US ON THESE SELECT NIGHTS  
WHEN WE SERVE CRAFT BEER & WINE  
PRE-SHOW, INTERMISSION\*  
AND POST-SHOW.

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT CIRCLE THEATRE.



## LOBBY BAR NIGHTS

JULY 16	CABARET
JULY 19	HITS OF THE 80S: VOL. 2
JULY 23	CABARET
JULY 26	FREEBIRD: CLASSIC MUSIC OF THE 70S
AUGUST 13	NOISES OFF
AUGUST 16	ABC: BOY BAND EVOLUTION
AUGUST 23	HELLO SUNSHINE: SONGS OF SUMMER
SEPTEMBER 10	HAIR
SEPTEMBER 6	ANNUAL SEASON PARTY
	AMERICAN GRAFFITI IN CONCERT
SEPTEMBER 17	HAIR
SEPTEMBER 29	MOVIES ON THE LAWN
	THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
OCTOBER 2	MOVIES ON THE LAWN
	THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

Bar opens 30 minutes before show-time.

\*When Applicable