SATURDAY, MAY 15, 2021 | 8:00 PM



USCOS!
UNDER THE STARS

DIRECTED BY ALISON LAWRENCE

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: MICHAEL SANTANGELO

EVENT CHAIR: GEORGIA DONALDSON

PLAYBILL



RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE

Welcome Letter from Divas! Committee Chair

welcome to *Divas! Under the Stars*, where some of RLT's most talented performers will be entertaining you tonight. Who will win the crown? That depends on you! Please show your love by opening your hearts and wallets, as each dollar counts as a vote for your favorite Diva.

There are many people involved in this production, both on and off the stage. I would like to thank our talented and energetic director, Alison Lawrence, who never loses her enthusiasm or creativity; musical director Michael Santangelo, who brings out the best in the singers; stage manager Alex Gromo – after all, there wouldn't be entrances and exits without him! And a huge thank you goes to the volunteers, who are the backbone of RLT, for helping us put on a show tonight.

I would also like to thank the wonderful staff at RLT, the Board of Directors, and the Divas Committee. Every dollar that you spend tonight acknowledges their hard work. Please be generous.

Lastly, a standing ovation for the Divas who have given of their time, talent, and fundraising skills. Each and every one of you is a winner. Break a leg tonight.

Warm regards,
Georgia Donaldson,
Chair

Letter from the Director

Welcome Home!

"When I think of home, I think of a place where there's Love overflowing."

These lyrics from the song "Home" from *The Wiz*, always come to mind when I think of what home means to me. For 36 years, Raleigh Little Theatre has overflowed with love into all aspects of my life. All the people I have met there have become a part of my chosen family, and a part of my cultural community home.

The song continues saying "Suddenly my world's gone and changed its face, but I still know where I'm going..." My, how suddenly our world changed its face! Still, we as actors, singers, technicians, volunteers, and staff knew we would eventually be returning home to the theatre. Fourteen months later and here we are...Home...at RLT, under the stars celebrating 15 years of *Divas!* fundraisers.

Without the love and support of everyone that has donated (no matter how much or how little) to RLT throughout the years, and especially through this past year, many of us would lose our home away from home. Our lives and our cultural community would be so much less... you have strengthened the foundation of that home and we are grateful.

If you have had the opportunity to watch the *Divas!* videos on RLT's Youtube channel (you should take a look as they are quite fun), you may have noticed many of the Divas mention RLT as being a "home" to them. That it is a place of refuge, safety to be themselves, to build healthy and long lasting relationships, to be inspired to create beauty in the world, to find themselves, to be comforted, to laugh, to cry, to play, to explore our humanity. To be our best selves and to love and be loved. Theatre creates and builds us a home and isn't that something to be grateful for... So, **WELCOME HOME!** We have missed you.

From Alison Lawrence, Director and all the 2021 Divas! cast and crew



CAST

Benaiah Barnes

Susannah "Nana" Castle

Christy Creech Connell

Alec Donaldson

Faith Jones

Noah Sennert

Emily Spain

Lauren Tompkins

Natalie Turgeon

Aya Wallace

Brian Westbrook

DIVAS COMMITTEE

Georgia Donaldson, Chair

Adrienne Kelly Lumpkin

Tim McKay

Debra Schafrath

Kimberly Wood

Pam Swanstrom

Suzanne Ruggles



PRODUCTION TEAM

Director: Alison Lawrence

Music Director: Michael Santangelo

Lighting Designer: Cailen Waddell

Sound Designer: Todd Houseknecht

Stage Manager: Alex Gromo

Assistant Stage Manager: Barbara Witherwax

Deck Crew: Daniel C. Eckert, Chris Acevedo, David Wilk, Jeff Hooper

Spot Operator: Daniel C. Eckert

Cellist: Emma Caterinicchio

Back-up singer: Peyton Grissom

Cashiers: Hughes Pittman & Gupton LLP

Graphic Design: Eric Forehand

Divas! 2021 Videos: Rod and Nancy Rich

Divas! 2021 Headshots: Jeannine Borzello

Masters of Ceremonies: Greg Moore, Kevin O'Barr and Rusty, the Diva Dog

Voiceover: Tina Morris-Anderson



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HISTORY OF DIVAS

In 2004, the idea for a fundraiser for RLT originated "out of a conversation between myself and Amy Flynn" says Sandi Sullivan. "We were discussing the fact that many people thought other actresses and myself didn't get along because we often found ourselves competing for the same roles. In fact, the opposite was true. I had great respect for the other actresses. Then the idea to start a fake fight between myself and these other women began to run through my mind" ...and the idea for Divas! was born.

The idea was this: there were so many talented women in the theatre community competing for so few roles, why not give them a chance to shine on stage together and raise some money in the process? Sandi felt that performers could provide their own costumes, perform without a set, use basic lighting and have minimal rehearsal. Therefore, the money from ticket sales for the evening would all be profit. The audience could vote for their favorite Diva of the evening. Amy Flynn took it a step further and said, "Why not make the audience vote with money?!" That was the final touch! Divas! was a thing.

Sandi presented the idea to the managing director of RLT and it was on! 12 women joined forces to present a concert style performance for One Night Only! In 2007, Divas! opened the competition to all genders. Since 2004, Divas! has been raising money for the theatre every year with the exception of 2009, 2011 and 2014, making this year the 15th anniversary. In that time, Divas! has raised over \$650,000 for RLT programs, making it the most successful fundraiser ever at Raleigh Little Theatre.

Thank you to ALL the Divas that have given so generously of their time, talent and fundraising skills.

PAST DIVAS

2004	Rebecca Johnston	2013	M. Dennis Poole
2005	Yolanda Rabun	2015	Brian Fisher
2006	Staci Sabarsky	2016	Rebecca Johnston
2007	Katherine Anderson & Don Smith	2017	Jess Barbour
2008	Martie Todd Sirois	2018	Emily Spain
2010	Katie Hennenlotter	2019	Dee Penven-Crew
2012	Greg Moore & Kevin O'Barr	2020	Emily James

2021 DIVAS BIOS

BENAIAH BARNES is a local performance artist who is no stranger to any of RLT's stages. Starring in multiple productions including Cinderella in which he hopes to reprise his role as King Darling

in the near future, he was also a Diva contestant for *Divas!* 2019. He is thrilled to continue efforts to support the "second

home" that he considers RLT to be.

SUSANNAH "NANA" CASTLE has loved performing since she could talk. At

twelve, Nana was the youngest performer ever accepted into the UNCSA Summer Vocal Intensive Program. This evening she is performing as the youngest Diva in RLT history. Nana's shows include *Alice in Wonderland*, *Into the Woods, Godspell*, and *Hairspray*. When she is not on stage, Nana barrel races, show jumps, paints, draws, exhausts her family, enjoys her critters, and rocks her academics.

CHRISTY CONNELL is thrilled to be making her RLT debut in *Divas!* After

majoring in Theatre at the University of South Carolina, Christy performed in DC and then NYC, where she originated two Off-Broadway roles. Favorite roles include Audrey, *Little Shop*; Tonya Harding, *The Musical Enquirer*; Julie Jordan, *Carousel*. Christy now enjoys singing along with her daughter, lvy, to songs of her husband, David's, band, The Connells,

and can be heard singing back-up in a few songs on their new record, "Steadman's Wake."

ALEC DONALDSON appeared as Mushnik in RLT's Little Shop of Horrors

in 2018 (Cantey nomination). He played Jules in *Sunday in the Park with George* and, most recently, King Pellinore in *Camelot* (2019), and appeared in other shows, all at Burning Coal Theatre. He was part of *Miscast* in 2017 and 2018 for NRACT. He is a corporate and securities lawyer at Wyrick Robbins Yates & Ponton.



2021 DIVAS BIOS

FAITH JONES (she/her) is thrilled to return to RLT for Divas! Faith is a recent



graduate of UNC-CH, completing a B.A. in Music and a minor in African, African American, & Diaspora Studies. She was last seen at RLT as Cathy in *The Last Five Years*. Favorite credits include *The Wild Party* ("Queenie," Company Carolina), *Ragtime, She Loves Me* (Playmakers), and *Caroline, or Change* (RLT). Stay tuned for her upcoming debut EP, Self-Study by visiting faithjonesmusic.com.

NOAH SENNERT is really excited to take the RLT stage again in Divas! 2021.



He competed in Divas! 2020 to a third place finish. He is an NC State graduate who participated in the theatre program during his time there and has taken several classes at RLT in many aspects of musical theatre such as acting, singing, and dancing. He thanks his friends and family for supporting his dream.

EMILY SPAIN is a rising senior at Meredith College and a past winning Diva!



Select performances include RLT storytellers' Oh! Deer, American Fairytale, and Cinderella, Broadway Series South's Handel's Messiah Rocks, NC Opera's Turn of The Screw and Joy: An Irish Christmas at Carnegie Hall, and Meredith College's Strike Up The Band and Company. Emily would love your vote in helping her support RLT and maybe take home another crown! Thank you!

LAUREN TOMPKINS is thrilled to be competing for *Divas!* following her roles



as StepMama in *Cinderella* and Lady Eugenia D'Ysquith in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. Other favorite roles include Blanche Barrow in *Bonnie and Clyde*, Tina Vitale in *Tony n Tina's Wedding- Raleigh*, Abigail Adams in *1776*, Woman 1 in *Songs For A New World*, and Sara Jane Moore in *Assassins*. She holds a bachelor's degree in voice performance from

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and a master's degree in voice performance from The University of Iowa. When not performing, Lauren enjoys music directing, accompanying and teaching voice lessons - and is a financial advisor during the day!

2021 DIVAS BIOS

NATALIE TURGEON is happy to be reprising her role of Diva Extraordinaire,

originally making her debut in 2013! Raleigh Little Theatre credits include *Hairspray!*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Sister Act* and *Cinderella*. Other favorite local theatre credits include: *Legally Blonde* (Paulette Bonafonte), *The Rainmaker* (Lizzie Curry), *Wild Party* (Madeline True), *9-5 The Musical* (Roz Keith), *Assassins* (Emma Goldman/ensemble), and *The Old Man and*

the Old Moon (Old/Young Woman). Special thanks to YOU, RLT patrons for supporting this theatre by opening up your hearts and pockets to help this tiny but mighty theatre get back on its feet! Enjoy the show!

AYA WALLACE's first performance with RLT was the role of Felicia in Memphis.



She was awarded a Cantey for the lead role. Other RLT roles include Wanda in *Crowns* and Montego in *Three Little Birds*. Aya also directed an audio reading of *The Pit and the Pendulum* starring Jesse Gephart. She is grateful for the relationships formed at RLT and proud of the work produced and brought to life for audiences to experience.

BRIAN WESTBROOK is thrilled to be competing for that Diva crown for the second time after reaching for it first back in 2015. Raleigh

Little Theatre has been a "home base" theatre for several years now for Brian, and he can't wait to get back up on stage with everyone. Previous theatre credits include... For Raleigh Little Theatre: Monty Python's Spamalot (Lancelot), Sweeney Todd (Beadle Bamford, Cantey nom.), Memphis (Ensemble),

Mothers & Sons (Cal Porter), What We're Up Against (Ben). For Theatre in the Park: Glorious! (Cosme McMoon), It's Only A Play (Peter Austin). For Henderson Rec: Hairspray! (Corny Collins), Beauty and the Beast (Lumiere). For VGCC; Company (Bobby): 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Comfort Counselor/Choreographer). Brian sends endless love and gratitude to his family and friends!

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

CHRIS ACEVEDO (Deck Crew) is excited to be back in the theatre after a brief hiatus! His last gig was stage managing *Waiting for the Host at RLT!* He wants to thank Barbara for this exciting opportunity to be a part of the Divas family this year, his friends and family, and to all of the Divas. Best of luck to all of you! Instagram: Livinglife1994

DANIEL C. ECKERT (Deck Crew, Spot Operator) is excited to be back in black after a hiatus from productions during 2020. Dan's most recent RLT production activities include *Snow White* (Sound Crew Chief), *Seussical* (Spotlight Operator) and *Cinderella* (Stage Manager). Thank you to RLT staff and the entire production team!

ALEX GROMO (Stage Manager) has Stage Managed *Divas!* for the last three years. He has also worked on quite a few RLT productions over the past six years. He feels that RLT is like a second home for him and enjoys all aspects of theater production.

JEFF HOOPER (Deck Crew) is a North Carolina native, and is excited to be back at Raleigh Little Theatre for his 9th show as crew. Most recently he has worked *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Sister Act*.

TODD HOUSEKNECHT (Sound Designer) has been very active in community theatre in the Raleigh area for 13 years, providing set construction, technical direction, lighting design and sound engineering services. Highlights include Rocky Horror Picture Show, Hairspray, Legally Blonde, Spring Awakening, Cinderella, Spamalot, Hedwig, Sweeney Todd, Avenue Q, Sister Act, and many many others. He hopes you enjoy the show!

ALISON LAWRENCE (Director) is an award winning actress, director and voice teacher with over 20 years of experience. She lives in Raleigh with her four-legged family and maintains a successful private voice studio, The Singer's Art. Ms. Lawrence received her B. A. degree in Voice performance. Ms. Lawrence has been awarded 4 Cantey performance awards from Raleigh Little Theatre as well as being honored to receive the Haskell Fitz-Simons Distinguished Performer Award. She has also been the recipient of numerous FORSCOM Festival (Military Performance Awards) awards for her work as a performer, director and musical director while working on Ft. Bragg. Ms. Lawrence also had the honor of joining Clay Aiken's Joyful Noise Tour in 2005 as Beverly Ledford and the community theatre liaison. She located

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

and recruited community theatre actors/singers to perform as the chorus in the show in the 32 cities that were visited on the tour. Onstage most recently, Ms. Lawrence was seen at PlayMaker's Repertory Theatre: Ensemble in *She Loves Me*, at RLT: Mother Superior in *Sister Act*, Gladys in *Memphis*, Stepmama in *Cinderella* (4 years), Director of 13 years of *Divas!* fundraisers (and a three time *Divas!* loser), Theatre In the Park: as Florence Foster Jenkins in *Glorious: The True Story of Florence Foster Jenkins*, Judy Steinburg in *It Shoulda Been You*, NC State Theatrefest: Gerde in *The Hollow*, Actors Comedy Lab; Sister Acacious in *The Divine Sister*, NRACT with Actors Comedy Lab: *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, Justice Theatre Project: as Big Edie in *Grey Gardens*, and Emma Goldman in *Ragtime*. You can contact her through email: thesingersart@att. net or website: www.thesingersart.net or Facebook: The Singer's Art Vocal Studio. Adopt a pet! It will change you for GOOD.

MICHAEL SANTANGELO (Music Director) is thrilled to be working with the wonderful cast and crew of Divas! Under the Stars. Past credits include Disney's High School Musical On Tour and Breaking Up is Hard to Do (Branson Production). Regional credits include High School Musical (TOTS), Meshuggah Nuns (Gateway Playhouse), Altar Boys (NCT), A Chorus Line (NCT) and The Little Mermaid (NCT). Locally, Michael has served as Musical Director for In The Heights (NCT Conservatory), Jesus Christ Superstar (NCT Conservatory), Crazy for You (NCT Conservatory), Divas! (RLT), Spamalot (RLT), Grey Gardens (JTP), The Color Purple (JTP), Title of Show (NRACT), and The Wedding Singer (NRACT). He is a graduate of the Crane School of Music.

CAILEN WADDELL (Lighting Designer) is excited to be involved with another production at RLT. He is especially excited to be creating art again after pandemic time off. He would like to thank his wife, Liz, for her love and support.

DAVID WILK (Deck Crew) is a not so recent graduate of Cary Senior High School and NC State University. In pre-pandemic times, he was frequently found working tech for theatres in the area. Recent credits include stage manager for *The Curious Incident of The Dog in The Night-Time* and *Don't Dress for Dinner* at RLT. David looks forward to the return of live, local theatre.



ACT 1

Invocation and Instruction to the Audience (from The Frogs)

Greg Moore & Kevin O'Barr

Man of the Hour (ripped from Man of LaMancha)

Alec Donaldson & Noah Sennert

Astonishing (from Little Women)

Nana Castle

A Trip to the Library (from She Loves Me)

Emily Spain

I Dreamed A Dream (from Les Miserables)

Faith Jones

Sonya Alone (from Natashia, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812)

Natalie Turgeon feat. Emma Caterinicchio, cello

I Will Never Leave You (from Side Show)
Lauren Tompkins & Benaiah Barnes

Life of the Party (from The Wild Party)

Aya Wallace

My Man (from Funny Girl)
Christy Connell

What Is It About Her (from The Wild Party)

Brian Westbrook feat. Peyton Grissom, backup vocals

Seasons of Love (from Rent)
The Divas

Intermission



ACT 2

Getting Married Today (from Company)

Lauren Tompkins

Freeze Your Brain (from Heathers: The Musical)

Noah Sennert

Sing Happy (from Flora, The Red Menace)

Alec Donaldson

Some Things Are Meant to Be (from Little Women)

Emily Spain & Nana Castle

Words Fail (from Dear Evan Hanson)

Benaiah Barnes

Bad Idea (from Waitress)

Aya Wallace & Brian Westbrook

Princess Power Medley (Disney medley)
Christy Connell, Faith Jones & Natalie Turgeon

West End Avenue (from The Magic Show)
Diva 2019, Dee Penven-Crew

I Got a Feeling I'm Falling (from Ain't Misbehavin')

Diva 2020, Emily James

Crowning of your 2021 RLT Diva!

LIVE AUCTION ITEMS

Live auction bidding will occur during Act 1 and Act 2 of the program. Be ready to bid!

#1 RLT VIP PACKAGE

We all know that Raleigh Little Theatre has so much to offer. Well, this RLT VIP Experience has it all! This package includes a full five-year subscription for two to everything RLT produces including all shows performed in the Sutton Theatre, Gaddy-Goodwin Teaching Theatre, and Stephenson Amphitheatre -- including the Movies in the Garden series! You will also receive registrations to a Youth class series and an Adult class series. AND you will get to be a part of a production process from start to finish for one of next season's shows! Alongside Artistic Director Patrick Torres, you will get a backstage look into how casting happens, the rehearsal process, the design process, and the opening night jitters. This package is truly your ticket to experience all the magic of Raleigh Little Theatre.



Scheduling of all activities will be mutually agreed upon times. This package is donated by the RLT Board of Directors. Contact Mackenzie Barker at mackenzie@raleighlittletheatre.org to schedule.

LIVE AUCTION ITEMS

Live auction bidding will occur during Act 1 and Act 2 of the program. Be ready to bid!

#2 DINNER UNDER THE STARS at the Executive Mansion

If you think Divas! Under the Stars is fun, just wait until you experience Dinner Under the Stars at the Executive Mansion! This incredible package includes dinner for eight under the arbor at the North Carolina Executive Mansion. You and your guests will be treated to a four-course seasonal meal prepared by Chef David Casteel with wine pairings personalized by Pam Swanstrom. To complement this delightful meal, entertainment will be provided by one of the RLT Divas! This package has everything for you and your guests to be wined and dined in the beautiful setting of the Executive Mansion gardens!



Scheduling of Dinner Under the Star at the Executive Mansion will be a mutually agreed upon time during September 2022, to be scheduled by September 2021. This package is generously donated by Kristin Cooper, Mitchell-Casteel A Fine Catered Affair, Pam Swanstrom, and a mystery Diva. Contact Greg Moore by the end of September 2021 to schedule — 6622ggmoore@gmail.com. No Saturdays or Sundays or Labor Day Monday.

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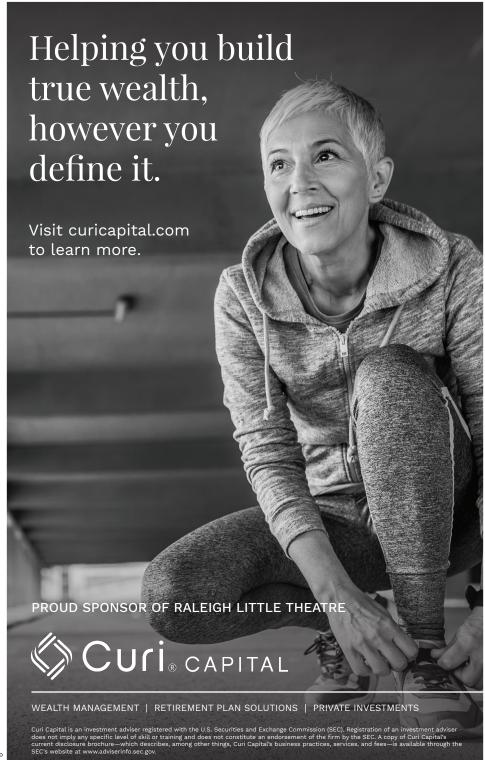
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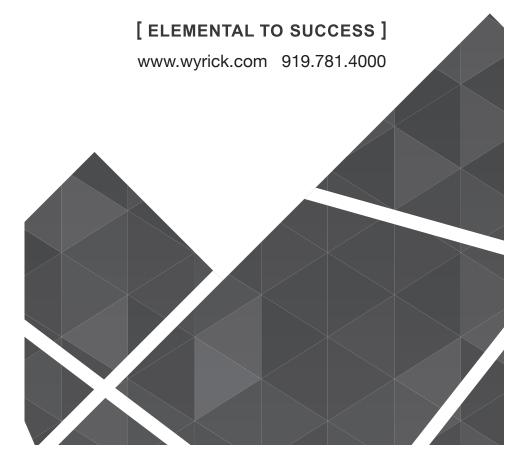


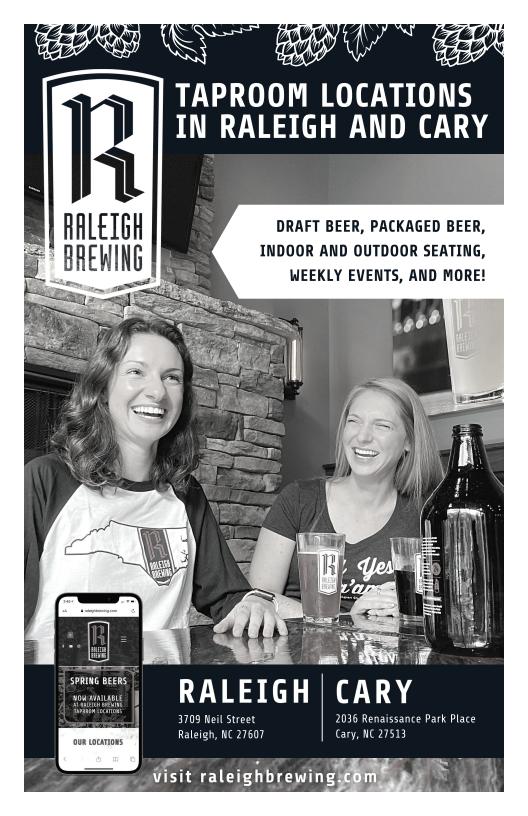
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Our attorneys are proud to be involved with the Raleigh Little Theatre and to support *Divas! Under the Stars* in 2021.



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for providing the beautiful flowers for our Divas this evening!



for catering our pre-show sponsor reception!



for crunching the numbers to help us crown our winning Diva!



for designing the Divas playbill and promotional materials!



In loving memory of Haskell Fitz-Simons.
You will always be greatly missed.
- Steve and Lisa Zaytoun



BRAVO TO OUR OUTSTANDING STAFF especially during this unprecedented year

Your resilience, creativity and teamwork kept RLT's mission alive!

Heather Strickland, Executive Director

Patrick Torres, Artistic Director

Meredyth Pederson Cooper, Director of Education

Dennis Berfield, Production Manager & Technical Director

Jenny Mitchell, Costume Designer

Megan Farrell, Marketing Manager

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Scott Wray, Box Office Supervisor

Mackenzie Barker, Development & Events Coordinator

Thank you for your continued dedication to our arts community.

YOU ALL DESERVE A DIVA'S CROWN!



from Phyllis Parish Howard, President, RLT Board of Directors.



IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER WHO GAVE SO MUCH TO THIS THEATRE AND INSPIRED ME TO BE AN ARTIST.



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In memory

of the RLT volunteers that we lost this past year.

Bob and Liz Dean
Bob Pollard
Sue Tucker Briggs
Paul Bamford
Fred Corlett
Shelia Denn
Page Miller
Dennis Rogers
Ellen Dingman
Jordan Smith
and any others that have been a part
of the RLT Family.





RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE

2021-2022 SEASON OF *NEW HEIGHTS*

As You Like It

July 23 - 31, 2021

Beehive:

The 60's Musical

August 12 - 28, 2021

The Velocity of Autumn

September 17 - October 3, 2021

Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"

October 23 - 31, 2021

Pride and Prejudice

February 4 - 20, 2022

Junie B. Jones is Not a Crook

March 18 - 27, 2022

In the Heights

June 3 - 19, 2022



Thank you for joining us Under the Stars!



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