RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE

26/27 SEASON

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

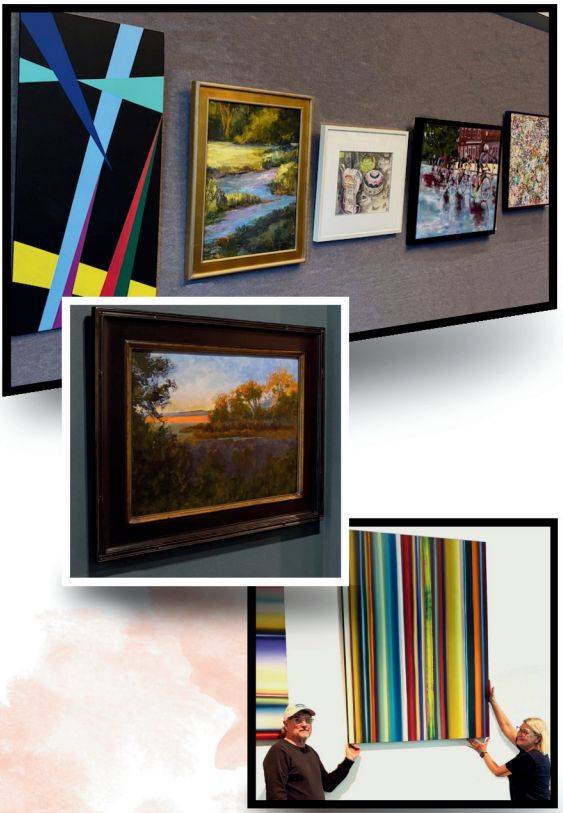


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RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE

presents

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

BY TOM STOPPARD

Directed by Jeri Lynn Schulke

Scenic Design by Sonya Leigh Drum

Costume Design by Jenny Mitchell

Lighting Design by Darby E. Madewell

Original Compositions and Sound Design by Louis Landry

Fight Choreography by David McClutchey

Props Design by Lora McIntosh

Stage Management by Lauren Montana

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)

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Raleigh Arts

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is supported by United Arts Wake County, as well as the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

UNITED ARTS WAKE COUNTY

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Welcome to Raleigh Little Theatre!

This year, RLT is celebrating 90 years of bringing people together through theatre and theatre education. We were honored to receive a proclamation from the Mayor and City Council marking this extraordinary milestone. We have it displayed in the lobby so I hope you will take time to read it. It belongs to every volunteer, artist, student, donor, and audience member who has helped make RLT a place where creativity is explored without expectation.

I believe *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is Tom Stoppard at his best: smart, funny, and, at times, surprising. Since his death in November 2025, producing his work feels like the appropriate way to honor him. Stoppard earned his place among our most important modern playwrights by using wit, curiosity, and a love of language to explore questions we all ask. Where do we fit? What happens next? Why does it sometimes feel as if everyone else knows something we don't?

This play was brought to life by an amazing group of artists who collaborated, struggled, questioned, and laughed together. They listened to one another, worked through difficult decisions, and kept searching until they found ***their*** way to tell this story. These experiences are part of making theatre, sure, but they are also part of being human. Like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, we do not always know exactly where we are going, but the exploration is more meaningful when we share it with others.

Thank you for being here and for being part of RLT's ongoing story.

Enjoy the show!



Michele Weathers
Producing Artistic Director



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North Carolina Arts Council

A message from your North Carolina Arts Council.

CAST

Rosencrantz
Parker Perry

Guildenstern
Gabriel Krut

The Player
David Hudson

Hamlet
Jackson Leo Gemborys

Claudius
Erik Lars Myers

Gertrude
Amanda Lee Scherle

Polonius
Matthew Kinney

Ophelia
Elena Willis

Tragedians
Allen Dew-Adorno
Sydney Knoll
Joey Lloyd
Merry Moore
Shaun Schneider
Brendan Shore

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director
Jeri Lynn Schulke

Scenic Designer
Sonya Leigh Drum

Costume Designer/ Costume Shop Manager
Jenny Mitchell

Production Manager/Technical Director
Dennis R. Berfield

Lighting Designer
Darby E. Madewell

Composer/ Sound Designer
Louis Landry

Fight Choreographer
David McClutchey

Props Designer
Lora McIntosh

Stage Manager
Lauren Montana

Dialect Consultant
Rebecca Bossen

Assistant Director
Sam Howard

Assistant Sound Designer
Amy Riggs

Assistant Stage Managers
Chloe Allen
Whitney Glomb

Fight Captain
Jackson Leo Gemborys

Magic Consultant
Gabriel Krut

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rosencrantz: So, we've got a letter which explains everything.

If only it were that easy! Tom Stoppard's classic *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is one of the best-known examples of Theater of the Absurd, a genre of theater which began post-WWII. The world reeling from war and devastation, this form of theater sprang from the feeling that traditional values and human reason were meaningless. Coined in the 1960s, Theater of the Absurd included plays by Samuel Beckett (*Endgame, Waiting for Godot*, and others) and Eugene Ionèsco (*Rhinoceros, The Chairs*, etc.) as well as work by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. All these works grapple with the ideas of disillusionment, existentialism, and meaninglessness.

Stoppard certainly took inspiration from these writers and their work. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* sprang first from a challenge Stoppard's literary agent gave him: to write a play tracking two minor characters in Hamlet on their journey to England. The original idea included having the duo arrive in England and meet King Lear, smashing two well-known Shakespeare plays into one. Ultimately, Stoppard jettisoned King Lear but kept the idea of bending and blending reality.

Absurdism in *R&G* takes many forms: the coin-tossing game, their interchangeable identities, their circular and nonsensical dialogue, and the duo's sense of purposelessness all add an absurdist quality to their story. Almost to highlight the absurdity, there are also moments of comedy and slapstick such as the tennis match,

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

the duo's verbal dexterity, and their acting out or "rehearsals" of conversations. All this (and more!) adds up to the play's tragicomedy nature.

First produced at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1966, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was picked up by the National Theater when Kenneth Tynnan, the theater's literary manager, read a rave review of the Fringe production. It premiered in April 1967 at the Old Vic, to further acclaim and set Stoppard's playwriting career in motion.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, a beloved, classic play in the theater canon, reached its 50th anniversary in 2017. The play's timeless themes and much-loved characters will continue to live on as long as we keep asking "What does it all add up to?" (Guildenstern).

Jeri Lynn Schulke
Director



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CAST BIOGRAPHIES



ALLEN DEW-ADORNO (Tragedian) is in his first show with Raleigh Little Theatre! He is a graduate from UNCP's Art Department and is currently pursuing a masters in Counseling. He started dancing when he was 2 and became obsessed with being on the stage since then. It has been a couple of years since he has been on the stage, and he couldn't have done it without his wife, who he thanks for supporting and believing in him.



JACKSON LEO GEMBORYS (Hamlet) is an educator and actor based in Durham, NC. He is thrilled to be making his Raleigh Little Theatre debut as Hamlet in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Jackson holds a B.A. in Theatre from Greensboro College, and an M.A. in Theatre from Louisiana Tech University. Some of Jackson's favorite roles in the past include Truman Capote in *Tru*, Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Sid Sorokin in *The Pajama Game*.



DAVID HUDSON (The Player) is a graduate of Arts Educational Schools of London. He has worked with many local theatre companies, including: Theater in the Park, Burning Coal, Deep Dish, REP, and The Justice Theatre Project. He can be found on BlueSky: @dbhudson.bsky.social

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



MATTHEW KINNEY (Polonius) is excited to return to Raleigh Little Theatre after appearing in last season's production of *Witch*. Other recent productions include *Company* and *Appropriate* at North Raleigh Arts & Creative Theatre and *Un/NAMED* with Burning Coal. Previous productions in New York and North Carolina include *Taming of the Shrew, Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Real Thing, The MacGuffin, Hay Fever*, and many more. Love to his support team, Michelle, Elliott, Ivy, and Ada.



SYDNEY KNOLL (Tragedian) hails from Annapolis, Maryland, and is stepping back into acting after a brief creative hiatus as a member of the Tragedians. She graduated with a minor in acting from the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, where she specialized in devised theatre and Comedia D'elle Arte. She has danced, sang, and cried her way from the UK's Georgian Theatre Royale, to Baltimore's Hippodrome Theater- and now to the Raleigh Little Theatre where she is very excited to show her Shakespeare-adjacent talents! And no- for future reference, she does not know any of the Greek plays.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



GABRIEL KRUT (Guildenstern) is excited to be on stage for the first time since moving to Raleigh in 2021. He studied Theatre at the University of Notre Dame, playing roles including Algernon *(The Importance of Being Earnest)* and Jay Gatsby *(The Great Gatsby)*. While there, he met his now-fiancée, who encouraged him to audition for this production. He wishes to thank the Raleigh Little Theatre team, the cast, and his mother for fostering his love of live performance.



JOEY LLOYD (Tragedian) is absolutely enthused to be on the Raleigh Little Theatre stage for the first time! She graduated from The University of Rhode Island, with a BFA in theatre in 2024. When not acting or volunteering backstage, Joey can usually be found reading a book or watching horror movies. Psalm 46:1



MERRY MOORE (Tragedian) is a native North Carolinian, based in Raleigh. Moore's experience has been primarily in film, most recently *It Happened One Weekend* (streaming on Amazon Prime). When she is not auditioning, Moore is taking classes at Moonlight Stage Company and cuddling with her two dogs, Ellie and Henry.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



ERIK LARS MYERS (Claudius) received a BFA in Performing Arts from Alfred University approximately one thousand years ago, and has acted and directed in both plays and musical performances semi-professionally ever since. His most recent work has been in the role of Ebeneezer Scrooge in *A Southern Christmas Carol* and Aunt Augusta in a pandemic reading of *The Importance of Being Earnest* with Enigma Theater Company. He is the Managing Director of Raleigh's The Justice Theater Project.



PARKER PERRY (Rosencrantz) is overjoyed to be returning to the theatre that raised him! Previous credits at Raleigh Little Theatre include *Witch* (Cuddy), *Bat Boy: The Musical* (Edgar), and *Spamalot* (Herbert), along with *Pippin* at UNC-Greensboro (Pippin). He would like to thank the brilliant cast and creative team, Jeri Lynn for the incredible opportunity, his always supportive family, his partner in everything Leanne, and you for supporting the arts!



AMANDA LEE SCHERLE (Gertrude) has 25 plus years of experience in classic theater, improv, stand-up comedy, and sketch comedy. She acts as a standardized patient with The American Board of Anesthesiology and the American Board of Emergency Medicine. She's a published poet, cottage baker, trivia host, emcee, and a board member of The Justice Theater Project. Deeply in love with both Stoppard and Shakespeare, Amanda is stoked to be bringing Gertrude alive for a new audience.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



SHAUN SCHNEIDER (Tragedian) is excited to be returning to the stage at RLT after a long hiatus - he last appeared as Tootles in the 2008 (!) production of *Peter Pan*. More recently, Shaun has performed with Theatre in the Park, Burning Coal Theatre Company, and Scrap Paper Shakespeare. Shaun studied dramatic art at UNC Chapel Hill, and continued his training at Moonlight Stage Company, where he now works as an acting teacher and audition coach. When not on stage, Shaun also works as a yoga teacher and an instructor at Orangetheory Fitness. He would like to thank his wife, Lucy, for her unwavering love and support.



BRENDAN SHORE (Tragedian) is so excited to be appearing in his second show here at Raleigh Little Theatre! Having just graduated from High Point University and appearing in shows like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Lone Star*, Brendan is incredibly grateful to continue his post-grad career in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. He would like to thank his family and friends for their support and encouragement!



ELENA WILLIS (Ophelia) is beyond excited to be a part of this production. This is her favorite play! You may have recently seen her in North Raleigh Arts & Creative Theatre's production of *Company*. Her other prior experience includes being in the ensemble of the new musical *All Aboard the Watchtower* by Becket Patterson and Izzy Hedges and Raleigh Little Theatre's *Cinderella*.

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PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

JERI LYNN SCHULKE (Director) is a Triangle-based actor, director, and producer. Directing credits at Raleigh Little Theatre include *Witch* and *Pride & Prejudice*. Other recent directing credits: *Appropriate* (North Raleigh Arts & Creative Theatre), *Art* (RedBird Theater), *Spring Awakening* (Kenan Theater). Jeri Lynn has also acted in and produced numerous productions throughout the Triangle. She received her MFA from UNC-Chapel Hill, is co-founder of RedBird Theater, and led five seasons at ArtsCenter Stage as the Producing Artistic Director.

SONYA LEIGH DRUM (Scenic Designer) is a theatrical designer, visual artist, and arts educator based in Raleigh. For the past 27 years, Sonya has designed scenery for universities and professional theatre companies big and small. Sonya is pleased to be working once again with The Raleigh Little Theatre. Memorable designs for RLT include *The Color Purple, Misery, A Number, The Mountaintop*, and *Blood Done Sign My Name*. When not designing, Sonya works as a Magnet Visual Arts Specialist for the WCPSS.

JENNY MITCHELL (Costume Designer/ Costume Shop Manager) brings all her experience to Raleigh Little Theatre to work with volunteers to create the costumes for each production. Past work includes designs for *Hadestown: Teen Edition, Witch, The Hobbit,* and *Hairspray.* She is thrilled to contribute to this production and help bring its visual world to life.

DARBY E. MADEWELL (Lighting Designer) (she/they) is thrilled to be a part of this fabulous production team and working with Raleigh Little Theatre again! Recent credits include lighting design for *Witch* and *Hadestown: Teen Edition* at RLT. Darby is an interdisciplinary artist with a decade of experience creating theatre as a lighting designer, projections designer, and stage manager. www.darbyemadewell.com

LOUIS LANDRY (Composer and Sound Designer) is a performer, composer and instructor based in Durham since 2011. He has taught private lessons at High Strung School of Music for 13 years. Louis has collaborated on productions like Manbites Dog Theater's *Paris 76* and *The Best Of Enemies*; Honest Pint's *Small Mouth Sounds*; RedBird's *The Night Before Christmas Carol, Revolution* and *The Price*; and Switch Theater's *Pirates! A Boy At Sea*. He made his RLT debut playing Guitar 2 in the pit of 2024's *Kinky Boots*. More at www.LouisLandryMusic.com

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

DAVID MCCLUTCHEY (Fight Choreographer) has been a fight choreographer in the Triangle for the past 25 years, with hundreds of credits in professional, educational and community productions. For the past 15 years, David has loved being the Director of Theater at St. David's School in Raleigh. Thanks to Jeri Lynn for welcoming me into this production!

LORA MCINTOSH (Props Designer) is thrilled to be a part of Raleigh Little Theatre's production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*! She thanks the creative team and cast for all the hard work everyone has poured into this project! It has been an honor for her to work with this wonderful group!

LAUREN MONTANA (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back on headset for another amazing show at Raleigh Little Theatre! She's recently stage managed *Witch* (RLT), been ASM for *School of Rock* (RLT), *Proof* (NRACT), and *The Color Purple* (RLT), as well as on crews and SM teams for various productions at her alma mater, New York University. Shouts to Mama, Chuck, Madge, Jack, and Bean for literally everything. And shouts to YOU for supporting the arts and community theatre!

REBECCA BOSSEN (Dialect Consultant) is a dialect coach, theatre educator, playwright, and performer whose work has been seen in venues across the country. She has taught several classes for Raleigh Little Theatre, including Acting, Teens on Stage, and Dialects, as well as serving as dialect coach for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *One Man Two Guvnors*. Education: Duke University (BA), Northwestern University (MA), Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Advanced Certificate in Voice Studies).
www.rebeccabossen.com

SAM HOWARD (Assistant Director) took several Raleigh Little Theatre Creative Team Workshops over the years and couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of the team. In their free time they're planning an imaginary (for now) immersive theater experience based on *Waiting for Godot* and trying not to let startup cliches bleed into their creative work too much (sadly, "if Shakespeare and Beckett had a baby" for explaining this play to unsuspecting family members has stuck).

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

AMY RIGGS (Assistant Sound Designer) (she/her) is a Durham musician and performer who is pumped as heck to be making her Raleigh Little Theatre debut working on *R&G*. Her previous theatre credits are songwriting, music directing, performing, and making fake baby noises in productions of *Marat/Sade, The Miracle Worker, The Crucible*, and Stone Soup's upcoming production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. She thanks her partners Dustin and Anni, and Louis for reaching out. She can do an eight foot vertical leap and has great legs.

CHLOE ALLEN (Assistant Stage Manager) has enjoyed two years of volunteering with Raleigh Little Theatre, having worked as a props crew member, Assistant Props Designer, Props Crew Supervisor, and now an Assistant Stage Manager. She holds an M.A. in Media Production and Cultural Analysis from NC State University and hopes to continue her academic career studying media communication. Outside of theatre, Chloe enjoys watching figure skating and is a proud clogger, most recently dancing with the Pack Clogging Club at NC State.

WHITNEY GLOMB (Assistant Stage Manager) is excited to be an Assistant Stage Manager for the first time! She has previously worked on the stage crew of other Raleigh Little Theatre productions such as *Cinderella, School of Rock, Witch* and more! She is beyond grateful for the friends she has made while volunteering at the theatre, they have played a big part in making North Carolina feel like home.

KRISTINA BRUNELLE (Team Dynamics Strategist) is an Organizational Strategist and the founder of Momaging Made Easy, where she equips parents - especially moms - with the tools and confidence to guide their young actors through the often-overwhelming world of auditions, self-tapes, and casting. Her professional work focuses on helping leaders and teams thrive through purposeful conversations that build trust and connection, while her entrepreneurial work helps families navigate the business side of show business without losing their sanity. By night, she's an avid theatre-goer (likely in a row near you), and always grateful for the chance to support incredible casts and crews. Here's to a spectacular performance - on with the show! MomagingMadeEasy.com

RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

MICHELE WEATHERS (Producing Artistic Director has built her career bringing people and communities together through the performing arts. Before joining Raleigh Little Theatre, she served in senior leadership roles at Carolina Ballet, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Barrington Stage Company, and North Carolina Theatre. Her New York credits include *In the Heights, High Fidelity, Orson's Shadow,* and *Red Light Winter*. In 2025, she served as a consulting producer for La Vie Productions on the multi-city national tour of *Austen's Pride*, a new musical inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The tour launched at STAGES St. Louis before traveling to cities across the eastern United States. A Meredith College graduate, Michele has participated in artEquity and Emerging Equity workshops and is a member of the League of Professional Theatre Women. She received Triangle Business Journal's Women in Business Leadership Award in 2019 and was named to Raleigh Magazine's inaugural Impact 50 in 2024. She is the proud mother of Peyton Rose, a Michigan State University sophomore. Go Green! Michele is especially proud of RLT's 90 years of extraordinary history and the vital place it continues to hold in our community.

DENNIS R. BERFIELD (Production Manager/Technical Director) is from South Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He received degrees in Theater and Communication Studies at the Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, and a Masters of Fine Arts in Scenic Design and Technology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Dennis has worked at various regional and off-Broadway theaters as a Scenic Artist, Carpenter, Master Carpenter, Scenic Designer, Assistant Technical Director, and Scenic Coordinator. After working professionally for a number of years, Dennis became an adjunct professor at Millikin University in Decatur, IL, and went on to become the Technical Director at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania.

JENNY MITCHELL see Production Team biographies.

RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

TERRA HODGE (Director of Education) is the Director of Education at Raleigh Little Theatre. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre Education from North Carolina Central University and her Master of Arts degree in Media Arts from Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus. Prior to joining RLT, Terra was the Theatre Arts teacher at Culbreth Middle School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She was named the 2017-2018 Culbreth Teacher of the Year and was named an Honor Teacher for Chapel Hill – Carrboro City Schools. Terra has worked as a teaching artist, actor, and director with many local theatre companies. She is the director of Agape Theatre Project's production of *Crowns* that was featured at the 2024 International Black Theatre Festival in Winston Salem, NC.

HELEN NOWLAN-WALLS (Development Manager) spent most of her life in the UK and Canada and moved to NC in 2023. She has been working in non-profit development for more than 20 years and has spent her career focussed on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She has a BA in English & Theatre and is thrilled to be returning to her theatre education and performance roots at RLT. Outside of work, Helen can be found driving her kids to their various rehearsals, wrangling her basset hound Daphne Honeybutt, watching murder mysteries, and playing video games whenever time allows it. Helen has been struck by lightning twice and hit by a double decker bus - all while riding a bicycle. Helen is no longer allowed to ride a bicycle.

CANDACE SPENCER (Education Programs Specialist) is an accomplished African American theatre professional passionate about nurturing young artists. She holds a BA in Theatre from Greensboro College and an MFA in Theatre Performance from the University of Louisville. Candace has expanded her artistic perspective through a six-month study abroad program in London, where she explored theatre and dance. While pursuing her MFA, Candace gained four years of experience teaching introductory acting classes to undergraduates, and she developed on-camera acting skills during her undergraduate studies. She is skilled in drama instruction, on-stage and on-camera acting, and stage directing. Her dedication to youth development is not only evident in her teaching experience, but also in her work with young artists at a summer camp in Los Angeles, California.

RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

MORGAN HARRIS (Box Office & Front of House Supervisor) is a Raleigh, NC native who has been involved in theatre in one capacity or another since elementary school. In 2017, she started volunteering at Raleigh Little Theatre and quickly began asking what else she could do. In 2019, she became the Special Events Intern and a Box Office Associate. During her time at RLT, she has been recognized with two Al D. Wolfheimer Volunteer Awards and a Special Recognition Award. In 2026, Morgan stepped into the role of Box Office & Front of House Supervisor and looks forward to many more years with RLT!

JOEL SOREN (Interim Technical Director) is Cary resident, theater artist, theatrical director, technical director, teaching artist and designer of lighting, sound, costumes, projections, properties, puppets, and scenery for live performance. Since moving to NC in late 2019 Joel has worked with Burning Coal Theater Co., Carolina Ballet, Raleigh Little Theatre, Cary Players, Honest Pint Theater Co, the Halle Cultural Arts Center, Theater in the Park, and is also a technical contractor for the Town of Cary. Joel also has a range of past NYC directing and design credits including an exhibition for the New York Hall of Science as well as off-broadway and off-off broadway in NYC (BFA: NYU)

ELSPETH (ELLY) MCCLANAHAN (Assistant Costume Shop Manager) is a proud Navy brat. She earned her bachelor's degree in Theatre, with an emphasis in costume design and costume history, from Radford University. She has more than 35 years of professional experience in theatrical costuming, spanning work in costume design, costume shop operations, wardrobe, and crafts. She has worked in both Equity and non-Equity theatres, as well as amusement parks and touring productions. Elly's diverse background and lifelong dedication to the art of costuming have given her a broad perspective on the many facets of theatrical production.

LINDSEY WYATT (Costume Shop Assistant) (she/her) is a costume shop assistant, a backstage volunteer, and a lead usher. So basically, she's always here! She believes theater is for everyone, and she's glad to support RLT volunteers and patrons through the costume department.

RALEIGH LITTLE THEATRE STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

MAGGIE GINA (Administrative Intern) is a senior at NC State majoring in Business Administration with a minor in arts entrepreneurship. Since she first picked up a trumpet at age 9, she was immediately drawn to a world of music and creativity, helping her realize she needed the arts to be forever a part of her life! Maggie is very excited to be a part of RLT and is grateful for the chance to gain real-world experience in marketing/administration and see first hand what it means to bring a performance to life. When not in the theater, Maggie can usually be found spending time with friends, studying, or in and out of practice rooms.



DRAMATURGY NOTES: LIVING IN THE LOOP: THE SCRIPT AND STAGING OF STOPPARD'S EXTRAS

In a standard script, characters drive the plot. But in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the characters are trapped inside a script they didn't write, forced to execute a tragic plot they don't understand. Stoppard's dramatic experiment takes William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and turns it inside out, focusing entirely on two minor courtiers who are completely out of their depth. In this text, a fundamental question emerges: How does a director's approach align with Tom Stoppard's original text-based intentions?

Director Jeri Lynn Schulke brings this text to life by building the show around one central concept: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are actually dead from the very beginning, caught in an endless loop trying to figure out how they got there. Stoppard establishes this structural friction early on with a sequence of coin tossing where the coin lands on "heads" eighty-five times in a row. This isn't just a comedic gag; it is a script mechanic showing that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been pulled out of the natural world and trapped inside the rigid gears of a predetermined tragedy. To reinforce this inescapable cycle, scenic designer Sonya Drum built an M.C. Escher-inspired layout full of multi-level platforms and four separate exits, making the physical stage feel like a literal maze.

Stoppard constantly plays with language to show how the characters try to pass the time while waiting for their destiny. A prime example is the "Questions Game," a rapid-fire verbal tennis match where the characters can only speak in questions, agonizing over whether a simple greeting like "Well, I can tell you I'm sick to death of it" counts as a statement. To capture this mix of heavy existential dread and laugh-out-loud humor, the production intentionally plays this game with the ferocious speed and energy of a real tennis match because that is how it is written.

DRAMATURGY NOTES: LIVING IN THE LOOP: THE SCRIPT AND STAGING OF STOPPARD'S EXTRAS

The text highlights a sharp contrast between the duo's personalities, pairing Guildenstern's gloom and need for logic with Rosencrantz's upbeat optimism. Yet despite these differences, the two remain fundamentally interchangeable because neither ever takes control of his own fate. When characters from Shakespeare's original *Hamlet* burst unexpectedly onto the stage from different levels, they completely throw off our protagonists, forcing them to awkwardly copy the grand, poetic style of Elizabethan language just to fit in.

Ultimately, the script is a masterclass in dramatic irony. We know exactly how their story ends because Shakespeare wrote it four hundred years ago, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spend the play looking for a purpose that will never arrive. Instead of traditional dramatic climaxes, the production uses seamless lighting—like a dramatic spotlight on the characters whenever recurring lines pop up—to keep the story moving in a continuous loop. When they finally accept their fate at the script's inevitable conclusion, Guildenstern delivers one of the play's most haunting lines: "Now you see me, now you don't." Together, these inventive choices transform Stoppard's brilliant text into an engaging, visual journey through fate, free will, and the absolute absurdity of life.

- Jared Rivera and Dr. Mary Russell

CREWS AND VOLUNTEERS

Raleigh Little Theatre is grateful to the following individuals that have invested their time, skills, and expertise as part of our community of volunteers between September 27, 2025 - September 27, 2026.

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