

A fun-filled musical based on
Mo Willems' beloved children's books

**DON'T
LET THE
PIGEON
DRIVE THE
BUS!**

THE MUSICAL!



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DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS!

THE MUSICAL!

BASED ON THE BOOK

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

BY **Mo Willems**

PUBLISHED BY **Hyperion Books for Children**

SCRIPT BY **Mo Willems** AND **Mr. Warburton**

LYRICS BY **Mo Willems**

MUSIC BY **Deborah Wicks La Puma**

DRAMATURGY BY **Megan Alritz**

WITH

**Taylor Baker, Bryan J. Black, Joanie Brosseau-Rubald, Alex Campbell,
Randy Chalmers, Michaela Murray, Brian Watson, Matt Zambrano**

Stage Managers: **Wayne Breyer, Harper Hadley**

SCENIC DESIGN BY
Lisa M. Orzolek

COSTUME DESIGN BY
Kevin Copenhaver

LIGHTING DESIGN BY
Charles R. MacLeod

SOUND DESIGN BY
Alex Billman

MUSIC DIRECTION BY
Jordan Ortman

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
Diana Dresser

PUPPET DESIGN BY
Chris Campbell

PUPPETRY SPECIALIST
Aretta Baumgartner

CASTING BY
Grady Soapes, CSA

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT BY
Matthew Campbell

DIRECTED BY **Allison Watrous**

This play was commissioned by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and was first produced at the Kennedy Center during the 2019-2020 season.

DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS! THE MUSICAL! is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com

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CAST

Pigeon.....	Bryan J. Black
Hot Dog Vendor/Business Man	Randy Chalmers
City Worker/Duckling/Bus Puppet Dream Ballet/Puppy/Puppet Captain	Matt Zambrano
Bus Driver.....	Alex Campbell
Little Old Lady	Joanie Brosseau-Rubald
Teenager	Taylor Baker
Swing/Dance Captain	Michaela Murray
Swing.....	Brian Watson

The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers of the United States.

Stage Manager	Wayne Breyer
Assistant Stage Manager	Harper Hadley

DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS! THE MUSICAL!
will be performed without an intermission

WHO'S WHO

ACTING COMPANY



TAYLOR BAKER (Teenager) (She/Her) is thrilled to be making her DCPA debut! Credits: vocalist/dancer in “An Evening with Sutton Foster and Kelli O’Hara” with the Colorado Symphony (Boettcher Hall), Lily St. Regis in *Annie* (Town Hall Arts); Minnie Fay in *Hello Dolly*, Virtue/US Reno in *Anything Goes*, Edna/US Margo in *Bright Star*, Kate/US Ado Annie in *OK!*, Swing in *Scrooge*, and Martha Cox in *High School Musical!* (Candlelight Dinner Playhouse). Training: BFA in musical theatre and dance minor from the University of Northern Colorado. Endless thanks to her family for supporting her all the way from CA and to her friends for always believing in her. IG: @Taylorry.Bakerrr



BRYAN J. BLACK (Pigeon) (He/Him) is WAY too excited to be back at DCPA! At the DCPA: *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors*. Select credits include: *Odd Squad Live!* (national tour), *Witch* (BETC), *Baskerville* (Lone Tree Arts), *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Eleventh Hour Theatre Company). TV/Commercial: “Gold Rush” (CO Lottery), “Your Stuff’s Happy Place” (SmartStop Storage). Training: BFA in Musical Theatre and Minor in Music Composition, UArts (RIP). Thanks to crew and cast, C (promise promise), and everyone who made this birdtastic show possible - including YOU for supporting live theatre!



JOANIE BROSSAU-RUBALD (Little Old Lady) was last seen at DCPA in *Goodnight Moon*. Other regional credits include *Violet* (Aurora Fox Theatre); *1950’s Radio Hour*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Damn Yankees*, *Once upon a Mattress*, and others (Arvada Center); *Evita* (BDT Stage, Country Dinner Playhouse, Candlelight Dinner Playhouse); *Little Shop of Horrors* (BDT Stage, Parker PACE Center); *Alexander... Bad Day* (Lone Tree Arts Center), and dozens of main stage and TYA productions at BDT Stage in Boulder. Joanie is the director and founder of Miss Joanie Drama, drama camps and workshops for elementary age children.



ALEX CAMPBELL (Bus Driver) (She/Her). At the DCPA: *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"* and *Little Red*. Regional and Colorado credits include: *Furlough's Paradise*, *Cullud Wattah* (Curious Theatre Company); *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* (Great River Shakespeare Festival); *Men on Boats*, *As You Like It*, *The Cherry Orchard* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre); *King Hedley II*, *Where We Stand*, and *The Bluest Eye* (Theatreworks); *Cinderella*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, and *In the Heights* (The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center); and *Hairspray!* (Performance Now! Theatre Company). Alex is also a local Teaching

Artist and an aspiring Intimacy Director. Training: MFA, UConn.



RANDY CHALMERS (Hot Dog Vendor/Business Man) is returning to the Randy Weeks Conversatory Theatre after most recently portraying Bob and Others in the Arvada Center for the Arts/ Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center co-production of *Come From Away*. At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon*. He has performed on stages across the US and Canada, performing with symphonies alongside Broadway's Capathia Jenkins (*Newsies*, *The Civil War*, and *Caroline, or Change*). Other Credits: u/s Lola in *Kinky Boots* (Arvada Center), Jamal in *Escape to Margaritaville* (Theatre SilCo), Curtis in *Sister Act*

(Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center), Narrator/EI Gallo in *The Fantasticks* (Town Hall Arts Center), Ozie/Ruby in *The Scottsboro Boys* (Vintage Theatre), Seymour in *Little Shop Of Horrors* (Theatreworks), and Vocalist/Himself in *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Town Hall Arts Center). @ranran426



MICHAELA MURRAY (Swing/Dance Captain) (She/Her). At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon*, *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in A Play!"* (Piggie), *Little Red*, and *Theater of the Mind*. Her most recent local credits include: *A Case for Black Girls Setting Central Park on Fire* (Rottweiler) and *Chasing Breadcrumbs* (Gwen) (Local Theater Company); *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Little Eva) (Arvada Center). Regional work includes: *Once On This Island* (Town Hall Arts Center); *GYPSY* (June) and *Drowsy Chaperone* (Trix the Aviatrix) (Vintage Theatre). She would like to thank friends and family for their constant support!



BRIAN WATSON (Swing) (They/He). At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon*. Local credits: *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812* (Arvada Center); *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, and *Around the World in 80 Days* (Aurora Fox); *The Last Session* and *All Shook Up* (Town Hall Arts Center). California credits: *A Christmas Carol* and *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure* (Sacramento Theatre Company); *The Secret Garden* and *110 in the Shade* (42nd Street Moon); *Enron* and *Macbeth* (Capital Stage). Training: B.A. Theatre Arts (CSU Sacramento)



MATT ZAMBRANO (City Worker/Duckling/Bus Puppet Dream Ballet/ Puppy/Puppet Captain) (He/Him). At the DCPA: *Elephant & Piggie's "We're in a Play!"*, *Little Red*, *The Liar*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Other TYA credits include: *Junie B. Jones The Musical* (Director, Arvada Center), *Pete the Cat/Tomás & the Library Lady* (Director, Denver Children's Theater), *The City Dog and The Prairie Dog* (Director, Creede Repertory Theater), *Destination Everywhere* (Broken Box Mime Theater). Podcasts: "The Story Pirates," "Circle Round," "The Get Up Show!". Special Awards/Training:

MFA, National Theatre Conservatory.

PLAYWRIGHT

MO WILLEMS is all about letting imaginations run wild. He is the beloved artist and author behind #1 NYT bestselling and Caldecott Honors-awarded picture books like *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and the *Knuffle Bunny* series as well as his celebrated *Elephant & Piggie* early reader series, for which he's won two Theodor Seuss Geisel Awards, five Geisel Honors, and an Eisner Award. Mo's title *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* was the inaugural induction into the Picture Book Hall of Fame. Mo has published more than 70 children's books — more than 50 of them NYT bestselling titles — with over 26 foreign language translations. In addition to his Caldecott Honors, he garnered six Emmy Awards for his writing on Sesame Street, where he began his remarkable career. Mo also has created three television specials, six animated series, seven musical adaptations, five licensed theater productions, and three touring exhibits. Mo loves playing in new sandboxes. He regularly collaborates with other globally renowned artists and organizations to create bright and innovative new works in the worlds of classical music, opera, comedy concerts, dance, painting, and digital content. Mo's art has been exhibited around the world, including in major solo retrospectives at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and The New York Historical in NYC. Over the last decade, he has become the most produced playwright of Theatre for Young Audiences in the U.S., having written or co-written four musicals based on his books. In 2023, Mo co-founded the Hidden Pigeon Company to extend the reach of his beloved characters and stories across multiple platforms. Mo Willems is a former child.

MR. WARBURTON is the executive producer of Disney Jr's hit series *Muppet Babies*, which has introduced Kermit, Piggy, Fozzie, Gonzo, Animal, and a brand-new Muppet named Summer Penguin, to a whole new generation of kids. But Mr. Warburton is best known as the creator of the action-packed original series *Codename: Kids Next Door*, which ran on Cartoon Network for six seasons and inspired kids to start their own KND sectors worldwide. Over the years Mr. Warburton has helped produce, design and direct many other animated shows including Disney's *Fish Hooks*, *The 7D* and *Pepper Ann* as well as Cartoon Network's *Sheep in*

The Big City, Nickelodeon's *Doug* and MTV's *Beavis and Butthead*. He's also worked on tons of animated commercials, episodes of *Schoolhouse Rock* and *Saturday Night Live's TV Funhouse*. Mr. Warburton also likes to make books. His first picture book, *1000 Times No*, was published by HarperCollins to super nice reviews, and an animated version was made for Nick Jr. Recent projects include collaborating with his best pal, children's book author Mo Willems, on a musical based on Mo's best-selling book *Don't Let The Pigeon Drive The Bus!* for the Kennedy Center as well as an animated production of *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Opera Experience*.

MUSIC

DEBORAH WICKS LA PUMA is a composer, music director and orchestrator. Deborah is one of the most produced Theatre for Young Audiences artists working today. Some of her most popular musicals include *Ella Enchanted* (based on the book by Gail Carson Levine), *Oliverio: A Brazilian Twist*, and *Einstein is a Dummy* with playwright Karen Zacarias, and the Off-Broadway hit *She Persisted* (based on the book by Chelsea Clinton) with playwright Adam Tobin. As a music director and orchestrator, she has worked with major regional theatre companies across the country, including the Guthrie, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. She received her MFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and her bachelor's degree from Stanford University. Her honors include the Harold Oaks Award for Sustained Excellence in TYA, an Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best Family Musical, the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, an NEA New American Works Grant, two Parents' Choice Awards, and a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Musical Adaptation. A proud Mexican-American and "Navy brat" who grew up in Brazil, Portugal and California, La Puma is a member of TYA/USA, ASCAP and The Dramatists Guild. Mother to three daughters and Mimi the Cat, La Puma lives in Southern California with her PR agent and loving husband, Chris.

DIRECTOR

ALLISON WATROUS (She/Her) is the DCPA Executive Director of Education and Community Engagement. Directing credits include: *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, *Little Red*, *Goodnight Moon*, *Corduroy*, *Snowy Day*, *Shakespeare in the Parking Lot*, and *Cult Following* (DCPA). Other theatres: *Bus Stop* (Arvada Center); *Brooklyn Laundry*, *What the Constitution Means to Me*, *The Effect*, and *The Revolutionists* (BETC); *Anna Purna* and *Three Sisters* (Off Square); *Big Love*, *Trojan Women*, and *Constellations* (University of Denver); *Eurydice*, *The Laramie Project*, *Wintertime*, *The Wolves*, and *Arcadia* (Denver School of the Arts). Acting credits: *Just Like Us*, *Jackie & Me*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Scapin* (DCPA) and *Girls Only* (DCPA Cabaret). Other theatres: *Astronomical Sunset* (Curious Theatre Company); *Crimes of the Heart*, *Talley's Folly*, *Savage in Limbo*, *Gideon's Knot*, and *Heisenberg* (Sis Tryst). Training: MFA National Theatre Conservatory.

CREATIVE TEAM

ARETTA BAUMGARTNER (Puppetry Specialist) specializes in puppetry, mask, and movement. She's been a professional puppeteer since 1992, and has presented hundreds of workshops, master classes, and keynotes at arts education events all over the country. Aretta served multiple terms as President of the Board of Directors for the Puppeteers of America and as long-time Education and Advocacy Director at Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts. She performs regularly as a puppeteer, actor, and backing vocalist. Aretta is dedicated to using puppetry and theatre as tools to unlock potential, passion, and story in every human she meets. arettabaumgartner.com

ALEX BILLMAN (Sound Designer) is a nerd and lover of stories in all forms. Billman started as the Sound and Technology Supervisor at the DCPA in 2021. Design work includes: *Drag Queen Magic* (Local Theater Company), *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* (DCPA Cabaret), *Waiting for Godot* (Bas Bleu Theatre Company), *Where Did We Sit on the Bus?* (Denver Center Theatre Company), and *Theater of the Mind* (Arbutus/DCPA Off-Center)

CHRIS CAMPBELL (Puppet Designer) is thrilled to join the Creative Team as Puppet Designer for *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* She has been very

fortunate to work with the brilliant Kevin Copenhaver in the DCPA Costume Crafts department for more than ten years. Before joining the DCPA, Chris spent eight years at the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, serving as Costume Designer, Costume Shop Manager, and Properties Manager. Her costume design work there was recognized with two Colorado Theatre Guild Henry Awards for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (2010) and *Man of La Mancha* (2013). Her additional design credits include work with the Nashville Ballet and the Mizel Center. Chris has also had the opportunity to work with acclaimed puppet designer Randy Carfagno at Carfagno Studios in New York City, where she further developed her passion for the artistry and craftsmanship of puppetry.

MATTHEW CAMPBELL (Production Manager) is grateful and honored to support, collaborate, and work with our brilliant and outstanding production team, shops, crews, artisans and guest artists to create extraordinary theatre. Previously a stage manager at a few stops in the mid-west as well as numerous Colorado theatres and Assistant Professor of Theatre at Brooklyn College in New York. Joined the DCPA stage management team in 2010 and after several years moved over to the production management team. Every show along the way is a favorite, but some DCPA and Off-Center highlights have been *Sweet & Lucky*, *The 12*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Animal Crackers*, *Frankenstein*, *The Book of Will*, *Rattlesnake Kate*, and *The Chinese Lady*.

KEVIN COPENHAVER (Costume Designer). At the DCPA (30+ seasons): *The Tempest*, *Somewhere, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *A Little Night Music*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Wild Fire*, *Twelfth Night*, *Goodnight Moon*, *Sweat*, *Corduroy*, *The Who's Tommy*, *The Snowy Day*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Frankenstein*, *The Christians*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Animal Crackers*, *Just Like Us*, *Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash*, *The Whale*, *Dracula*, *Mama Hated Diesels*, *A Christmas Carol*, and many others. Other Theatres: *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Arvada Center); *Hair* (Geva Theatre Center); *Sylvia*, *The Explorer's Club*, *Passing Strange*, *Hairspray*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *The Divine Sister*, *Tommy*, *Dream a Little Dream*, *12th Night*, *Titus Andronicus*, regional premiere of *Peter and the Starcatcher* and

Love, Janis (USF). Training: BA in Theatre Design, University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali, Padua, Italy.

DIANA DRESSER (Choreographer) (She/Her). At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon* (Choreographer), *Sweet & Lucky: Echo* (Understudy/Resident Director), *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"* (Choreographer), *Emma* (Assistant Director), *A Little Night Music* (Assistant Director), *Anna Karenina*, *Sweet & Lucky*, *The Wild Party*, *All the Way*, *Jackie and Me*, *The Giver*, and *Girls Only*. Other credits include: *Ten Myths...* (Buntport Theater); *The Book Club Play*, *Our Town* (Arvada Center); *The Sound Inside*, *Frozen* (Curious Theatre); *Tiny Beautiful Things* (BETC); *The Underpants, It's a Wonderful Life* (Theatre Aspen); *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Honeymoon China* (Theatre de la Jeune Lune); and close to 50 productions at Creede Repertory Theatre. Film: *Remembering Us*, *Searching for Fortune*, *What We've Become* and *Juncture*.

CHARLES R. MACLEOD (Lighting Designer). At the DCPA (300+ productions/40 seasons): Recent designs include: *The Tempest*, *Godspeed*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, *Clyde's*, *In the Upper Room*, *As You Like It*, *Sweat*, *Native Gardens*, *One Night in Miami*, *Appoggiatura*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Lydia*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *1001*, *The 39 Steps*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Lord of the Flies*. For DCPA Cabaret: *The Other Josh Cohen*, *The Improvised Shakespeare Company®*, *Xanadu*, *First Date*, *The Secret Comedy of Women* (Denver and national tour), *The Last Five Years*, *Always...Patsy Cline*. For DCPA Education: *Corduroy*, *Goodnight Moon*. Mr. MacLeod has been a member of the Theatre Company since 1983. charlesmacleod.com

JORDAN ORTMAN (Music Director). At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon* and *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*. Recent credits: *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast* (Henry Award Best Music Direction), *Elf*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Arvada Center); *Ragtime*, *Footloose*, *Bright Star* (MSU Denver); *Spamalot*, *Wicked*, *White Christmas* (DCPA Broadway); *Manon* (Boulder

Opera); *Pirates of Penzance*, *A Grand Night For Singing*, 1776 (Performance Now); *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Chorus Line*, *Newsies* (Inspire); *The Wizard of Oz* (Ovation West). 2017-2018 Artist in Residence Coach and Pianist at Opera Colorado. Faculty member at CU Boulder and Colorado School of Mines.

LISA M. ORZOLEK (Scenic Designer). At the DCPA: (290+ productions/36+seasons) *Goodnight Moon*, *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, *Little Red* and more (DCPA Education); *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Hotter Than Egypt*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *A Doll's House* and *A Doll's House, Part 2*, *The Whistleblower*, *Native Gardens*, *The Nest*, *Tribes*, *One Night in Miami*, *Benediction*, *Shadowlands*, *Jackie & Me*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Superior Donuts*, *Othello*, *Gee's Bend*, *The Pillowman*, *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*, and more (DCTC); *Gutenberg! the Musical*, *Miss Rhythm*, *The Other Josh Cohen*, *The Improvised Shakespeare Company®*, *Xanadu*, *Forbidden Broadway*, *Girls Only*, and more (DCPA Cabaret). *Sweet & Lucky: Echo*, *Theater of the Mind* (Associate Designer), *DragOn*, *Sweet & Lucky* (2016) (DCPA Off-Center); Lisa is a Denver native and has a BFA in Scenic Design from Boston University.

GRADY SOAPES, CSA (Casting) (He/Him) is the Director of Casting and Senior Artistic Producer with the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Grady has cast over 100 DCPA productions and workshops including *Rattlesnake Kate*, *Theater of the Mind*, *The Chinese Lady*, *The Who's Tommy*, and *The Wild Party*. Choreography credits include *A Christmas Carol* (4 seasons), *Twelfth Night*, *Goodnight Moon*, *Anna Karenina*, *As You Like It*, *Drag Machine*, *Lord of the Butterflies*, *DragON* (Denver Center); *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Natasha, Pierre and...*, *Into the Woods*, *The Liar* (Arvada Center); *Comedy of Errors* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival). Grady also works as a Casting Director for Sylvia Gregory Casting where he has cast multiple commercials, TV, film, and video game projects.

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL (MTI) is one of the world's leading theatrical licensing agencies, granting theatres from around the world the rights to perform the greatest selection of musicals from

Broadway and beyond. Founded in 1952 by composer Frank Loesser and orchestrator Don Walker, MTI is a driving force in advancing musical theatre as a vibrant and engaging art form. MTI works directly with the composers, lyricists and book writers of these musicals to provide official scripts, musical materials and dynamic theatrical resources to over 100,000 professional, community and school theatres in the US and in over 150 countries worldwide. MTI is particularly dedicated to educational theatre and has created special collections to meet the needs of various types of performers and audiences. MTI's Broadway Junior® shows are 30- and 60-minute musicals for performance by elementary and middle school-aged performers, while MTI's School Editions are musicals annotated for performance by high school students. Launched in May 2025, MTI's Broadway Senior™ musicals are geared and adapted for adult performers 55 and over.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

WAYNE BREYER (Stage Manager) (He/Him) trained with the Denver Center Theatre Company as an apprentice stage manager and currently works as the production manager for Curious Theatre Company. At the DCPA: *Goodnight Moon*, *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play"*, and multiple Colorado New Play Summits. Other stage management credits: *Birthday Candles*, *Downstate*, *cullud wattah*, *The Minutes*, *On the Exhale*, *Amerikin*, *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, and *Refuge* (Curious Theatre Company); *Eddie and Dave*, *Land of Milk and Honey*, *The Whiskey Tasting*, *The Rough*, *Shockheaded Peter*, and *Everybody* (The Catamounts), and the 2025 and 2024 Henry Awards (Colorado Theatre Guild).

HARPER HADLEY (Assistant Stage Manager) (She/Her). At the DCPA: *English*, *Cowboys & East Indians*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Hot Wing King*, *Theater of the Mind*, *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, *Little Red*, Colorado New Play Summit: 2022, 2024, 2025, and *In the Upper Room*. *Topdog Underdog*, *Amerikin*, and *Truth Be Told* (Curious Theatre Company); *Democracy Cycle* and *237 Virginia Avenue* (Local Theater Company); *A Very Sordid Wedding*, *Fun Home*, *When Pigs Fly*, and *Kinky Boots* (Uptown Players) BA in Theatre, University of North Texas.

TAKING PHOTOS AT THE THEATRE

We welcome you to take photos in the theatre **before** and **after** the performance. If you post photos on social media, please credit and tag the DCPA and the design team:



@denvercenter

Director: Allison Watrous
Musical Director: Jordan Ortman
Choreographer: Diana Dresser
Scenic Designer: Lisa M. Orzolek
Costume Designer: Kevin Copenhaver
Lighting Designer: Charles R. MacLeod
Sound Designer: Alex Billman
Puppet Designer: Chris Campbell
Puppetry Specialist: Aretta Baumgartner
Casting: Grady Soapes, CSA @grayzvander
Production Manager: Matthew Campbell
Stage Management: Wayne Breyer and Harper Hadley @harper311

Photos and the video and/or audio recording during any part of the performance by any means whatsoever are **strictly prohibited**.

In addition to DCPA staff, the following crew worked on this production: Andy Bruening, Daniel Bonavich, Beau Carleton, Rowan Gabriel Crites, Matthew Dugger, Lisa Ehrle, Josie Karet, Cecilia Kastner, Amber Krimbell, Loren Martin, Joe Motzkin, Trigger Zappe.



The Director is a member of the **STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



Backstage and Ticket Services Employees are represented by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States and Canada. (or I.A.T.S.E.)



The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

How Does a Pigeon Drive a Bus?

By Suzanne Yoe

This fall, thousands of eager children will file into the Weeks Conservatory Theatre for the DCPA's Theatre for Young Audiences program. After having served more than 210,000 PreK through third grade children in its first eight years, this season's TYA production will delight a new flock of theatregoers with Mo Willems' beloved children's book, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*

But how *does* a pigeon drive a bus and how does a bus *drive* on stage?

Lisa Orzolek, Head of Scenic Design for the Denver Center Theatre Company, let us peek under the hood.

Mo Williams' stories are "simple and relatable, particularly for younger kids," said Orzolek. But his "illustrations are really about the characters and there is little to no environment," so working with director Allison Watrous, they try to create a three-dimensional setting to complement the story.

"Allison is very much interested in creating a whole world that can expand beyond the stage into the lobby," Orzolek explained. That can pose a challenge when the book's illustrations don't provide an indication of what Willems' world looks like. "He's pretty much like, 'These are the characters, this is the bus,' so it's up to the imagination of the set designer to come up with something.

"Children's theatre sometimes has a simplistic approach to the design. Instead, we want the design to be a little more realized, more dimensional and interesting, like the designs seen on the DCPA main stages."

Using the power of the imagination, a bus will appear on stage to transport characters through the story. Because Willems' illustrations are so iconic, care had to be taken in the bus design. Instead of a motorized vehicle, like a golf cart, or a unit that runs in an automated track, it "will be wheeled and people powered. We want the bus to be its own character. We may attach the back of the bus to a track to keep it from going too far downstage, but the front can have a little bit of movement and not just track straight across the stage."

The set had to accommodate actors, puppets, and puppeteers, all of which had to be factored into the design to allow for adequate space and staging. And, lest we forget, the main character is a bird who not only wants to drive a bus but, by nature, wants to fly.

"Flying will be achieved with theater magic," continued Orzolek. "I think all you need to say is the words 'I'm flying' and let the audience's imagination take off. The flying is going to be achieved with the performer who is puppeteering the pigeon to make it fly, and lights and sound will enhance this action."

This audience, she noted, flies all the time with a cape or simply flapping their arms, so they are ready to believe in magic.

"Watching a TYA show is so fulfilling because the kids get excited about everything and it's such an honest reaction," said Orzolek. "This is often the first show they've ever seen and they're so excited. It just makes you feel like, wow, I've made a difference in someone's life today, introducing them to live theatre."

A Bird's Eye View of Big Dreams

By Amanda L. Andrei

Have you ever had an ambitious dream that led you down an unexpected route?

That's the core of *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!*, an interactive comedy adapted from Mo Willems' beloved picture book that follows Pigeon, a tenacious, avian hero who is determined to get behind the wheel and take off.

"He's a little guy, and he's like, I want to drive the bus!" says director Allison Watrous about the loveable bird. "He has to navigate that it's not quite his time – and what is his time is finding his thing, and the power of curiosity in the world."

Over the course of the play, Pigeon runs into other dilemmas beyond convincing the bus driver and passengers that he's capable of driving a public vehicle. He wants to have "a thing" of his own, whether that's caring for a puppy or knowing his role in society. In short, Pigeon wants to find his place and make the world a better place – a desire that resonates with young people and the young at heart.

"There's the power of ambition, and how amazing that is, and wanting to do things in the world," remarks Watrous. "You have to find the thing that's a fit for you and authentic for you. Sometimes there are things you have to grow into, and that's okay too, because you have things on the horizon for you."

Originally published in 2003, the book *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* won multiple awards, including the Caldecott Honor for both writing and illustrating. Many years and picture books later, Pigeon's bus story (and other adventures) were adapted for the stage by Mo Willems and animation producer Tom Warburton during a residency at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

Deborah Wicks La Puma's lively jazz music accompanies the six-person cast, along with puppets, singing, and dance numbers. In 2019, the musical premiered at the Kennedy Center to enthusiastic audiences.

"It's so incredible for young people to come to the theater, see themselves onstage, and see a story come to life so fully," explains Watrous, who is also DCPA's Executive Director of Education and Community Engagement. Together with her team, they have managed a wide range of educational programs over the years, many including adapting children's literature for the stage. "You meet a young person at the highest point of their intelligence, and they deserve incredible stories and humor. The way that Deb and Mo have put the show together, it has such musicality: the harmonies are rich, the singing is dynamic, it's full — because young people deserve that. It's full of laughter, and Mo really believes we deserve to laugh."

Open any Mo Willems book, and you're bound to laugh — and engage with the story right away. The books encourage a dialogue between the reader and the book character, and this often becomes a mini-performance in its own right. A parent, caregiver, teacher, or older sibling might read the book out loud for a young person, consequently transforming into an actor as they voice multiple characters. The pages become a stage; the illustrations, the set. And the person

absorbing this reading performance leans in, responds to the characters' questions, and offers opinions and judgment — all while laughing and pondering the dilemmas of Willems' critters.

It's a shared experience that becomes even richer when dramatically adapted, helping audience members become more imaginative and thoughtful as theatergoers, readers, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners.

"We have design conferences where we're creating and planning scenically months in advance," Watrous says, describing the process of bringing the play to life through not only the set, lights, props, and costuming, but also through the experience of walking through the lobby and entering the theater itself. "Dramaturgically, we bring in all the resources and look at the visuals of the source materials and the books. This is another powerful thing about creating for this age group: the play makes you a stronger reader. The stage visual connects to books on the page, the word-connection is happening out loud."

It also integrates well with education and pedagogy. "We have incredible teachers who bring their students to see this book come to life, and then they start making connections between literature to theater and then to other art forms," notes Watrous. "That's connected to critical thinking, and that's connected to learning across the board."

Watrous has seen firsthand how connections with the theater and workshops have helped young people grow more creative and empathetic: "Theater gives you that immediate feedback of the actors onstage with you in that moment, and those shared experiences are so important when you see a young person stand up taller because they're like, 'I felt like the Pigeon in that moment,' or they step into a workshop and say, 'I get to be the voice of the Pigeon?!' And for them it means that the artform is possible for me in my life."

"That's where art is incredibly powerful," she adds, noting that these skills also make one a good citizen. "It cracks open what's possible in your life."

Even if you've had a big ambitious dream that didn't quite pan out, maybe that dream was pointing to something else. Maybe it was pointing to another skill or talent you have, or another place in the world where only you can fit and grow.

When asked if she would let Pigeon drive the bus, Watrous laughed heartily. "I do think we gotta take things step by step," she remarks. "Maybe it's my teacher self, but we're not there yet, so what can we find for you that's your thing? Maybe when it's your time, maybe you can drive the bus."

"And time is a beautiful thing when you're growing up!" she continues. "Take the time. I would never want to rush anyone in their growing up, and that's why I'd say, Pigeon, don't worry about driving the bus yet. Don't worry about growing up so fast. You have all these magical years of growing up and being a young person."

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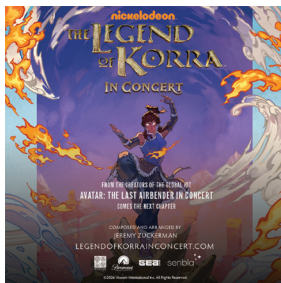
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