

About Prison Performing Arts

Prison Performing Arts is a 27-year-old, multi-discipline, literacy and performing arts program that serves incarcerated adults and children at St. Louis City Juvenile Detention Center, Hogan Street Regional Youth Center, Quest Day Treatment, St. Louis City Justice Center; Family Court's Detention Alternatives Program, Northeastern Correctional Center (NECC) in Bowling Green, Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (WERDCC) in Vandalia, MO and Missouri Eastern Correctional Center (MECC) in Pacific, MO.

Prison Performing Arts involves incarcerated youth and adults in the performing arts to inspire intellectual curiosity and personal development. We nurture the discipline, teamwork and communication skills necessary for successful re-entry into society. We encourage members of the larger community to connect personally with program participants, and we offer continuing programs for participants who have been released.

PPA Needs Your Help!

*Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution on our website to support the continuation of life-changing arts opportunities for incarcerated adults and detained youth in Missouri.
Thank you for your support.*

Prison Performing Arts
3547 Olive Street, Suite 250
St. Louis, MO 63103
314-289-4190

Upcoming Prison Performing Arts Performance!

Prison Performing Arts Alumni Company performs
THE BEGINNING FOR MYSELF

ONLY on June 30—every half hour between 6:30PM and 9PM

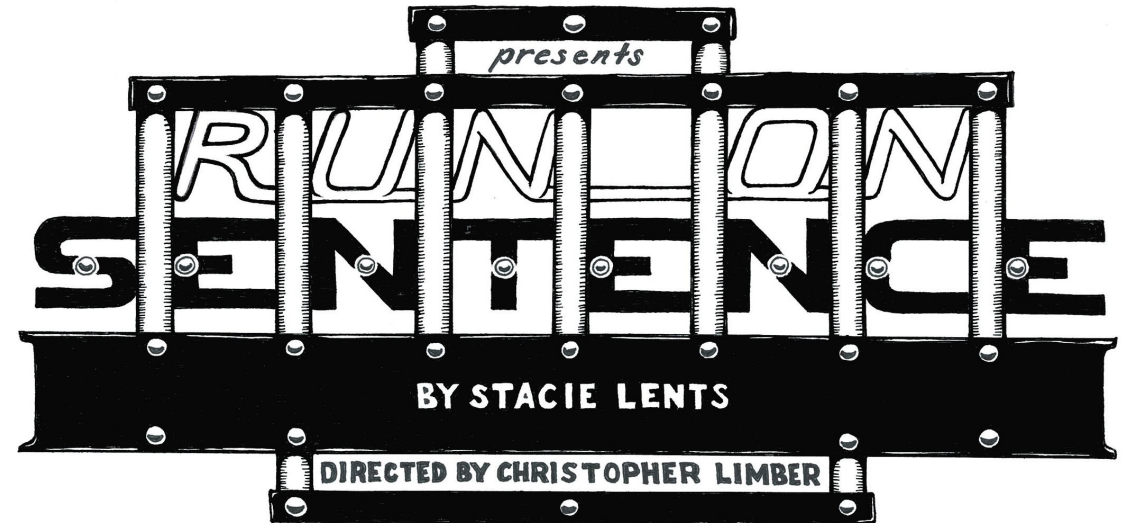
Join St. Louis Public Radio for the finest offerings of the bustling St. Louis theatre scene at the Grand Center Theatre Crawl. Rotate through venues in Grand Center to get free access to 24 local theatre groups in short performances over two days. Registration will close on Wednesday, June 28 at 12 p.m.



Performances begin at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, June 30 and 1 p.m. on Saturday, July 1st.

Your starting venue will be emailed to you on Thursday, June 29. After the first performance you may travel freely through Grand Center to the other venues.

<http://www.stlpublicradio.org/theatrecrawl/index.php>



The Vandalia Women's Theatre, Vandalia, MO
Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center

Tuesday, June 20, 2017; 11:00AM & 6:15PM

Wednesday, June 21, 2017; 1:15PM & 6:15PM

Thursday, June 22, 2017; 1 & 6:15PM

Mass Meaning - a New Plays Initiative



Prison Performing Arts' *Mass Meaning - A New Plays Initiative*, includes the development, production and documentation of three new plays. These original scripts by nationally respected playwrights, will illuminate the voices and experiences catalogued in theatre workshops for incarcerated individuals in three Missouri state prisons. An independent documentary film will follow the development and performance of these new works and enlighten the power of art as a transformative element of rehabilitation and re-entry.

Playwright Note: Stacie Lents

I was fortunate to be commissioned by Prison Performing Arts to work with the inspiring women of the Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (WERDCC). Although this play is fictional, their stories, experiences, and points of view inspired the piece. The incarcerated women in Vandalia also inspired me as an artist. Their generosity, spirit of collaboration, and interest in finding their own voices as artists and people drove me to find a story that felt authentic. At several different points during my time with them and when I came back to hear the WERDCC cast read my first draft of the play, I asked them to tell me, "What do you hope audiences will get out of this piece?" They all answered with variations on a few simple, but important themes which came up over and over again: **"We are human beings..."** and **"It can happen to you..."**

And so that made me think a lot about what it means to be defined—and judged—by the worst thing you've ever done. I'm not sure that any of us would like that label. But more than anything, these women made me feel. Because of their generosity in inviting me into their lives, journeys and their own imaginations, they inspired mine. One thing that they made clear is how much they worry about their families on the outside—and I can never thank their families enough for inviting me, Lisa and Chris into their homes and sharing *their* experiences with us. This made me think a great deal about my own family, particularly as I am originally from Missouri--and you'll see the impact of the family relationships on the play.

I owe a special debt of thanks to Christopher Limber and Prison Performing Arts. I also want to thank the WERDCC staff and administration including Angelica Boyd, Angela Mesmer, and former director George Lombardi. I'd also like to thank Fairleigh Dickinson University, Amy Wagner of Abrams Artists Agency, Project Y Playwrights Group and Writers Theatre of New Jersey for their support of the development of the play.

But most of all, I thank the women of WERDCC who worked with me. Although this story is fictional, it could never have happened without the inspiration of these incredible women.

Filmmaker Note: Lisa Boyd, Mountain Top Films

My goal in directing this documentary, about *Mass Meaning A New Plays Initiative* for Prison Performing Arts, is to shed light on the process theatre plays on the incarcerated and how individual lives can be transformed through the power of creativity. I hope this film will inspire a positive awareness in the approach to incarceration by exploring the development of theatre as a catalyst for fostering interest and compassion for the incarcerated. We all have the power to heal and to change. These women are not just a number, they are mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and grandmothers and I am fortunate to call them friends.

Prison Performing Arts - Board and Bios

Board of Directors, Prison Performing Arts

April Foster
Edgar Evans
Jean Daniel-Gentry
Chris Harris
David Lawton
Melinda Ligon
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Stephen Mastin, II
Tara A. Nealey
Steven Knight
Cort VanOstran
Sr. Barbara Schlatter
Steve Tharp
David Weaver
Agnes Wilcox, *Artistic Director Emerita*

Christopher Limber

(Director, Adult Prison Programs)

Chris has made his professional living for 36 years in the theatre, acting, directing, writing and composing for every major theatre in St. Louis and many around the country. His Directing credits include productions for the Repertory Theatre St. Louis, Opera Theatre St. Louis, HotCity, Union Avenue Opera, St. Louis Shakespeare, St. Louis Actor's Studio, That Uppity Theatre Company's *Briefs*, *COCA*, *Shakespeare Festival*, and most recently, for Prison Performing Arts, where he serves full time as Director of Adult Prison Programs. His published work includes the Kevin Kline Award-winning plays *Me and Richard 3* and *Quick Brewed Macbeth*; and musical scores for *Kabuki Ugly Duckling* and *The Secret Garden*, both honored with awards from The American Alliance for Theatre in Education.

Rachel Tibbetts

(Director of Youth Programs)

Rachel Tibbetts has worked in arts education since 2000 as an Education Associate and Assistant Director of Education at the Delaware Theatre Company in Wilmington; and Arts Partners Program Administrator and Assistant Arts Education Director at Young Audiences of St. Louis. She received her B.A. in Theatre from Oklahoma State University. Rachel graduated from the 2006-2007 Community Arts Training Institute at the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission. Rachel is a member of the SATE Ensemble, a St. Louis area based professional theatre Company

Shelby Partridge

(Director of Operations & Development)

Shelby Partridge has spent the majority of the last decade working in sales and marketing management. Since moving to St. Louis in 2002, she's had the opportunity to work in two start-up companies experiencing rapid, nationwide growth. The bulk of her work experience is in the technology industry where she gained invaluable skills in online marketing, search engine optimization, and web design. She holds a B.A. in Journalism from Oklahoma State University where her primary focus was public relations.

Chris Harris

(Office Assistant)

Chris Harris participated as an actor with Prison Performing Arts for more than a decade, with roles in *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Richard III*, and *Stalag 17*. He is currently a member of PPA's Alumni Theatre Company, having performed in *Green Eggs & Hamlet* and Pirandello's *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth*. Chris earned an associate's degree from Platt College.

Special Thanks

Mountain Top Films
Repertory Theatre of St. Louis
Missouri Department of Corrections

Anne L. Precythe, Director
David Owens, Communications Director

Women’s Eastern Reception,
Diagnostic and Correctional Center

Angela Mesmer, Warden
Tom Dunn, Deputy Warden
Todd Francis, Deputy Warden
Marilyn Buss, Assistant Warden
Deborah Miller, Assistant Warden
Derek Hendren, Major
Angelica Boyd, IAC
Tammie Kirk, IAC
Melissa Burleson OSA for IAC
Melissa Basket, Reflective Media Productions
Jean Fowler, OSAK
Derek Hendren, Major
Patricia Stathem, Restorative Justice

The Correctional Officers of WERDCC
The Maintenance Dept. of WERDCC
The Recreation Dept. of WERDCC

PPA Staff

Christopher Limber
Director of Adult Prison Programs

Rachel Tibbetts
Director of Youth Programs

Shelby Partridge
Director of Development & Operations

Chris Harris
Office Assistant

Jerry McAdams
Community Volunteer

Martin Stillwell
Cover Art

Run-On Sentence by Stacie Lents
Commissioned by Prison Performing Arts
Cast and Crew

June 20 - 6:15; June 21 - 6:15 PM; June 22 - 1:00 PM

Autumn SmithMary
Laura HulseyJune

June 20 -11:00 PM; June 21 -11:00 PM; June 22 - 6:15 PM

Laura HulseyMary
Autumn SmithJune

Amy Sherrill Bug
LaWanda Jackson Mel
Patty Prewitt Miss Alice
Tessa Van VlerahGiant
Bethany Johnson Officer Wallace
Rachel StaudteUnderstudy

Christopher Limber Director
Janet Baiter-BohnStage Manager
Rachel Staudte Props
Cassie Adams Stage Right
Lauren BanksStage Left
Heather Nelson Technical Assistant
Rachel Tibbetts, Chris HarrisCostume Assistance

Additional Workshop members for the Original 2016 Play Development Workshop
Lauren Banks, Sheena Benson, Angie Ogle, Erica Nowden

Our Supporters



Special thanks to
The Holly Challenge Founder’s Fund



3547 Olive Street, Suite 250
St. Louis, MO 63103
314-289-4190
www.prisonperformingarts.org



Company Bios

Cassie Adams (*Technical assistance*) Hi! I am 27 years old, and this is my first involvement with PPA. I'm super excited to be part of this production. These women are all amazing in so many ways. I look forward to being involved in future PPA productions.

Janet Baiter-Bohn (*Stage Manager*) This is my ninth play. PPA has enriched my life and I'm grateful for the program and its supporters. Working with Stacie, Lisa and Chris on the workshop and subsequent play has been a great adventure. We are a close knit group. I'll miss them a lot when I leave this fall (*after 22 years*) to go home to Oregon.

Lauren Banks (*Technical assistance and workshop participant*) Hey! I'm 25 years old. I was introduced to PPA through my mother, Amy (*playing Bug*). I've done several plays through PPA and have enjoyed every one. Especially the amazing women I've been blessed to work with, who have also participated—and the many things I've learned through and with them. PPA is an amazing experience to be a part of. I'm very thankful for the opportunity.

Sheena Benson (*Workshop participant*) I am 32 years old and I love working with PPA. I never thought it was something I would do, but once all my friends talked me into it I discovered it made me happy. It also helped me in so many ways, like in helping me overcome my shyness, I am a big PPA fan and hope so many more women get the chance to try it out. Go PPA! You Rock!

Laura Hulsey (*Mary / June*) I'm 25 years old, born and raised in St. Louis. I've been incarcerated since 2014. I joined PPA in 2016. I performed the part of Moses, the Raven in the last play, *Animal Farm*. I am so proud to be part of *Run-On Sentence*, an emotional, comedic, heart-felt play. I am also so proud of the other women involved whom I have spent most of my incarcerated time with. Every day we are judged, so it took a lot for most of us to open up to absolute strangers in a workshop. However, contributing to the work of this play made us stronger and wiser. I want to thank Chris Limber for his outstanding dedication and patience. He is such a hard worker and a joy to be around. Thanks also to Stacie Lents and Lisa Boyd for taking the time in getting to know us first as people and not through our crimes. What a great experience!

LaWanda Jackson (*Mel*) This play is personal. I was vulnerable and exposed, sometimes very exposed. Everything happens for a reason. God has given me the strength, knowledge and purpose for this play. I am honored and privileged to be a part of this process; and I would like to thank Stacie, Lisa and Chris for caring to represent us so well. You make me proud! :)

Bethany Johnson (*Officer Wallace*) This is my second play with PPA. It has been a great learning experience. Being part of this workshop and production have really meant a lot to me. It's my hope that *Run-On Sentence* gives a glimpse of what prison is truly like. Thanks to PPA, Chris, Stacie and Lisa.

Heather Nelson, a.k.a. Byrd (*Technical Assistant*) I am 30 years old and I love to write and act. I find so much joy in this organization Prison Performing Arts. It has helped me find who I am, once again after so long being lost. I've got three amazing children and an amazing family who believe in me. I plan on staying involved in the arts and PPA after my release. My nickname, Byrd is short for hummingbird, because I flow like a butterfly and can sting with my beak. Thank you PPA—you are Amazing.

Stacie Lents (*Playwright*) Stacie's plays *Fire Exit*, *Henry's Law*, and *Laugh Out Loud* (*cry quietly*) are published by Playscripts, Inc. These plays have had productions across the United States and in Canada. *Henry's Law*, which was also performed at the Hostos Center for Arts and Culture in New York and in the UK, was included in Backstage.com's list of 15 Must-Read Plays for Tweens and Teens. Her play *College Colors* premiered at Crossroads Theatre Company in 2016. Most recently, Stacie was Commissioned to write a short play as part of Project Y Theatre's The Hrosthvitha Project. Monologues and scenes from Stacie's plays are included in two anthologies by Applause: In Performance:

Company Bios

Contemporary Monologues for Teens and the upcoming Contemporary Scenes for Twentysomethings. As an actor, Stacie has performed regionally and in New York; she originated the one-woman play *Six Hands* by Eric H. Weinberger and role of Joan in the new Richard Dresser play *100 Years*. Stacie is Director of Acting and Director of the Barn Theater at Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she is an Associate Professor. She received her MFA from Rutgers, Mason Gross School of the Arts and her BA from Yale University.

Angela Ogle (*Workshop participant*) I have acted in PPA's, *The Rover* and in *Animal Farm* and then participated in the workshop from which this play was created. I couldn't be in the production because fortunately, I am on work release and travel full time during the day to work outside the prison helping senior citizens and older adults - a job that I love very much. I'd like to thank Chris and Stacie both for all the time they've taken out of their lives to create and produce such an awesome production! PPA is a blast. Keep up the great work and so will we!

Patty Prewitt (*Miss Alice*) Last fall I danced at the chance (*picture jazz hands*) to participate in a PPA workshop, with a young female playwright, that will also be immortalized on film for a documentary. What a ride! Stacie Lents and Lisa Boyd are enlightening the universe and I am honored and elated to be an old con-cog in their creative wheel. The moral of this story boils down to the truth about opportunity. When she knocks, swing wide your door and invite her to stay. Oh—and to those of you who contribute to and support PPA, thank you for hauling life-saving water to this intellectual desert.

Autumn Smith (*Mary / June*) When I first began PPA it was a means to pass time. Quickly, I realized PPA had become an important part of my life. Chris Limber has brought such joy and opportunity to our lives—I never would have imagined. I've found a family of fellow artists with PPA as well as a more established view of my own possibilities. I thank anyone and everyone who has donated their time, money, energy, and belief in all of us women. Thanks to these amazing people I have grown as an actress, mother, woman, artist, and overall person. Thank you all for believing in us when most wouldn't. I encourage everyone to give this program a chance—it's worth the time and energy.

Amy Sherrill (*Bugs*) Wow, what a great experience all this term has been for me! Meeting Stacie Lents, being involved in such a meaningful project has done so much. I want to thank everyone that contributed to this project and a special thanks to Chris for his direction and patience.

Rachel Stavdte (*Props*) This is my first time with PPA, and even though it has been a lot of work, I have enjoyed being a part of the group. I can see myself working with this group again in the future (maybe even for several years). It has been fun and the others have taught me a lot.

Tessa Van Vlerah (*Giant*) This is my ninth semester with PPA. I had such a wonderful experience with this production. Getting to work with Stacie from the start and to see where she took our stories was amazing. I love PPA and I have made life-long friends because of it. PPA has brought Joy into my life. I want to say thank you to everyone who has helped with this process.

Lisa Rhoden Boyd (*Documentary and Film Producer*) Lisa, also a writer and director, has worked on numerous projects for CBS, NBC, HBO, TNT and Showtime. She produced the award-winning films BITTER SUGAR, PINE-RO, PARAISO, and EL CANTANTE starring Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony. As an advocate for Restorative Justice, she interviewed death row inmates in Potosi, Missouri creating her award-winning short film, POTOSI, GOD IN DEATH ROW. Her new documentary feature film, AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY, follows the life of a death row inmate and his journey to redemption and the victim's families journey to forgive. Currently, Lisa is working alongside Christopher Limber documenting the Prison Performing Arts "New Plays Initiative" Program which focuses on aspects of Mass Incarceration.