

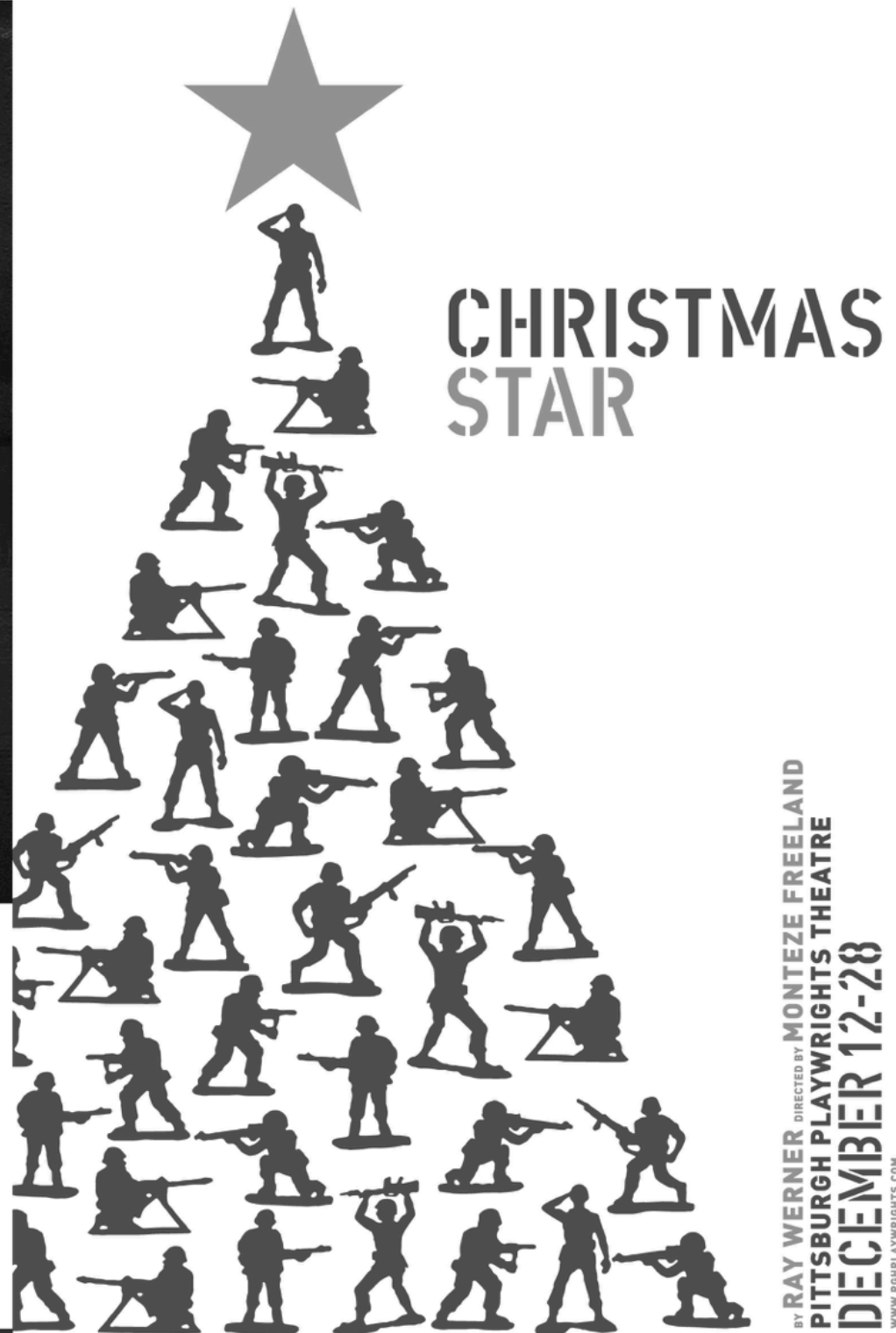
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HOLY
NIGHT
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GARY KLINE, DIRECTOR

YOU'VE SEEN THE PLAY.
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DECEMBER 12-28
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From the Artistic Director Mark Clayton Southers

During the course of our last four seasons we have produced over a half dozen Ray Werner plays. There's a reason for it. Put simply, Ray is a great writer. His stories captivate and inspire. They are creative and lift us up in laughter. These stories and characters come to us from his great imagination and the rich fabric of his life. His friends' and family's experiences and traditions I'm sure have all laid the groundwork from which his work has grown. Ray chose to highlight PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) in

Christmas Star to draw attention to a wound that which is often overlooked. At the Pittsburgh Playwrights we believe that theatre is a great place to learn about one another. Ray has certainly done his share in teaching through his craft as a playwright. Enjoy the show.

About Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company

Mark Clayton Southers founded Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company in 2003. We began as the resident company of Garfield's Penn Theater, and moved to a 75-seat space at 542 Penn Avenue in the downtown Cultural District in January 2005. In October 2011 we moved again, into the penthouse at 937 Liberty Avenue. Thanks to the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for finding this exciting new space for us! This space has an elevator and is wheelchair-accessible.

The Mission of Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company is committed to developing and showcasing the works of local playwrights; from accomplished masters like August Wilson and George S. Kaufman to promising new talents. We seek to nurture a racially and culturally diverse community of playwrights, directors, actors and technical specialists to hone their craft and to network creative opportunities. Finally, we support a racially and culturally diverse management staff and board of directors who, together, promote audiences that reflect the rich variety of our Pittsburgh community. Through such sharing of talents, resources, perspectives and experiences we aspire to provide artistic enlightenment that will strengthen our civic community.

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company's Board of Directors

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To stay up on the latest from
Pittsburgh Playwrights

Production Staff

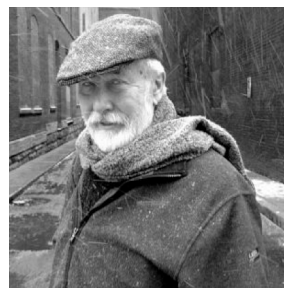
Playwright	Ray Werner
Director	Monteze Freeland
Production Stage Manager	Ira Cambric III
Assistant Stage Manager	Ashley Southers
Set Design	Mark Clayton Southers
Light Design	Madeline Steineck
Sound Design	Matt Dillin
Instrumental Track	Al Snyder Studio
Original Music and Lyrics	Ray Werner
	Mike Gallagher
Christmas Music	St. Bede Choir
	Gary Kline
Costume/Makeup Design	Cheryl El-Walker
Prop Master	Austin Sills
	Eric A. Smith
Carpenters	Mark Clayton Southers
	Alvin Briskey
Senic Painter	Alvin Briskey
Posters/Graphic Design	Larkin Werner

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company Staff

Founder/Artistic Director	Mark Clayton Southers
Artistic Associate	Monteze Freeland
Managing Director	Eric A. Smith
Business Manager	Lorill Readie
Resident Costumer	Cheryl El-Walker
Resident Sound Designer	Mark Whitehead
Box Office	Carl Southers III
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From the Playwright of Christmas Star

As an older character in one of my plays says, “I’ve been around the jug and grabbed the handle, a couple of times.” So have I, and what I’ve grabbed is an abundance of wonderful moments, as the path of life has taken me into the realm of music, bread, brick ovens, advertising, film making, community service, my Catholic faith and most of all, my family who understand that I’m not in retirement, I’m in refinement. And there’s so much more of me yet to be refined, God willing. Following is a glimpse of my life as a playwright: *Night Song*, selected and produced at the Source Festival, Washington, DC, 2009; *Elder Hostages*, a trilogy,

staged reading, Capetown, South Africa, 2010. *Elder Hostages*, a trilogy, staged reading at the Hazlett, 2010, and a premier at the opening of this theater in 2011; *Night Song*, Indiana Regional Theater, 2011; *Felled Family Tree*, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater, 2011; *Redneck Revenge*, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater, 2012 (Named Audience Favorite, Best Actor, Best Director.); *Christmas Star* (one-act), Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater, selected for First Night, 2013; *Christmas Star* (full-length), Pittsburgh Playwrights, Premier, 2014.

A Thought from the Playwright

We all know someone who has been injured in a war, fighting for our freedom and our families. The boy next door, the girl in your physics class, the kid across the street. Tragically, it is also a son, a daughter, a father, a grandfather, or someone very close to us. Back home, they don’t want to be called heroes, although they’re heroic. They never talk about their courage, but rather tuck their war medals away in a shoebox. They just want to get back to the life they had before they left home. But the “moral injury” of PTSD that can suck the life out of their soul so often denies them that opportunity. And we, their caregivers, all of us, so often deny them the treatment that can help them get back to who they are. The cure is elusive. The mental illness is a mystery. But the larger mystery is why can’t we, in a country as great as ours, make more progress, and make their healing a priority. A retired Admiral and former Navy Seal told me there are 900,000 veterans on the streets of America with PTSD. And if each of us would mentor just one of these, the crisis would go away. Of all I’ve learned, in all the research I’ve done, what really sticks with me is this. Let that veteran know you care. You truly care. That’s what I hope you take home with you. That, and a good story.

A Special Acknowledgement

For Mark Clayton Southers, one of Pittsburgh’s cultural treasures, who created Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater over a decade ago to give original works their moment in front of a live audience. Thank you, Mark, for seeing a larger play in my one-act and asking me to expand it. The playwright is grateful for the help, insight and encouragement from: Spec/5 John Anderson, our cousin and friend who was killed in Vietnam in 1969, his letters on loan from his dear family. Ed Betz and Harry Milne and the many veterans over the years who were willing to tell me their stories, Michelle Margatti, Veterans Leadership Program. Dan Pultz and General T.C. Jones of Semper Fi Odyssey. An incredible experience. The Thomas Merton Center, and their unflagging spirit. Poet Jim King, whose tribute to Walt Whitman is on display in the lobby. Larkin Werner, for his elegant design and art direction. Mike Gallagher, whose talent and good spirit lifted the music and lyrics. The powerful women of faith in my life -- my wife Susan, my mother Pauline, my grandmother Marie and my sisters Patricia, Rita and Kathleen. My director and cast, whose sheer hard work and talent gave real life to my words.

I am honored to have my play run in tandem with Ubuntu Holiday, by Kim El, an outstanding playwright, actor and director. Please try to see it and bring your friends. Christmas Star is dedicated to my late brother and mentor, Larry Werner, Korean War veteran and master storyteller. His legacy was helping others. Find out how you can help at-risk cancer patients make ends meet. Go to Larry’s Legacy at the Pittsburgh Foundation. <https://www.pittsburghfoundation.org>.

Christmas Star

Time

2005, a few years after the beginning of the War in Iraq

Setting

Act One

A hospital room (Two days before Christmas)

Act Two

A home in the Garfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh (Christmas Eve)

Epilogue

A theater (Several months later)

Cast

Kenny Hudson:	Anthony Gullickson
Eduardo Sanchez:	Lamont Walker II
Mick McGuire:	LaTrea Rembert
Grace:	Dominique Briggs
Gertie Hudson:	Susie McGregor-Laine*
Bernie Hudson:	Bill Crean

**Actor appears courtesy of Actor's Equity*

*There will be one 15-minute intermission after Act 1
Restrooms are located on the second floor*

The characters in Christmas Star are entirely from the imagination of the playwright. They are pure invention. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental.

If you or someone you know suffers from PTSD

For immediate help, contact
Veterans Leadership Program
2417 E Carson St, Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412-481-8200
<http://www.vlpwpa.org>
They know you can't wait until tomorrow.

You can help homeless veterans

by helping Operation Safety Net, founded by Dr. Jim Withers.
Operation Safety Net
249 South Ninth Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412-232-5739
OperationSafetyNet@pmhs.org

Christmas Star Production Bios

Ira Cambric III (*Stage Manager*) is making his debut working with PPTCO. He is thrilled to manage this hardworking cast and crew and wishes you a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Madeleine Steineck (*Lighting Designer*) graduated from Temple University in 2011 with a degree in Theatre: Lighting Design. This will be the third show she has designed for Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company as she designed lights for last season's productions of *Sold: Renn Woods in Concert* and *Poe's Last Night*. She also designs lights for various high school and middle school musicals, including *Curtains*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Lucky Stiff*, *Seussical*, and *Man of La Mancha*. She is the resident lighting designer for Mercyhurst University Theatre, having designed *Urinetown: The Musical*, *The Laramie Project*, and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. She has designed for Morgantown Dance Studio. She worked as a Master Electrician for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre last summer and was the Master Electrician for Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh's Summerfest this past summer.

Matt Dillin (*Sound Designer*) is a producer/disc jockey/promoter/audio recording engineer who has been involved with music since 1996. He graduated from the Institute of Audio Research - New York City in 1999. Currently he's producing music and pursuing production deals, while simultaneously juggling his many other talents. Inquires - Mattdillinger@aol.com

Cheryl M. El Walker (*Costumes*) is an award-winning costume designer and make-up artist who is also a veteran stage actor from Pittsburgh. Her creative work has been seen in Kim El's "Straightening Combs" and she has earned several Onyx Awards for Best Costume Design, Best Make-up and Leading Actress, all from the African American Council for the Arts (AACTA). She also received the 2012 Legacy Award from the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. Cheryl's stage performances include the Wilkinsburg Arts Theatre, New Horizon Theatre, Kuntu Repertory Theatre, PPTCO and most recently with the B.U.S. 8 Tour with *Bricolage*. Cheryl is an alumna of Point Park University.

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Jeanne Zell



From the Director of Christmas Star

Monteze is thrilled to be back in the home of the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. In addition to directing the one-act version of “Christmas Star” last Christmas season, Mr. Freeland has directed “The Gospel Singer” for his company The LAB Project, “Poe’s Last Night” and “Sold” for PPTCO, “Is That A Gun In Your Pocket” for the Pride Theater Festival, “Reservations Cancelled” for the New Works Festival and “Harriet Tubman Loved Somebody” for Kuntu Rep. “Reservations Cancelled” for the for the New Works Festival.

Many many thanks to Mark, Ray and this immensely talented and hardworking cast and crew. I couldn’t have asked for a better ensemble! Up next: “The Wiz” with ACH Clear Pathways. This is for Walter Freeland, Howard Hall, and Devonya White, thank you for your service. And Gary Freeland, thank you for life.

A Thought from the Director

The superstitions that surround the world of theater may not always be agreed upon but one belief that artists seem to hold onto is the old adage: Everything happens for a reason. Mounting “Christmas Star” comes at near perfect timing as it’s themes are reinforced and echoed in our daily media with images of the soldier finding his way home. Returning to what once was. From First Lady Michelle Obama’s public efforts of raising awareness to billboards urging Americans to never forget our heroes it becomes difficult to ignore those who made the great sacrifice. This play is much more than an introduction to the horrors of PTSD instead it examines the hearts of those who cannot forget. As Americans we do not forget the benchmarks of our sordid history from slavery to 9/11. We are still a nation that is divided by the concept of war yet brought together through tragedy. But one thing that remains constant is our tight grasp of nostalgia; wishing life would reset to that simpler time yet realizing the memory is all that remains. But isn’t that a wonderful gift in its own way?

PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury.)

- There are more than 900,000 veterans in America with PTSD.
- Nearly 275,000 veterans have been diagnosed with TBI since 2002.
- Each day, there are more than 20 veteran suicides in America.
- Veterans account for more than 20% of all suicides.
- More active duty personnel died by their own hand than combat in 2012.
- 50% of returning veterans have chronic pain issues, one major cause of PTSD.
- Nearly 30,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans divorced in 2011.
- 38% of Vietnam veterans divorced within 6 months of coming home.
- 30% of Vietnam veterans suffer from PTSD.
- An estimated 14% to 20% of Iraqi veterans suffer from PTSD.
- 50% of those with PTSD do not seek treatment.
- Treatment for Iraq and Afghanistan PTSD has cost more than \$2 billion.

Homeless and Veterans

- Between 529,000 and 840,000 veterans are homeless at some time during the year.
- Every night, more than 300,000 veterans are living on the streets or in shelters.
- There are an estimated 2,300 homeless veterans in the Pittsburgh area every day.

Christmas Star Actor Bios



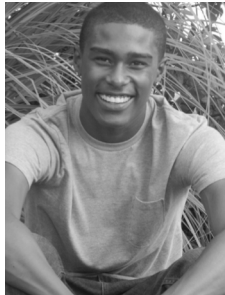
Anthony Gullikson
(Kenny Hudson)

Anthony is thrilled to be returning to Pittsburgh Playwrights for the premiere of Christmas Star. Anthony is an Acting Major at Point Park University. Recent Pittsburgh credits include Mr. Maw in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* at Prime Stage, Adam and Corin in Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks' *As You Like It*, and various characters in Advanced Labor and Cultural Studies' radio play *The Thin Man Comes to Pittsburgh*. Anthony aspires to be a voice actor working specifically in cartoon programming. He hopes you enjoy the show as much as he has enjoyed performing in it. He gives his thanks to the cast and crew. For Nancy, Mitch, Aless, Matthew, Paloma, all our veterans, active service members, and his hometown Sonoma, California.



LaTrea Rembert
(Mick McGuire)

LaTrea Rembert is a recent graduate of Point Park University where he majored in Musical Theater and minored in Dance. Hailing from Cincinnati, OH, LaTrea is thrilled to return to the Pittsburgh Playwrights stage where he was last seen in the Festival in Black and White in 2012. He has also had the opportunity to perform at the Pittsburgh Playhouse in Point Park's productions of A Chorus Line and the Raymond Laine Memorial One Act Festival. LaTrea is also working with the Staycee Pearl dance project among other things here in the city. He gives thanks to God, family and friends for their continued love and support in his artistic endeavors. Jeremiah 29:11.



Lamont Walker II
(Eduardo Sanchez)

Lamont Walker II is currently a sophomore musical theatre major at Point Park University. He is extremely excited to be working on this project with so many other talented artists in this city. Recent credits include Wilson in 21: the Roberto Clemente Musical at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream with the Hampton Roads Shakespeare Festival and a finalist at the 2014 Campus Superstar college singing competition. Thank you Playwrights for this amazing opportunity, Monteze and Ray for trusting me with this amazing role, and all of my friends and family for their continued support.



Dominique Briggs
(Grace)

Dominique Briggs, a graduate of the University of Michigan and Duquesne University, makes her debut performance with Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater as Grace in Ray Werner's Christmas Star. Her notable theater performances include Lundyn Bridges, The Childfinder, Barnum, and the Witch in Into the Woods. She has also appeared in films including Southpaw (Antoine Fuqua) as Aileen, Set Free (Patrice Johnson) as Danielle Singleton, and the film short, The Take Us (C. Henry) as Sorsha. When not performing on stage or behind the camera, Dominique enjoys working on her freshman EP (Extended Play) jazz project or background studio vocals. She wishes to thank her amazing cast mates for bringing the Christmas Star to life, her director for trusting her with "Grace," and last but certainly not least, her husband, Cedrice, for always allowing her to chase her dreams.



**Susie
McGregor-Laine***
(Gertie Hudson)

Susie is very happy to be performing at Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre (PPTCO) once again where she has appeared in Valu-Mart & Elder Hostages. Susie is thrilled to be involved in this production & working with Monteze Freeland who is a truly outstanding director, and an awesome, fun & talented cast & crew. Susie started her theatrical career in 1967 appearing with the Hong Kong Stage Club where she lived prior to coming to the USA in 1968. Since arriving in the USA, she has worked with numerous theatre companies in the area and is no stranger to Pittsburgh theatre audiences, appearing in numerous productions with: Off The Wall Theatre; Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre; the Pittsburgh Playhouse; Quantum Theatre; Pittsburgh Public Theatre; Barebones Productions; Apple Hill Playhouse; Open Stage; the Summer Company; the Red Masquers & Little Lake Theatre. Susie was recently awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Pittsburgh New Works Festival. Susie will be performing the role of Mrs. Higgins (Henry Higgins' Mom) in *My Fair Lady* at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre in January/February, 2015. Susan is a member of Actors Equity Association.



Bill Crean
(Bernie Hudson)

Bill Crean (*Bernie*) returns to the Playwrights stage in his second Ray Werner play, having previously played in "Redneck Revenge" (*Buzzy*) in the 2012 Black and White Festival. Bill received an award for his performance in "A Life's Work" (*Mickey Conroy*) in the 2010 Black and White Festival. Most recently, Bill appeared as *Captain Keller* in "The Miracle Worker" at Little Lake Theatre and has been active at many area theaters including South Park Theatre, The Theatre Factory, Prime Stage, and Throughline. Bill is grateful for the opportunity to work with Mark, Monteze, and this talented cast.