

The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company proudly presents

LIGHTS OUT

BY STEVE HALLOCK
DIRECTED BY CHERYL EL-WALKER

**WORLD
PREMIERE!**

**APRIL
1ST—15TH
2017**

WELCOME



Welcome to the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre. I'm excited about this world premiere production of Steve Hallock's *Lights Out*. Supporting new work by Pittsburgh playwrights is our main goal. Mr. Hallock's new work adds to the canon of Pittsburgh-specific plays. It offers a unique and artful look at Pittsburgh life. We're glad that we are able to assist in bringing it from page to stage. That's a big part of our mission and we're very thankful to play a part in that process.

We hope you have an enjoyable experience.

Mark Clayton Southers

SPECIAL THANKS

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

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Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh



ABOUT THE PLAY

LIGHTS OUT

by Steve Hallock
directed by Cheryl El-Walker

SAM ALEC	Connor McCanlus*
MANNY	Sam Lothard
NADINE	Jenny Malarkey
MICK	Michael Lane Sullivan
SOL/LONER	Arjun Kumar
TROLLEY DRIVER	Thomas Hammond
STANLEY	John Michnya
FLORENCE	Sandy Zwier
ANITA	Melissa Franklin
SAM	Nik Nemec

*Member of Actors' Equity Association

Playwright's Note: I enjoy dramas that are primarily character studies and that explore interactions of characters in challenging situations, such as during times of peril or of perceived threat -- to delve into the emotions and passions that fuel people facing crisis or discomfort. This is when the people and things that are important to us come to the fore. This is when we think about and remember the events and people of our lives. Such studies are not new to the stage or to literature; a couple of them are mentioned in the play (*Twelve Angry Men*, *Lord of the Flies*). I wanted to create a play that not only depicted such a situation, but that brought the audience into the drama, along for the trolley ride and trapped with the players, as well.

Director's Note: What would you do if you were trapped on a Pittsburgh trolley with strangers and the lights went out? How would you react? *Lights Out* embraces our survival techniques, regardless of what our social or economic status is. Passengers, often unfeeling and emotionless, hide behind laptops, headsets, newspapers and cell phones until we reach our destination. Sometimes we appear almost mannequin-like. If the electricity on the trolley suddenly stopped and connection to the outside came to a halt, many of our subconscious fears might be similar. Preconceived views and ideologies of each other might force us to realize that through all of our struggles in life and unexpected detours, we are all the same in the dark. As the lights go out in the theater, I encourage you to sit back, relax and enjoy the ride on the "T" with the *Lights Out*.

BIOGRAPHIES



PLAYWRIGHT | STEVE HALLOCK is director of the graduate program for the School of Communication at Point Park University. A former longtime newspaper reporter and editor, he has published six books, the most recent being his first published novel, *The Silent Treatment* (2016, The Artists' Orchard). He also has published commentary in newspapers that include The New York Times, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Philadelphia Inquirer and Denver Post. *Lights Out* is his first play. He and his wife, Joanne, live in Mount Lebanon.



DIRECTOR/COSTUME & MAKEUP DESIGN | CHERYL EL-WALKER is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist and Pittsburgh native. Cheryl's directing credits include Ray Werner's *Stay*, Lissa Brennan's *And To All A Good Night* and Kim El's *Straightening Combs* (Pittsburgh Hill House and D.C. Black Theatre Festival). Her creative work has been seen in nine of August Wilson's plays. She has earned many Onyx Awards from the the African American Council of the Arts including Best Make-up Artist, Best Costume for a Musical; Best Leading Actress; Best Costume Design for a Play (four times), plus the PPTCO 2012 Legacy Award. Her stage direction of *And To All A Good Night* in 2013 received five more awards including Best Director. In addition to stage work, Cheryl

is also the facilitator for her quarterly make-up workshop series, "About Face." Cheryl is married with a teenage son. She is an alumna of Point Park University.

BIOGRAPHIES



ANITA | MELISSA FRANKLIN is excited to be making her Pittsburgh Playwrights debut in the world premiere of *Lights Out*. She received her BFA in Acting from Clarion University. Born and raised in the Steel City, she found her passion for acting at age 11 at Frick International Studies Academy. Recent performances include: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Choir, PMT), *Hairspray* (Motormouth Maybelle, SATC), *Sister Act* (Nun, PMT), *Saturday Night Fever* (Shirley Charles, PMT), and 9 lead roles for Story Theatre. She is a proud member of the Equity Membership Candidate Program. She wants to thank director Cheryl for believing in her to make this role come to life, stage manager Marti, her cast mates for sharing this wonderful journey with

her, and her loving family and friends for their constant support and encouragement. She hopes you all enjoy the show. "Get ready for an *interesting* ride!"



TROLLEY DRIVER | THOMAS HAMMOND is a retired PA State Police Corporal and UPMC medical coder. Thomas trained at Donna Belajac Actors Studio. Other theater credits include *Raisin in the Sun*, *Streamers*, *The Skin of Our Teeth* as well as a role in the Netflix TV series *Mindhunter*.



SOL/LONER | ARJUN KUMAR is excited to be performing with Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater for the first time! Arjun has recently performed with Stage and Steel Productions and McKeesport Little Theater. During the spring and summer, he will be performing at Greensburg Civic Theater and South Park Theater. Arjun works as a software engineer and enjoys basketball and video games in his free time.

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MANNY | SAM LOTHARD has been acting, writing and directing since 2007. Sam received a Best Actor Nomination in Pittsburgh Playwrights' Theatre Festival in Black and White in 2013. He's performed as Uncle Moses in *The Ballad of Emmett Till*, LoBoy in *Lower Ninth* and is Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre's featured actor for this season. Following that, Sam will be seen in *Kalopsia* at the New Hazlett Theater. He's thankful for the experience that phenomenal cast members and directors have poured into him. "Many thanks to God, my family, and friends. Put God first. Shoot your shot. Chase your dreams."



NADINE | JENNY MALARKEY is thrilled to be making her Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre debut. A Pittsburgh native, she received her theatre training from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. While down south she worked for both The North Carolina Shakespeare Company and The Virginia Shakespeare Company. Since returning back to the Steel City, Jenny has performed with such companies as: Saint Vincent Summer Theatre, Pittsburgh Musical Theatre, Throughline Theatre, Cup-a-Jo Productions, Point Park University, Prime Stage, CMU, Unseam'd Shakespeare Company, The NRTC, Gemini Theatre, and Little Lake Theatre. When not on stage, Jenny can be found teaching for the Pittsburgh Public Theatre. As always,

thank you to her friends and family for their continued love and support. This cast and crew includes both new friends and old, and Jenny couldn't be more inspired by all of their amazing talent. "Thank you to all involved for making this such an incredible experience!"



SAM ALEC | CONNOR MCCANLUS' first professional acting job was with Pittsburgh Playwrights for the 2011 Black and White festival and he's very happy to return for the premiere of *Lights Out*. Previous credits: *The Merchant of Venice* at PICT Classic Theatre, *Wig Out* at The REP, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* at Kinetic Theater, as well as productions with CLO Cabaret, Bricolage, barebones, Unseam'd Shakespeare, and Prime Stage. He is an improv comedian and musical improviser who hosts the weekly Pittsburgh Improv Jam at Cabaret at Theater Square with his team Well Known Strangers. He can be seen later this summer in Disney's *Newsies* at Pittsburgh CLO.

BIOGRAPHIES



STANLEY | JOHN MICHNYA is a Pittsburgh-based actor, director, and teaching artist and is making his second appearance in a Pittsburgh Playwrights show following the premiere of *Findings* last month. His recent acting credits include *The Odd Couple* (Roy, St. Vincent Summer Theatre), *Midnight Radio:1984* (Voice & Foley Artist; Bricolage), *Last Gas* (Guy Gagnon; Little Lake Theatre), *Animal Farm* (Boxer; Primestage), and *As You Like It* (Jacques; PSiP). John has recently directed *The Mathematics of Being Human* and will direct *Fantastic Mr. Fox* for Little Lake Theatre's Looking Glass series this summer. johnmichnya.com



SAM | NIK NEMEC, a graduate of Point Park University, now works for Pittsburgh CLO and is a freelance stage manager throughout the region. He is also a playwright and comedian. Nik's plays have been produced in Pittsburgh at Point Park and the Pittsburgh Pride Theatre Festival, in Atlanta, Georgia with the Horizon Theatre's Young Playwrights Festival, and at Westminster College. His latest play *Home Again, Home Again*, in which he starred, won the Audience Favorite in last year's Theatre Festival in Black and White at Pittsburgh Playwrights. Favorite credits include *August: Osage County* (The REP), *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches/Perestroika* (Throughline Theatre), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Stage 62), *Hecuba* (Point

Park), *Chicago*, *Shrek*, and *Annie* (Pittsburgh CLO), and five seasons of *The Nutcracker* with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. Up next: *Kalopsia*, part of the New Hazlett CSA Series. @NikNemec



MICK | MICHAEL LANE SULLIVAN is honored to be making his Pittsburgh Playwrights debut in *Lights Out*. Michael is a graduate of RMU class of '13 and has since been cast in several stage productions and independent films. You may have seen him in: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Martini) with barebones Productions; *Guys and Dolls* and *Othello* with Pittsburgh Public Theater; *Spring Awakening* (Georg), *JCSS* (Simon) and *A Lyrical Christmas Carol* (Bob Cratchit) with PMT; *Man of La Mancha* (Barber) with Company of Pittsburgh. Michael thanks his family and friends, "I wouldn't be anywhere today without all the love and support I have from all of you."

BIOGRAPHIES



FLORENCE | SANDY ZWIER is grateful to be a part of the Pittsburgh Playwrights production of *Lights Out*. She has a BFA in Music Theatre Performance from Western Michigan University and trained with the Upright Citizens Brigade in NYC. She is currently based in Pittsburgh and recently finished touring the country with *Ragtime* (Emma Goldman) and *Mamma Mia!* (Ensemble/US Donna & Rosie). Other favorite roles include Janis Joplin in *Beehive* (Mason Street Warehouse), Betty Jean in *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (Farmers Alley Theater) and Miss Jane in *Floyd Collins* (Front Porch Theatricals). All her love and thanks to the theatre community of Pittsburgh, her incredibly supportive family and friends, and Prince Eric. sandyzwier.com

TROLLEY DRIVER (UNDERSTUDY) | GIBSON WILLIAMS III, a native Pittsburgher, resides in the Hill and enjoys theatre and acting. His offstage talents include costuming and set construction. His theatre credits include *Seven Guitars* and *Findings*. He is grateful to Mark for granting him the opportunity to explore his theatre world. "I thank God for blessings always!"

PRODUCTION MANAGER | MONTEZE FREELAND has worked with PPTCO since 2013. He's managed the productions of *Findings*, *Seven Guitars*, *Dulcy* and *The Piano Lesson*. In 2015 he organized the Theatre Festival in Black & White and returned as Assistant to the Director of the festival in 2016. As always, it's a pleasure to watch the artists create through their talents.

SCENIC PAINTER | DIANE MELCHITZKY has designed and built Pittsburgh Playwrights sets since our 2003 debut. Her work for *Fences* can be seen on display at the August Wilson Center. She recently worked as a carpenter on the movie *Fences* directed by Denzel Washington and completed the set design for the Gateway High School production of *Cinderella*.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | ARIONA SHERWOOD is a Pittsburgh resident who eagerly adopted the Pittsburgh Playwrights into her life beginning with the play *Miss Julie, Clarissa and John*. She has had the luxury of stage managing for the Theatre Festival in Black & White. She has also had a major part in the costumes that have lit up the stage, helping to be a part of history, in August Wilson's *Fences* and *Seven Guitars*. As she continues down this creative journey with her theater family, she would like to dedicate every piece of her hard work in helping this play on its feet to her two children Ameer and Niyeer. For anything is possible through God.

BIOGRAPHIES

SOUND DESIGN | MARK WHITEHEAD is the founder of Saints & Poets Theater, for which he produced and directed the world premiere of Christiane D's *Saffronia*, and the local premieres of Sam Shepard's *The Late Henry Moss* and Donald Freed's *Secret Honor: The Last Testament of Richard M. Nixon*. He was a member of timespace, for which he produced *hamletmachine* and directed *4-H Club* and *Insignificance*. Additional directing credits include *Comfort Zone*, *The Revenants* for PPTCO, *Cry Havoc*, *Taking Sides*, and *Fool for Love*. Mark is Resident Sound Designer for PPTCO and The Unseam'd Shakespeare Company, and has designed for numerous local theaters. Mark has won Onyx awards for best sound design three years in a row for his work on PPTCO's annual August Wilson productions. He was named best sound designer and listed among the best directors in City Paper's 2001 theater round-up, and was named best sound designer of 2000 by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Mark was a founding producer of The Dark Night Cabaret performance series. He has also produced and directed music videos for several local bands.

STAGE MANAGER | MARTI WILLIAMS is honored to be working again with Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. She recently worked on *Josh: The Black Babe Ruth* (New Horizon Theater) and *Miss Julie, Clarissa and John, The Piano Lesson, Dulcy* and the Theatre Festival in Black & White (Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company). She has stage managed numerous plays for New Horizon Theater, Chrystal Bates Productions, Kuntu Repertory Theatre, New Works Festival, National Black Theater Festival, the D. C. Theater Festival and the Langston Hughes Poetry Society of Pittsburgh. Marti was the secretary for the Wilksburg Arts Council, Location Manager for NOMMO Productions, Administrative Assistant for Black Theater Network and a member of Urban Playwrights United. She was awarded an AACTA ONYX Award for best light technician for *Good Black Don't Crack* (Kuntu Repertory Theatre). Her poetic works have been published in several volumes of The National Library of Poetry, "Cavalcade" by Point Park College and "The Phoenix" by Community College of Allegheny County. She is very active in her church and enjoys the theater, bowling, reading, traveling and writing poetry. She thanks GOD for all the talents He has bestowed upon her and for His many blessings. "I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me". She thanks her family & friends for their love and support. She dedicates her work to her ancestors and to her Midnight Angels.

Next at Pittsburgh Playwrights...

Hercules Didn't Wade in the Water

by Michael A. Jones
Directed by Wali Jamal
May 6-21



It is 2005. Two men cling for life on a rooftop, surrounded by murky water, festured with disease and the unknown. Two women are hundred of miles away, striving to see their dreams of life, love and the pursuit of happiness come to fruition. All of this set against the threat of one of America's greatest disasters.

*For tickets and information,
visit pghplaywrights.org*

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DIRECTOR	Cheryl El-Walker
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Ariona Sherwood
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Monteze Freeland
STAGE MANAGER	Marti Williams
SCENIC DESIGNER	Hank Bullinger
SOUND DESIGNER	Mark Whitehead
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Mark Clayton Southers
COSTUME DESIGN	Cheryl El-Walker
MAKEUP DESIGN	Cheryl El-Walker
SCENIC PAINTER	Diane Melchitzky
SET CONSTRUCTION	Alex Barnhart
LIGHTING TECHNICIAN	Ashley Southers
SOUND TECHNICIAN	Marti Williams
PROPS	Marti Williams & Ariona Sherwood
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Pittsburgh Playwrights THEATRE COMPANY



DID YOU KNOW... Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company will travel this summer to the prestigious Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland and the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem NC, with last season's hit play *Miss Julie, Clarissa and John* by Mark Clayton Southers. The production will feature its original cast, pictured above: Chrystal Bates, Kevin Brown and Tami Dixon.

We have received a generous matching grant of \$10,000 for this production. You can **double** the impact of your donation by donating today.

Financial support from patrons like you helps us to pay the theatre artists, build sets, advertise the show and produce the program book in your hand. Your tax-deductible contribution helps us fulfill our mission to produce the work of Pittsburgh playwrights and makes our 2017 Season of World Premieres possible. **Thank you for your support.**

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