

# PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, Nov 7

## ***A Year with Frog and Toad, Plays Nov 30 - Dec 15***

Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University (WFT) proudly announces the second production of its 24/25 season, *A Year with Frog and Toad*, performing November 30 - December 15, 2024 at its theater located in the heart of Boston's Fenway neighborhood.

### **PRESS PERFORMANCES**

Sunday, December 1 at 10:30am & 2:00pm

Tuesday, December 3 at 10:30am

Wednesday, December 4 at 10:30am

### **Press Contact**

**Nick Vargas, Executive Director**



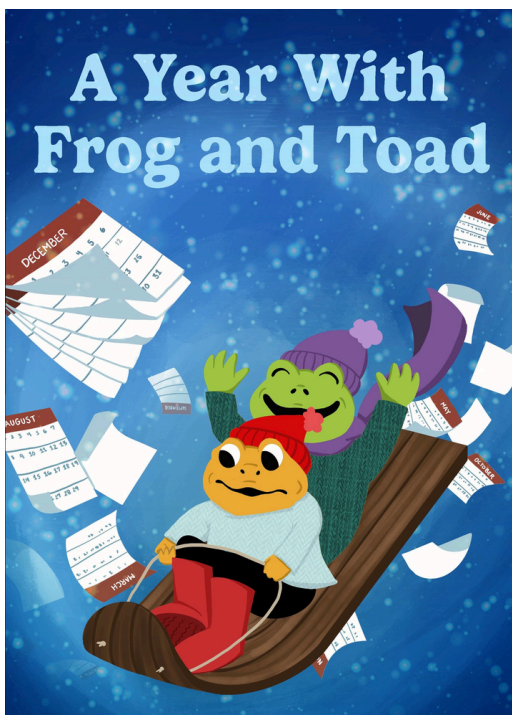
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wheelockfamilytheatre.org



WFT continues its season-long celebration of 'the power of friendship' with the Broadway musical, *A Year with Frog and Toad*. This Tony Award-nominated musical is the perfect story to enjoy this holiday season, providing audiences of all ages an opportunity to see theater with the ones you love.

Based on the popular children's books by celebrated author Arnold Lobel, WFT's *A Year with Frog and Toad* brings Lobel's loveable characters off the page with vibrant music, dynamic choreography and imaginative storytelling, transporting audiences into a vivid picture book world. WFT's production will be directed by Elliott Norton Award winner **Leigh Barrett** with music direction by Elliott Norton Award winner **David Freeman Coleman** and choreography by WFT favorite **Brad Reinking**.

"*A Year with Frog & Toad* was one of the first shows I thought of when considering our theme for the season, a celebration of the power of friendship. The show is the perfect example of how two people, or a frog and a toad, can be different from one another but still care so deeply for each other" says **Nick Vargas, WFT Executive Director**. "It's a clever piece of musical theater that adapts Lobel's stories in a way that speaks to adults and children alike about the themes of kindness, acceptance, and loyalty."

*A Year with Frog and Toad*, follows Frog and Toad over the course of a calendar year. The show begins in early spring, as a trio of birds welcome Frog and Toad awake from their winter-long hibernation. From the moment their webbed feet hop out of bed we're off on adventures big and small! From baking the most delicious cookies to riding down a snowy hill, Frog, Toad, and friends have the most eventful year, ending with the two sharing gifts on Christmas Eve. WFT is excited to welcome back **Anthony Pires Jr.** (WFT's *The Addams Family*, *Matilda the Musical*, & *Ragtime*) in the role of Frog and ecstatic to have Boston veteran **Will McGarrahan**, making his WFT debut, as Toad.

"I'm thrilled about the opportunity to tell this story now because of its relevance in today's world," says Pires Jr.. "We're living in a time where people are searching for connection and understanding, and this story offers audiences an exploration of those themes in a way that allows people to see themselves and each other with more empathy, making the experience not only entertaining but truly meaningful." McGarrahan adds "A Year with Frog and Toad celebrates the comfort that comes from friendship and simple actions. We all can use a little comfort now with our chosen friends."

Barrett, most recently seen as Alice Beineke in WFT's 2023 production of *The Addams Family* is making her WFT directorial debut with *A Year with Frog and Toad*. When sharing her approach to bring these well loved characters to the stage Barrett says, "Everything you know and love about these characters is all still there! But, we've worked diligently to find ways to explore the BIG feelings these characters have and how can our friends help us navigate them."

Continuing its 44 year tradition, *A Year with Frog and Toad* features performers ages 8 to 14 in the role of Moles. These multi-talented young performers hail from towns and cities from across Massachusetts, the majority of which are making their WFT debut! "Our commitment to casting youth in our productions allows young people in the audience to see themselves on stage, deepening their connection to the story and its themes" says Vargas. "The multi generational dimension of, not only the audience, but the company, is part of what makes seeing a show at WFT special." says Barrett. "I love that representation is an intentional part of Wheelock's story, from the stories, to the cast, and especially to the audiences."

Pires Jr. adds, "Wheelock Family Theatre creates a uniquely immersive and inclusive environment. The productions are crafted with care, not just for the story, but for the whole audience experience. The theatre's commitment to accessibility and community engagement makes each show feel like a shared experience, where everyone can feel like they belong."

*A Year with Frog and Toad* runs November 30 through December 15 with the following public performance schedule:

- Saturday, Nov 30 at 2pm
- Sunday, Dec 1 at 10:30am & 2pm
- Saturday, Dec 7 at 2pm & 6pm
- Sunday, Dec 8 at 2pm
- Saturday, Dec 14 at 2pm & 6pm
- Sunday, Dec 15 at 2pm

## **BILLING**

*A Year with Frog and Toad* has music by Robert Reale, book and lyrics by Willie Reale, and is based on the books by Arnold Lobel. The production was originally presented on Broadway by Bob Boyette, Adrienne Lobel, Michael Gardner, Lawrence Horowitz and Roy Furman. The world premiere production was at The Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

## **CAST**

Alan Cid (Bird/Lizard/Large & Terrible Frog), Kristian Espiritu\* (Bird/Mouse/Squirrel/Snail), Will McGarrahan\* (Toad), Todd McNeel (Frog, Toad, Bird/Lizard Understudy), Katie O'Reilly (Snail/et al, Bird/Squirrel Understudy), Anthony Pires Jr.\* (Frog), and Tader Shipley (Bird/Turtle/Squirrel/Mother Frog)

*\*Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association*

## **MOLES**

Hazel Bradley, Luna Odessa Coleman-Brown, Delaney Cuthberth, Addy DeFeo, Ewan Dixon, Maia Ettinger, Nora Gao, Maeve Kennedy, Gray Oliveira, Scarlett Robillard, Gerald Schlechter, Morgan Sharmaboro, Katie Starmer, Zoe Vidanovic, Clare Warren, Ella Wei

## **CREATIVE TEAM**

Leigh Barrett (Director), Alex Berg (Sound Designer), David Freeman Coleman (Music Director), Chelsea Kerl (Costume Designer), Saskia Martinez (Props Designer & Scenic Charge), Jenna McFarland Lord (Scenic Designer), Deb Sullivan (Lighting Designer)\*\*, Phoebe Singer (Associate Director), Brad Reinking (Choreographer)

*\*\*Indicates a member of United Scenic Artists 829*

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

Fanni Horvath\* (Production Stage Manager), Cassie Lebeau (Asst. Stage Manager), Nate Morrissey (A2, Deck Captain), Anika Nayak\* (Asst. Stage Manager), Bekah Rudinec (A1, Audio Engineer), Carolyn Saxon (Casting Supervisor), Lawrence Ware (Lead Electrician), Marissa Wolf (Wardrobe Supervisor/Costume Shop Manager)

*\*Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association*

## **RUN TIME & AGE RECOMMENDATION**

*A Year with Frog and Toad* will run approximately 80 minutes without an intermission.

This production may not be suitable for children under the age of 3 due to the duration of the performance.

For a full synopsis and a list of resources please reference our [Performance Preview Guide](#).

## **WHERE**

Performances take place at Wheelock Family Theatre, located at 180 Riverway, Boston MA 02215. For more information on traveling to the theater visit our website.



## TICKETS

Single ticket prices range from \$26-52 and can be purchased online [WheelockFamilyTheatre.org](http://WheelockFamilyTheatre.org), by phone (617) 353-3001 or at our box office at 180 Riverway, Boston, MA 02215.

First Weekend Four-Pack, provides audiences with 4 tickets to the first three performances (Nov 30 at 2pm, Dec 1 at 10:30am & 2pm) for \$100. For a full list of discounts, please visit our [website](http://www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org).

## ACCESSIBILITY

Access Public Performance Dates are December 8 (2pm) & December 14 (2pm). Open Captioning provided at all performances. Questions regarding access? Please contact Assistant Director for Audience Services Jamie Aznive at [jaznive@bu.edu](mailto:jaznive@bu.edu).

## WRAP-AROUND EXPERIENCES

Following every public performance meet members of the cast on our red carpet!

## ADDITIONAL BILLING

A Year with Frog and Toad- TYA is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International(MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com).

**Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University** (WFT) is the greater Boston area's only professional theater offering a shared experience for the entire family. Founded in 1981, WFT's long-standing commitment to equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion has garnered recognition and awards at the local and national level. WFT's productions have served more than a half-million audience members and WFT's education programs have provided hands-on training to tens of thousands of students across the state of Massachusetts.

Founded in 1839, **Boston University** is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 33,000 students, it is the fourth-largest independent university in the United States. BU consists of 17 schools and colleges, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes integral to the University's research and teaching mission. In 2012, BU joined the Association of American Universities (AAU), a consortium of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.



Jenna McFarland Lord's  
scenic model for  
*A Year with Frog and Toad*

## MEET THE CAST



**Alan Cid** he/him | Bird/Lizard/Large & Terrible Frog

is thrilled to be back again at Wheelock Family Theatre! Past WFT credits include: u/s Patrick, u/s Ensemble (*The Spongebob Musical*), u/s Captain Cook, u/s Ensemble (*Mr. Popper's Penguins*) Additional credits include Swing – Reg, Gary (*The Full Monty*: Umbrella Stage Company) u/s Anthony/Swing (*Sweeney Todd*: Moonbox Productions) Jetsam/Ensemble (*The Little Mermaid*: Reagle Music Theatre), u/s Pablo, TJ, Joey (*Sister Act*: Lyric Stage) Caveman/Ensemble/u/s Andy (*As You Like It*: Boston Conservatory) Alan is a senior at the Boston Conservatory for a BFA in Musical Theater. Special thanks and love to mom, dad, and all of my supportive friends!



**Kristian Espiritu\*** she/they | Bird/Mouse/Squirrel/Snail

is a proud queer Filipinx theater maker and artist. Select credits: (*Here Lies Love*) The Public. (*School of Rock*) 1st National tour. Regional: (*Romeo & Juliet*) A.R.T.; (*The Heart Sellers*) The Huntington Theatre; (*Assassins*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*) Lyric Stage Company; (*Mr. Popper's Penguins*) Wheelock Family Theatre; (*Interstate*) East West Players, (*The Rise and Fall of Holly Fudge*) Merrimack Repertory Theater, (*Once on This Island*) Pioneer Theater Company, (*Little Shop of Horrors*) Music Theatre of Connecticut. Also, Disney Cruise Line, Leviathan Lab, New York Musical Festival, New York Classical Theatre. Intimacy Directing: Chuang Stage, Hovey Players, Sullivan Rep. TV: Love Life, Ray Donovan, Hunters, Younger.



**Will McGarrahan\*** he/him | Toad

makes his Wheelock Family Theatre debut. Previously he played Izzard the Lizard (*The Somebodies*) at Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar, NY in 1972 and Mr. Toad (*The Wind and the Willows*) at Gloucester Stage Company in Gloucester, MA in 2006. He has worked locally at SpeakEasy Stage Company, Lyric Stage of Boston, Huntington Theatre, Umbrella Stage Company, Moonbox Productions, New Rep, Central Square Theatre, and Greater Boston Stage Company. He has a few IRNE Awards and an Eliot Norton award. He would like to dedicate his performance to all the Frogs and Toads out there, especially Larry Coen, who played Toad at Wheelock Family Theatre in 2016.



**Anthony Pires Jr.\*** he/him | Frog

is excited to be back at WFT. You may have scene him recently as Fester (*Addams Family*), Mr. Wormwood/Escapologist (*Matilda*), Coalhouse (*Ragtime*). Other recent credits: Central Square Theater/Front Porch Arts Collective: *Next to Normal* (Dan), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Company). Lyric Stage Company Boston: *Urinetown* (Officer Lockstock) *Preludes* (Chaliapin). *Once on This Island* (Tonton/Storyteller) Greater Boston Stage Company: *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Company). Moonbox Productions: *Passing Strange* (Mr. Franklin/Joop/Hugo). Anthony is proud to be a Black-CapeVerdean Boston native and 2 time Elliot Norton Award Recipient. Special thanks to his friends and family for all their support!



**Tader Shipley** she/her | Bird/Turtle/Squirrel/Mother Frog

is thrilled to be back at Wheelock Family Theatre! WFT credits: *The Wizard of Oz*. Other favorite credits include: *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Moonbox Productions); *All Shook Up* (Reagle Music Theatre); *The Full Monty* (Umbrella Stage Company), *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Taming of The Shrew* (Actors' Shakespeare Project); *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol* (Emerson Colonial Theatre); and *The Donkey Show* (American Repertory Theatre). When not in the theatre, Tader can be found singing in a duo with her partner in music and life, Maxfield Anderson. All my love to mom, dad, and Max.

\*Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association

For full company bios visit our [website](#).

## MEET THE CAST continued



**Todd Mcneel Jr.** he/him  
Understudy  
Frog, Toad, & Bird/et al



**Katie O'Reilly** she/her  
Understudy,  
Bird/Turtle, Bird/Snail

## MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



**Leigh Barrett** she/her | Director

was last seen on The WFT stage as Alice in *Addams Family*, she is thrilled to be making her Wheelock Family Theater directorial debut. Most recently Leigh directed *The Full Monty* (The Umbrella Stage Company). Other directing projects include *Sister Act* (The Lyric Stage Company) *The Last Five Years* (The Lyric Stage Company) *Closer Than Ever* (The New Rep) *Hairspray* (RTW); *Urinetown* (Northeastern University); *Into the Woods*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Addams Family*, *Forever Plaid*, *Spamalot*, and several summers for the Lyric First Stage program, She gives masterclasses in auditioning and navigating a balanced life in this crazy biz as well as mentoring & meeting artists where they are on their career journey. She is a consent forward artist pursuing certification in trauma informed performance coaching. This summer she completed the EDI Cohort Certification Program with Inclusive Stages™. The proud recipient of the 2018 Elliot Norton Prize for Sustained Excellence and the 2018 Norton Award for Outstanding Actress in *Gypsy* and *Souvenir* (Lyric Stage). She also received the Elliot Norton Award in 2004 and 2008. [www.LeighBarrett.com](http://www.LeighBarrett.com) She is the founder of “Carols for a Cure” raising funds for Type One Diabetes Research. [www.LeighBarrett.com](http://www.LeighBarrett.com) Many thanks to this incredible group of humans for sharing so much of their time trust and talents with me in this process. Much Love to HB & the boys.



**David Freeman Coleman** he/him | Music Director

is excited to return to Wheelock Family Theater after music directing past season's *The Addams Family* & *Matilda*. Associate Professor at Berklee College of Music, Lecturer of Music at Tufts University. Recent Music Direction: *South Pacific*, *The Little Mermaid* (Reagle Music Theatre), *The Boy Who Kissed the Sky* (Company One), *Sister Act* (Lyric Stage), *Jelly's Last Jam* (Long Wharf Theatre), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Central Square Theater & Greater Boston Stage), *A Strange Loop*, *Once On this Island*, *Choir Boy* (SpeakEasy Stage), *The Bluest Eye* (Huntington Theater), *Wild: A Musical Becoming* (A.R.T.), *Passing Strange* & *Sister School* (Moonbox Productions). 4 Eliot Norton Award Nominations for Outstanding Music Direction and 1 win for 2023. Has worked with Idina Menzel, Audra McDonald, Mariah Carey, Bobby McFerrin, Ryan Gosling and the Boston Pops.



**Brad Reinking** he/him | Choreographer

returns to WFT after appearing in *Disney's Beauty in the Beast* (Lumiere), *Ragtime* (Harry Houdini), *Shrek*, *Billy Elliot*, and *Make Way For Ducklings*. Recent credits include choreographing *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Moonbox Productions), directing and choreographing *Disney's Descendants* (The Company Theatre), and choreographing *The Wizard of Oz* (Rochester Opera House). Regional credits include Trinity Repertory Company, North Shore Music Theatre, The Hanover Theatre, Lyric Stage Company, Wagon Wheel Theatre, and many others. In addition to performing, directing, and choreographing, Brad is an award winning theatre educator. He has served on staff at North Shore Music Theatre, Greater Boston Stage, The Company Theatre, Kids Through Arts, and right here at WFT as a long time member of the Education Department! Brad lives in Boston, MA with his partner, Drew, and their Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Belle.