

The Cool Kids Musical

# September 15-October 9

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#### Message from the Director

The fact that I even get to write a Director's note during this time is unbelievable to me; I am so grateful. This process has been such a revitalizing and inspiring experience. Our cast was a dream to work with: their tenacity, creativity, and sparkle was exactly what I needed during this tumultuous time.

I owe so much gratitude to the writers: Douglas Lyons, Melvin Tunstall III & Greg Borowsky, and to Broadway Licensing for giving us permission to do this extremely timely and beautiful show. *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* is about Lily Polkadot being the first Polkadot in an all-Square school and is based on the Little Rock Nine's courageous journey at the beginning of desegregation of schools in 1957 America. Throughout the show, we watch Lily overcome bullying, segregated drinking fountains, and we see her form unbreakable bonds with her classmates & teacher. Lily represents all of the brave civil rights pioneers that have come before her: who fought for a seat at the table, who demanded they be treated equally. We must continue to advocate for others and speak up about injustice. Black Lives Matter.

Though this show is advertised as "TYA," or Theatre for Young Audiences, this story and message is for everyone. My hope is that this musical will inspire conversations with families surrounding equality, individuality, and acceptance. I dedicate this production to anyone who has ever felt like a Polkadot, to anyone who has felt like they didn't belong. You do belong. You are special. You are loved.

"Though your skin is different I am still your brother. We will not let ignorance control our actions no way, for it's a new day at Rockaway. You're a cool kid because you are there."

#### ~Christopher Castanho, Director & Choreographer

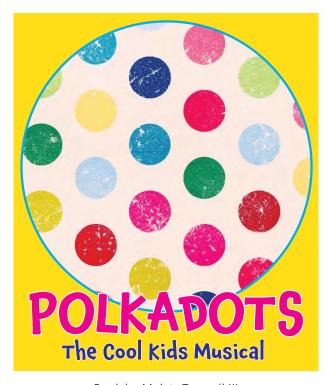
#### - Message from the Board President

When the 2020 season was revealed to Mill Mountain Theatre's Board of Directors in 2019 I was delighted to learn that the MMT Apprentices would be performing *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*. The subject matter is timely and relevant to our lives today. I was disappointed when we had to cancel the summer tour, but the safety of our artists, staff and guests remains our top priority.

While nothing can compete with the experience of live theater, I am excited that MMT has been able to adapt this production to the digital screen. MMT staff and apprentices have put in hundreds of hours of planning, rehearsing, performing, producing and editing to bring this production to life virtually. The Board of Directors cannot thank them enough for their willingness to adapt and for their dedication to the theatre. Because of their dedication, our virtual audience members will be reminded that our differences are what make us awesome!

On behalf of the Mill Mountain Theatre Board we hope you enjoy this performance!

~Macel H. Janoschka, Mill Mountain Theatre Board President | 2020



## Book by Melvin Tunstall III Music by Greg Borowsky & Douglas Lyons Lyrics by Douglas Lyons

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical is presented by arrangement through Broadway Licensing and streamed exclusively through Broadway On Demand.

#### **Producing Artistic Director**

Ginger Poole

Director/Choreographer

Christopher Castanho

**Projections Designers** 

Victoria Buck & Travis Kendrick

**Costume Designer** Cole Spivia

**Production Stage Manager** 

Taylor Cobb

**Scenic Designer** Matt Sheilds

**Properties Designer** 

Matt Shields

Videographer Richard Maddox **Music Director** 

Seth Davis

**Lighting Designer** Travis Kendrick

**Sound Consultant** Dylan Francis with Stage Sound

# **CAST LIST**

Alexia Buckner
Achilles Mulkey
Nisa Isabella Mercado
Madeline Walker
Roberto Méndez
AnnElese Galleo

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

ProducerGinger Poole
Director and Choreographer
Music DirectorSeth Davis
Production Stage Manager Taylor Cobb
Scenic Designer and Props Designer
Costume DesignerCole Spivia
Lighting Designer Travis Kendrick
Projections DesignersVictoria Buck and Travis Kendrick
VideographerRichard Maddox
Assistant Stage Manager AnnElese Galleo
Video Editing Assistant
Costume Support Matt Shields, Taylor Cobb, AnnElese Galleo and Ginger Poole

# **MMT STAFF**

Producing Artistic Dir	ector	Ginger Poole
Director of Education	1	Travis Kendrick
Education Associate.		Victoria Buck
Resident Creative and	d Teaching Artist	Christopher Castanho
Business Manager		Larry Kufel
Director of Developm	nent	John Levin
Assistant Artistic Dire	ector	Payton Moledor
Digital Creative Intern	n	Olivia Bloch

### **Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical**

Book by Melvin Tunstall III, Music by Greg Borowsky and Douglas Lyons, and Lyrics by Douglas Lyons

## Setting: Fictional Town of Rockaway

Scene 1 First Day Sticks and Stones	
Scene 2 One Pal	The Playground Lily
Scene 3 Square Motto Beautiful	
Scene 4 The First	The Lunchroom . Ms. Square & Lily
Scene 5 One Pal (Reprise)	<b>The Playground</b> Lily
Scene 6	The Bus Stop
Scene 7 Cool Kid The Squa-Dot	•
Scene 8 New Day Bows/Finale	Troy Triangle

#### **THE CAST**



# ALEXIA BUCKNER (Lily Polkadot)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Alexia Buckner (Lily) is so happy to be working with Mill Mountain Theatre this summer! She is a recent graduate of the Dobbins Conservatory at Southeast Missouri State University. During her time in school, she was given many opportunities to star in shows as Deloris Van Cartier in Sister Act, Beneatha Younger in A Raisin in the Sun, and the ferocious Dragon in

Shrek the Musical. When she is not onstage, she loves to spend her time in aerial gyms, traveling, and watching Food Network. Follow her @thealexiabuckner to see what else she's working on!

A Message from Alexia: It is an honor to be bringing life to Lily Polkadot in Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical here at Mill Mountain Theatre this summer! I am originally from Memphis, TN, and am a recent graduate from the Dobbins Conservatory of Southeast Missouri State University. After graduating in such difficult times, my hope has been restored by the opportunity to perform in this production. With a message that perfectly coincides with the current situation of our nation, it is even more important to raise awareness about these events and use the community-driven platform Mill Mountain has maintained to share that message.

I am eager to work with these artists, directors, and production teams as we navigate the realm of virtual entertainment. As an artist, it is imperative to be adaptive, and there is no better time to work with all the curveballs life has been throwing us than right now. It truly shines a light on my need to be in the hands-on process of creating live theatre, even without a live audience, and I am so thankful to have this opportunity. My hope is that this performance will serve as a blueprint, and that others are inspired by Mill Mountain's dedication to helping performing artists continue to do what we love.



#### **ACHILLES MULKEY**

(Sky Square)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Achilles Mulkey (Sky) is overjoyed to be working with Mill Mountain Theatre for the first time! He is a theatre artist, instrumentalist, and writer originally from NW Arkansas. Favorite credits include: Mr. Mistoffelees (CATS), Giuliano (BIG LOVE), and Peter Pan (THE LOST GIRL). In his spare time, he enjoys photography, exploring nature, and a good cup of tea. Training:

Viterbo University (BFA Music Theatre), RAD Ballet. Special thanks to his family, Kai, and the cats. IG: @achillesmulkey/achillesmulkey.com

A Message from Achilles: I'm originally from Northwest Arkansas where I was born and raised in a big, homeschool family! Growing up, I was fortunate enough to have an arts-heavy education, and I focused on ballet as a possible career path. It wasn't until later in high school that I discovered theatre and realized that it was an art form where my love of storytelling and my technical skills as a dancer, singer, and musician could meet.

I graduated from Viterbo University in 2019 with my BFA in Musical Theatre and a Minor in Dance. Whenever I'm not performing or auditioning, I enjoy exploring the outdoors, writing, photography, and spending time with my partner and our cats!

I am endlessly grateful to be working with Mill Mountain this summer. So many of my peers are currently out of work and are unable to safely do what they love, which is heartbreaking. I also feel incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to touch on this work in particular, especially with all that is going on in the world and our country. Intersectional and inclusive theatre are very important to me. I'm so excited to be working on material written by Black artists, to be presenting pivotal history in a way that all ages can understand, and to be able to share this story in such a unique way.



#### NISA ISABELLA MERCADO

(Penelope Square)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

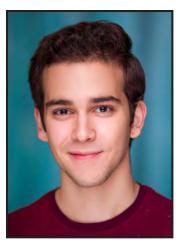
Nisa Isabella Mercado (Penelope) is so excited to be joining Mill Mountain Theatre's 2020 apprentice company! Although she was born and raised in California, she decided to further pursue her dreams of being a professional performer at Shenandoah Conservatory and recently finished her senior year as a BFA Musical Theatre major! Her favorite

credits include, Diana Morales in *A CHORUS LINE* at Heritage Theatre Festival, Belinda Blair in *NOISES OFF* at Shenandoah Conservatory and U/S Glinda and ensemble in *THE WIZ* at Virginia Repertory Theatre.

A Message from Nisa: I was born and raised in San Diego, California. I come from a huge family of many different cultural backgrounds, Filipino, Mexican, and Black. I have family in many different places around the world, so having this opportunity to do what I love and have it broadcasted online during the pandemic is a huge blessing.

I have always wanted to work at Mill Mountain, and before we knew we could still do the production, I was so devastated that I might not have been able to spend at least part of my summer here. I knew we had to do what was necessary for the safety of ourselves and others, but I could sense that Mill Mountain wasn't going to back down and completely shut down this show. The urgency and care they have put into making this production happen are very apparent. When Travis and Christopher gave me the news that I would still have the opportunity to come here, I couldn't tell you how grateful I was to know that I could continue to explore my artistry and do what I love this summer.

As a 2020 graduate of Shenandoah Conservatory with a BFA in Musical Theatre I can say that I am very grateful to have the ability to perform immediately upon graduating. But even more than that, I am very excited to share a story that is beyond important and relevant to the Black Lives Matter movement.



**ROBERTO MÉNDEZ** 

(Papa Square)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Roberto Méndez (Papa Square) is originally from Puerto Rico, but moved to Atlanta, Georgia when he was nearly nine years old. He now lives in Columbus, Georgia where he is pursuing a BFA in Theatre Performance at Columbus State University. He is thrilled to be back at Mill Mountain Theatre where you may have seen him last as Ernst in 'Spring Awakening', or as Snail

in 'A Year with Frog and Toad'. He also hopes you enjoy the show as well as its pertinent message.

A Message from Roberto: I am originally from Ponce, Puerto Rico. I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, when I was nine years old, and that's where I found my passion for the performing arts. I am extremely excited to start my senior year this Fall at Columbus State University and to complete my BFA degree in Theatre Performance. While we will be mostly online for our classes this semester, I'm eager to see what innovative ways the theatre world finds to still help people come together and create.

It is amazing to be back at Mill Mountain Theatre after being an apprentice company member here in 2018. Mill Mountain continues to provide audiences with incredible stories in a safe manner and I am utterly grateful, not only for the opportunity to get to do what I love during these uncertain times, but also because I get to experience this new way to produce theatre first-hand!



#### MADELINE WALKER

(Ms. Square)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Madeline Walker (Ms. Square) recently graduated from the University of Central Florida with a BFA in Musical Theatre and minor in dance. She was a member of MMT's 2018 Apprentice Company and returned last summer to perform in their Let's Go to the Movies concert. Madeline enjoys performing at Universal Orlando Resort and SeaWorld Orlando. Theatre

UCF credits include *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Miss Shingle), *Hot Mikado* (Yum Yum), and *Oklahoma!* (U/S Ado Annie). MsMadelineMae.com

A Message from Madeline: I am beyond thankful to be back in Roanoke, Virginia. I graduated this past May from the University of Central Florida, where I earned my BFA in Musical Theatre with a Minor in Dance. Living in Orlando, Florida, I have been very fortunate to have the chance to work with some incredible regional professional theaters. I also have really enjoyed working to provide entertainment at theme parks such as Universal Orlando Resort and SeaWorld Orlando.

I was a member of MMT's 2018 Apprentice Company and performed in *Spring Awakening, A Year with Frog and Toad,* and *Shrek*. This past summer I was a vocalist in MMT's Let's Go to the Movies concert. Mill Mountain has continually provided me with some incredible opportunities, and this summer is no different. It is amazing to be creating theater right now, during this crazy time for our country and the performing arts industry. It is also a difficult time to be a performer, and Mill Mountain's determination to put this production out into the world gives me so much hope. Coming back to Roanoke this summer has definitely been different, but I feel safe and cared for in the new protocols put into place by the theatre to ensure the production. I am so excited to be involved with this project, and I am even more excited to see the impact this production will have, especially in this new, virtual way. Thank you for supporting Mill Mountain Theatre and artists like me.



#### ANNELESE GALLEO

(Swing/Dance Captain)

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

AnnElese Galleo (Swing/Dance Captain) is a Salem-grown performer, creative artist, educator, and writer. A former Mill Mountain Conservatory student and summer intern, AnnElese is currently pursuing her BFA in Music Theatre at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Some of her favorite credits include *Shrek* (Fiona), *Spring Awakening* (Anna), and *Newsies* 

(Ensemble/Dance Captain). She is delighted to be back at Mill Mountain during this time to create art with such friendly faces.

A Message from AnnElese: I am a theatre artist born and raised right here in the Roanoke Valley. Currently, I'm working towards my BFA in Musical Theatre at Boston Conservatory's Berklee College of Music. Go Jazz Cats! I am absolutely thrilled to be getting the chance to learn and grow as a "swing" in this brilliantly written show, during such uncertain times. My heart is soaring. Although there may never be a "normal" again, I am extremely grateful to be able to create art in a safe space and meet new theatre artists whom I, in such a short time, have become incredibly inspired by.

Mill Mountain Theatre is the place where I truly discovered my passion for the arts in so many different areas, such as costuming, lighting, directing, and much more. Not only is MMT entrusting me with *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, but in the fall I will also be teaching and assistant-teaching musical theatre and dance classes in the MMT Conservatory while I continue my own virtual studies at my conservatory! Being able to keep working hands-on in the field I'm studying will benefit me my whole career. Mill Mountain Theatre is full of the kindest and most generous people I have ever met. They continue to push me out of my comfort zone and have helped shape me into the artist I am and will become.

I thank you deeply for your support and keeping something so human and so beautiful as theatre alive during this time.

#### CREATIVE TEAM

**CHRISTOPHER CASTANHO** (Director/Choreographer) is a director, educator, and writer originally from Connecticut. Most recently, Christopher co-directed Mill Mountain's award-winning holiday production of *The Sound of Music*. He holds his BFA in Musical Theatre from Shenandoah Conservatory. Prior MMT directing credits include *Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr, A Year With Frog and Toad TYA, The Tempest, Dead of Night, My Fatal Valentine,* and program director for the annual *Write Stuff!* Young Playwright Festival. His adaptation of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and original play *Mother Goose Tales* have both been produced on MMT's Waldron Stage. Christopher works full-time at Mill Mountain Theatre as their Resident Creative and Teaching Artist.

**SETH DAVIS** (Music Director) is the resident music director at MMT and thrilled to work with such a phenomenal cast and creative team on this fun show! Seth is a music director and musician in both the musical theater and classical music realms, in addition to being a teacher, clinician, and coach for performers and musicians of all ages. In addition to all of the terrific MMT shows he has had the chance to work on since arriving in Roanoke in 2013, favorite regional credits include *Kiss of the Spiderwoman, Spring Awakening, See What I Wanna See* (Actor's Express), *Illyria: A Twelfth Night Musical* (Georgia Shakespeare), *Hair, Time Between Us, A Diva's Christmas* (Serenbe Playhouse), *The Red Balloon* (Theatre du Reve) and *The Andrews Brothers* (Stage Door Players). Seth has also served as musical director for Georgia Tech, Oglethorpe University, and Hollins University in addition to teaching at The Alliance Theatre, Aurora Theatre and judging many regional music and theater festival competitions. Love always to Travis.

**TAYLOR COBB** (Production Stage Manager) has been involved in theatre for over 15 years as an actor, pit percussionist, and stage manager. Over the past two years he has been stage managing touring/mainstage performances right here in the Roanoke Valley. Some of his favorite SM credits include *Matilda*, *Annie*, and *Schoolhouse Rock: Live!* Taylor would like to thank you all for supporting MMT and the important work that is Polkadots. He would also like to thank his incredible partner Emily and their two cats, Clara and Rufus. Enjoy the show!

MATT SHIELDS (Scenic & Props Designer) originates from Northern Virginia and is one of nine children. He graduated from Radford University in 2017, where he studied technical theatre. Matt has lived and worked at a variety of theaters around the United States. For the last three seasons, he has served as the resident Props Master here at MMT. Some of his favorite credits include *West Side Story* at MMT, *Souvenir* at New Harmony Theatre, and *Oklahoma!* at Stage Door Manor. Matt is very excited to have been a part of this recorded production, spreading the amazing message of this story.

**COLE SPIVIA** (Costume Designer) is a Costume Designer and Technician from Atlanta, Georgia. She's absolutely thrilled to be back at Mill Mountain for this unique project. You may have seen her previous work on *Shrek The Musical*. She's designed for many of the great Atlanta theaters including Georgia Ensemble Theatre, Horizon Theatre Company, Synchronicity Theatre Company, Actor's Express, and The Aurora. She's also designed regionally with Glow Lyric Opera in Greenville, SC. Thank you wholeheartedly for supporting the arts.

**TRAVIS KENDRICK** (Lighting Designer & Projections Designer) is a professional artist and educator and serves as the Director of Education for Mill Mountain Theatre. He holds his MFA in Directing from the University Of California – Irvine and BFA in Musical Theatre from Point Park University. Most recently at MMT, Travis served as director and lighting designer for *Write Stuff! Young Playwrights Festival* and *Romeo & Juliet*. Travis is proud to be working on this imaginative, insightful, and timely production. TravisKendrick.com

VICTORIA BUCK (Projections Designer) Victoria is originally from Columbus, Georgia, where she spent her childhood acting, singing, and dancing in local theaters and studios. After graduating from high school, her passion for the performing arts and education led her to Greenville, South Carolina, where she received her Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Theatre Arts from Furman University, and then on to Mary Baldwin University in Staunton, Virginia, where she received both her Master of Letters (MLitt) and her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Shakespeare & Performance. Currently, Victoria resides in Roanoke, Virginia, where she works as the full-time Education Associate for Mill Mountain Theatre, a Visiting Lecturer in Theatre at Hollins University, an actor, and a private acting coach.

#### **COSTUME DESIGN**



We were so lucky to have Cole Spivia, the costume designer of Polkadots, return to MMT for this special project. Mill Mountain patrons may remember her work from *Shrek The Musical TYA* on the Trinkle MainStage in 2018. Cole created her design by using costume pieces that we had in storage and even custom built some of the clothes. Below are her costume renderings or costume drawings next to an image of the finished product.



Alexia Buckner as Lily Polkadot





Achilles Mulkey as Sky Square





Madeline Walker as Ms. Square



#### **SCENIC DESIGN**



Originally this production was meant to tour the Roanoke valley, which meant our set, costumes, and props all had to fit in a white van. After we made the decision to translate our touring show into a digital production, scenic designer Matt Shields adapted his original design (seen above) into the final product of what you see in the show today.

#### **PROJECTIONS DESIGN**

Travis Kendrick & Victoria Buck designed all of the projections you see in the show. All of these images and videos were built from scratch, stylized to accentuate shapes: squares, dots, and triangles. If you look closely, you might see some fun easter eggs hidden throughout: one of which is Ms. Square's word wall mentioning many of the vocabulary words she teaches us throughout the musical.



#### **FILMING**



For our final performance that you will see through Broadway on Demand, we combined the magic of theatre and filmmaking and recorded the show over two and a half days, making sure every camera angle was perfect, every costume was sparkling, and every voice was crystal clear. Our actors had the challenge of "hitting their marks" and being consistent throughout their performance so that the final product would feel cohesive.

#### **VIRTUAL REHEARSALS**



The cast had virtual rehearsals during their first two weeks, where they learned music, explored the characters and story, and got the chance to hear from some very special guests regarding race, equality, and the inspiration for *Polkadots*. These socially distanced weeks, though unorthodox, were such an incredible gift.

We spoke with Douglas Lyons (Co-creator of Polkadots), Charles & Anita Price (Harrison Museum), Kennedy Salters (Professional Actor & MMT Alum), Michelle LoRicco (Theatre Educator & MMT Alum), Gates DeHart (Former Educator), and William Lee (MMT Board Member, Former Clergyman & Community Activist).





#### Live Theatre Needs An Audience. MMT Needs You.

Dear Friends of Mill Mountain Theatre,

In this year of multiple health, social and economic challenges, Mill Mountain Theatre rose to meet them. Through innovation and creativity our classes for students have reached them safely via the internet. Meet Me At Mill Mountain podcasts invited our theatre family to enjoy eves dropping on interesting conversations with actors you usually see on stage. And a safely produced film of our summer children's musical allowed us to uphold our mission to build their reading skills. MMT drew a truly international following, thanks to the technology that has shrunk our world.

But, Live Theatre Needs An Audience. Without you sitting in the Trinkle MainStage or close to the Waldron Stage's performers, some of the magic of theatre is lost. Not hearing your laughter and having you sing along to familiar songs means the show is incomplete.

MMT is eager for new days ahead, a 2021 Season in which we are ready to navigate multiple ways of bringing you drama and music, imagination-sparking magic and enrichment for kids.

MMT survives every challenge only with the friendship and support of those who believe as we do that live theatre exists for the audiences it serves. There are many ways to be involved at MMT and we can find a place for whatever you can contribute. The most urgent is to be part of our year-end appeal that will enable MMT to continue into 2021. Please go to www.millmountain.org, click on the DONATE button and make your gift today.

MMT Needs You.

Macel Janoschka President, Mill Mountain Theatre Board of Directors

Ginger Poole Producing Artistic Director

#### Here is how we used your gifts in 2019

- 212 arts events (includes performances, concerts, MMTC classes and camps.
- 337 actors, directors, designers, musicians, artists hired for those shows and programs.
- Entertained audiences totaling 27,946 included 4,289 youth under age 18.
- MMT Conservatory held 42 multi-week courses and one-week summer camps teaching 8,662 students - pre-kindergarten through adults - theatre skills and workplace disciplines, building confidence through public performances. Technical Theatre classes taught teenage students design and execution skills in sound, lighting, scenic and costumes. We gave 2,077 books to kids about the shows they had seen and know 92 percent were enjoyed.

Don't just join a gym.

# CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

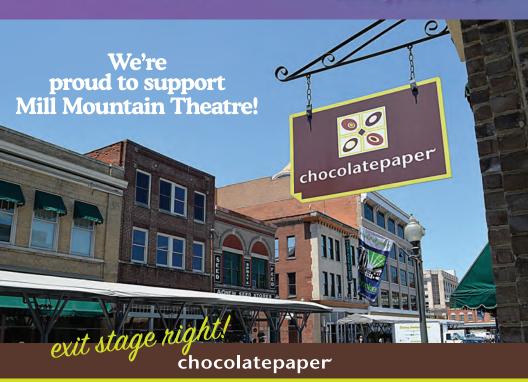
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#### TO MAKE A DONATION:

- Click on the DONATE button on our website, www.millmountain.org or our Click & Pledge social media page. GIVE NOW on your phone, add the contribution to your credit card account and get an instant confirmation.
- Mail your gift to Mill Mountain Theatre, One Market Square, Roanoke, VA 24011
- Contact John Levin at 540-342-5761 or development@millmountain.org

#### FREE PARKING FOR DONORS

Donors who give \$1,000 or more per season to support Mill Mountain Theatre earn passes for free parking when they attend our shows. Available parking is in either the Center in the Square Garage or the Tower Garage on days when MMT has performances. Eligible donors will be contacted with details.

For more information about this valued benefit, please contact

John Levin at 540-342-5761 or development@millmountain.org.

# **Share the Magic**

Live theatre is inspiration that nourishes the imagination of children. And for teenagers an experience in a professional theatre often opens career paths and affirms talent. Not every family in our community can afford to give their children these experiences so we ask for contributions to the Share the Magic fund, which provides free tickets to families who need them and scholarships to talented youth.

Through non-profit partners – Apple Ridge Farm, Child Health Investment Partnership of Roanoke, HopeTree Family Services, West End Center for Youth and YMCA After School – we identify eligible recipients. This season their tickets are paid by The Dunkenbeger-Waskey Group at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, Dominion Risk Advisors, Freedom First Credit Union, First Citizens Bank & Trust Co., Interactive Design Group and P1 Technologies, Inc. For more information about Share the Magic and MMT's Community Outreach Programs, please contact John Levin.

Mill Mountain Theatre is grateful to friends whose donations to the Annual Giving Fund sustain live, professional theatre and enable us to provide valued programs for the community. The following is a list of generous donors whose gifts we received in 2019. Asterisks mark those who are current and past members of MMT's Board of Directors. If you have questions about this list, please contact Development Director John Levin at 540-342-5761 or development@millmountain.org

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