

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, January 16

Flora & Ulysses, Plays February 15 - March 9

Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University (WFT) is thrilled to announce the third production in its 24/25 season, **Kate DiCamillo's** award-winning book *Flora & Ulysses* adapted into a heartwarming and imaginative production for the stage!

PRESS PERFORMANCES




Saturday, February 15 at 6:00pm

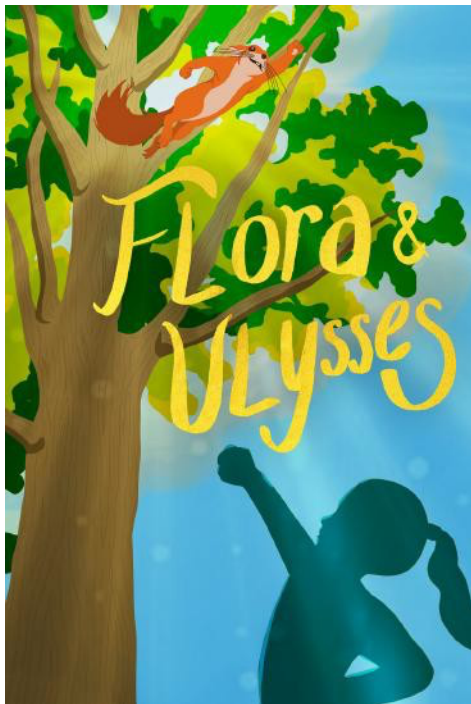
Sunday, February 16 at 2:00pm

Saturday, February 22 at 2:00pm

Press Contact

Nick Vargas, Executive Director

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Flora & Ulysses tells the extraordinary story of Flora Belle Buckman, a 10-year-old girl who's a self-proclaimed cynic with a deep love for comic books. Her life takes an unexpected turn when she witnesses a squirrel, Ulysses, being sucked into a vacuum cleaner and emerging with unexpected powers. Together, Flora and Ulysses embark on an adventure that explores friendship, love, and the power of unexpected heroes. Adapted by **John Glore** (WFT's 2024 production of *A Wrinkle in Time*), *Flora & Ulysses* is based on the Newbery Medal-winning novel by **Kate DiCamillo** (*Because of Winn Dixie*, *The Tale of Desesperaux*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, and many others). WFT's *Flora & Ulysses* features an imaginative mix of heartwarming storytelling, comic book-inspired visuals, and an intergenerational cast of Boston-based performers.

"This production promises to be a heart-filled experience for families," says **Nick Vargas**, WFT Executive Director. "Glore's adaptation perfectly captures the book's tone, blending humor and the wildly unexpected with a warmth and tenderness for the characters as we watch their story unfold. I'm excited to welcome audiences into the world of the play, with design elements borrowing inspiration from the book's signature comic book-style illustrations. The creative team, led by Director Joshua Rashon Streeter, has found the perfect marriage of new technology, traditional theatre storytelling devices, and original puppets to spark the imaginations of the young and young at heart."

WFT is thrilled to have **Joshua Rashon Streeter** at the helm of this production, making his Wheelock Family Theatre Debut. “Flora & Ulysses digs into complex relationships and genuine friendships that represent the modern family,” says Streeter. “Audiences, no matter their age, will see themselves in the piece. The characters are quirky, but each has honest and heartfelt elements about them that remind us of someone in our own backyard. This is truly a “family theatre” play!”

Continuing its 44-year legacy of intergenerational casting, WFT introduces 11-year-old **Livia “Livie” Ketri** to audiences as Flora Belle Buckman and welcomes back 13-year-old **Jack Baumrind** (*The Addams Family, James & the Giant Peach*) as William Spiver.

“I am honored to make my debut at the Wheelock Family Theater, home to some of the greatest productions in the Northeast,” shares **Ketri**. “As a 5th grader, I read Kate DiCamillo’s wonderful book and loved Flora’s character, a witty and smart young woman, who is a “natural born cynic. I am inspired by Flora’s strong personality and dedication to finding a lasting friendship.”

“I am excited to return to WFT for the third time,” says **Baumrind**. “I read Flora & Ulysses when I was younger and I’m very excited to perform in a play version of a story I love. William was one of my favorite characters in the book, and I think everyone will relate to him, and his relationship with Flora - two friends that can be with each other no matter how they view you.

Joining Ketri and Baumrind in the cast are the best of Greater Boston’s performers, three of whom are making their Wheelock Family Theatre debuts. **Cheryl McMahon** is returning to WFT having most recently appeared in its award-winning production of *Hairspray*. **Kayla Shimizu, Damon Singletary, and Chris Stahl**, will be familiar to regional audiences, having numerous credits throughout New England.

Stahl, playing one of the titular roles, Ulysses, will have the creative challenge of performing as an actor/puppeteer, a task he’s mastered before. “Normally an actor just has their own body to tell the story, but in this case, it’s like having two bodies. There’s a lot of trial and error to see what works and doesn’t, but there’s also so much imagination involved when working as a puppeteer, which is thrilling!”

“As a frequent member of the audience at Wheelock Family Theater, I have always loved the high quality of its shows and their broad appeal and accessibility to audiences of all ages and backgrounds,” says Ketri. “I am excited to be part of a show that delivers an uplifting message of hope, kindness, and friendship.”

Flora & Ulysses runs February 15 through March 9 with the following public performance schedule:

February

Saturday, 15 at 2 pm & 6 pm
 Sunday, 16 at 2 pm
 Wednesday, 19 at 11 am - MA School Vacation
 Thursday, 20 at 11 am - MA School
 Vacation
 Saturday, 22 at 2 pm
 Sunday, 23 at 2 pm

March

Saturday, 1 at 2 pm & 6 pm
 Sunday, 2 at 2 pm
 Sunday, 8 at 2 pm & 6
 pm
 Sunday, 9 at 2 pm

BILLING

Flora & Ulysses by John Glore / Based on the novel by Kate DiCamillo / Originally produced by South Coast Repertory, CA / Produced by special arrangement with Plays for New Audiences

CAST

Jack Baumrind (William Spiver), Eli Ditkoff (Understudy - William Spiver), Livia 'Livie' Ketri (Flora Belle Buckman), Brandon Lee (Understudy - Ulysses, George Buckman/et al), Cheryl McMahon* (Tootie Tickham, Rita, Dr. Meescham), Katie Pickett (Understudy - Tootie/et al & Phyllis/et al) Kayla Shimizu (Phyllis & Ernie), Damon Singeltary* (George, Alfred T. Slipper, Mr. Klaus), Christ Stahl* (Ulysses), Millar Vigoda (Understudy - Flora)

**Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association*

CREATIVE TEAM

Mackenzie Adamick (Composer/Sound Designer), Nia Safarr Banks** (Costume Designer), Daniel Begin (Associate Director), Danielle DeLaFuente (Scenic Designer), Amanda Gibson (Puppet Designer), Justin Lahue (Projections Designer), Saskia Martinez (Props Designer), Joshua Rashon Streeter (Director), Lawrence Ware (Lighting Designer)

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

PRODUCTION TEAM

Becca Cottrell (Assistant Stage Manager) Shauwna Dias Grillo* (Production Stage Manager), Saskia Martinez (Scenic Charge), Nate Morrissey (Lead Electrician/Deck Electrician/A2), Anika Nayak (Assistant Stage Manager), Bekah Rudinec (A1/Audio Engineer), Marissa Wolf (Wardrobe Supervisor/Costume Shop Manager)

**Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association*

RUN TIME & AGE RECOMMENDATION

Flora & Ulysses will run approximately 80 minutes without an intermission.

This production may not be suitable for children under the age of 8 due to some of the themes explored. 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 at WheelockFamilyTheatre.org, by phone at (617) 353-3001 or our box office at 180 Riverway, Boston, MA 02215.

First Weekend Four-Pack provides audiences with 4 tickets to the first three performances (Feb 15 at 2 pm & 6 pm and Feb 16 at 2 pm) for \$100. For a full list of discounts, please visit our [website](#).

ACCESSIBILITY

Access Public Performance Dates are March 1 (6 pm) & March 8 (2 pm). Open Captioning is provided at all performances. Questions regarding access? Please contact Assistant Director for Audience Services Jamie Aznive at jaznive@bu.edu.

MEET THE CAST



Jack Baumrind | William Spiver

is excited to return to WFT to act in his first non-musical. He most recently performed as Boy Scrooge/Ignorance (*A Christmas Carol*) at NSMT in Beverly, and Oliver (*Oliver!*) at APA in Orleans. His most favorite role has been Pugsley (*The Addams Family*) at WFT. Other roles he enjoyed were Kurt Von Trapp at NSMT, Ralphie at CCTC/HJT in Harwich, and Olaf and Gavroche at Company Theater in Norwell. In 2023, Jack rehearsed and performed with the original cast of *Ragtime* at Broadway's Minskoff Theater for the 25th Reunion Concert. He is incredibly grateful to the entire WFT team for welcoming him back. @jackbaumrind



Livia 'Livie' Ketri | Flora Belle Buckman

is excited to make her mainstage WFT debut in the role of Flora. She is a 5th-grade student at The Meadowbrook School of Weston. Her past credits include Gabriella (*Disney's High School Musical Jr.*), Tin Man (*The Wizard of Oz*), Cinderella (*Rodger & Hammerstein's Cinderella*), among others. When not on the stage, Livie enjoys her voice and piano lessons and recitals at the Rivers Conservatory, playing soccer with Wellesley United, and spending time with friends. Livie would like to thank her mom, dad, extended family and her acting coach for their support and guidance.



Cheryl McMahon* | Tootie Tickham, Rita, Dr. Meescham

is delighted to return to WFT, having most recently appeared here in *Hairspray*. Back in 1982, WFT founders, Jane Staab and Sue Kosoff took a chance on Cheryl and cast her in *It's a Bird, It's a Plane*, *It's Superman*, as Lois Lane, and that experience led to more than a dozen shows here. Other performances include those at the Huntington Theatre, Lyric Stage Boston, Speakeasy Stage Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, Goodspeed Opera House, New London Barn Theatre, and Hanover Repertory Company, where she recently played Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*. For the last 30 years, during the holiday season, Cheryl can be found at North Shore Music Theatre, in the long-running production of *A Christmas Carol*.



Kayla Shimizu | Phyllis Buckman, Ernie

Recent credits include *A Christmas Carol* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Project), *La Cage aux Folles* (Trinity Rep), *Legally Blonde the Musical* (Moonbox Productions), *Preludes*, *Assassins* (Lyric Stage Boston), *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *Oklahoma!*, *Pippin* (Reagle Music Theatre), *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* (The Wilbury Theatre Group). Kayla is a graduate of Emerson College. She is endlessly thankful for the support from her friends and family! IG: kaylashimizu



Damon Singeltary* | George Buckman, Alfred T. Slipper, Incandesto

is a Boston-based actor, playwright, and director. He is thrilled to make his Wheelock Family Theatre debut! Some of his recent performances include *A Christmas Carol* and *Birdy* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company); *Network*, *The Minutes*, *The Colored Museum*, *Fences*, and *Head Over Heels* (Umbrella Stage Company); *A Raisin in the Sun* (New Repertory Theatre); *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Sister Act*, *Fabulation Or*, *The Re-Education of Undine*, and *The Wiz* (Lyric Stage Boston); *Shakespeare in Love*, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (SpeakEasy Stage Company); and *Miss Holmes* (Greater Boston Stage Company). A proud member of the Actors' Equity Association, Damon resides in Topsfield, MA with his wife Laurie, also an actor and playwright, whose support is invaluable.

MEET THE CAST continued



Chris Stahl* | Ulysses

is so excited to be making their WFT debut, they could practically fly! Recent theatre credits include: Two productions as Lemml (*Indecent*) at Perseverance Theatre and The Wilbury Theatre Group, Sebastian (*Twelfth Night*) Theatre Alaska, Noah (*Observance*) NY Fringe, Alexei (*Anna Karenina*) Notch Theatre/The White Heron, John Hinckley Jr. (*Assassins*) The Gamm, Error (*Song for a Future Generation*) Williamstown Theatre Festival. Other theatres they have worked at include Lincoln Center, Theatre for a New Audience, The Flea, & Trinity Rep. Film/TV credits include *Revenge of the Green Dragons* (Artfire Films- produced by Martin Scorsese), *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Amazon), *The Invisible Girl* (BKE Productions). Upcoming roles in *The Drama* (a24) and *The Provider* (a713 productions). Adjunct Instructor at Dean College. MFA: Brown/Trinity Rep, BA: Fordham University. Interlochen graduate. They are the recipient of the National Youth Theatre award. Proud member of Actors' Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild. He can't thank his friends and family enough for their constant support and love. For Olive. www.chrisstahl.org @chrismstahl



Eli Dittkoff
Understudy
William Spiver



Brandon Lee
Understudy,
Ulysses & George/et al



Katie Pickett
Understudy,
Phyllis/et al &
Tootie/et al



Millar Vigoda
Understudy,
Flora Belle Buckman

*Indicates a member of Actors' Equity Association For full company bios visit our [website](#).

MEET THE DIRECTOR



Joshua Rashon Streeter

is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Education at Emerson College. As a theatre-maker, Joshua loves to make work that is aesthetically and narratively driven – playing with light, objects, movement, and music. He was a 2021 finalist in the Reimagine: New Plays in TYA initiative. Additionally, Joshua has directed *Old Jake's Skirts* (Emerson College), *Edward Tulane* (Emerson College), *Freedom to Fly* (Muhlenberg College), in addition writing *Birds of a Feather* produced by Arts on the Horizon. His teaching focuses on critical pedagogy, K-16 pre-service and in-service education, drama and theatre education, and Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA)/Theatre for the Very Young (TVY). Joshua's scholarship analyzes the pedagogies used in rehearsals and classrooms and considers the relationship between process and product in a creative experience.

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.