

WESTON PLAYHOUSE
THEATRE COMPANY

2017

Cast and Creatives

Compiled by Rachel Liff, Administration/Education Intern

MEET THE CAST

The Kurnitz's are like any ordinary family...almost. They fight, cry, tease, struggle, fight, steal spoonfuls of ice cream, hide bags of pistachios, and put everything on the line for each other. Watch as this ensemble transforms into relatives who deeply care for each other, even if they have a funny way of showing it.



Elizabeth Franz
Grandma Kurnitz



Luke Haefner
Arty



Jesse Liebman
Eddie



Tracy Michailidis

Gert



Davy Raphaely

Louie



Michael Seltzer

Jay



Sarah Stockton

Bella

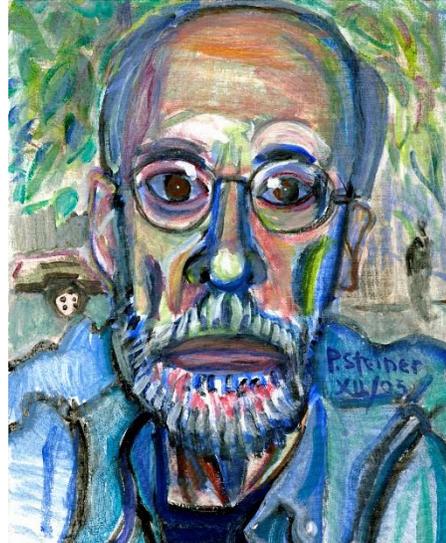
A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR KENT PAUL

What drew me to this show was the opportunity to work with Steve Stettler and Elizabeth Franz. I'll direct any play Elizabeth Franz wants to be in, and I've known Steve for a long time. I love working at Weston because I know Steve respects my work and takes it seriously.

This is my first time directing a Neil Simon play. I saw *Lost in Yonkers* when it was in previews on Broadway years ago. I was shocked by how dramatic it was, yet it still blessed us with familiar Neil Simon humor. To me, the juxtaposition of drama and humor makes it Chekhovian. When I see plays done superbly, I don't always have the appetite to do them myself. But I am excited by this play. I think it merits fresh attention. All seven characters in this play are presented with life threatening crises. But there are no whiners in this group—they all seek active solutions. I believe this is what we all need to be doing, especially in the current political climate. Simultaneously, this play is a timely celebration of this country.

I direct because I love actors. I love to watch them and work with them. Watching actors tell stories permits us to understand our own lives. This cast tells this story like a chamber music ensemble. They pick up themes and develop from each other; they are wonderful to behold. From Luke to Elizabeth, they are an extraordinary group of artists. They also look like a family. The Broadway production made no attempt to hire a group of actors that actually look related, something I wanted to do for this production. This play is an uninhibited view of the family, so they must really feel like they are related.

I've never had a company that delights and respects each other this much. Getting together feels like a family reunion. This play also has some extraordinary designers. For example, Edward Morris' set makes it seem like a brand new play. I told him I wanted the play to look like a legend, something Jay and Arty would tell their children about someday. That vision is represented in his design. Whenever I direct I honor the original, but I ask myself "why do it again now?"



Portrait courtesy of the artist, Peter Steiner

AN INTERVIEW WITH LUKE HAEFNER

Rachel Liff: What drew you to this show?

Luke Haefner: *Lost in Yonkers* is a great play all around and it is always a ton of fun to be a part of good plays. I also found as I read the script that I have a lot in common with Arty. I love to play parts that I can relate to.



Luke Hefner with Michael Seltzer, photo by Sarah Stockton

RL: Do you have any brothers?

LH: Yes, I have an older brother named Justin. We are about the 3 years apart – only a little more than Jay and Arty.

RL: What has made you feel like a real brother to Michael Seltzer (Jay) in the show?

LH: Michael and I are both participating in the Cabaret. That rehearsal time is when we get to unwind. We get to do goofy things, sing, and dance and we became closer during that time.

RL: Jay and Arty have a very close relationship in the play. What is it like to play a character who depend on the other so much?

LH: It is a lot of fun. Arty and Jay are so close that they almost seem to mesh into one person. It is harder to play half of a character than a whole because you have to interact with your other half on a higher level.

RL: What has been the most enjoyable part of this process?

LH: My favorite part is being on stage with people who I have gotten to know so well over the past three weeks. It is an amazing experience to see how they change from hanging out back stage to when they transform into their character.