

### **DIRECTOR'S NOTE:**



an enemy into a friend"

Martin Luther King Jr.

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for this production of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. It is a privilege to bring this powerful and thought-provoking story to the stage. Originally a groundbreaking film in 1967, this story remains deeply relevant today, sparking conversations about love, race, family, and societal change.

At its core, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner is about human connection. It challenges us to examine our own biases, fears, and expectations, reminding us that love has the power to bridge even the deepest divides.

As a director, my goal has been to honor the original work while ensuring that its themes resonate with today's world. Our incredible cast and crew have worked tirelessly to bring these characters and their struggles to life with authenticity and heart. It is my hope that this performance sparks reflection, conversation, and perhaps even a shift in perspective.

Thank you for being part of this experience. Theater has the power to bring us together, and I am grateful to share this journey with you.

Enjoy the show.

Diane L. Parker

**Director** 



## GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER



### **BYTODD KREIDLER**



BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

### **BYWILLIAM ROSE**

PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH PLAYSCRIPTS, INC. (WWW.PLAYSCRIPTS.COM)











## THE SETTING

Set in the spring of 1967 in the house of the Draytons, a house on a hill in San Francisco.

### **SCENE BREAKDOWN**

ACT I Scene 1 -

Scene 1 – A mid-Wednesday

Scene 2 – Two hours later

Scene 3 – Later that evening

(There will be a 15-minute intermission between acts.)

**ACT II** 

Scene 1 – Seven minutes later

Scene 2 – Seven minutes later

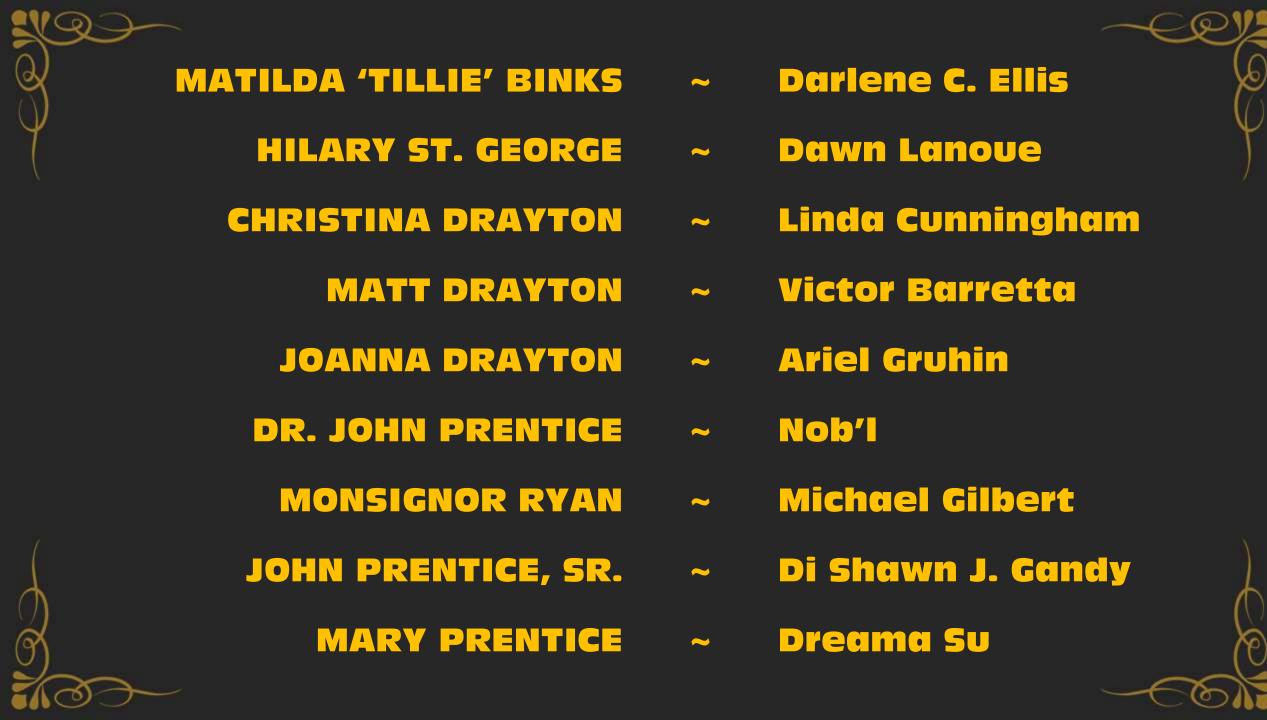


# STHE CAST

(in order of appearance)







## s Our Musicians s

SPECIAL GUEST VOCALIST ~ Sandra Ward

**KEYBOARDS** ~ Lawrence Allen



### **Production Staff**

Producers	Rob Michael Lasky & Deb Lasky
Special Guest Director	Diane L. Parker
Stage Managers	Sherese Bulluck & Rachel Piscopo
Costumes	Anthony Wurtz
Props	Philip Rieschick
Lighting Design/Operator	Aaron Jelinek
Lighting Design	M. Kitty Getlik
Sound Design/Operator	Eric Collins
Scenic Design/Builder/Painter	Shawn Simmons
Set Construction Crew	Michael Gilbert, Edward Simmons, Dale Jones & the cast
Scenic Design/Builder/Painter	Shawn Simmons
Sound Design/Operator	Eric Collins
Videographer/Photographer	John Maurer
Publicity Photographer	Joseph Cutalo
The MTM Players Board	
President	Rob Michael Lasky
Vice-President	Deb Lasky
Finance	Jeffrey Milstein
Secretary	Angela Robb

### **Special Thanks**

Darrell Sadler and Gwen Ricks-Spencer!

Special kudos to Mike Almstedt for his tireless behind-thescenes help!

The rest of the awesome Kelsey Theatre Staff:
Amy, Kitty, Sheron, Nick & Diana!
Jim Gardner for publicity!

Edward Simmons, Dale Jones, Zhi Sharpe & Michael Gilbert!

The New Jersey Creative Arts Collaborative (njcac.org) for donating snacks for the opening night gala!

# AND A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR MILITARY AND VETERANS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!





# MEET THE CAST





Darlene C. Ellis as Matilda 'Tillie' Binks Darlene is grateful for the opportunity to work at Kelsey Theatre and to reprise the role of Tillie. She earned a nomination for an NJACT Perry Award as Best Featured Actress in a play for her previous portrayal at Villagers Theatre in 2018. Darlene has also worked in other productions under the direction of Diane L. Parker. She is grateful for all the support from her family and friends.



Dawn Lanoue as Hilary St. George

Dawn is thrilled to be performing with The MTM Players for the first time. She was most recently seen as Clairee in Playhouse 22's Steel Magnolias and as Tracey in Sweat at Villagers Theatre. She is a two-time Perry Award nominee for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Play for her roles in Outside Mullingar (Rosemary Muldoon) and 'night Mother (Jessie Cates). A few favorite roles from the past include: The Sweet Delilah Swim Club (Lexie), August: Osage County (Karen Weston), Bill W. and Dr. Bob (Anne Smith), Heisenberg (Georgie Burns) and Night Watch (Blanche Cooke).

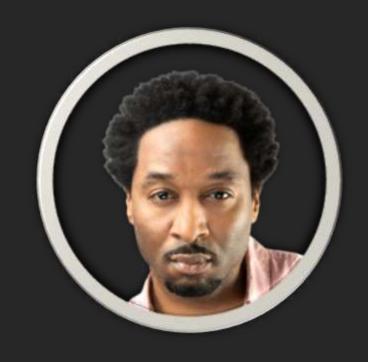


Linda Cunningham as Christina Drayton

Linda is happy to be working with The MTM Players for the first time at Kelsey Theatre where she recently appeared in Steel Magnolias and I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change. She has worked with other theater groups around Philadelphia in such productions as Big Fish, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Moon Over Buffalo, Arsenic and Old Lace, August, Osage County, 9 to 5, Miracle on 24th Street, Miracle Worker, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, and more. She thanks Julia, Matt, and Preston for their continued enthusiastic support.



Ariel Gruhin as Joanna Drayton Ariel is overjoyed to join The MTM Players family! Her adventures in theater have included touring as Cinderella, singing at Carnegie Hall, and performing Shaw in a Brooklyn kombucha brewery. Off-stage, Ariel is a veteran of the cybersecurity and hospitality industries (a proud Hotelie!) Cornell and now works telecommunications. Her favorite role is mom to her 2½-year-old daughter, Daphne Shel. Love and thanks to her biggest cheerleader Alex, for making this return to the stage possible.



Nob'i as Dr. John Prentice

Nob'l wears many hats, most notably as an actor, writer, producer, director, and hip-hop artist. As an actor he has appeared in stage productions such as An American Tree (Behind The Veil Productions) and Guess Who's Coming To Dinner (Villagers Theatre), both of which were nominated for Perry Awards in 2018. He has trained privately with acting coach Jared Kelner and at the Baron Brown Studio in Los Angeles. He has also written, produced, co-directed and starred in the short film Resistance, which was selected and premiered at the 30th Annual Black Harvest Film Festival in Chicago, Illinois in Nov., 2024 As a hip-hop artist and producer, he's released his latest single "Bounce Back" in Sept., 2024. His sound incorporates live instrumentation, hip-hop, and soul - showcasing deep lyricism and intricate wordplay. "Bounce Back," reflects his journey of resilience, inspiring listeners to rise from setbacks and keep pushing forward.



Michael Gilbert as Monsignor Ryan

MIchael taught high school theatre in NYC for 33 years. Since retirement his credits have included Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (Big Daddy) with Villagers, Art (Marc) with Pennington Players, A Christmas Carol (Marley's ghost) at Playhouse 22, The Trial of Ebeneezer Scrooge (Scrooge) with The MTM Players, Romeo and Juliet (Friar Laurence) with Shakespeare '70, and Grand Horizons (Bill French), also at Playhouse 22. Last year he played Giles Corey in The Crucible at Tampa Rep in Florida. In addition to acting, Michael has directed 170 productions.



Di Shawn J. Gandy as John Prentice, Sr.

Di Shawn is thrilled to join The MTM Players in their production of Guess Who's Coming To Dinner. He has worked in theater, film, and television as an actor, director, playwright, & screenwriter. He honed his craft through studies at Woody King Jr's New Federal Theater in NY, GSP Education in NJ, and Jared Kelner's Actor's Approach Acting Academy in NJ. He founded Behind The Veil Productions LLC, an award-nominated theater production company in New Jersey. His play, An American Tree, was nominated for an NJACT Perry Award in 2018 for Original Production of an Original Play. His play Thy Will Be Done was officially selected for the 2017 Black Theatre and Arts Festival in Washington, DC. He also co-directed the short film Resistance, written by Michael Maurice - an official selection for the 30th Black Harvest Film Festival at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago. Additionally, he has appeared in several indie films, including How To Get Rich In 13 Easy Steps and An Evening With Donald Kempinski. He thanks his wife and family for their love and support.



Dreama Su as Mary Prentice Dreama is a licensed Massage Therapist, and wannabe actress! This is her first foray onto the stage and in the limelight in a play in over 40 years! She is grateful to Director Diane for the opportunity to try out her acting skills again.



Guest Vocalist: Sandra Ward Sandra is a previous NJACT Perry Award nominee for her singing role in Death of a Salesman. She is a dynamic vocalist and recording artist with a huge gospel voice and strong belt mix. Her credits extend to theater performances such as the Fats Waller musical, Ain't Misbehavin', The Mountaintop, Memories of Motown, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner – pre-show entertainment, Smokey Joe's Cafe, Amen Corner, Disney's Newsies, and lead vocalist roles in Fannie Lou Hamer presentations, Narrator for theatrical staged readings Damage Control and An American Tree. She also contributes her talents with the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and Mental Health Association in their community outreach programs. She is most grateful to God, her family and friends for their unending support and is excited and honored to participate with MTM for the first time with cast and crew at Kelsey Theatre in another fresh and creative production of Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.



# S THECREW S

**Diane L. Parker (Director)** Diane is a NJACT Perry award-winning actress with multiple nominations for acting and directing. A native of St. Louis, Mo, Diane relocated to New Jersey over 20 years for an opportunity to continue her professional career in human resources, diversity and inclusion in the media industry with an international news organization headquartered in New York City. For the past two years, Diane has held an executive position in the global asset management industry for a New Jersey based firm.

With a strong passion for the arts, she co-founded the New Jersey Creative Arts Collaborative (NJCAC), is a board member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance and Co-Vice President of the American Theatre Group (ATG). Diane is also a proud alumnus of Stella Adler's/Billie Holiday Theatre Black Arts Institute, a member of Actors Equity Association, and the acting company of the New Jersey Play Lab.

She has worked as an actor and director in numerous NJ theater productions with Luna Stage, Premiere Stages, The Theater Project, Phoenix Productions, Vanguard Theater, Villagers Theatre, Playhouse 22, Gas Lamp Players, 4<sup>th</sup> Wall Theatre, Holmdel Theatre Company, and more. She has portrayed a range of characters from the Dragon in *Shrek the Musical* to Rose in *Fences*.

Diane's original one-woman show on voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer was recognized as the top play in the 2017 New York Strawberry One-Act Festival where she also received the best actress award.

In 2018, Diane had the privilege to direct Guess Who's Coming to Dinner at Villagers Theatre and she is thrilled to have an opportunity to tell this powerful story again.

Sherese Bulluck (Stage Manager) Sherese is very excited to be working as stage manager for this production. She developed her management skills while working as a project manager throughout her professional career. She previously worked as stage manager in the production of Guess Who's Coming to Dinner and Radio Golf and as an assistant stage manager in the production of The Mountaintop and The Death of a Salesman. In addition, she has performed with various community ensembles throughout NJ as well as being cast in several musical productions. She has also used her vocal and acting talents to teach children of all ages to discover their own talents. Sherese thanks God for His continued blessing on her life as well as the many family and friends that support her love of

theater.

**Rachel Piscopo (Stage Manager)** Rachel is excited to be involved in theater again after taking some time off to spend with her children and husband. Rachel started working as a stage manager in this area back in 2001. She has worked with numerous companies during her career and is joining MTM for a second time having been assistant stage manager for the Perry nominated *Nunsense* this past spring!

Shawn Simmons (Scenic Designer/Builder/Painter) Shawn is a 3x nominated and one-time NJACT Perry Award Winner. He won his Perry for Scenic Design/Artistry for his work on *Talley's Folley* with PinnWorth Productions. Shawn's recent designs were the NJ Premiere of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, and *Groundhog Day* (Playful Theatre), *Tarzan the Musical* (Bear Tavern Project), and *Parfumerie* and *Nunsense* (The MTM Players). Shawn was also most recently seen on stage as Roger (*RENT*), and Neil Sedaka, Bobby Hatfield, and Lou Adler (*Beautiful*). Shawn is also a founder of Kelsey Forward and K.R.E.W. (a safe space for anyone to utilize at Kelsey Theatre.)

**Eric Collins (Sound Design/Operator)** Eric is blessed to be back with The MTM Players for this production of *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*. Eric has been doing sound design for the past 10 years and has worked on a number of projects at Kelsey over that time. If you're a regular Kelsey patron, you would know him from some recent shows like *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change, A Lovesong for Miss Lydia, Half Moon, Nunsense* and *Roebling*. To the cast and crew: break legs!

**Aaron Jelinek (Light Design/Operator)** Aaron makes his second return to the Kelsey Theatre after a hiatus. The most recent shows to his credit are Noël Coward's *Present Laughter*, 22 a Day and The Best Time of the Year with the MTM Players, as well as Theater To Go's productions of To Kill a Mockingbird and Dial M For Murder. This is his debut running lights at Kelsey and is very excited!

**Kitty Getlik(Light Designer)** Kitty has served as the Artistic Director of the Kelsey Theatre since 1990. A noted director and accomplished actress, Kitty was winner of the 2012 Perry Award for Outstanding Lighting Design of a Musical for *Aida*, and a recipient of Lifetime Achievement Awards from both The Perry Awards and The Kelsey Awards.

Anthony Wurtz (Costumer) Anthony is very excited to be working with The MTM Players again. He has been costuming for 10 years in PA & NJ and has worked on many shows at Kelsey Theatre including Sordid Lives, City of Angels, Around the World in 80 Days, Boy from Oz, Parfumerie, and Beauty and the Beast for which he won a Kelsey Award for Best Costumes. He has been nominated for his costumes at the Perry Awards many times. He has performed in the past in many productions such as Cats, The Wedding Singer, and Rocky Horror Picture Show just to name a few. He thanks his better half Brian and his family and friends for all their love and support.

Philip Rieschick (Props) Philip has performed in over 1,000 performances from the landmark New York City restaurant Sardi's to the Doylestown museum, performing Dinner, Dessert, Dancing & Death with Hewitt Productions. Actor's equity credits: Passage Theaters' Roebling Steel, Thin Air: Takes of the Revolution and The Masseur. Film credits: Socrates, Judas, Execution, John Brown, Casement, and Bonhoeffer. Recording credit: Broadway revival cast — Pippin. Book credit: A Pixelated Man, 2012. Break legs to the cast and thank you for attending!











Mar  $7^{th}$  –  $16^{th}$ , Mar  $21^{st}$  –  $30^{th}$ , Apr  $4^{th}$  –  $13^{th}$ , Apr  $25^{th}$  – May  $4^{th}$ , 

# COMING TO THE KELSEY STAGE NEXT SEASON FROM THE MTM PLAYERS!



COMING IN THE SPRING MARCH 20-29, 2026

We can't say yet...
BUT you'll go CUCKOO when we finally announce!





- NO photography or videotaping unless prior permission is obtained from theatre manager
- 3. Please turn OFF all cell phones and electronic devices
- 4. NO food or drinks (except water) allowed in the theatre
- 5. NO smoking allowed on campus (except in your own vehicle)

## KELSEY THEATRE STAFF

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR.	M. Kitty Getlik	
SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST	Amy Bessellieu	
TECHNICAL THEATRE COORDINATOR	Nick Mastalesz	
BOX OFFICE MANAGER	Diana Maurer	
BOX OFFICE CLERK	Martha DiBartolo	
SHOP SUPERVISOR	Michael Almstedt	
PRODUCTION ASSSISANT	Shawn Simmons	
HOUSE MANAGER.	Sheron Williams	
TOMATO PATCH PROGRAM DIRECTOR.	Melissa Jackson	
TOMATO PATCH PROGRAM COORDINATOR	Jane Coult	
ON-CALL STAFFFabiola Bien-Aimé, Len Calabrese, Angela Chapman, Andrew Devlin, Dan Mucha		



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This program is made possible, in part, by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Commissioners and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

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