

Rutherford Arts Alliance Presents



PARTY OF

Twelve

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Written by MARY DONNET JOHNSON

Directed by DANIELLE ROOS

A community-based project to celebrate just a few of the many inspiring women from the history of Rutherford County, Tennessee

World Premiere April 8–10, 2022, at the Washington Theatre
in Patterson Park Community Center, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

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A Note from **Andrea Loughry**



In 2018, the City of Murfreesboro named its first Arts Laureates in the areas of poetry, visual arts, and photography. Soon after being named, these first three were tasked with finding ways to enhance the arts, culture, and heritage of our community. In a splendid show of collaboration and unity, they chose to share their creativity with the public through a joint showing

of their art in the rotunda of City Hall. This gave rise to other inspired actions throughout the community.

Artist Ginny Togrye transformed the controversial bridge that was being built over Northwest Broad Street with a painting, which poet Kory Wells embellished with “The Bridge Builder” poem by Will Allen Dromgoole. As I watched this public art take shape, I mentioned to the artists that that poem brought back memories of my nervous stomach when I had to stand up in class and recite it. They replied, “Did you know that Dromgoole was born in Rutherford County?” “No!” I responded. “I have lived here for 66 years and have never heard her name.”

And that was the first Leading Lady of Rutherford County history to inspire me to begin a fascinating journey of discovery that is culminating in this world premiere tonight. It shouldn’t surprise anyone in our community that we very quickly picked up many enthusiastic and talented fellow travelers who care greatly about our county and its history along the way.

During that year, as a board member of the Tennessee Arts Commission, I had joined the laureates in exploring the need for an umbrella organization to connect creatives with our community institutions through our cultural assets and market Rutherford County as an arts, culture, and heritage destination.

Early in 2019, when addressing a group of performing arts supporters at the Boro Bash, I challenged them with my “fairy godmother” magic wand to give a voice to female influencers like Will Allen Dromgoole, Willie Betty Newman, and Mary Noailles Murfree (who wrote under the name of Charles Egbert Craddock), who all benefited from or assumed a male name to experience the success they desired. These notable women from our past were stepping out from the shadows and giving me a pretty firm nudge.

Soon after, we formed the Leading Ladies of Rutherford County History committee and set to work studying all the many exceptional women our local history groups selected for our review. This research spawned an effort to make videos of their friends and family telling stories and sharing portraits,

recipes, and artifacts. We developed an archival website for these treasures and developed a trust relationship with community institutions. As each instance of these women’s courage and dedication was revealed, we were filled with the passion to press on through the pandemic.

Core members of this committee—many of whom were founding members of the Arts Alliance—like Angela Jackson, Director of Community Services for Murfreesboro Parks and Rec.; Susan Gulley, Director of Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Convention & Visitors Bureau; Mary Watkins, President and founding member of the African American Heritage Society; Antoinette van Zelm, Assistant Director of the MSTU Center for Historic Preservation; Sarah Callender, Executive Director of Main Street Murfreesboro; Lucy Langworthy, Assistant to the Dean of the MTSU College of Liberal Arts; Patience Long, Executive Director of the Center for the Arts; and yours truly, found ourselves volunteering our expertise for much longer than ever intended.

We chose community-involved dramatist Mary Donnet Johnson, who had also served on the Tennessee Arts Commission board, to join us on our journey and give voice to these women. She created a magical, humorous play, *Party of Twelve*, which involved 11 of the women and we were all set to produce it in August of 2020, to coincide with the Centennial Celebration of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote.

But that was B.C.—BEFORE COVID!

Over the course of the next three years, a dozen or so women gathered first in person then by Zoom. We built bridges to our community institutions through public art murals, plywood face cut outs for photo ops, mannequins dressed as suffragists popping up in the most unexpected places (fully masked), and even craft cocktails named after a representative group of women from our past were created by a local chef/restaurant owner, Mitchell Murphree.

Along the way, there were men in decision-making roles that gave the project an endless flow of guidance and resources, which helped the core members keep their indomitable spirit in the face of many challenges. But what really spurred us on? Many of us have daughters and granddaughters, and we want them to know and hear from these women of our past who give us such hope and confidence for the future. Those voices help us remember the strength of Rutherford County as the heART of Tennessee and the geographic center of our state.

Thank you for joining us tonight. Let the pARTy begin and never end!

Andrea Loughry
Arts Advocate

A Note from **Susan Gulley**



Welcome to a night of celebration! For two years a team with a passion for the arts have dreamed of bringing the stories you will experience tonight to the stage—a platform to elevate personalities, to rejoice in discoveries, to create a dialogue bridge. What began as a short-term project to produce a play was placed into perpetual delay in 2020. However, that delay created something even more—similar to a chrysalis that turns a simple caterpillar into a strong and beautiful butterfly, that delay transformed a modest goal into a transformative experience. We are honored to release this new creation this weekend. It's time to share the stories of these ladies who were leading our county's path—and most especially, to highlight what art does most in our world, it opens the path to discussions in ways nothing else can. We welcome you to listen and learn and go forward.

The Rutherford Arts Alliance has its own story born of a creative momentum that goes back decades in our community but accelerated by more recent events. In 2017, the inaugural Murfreesboro Arts Laureates identified a need to better connect area creatives. That same year, Rutherford County reached a critical crossroads in the arts: An Americans for the Arts study showed that the arts in Rutherford County generated \$31.2 million in annual economic activity—and that was a conservative estimate. Another national study by the SMU National Center for Arts Research ranked the Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin area fourth in arts vibrancy for large communities.

This put in motion a series of meetings that led to the Alliance formation. By the latter half of 2018, more than 60 community volunteers -- artists, educators, and business, nonprofit and government representatives -- were participating in these meetings and contributing to the vision for the Alliance. As it developed, the fledgling organization benefited from the input and guidance of the Tennessee Arts Commission, MTSU Arts, MTSU Liberal Arts, graduate faculty of MTSU's Social Innovation and Not-for-Profit Management program, the Rutherford County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the City of Murfreesboro, Carpe Artista in Smyrna, the Discovery Center, the Center for the Arts, and others.

The Rutherford Arts Alliance tagline states that our purpose is “connecting creatives and community.” We advocate a cooperative, not competitive, approach. Partnering with existing arts organizations, individuals, and other groups which represent government, education, business, wellness, and more is foundational to our mission and our future success.

The RAA welcomes you to join us at monthly trainings, meetings, and workshops. All events are open to anyone interested in any type of Cultural Arts and Arts Advocacy. Our communities are better when we create together. Come join us. Whatever your favored medium, we can't wait for you to shine. We have a place for you to connect, have fun, and enjoy the Art of living!

Susan Gulley

Current Chair of Rutherford Arts Alliance

A Note from **the Playwright**



When Andrea Loughry and the Rutherford Arts Alliance asked me to create a theatre piece about inspiring women from Rutherford County history, I thought – “Piece of cake.” We’re not used to taking out armloads of books from the library about notable women from the past. Most archives are sadly bereft of women’s voices. We’ll pick a few outstanding women and put a little play together in no time.

Reality check. There is a whole host of amazing women from Rutherford County history from every walk of life, and they all clamor to be recognized and heard. So, with the help of expert historians Mary Patterson Watkins, Dr. Antoinette van Zelm, and the whole Leading Ladies committee, we winnowed the long list of extraordinary women down to an even dozen, who represent all parts of the county, racial diversity, and many vocations, ages, and important moments in history. I

am now proud to call every one of these 12 ladies a dear friend. Oh, they have come alive, alright. They speak to me quite clearly, as I hope they will to you.

Party of Twelve is not a reenactment. It’s a flight of fancy based on true details. I attempted to draw portraits of each of these ladies as truthfully as possible. Some research yielded tons of information and some just a paltry, few clues. I hope what we are presenting here tonight makes you curious enough to do your own research. There are many rich resources and passionate historic preservationists in Rutherford County. Their names are listed in the acknowledgements section. Get to know them!

This project should have taken about a year to complete. Because of the extended nature of the pandemic, we were forced to wait, and wait, and wait for a clear go-ahead. The hidden treasure in this challenge was that a powerful gathering of today’s fierce women seized the opportunity to expand and deepen the ways we can celebrate our important historic women. So many new initiatives were launched! We also were able to get to know each other better – forge relationships that would surprise, delight, and empower us to support each other in making arts and community dreams come true.

We hope that the magnificent women whose lives we are illuminating here today, move you, inspire you, and spur you on to do the great and important work that is uniquely yours to do.

Gratefully, and with admiration for all the Leading Ladies of Rutherford County, past, present, and future,

Mary Donnet Johnson
Playwright

A Note from **the Director**



Working on this play has had me thinking quite a lot about dreams – both the kind we have at night and usually forget upon waking, but also the kind we hold onto and walk around with – the goals and hopes we have for the future. Each of you arrived at the theatre tonight with some sort of dream, consciously or unconsciously. It might be on a personal level and have to do with work or a hobby. It might be family- or relationship-related. It also might be connected to a wider circle of people, your larger community, or the city in which you're living.

The women of this play—boy, did they have dreams. We get to hear about many of them as they meet each other, many of them for the first time, onstage in front of us. We get to feel their passion, cheer for their successes, and share in their heartaches as they challenge each other, gush over each other, and in some cases even confront each other. The unrealized dreams they share end up being every bit as powerful to recount as the triumphant ones.

For me, that's what this play is about. It's about recognizing the victories, yes, but also acknowledging the growth that being on a journey requires. We see the imperfections of these women, yet we can still laud the good they did and the progress they made, even while making mistakes. They met obstacles head on and they encourage us to do the same. This is where dream meets reality. Dreams are just dreams until we take action.

We're all on our own imperfect journey. We may or may not see our dreams become reality. But the work, the struggle, the learning, and even the admission of faults, is what we will take with us, no matter the outcome.

As the women on stage tonight share how they shaped and reformed the world around them, I want to invite you to join the journey they began. It's through the steps we take together and the dreams and actions we inspire in each other, that I hope real growth can come.

Danielle Roos
Director

Rutherford Arts Alliance
proudly presents

PARTY OF *Twelve*



*A partially imagined play based on the real lives of just a few of
the many inspiring women from Rutherford County history*

Written by **MARY DONNET JOHNSON**

Directed by **DANIELLE ROOS**

Starring

SABRINA BIRDINE-MOORE REBECCA CHRISTIE TEAGAN COOPER HEATHER GARDNER
KATLYN MARION BRENDA MCKNIGHT MILEAH MILSTEAD LESLEY NICOLE
MEGAN PENNINGTON LARAY RICHARDSON PATRICYONNA RODGERS
JACLYN BRI WOOD

With standby support from

JEANNA PEREZ

Scenic Design
TODD SEAGE

Costume Design
LISA MCLAURIN

Sound Design
ANNA ANGELES

Lighting Design
JESSE WATTS

Production Stage Manager/Assistant Director

JENYSA DONYELLE

Executive Producer
ANDREA LOUGHRY

Managing Producer
SUSAN GULLEY

Project Director
PATIENCE LONG

Lead Historians

DR. ANTOINETTE VAN ZELM AND MARY PATTERSON WATKINS

PARTY OF *Twelve*

Cast (in order of appearance)

Olivia	KATLYN MARION
Mary Kate Patterson	JACLYN BRI WOOD
Sarah Childress Polk	MEGAN PENNINGTON
Mary Ellen Vaughn	LESLEY NICOLE
Will Allen Dromgoole	REBECCA CHRISTIE
Willie Betty Newman	MILEAH MILSTEAD
Annie Brawley Jackson	TEAGAN COOPER
Nannie Rucker	LARAY RICHARDSON
Lottie Sublett	PATRICYONNA RODGERS
Mary Noailles Murfree	HEATHER GARDNER
Myrtle Glanton Lord	BRENDA MCKNIGHT
Mariah	SABRINA BIRDINE-MOORE

Creative Team

Playwright.....	MARY DONNET JOHNSON
Director.....	DANIELLE ROOS
Stage Manager/Assistant Director.....	JENYSA DONYELLE
Assistant Stage Manager and Understudy	JEANNA PEREZ
Scenic Design.....	TODD SEAGE
Sound Design	ANNA ANGELES
Lighting Design.....	JESSE WATERS
Props and Set Dressing	GROUP EFFORT
Costume Design and Construction.....	LISA MCLAURIN
Stitchers and Builders	KATHY BOUDREAUX, MATTIE CASTEEL, HEATHER GARDNER, DENESE KELLEY, SHERRE PITMAN
Hair and Makeup	LYDIA TAYLOR

Production Team

Executive Producer	ANDREA LOUGHRY
Managing Producer	SUSAN GULLEY, RUTHERFORD ARTS ALLIANCE
Project Director and Box Office Support	PATIENCE LONG AND CENTER FOR THE ARTS
Host Theater	SUSAN HICKS AND WASHINGTON THEATRE
Public Relations.....	CATHY SGAMBATI, <i>PR Specialist, MTSU Marketing and Communications</i>
Press Representatives.....	DEB HUNTER, ALYSSA POSTON, BETH PRIEST
Program Printing.....	CREATIVE MARKETING SOLUTIONS AND MTSU DIVISION OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Souvenir Program Design	CURTIS JOLLEY
Program Editor.....	MARY DONNET JOHNSON
<i>Party of Twelve</i> Logo	GRISHAM DESIGNS
Lead Historians	DR. ANTOINETTE VAN ZELM, MARY PATTERSON WATKINS

Washington Theatre Staff

Cultural Arts Supervisor	SUSAN HICKS
Theatre Manager	LESLIE WRIGHT
Theatre Consultant.....	MARK SALTALAMACHIA
Set Technician	TRAVIS HOLMES
Props Manager and Lighting Technician.....	OLIVIA CRAKER
Sound Technician	DALE SHACKELFORD

Artists who created vision boards for each of the characters in the play:

LISA BROWNING (Mary Noailles Murfree, Mary Kate Patterson)
DR. BARBARA AND LEROY HODGES (Myrtle Glanton Lord)
SUZANNE LEBEAU (Will Allen Dromgoole, Annie Brawley Jackson)
VINCENT MOSLEY (Nannie Rucker)
ABBY REISH (Lottie Sublett)
LARISSA REED (Sarah Childress Polk)
LISA SIMS (Willie Betty Newman)
MARY PATTERSON WATKINS (Mariah, Mary Ellen Vaughn)
GINNY TOGYRE (Olivia)

For more information on this wonderful group of local artists,
please contact Rutherford Arts Alliance • rutherfordartsalliance.org

Cast

SABRINA BIRDINE-MOORE



(Mariah)

Born in Nashville, Sabrina is a graduate of Tennessee State University, Class of '19, majoring in Mass Communications with a focus in Film and Television. She has performed with the TSU Theatre and Dance Program in several productions such as *Anne and Emmett* (Mamie Till), *Dot* (Dot), and Paul Laurence Dunbar's *Jingle In A Broken Tongue* (various characters) and is currently in TSU's first audio drama *Farside* (Mama). Sabrina has shared her talent in theatre, film, television, and several music videos. She was a 2019 Nominee for the Irene Ryan Acting Award in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival's Division IV. Sabrina was blessed (some years ago) to make her stage debut in *A Woman Called Truth* as Sojourner Truth at the Nashville Academy Theater

REBECCA CHRISTIE



(Will Allen Dromgoole)

is thrilled to be making her Tennessee theatre debut! Originally from Rhode Island, she received a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Rhode Island where she studied classical voice. Rebecca has trained as an actor through classes with The Gamm Theatre and virtually with

Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater. She has performed with groups such as The Contemporary Theater Company (*Bethel Park Falls*, *The Gift of the Magi* and *Henry IV, Part 1*) and Head Trick Theatre (*Mrs. Dalloway*).

TEAGAN COOPER



(Annie Brawley Jackson)

is so excited to join this cast and perform in the great state of Tennessee for the first time! She is so thankful for her mother who instilled in her a love of theatre and helped her grow as an artist and her father who has always supported her and paved the way. All glory to God forever and ever, amen.

HEATHER GARDNER



(Mary Noailles Murfree)

is honored for the chance to team up with strong, talented women in our present day to represent strong and inspiring women from Rutherford County's history. Many priceless memories and connections have been made over the past seven years acting in various local community theatre

groups across Murfreesboro, now including the Rutherford Arts Alliance. All my love to Grant, Aylee, and Caden. Thanks to everyone who came out to show your support. May you leave feeling empowered to succeed, make good choices, and be a positive light in the lives of those around you!

KATLYN MARION



(Olivia)

Katlyn has been a Murfreesboro native since she was five years old. This is her first performance since graduating from MTSU in May 2021, and she could not be more excited for the opportunity! She is thrilled to be working alongside a cast and crew that want to bring the

story of these powerful and influential women to life. Some past performances include *Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet), *Noises Off* (Poppy Norton-Taylor), and *The Royale* (Nina). After watching this performance, Katlyn hopes that you leave with a fonder appreciation of the past that brought us here today. She thanks you for coming and hopes you enjoy!

BRENDA MCKNIGHT



(Myrtle Glanton Lord)

is a native of Tennessee, an Ordained Minister, Wife and Mother, Author, Publisher, and well-known Playwright and Actress. Brenda has written, produced, and staged over 25 plays at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville, Progress Energy Center in Raleigh, NC, and

numerous College Campus Theaters, Churches, and local schools. She wrote and produced *Hear My Cry*, *Looks Can Be Deceiving*, *Deep*, *Dark Family Secrets*, *Love*, *Lies & The Lottery*, and *If These Walls Could Talk*, just to name a few. Brenda has worked with Dr. Bobby Jones and others in the Gospel arena. She was an original member of the Consortium of Gospel Music founded by Jimmy Bender and Dr. Bobby Jones. She has covered and continues to cover many major events and Award shows such as The Stellar Awards, The Dove Awards, NFL Super Bowl Gospel Celebration, I.M.A.C, and Urban Soul. She is honored to play the distinguished Ms. Myrtle Lord in *Party of Twelve*, written by the lovely Playwright, Mary Donnet Johnson. Brenda McKnight believes that she can do all things through Christ who strengthens her.

MILEAH MILSTEAD



(Willie Betty Newman)

is proud to be telling this story with this talented group of women. Most recently, she was featured in Street Theatre Company's production of *Lizzie: The Musical* as Bridget Sullivan (also with an all-female cast)! She graduated from MTSU in 2019 with a degree in theatre.

Past roles include Catie in *White Elephant* (Woven Theatre), Angie in *The Wedding Singer* (Chaffin's Barn), Anna in *Spring Awakening* (MTSU), and Judy Bernly in *9 to 5* (MTSU). She would like to thank her parents, J.R., and her friends for their support! Enjoy the show!

LESLEY NICOLE



(Mary Ellen Vaughn)

is excited to be making her way back to the stage after a long hiatus to spend time with her family. She is a singer, songwriter, actress, writer, and motivational speaker. Lesley has been performing on stage since the age of four and finds her home when performing. She is a native

of St. Louis, Missouri, where she was introduced to theatre, appearing in plays such as reenactments of "The Birth of Christ" and *FAME*. Musically she has done writing and studio work and has performed spoken word, pageants, competitions, and performance art for many organizations and events. She was a member of a performance group in Atlanta for 10 years. Lesley would like to thank her family for their unending love and support, and Ms. Mary Donnet Johnson, Danielle Roos, Jenysa Donyelle, and all of the support cast for their encouragement and the opportunity to continue in the arts.

MEGAN PENNINGTON



(Sarah Childress Polk)

is thrilled to bring Sarah Childress Polk back to life to share this significant story of Rutherford County's history. Acting highlights include: *The Outsiders*, *Urinetown*, *Cabaret*, and *Chrisley Knows Best*. You can currently catch Megan's choreography in the Arts Center

of Cannon County's production of *The Wizard of Oz* and GoodPasture Christian School's *The Sound of Music*. When not on stage or on set, Megan can be found with her beloved cats, Casey and Sheba. BFA Lindenwood University. IG: @megsy__p

JEANNA PEREZ



(assistant stage manager, understudy for Olivia, Willie Betty Newman, and Will Allen Dromgoole)

Jeanna graduated from MTSU with a degree in theatre. She has experience in costume design, stage management, acting, and directing. She worked on many shows at

MTSU including *9 to 5: The Musical* as tech assistant stage manager and acting in *The Blue Martini* as Renee. She is excited about returning to the theater after a very long two years. She wants to thank her husband Jean for the constant support and the Rutherford Arts Alliance for putting on such an educational and important show.

LARAY RICHARDSON



(Nannie Rucker)

is a singer and loves acting. She has had the opportunity to sing back-up for different artists and with several gospel groups. Laray has also recorded songs in the studio and live productions. She has performed in several plays including *The Color Purple* in 2012 as the church soloist.

She is also the founder of Shekinah Glory Praise dancers and was the youth director at her church for years. Laray thanks her family for being her greatest supporters. She believes that, if you make the effort, God will make the arrangements!

PATRICYONNA RODGERS



(Lottie Sublett)

is a native of Memphis TN. She has been involved in various productions growing up such as Dorothy in *The Wiz*. She is excited to grow as an actress and be a part of *Party of Twelve*.

JACLYN BRI WOODS



(Mary Kate Patterson)

(she/her) is a Murfreesboro local, and she is thrilled to join the company of *Party of Twelve*. Her previous credits include Ocean O'Connell Rosenberg (*Ride the Cyclone* – MTSU), Ensemble (*Kiss Me, Kate!* – MTSU), and Jennifer (*Greener Pastures* – Springhouse Theatre Co.)

She would like to thank Danielle, Mary, and Jenysa for giving her an opportunity after a theatre hiatus due to the pandemic, as well as her family, Max, Dove, and her coach Stephanie for always being her biggest cheerleaders. Enjoy the show! (jaclynbwood.com)

Creative & Production Team

MARY DONNET JOHNSON



(Playwright)

grew up in Vermont, earned her BA from Sarah Lawrence College, worked for a decade in New York City as a professional actress, and now happily makes her home in Tennessee. Her comedy-drama *Shanktown* is scheduled for full production early in 2023 at the Playhouse

on the Square in Memphis. She wrote the screenplay for Nashville Rep's 2021 online holiday show *'Twas the Night* and continues to work on new plays with theatre artists from all over the country via Zoom. Her plays have been recognized by the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference (semi-finalist), American Shakespeare Center's Shakespeare's New Contemporaries contest (semi-finalist), and the Kentucky Women Writers' Conference (finalist). Mary has had plays produced at Darkhorse Theater, Tennessee Women's Theater Project, and the Cordelle in Nashville. Mary loves to illuminate inspiring women in history. Her play *To Know You*, about Susan Wiley Walker, was written for the Maryville College Bicentennial in 2019, and led to the rich and rewarding experience of working with a community of powerful women in Rutherford County to create *Party of Twelve*. She would like to thank her husband Richard Johnson and her daughter Mary Margaret for always providing her with the most passionate, persistent, and perceptive dramaturgy. She is grateful for her son Pace who regularly sharpens her ability to observe, focus, and double down, and for the eternal love of her parents whose benevolent spirits surround her now and continue to make her bold. www.marydonnetjohnson.com

DANIELLE ROOS



(Director)

is a theatre maker and director with her MFA in Directing from Northwestern University. She is the founder of Yellow Rose Productions and co-founder of the Henley Rose Playwright Competition for Women. Most recently, Danielle directed *The Busie Body* by Susanna Centlivre at

Middle Tennessee State University. While at Northwestern, Danielle directed *The Flick* by Annie Baker, *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner, and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. With Yellow Rose Productions, Danielle directed and produced *Fiction* (Steven Dietz), *All in the Timing* (David Ives), and an original show she co-wrote titled *Princess Cut: A young girl's reality inside a Tennessee sex ring*. Danielle also directed and produced *Princess Cut* for the New York International Fringe Festival and a series of performances around the Southeast United States. Check out danielleroos.com for ongoing projects.

ANNA ANGELES



(Sound Design)

is a Birmingham-based sound designer and engineer. This is her first time working with the Rutherford Arts Alliance and she's incredibly grateful for the opportunity. Some of her favorite design credits are from her time in school at Middle Tennessee State University, including Branden

Jacob Jenkins' *Everybody* and Marco Ramirez's *The Royale*. Anna also spent time as an Audio Apprentice with Red Mountain Theatre in Birmingham, with credits that include *Little Shop of Horrors* (Sound Engineer), *Mamma Mia!* (Second Engineer), and *My Fair Lady* (Sound Engineer).

JENYSA DONYELLE



(Stage Manager, Assistant Director)

is an Actor, Stage Manager and Director born and raised in Murfreesboro. Most recently, she Stage Managed *Driving Miss Daisy* at the Center for the Arts. In 2019/2020, Jenysa was selected as a Stage Management Intern for both

Actors Theatre of Louisville and Nashville Repertory Theatre's Ingram New Works Festival. She is a graduate of MTSU, where she Stage Managed *The Blue Martini* and Assistant Stage Managed *Noises Off* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Other credits include Assistant Stage Management for *Tall Tales* (Woven Theatre) and *Dance Nation* (Nashville Story Garden). Favorite acting credits include *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (MTSU), *This Vessel is a Fragile Thing* (The Where House Theatre), *Church and State* (MTSU), and *Closer Than Ever* (MTSU). Jenysa is excited to be working on this new project and to have *Party of Twelve* be her post-COVID comeback. She hopes everyone enjoys seeing this magical play come to life.

LISA MCLAURIN



(Costume Design and Construction)

After a career in marketing and public relations followed by a career as Mom, Lisa crafted an unexpected third career as a theatrical costumer. Her mom, Mattie, inspired Lisa's love of sewing, but it was her daughter's passion for the stage that focused her

imagination and skills on costuming. Lisa's costume-design resume includes *1776*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *9 to 5*, *Memphis*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Little Women*, *Mary Poppins Jr.*, *The Producers*, *The Pajama Game*, *Hamlet: Remix*, *Bright Star*, *The Little Foxes*, *La Cages Aux Folles* and *Newsies*. She has built costumes for a number of other area productions including *The Addams Family*, *Shenandoah*, *Hello Dolly*, *The Music Man*, *Charlotte's Web* and others. Lisa has costumed full productions for the Center for the Arts in Murfreesboro, Belmont University's Department of Musical Theatre, Act 1 and Circle Players and built costumes for productions at the Arts Center of Cannon County, Center for the Arts, and Murfreesboro Little Theatre. She currently serves as costume manager at Murfreesboro's Center for the Arts. Lisa is a 1988 graduate of Belmont University with a degree in marketing; the mom of two adult children, Lydia and Colin; and best friend to a couple of devoted pugs and one indifferent cat. For 30 years she was the grateful wife of the all-too-soon late Christopher McLaurin, who encouraged her in every pursuit and convinced her to believe she could achieve every goal she set.

JESSE WATTS



(Lighting Design)

is blessed to be given the opportunity! Most will know Jesse by the companion at his side, known as Rigsby, a dog of a mixed breed. Rigsby also enjoys theatre. This will be Jesse's 23rd show. He is most known for lighting design in *The Outsider's*, a Bravo boro production.

Jesse extends his thanks to all that have worked on this production on and off stage, and to the family and friends who have supported them in this endeavor. Thank you, and enjoy the show!

Historians

DR. ANTOINETTE G. VAN ZELM



(Leading Ladies Project historian, Assistant Director of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University)

focuses on southern women's history and has been involved in many collaborative projects but none as creative as *Party of Twelve*!

Antoinette's first contribution to the project involved researching local suffragists, and she thoroughly enjoyed discovering more about Annie Brawley Jackson, from tracking down her first name and her day job as a railroad freight clerk to finding her in a photo of state suffrage leaders in Nashville. Antoinette is thrilled that *Party of Twelve* will bring the stories of local women alive with humor and poignancy. For our community to rally around a play focused entirely on the contributions and achievements of women from our past is a tremendous accomplishment. With its deep dive into the histories of just a handful of historic women, *Party of Twelve* will hopefully inspire people to learn more about the many fascinating women in Rutherford County's past.

Antoinette was born in Florida and grew up in Massachusetts. She has a BA from Middlebury College in Vermont and an MA and PhD from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. She has worked at the Center for Historic Preservation at MTSU since 2002, and one of her favorite projects is the driving tour *In the Footsteps of Notable Women: A Self-Guided Tour of Rutherford County*.

MARY R. PATTERSON WATKINS



(Leading Ladies Project historian)

Mary, age 75, is one of nine children born to Walter and Sam Ella Patterson. She is a native of Rutherford County, TN, and the mother of four sons and grandmother of seven. Mary received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Art and

Sociology from Middle Tennessee State University and two endorsements in Special Education from University of Tennessee of Nashville, and University of Tennessee at Martin. She was employed by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (now known as the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability) for twenty-three years and retired from the Rutherford County Board of Education. She is an accomplished artist, playwright, and self-taught genealogist. She has received numerous Awards and Honors in the field of education and community service.

Mary would like to say she is honored and grateful to have been given the privilege of serving on the Leading Ladies *Party of Twelve* Production Committee. It has definitely been a very informative and educational experience being involved with a group of such powerful and influential ladies from various walks of life in the community. She has cherished the opportunity to learn valuable information about individuals of the past while getting to know individuals of today whose path she otherwise might never have crossed.

She notes that the ladies portrayed in the play expose many struggles women of the time had to face, even their own identity in society before and after the signing of the 19th Amendment. We're standing on many of their shoulders because they paved the way and opened doors that we can now go through that otherwise would not have been possible. We owe these ladies a great deal of gratitude due to the sacrifices they made and endured. To see the production from its inception to the final premiere is very enlightening and rewarding thanks to Playwright and Producer Mary Donnet Johnson, Characters, Leading Ladies *Party of Twelve* Committee, and the Rutherford Arts Alliance for having the vision to produce such a wonderful play.

Leading Ladies

OF Rutherford County History

This group of community leaders and artists originally assembled for the purpose of putting on a play to celebrate a few of the many inspiring women in Rutherford County history in honor of the centennial of women's suffrage. Nearly three years later, thanks to the ongoing challenges and extended deadline imposed by the pandemic, these intrepid women (and two men) have now created myriad offshoots and ways to deepen the impact that one good idea can have on a whole community.

To learn more, please visit: leadingladiesrutherford.com

- ♦ HONORARY CHAIR, ANDREA LOUGHRY
- ♦ PLAY CHAIR, PATIENCE LONG

Committee Members:

- ♦ SARAH CALLENDER
- ♦ THE LATE DR. GINNA FOSTER CANNON
- ♦ DR. MARY EVINS
- ♦ SUSAN GULLEY
- ♦ DEB HUNTER
- ♦ MARY DONNET JOHNSON
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- ♦ JOHN LODL
- ♦ ARABELLE POLLOCK
- ♦ LISA RAMSEY
- ♦ LAUREN SHOUSE
- ♦ CAROL WHITE
- ♦ TOMMY WOMACK

We'd also like to acknowledge the contributions of the following participants in the workshop reading of the play that was done August 21, 2020, on Zoom and directed by Keri Boe.

Cast

OLIVIA	AURORA BOE
MARY KATE PATTERSON.....	KARISHA GLOVER
SARAH CHILDRESS POLK.....	LEAH WILLIAMS
MARY ELLEN VAUGHN.....	LARAY RICHARDSON
WILLIE BETTY NEWMAN	BETHANY TRUE
WILL ALLEN DROMGOOLE	DENISE PARTON
ANNIE BRAWLEY JACKSON.....	ISABELLA KEARNEY
NANNIE RUCKER.....	ANGELA BINGHAM
LOTTIE SUBLETT.....	MIYA BURT
MARY NOAILLES MURFREE	LISA McLAURIN
MYRTLE GLANTON LORD	BRENDA MCKNIGHT
MARIAH	KARRISA WALKER

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MARCIA RICHMOND

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DEB THOMPSON & ROY SNIPES

BETH & MIKE USSERY

GERRY & STEVE WALDRON

PEGGY YOUNG

**Support listed was received as of March 23, 2022*

Courthouse image courtesy of the Rutherford County Archives.



PARTY OF *Twelve*



Written by MARY DONNET JOHNSON

Synopsis

In the middle of another long night of study, Olivia, an MTSU graduate student in public history, sits alone in her studio apartment in downtown Murfreesboro, Tennessee, eating a bowl of lukewarm Ramen noodles and typing on her laptop. She feels the pressure of having to write the best speech of her life about significant figures in Rutherford County history – before dawn. It’s not going well. She tries some yoga. She talks to a friend. But nothing seems to work, and most of all, she misses the wise counsel of her mother, who has recently passed away.

She opens the blinds to see if the sun has come up yet. It’s still dark. She returns to her computer, stares at the screen, sighs, slowly lays her head down on the desk and gives in to sleep.

We hear the soft refrain of a mid-nineteenth-century song. Then a Bobwhite call. The door to Olivia’s apartment opens quietly, and the spirit of Mary Kate Patterson, a notorious Confederate spy, tiptoes into the room wearing a voluminous cape and elegant dress whose design is circa 1864. Olivia stirs, and the dream begins.

Over the next hour Olivia is visited by the spirits of 10 more inspiring Rutherford County women, who all appear as they were at the peak of their power to help Olivia write her speech. The tireless mover and shaker, Myrtle Glanton Lord, suggests creating a vision board, using the inspiring messages each guest brings to the party, like “Be Bold,” “Build Bridges,” “See Opportunity,” “Speak Truth,” and more. A final woman appears, and a dramatic confrontation paves the way for this unique gathering to experience hope and healing that has the potential to reverberate throughout the community today and beyond. As the new day dawns, the women pour a celebratory drink of Cordial made from Rutherford County strawberries, toast each other, and disappear accompanied by the rousing melody of a familiar hymn. Thankful and inspired, Olivia greets the sun and embraces her future.

Time: The early morning hours of August 18, 2020, just before the centennial celebration of women’s suffrage

Place: A graduate student’s modest apartment in downtown Murfreesboro, TN

Any resemblance to persons, places, or historical events in this play are purely intentional – even though poetic license has been taken quite liberally in some instances.

Historic Women

Featured in *Party of Twelve*

Please note that the following list includes just a handful of the many extraordinary women from Rutherford County's history. They were chosen to represent urban and rural areas of the county, racial diversity, and a variety of vocations, ages, and important moments in history. Please visit leadingladiesrutherford.com to learn about additional inspiring women who have made our community a better place in which to live.



WILL ALLEN DROMGOOLE (1860-1934)

A writer, editor, and renowned orator, she published her first novel in 1886 and served as a columnist and then literary editor for the *Nashville Banner*. Named poet laureate by the Poetry Society of the South in 1930, she served two terms as an engrossing clerk for the Tennessee Senate and actively supported women's suffrage. She is believed to be the first woman to serve as a yeomanry warrant officer for the U.S. Navy.



ANNIE BRAWLEY JACKSON (ABOUT 1884-BY 1947)

A South Carolina native and secretary of Murfreesboro's Equal Suffrage League organized in 1914, she assisted Sue Shelton White and the National Woman's Party at its campaign headquarters during the 1920 ratification effort in Nashville. At that time, she lived with her husband Walter Cobb Jackson in Murfreesboro, where she was a railroad freight clerk and he was a freight agent.



Historic Women

Featured in *Party of Twelve*



MYRTLE GLANTON LORD (1908-2007)

A graduate of Bradley Academy, she taught at Little Hope in Smyrna and at Bradley and Hobgood in Murfreesboro. She also served as a prominent community activist and played key roles in the creation of Patterson Park Community Center, where the library is named for her, and Bradley Academy Museum and Cultural Center, where the classroom is named after her. She was honored as Tennessee's Most Outstanding African American Woman in 1999.



Mariah

John W. Childress to Sarah Childress Polk, 1826 January 3, Polk Memorial Association Collection of James Knox Polk (1780-1972) at the Tennessee State Library & Archives, Courtesy of the President James K. Polk Home & Museum.

MARIAH (1812-1849)

As an enslaved twelve-year-old within the Childress family, she went to Columbia, Tennessee, with Sarah Childress Polk after Sarah married James K. Polk. When sent back to Murfreesboro from Columbia to be sold, she escaped back to Columbia and was purchased by James K. Polk. She became an expert weaver, married, and had a son. Mariah died on the Polks' Mississippi plantation.



MARY NOAILLES MURFREE (1850-1922)

A prolific writer known as Charles Craddock, she penned a post-Civil War novel about the aftermath of the Battle of Stones River but was best known as a local-color writer who focused on people living in the southern mountains. She inspired MTSU's Craddock Study Club, a literary society, and her writing desk is at the Woman's Club in Murfreesboro.

WILLIE BETTY NEWMAN (1863-1935)

An acclaimed artist who attended Soule College, the Art Academy of Cincinnati, and the Julian Academy in Paris, she briefly ran an art school in Nashville and also taught students privately. She received the Parthenon medal from the Nashville Museum of Art. Despite her status as an independent woman, she argued that women did not need the vote because their male relatives would represent their opinions at the polls.



MARY KATE PATTERSON (1838-1931)

A Confederate spy and friend of Sam Davis (a member of Coleman's Scouts), she later married his brother, John. She lived in La Vergne most of her life and was the first woman buried in the Confederate Circle in Nashville's Mt. Olivet Cemetery. A Civil War Trails marker is located in front of the house where she lived from the mid-1880s to the early 1920s.



Historic Women

Featured in *Party of Twelve*



SARAH CHILDRESS POLK (1803-1891)

A well-educated woman who became an influential First Lady, she grew up on a plantation in Rutherford County and married James K. Polk when Murfreesboro was the capital of Tennessee. She is best-known for her behind-the-scenes assistance to her husband while he was president and for her neutrality while living in Nashville during the Civil War.



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NANNIE G. RUCKER (1914-2004)

A dedicated advocate for schools and busing as a longtime Rutherford County teacher and a member of the county school board, she became the first African American female elected as a Tennessee delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1972. She appears in both *Who's Who in American Politics* and *Who's Who Among African Americans*.



LOTTIE SUBLETT (1912-2002)

A native of Smyrna and the daughter of a farmer, in 1930 she became the first student from that town to attend Holloway High School, which educated African American children in Murfreesboro. She later lived in Nashville, worked as a technician at Meharry Medical College, and married WWII veteran and barber Henry Q. Sublett. The picnic area at Hilltop-Rosenwald Park in Smyrna is named after her.



MARY ELLEN VAUGHN (1893-1952)

A journalist, nurse, and educator, she established the *Murfreesboro Union* in 1920 and worked for the Commonwealth Fund's rural health initiative that later resulted in establishment of the Rutherford Health Department. In 1933, she opened Vaughn's Training School, in part to help African Americans meet the literacy requirement for voting. Murfreesboro's Vaughn Street is named after her, and a new state historical marker commemorates her many significant contributions to the community.

Compiled by Dr. Antoinette G. van Zelm, Assistant Director of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, with assistance from Mary Watkins, President of the African American Heritage Society of Rutherford County; Sarah Calise, Archivist at the Albert Gore Research Center at MTSU; and Katie Wilson, President of the Murfreesboro Branch of the NAACP.

The Bridge Builder

BY WILL ALLEN DROMGOOLE

An old man going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
Through which was flowing a sullen tide
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way;
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head;
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There followed after me to-day
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”

Source: *Father: An Anthology of Verse* (EP Dutton & Company, 1931)

Autographs

Thank You

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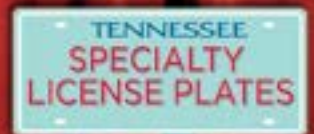
Many thanks to our many media partners

CityTV, *Murfreesboro Pulse*, Murfreesboro Voice, *VIP Murfreesboro*, Spread the Positive Podcast, Table Talk with Jonathan Harmon Podcast, WGNS, WQJZ, and all who helped support the Leading Ladies community project and *Party of Twelve* production.

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