



School of Theater

&

Mason Players

Present

a digital workshop production of

Luther's Trumpet

by

James Reston Jr



Streaming May 28, 2021 - June 4, 2021

Director's Note

Thank you for tuning in to our digital workshop exploration of Luther's Trumpet. I've been fortunate to be involved with the evolution of this fascinating text for about three years now, having staged a rather elaborate reading/performance in 2018 in the beautiful Stone Hill Amphitheatre in Rappahannock County, Virginia. Ever since, Jim Reston and I have been looking for the right vehicle to help the play take its next steps toward full production.

The pandemic and its panoply of closures and restrictions ended up guiding some of those steps. Now there are two terms I wish we could retire from the lexicon: "pivot" and "thinking outside the box." But I'm going to use them one last time (I solemnly swear) because they exactly describe what we have tried to do with this project. We pivoted from a conventional staged reading concept to a hybrid in-person and remote interaction when it became clear that a traditional full gathering of artists and audience in one room would be challenging in the short term. And we were determined not to be "boxed in" by the omnipresent two-dimensional rectangles of Zoom, a medium that, while essential to the survival of the arts (and committee meetings and happy hours) during this time, has also become a bit confining and predictable.

Enter the Window Wall, an innovative concept for teaching and creating at a distance developed by the brilliant choreographer Christopher D'Amboise, Heritage Professor of Dance at Mason. Christopher had been working on this unique arrangement of cameras, projectors, surfaces, and interfaces since well before the pandemic, as a means of collaborating remotely at life-size and in three dimensions, allowing a choreographer or director in one city to work with a cast somewhere else and feel very much like being in the same studio. When COVID-19 hit, this technology immediately proved to be game-changing. Our School of Dance was able to carry on a significant amount of in-person teaching and creation, very safely, using the Window Wall to keep classes small and spread out, and beaming choreographers in from DC and New York and beyond.

We've used it for musical theater master classes and full-scale dance rehearsals. The concept is so powerful that we created a research home for it with our College of Visual and Performing Arts, called the Center for Live Interactive Virtual Education (LIVE), to continue developing both the technology itself and the programming that it can facilitate. <https://cvpa.gmu.edu/academics/live-center>

Seeing all this in action gave me the idea of using it to work on Luther's Trumpet. Jim Reston caught the concept right away, and Christopher eagerly jumped in as a facilitator, collaborator, and, during our one-week rehearsal and shooting period, a valuable "Visual Dramaturg," helping us get the most out of his creation.

One of the key premises of this workshop is to explore how actors on a stage – or what became a soundstage -- can interact with other actors in remote locations (in this case, Washington, DC, and Pittsburgh) in digitally-enhanced environments created through layers of projections. A full treatment of this concept would require Window Wall installations at all locations; our remote actors come to us via their own Zoom set-ups. But we wanted to point the way toward what could be an enduring, post-pandemic hybrid technique to create a workshop and performance environment that goes well beyond either the traditional actors-at-music-stands reading or the static Zoom-box experience. I'm eager to hear what you think about what we accomplished and where you think it might lead.

One final note. This is the final official project under George Mason auspices for my good friend and colleague for 30 years, Kevin Murray (Tetzel). Kevin's steady, creative, resourceful, and humane leadership style (as Company Manager and later Managing Director) was one of the keys to the artistic success and 20+ year survival of Theater of the First Amendment, our experiment in combining a resident professional company with an undergraduate theater program. He brought those same qualities to a two-year stint (one year longer than planned, thanks to the pandemic) as Interim Director of our School of Theater, which comes to a conclusion this summer with his retirement from the university.

Director's Note continued

But his active life as a professional actor is sure to get even more active, and he'll still be in the neighborhood, so I know we'll be working together again before too long on something. Thanks, K-Man.

And thanks to all the sponsors, cast, and (surprisingly vast) production staff and crew that made this workshop possible. I learned something new every day. And I hope we served our original purpose of taking Luther's Trumpet a little farther down the road to a full realization.

Rick Davis, Director.

Playwright's Note

Rick Davis and his creative team have created here a far grander and awe-inspiring production than I could ever have imagined, when we first began to talk about this in the depths of the pandemic. The revolutionary approach of allowing actors on stage to interact with characters who appear on the massive magic wall should inspire theatre professionals everywhere in the post-pandemic world. That this exciting experiment featured some of the finest actors in Washington was merely icing on the cake. The epic story of Martin Luther and the birth of Protestantism has never been told like this.

James Reston Jr, Playwright.

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A Few Important Points

Martin Luther (1483-1546): known as the Reformer
Reformation: a 16th-century movement to reform the abuses in the Roman Catholic Church that led to the establishment of the Protestant Churches
Holy Roman Empire: a loose confederation of European states extending from Denmark to Austria to Spain and the Netherlands, and on to the New World, presided over by Charles V, the king of Spain who was the Holy Roman Emperor
St. Peter's Cathedral: the great basilica of the Vatican in Rome
Purgatory: In Roman Catholic belief, a place of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven
Indulgences: a papal grant that could be purchased to reduce the time a sinner spends in purgatory
Papal Bull: a formal papal proclamation
Celibacy: the vow of a Roman Catholic priest to abstain from marriage and from all sexual relations
The Diet of Worms: an imperial conclave convened to consider Luther's heresy

Cast Members (in order of appearance)

Cardinal Giuliano de Medici	Alison Weisgall
Pope Leo X	Craig Wallace
Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor	Hasan Crawford
Father Tetzl, Priest	Kevin Murray
Martin Luther, Friar	Edward Gero
Philip, friend of Luther	Steven Franco
Hans, Captain of the Wartburg	Hugh Hill
Argula von Stauff, Writer & Noblewoman	Karen Hochstetter
The Devil	David Tatel

Production Team

Director

Rick Davis

Production Manager

Ruth Yamamoto

Assistant Stage Manager

Amelia McGinnis

Center for the Arts Production Manager

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Christopher d'Amboise

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Alex Brewer, Anna Feinerman, Joe Finneran, and Eileen Goodrich

Teleprompter Operators

Alex Cloud, Mina Maderi, and Emily Mayberry

Deck Audio

G. Phoenix Henkle

Cast Bios



Hasan Crawford (Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor) is ecstatic to be a part of this staged reading of Luther's Trumpet! Hasan is approaching his senior year of studies at George Mason University, where he majors in Theater with a concentration in Musical Theatre. You may have seen or him there in shows such as Twelfth Night (Sir Andrew), Mason Cabaret, or the upcoming Unexpected Stage's production of Nothing To Lose, or even in an ad for an app on your phone! He thanks his cast and crew for their hard work and dedication and his family and friends for their love and support.



Steven Franco (Philip) is a rising junior at George Mason University where he is working to obtain his B.F.A. in Theater with a concentration in Musical Theater Performance. GMU: Rags, Spring Awakening, Gaining Ground, Mason Cabaret, Chimichangas and Zoloff, and Runaways. Steven would like to thank the cast and crew of Luther's Trumpet. Gracias a mi familia, a mis amigos y en especial, para toda mi gente Latinx!



Karen Hochstetter (Arugula von Stauff) first tampered in the world of acting as a child dubbing for Italian films at Cinecitta studios in Rome, Italy. She studied Drama at Catholic University in Washington DC and appeared in the theatre in Washington DC, NYC, and LA. Selected credits include Helena in 'A Midsummers night Dream' once at the Sylvan Theatre at the Washington Monument. And once in the 6th grade in England where the review by a neighboring school has stood her in good stead throughout her life, Blanche: Women Behind Bars at Bart Whitemans The Source Theatre, Maria Feletti : Accidental Death Of an Anarchist 'Manequin' the Manequin play, Ellie Price : Tropical Madness The professor : The Lesson, and reprising her role as 'Arugula' In Luthers Trumpet

Cast Bios



Edward Gero (Martin Luther) is Performance Area Head for the School of Theatre at Theater at George Mason University. A veteran of the Washington theatre community, he is a four-time recipient of the Helen Hayes Award. In 2015, he created the role of Justice Antonin Scalia in the world premiere of Molly Smith's acclaimed production of John Strand's play *The Originalist*. The play has toured to Asolo Rep in Sarasota, Florida, The Pasadena Playhouse, and will continue to Chicago's Court Theatre in May of 2018. Other political roles include Richard Nixon in Nixon's *Nixon* at Roundhouse Theatre in 1999 and 2008, which earned him a Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor both times. He has also appeared as Mark Rothko in Robert Falls' production of *RED* at the Goodman Theater in Chicago and Arena Stage in Washington, DC. In 31 seasons with the Shakespeare Theatre Company, he most recently appeared as King Henry in *Henry IV, parts 1&2*. 70 other roles for STC include *Hotspur* in *Henry IV* (Helen Hayes Award), *Bolingbroke* in *Richard II* (Helen Hayes Award) and *Macduff* in *Macbeth* (Helen Hayes Award). Other DC credits include *Scrooge* in *A Christmas Carol* at Ford's Theatre; *Salieri* in *Amadeus* at Roundhouse Theatre; *Donny* in *American Buffalo* at The Studio Theatre and *Sweeney Todd* in *Sweeney Todd* at Signature Theatre. Film and television credits include *House of Cards*, *Turn: Washington's Spies*, *Die Hard II*, *Striking Distance*, and narrations for The Discovery Channel and PBS. He earned a BA in Speech and Theater at Montclair State University. Mr. Gero was honored to receive the 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship.

Cast Bios



Hugh Hill (Hans) has appeared and directed in many area venues. He studied with The Shakespeare Theater, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and Studio Theater. Hugh appeared in a previous production of this masterful work staged in an outdoor theater and directed by Rick Davis.



Kevin Murray (Tetzel) currently serves as the Interim Director of the School of Theater at George Mason University. As an actor, he is best known for his appearances in feature films *Aftermath* with Arnold Schwarzenegger and *Runaway Bride* with Julia Roberts and Richard Gere, and recently appeared in the Showtime series *The Good Lord Bird* with Ethan Hawke. Additional appearances include *House of Cards* on Netflix, *Veep* and *The Wire* on HBO, *Homicide* on NBC, and numerous independent films. Kevin is a teacher, acting coach and arts education advocate. He has appeared in scores of plays, and in his past life as Managing Director of Mason's resident theater company, Theater of the First Amendment, he championed new work in both theater and film. Each summer, he teaches on-camera acting techniques to children of all ages as a staff member of Acting for Young People, the theater component of the Mason Community Arts Academy, and is a board member for both organizations.

Cast Bios



David S. Tatel (The Devil) is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Apparently typecast as a prosecutor, his theatrical experience consists of performances as the Grand Inquisitor in Stone Hill's and Castleton's productions of Jim Reston's *Galileo's Torch*, and as Secretary of War Edward Stanton in Stone Hill's production of Reston's *Sherman the Peacemaker*. It was thus hardly surprising that he appeared as the Devil in the 2018 Stone Hill production of Reston's *Martin Luther*.



Craig Wallace (Pope Leo X) has been an actor/director/teaching artist in the DMV for 25 years. He is a graduate of Penn State University (MFA) and Howard University (BFA) where he also an adjunct Professor. Craig has performed on several DMV stages and is an affiliated artist with Shakespeare Theatre Company; Round House Theatre and Ford's Theatre.



Alison Weisgall (Cardinal de Medici) is thrilled to be part of "Luther's Trumpet." *New York: Life and Times*, Episodes 1-4 (Public Theater, Obie Award for Special Citations); *Romeo and Juliet* (Classic Stage Company); *Angel of History* (HERE Arts Center). Regional: *A Few Good Men* (Pittsburgh Public Theater); *The Glass Menagerie* (Winnepesaukee Playhouse). She also toured Europe and Asia for three years as a company member with Nature Theater of Oklahoma. Film/TV: *I'm Your Woman* (Amazon); "Archive 81" (Netflix); "Rust" (Showtime). Alison is an adjunct professor of Theatre at Chatham University. B.A., M.F.A.: Columbia University.

Production Bios



Rick Davis (Director) is Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Executive Director of the Hylton Performing Arts Center, and Professor of Theater at George Mason University. Rick came to Mason in 1991 as Artistic Director of Theater of the First Amendment (TFA) after six seasons as Resident Dramaturg and then Associate Artistic Director at Baltimore's Center Stage. He co-founded the American Ibsen Theater in Pittsburgh (1983-1985), and worked in summer stock as director, actor, and designer/technician in his formative years. An active director of theater and opera on and off campus, Rick has staged productions for TFA, Center Stage, the Kennedy Center, Opera Idaho, The IN Series, Delaware Theatre Company, Players Theatre Columbus, Unseam'd Shakespeare Company, American Ibsen Theater, The Virginia Consort, Capital City Opera, and others. For the Mason Players, he has directed a variety of plays and musicals, most recently *Pericles*. He also directs for Mason Opera Theater from time to time, including a recent production of *The Medium* and a collaboration with Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, *Raising Voices*. Rick was educated at Lawrence University (B.A.) and the Yale School of Drama (M.F.A., D.F.A.). At Mason, he has been honored as the Alumni Association "Distinguished Faculty of the Year" and with a university Teaching Excellence Award.

Production Bios



Amelia McGinnis (Assistant Stage Manager) is a recent graduate of George Mason University with a BFA degree in Design for the Stage and Screen. She specializes in stage managing and choreographing musical productions. Selected stage management credits at George Mason include Gaining Ground, Rags, The Wolves, and Originals. She is currently pursuing a masters degree in Stage Management at Columbia University. Amelia is proud to be a Senior Teaching Artist at Acting for Young People where she currently serves as a choreographer and administrative assistant.



James Reston Jr (Playwright) has written 19 books and 4 plays. His 9/11 novel, The Nineteenth Hijacker, has just been published. His first play Sherman the Peacemaker, about General William Tecumseh Sherman at Civil War's end, premiered at the PlayMakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill, N.C. in 1979. His second play, Jonestown Express, premiered at the Trinity Square Repertory company in Providence, R.I. in 1984. Directed by the iconoclastic director, Adrian Hall, it was published by TCG as one of the best new plays of that year. His third play, Galileo's Torch, premiered in 2016 and has had seven productions including the Folger Shakespeare Company. Luther's Trumpet received its first staged reading in 2018.

Production Bios



Ruth Yamamoto (Production Manager) is an adjunct professor for George Mason University and Prince George's Community College, production manager, improv consultant, and author (Serious Fun: The Power of Improvisation for Learning and Life). Ruth has worked for and performed at The J. F. Kennedy Center, Asian Stories In America (A.S.I.A.) theatre company, and local DC film/tv productions. She was production manager at The Kitchen in NYC, and technical director at Discovery Theater at the Smithsonian. She holds a PhD in education from Walden University, an MEd in education from Marymount University, and a BA in drama from the University of Hawaii. Dr. Yamamoto has been a theatre educator for 20+ years in public and private schools and is a member for The Association for the Study of Play (TASP), Applied Improv Network (AIN), and SAG/AFTRA.

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Spring Season**

Mason Cabaret:

Sing Happy! The Music of Kander and Ebb

Directed by Erin Gardiner and James Gardiner

Musical accompaniment by Joe Walsh

February 14, 2021

(Mason Arts at Home)

Mason Fringe

Come My Beloved

By Emma Weinstein

Directed by Jacob Horowitz

February 12, 2021

(Mason Arts at Home)

Chimichangas and Zolof

By Fernanda Coppel

Directed by Esteban Marmolejo-Saurez

March 19, 2021

(Mason Arts at Home)

presented by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Are You There?

By Vivian Barnes, Jonathan Norton, and Gab Reisman

Directed by Mimsi Janis

April 9-11, 2021)

(Mason Arts at Home)

1001 Plays

Codirected by Kristin Neshati-Johnsen and Nicholas Horner

April 27, 2021

(online)

**The School of Theater's and Mason Players'
2020-2021 Spring Season cont.**

A Concert Production of *Runaways*

by Elizabeth Swados

Directed by Erin Gardiner

Musical Direction by Joe Walsh

Choreography by Ahmad Maaty

April 30 & May 1, 2021

(Mason Pond Lawn)

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- Emily Schneider, *Academic Programs Marketing Manager*
- Stacey Schwartz, *Web and Digital Marketing Manager*
- Meaghan Sweeney, *Marketing Assistant*
- Azriel Towner, *Graphic Designer*

Operations

- Jessica D'Angelo, *CFA Production Manager*
- Dan Hobson, *CVPA Production Manager*
- Cat Buchanan, *Dance Wardrobe Coordinator*
- Lowell Conrad, *Assistant Carpenter*
- Carrie Cox, *Scene Shop Assistant Technical Director, Master Carpenter*
- Robert Cunningham, *Technical Supervisor*
- Dorsey Drummond, *Audio Visual Engineer*
- Laurel Dunayer, *Costume Shop Manager*
- David Foti, *CFA Schedule and Event Coordinator*
- Will Gautney, *Assistant Master Electrician*
- Francesca Kachur, *Events and Production Assistant*
- Billy Kessinger, *Audio Supervisor*
- Reid May, *Audio Technician*
- Ethan Osborne, *Scene Shop Manager*
- Adrianna Daugherty Smith, *Venue Technician*
- Micah Stromberg, *Venue Technician*
- Tom Terlecki, *Venue Technician*
- Bethany Thompson, *Master Electrician*
- Megan Webb, *Program and Production Coordinator*

Finance

- John Wilkin, *Director of Finance and Administration; CFO*
- Meghan Blydenburgh, *HR and Payroll Coordinator*
- Crystal Broomall, *Finance Specialist*
- Jennifer Butler, *Payroll and HR Assistant*
- Teri Grass, *Finance Assistant*
- Delia Johnson, *Accountant*
- Peggy Kamin, *Finance/Budget Analyst*
- Hiwot Kifle, *Finance Assistant*
- Caitlyn Loweth, *Event and Contract Coordinator*
- Catherine Winkert, *Associate Director of Finance and Administration*

Mason Community Arts Academy

- Libby Curtis, *Executive Director*
- Claire Allen, *Faculty Coordinator*
- Madelyn Austin, *Graduate Intern for Outreach*
- Samantha Clarke, *Graduate Intern for Instruments in the Attic*
- Kaity Cookson, *Coordinator Data and Programs*
- Matt Geske, *HR and Purchasing Assistant*
- Morgan Johnson, *Coordinator Registration and Programs*
- Mary Lechter, *Associate Director/Acting for Young People Theater Director*
- Rachel McAleer, *Coordinator HR and Communications/Music Instructor*
- Alaina Talley, *Coordinator Programming and Registration*
- Zi Wang, *Coordinator Marketing and Website*