

The DIVINE SISTER



110TH
Season
1916-2026

MAY 29 – JUNE 21, 2026



VAGABOND PLAYERS



VAGABOND PLAYERS

The Best of Broadway on Broadway

806 South Broadway
Baltimore, MD 21231
410-563-9135
www.vagabondplayers.org

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VAGABOND PLAYERS PRESENT

The DIVINE SISTER

by Charles Busch

Directed by Steve Goldklang

Cast (in Order of Appearance)

Agnes	Morgan Wenerick
Sister Walburga/Mrs. Macduffie	Maeve Koch
Sister Acacius	Holly Pascuillo
Mother Superior	J Purnell Hargrove
Mrs. Levinson/Timothy	Melissa Bannister
Jeremy/Brother Venerius	Mark Kozlowski
Understudy (Agnes)	Gracie Sciannella
Understudy (Jeremy/Brother Venerius)	Michael Kranick

Setting

Pittsburgh, 1966

Saint Veronica's Convent and School

There will be a fifteen-minute intermission.

*The Divine Sister is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals
on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com*

*The Divine Sister was produced by Daryl Roth and Bob Boyett at
SoHo Playhouse in New York City on September 22, 2010.*

*The Divine Sister was developed at Theater For The New City
(Crystal Field, Executive Artistic Director) in New York City in February, 2010.*

About The Show

The Divine Sister is a comedy that affectionately spoofs a long line of convent dramas, religious mysteries, and larger-than-life Hollywood storytelling traditions. With six actors playing nine roles, the play layers misunderstandings, secrets, revelations, and improbable coincidences into a deliberately exaggerated theatrical farce.

Busch's script is filled with references to classic films and stage works, inviting audiences to spot the inspirations behind its characters and scenes. Among the works echoed throughout the play are:

- ◆ *The Trouble with Angels*
- ◆ *The Singing Nun*
- ◆ *Agnes of God*
- ◆ *Doubt*
- ◆ *The Bells of St. Mary's*
- ◆ *His Girl Friday*, particularly in the early 1940s-style flashback sequence
- ◆ *The Da Vinci Code*
- ◆ *The Sound of Music*
- ◆ *Auntie Mame*
- ◆ *Suddenly, Last Summer*

Rather than parodying any single source, *The Divine Sister* blends elements from many familiar stories into its own comic tale of convent life, hidden pasts, and theatrical melodrama.

We encourage audiences to check out (or revisit) some of these great references!

About The Playwright

Charles Busch is the author and star of such plays as *The Lady in Question*, *Red Scare on Sunset*, *The Confession of Lily Dare* and *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* (one of the longest-running plays in the history of off-Broadway). His play *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* received a Tony nomination for Best Play and is the longest-running Broadway comedy of the past 25 years. He wrote and starred in the film versions of his plays *Psycho Beach Party* and *Die Mommie Die!*, the latter of which won him the Best Performance Award at the Sundance Film Festival.

Mr. Busch has been honored with a special Drama Desk Award for career achievement as both performer and playwright and received the Flora Roberts Award for Sustained Achievement in the theater by the Dramatist's Guild. He is the subject of the documentary film *The Lady in Question is Charles Busch* and author of *LEADING LADY: A Memoir of a Most Unusual Boy*.

Learn more at www.charlesbusch.com

Cast Biographies



Melissa Banister (Mrs. Levinson/Timothy) is excited to return to Vagabond Players, where she was previously seen in *Arsenic and Old Lace*; *Pipeline*; *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*; and *How I Learned to Drive*. Additional recent credits include: *Deathtrap*; *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Spotlighters Theatre) and *Machinal* (Fells Point Corner Theatre). Melissa earned her BA in Theater and Dance from Trinity College, and teaches theatre arts to high schoolers. She appreciates Steve for the opportunity to join an amazing cast and crew for this wild ride. Melissa is forever grateful to Nicholas and Matthew for their support, inspiration, and love.

J Purnell Hargrove (Mother Superior) is a Baltimore based performer, theatrical administrator and all-around galactic treasure. They were first seen on the Vagabond Player's stage many years ago in *Godspell*. You may have recently seen them in Fells Point Corner Theatre's production of *Dance Nation* as Dance Teacher Pat or in Motte & Bailey's production of *Cesar/Americana* as Cinna the Poet. J is the co-founder of The Greasy Utterson, an audio drama podcast company. They are also the Artistic Director of FPCT where they continue to foster and champion bonding and community within the Baltimore arts scene.



Maeve Koch (Sister Walburga/Mrs. Macduffie) is delighted to make her stage debut at Vagabond Players after toiling for years behind the scenes as a props master, costumer, and tenant of the light and sound booth. She is excited to work with Steve, Jesse, Apryl, and Roy again! Although she has played many roles and worn many hats over the years, her most prolific was perhaps the beret she donned whilst performing as a mime in a 10-minute play her parents drove 3 hours to see, never questioning whether a theatre degree from American University was the absolute best use of money. For that, she is grateful.

Mark Kozlowski (Brother Venerius/Jeremy) is excited to be making his Vagabond Players debut. Previously in Baltimore, he was seen in *Murder on the Orient Express* at Manor Mill Playhouse (M. Bouc) and in a staged reading of *Reconciling a Ruse* (Peter Ward). Prior to moving here in 2019, he was involved in theater at the California Institute of Technology as an actor, director, producer, and playwright. Mark wishes to extend many thanks to this talented cast and crew, and especially to his wife Penelope for her constant love and support!



Cast Biographies



Michael Kranick (Understudy for Brother Venerius/Jeremy) would like to thank director, Steve Goldklang, for once again providing him the opportunity to jump back onstage! Mike's previous credits with Vagabond Players include: Timothy Hogarth (*Room Service*), Jonah (*Bad Jews*), and Katurian (*The Pillowman*). Mike would also like to thank his parents and extended family members for their continued unconditional love and support.

Holly Pasciullo (Sister Acacius) previous Vagabond Players' credits include Blanche in *Broadway Bound*, Masha in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, Aunt Debra in *Kimberly Akimbo*, Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*, Mabel Cantwell in *The Best Man*, Frances Black in *Light Up the Sky*, and Chris Gorman in *Rumors*. Other roles in the Baltimore area include Nora in *A Doll's House Part 2*, Helen Hubbard in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Alice Beene in *Titanic*, and the Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods*.



Gracie Sciannella (Understudy for Agnes) (she/her) is a Baltimore creative and is so grateful to be back at Vagabond Players! Gracie was seen last fall in Vagabond Player's hit production of *HAIR* as a tribe member. She has also been seen on stage at Spotlighters Theatre and Fells Point Corner Theatre. Gracie graduated with an Acting BFA from Towson University in 2024 and has been working in Baltimore ever since. She loves her city and her theater community!!

Morgan Wenerick (Agnes) was last seen on the Vagabond Player's stage in their production of *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*. Other past credits at Vagabonds include *How I Learned to Drive*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, and *Stop Kiss*. She earned her Acting B.F.A. at Towson University in spring of 2020, and most recently performed as Sorel Bliss in Cockpit in Court's production of *Hay Fever*. She hopes you laugh loudly during the show.



Crew Biographies

Steve Goldklang (Director) has been directing theatrical productions in the Baltimore area for over 35 years. Recent Vagabond Players productions include: *Room Service*, *Doubt*, *Broadway Bound*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Lion in Winter*, and *Born Yesterday*. Steve has also conducted workshops in both Directing and Auditioning at Vagabonds. When he is not at the theater, you can find him on a variety of pickleball courts in Baltimore.

Brad J Ranno (Lighting Designer) is the Senior Special Event Coordinator with Johns Hopkins University's Data Science & AI Institute. He has a BA in Theatre from The University of Maryland and a Masters Degree in Arts Administration from Goucher College. He is the Operations Manager at Shriver Hall Concert Series, Operations & Event Coordinator at UMBC's Performing Arts & Humanities Building, Assistant Technical Director at the Bowie Center for Performing Arts, Technical Director at Baltimore Theatre Project, and Theatre Technician at CCBC Essex. For over 20 years, Brad has done theatrical design work for over twenty years including at: Lyric Baltimore, Centerstage, Everyman, and more.

April Forrer (Costume Design) is thrilled to be back working with Vagabond Players. She recently worked with the amazing crew and cast of *The Heidi Chronicles* at Vagabonds and with the Maryland Opera for *Madame Butterfly*. She wishes to thank her three wonderful children, Ethan, Quintin and Lilly. Enjoy the show!

Ren Saul (Booth Technician) is a sophomore at VCU studying for a B.A. in Theatre. This is their first show at Vagabond Players, other recent credits include ASM for *The Bloody Diner* with VCUarts SALT, set design for *Keep Forward* with VCUarts Staged, technical director for *Footloose* and PSM for *Into the Woods* with Towson High School Theatre. Ren would like to thank the cast and crew for this amazing opportunity as well as thank their best friends Josie, Charlie, Bo, and Rowan for always supporting them!

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Patron support allows us to offer our artists stipends and has helped us with several major projects over the years including:

- **Renovation of our auditorium**
- **Replacement of the theatre's aging heating and air conditioning systems**
- **Complete overhaul of our lighting and sound systems, including the installation of hearing assistive technology for our patrons.**

Every dollar you contribute goes toward assuring we can continue to bring you high-quality productions and a grand experience at the Vagabond Theatre.

**TO MAKE A DONATION, VISIT
WWW.VAGABONDPLAYERS.ORG/DONATE**



Production Staff

Director	Steve Goldklang
Stage Manager	Jesse Stiteler
Assistant Stage Manager	Apryl Bancroft
Lighting Design	Brad Ranno
Sound Design and Musical Director	Stephen Deininger
Costume Design	April Forrer
Set Design	Roy Steinman
Set Build	Bruce Kapplin Jay Demarco
Booth Technicians	Ren Saul Chip Furstenau
Photographer	Shealyn Jae Photography
Marketing/PR	Audra M Mullen Sydney Marks Su Kim
Graphic Design	Sarah Hepworth
Box Office/Front of House	Michael Kranick
Producers	Marylee Barnes Michael Kranick

Special Thanks **Steve Arnold**



Tech Crew at Vagabond Players Read Street, ca 1935

The History of VAGABOND PLAYERS

The years that followed the great fire of 1904 were a time of great bustle and activity for Baltimore, and the commencement of World War I in 1914 helped to intensify this mood. During 1915 and 1916, Baltimore's industrial growth surpassed that of any similar period. [Also] during the war, a renaissance in the arts took place, led by Baltimore's mayor, Walter Preston. In 1915 Preston told the city council, "Baltimore's citizens have as much right to organizations that provide for aesthetic development as they do to a sanitation department."

Thus, by 1916 the city had its own symphony and community park concerts, and work had begun on a public art museum. Curiously enough, though, no one had been able to establish any kind of successful, progressive theater. This seems especially odd when one considers the great theatrical ferment that was then sweeping the country. Despite this national movement, however, attempts to organize permanent dramatic groups in Baltimore had failed. In 1916, three people decided to alter this situation: Constance D'Arcy Mackay, a New Yorker who specialized in directing elaborate pageants; Adele Gutman Nathan, a Baltimorean who had directed plays while attending Goucher College; and Carol Sax, a former student of theater and art at Columbia University and teacher at the Maryland Institute of Art.

In 1947, Mrs. Nathan recalled the circumstances that led to the founding of Baltimore's first little theater:

Constance Mackay, Carol Sax and I were waiting for a streetcar at the corner of Charles and Centre Streets...Weary from rehearsal, we leaned against a store window while we talked — good talk about the Little Theatre Movement that was spreading across the country...We agreed that Baltimore should have a Little Theatre. The town was loaded with talent. The question was, where to put the playhouse.

Carol Sax noticed that Miss Mackay and I were leaning against a store window. Directly above our heads was sign, "For Rent—Apply St. James Hotel." Eagerly the three of us cupped our eyes with our hands and peered through the darkened glass. The store was empty. It was about two stories high, just right for a theatre, and by some miracle there was a raised platform across the back wall...

Early the next morning, Carol Sax went to the St. James Hotel and paid the first month's rent. \$19.

Constance MacKay did not remain in Baltimore to participate in the actual founding of the theater. However, Carol Sax and Mrs. Nathan proceeded enthusiastically with the project, managing to throw Baltimore into a tizzy of excitement with their oblique publicity.

To learn more about our history, check out ***The Vagabonds: America's Oldest Little Theatre*** by Linda Lee Koenig or visit our website:
<https://www.vagabondplayers.org/history/>



For more than a century, Vagabond Players has been powered by the passion, creativity, and dedication of local artists and audiences. We celebrate the vibrant connection between this historic theatre group and the community that built it — and continues to sustain it

From actors stepping onto our stage for the first time to audience members who have filled our seats for generations, Vagabond Players remains a living testament to Baltimore's artistic spirit. As one of the oldest continuously operating community theatres in the country, we are proud to provide opportunities for local talent while presenting compelling, accessible theatre for our community.

Shining the spotlight on two extraordinary leaders whose dedication ensured Vagabond Players' survival and growth for nearly a century:

Helen Penniman joined the board in 1917 and guided the organization through decades of growth, serving as board president until her retirement in 1961. During a time when many theatre groups transitioned toward professional models, Penniman remained steadfast in her belief that Vagabond Players should remain rooted in community theatre. Her unwavering commitment to showcasing local talent helped establish the artistic foundation that still defines the company today.



Penniman's vision was carried forward by **John Bruce Johnson**, who joined Vagabond Players as an actor in 1960 and soon became one of its most influential leaders. Serving as board president for 30 years, Johnson oversaw the theatre's move to its current historic home in Fells Point and helped define its signature programming style — presenting innovative, popular productions while occasionally introducing bold and adventurous works.

The leadership, passion, and dedication of Penniman and Johnson ensured that community theatre would not only survive in Baltimore — it would thrive.

We Are Vagabonds. We Are Baltimore.
Share your story with us: www.WeAreVagabonds.org



VAGABOND ANGELS

Become an Angel today!

Support the arts, remember a loved one,
or honor a fellow theatre lover.

Broadway Angels

(Contributions of \$1,000 or more)

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Carol and Tim Evans
David Dunn
Dave Guy
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Barbara Hawkins

The Ann Horwitz and Bertha N. Oppel
Charitable Trust
Robert Kass
Katie Marcotte
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The Estate of Jack Strong Smith
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Candice Chesno
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Suzanne Keilson
Bruce McPherson

Michelle Melicosta
Rhett Murphy
Trina Schroer
Julie Spokus
Christopher Weglein

Vagabond Players is a recipient of grants from the
Abell Foundation and the Maryland State Arts Council.





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OUR 110TH SEASON!

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OUR 111TH SEASON!

THINK YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE
A PART OF OUR PRODUCTIONS?

Visit our website, sign up for our e-newsletter,
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auditions and behind-the-scenes opportunities.

We welcome artists of all backgrounds and
experience levels to join us and be a part of
bringing high quality theatre to Baltimore.

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Have you been involved in a production for
Vagabond Players? Whether on the stage or
behind the scenes, once you've participated in a
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