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5 NEW PLAYS

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ESTD 2025

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Melissa Flower Gladney

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Emily Aronoff

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James Ahn Brandfonbrener
Gabriel Schmid-Doyle

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Sean Dagony-Clark
Jeffrey B. Fuerst

Directing by
Rich O'Brien*
Cathy Reinking
Carolyn Marie Wright
Melissa Flower Gladney
Maria Provenzano

Plays by
Rich Feldman
Jeffery Fuerst
Joni Fritz
Bette Carlson Siler*
Andrew O'Brien

PELHAM FRINGE COMPANY

Alba Ovalles, R. Alex Murray, Andrew O'Brien, Andy Horan, Bette Carlson Siler*, Brittney Jensen, Carolyn Marie Wright, Cathy Reinking, Ellen Weiss, Emily Aronoff, Emily Tuckman*, Gretchen Metzloff, James Ahn Brandfonbrener, Janine LaManna*, Jean Garner*, Jeffrey B. Fuerst, Jessica W. Bonds, Jill Friedman, Jim Cairl, Jim Ewing, John Hastings, Jonathan Hicks, Joni Fritz, Judith Reagan*, Karen Pursel, Kate McDaniel, Kathleen Mary Carthy (Boon)*, Kathy Rossetter, Khrystina Pryani, Krisana Soponpong, Laura Lee Botsacos*, Lin Snider, Lizzy Kircher*, Lori Federico, Lori Myers, Maggie Solimine*, Margo Hastings, Maria Provenzano, Marin Zielinski, Melissa Flower Gladney, Meredith Shea, Michael Fanuele, Misti Tindiglia, Neil Friedland, Nick DeSimone, Penelope Golden, Phyllis Lindy, Rachel Arbeit Robertson, Renée Hewitt, Ric Siler*, Rich Feldman, Rich O'Brien*, Richard Warner*, Sean Dagony-Clark, Sophie Cohen, Tony A. Watts

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Pelham Fringe is a creative lab and producing platform for new work, bringing actors, writers, and directors into a focused, collaborative room. This festival is the organization's inaugural production: the world premieres of five short plays developed in-house.

Hosted by The Picture House Regional Film Center, 175 Wolfs Lane, Pelham, NY 10803.

Pelham Fringe Festival is presented through special arrangement with Actors' Equity Theatre Authority. Any actor with an asterisk is a member of Actors' Equity Association.

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Pelham Fringe Started With a Question

and a FaceBook post



Kate McDaniel, center, with her daughters JJ, Ryley, and Andi, picking apples, October 2025.

Less than a year ago, Pelham Fringe didn't exist.

I spent 10 years working as an actor in Los Angeles before moving to New York and becoming a stay-at-home mom of three little girls ages 8 months, 2, and 5; I was looking for a creative outlet — and wondering if anyone else around here might be, too.

On October 13, 2025, I put a post in the Parents of Pelham FaceBook group: "Does anybody want to read Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County* with me?"

Thirty-two people showed up. That night changed everything.

I discovered an extraordinary amount of talent hiding in plain sight — like-minded actors, writers, directors, and artists who wanted to work, stretch themselves, meet one another, and, perhaps most importantly, wanted a room in which the work could be taken seriously without taking ourselves too seriously.

SO WE KEPT GOING.



Writers started approaching me with their work. We spent an evening this past January performing short plays by local playwright Jeffrey B. Fuerst. From there, Pelham Fringe evolved naturally based on who entered the room and what they brought with them: a Shakespeare coach led a night working on scenes from the Bard; a Second City veteran led an improv session that gave us a new set of tools to approach scripted material.

A roster of talented local playwrights led me to curate a 10-Minute Plays night where a few dozen actors all sat at the table and read the work. And then I created Under the Influence, an experiment built around something I love about the creative process:

ONE ARTIST INSPIRING ANOTHER.

In Under the Influence, we focus on the work of a single playwright, read and explore it together, and then the writers in the room take a point of inspiration — a theme, a character, an image, a line of thought — and create an original scene or short play. Two weeks later, we reconvene for After the Influence in which our actors bring these newborn scripts to life for all to hear, to discuss, and for the writers to revise.

Extraordinary things started being made.

The five plays in this inaugural Pelham Fringe Festival grew out of that spirit of development and discovery: work moving from an idea to a page, to a room full of artists, and now, for the first time, to the stage. Two of the five plays happen to be by first-time playwrights — actors who showed up to act and then were inspired to write.

"We read.
We talk.
We follow
what sparks."

Pelham Fringe itself has evolved in much the same way. I never sat down with a blueprint for everything it would become. Rather, it has grown organically in response to the talent, generosity, and ideas of the people who keep showing up.

And there is so much more I want us to build, together.

One of the clearest examples is our **Second Prime Program.** As our community grew, I found myself surrounded by astonishing women — particularly women in their second acts, with enormous talent, perspective, humor, intelligence, and life experience.

Playwright Joni Fritz, and the caliber of her laugh-out-loud funny and deeply heartfelt work, made me reflect on how rarely women over 50 are treated as the most exciting voices in the room. Second Prime grew from that realization: an initiative devoted to **developing and championing female playwrights 50 and over**, a demographic I believe is simultaneously one of our most overlooked and one of our most interesting.



Melissa Flower Gladney (left), and Kate McDaniel (right), performing scenes from Joni Fritz' A Leave of Absence.

I envision Pelham Fringe as...

- A creative laboratory and producing platform where accomplished professional artists and emerging artists can work side by side at a high level — with rigor, curiosity, generosity, play and joy.
- A place where artists are treated as peers.
- Where people can take creative risks.
- Where a first draft can become a workshop, a workshop can become a production, and above all, a conversation between artists can become something none of us could have imagined alone.

I would like Pelham Fringe to develop young writers, including a future young playwrights program in which middle/high school students are mentored by our artists and get to see selected works mounted by professional actors and directors.

Ultimately, I hope to expand beyond theatre into film, television and other media. Key to that vision is the synergy of collaborating with the remarkable cultural institutions already thriving in zip code 10803 — The Picture House, the Pelham Art Center, the Pelham Public Library, Speak Easy Pelham and others — because I believe something extraordinary can happen when a community's artists and institutions stop operating separately and begin creating together.

I want Pelham and Lower Westchester to become a place where exceptional artists want to come to work — a place known for developing new voices, taking artistic risks and creating work of real consequence before sending it out into the wider world.

But everything starts the same way Pelham Fringe did:

Someone brings an idea into a room.
Other people show up.

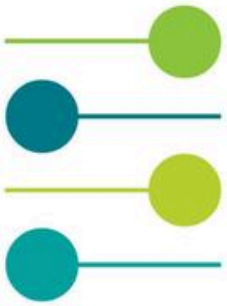
And together, we see what it might become.

Thank you for showing up.

Kate McDaniel
Founder & Artistic Director
Pelham Fringe



Kate McDaniel shot by Yellowbelly NYC.



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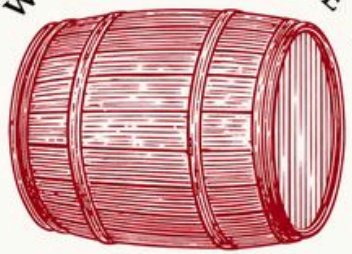
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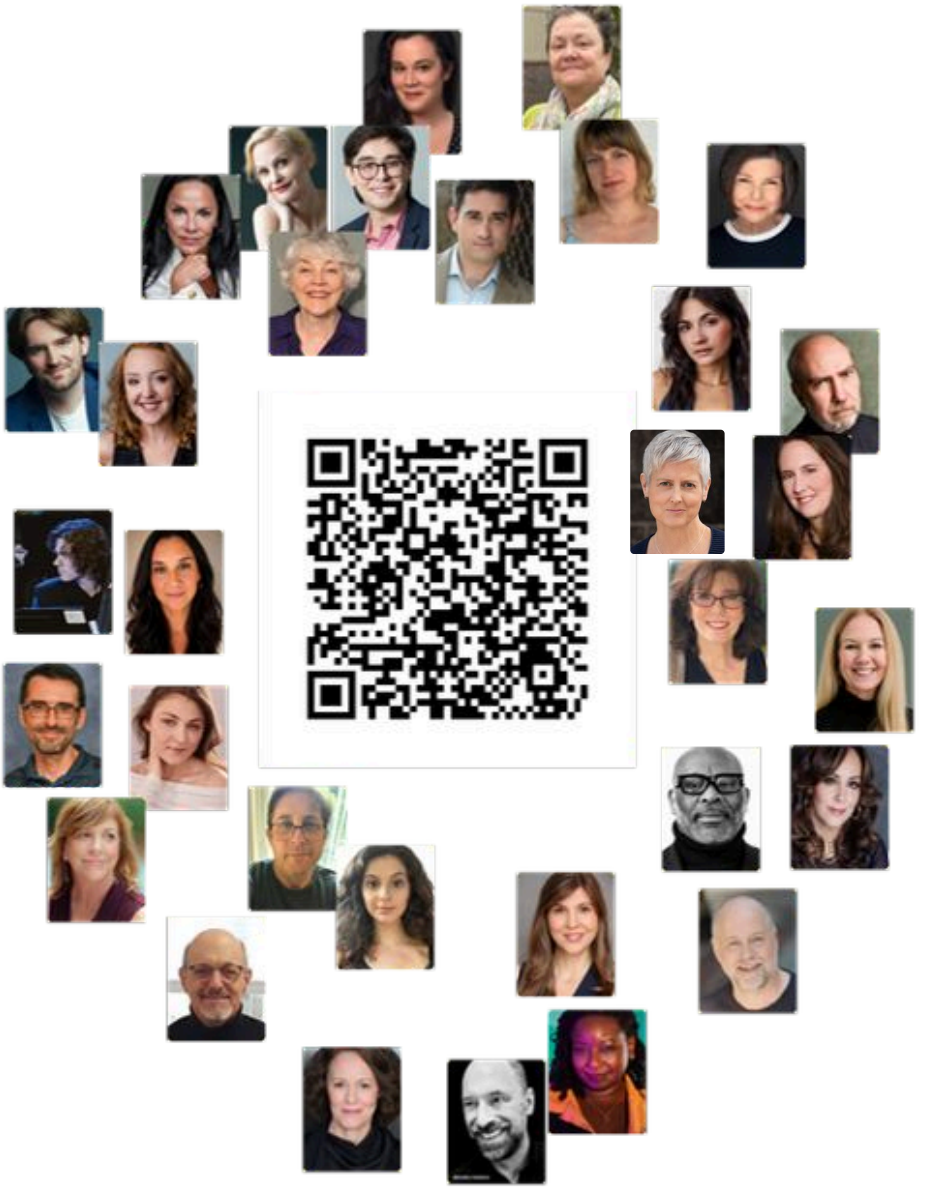


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WHO'S WHO IN THE PELHAM FRINGE FESTIVAL

Scan this QR code with your phone for bios of actors, artists, and contributors.



For more info, visit pelhamfringe.org and follow us on Instagram @pelhamfringe

PELHAM FRINGE TIMELINE

OCT 13 2025 — **Kate's Facebook Post**

OCT 29 2025 — **First Table Read: *August: Osage County***
32 people show up to read Tracy Letts's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama.



Many Fringe members gather with scripts reading August: Osage County.

JAN 22 2026 — **Fuerst Fest**
Staged readings of short plays by Jeffrey B. Fuerst, including the first live reading of *Go Time (*see below*)*. Feedback led to changes in the play, which was produced this past August, off-off Broadway and directed by PF member Renée Hewitt.



Laura Lee Botsacos performing with Mauro Contrastano.

FEB 5 2026 — **Table Read: *Loose Knit***
The group gets together to read Theresa Rebeck's *Loose Knit*.

FEB 25 2026 — **Pelham Fringe Studio: Director's Lab**
With Lin Snider directing, actors and audience members experience the process of play rehearsal through multiple readings of scenes from Kaufman and Hart's *Merrily We Roll Along*.

MAR 12 2026 — **10-Minute Plays Night**
Pelham Fringe writers share original work.

MAR 26 2026 — **Pelham Fringe Studio: Improv Toolkit**
Led by Jim Ewing, experienced improvisational actors and newbies use techniques rooted in the improv tradition to sharpen instinct and presence, and build richer, more truthful scripted characters from the inside out.

APRIL 8 2026 — **Pelham Fringe Studio: Shakespeare Lab**
Shakespeare Coach Laris Macario assigns scenes and coaches actors through the pieces, working with impulse, truth, and dedication to the language.



Lori Federico (left) and Emily Tuckman (right) working a scene from King Lear with Laris Macario.

"The talent in the room was remarkable. This was my first Fringe event and I knew after this I would be coming back for more."
-Lizzy Kircher

APRIL 22 2026 — **Under the Influence: John Patrick Shanley**
Actors, writers, and directors read scenes from a collection of Shanley's plays, exploring the writing, relationships, rhythms, and moments that linger. Writers take a point of inspiration and use it as a jumping-off point to create a short play.

MAY 6 2026 — **After the Influence: John Patrick Shanley**
Writers come back with their short plays and actors bring them to life, allowing the writers a chance to hear their work out loud.

MAY 20 2026

Second Prime: *A Leave of Absence*

Participants read and discuss Joni Fritz's play, then, after getting notes, actors redo some scenes.

"What connects us is the desire to create — and the belief that there is still so much more ahead. If anything, as life changes us, we have even more to say. We see the world through a different lens — and that gives us new stories to tell and new ways to tell them. And when those stories reach an audience, they can open a window into someone else's life — and sometimes help us understand something about our own."
-Joni Fritz

JUNE 3 2026

Under the Influence: Theresa Rebeck

Actors, writers, and directors read scenes from several of Theresa Rebeck's plays, exploring what sparks, surprises, and lingers. Writers use inspiration from the evening as a jumping-off point to create an original 10-minute play.

JUNE 17 2026

After the Influence: Theresa Rebeck

Writers bring in short plays inspired by Theresa Rebeck's work, and actors give them life.



Theresa Rebeck, on Zoom, joins the room of 50 Pelham Fringe members to speak about her writing process.

"I feel like every time I go to a Fringe event I leave with my jaw on the floor. It is that same feeling you get when you know you have been a part of something unforgettable."
-Melissa Flower Gladney

JULY 30 2026

Scene Machine

In Jill Friedman's play, *The Platform*, two people who had been in a relationship years ago meet unexpectedly while waiting for a train. Ten teams of two actors and a director each spend ten minutes rehearsing a five-minute excerpt. The result: ten wildly different interpretations of the same text.



Laura Lee Botsacos directing Jim Ewing and Emily Aronoff in one of the interpretations of The Platform.

AUG 27 2026

Industry Lab: Inside the Casting Room

Casting Director Cathy Reinking conducts a hands-on TV/Film casting session where actors are videotaped, reviewed, and redirected.



Cathy Reinking giving redirects to Fringe member Chris Anthony Hernandez.

Sept/Oct 2026

Production Month

Fringe members shift into full collaborative mode gearing up for the festival with production meetings every Thursday.

Oct 2, 4 2026

PELHAM FRINGE FESTIVAL

It's showtime, with five original plays, plus improv and live music and song.

RADIO SILENCE

By Rich Feldman
Directed by Rich O'Brien

PLACE

Kat's Pub, somewhere in Queens.

TIME

Some evening, April 2026.

CAST

ELENA ..... Kate McDaniel
MIKE ..... Tony A. Watts
KAT .... Kathleen Mary Carthy (Boon)*
RON ..... Rich O'Brien*

Scan for bios

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As T.S. Eliot once inquired: "Do I dare disturb the universe?" And if you've been completely flattened in pursuit of a dream, is it courageous or foolhardy to get up and pursue again? I was immediately drawn to Rich Feldman's exploration of such questions in the play.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

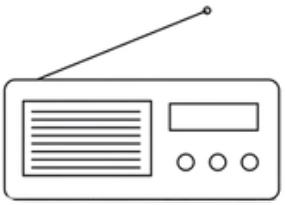
My primary inspiration for this piece is the work of John Patrick Shanley, whose plays, to me, share one overarching theme: Big truths in small places. With that in mind, *Radio Silence,* flowed out of me.

I may not be a true barfly, but I love baseball, lived in Queens for fifteen years, and am a long-suffering Mets fan.

The characters are composites of people I've encountered throughout my years as a stand-up comedian, actor, and now writer.

I dedicate this play to anyone who knows their "glory days" are behind them and struggles to find purpose in the years ahead.

Radio Silence explores the importance of communication and human connection when facing difficult decisions. Metaphorically speaking, you're never too old to play ball.





A PAIR OF MOPES

By Jeffrey B. Fuerst
Directed by Cathy Reinking

PLACE

The living room of a disorderly man-caved basement apartment in a not-yet gentrified part of Brooklyn.

TIME

Spring, 1984

CAST

HUGO ..... Jonathan Hicks
LOUIE ..... Sean Dagony-Clark
YOLANDA ..... Lizzy Kircher*

Scan for bios



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I immediately fell in love with Jeff's enduring characters. They harken back to a "simpler time" in one's life, before the reality of "Real Life" sets in. It's 1984, and even a couple of mopey putzes can possibly find love.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

In the Under the Influence session on John Patrick Shanley, I was inspired by the plays written in, or set in, the early 1980s. Shanley's characters were predominantly young and in their 20s, as was I at that time.

I happened to be living in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn then, when it was still solidly working-class Italians. This was the milieu of Shanley's breakthrough film, *Moonstruck* (1987). I remember when they filmed scenes at a bakery near where I lived!

I wrote *A Pair of Mopes* about that era in my life. The characters are an amalgam of local people I befriended there. The cadences of their speech and snatches of dialogue are verbatim (or pretty close). Lifelong friends Hugo, Louie, and Yolanda delight in giving each other shit, mercilessly, in a vernacular of poetic invective that is simply their way of saying they love each other deeply, fiercely, and unshakably.

The scene presented in the Festival is the opening section of a full-length play about opening yourself up to possibilities once you accept yourself for who you are.

HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

By Joni Fritz
Directed by Carolyn Marie Wright

PLACE

An apartment in Manhattan.

TIME

Now.

CAST

LILLY.....Laura Lee Botsacos*
BEV.....Emily Aronoff
ELLEN.....Karen Pursel
AI VOICE....Carolyn Marie Wright
SONIA VOICE.....Jill Friedman

Scan for bios

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

There are so many reasons I am drawn to this play. It starts with Lilly: a woman who loves her mother beyond measure, who has the kind of friends who show up and tell the truth, who wrestles with the loss of control when life throws a curve ball. Lilly has a big heart and will go to the ends of the earth to help others. But sometimes she goes too far.

The struggle to accept change is deeply relatable, even for folks who are not in Lilly's situation. The desire to fight, to hold on, to persevere – to do something – is pervasive. But sometimes gentleness and releasing the need to "fix it" matter, too.

I love how this play embraces the unknown and reminds us that "help" comes in all shapes and forms – and sometimes in the most unexpected ways.

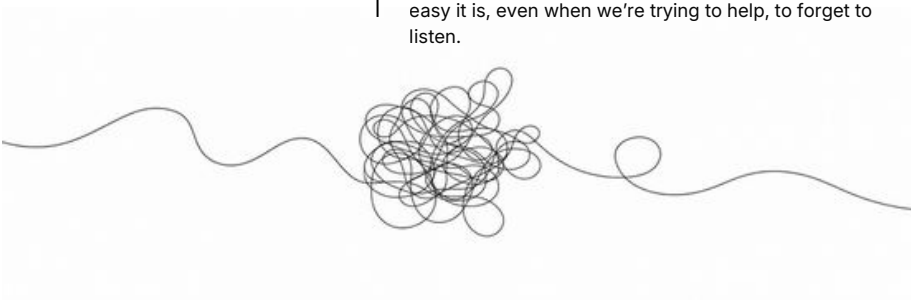
PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

During the Under the Influence evening celebrating Theresa Rebeck, I was especially drawn to *Sunday on the Rocks* and the funny, familiar, brutally honest banter between the young women.

It made me think about my own friendships with women I've known since college — my closest friends who still make me laugh and tell me the truth, even when I don't want to hear it.

I'd also been wanting to write about a medical insurance call with an AI system that literally left me on the floor screaming, "F**k you!" In the middle of my meltdown, I actually got up to write down the idea for a play — then went back to the floor and continued screaming.

As the play took shape, I realized what connected the two: the very human need to be heard — and how easy it is, even when we're trying to help, to forget to listen.



THE COMPANY WE KEEP

By Andrew O'Brien
Directed by Maria Provenzano

PLACE

An Italian restaurant in the Bronx.

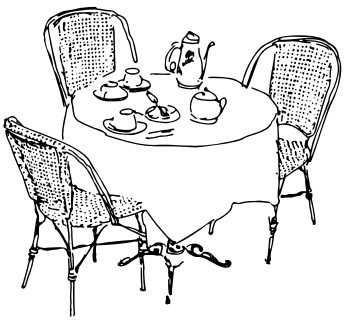
TIME

Modern day, June.

CAST

LINDA RIZZOLI .....Renée Hewitt
TINA O'DONNELL .... Bette Carlson Siler*
JESSICA HIRSCHFELD .... Kate McDaniel
CHRISTINE HARTLEY.. Maggie Solimine*
WAITER ..... Andrew O'Brien

Scan for bios



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I immediately fell in love with Andrew O'Brien's play. In just a few pages, he gives us four unforgettable women—fierce, flawed, funny, and full of heart.

His dialogue is sharp, honest, and alive. He writes about friendship with humor and tenderness, and he understands how the past is never really past.

This story is a love letter to the women who raised us, the friends who still call us out, and the ties that never really break.

Set over a simple dinner in an Italian restaurant in the Bronx, *The Company We Keep* is funny, raw, and ultimately tender. Thank you, Andrew, for writing characters who feel like old friends—the kind who make us laugh, frustrate us, and remind us who we are. It has been an honor to bring your beautiful play to life.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

It's an honor to make my playwriting debut at the Pelham Fringe Festival. As an actor and singer who has dabbled in writing, I'm thrilled to have my work produced for the very first time!

After attending Pelham Fringe's Under the Influence: Theresa Rebeck as an actor, a wave of inspiration came over me to write. I thought about something a dear friend had said, and a few days later, put pen to paper. Suddenly, Linda, Tina, Jessica, and Christine came pouring out of me within a few hours.

This is a story of integrity, friendship, womanhood, grief, connecting with one's roots, family, generational connections and miscommunications, and, most importantly... humanity.

SO SORRY TO KILL YOU, POOR LITTLE MAN

By Bette Carlson Siler
Directed by Melissa Flower Gladney

PLACE

Ethel's house in suburban Nyack, NY.

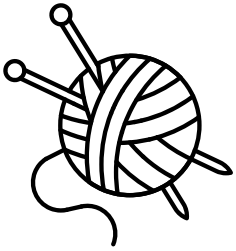
TIME

Present,
Saturday Night,
11:53 pm

CAST

STEWY.....Michael Fanuele
MARSHA..... Janine LaManna*
ETHEL..... Judith Reagan*

Scan for bios



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Kate: Melissa, you are the best choice to direct this play because it is dark and a little absurdist, but serious.
Me: Basically my bio. LOL.

So Sorry is dripping with Bette Siler's wit, wisdom, and brilliant sense of rhythm. She pulls themes from her own life that we can all connect to while also making us laugh. It does one of the things theatre has done for millennia and asks: "Wait, what are we missing?" And while we as artists have laughed our way through making it, we're also deeply moved.

I have worked on new plays throughout my career as a devisor, writer, and performer, always collaboratively. In this piece, Bette's involvement in our first rehearsal and her endlessly creative spirit gave our actors a chance to feel like they were part of the performance, from script-making to the stage here today.

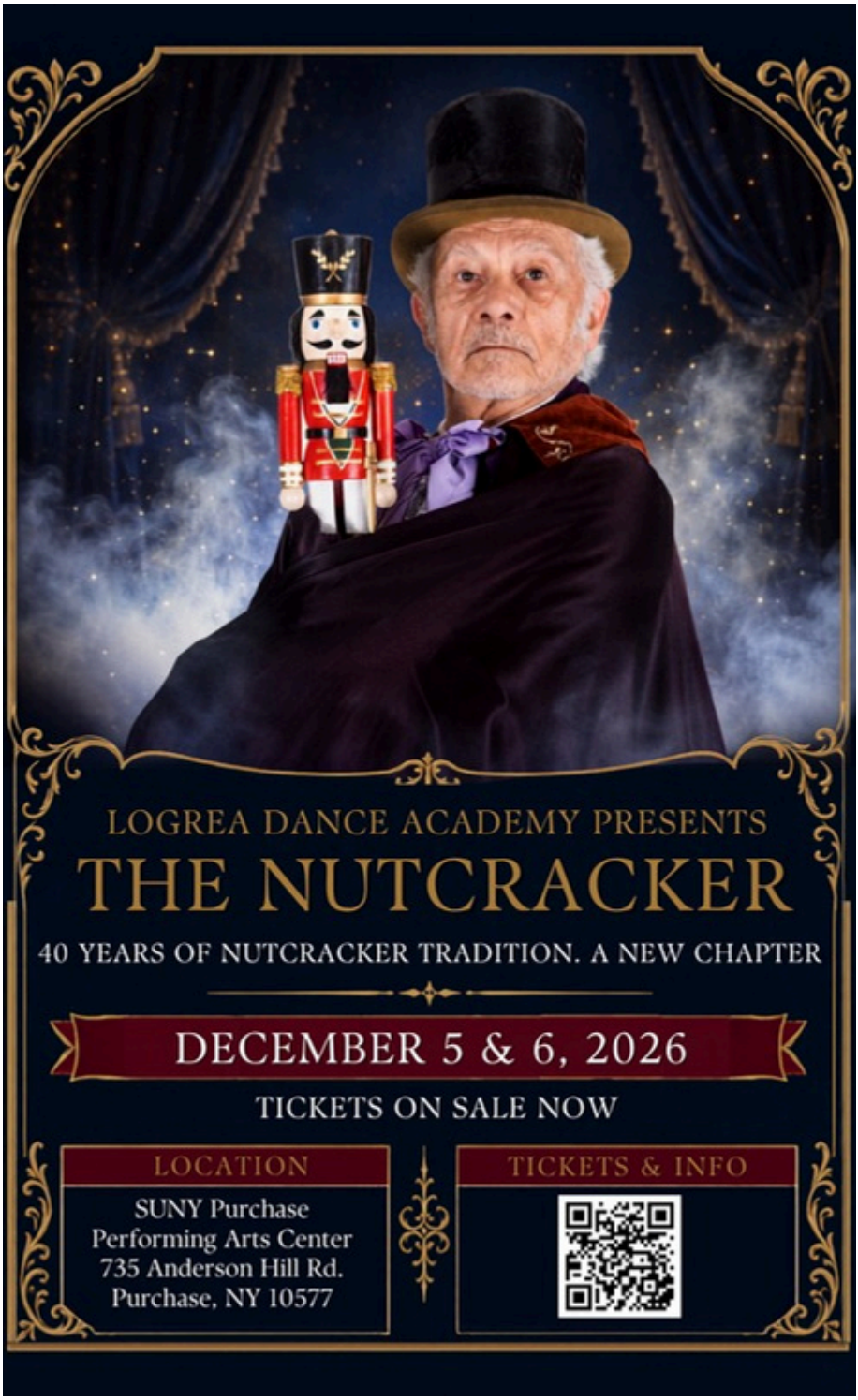
PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I fell in love with Theresa Rebeck during her Under the Influence session. Yes, her dialogue and pace were entertaining. But what really got to me were the real people with real problems... however wildly funny they may be. That was my first inspiration. The other motivator was purely autobiographical.

I am an exceptionally crappy knitter. I kid you not. Strictly "Knit 1, Purl 2, F*ck 3." I mean... I have knitted. The outcome? A crop top for Quasimodo? A beanie for Joseph Merrick? I realize that at my age, I'm just not gonna get good. That's when I saw him strolling along, taking his TIME and I just... SPOILER ALERT!

Anyhow, so sorry dude. I wrote this play in your honor.




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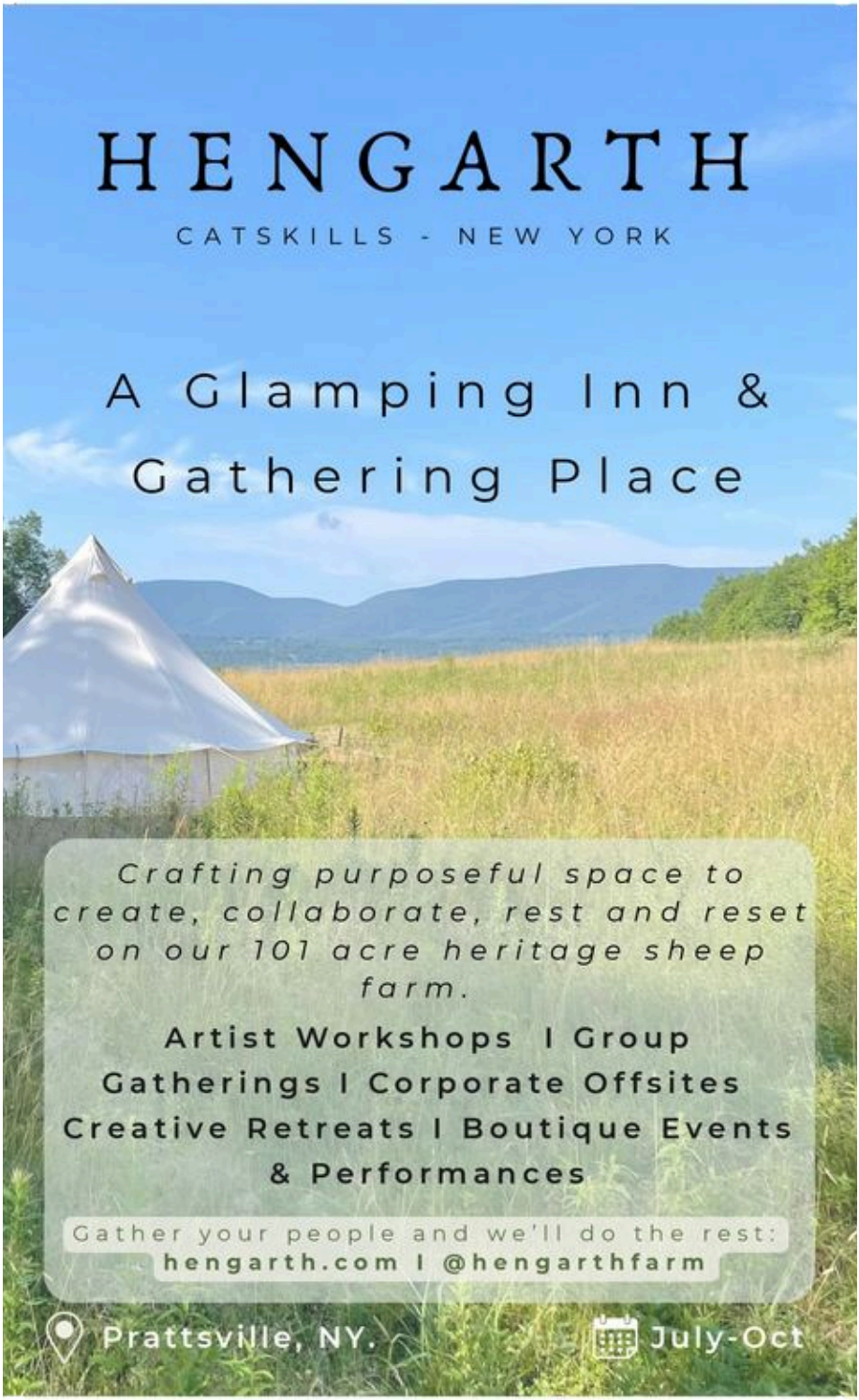


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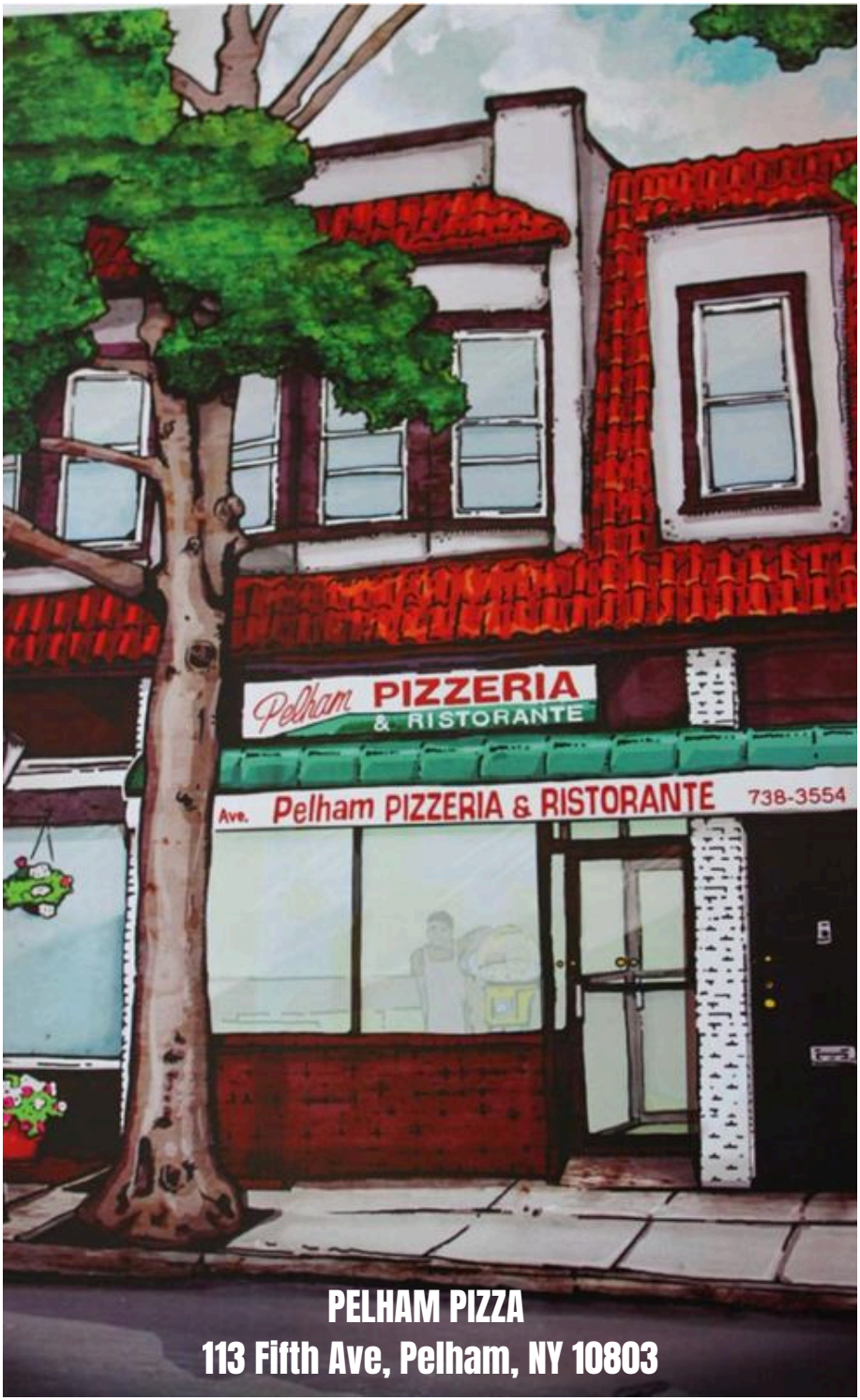


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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Carolyn Marie Wright

Actor • Director • Writer • Educator

An actor, director, writer, and educator. She has a BA in Theater Studies from Yale, an MA in Educational Theatre from NYU Steinhardt, and an MFA in Acting from UCLA. She grew up in upstate New York and now lives in Larchmont.

We sat down with Carolyn Marie Wright to talk about her journey as an artist, what inspires her, and the unique perspective she brings as both an artist and educator. She shares the experiences that have shaped her and what she loves about being part of Pelham Fringe.

When did you first know you wanted to do theater? And why?

There are two distinct moments. The first was in high school. I was a competitive gymnast growing up, so I was a late bloomer when it comes to theatre. During my senior year, I took a class called Arts English, and we went on a field trip to New York City and saw *Rent*. I had never seen or heard anything like it. I sat in the Nederlander Theatre in awe. The show was electric. I remember taking in the final scene with Mimi – and Angel was there – and thinking, I want to do this.

The second defining moment for me happened in 2015, after the tragedy in the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, when nine African American churchgoers were killed. At the time, I was performing in a sketch comedy show at The Second City Hollywood called *This Is Not a Tan* written by Charity L. Miller. It was a satire and social commentary about how people of color experienced show business. We were together when Charleston happened, and I did a lot of listening. I was blessed to be in a community of artists where I was able to learn and discover how to be an ally and an advocate. A group of us got together to do something to honor the folks who lost their lives in Charleston. We formed Humanity Play Project and hosted a community event on Martin Luther King Day 2016.

You were a competitive gymnast in college. How did theater become part of your life?

Funny enough, my junior and senior year floor routine was choreographed to music from Chicago. I would do Fosse and then launch into a tumbling pass! But I always knew I wanted to do something with storytelling. At Yale, I ultimately majored in Theater Studies with a double concentration in playwriting and performance. After graduation, I moved to Chicago and pursued acting.

What was it about the Chicago scene that drew you in?

In college, I was an ensemble member of Yale Children's Theater, touring across New Haven. We brought free theater to kids and families with limited access to the arts. I loved it! I also got into Shakespeare, which was equally uplifting and exciting. Chicago was the vibe I was looking for as a new actor. There is a ton of Shakespeare and children's theater there...and rooting for the Cubs was also an adventure!

Something I admire about you, Carolyn, is your pursuit of education. What keeps bringing you back to school and training?

When I was in Chicago, I was taking classes at The Second City, and doing children's theater and Shakespeare. I got cast in my first equity show as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at New American Theatre. The actor playing Puck was Gerson Decanay, and I would go to rehearsal and watch him even if I wasn't called, because he was so good. I eventually asked him, "How? How are you so good at this? I want to learn." He told me about his MFA in acting. I knew then I wanted to go to grad school and hone my craft.



Carolyn rehearsing How Can I Help You? with Emily Aronoff, Karen Pursel, Laura Lee Botsacos.

Now, you teach at Fordham Prep and direct a summer theater program at Onteora Club in the Catskills. What do you try to teach young people about being an artist?

There's room for everybody. You can be happy for someone else's success. Their success doesn't take anything away from you. And if you're in a room and you realize someone's voice is missing, you can make room for them and bring them in. Make art wherever you are. It doesn't have to be Broadway. It doesn't have to be Hollywood. Just make art where you are. When you make art, you are an artist.

> **"Just make art where you are. When you make art, you are an artist."**
> **Carolyn Marie Wright**

How did you find Pelham Fringe?

Through my friend and colleague at Fordham Prep, TJ O'Sullivan. I said I was looking for ways to get back into acting and playwriting, here in Westchester, and I was looking for "my people." He told me about his friend's wife – who happens to be Kate! He said, "She started this thing, it's right up your alley." So I signed up for the Shakespeare Lab this past April, and I've been hooked ever since.

I was looking for a community with a professional level of talent, for people who are committed to the work, to the craft. If you cannot make it into the room every single night, that is okay. But when you show up, you're all in.

Like Kate says, "New work. Bold artists. A room where it happens." That's Pelham Fringe.



Carolyn speaking at Theatrum Justitiae at NYU AATE Symposium.

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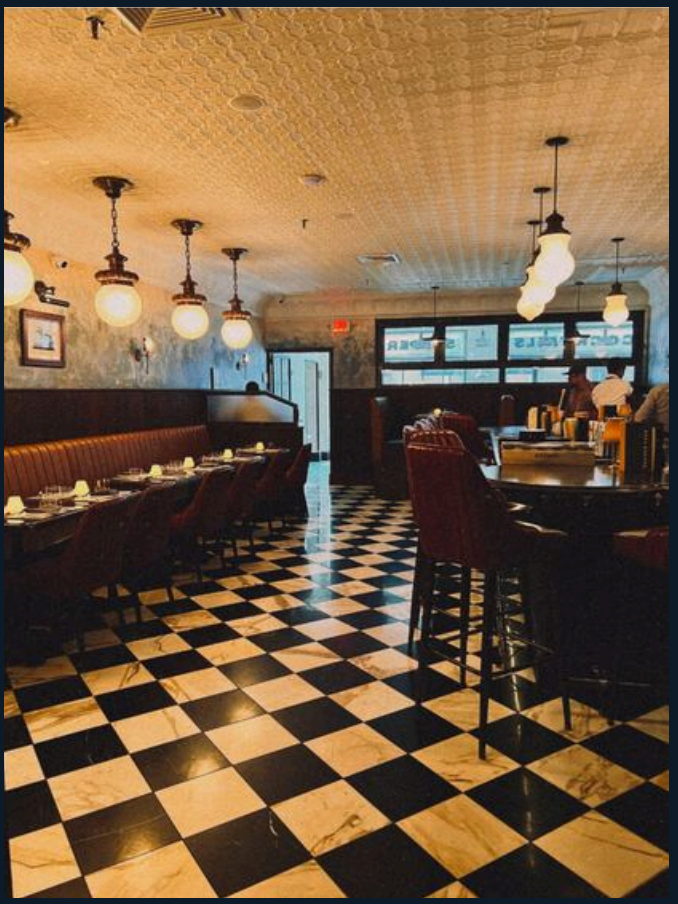


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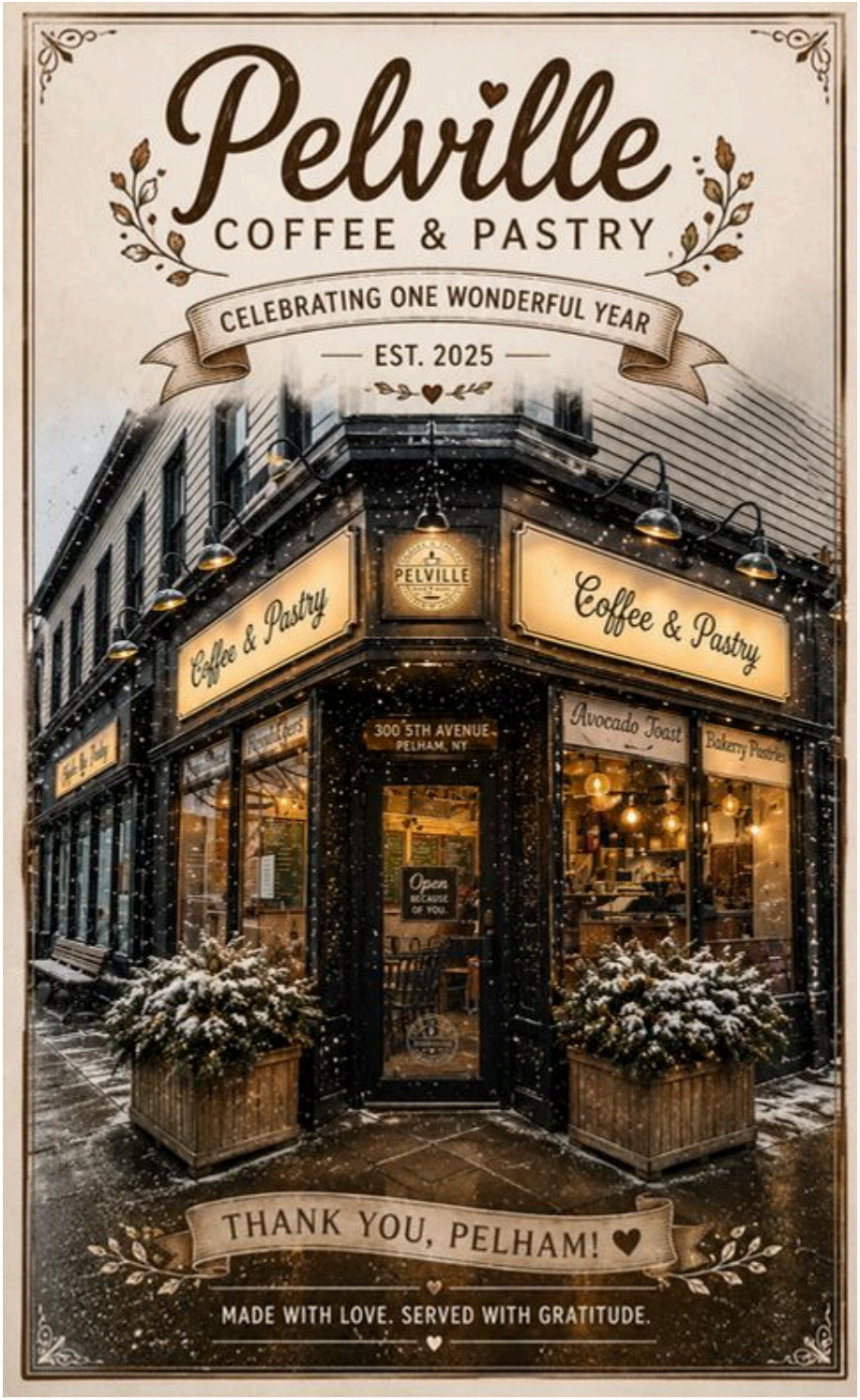
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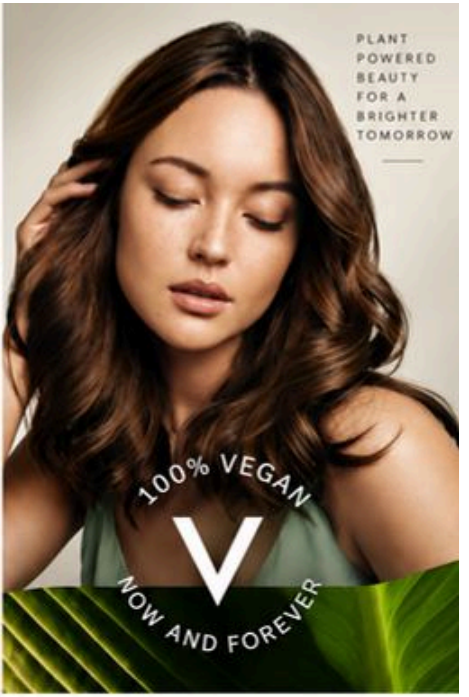
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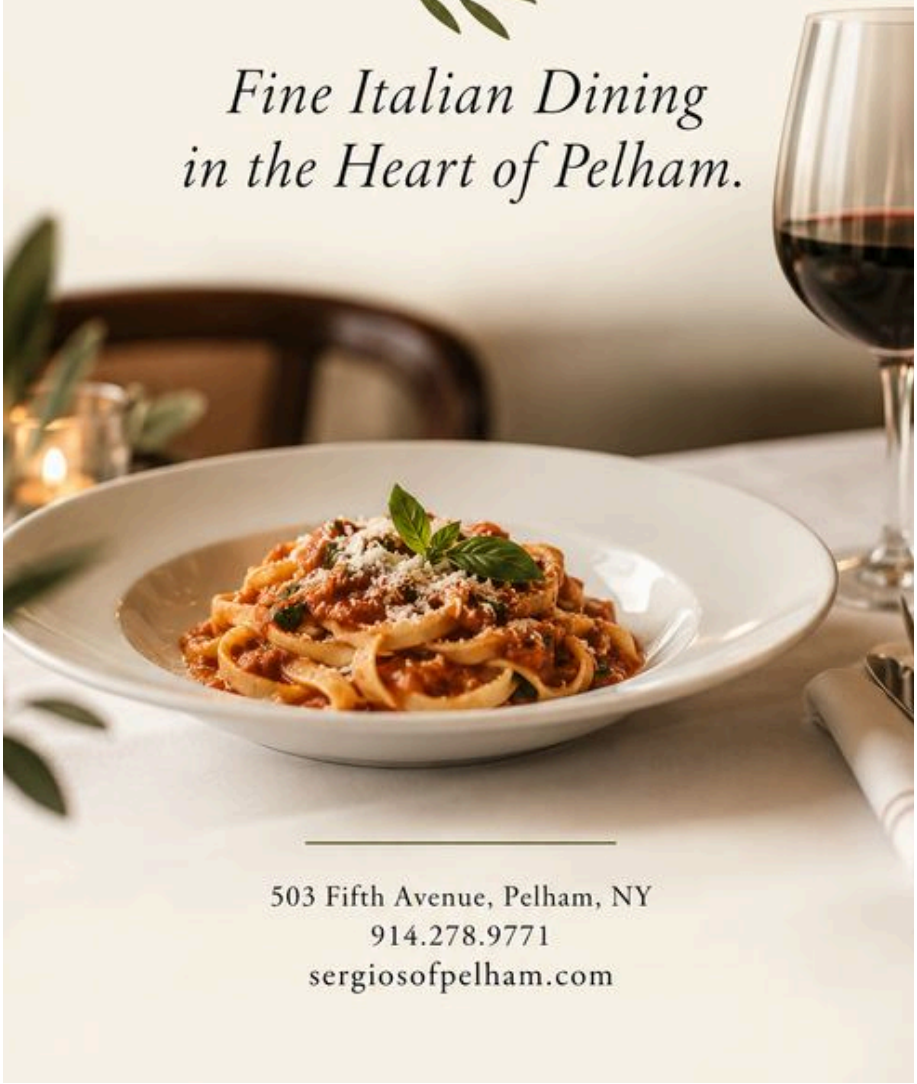
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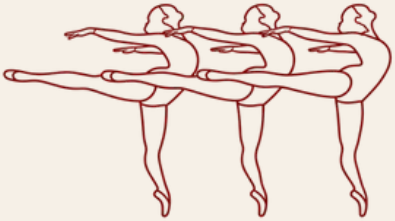






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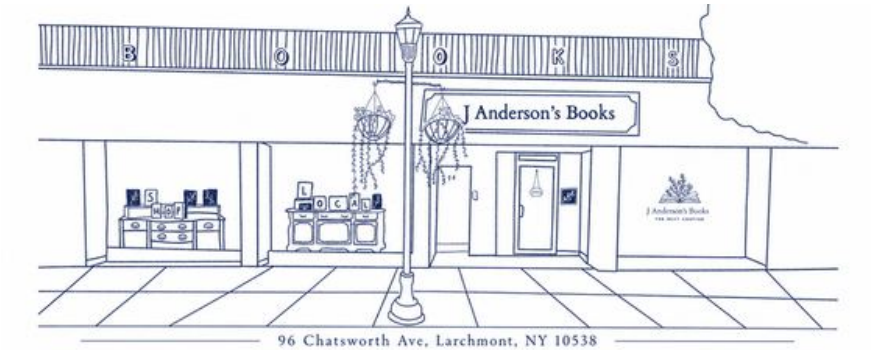
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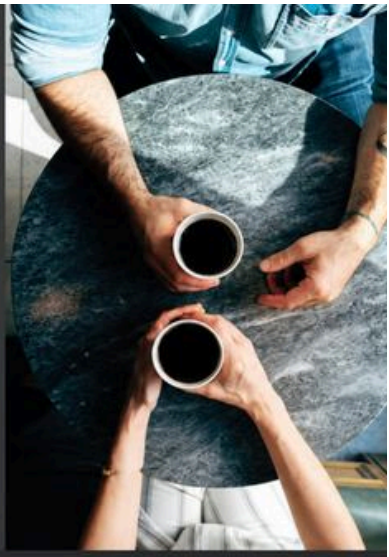
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