



For Immediate Release:
November 5 – November 18, 2018

Bridge Street Theatre presents
A World Premiere!
CASSE NOISSETTE (A Fairy Ballet)
by Michael Whistler
with Nancy O. Graham, Jason Guy*, Jason Kellerman*, Bradley Levine, and
Serena Vesper
Directed and Designed by John Sowle
Costumes by Jennifer Anderson
Production Stage Manager: Julia Rothwax
November 8-18, 2018
Bridge Street Theatre Mainstage
44 West Bridge Street, Catskill, NY



A selfie of the playwright, director and actors. From left, Serena Vesper, Jason Guy,

Jason Kellerman, Michael Whistler, Bradley Levine, John Sowle, Nancy O. Graham

A Convergence of ‘Firsts’ for Bridge Street Theatre’s “Casse Noisette”

Sugar Plum Fairies and phone sex workers collide in “Casse Noisette (A Fairy Ballet)”, Michael Whistler’s tale about discovering the strength to be true to one’s self, whatever the cost

When Michael Whistler’s “Casse Noisette (A Fairy Ballet)” opens at Catskill’s intimate Bridge Street Theatre this Thursday, November 8th, it will celebrate a LOT of firsts: It will mark the first full production the play has ever received. Four members of its five-person cast will be making their Bridge Street Theatre debuts. Four of the five actors will be the first-ever residents of the theatre’s brand-new upstairs artist housing. And this will be the first time the theatre has ever used a front curtain, opening and closing to reveal new wonders at each turn in the plot.

“Michael sent us the manuscript of ‘Casse Noisette’ immediately after we first worked with him on a production of his one-act play ‘Quimper’ at Stageworks Hudson in 2012, before we had a theatre of our own,” says John Sowle, Artistic and Managing Director of Bridge Street Theatre and the director and designer of this world premiere. “We loved it – it’s like a mash-up of Masterpiece Theatre and the plays of William Inge (whose work Michael adores). This one DEFINITELY ain’t your ‘traditional’ Nutcracker – Michael has pretty much shaken all the candy out of it. We also saw, and were blown away, by a 2013 staged reading we attended at NYU’s Tisch School for the Arts. But even after we moved into our own space in 2014, the play felt like too huge a challenge for us to take on. It’s got a lot of moving parts, multiple set and costume changes, two completely different time frames operating – sometimes simultaneously – and, even at only five people, a larger cast than we can generally afford to field. We were afraid we just wouldn’t be able to do it justice. Then, while we were attempting to put together our season for 2018, we re-read it, fell in love with it all over again, and decided that it was high time for us to take the leap and produce it. The heart of our mission at Bridge Street is taking risks on new and exciting work and creatively it felt like, with a show that spoke to us so deeply and directly, we either needed to put up or shut up. It’s been a massive undertaking, but the play itself is magnificent, our cast is phenomenal, the show LOOKS fantastic, and hopefully by opening night, all those moving parts will have come together smoothly and our audiences will be absolutely astonished at what they’re seeing on our small stage.”

The play finds parallels between two gay men in very distant and very different eras. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is a musical titan in late 19th-Century Russia: hugely popular, incredibly charismatic, deeply emotional. Tortured by his homosexuality, he finds release only in composing and in his love for the son of

his invalid sister. Joe Jessup is a quiet, unassuming, and very private high school Earth Sciences teacher in suburban Washington state, a man who has long since resigned himself to not getting exactly what he might wish for out of life. For years, his only emotional outlet has been his love for the music of Tchaikovsky and, more recently, his furtive calls to a gay sex chatline – but merely to listen to the young man on the other end of the phone, never to speak himself. Actor Jason Guy, whom audiences may remember from his tour-de-force performance in Bridge Street’s 2017 world premiere of Kieron Barry’s “The Official Adventures of Kieron and Jade”, portrays both these characters as their worlds intertwine and each struggles to find some sort of fulfillment in his life. The cast also features Nancy O. Graham, Jason Kellerman, Serena Vesper, and Bradley Levine as a host of other characters in both the play’s worlds. This World Premiere Production has been made possible in part by a generous gift from Duke Dang and Charles Rosen. The show is directed and designed by John Sowle, with costumes by Jennifer Anderson. Production Stage Manager is Julia Rothwax.



Michael Whistler in front of Bridge Street Theatre

Michael Whistler’s “Casse Noisette (A Fairy Ballet)” is recommended for mature

audiences (ages 16 and older) and plays Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 and Sundays at 2:00 from November 8-18, 2018 at Bridge Street Theatre, located at 44 West Bridge Street, in Catskill, NY. General Admission is \$25, \$10 for Students 21 and under. Discounted advance tickets are available at casse.brownpapertickets.com or by calling 800-838-3006. Tickets will also be sold at the door one half hour prior to each performance on a space available basis. "Pay What You Will" performances will be held on Thursday November 8 and Sunday November 11 ("Pay What You Will" tickets are available only at the door one-half hour prior to those performances). For further information, visit the theatre online at BridgeSt.org.

Events and performances in Bridge Street Theatre's 2018 Season are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature and by Public Funds from the Greene County Legislature through the Greene County Cultural Fund, administered in Greene County by the Greene County Council on the Arts.

To read a feature article (including an interview with the playwright Michael Whistler) published in last Sunday's "Times Union", please follow this link:
<https://www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/Tchaikovsky-a-focus-of-Casse-Noisette-at-Bridge-13357151.php>

Performance Calendar:

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Directed and Designed by John Sowle

Costumes by Jennifer Anderson

Production Stage Manager: Julia Rothwax

November 8-18, 2018

Bridge Street Theatre Mainstage

44 West Bridge Street, Catskill, NY

Thursday Nov 8 @ 7:30pm ("Pay What You Will" preview)

Friday Nov 9 @ 7:30pm (Opening Night)

Saturday Nov 10 @ 7:30pm

Sunday Nov 11 @ 2:00pm ("Pay What You Will" performance)

Thursday Nov 15 @ 7:30pm

Friday Nov 16 @ 7:30pm

Saturday Nov 17 @ 7:30pm

Sunday Nov 18 @ 2:00pm (Closing performance)

Tickets:

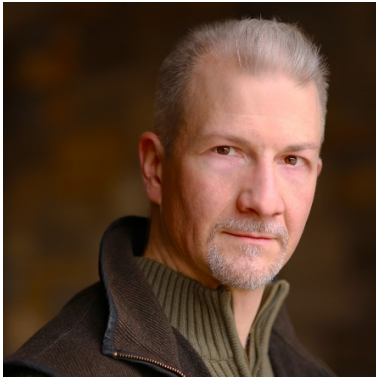
Advance tickets available at <http://casse.brownpapertickets.com> or by calling 800-838-3006

General Admission \$22, \$10 for students age 21 and under

Tickets can also be purchased at the door prior to each performance (on a space available basis) for \$25, \$10 for Students ages 21 & under.

“Pay What You Will” tickets available only on the day of performance and go on sale at the door one half hour before curtain time.

The Cast:



JASON GUY* (*Joe/Tchaikovsky*) survived Bridge Street Theater’s *The Official Adventures of Kieron and Jade* – barely – and yet has returned for more. He has suffered terribly in over 70 professional productions from Shakespeare to tap dancing – sometimes both at once. He was poisoned (as Hamlet) and beaten (Malvolio) with the National Shakespeare Co.; betrayed (Brutus) and beheaded (Buckingham) at the American Shakespeare Center’s Blackfriars Playhouse; and flogged, twice, (as both Dromios) by the Hamptons Shakespeare Festival. Seeking solace in living playwrights, Mr Guy lost his faith in *Doubt* (Greenbrier), lost a finger in *The 39 Steps* (Arkansas Rep), and was vomited on in *God of Carnage* (Cape May Stage). Fearing it was all his scene partners’ fault, Jason performed every role in Cortland Rep’s *I Am My Own Wife*: sadly, it was the loneliest thing he’s ever done. Turning to musicals in hopes of lighter fare, he was fired daily (*42nd Street*), punched repeatedly (*West Side Story*), and soaked nightly (Don Lockwood in *Singin’ in the Rain*). Most recently he was lied to by the Barnstormers – as *The Producers*’ Franz Liebkind, author of “Springtime for Hitler”. Jason was born in Michigan, grew up in Maine, and lives in New York City; but this litany of maltreatment has crossed four continents, fifteen countries, and all 50 States.



NANCY OARNEIRE GRAHAM (*Nancy/Dell'Era*). Nancy's recent stage work includes Voice Theatre's productions of *All My Sons* and *The Skin of Our Teeth* in Woodstock, NY, and *The Clean House* by Sarah Ruhl at Threshold Stage Company in Kittery, Maine. Other favorite roles, all presented or shot in the Hudson Valley, include Hesione Hushabye in *Heartbreak House*, Sara Rosensweig in *The Sisters Rosensweig*, and Thea in Peter Ferland's web series, *Pirate Birthday Party*. She curates and performs in Cocoon Theatre's "Soirée in the Parlor" series in Poughkeepsie, for which she recently performed a devised work-in-progress inspired by A. S. Byatt's short story, "The Thing in the Forest," in collaboration with Jim Granger and Bridge Street regular Molly Parker Myers. Her poems and short stories can be found by diligent searches of online journals, and in anthologies such as "In|Filtration: An Anthology of Innovative Poetry from the Hudson River Valley", edited by Sam Truitt and Anne Gorrick for Station Hill Press of Barrytown, NY. A company member of the newly formed Paramount Theater Group in Peekskill, Nancy lives in Kingston, NY.



JASON KELLERMAN* (*Marc/Modeste/Consort*) is thrilled to be making his debut with Bridge Street. Previous theatrical credits include *Bad Jews* (Theater Wit), *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (Theater 891), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Michigan Shakespeare Festival), *Tartuffe* (Michigan Shakespeare Festival), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (First Folio Theater), *MacBeth* (First Folio Theater), *Soon I Will Be Invincible* (LifeLine Theater), *Romeo and Juliet* (Teatro Vista), *Taming of the Shrew* (Muse of Fire Theater) and many others. Film credits: *Hunter*, *Snatchers*, *Shiva Baby* TV credits: *Betrayal*, *Master of None*. Bachelor's

degree in Theater Performance at Northwestern University. He'd like to thank his friends and family for their ever present support, and his Wife Alex for being the light of his life.



SERENA VESPER (*Sasha/Sugar Plum Fairy*). These roles are a fantasy come true. Her childhood revolved around dancing in Pacific Northwest Ballet's *Nutcracker* with such Sugar Plum Fairies as Cynthia Gregory and Patricia McBride. Since then, she's danced with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and acted all over the country. Favorite regional roles include Maria in San Diego's Old Globe Theatre *School for Scandal* (with Paxton Whitehead), Vera in Drury Lane Oakbrook (Chicago)'s *Ten Little Indians* (with Deanna Dunagan), Liliane/ Juliette in Zev Buffman's production of *Panic*, Barbara in Florida Studio Theatre's *Smoke and Mirrors*, Ruth in *Blithe Spirit* (Southwest Shakespeare Co.), and Pamela in *Fox on the Fairway* (Lake Dillon Theatre, CO). NYC roles include Maire in *Translations* (Irish Arts Center), and Tina in *Ampersand* (Riverside Stage Co., Off Broadway). Feature film roles: Maggie / *Happily After*, Juliette / *Getting Over*. Best Actress nomination from Midwest Independent Film Festival for *European Kid*.



BRADLEY LEVINE (*Blaine/Bob*) is thrilled to join this company and to be making his Bridge Street debut. He is based in NYC but is originally from the Hudson Valley. Recent theatre credits: *The Boy in the Church* (Regional tour; Theatre 54), *Down the Urinal Hole & Around the Corner* (Dixon Place; KC Fringe), *Camp Rolling Hills* (NYMF), *Gathering Sparks* (Exploriment Festival, Bangkok). He is

the co-Founder of The Cult Next Door, an ensemble theatre company based in NY. Training: Bachelors in Acting from Pace University; The William Esper Studio; The Grotowski Institute in Poland. He'd like to thank his family, friends, and teachers for their continual support.

*Denotes membership in Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

The Production Team:

MICHAEL WHISTLER (*Playwright*). Michael's plays include *The F*ggot Museum* (Theatre Off Jackson; Theatre Catalyst; Dixon Place); *phidias8* (InterAct Theatre; Phoenix Theatre); *Little Lamb* (InterAct Theatre; 20/20 Commission for New Plays; winner Virginia Brown Martin Award); "I'm Barbara Eden" (Stageworks/Hudson; Riverside Theatre Company); *Our Lady of Balenciaga* (Philadelphia Theatre Workshop); "Quimper" (Stageworks/Hudson). For the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, he was commissioned to create both *The Prescott Method* (also produced at Arcadia University, as well as Studio Tisch, NYU); and *Mickle Street*: both received their world premieres in the Walnut Street Theatre's Studio 3. *Casse Noisette* was developed through the support of Studio Tisch, NYU. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Montgomery County Community College near Philadelphia, where he has created two iterations of *Hidden Rivers*, theatrical evenings of oral histories of the College's students and community members. Many thanks to Steven and John for their unwavering support, and my love always to Jamie.

JOHN SOWLE (*Director/Designer*) is Artistic and Managing Director of Bridge Street Theatre. He founded Kaliyuga Arts in 1986 with his partner Steven Patterson and has received multiple awards for his directing and design work on their Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York productions. He has directed and designed BST's productions of *There Is a Happiness That Morning Is*, *Leni*, *Redwood Curtain*, *How to Pray*, *The Official Adventures of Kieron and Jade*, *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus*, *Holiday Memories*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Killing & The Love Death* (late plays of William Inge), and *Grinder's Stand* by Oakley Hall III, and designed their productions of *The Tavern*, *Souvenir*, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, and *Frankie & Johnny in the Clair de Lune*. John has an undergraduate degree in mathematics from M.I.T and a PhD in Dramatic Art from UC Berkeley.

JENNIFER ANDERSON (*Costumes*). Jennifer has designed and worked in theatre, film, television, opera, dance, couture fashion, the music industry and private clients from Los Angeles to Minneapolis to New York to Cairo, Egypt. Currently based in New York, Jennifer operates the Etheric Design Studio and Costume House. She received her MFA from the University of California, Irvine where she was trained to emulate the design style and elements of the "Golden Age of Hollywood". Recent projects include: *Ask For Jane*, *Soot & Spit: A Musical*, *It Came From Beyond*, and *Wicked*, *Frozen*.

JULIA ROTHWAX (*Stage Manager*), Julia was most recently Stage Manager for Bridge Street Theatre's production of *There Is a Happiness That Morning Is*. She has previously appeared as Mrs. Rudich in BST's production of David Mamet's *The Revenge of the Space Pandas* this past summer. During the previous summer, she performed as a refugee in Voice Theatre's production of *The Skin of Our Teeth* in Woodstock. She studies currently with the fabulous acting teachers, Seth Barrish and Lee Brock, at The Barrow Group in NYC. Stage Management is Julia's third "act" – her second being performing and her first as a political operative and campaign communications director for notable Democrats including Bill Clinton and Bill Bradley. Julia is also a Board Member of The Voice Theatre. She splits her time between Woodstock and Brooklyn, NY.

To contact Bridge Street Theatre directly, email contact@bridgest.org or call their offices at 518-943-3894. For more information, visit the theatre's website at BridgeSt.org or call their offices at 518-943-3818.

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