

Lantern Theater Company Fact Sheet for Mt. Airy Theater

Who:

Lantern Theater Company (the Lantern) is a professional, not-for-profit theater company that was established in 1994 and has been producing full mainstage subscription seasons of plays at St. Stephen's Theater at 10th and Ludlow Streets in Center City since 1996.

The mission of Lantern Theater Company is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times.

We produce plays on a wide range of themes and by diverse playwrights, from William Shakespeare to Lynn Nottage. Our current 2021/22 season features a streaming play about the great American blues musician Robert Johnson and a live drama about commitment to one's principles in politically volatile times. Our upcoming 2022/22 season includes drama about Jack Johnson, the first African-American world heavyweight boxing champion in the early 1900s, and a comedy about a fact-checker disputing a famous author's work.

The Lantern's education program includes the largest in-school residency theater program in Philadelphia. We partner with six to eight middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District each year, typically serving 800 – 1,200 students and teachers.

What & Where:

The Lantern has secured a long-term lease to develop a performance venue inside the former Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church at 7111 Germantown Avenue (at the corner of Germantown and Mt. Pleasant Avenues).

While the Lantern will continue to produce plays at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City, we will move our long-standing educational program, administrative offices, and some artistic programming to the new performance space and offices in Mt. Airy.

Why (Our Plans):

We are excited about this expansion of our cultural reach because our artistic programming is enjoyed by a wide range of Philadelphians. This new space enables the Lantern to grow artistically, while also becoming established in a neighborhood we love.

Once interior renovations are completed, this Mt. Airy theater will become the home of The Lantern's education program, including our student matinee performances and our theater school. We will produce productions of mainstage plays. We will also be able to offer one-time music and dance performances, along with a series of visual-arts exhibits that will be open to the public. The theater will have a capacity of 170–180 patrons in a flexible, black-box style performance space. The building is fully accessible.

We have requested a Zoning Exception for our use of the building as a theater rather than as a church. A meeting before the Zoning Board of Adjustment is scheduled for March 23, 2022. We have already commissioned a parking study to explore the potential impact on the immediately surrounding neighborhood. The September 2021 study, conducted by Dawood Engineering, concluded that the area will be able to accommodate any additional parking needs for evening or matinee performances.

Ties and Commitment to the Mt. Airy Community

Several members of the Lantern staff live in northwest Philadelphia, including co-founder and Artistic Director Charles McMahon, who is a life-long resident of Mt. Airy and Executive Director Stacy Dutton, who has lived in Mt. Airy since 2010.

We have long partnered with the W. B. Saul High School and Roxborough High School, both in northwest Philadelphia; we support teachers and students with classroom residencies on curricular works of literature, including plays by William Shakespeare. Opening a new theater in Mt. Airy will enable the Lantern to offer more opportunities to the students at the schools where we already provide classroom residencies and to expand our reach to other schools in the area.

We plan to create cross-promotional opportunities with community-based organizations, including local restaurants and small businesses.

Project Schedule and Opportunities for Dialogue

We plan to open the Mt. Airy theater in September 2023 and produce our first plays there in the 2023/24 season, including our *Romeo and Juliet* for middle- and high-school audiences in April-May of 2024. We have already started reaching out to key community organizations, including East Mt. Airy Neighbors (EMAN) and West Mt. Airy Neighbors (WMAN), residents and other leaders to begin a two-way conversation about our plans.

We welcome you to the dialogue; please feel free to reach out to us at any time with comments or questions by emailing mtairy@lanterntheater.org or visiting our website at lanterntheater.org.