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**Celebrate the 159<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pony Express  
With a rip-roarin' good time only at the Garry Marshall Theatre**

**marshallARTS Family Series**  
***The Root Beer Bandits --***  
***A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale***

**15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Production**

**book by Joseph Leo Bwarie and Lori Marshall, music by Rachael Lawrence**

**17 performances only!**

**April 4 to 28, 2019 (press opening Friday April 5)**

Burbank, CA | February 25, 2019 – The marshallARTS Family Series presents ***The Root Beer Bandits – A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale***, at the Garry Marshall Theatre in a new, updated *pull-out-all-the-stops* version complete with live band, added songs, a revised book, and all-new costumes for its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The book is by **Joseph Leo Bwarie** (one of the theatre's artistic directors and a record-holding 'Frankie Valli' in Broadway's *Jersey Boys*) and **Lori Marshall** (co-author, *My Happy Days in Hollywood*); the music is by **Rachael Lawrence** (songwriter, *American Girl* film series). Garry Marshall Theatre's Artistic Directors are Bwarie and Dimitri Tascas.

*The Root Beer Bandits* has only 17 performances, April 4 to April 28 (press opening April 5). Tickets, starting at \$20, are on sale now by calling 818.955.8101 or by visiting [www.garrymarshalltheatre.org](http://www.garrymarshalltheatre.org). The Garry Marshall Theatre has designated Friday, April 19 at 7pm as a sensory-sensitive performance.

Returning for its third visit, *The Root Beer Bandits* tells the story of Polly Peppercorn, the only female to ride for the Pony Express. But as often is the case -- that is her predicament – she really has dreams to become a songwriter.

When Polly delivers a letter to Sheriff Bailey of Sarsaparilla City, they discover that Copper Penny is scheming to steal the city's famous root beer supply. With Sally Sue Tucker, a trailblazing female entrepreneur named helping her, and Sheriff Bailey, Polly sets things right and makes it clear that everyone is capable of greatness, no matter what their circumstances may be.

Hold onto yer hats, 'cuz laughs are sure to be a-plenty in this high-paced vaudevillian show including a chase, a Ho' Down, a sing-off at high noon, and although the show has a surprise ending, its no surprise that girl power saves the day!

Bwarie said, "*The Root Beer Bandits* has a cast full of comic archetypes from California's past that illustrate the state's history. And although they are fictional -- each of them represents a different idea

of the laws of the land and how to achieve the American dream. When we first did the show fifteen years ago, we had no idea of – as time goes on – how important ideas of friendship, community, pursuing dreams and not being boxed in by other people’s ideas would become as themes.”

Garry Marshall Theatre favorite **Clayton Snyder** (Disney’s *Lizzie McGuire*, *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*) leads the cast, with **Grace Yoo** (*Allegiance*), **Cloie Wyatt Taylor** (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, The Troubadour Theater Company’s *Little Drummer Bowie*), **Kelly Brandeburg** (*Beach Blanket Babylon*), and **Josey Montana McCoy** (*Floyd Collins* Ovation & LADCC Award nominee).

Also on the creative team are choreographer **Christine Lakin** (ABC’s *The Goldbergs*) and dramaturge **Dr. Katherine Nigh**. The 2019 production features scenic design by **Tanya Orellana** (Princess Grace Fabergé Theatre Award recipient), costume design by **Jessica Champagne-Hansen** (Head of the Costume Program in the theatre arts department of East Los Angeles College), lighting design by **JM Montecalvo** (*Trolls The Experience* in New York City), sound design by **Robert Arturo Ramirez** (*Arrow* on The CW), along with properties designed by **Benjamin Warren** and **Siena LaGambina** (Mr. Marshall’s 10-year-old granddaughter). Casting is by **Elizabeth Ayoob**; arrangements are by **William Stone**; the production stage manger is **Emily Lehrer**.

### **Sensory sensitive performance and other special events**

The limited run of ***Root Beer Bandits*** is part of the ever-growing **marshallARTS Family Series** programming. The marshallARTS live stage productions are designed to educate, cultivate, and entertain the next generation of theatergoers, their friends, and their families.

With its commitment for making theatre accessible to all, Garry Marshall Theatre has designated Friday, April 19 at 7pm as a sensory-sensitive performance designed to create an experience that can be shared and enjoyed by all including our community’s children and families living with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other sensory and social sensitivities.

At this performance there will be a reduction in lighting and sound effects that may be considered jarring or startling; modification of the house lights during the performance; access to resource materials to prepare for your visit, and (as always) a judgment-free, no-shush zone -- patrons are free to talk or move about the venue during the performance

Other special events include, on Sunday, April 14, a celebration of the 159th anniversary of the day the first Pony Express letter was delivered in California in 1860; and a rootin’, tootin’ Easter Egg Hunt on Sunday, April 21.

### **More about *The Root Beer Bandits***

In the spring of 2003, Garry Marshall brought together book writers Joseph Leo Bwarie and Lori Marshall, with songwriter Rachael Lawrence, to develop a new family musical set during the time of the Pony Express with the working title *Polly and Penny’s Wild West Adventure*.

The trio created a small western township called Sarsaparilla City, known for its batches of root beer with a fleck of gold from the California Gold Rush years. Marshall supervised the original production, bringing his keen eye and ear for comedy, to it. Marshall was very hands-on, offering comedy suggestions and punching-up jokes for the characters, all archetypal Wild West personas.

Bwarie said, “The creative team, who had partnered previously on other original works, knew that the West offered a wide-open terrain for exploring history through story and music. Pinpointing an iconic change in how Americans could communicate, the saga unfolds in the year 1860 when the Pony Express

began its now famous rides. With a couple of wisecracking, misunderstood outlaws entering the picture with the notion of stealing the city's signature beverage, *The Root Beer Bandits* was born."

The next summer (at the then Falcon Theatre) the first audience was treated to *The Root Beer Bandits -- A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale* – a mixture of vaudeville, melodrama, and musical comedy. Families were delighted with the 65-minute charmer.

The songs, "Wild West Destination," "The Ballad Of Pollyanna Peppercorn," and "Dastardly Duo," harkened back to vaudeville with musical comedy flair. While "What A Friend Is For" and "Gonna Have A Ho'Down" explore some styles of popular dances from that time: the waltz and the hoedown. Additionally, in Polly's anthems, there is a contemporary layer of pop chords and ideas that reflect her ambition of becoming a songwriter, at a time when men dominated the music scene.

Elizabeth and Phill Gross generously underwrite the 2019 production of *The Root Beer Bandits-- A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale*.

**Calendar listing *The Root Beer Bandits -- A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale***

by Joseph Leo Bwarie and Lori Marshall with music by Rachael Lawrence

**Venue:** Garry Marshall Theatre, 4252 West Riverside Drive, Burbank CA 91505

**Dates** April 4-April 28, 2019  
Preview performance on April 4<sup>th</sup> at 7pm  
Opening Night, Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm  
Fridays at 7pm, Saturdays at 2pm & 7pm, and Sundays at 1pm

Sensory sensitive performance Friday, April 19 at 7pm (tickets at regular prices on sale at box office, on website and by phone)

**Tickets** **Prices** Under 12 - \$20, Adult - \$22, Family 4-Packs - \$80, Sheriff Star VIP - \$39,  
**Visit** [www.garrymarshalltheatre.org](http://www.garrymarshalltheatre.org)  
**Phone** 818-955-8101

Special event: Sunday, April 21 at 1:00 pm –  
Rootin' Tootin' Easter Egg Hunt - \$28  
VIP Easter Egg Hunt - \$47

**Social Media** Facebook: [facebook.com/GarryMarshallTheatre](https://facebook.com/GarryMarshallTheatre)  
Twitter: [@GMTheatre\\_org](https://twitter.com/GMTheatre_org)  
Instagram: [@garrymarshalltheatre](https://instagram.com/garrymarshalltheatre)

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**Biographies**

**JOSEPH LEO BWARIE (Director/Co-Book Writer)**

Joseph Leo Bwarie is a Sherman Oaks native, a recording artist popular on *Siriusly Sinatra* on SiriusXM Radio, and one of the Artistic Directors of the nonprofit Garry Marshall Theatre in Burbank, California. He is widely known for his record-breaking turn as Frankie Valli in the Tony Award-winning musical *Jersey Boys* with over 2,000 performances and nine years as the falsetto voiced pop icon (Las Vegas, 1st National Tour and Broadway). As a recording artist, Bwarie has released three solo albums, "Nothin' But Love," which marked his first collaboration with legendary record producer and arranger Charles Calello, "The Good Stuff," featuring Tito Puente, Jr. and

Paulinho Da Costa, and “A Little Christmas.”

Bwarie’s professional career began at age nine, first appearing on the television series “Highway to Heaven,” “Mama’s Family,” and “The Young And The Restless.” He is a longtime member of The Troubadour Theater Company and directed and starred in 2016’s *Little Drummer Bowie*. Recent concerts include The Doo Wop Project with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and Calello’s The Legend Behind The Hits! concert engagements. An ambassador for the nationwide rare-cancer fighting charity Cycle For Survival, captaining team Broadway Strong, Bwarie is participating in his fifth cycle ride campaign. In 2013, he collaborated as associate director with Garry Marshall for the former Falcon Theatre’s world premiere of the stage play *Billy & Ray* and its 2014 New York engagement at the Vineyard Theatre. In the inaugural season of the Garry Marshall Theatre, Bwarie directed *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To the Forum*, starring Paul C. Vogt and Joey McIntyre. With his writing partners Lori Marshall and Rachael Lawrence, Bwarie has created *The Root Beer Bandits-- A Rootin’ Tootin’ Wild West Musicale*, *Cindy And The Disco Ball*, *The Legend Of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Enchanted Nightingale*, *Rapunzel* and *Thumbelina*.

#### **LORI MARSHALL (Co-Book Writer)**

Lori Marshall is a columnist, fairytale playwright and ghostwriter. She has published three books: *Wake Me When It Is Funny* and *My Happy Days in Hollywood*, both co-authored with her father, film director Garry Marshall; and *Cue The Bunny on The Rainbow*, written with the late television director Alan Rafkin. She currently is writing a memoir with her mother, Barbara, a theatre producer. Three years ago Lori launched an on-line column called *Lori’s Library Party*, which offers weekly book reviews to a loyal following of readers. She has written articles for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, and *TravelAge West*.

Lori runs her own ghostwriting business called Ghost Girl SF, a discreet personal writing and editing service that scripts top-secret speeches, essays, letters, applications, blogs and editorials. As a playwright, Lori has written ten produced plays for children at The Garry Marshall Theatre. Lori also works for Hospice By The Bay, the first hospice established in California and the second oldest in the United States. She is a proud part of the revered admissions department, coordinating patient care services for hospice, palliative, and pediatric patients. Lori has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in journalism from Northwestern University’s Medill School. She is the mother of 23-year-old twin girls, Lily and Charlotte, and lives in Marin County with her husband Jeff.

#### **RACHAEL LAWRENCE (Composer)**

For the past 20 years, Rachael Lawrence has been a sought-after vocal coach, musical director, composer, and songwriter/producer in Los Angeles. Her projects range from being the in-house vocal coach for Fox’s “Glee” and ABC’s “Grey’s Anatomy” (The Music Event) to being the acting on-camera vocal coach for Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz, and Rebel Wilson’s personal vocal coach for the “Pitch Perfect” film franchise. She has musically directed shows in Los Angeles, at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and for the University of Southern California, The Troubadour Theater Company and, most recently, Joey McIntyre’s workshop of *The Kid*. As a composer and songwriter, Rachael has written musicals for the Garry Marshall Theatre and is co-founder of PTP Music, a songwriting and production company with many original song placements in film and television.

#### **CHRISTINE LAKIN (Choreographer)**

Probably best known for her role as ‘Al’ in the 90’s sit-com “Step By Step,” more recently, she was one of three “Hollywood Darlings” on the Pop Network, alongside Jodie Sweetin (“Fuller House”) and Beverley Mitchell (“7th Heaven”). The three executive-produced the highly improvised comedy, loosely based on their real lives and friendship. Christine has appeared in dozens of films and TV shows such as “Modern Family,” “Mother’s Day,” “CSI,” “The League,” “Melissa and Joey,” “Valentine’s Day,” “Veronica Mars” and “You Again.” She voices multiple roles on FOX’s “Family Guy,” Cartoon Network’s “Clarence” and is known as ‘Jane’ from “The Walking Dead” game (seasons 1 and 2). She is the voice behind ‘PeeBee’ in EA’s “Mass Effect: Andromeda.” She is well known for her numerous audio book narrations (over 50), including the recent best seller, “Dark Sacred Night” by Michael Connelly. Christine has also performed in several acclaimed theater productions, notably as ‘Clarice Starling’ in the cult-hit *Silence*, *The Musical* (LADCC award) and dozens with The Troubadour Theater Company. She hosts for CMT, VH1 and E!, and regularly guests on “The Steve Harvey Show” on his “Straight Talk” panel. Ms. Lakin is a nominated choreographer, whose work has appeared on HBO’s “Westworld,” “True Blood,” “Schooled,” and ABC’s “The Goldbergs,” on which she is in her 6th season. As a director, Christine had her network debut with an episode of “The Goldbergs” (“Bachelor Party”), airing in December 2018. Her work on the short film “Dancer By Trade” won her an honorable mention at the LA Film Festival in 2017. She has also shot for Funny or Die and directed the music video *MOTHER* for Broadway star, Joseph Leo Bwarie. As a producer, Christine is the creator of the hit storytelling

show, *Worst Ever*, which played to sold-out crowds around Los Angeles and New York before being developed and sold as a series with Thank You Brain Productions. It is currently a podcast on iTunes, featuring guests such as Danielle Fishel, Patrick Duffy, Rory O'Malley and Joey Fatone. Christine lives in Los Angeles with her husband Brandon and their two children.

**GARRY MARSHALL THEATRE**

Garry Marshall Theatre is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing innovative performances, educational opportunities, and storytelling activities for all ages, year-round. Located in the heart of Burbank and Toluca Lake's media district, the critically acclaimed and Ovation Award-winning 130-seat theatre was founded in 1997 as the Falcon Theatre by Hollywood legend Garry Marshall. Reestablished as the nonprofit Garry Marshall Theatre in 2017, the theatre continues to cultivate new artists and experiences that spark ideas and build community.

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