



PRESS RELEASE
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Up
The East Coast Premiere
A Family Play about Love, Money and Dreams



By Bridget Carpenter
Directed by Penny Metropulos

ARCHBOLD THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE

Previews: February 25-26 Press Open: February 27 Close: March 15

(SYRACUSE, NY)—Bridget Carpenter is a young American playwright on the rise, and in this contemporary parable, based on the true story of “The Flying Lawn Chair Man,” she dares us to consider what it is in the human spirit that makes us want to soar beyond the realm of reason. Why are we fascinated with the seemingly impossible? What makes daredevil aerialist Philippe Petit ascend the high wire? And why does he make frequent appearances in this clever and altogether amusing and intriguing play? Running February 25 to March 15, Carpenter’s play, *Up*, is sponsored by Lockheed Martin, Hiscock & Barclay and Brookfield Renewable Power. The media sponsor is WAER 88.3. Syracuse Stage season sponsors are *The Post-Standard* and Time Warner Cable.

Based on the true story of Larry Walters, *Up* follows the life of fictional Walter Griffin, a man who follows his dream of flight with the help of 42 weather balloons and a lawn chair. Sixteen years after his record-breaking feat, Walter’s desire to return to the sky is unwavering, and he spends his time toiling over inventions while having conversations with the spirit of French aerialist Philippe Petit. Inadvertently, Walter’s dream puts financial stress on his wife Helen, who works as a mail carrier, while the fleeting fame from his stunt leaves their son, Mikey, with questions of self-

worth. Brooding over the thought of his sophomore year in high school, Mikey is greeted on the first day by Maria, a bubbly and pregnant new student. Maria's wily Aunt Chris persuades Mikey to join her in phone sales of office supplies, in which Mikey discovers unrealized talents. Meanwhile, Helen's constant barrage of comments towards Walter about his unemployment creates a rift in their relationship, leading Walter to appease his wife by seeking work. As Walter works at his new job and Mikey becomes consumed by love and sales, the conflict between dreams and reality launches this family into a tumultuous freefall.

Central to *Up* is the discussion of dreams versus reality. "*Up* is about the audaciousness of dreamers, the need to love, and the role of money in the real world," said Director Penny Metropulos. "One of Bridget Carpenter's many gifts as a playwright is her ability to move in and out of reality with disarming agility. In *Up* she has written a play that is fresh, whimsical, and truthful. It is genuinely funny, but not frivolous, deeply moving, and yet unsentimental. And, though Bridget's story is completely original, it resonates with a disturbing familiarity at this moment in time in our American culture."

Bridget Carpenter began *Up* with the intention of writing about money. She notes, "I wanted to write something that dealt with money in a very quotidian, literal way—how hard it was to make it, how happy or sad having it or not having it could make you. I didn't want to use money as a metaphor. I wanted to have it as an undercurrent to these characters' lives, as it is in mine."

But ultimately Carpenter describes her work as a family play. "Everything incredible happens when you're a teenager," she says. "The highs are stratospheric. The lows are choking. You're experiencing everything for the first time and the loves and losses of those years mark you forever."

The set design by Michael V. Sims lends an air of mysticism that reflects many aspects of a dream. "The design reveals a world in which personal aspirations are pulled downward, as if by gravity, yet in which the dreamer continues to dream of transcendence, inexplicably," said Sims. "The onstage environment allows movement to be fluid, in the manner of a dream, and reflects the protagonist's tendency to walk around with his head in the clouds."

As a production filled with whimsy, *Up* will fuel the imagination of its audience. "No matter how life pulls us down into reality, you have no choice what your dreams are. It will somehow kill you if you don't continue to pursue them," said Director Penny Metropulos. "All dreams come at a cost, and no one knows that better than a working class family. The Griffins could be the typical American family, and working class Americans have poetry in their souls. They continue to dream."

THE INSPIRATION

Larry Walters (1949 -1993). After a lifelong fascination with flight, in 1982 Larry Walters strapped four dozen weather balloons to his rickety Sears lawn chair and accomplished the sort of astonishing feat that is only devised by walking the fine line

between ingenuity and lunacy. Walters was working as a truck driver in North Hollywood, CA, in 1982. He had served in Vietnam, but never saw a single day of flight training. His plan was amazingly simple: the balloons would carry him upward, the winds eastward, gallon jugs of water would provide ballast, and a shot from his pellet gun would burst a balloon or two when he was ready to descend. Walters, an avid outdoorsman, planned to float across the Mojave Desert toward the Rocky Mountains, spending several days in the air. On July 2 he lifted off from the rooftop of a friend's house in the town of San Pedro, CA. His calculations were wrong, however, and the balloons shot upward much quicker than expected, at around 1,000 feet per minute. Soon he was 16,000 feet (3 miles) in the air, at an elevation that put him smack dab in the flight path of commercial airliners heading to the Long Beach Airport and LAX. Spotted by two pilots, Walters' flight was quickly reported to bewildered officials at air traffic control and the Federal Aviation Administration. In the thin air high above the earth, Walters grew cold and dizzy; after piercing several of his balloons with his pellet gun, his frigid hands could not keep their grip and the gun plummeted to the earth. Luckily, Walters had managed to deflate enough balloons, and he began his descent. He planned to reach the Rockies, but only made it to nearby Long Beach, where he landed ensnared in power lines and caused a short power outage. This historic, albeit brief, flight granted Walters instant celebrity status. He appeared in newspapers and magazines across the country, and was interviewed by Johnny Carson and David Letterman. FAA officials were not amused. Adding to their frustration, there was no precedent for how to punish a maverick balloon pilot, and it is impossible to revoke the pilot's license of a man who does not have one. In the end, Walters was fined \$4,000 for operating a "civil aircraft for which there is not currently in effect an airworthiness certificate." Walters paid the fine, and never flew again. His personal life, like his aviation career, also remained landlocked. His celebrity faded, his long-term relationship ended, he struggled to find work, and in 1993 he took his own life. Once, the Smithsonian Museum offered to buy the historic lawn chair. Walters was unable to sell it, though, because immediately after landing, he gave the chair to a neighborhood boy who had watched the flight in amazement. Through it all, Walters never wanted fame: "It was something I had to do. I had this dream for twenty years, and if I hadn't done it, I think I would have ended up in the funny farm. I didn't think that by fulfilling my goal in life—my dream—that I would create such a stir and make people laugh," he once admitted.

Philippe Petit (1949 - present). Petit, who now lives in Woodstock, NY, was more than just a risk taker. He began his career on Paris streets filled with challenge and political change, in 1968. From his early start as a street performer, riding a unicycle, juggling and pantomiming, he went on to specialize on the high wire and became an artist-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Born in 1949 (the same year as Larry Walters), Petit made his mark in history walking high wires from such famous structures as the Sydney Harbor Bridge, New Orleans' Superdome, the Eiffel Tower, and one walk that truly captured the American imagination—the World Trade Center Towers. That walk is featured in the documentary film, *Man on Wire*. The film won a jury prize and the Audience Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, and is nominated for an Oscar as a Documentary Feature film. The circus-like activities Petit mastered have long been a metaphor for resistance to social conformity in scholarly thought.

PLAYWRIGHT

Bridget Carpenter (Playwright) is an alumna of New Dramatists. Her plays have been produced by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Public Theatre in New York, Trinity Rep, Center Stage, Berkeley Repertory Company, Mark Taper Forum, and Actors Theatre of Louisville, among many others. Other plays include *Fall* (Susan Smith Blackburn Prize), *The Faculty Room* (Kesselring Prize), and *The Death of the Father of Psychoanalysis* (& Anna). Among her honors and awards are fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Princess Grace Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group. Ms. Carpenter received a M.F.A. from Brown University and has taught playwriting in college, high school, elementary school, and prison. Currently, she lives in Los Angeles, where she is a writer for the Peabody Award-winning television series *Friday Night Lights*. Her plays *Up*, *The Faculty Room*, and *Fall* are published by Samuel French.

DIRECTOR

Penny Metropulos (Director) has been associated with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) in Ashland for 18 seasons, was Associate Artistic Director for 12 years, and was OSF's Co-Associate Artistic Director with Syracuse Stage's Timothy Bond. Her commissioned adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* was produced this season at OSF, where her directing credits include productions of *Tracy's Tiger*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Philanderer*, *Humble Boy*, *Lorca in a Green Dress*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Good Person of Szechuan*, *The Three Musketeers*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Timon of Athens*, *Cabaret Verboten*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Lips Together*, *Teeth Apart*, and *Restoration*. Other credits at regional theatres include *The Misanthrope* at Arena Stage in Washington, DC; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; the premiere of *Missing Persons* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *Candida* at Intiman Theatre in Seattle and Arizona Theatre Company; *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* at New York's The Acting Company; *Light Up the Sky* and *A Christmas Carol* at Alabama Shakespeare Festival; *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Richard II*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at California Shakespeare Festival; Oregon Cabaret Theatre in Ashland; and *You Can't Take it With You*, *Quilters*, and *The Trip to Bountiful* at the Denver Center. In addition to directing, Penny has acted in regional theatre including three seasons at OSF, co-adapted OSF's *The Three Musketeers*, directed and adapted scripts for OSF's School Visit Program, and was Executive Director of Encompass, Arizona Theatre Company's educational program. She is a graduate of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts and Dallas Theatre Center Academy.

CAST

Christopher Duval (Philippe Petit, Student, Firefighter, UPS Man) makes his Syracuse Stage debut in *Up*. He has been seen for the past ten seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, playing such roles as George Tesman in *The Further Adventures*

of *Hedda Gabler*, Roderigo in *Othello*, Dromio in *The Comedy of Errors*, Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, Roland Maule in *Present Laughter*, Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Yepihodov in *The Cherry Orchard*, Trinculo in *The Tempest*, Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*, Dumaine in *Love's Labors Lost*, Somerset in *Henry VI, Parts I, II and III*, Leo Davis in *Room Service*, Tim Allgood in *Noises Off*, and William in *As You Like It*, among others. He has also appeared at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Orange County, John Anson Ford Theatre, The Will Geer Theatre, and in world and national premieres at South Coast Repertory. Christopher is recognized as a Full Instructor of Stage Combat with Dueling Arts International, and has earned a black belt in Aikido. He has taught stage combat certification workshops and guest workshops throughout the west, including at such universities as Stanford, Cal State Fresno, Cal State Fullerton, Cal Tech, Southern Utah University, Southern Oregon University, and at a variety of regional theatres. He holds a BA in Theatre Arts from California State University Fullerton and an MFA in Acting from the University of California Irvine. In 2009, Christopher is serving as the Associate Fight Director for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Susannah Flood (Maria). This marks Susannah's debut at Syracuse Stage. Her Off-Broadway credits include workshops of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (dir. Doug Hughes, New York Theatre Workshop), *Canary* (Rattlestick Theatre), and *Okay*, part of Ensemble Studio Theater's 2008 Marathon. She has appeared regionally in the world premier of Paula Vogel's *A Civil War Christmas* (Long Wharf Theatre), as Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (dir. Lisa Peterson, Hartford Stage), Emily in *Our Town* and Katya in *Memory House* (Trinity Repertory Company), Varya in *The Cherry Orchard* (dir. Ethan McSweeney, The Chautauqua Theatre Company), Sister James in *Doubt* (The Hangar Theatre), and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare in Santa Fe). She is a graduate of UC Berkeley and The Brown/Trinity Consortium (MFA).

Suzanna Hay (Aunt Chris) has performed on Broadway with Sir Ian McKellan and David Stathairn in *Dance of Death*; with Helen Mirren in *A Month in the Country*; and with Mary Tyler Moore in *Whose Life is it Anyway*. Suzanna's film and TV credits include *Three Windows*, *The Dissection of Thanksgiving*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Kidnapped*, *The Guiding Light*, and *As the World Turns*. Off-Broadway credits include *Fool for Love* directed by Sam Shepard, *Flight*, and *A Case of You*. Regional theatre credits include *Dearly Departed* (Dramalogue Award), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Carbonell Award nomination), *Macbeth* and *Crimes of the Heart*. Among her many other regional productions Suzanna has performed in over 25 productions with the Actors Theatre of Louisville. She is a Graduate of Lamda and is married to the actor Brad Bellamy.

Todd Jefferson Moore (Walter) hails from the Northwest where he has raised a family and enjoyed a diverse artistic career, dividing his time between acting, writing, and teaching. He puppeteered with his family across North America and Europe for ten years with Teatro Pícaro, which received the UNIMA Award of Excellence. He currently acts in 3-4 shows a year at Seattle Repertory, Intiman, ACT, Seattle Shakespeare and Seattle Children's (SCT) Theatres. He was the title character in Blau Vier's American premiere of *Cyrano* which toured Seattle, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. He teaches acting and playwriting at Cornish College of

the Arts and the ACT Theatre Young Playwrights Program. He's written a number of solo documentaries including *In The Heart of the Wood*, about the Northwest timber crisis (American Theatre Critics nominee); *The Killing Jar*, *The Professor*, *The Puppet and the Execution* (about violence and the death penalty), and *The Last Best Place* about the battle of Farms vs. Salmon in the Skagit River Valley (all Seattle Rep and ACT commissions). His plays for children include *Angkor/America*, *Town Mouse and Country Mouse*, and *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* as well as *Scapin*, *First Day*, *Lost in Oz*, *Children's Crusade 1939*, *Kenny's Window*, and *A Day at the Beach* (SCT commissions). Mr. Moore is a recipient of a 1999 Artist Trust Fellowship, the 2000 Arts Network Outstanding Artist Award and the 2006 Greg Falls Award for Sustained Achievement. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Joby, of 32 years who is a kindergarten teacher. His son Max is studying acting at Yale, and his daughter, Anna, and her husband, Aaron, teach kindergarten and English in Cozumel, MX.

Graham Powell (Mikey) has appeared in numerous theatre and film projects. Indy film credits include *Bottled Up*, *Duchess*, and *Manifesto* which was screened at last year's Big Apple Film Festival. Regional credits include *Pig Farm*, and *The Overwhelming* at the Contemporary American Theatre Festival. Off-Off Broadway credits include *Fiction* and *The Apple Tree*, for which he won the Looking Glass Forum Award for Best Actor. This is Powell's Syracuse Stage debut.

Mhari Sandoval (Helen) has worked in theatres across the country, appeared in over 25 productions of Shakespeare, and has a thriving voice-over career. She has recorded hundreds of commercials, worked on animated shows, and was the voice of Turner Classic Movies. In New York she appeared in *The Power of Darkness* at the Mint Theatre, and in *As You Like It* for The Alibi Group. Her regional credits include *Death and the Maiden* and *Three Sisters* at Baltimore's Center Stage, *Twelfth Night* (Cincinnati Playhouse and Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), *A Nervous Smile* for the Humana Festival (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Smell of the Kill* and *Christmas Carol* at Geva Theatre, and five seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, where she worked with both Penny Metropulos and Timothy Bond. *Up* marks her third collaboration with Penny. Ms. Sandoval has also appeared on *One Life to Live*, and was in the Disney film *Secret Bodyguard*.

DESIGNERS

Michael V. Sims (Scenic Design). Past collaborations with Penny Metropulos include *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* (The Acting Company), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (California Shakespeare Festival). Past collaborations with Timothy Bond include *Venice* (Juilliard School Drama Division). Other credits: Guthrie Theatre; The Old Globe; South Coast Repertory; Milwaukee Repertory; Yale Repertory; Florida Stage; Center Stage; Cleveland Play House, George Street Playhouse; Alabama Shakespeare; New Jersey Shakespeare; California Shakespeare; Pennsylvania Shakespeare; Chautauqua Theatre Company; TheatreWorks/USA; New York's The Drama Dept; Blue Light Theatre; Curtis Institute of Music; Skylight Opera. Teaching credits: Ohio University and Princeton University. Michael holds an MFA from Yale School of Drama and is a member of United Scenic Artists (IATSE) in the set and costume design categories. Awards: 1995 Drama-Logue Award for West Coast premiere of *Nicky*

Silver's *Pterodactyls* (South Coast Rep); 2006 Craig Noel Award for Lee Blessing's *A Body of Water* (Old Globe).

Maggie Dick (Costume Design). Recent NYC designs include *Death* at PS 122; *All the Bad Things* at LAByrinth Theatre Company; *Two Husbands*, *The Gun Play* and *The Female Terrorist Project* at the Chocolate Factory; *Murdering Marlowe* at the Access Theatre; and *Pale Idiot* at the NY Fringe Festival. Regional work includes designing *Amadeus*, *Cymbeline*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, and assisting at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. She was the assistant designer for *King Hedley II* at Signature Theatre Company, *Bubbling Brown Sugar* starring Diahann Carroll, and for the Montreal production of *Beauty and the Beast*. She is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.

Thomas C. Hase (Lighting Design) has contributed work to productions throughout the United States, including: Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, BAM, Seattle Opera, The Minnesota Opera, The Goodspeed Opera, The Skylight Opera Theatre, The Portland Opera, New Orleans Opera, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Center Stage Theatre, Alliance Theatre, The Dallas Theatre Center, The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and Maine State Music Theatre. Recently he designed John Doyle's *Company* on Broadway and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at Los Angeles Opera, both to international critical acclaim and released on DVD. Internationally his work includes: The Barbican in London; The Abbey Theatre; Opera North, UK; The Canadian Opera Company; The Finish, Columbian, and Dutch National Operas; Opera de Marseille; Staatstheater Kassel; Theater Erfurt; The Bavarian State Opera; The Vancouver Opera; The Singapore Arts Festival; Tokyo Metro Arts Center; and over one hundred designs for theatre, opera and ballet at the Stadttheater Giessen, Germany. As Ping Chong's lighting designer his work was seen worldwide. He recently premiered Riverdance's new production *Magik Macabre* in Dublin as well as the blockbuster European revival of *The Wiz* for Stage Holdings in Holland. Concurrent with his many freelance projects, Mr. Hase is the resident lighting designer and director for the Cincinnati Opera.

Ryan Rumery (Sound Design/Composer). Broadway: *Thurgood*, starring Laurence Fishburne. Off-Broadway: *Uncle Vanya* (Classic Stage Company), *Back Back Back*, *Based on a Totally True Story* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Deathbed* (McGinn/Cazale), *Beauty on the Vine* (Epic Theatre), *Rearviewmirror* (59E59), *Getting Home* (Second Stage), and *Edward II* (Connelly Theatre). Regional: Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Actors Theatre, Center Stage, Dallas Theatre Center, Kennedy Center, Shakespeare Theatre, Playmakers Rep, Hartford Stage, Virginia Stage, Westport Country Playhouse, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Ford's Theatre, Florida Stage, Alley Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Trinity Rep, Adirondack Theatre Festival, Hangar Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, Alliance Theatre and Eugene O' Neill Theatre Center.

TICKET PRICES:

Adult: \$24-\$48

40 Below: \$20 with ID

Rush: \$15-\$25 day of performance, \$9 for students with ID

**Rush tickets available by phone (\$5 fee) or in person (no fee)*
**Discounts available for seniors, students, groups and subscribers*

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Groups: 315-443-9844

SYRACUSE STAGE

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Fact Sheet:

Up

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Suzanna Hay (Aunt Chris)
Todd Jefferson Moore (Walter)
Graham Powell (Mikey)
Mhari Sandoval (Helen)

The names in bold are actors and stage managers who are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Show Calendar: February/March

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			25 7:30 P	26 7:30 P	27 8:00 O	28 3:00 8:00
1 2:00	2	3	4 2:00 7:30	5 7:30	6 8:00	7 3:00 8:00
8 2:00 7:00 D	9	10 7:30 S	11 10:30 7:30	12 7:30	13 8:00	14 3:00 8:00
15 2:00						

P=Preview O=Opening

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