ELEPHANT & PIGGIE'S

"WE ARE IN A PLAY!"

MARCH 6-28, 2026

BASED ON THE

Elephant & Piggie books by Mo Willems

PUBLISHED BY

Hyperion Books for Children

SCRIPT AND LYRICS BY MO WILLEMS
MUSIC BY DEBORAH WICKS LA PUMA

A/MFA Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts

THIS PLAY WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AND WAS FIRST PRODUCED AT THE KENNEDY CENTER DURING THE 2013-2014 SEASON.

ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!" IS PRESENTED THROUGH SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL (MTI). ALL AUTHORIZED PERFORMANCE MATERIALS ARE ALSO SUPPLIED BY MTI. WWW. MTISHOWS.COM

ELEPHANT & PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!" IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY CAROLINE AND GEORGE MAKRIS III.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS ARE SUPPORTED IN PART BY THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION AND THE MCMATH FAMILY.

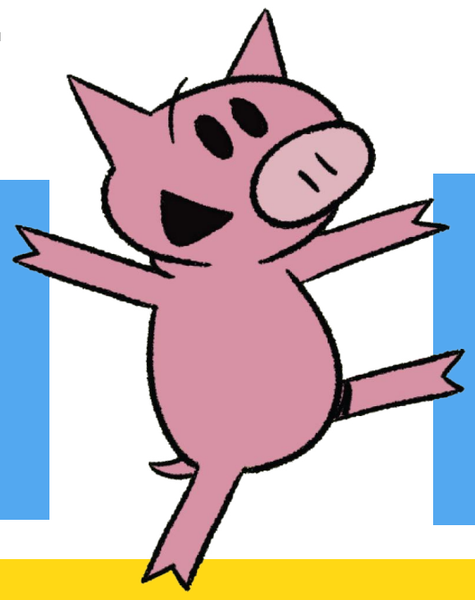
Jump into the joy of *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*—a rollicking musical adventure straight from the pages of Mo Willems' beloved, award-winning children's books.

When Gerald, the thoughtful elephant who tends to worry, and Piggie, his endlessly upbeat best friend, are invited to a party by the Squirrelles—a trio of singing, dancing squirrels—their day takes a delightful and unexpected turn. Gerald's doubts and anxiety bubble up, while Piggie throws herself into the fun with fearless enthusiasm. As surprises unfold, the two navigate soaring highs, sudden hiccups, and joyful discoveries—realizing that true friendship means sticking together, even when things feel uncertain.

Brimming with toe-tapping tunes, unforgettable characters, and big belly laughs, this delightful musical invites audiences to join in the magic of live performance—with plenty of playful, interactive moments along the way. With clever storytelling and joyful energy, it's full of heart, humor, and meaningful moments that linger long after the final bow.

★ **Stay after the show to meet the cast!**

RUNNING TIME
70 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGE
3 and up

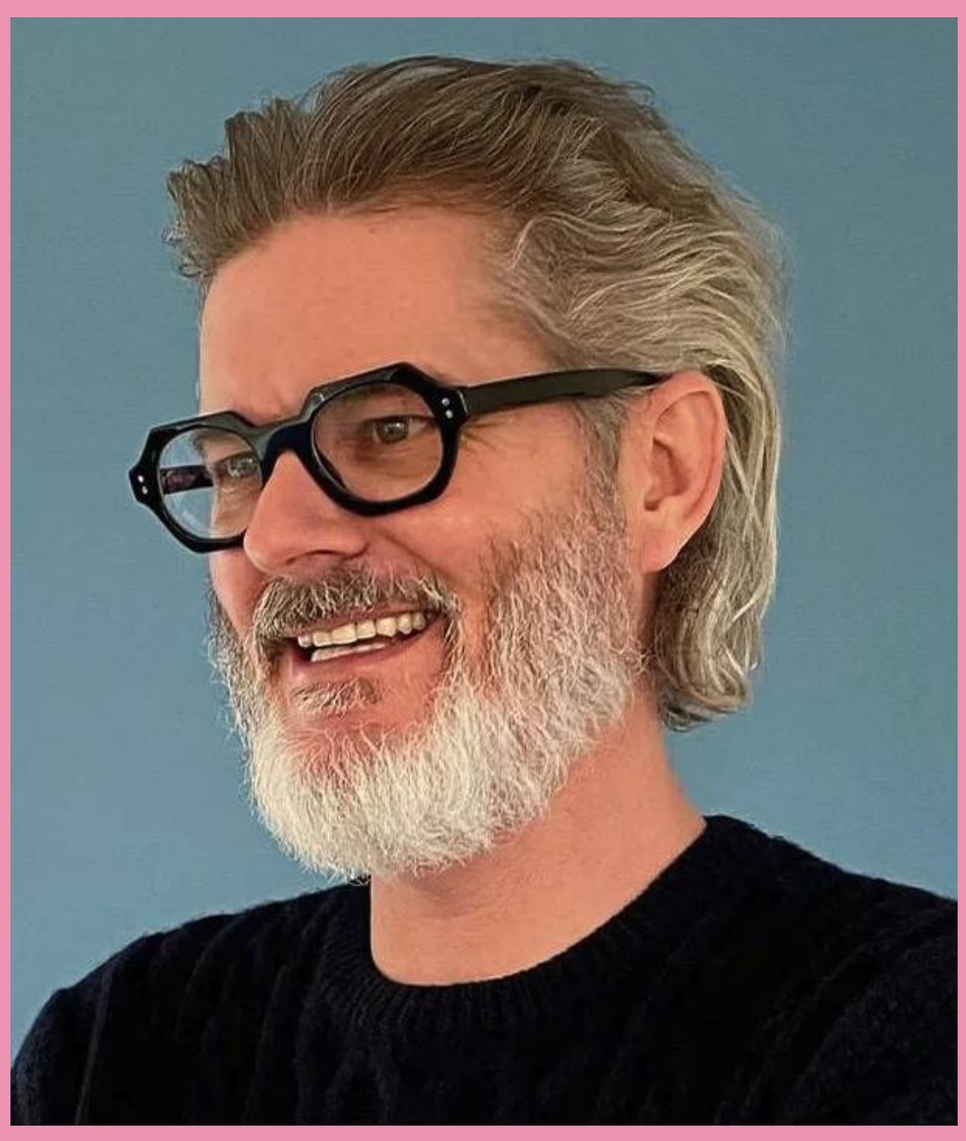
ACCESSIBILITY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCES

MARCH 14
10:30 a.m.
AUDIO DESCRIPTION BY CREATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

MARCH 14
2:00 p.m.
ASL INTERPRETATION BY COMMUNICATIONS PLUS

MARCH 15
2:00 p.m.
SENSORY-FRIENDLY SOUND AND LIGHTING CONDITIONS

ANY VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.



Mo Willems

is the beloved artist and author behind #1 New York Times bestselling and Caldecott Honor-winning picture books including *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, the *Knuffle Bunny* series, and the celebrated *Elephant & Piggie* early reader series.

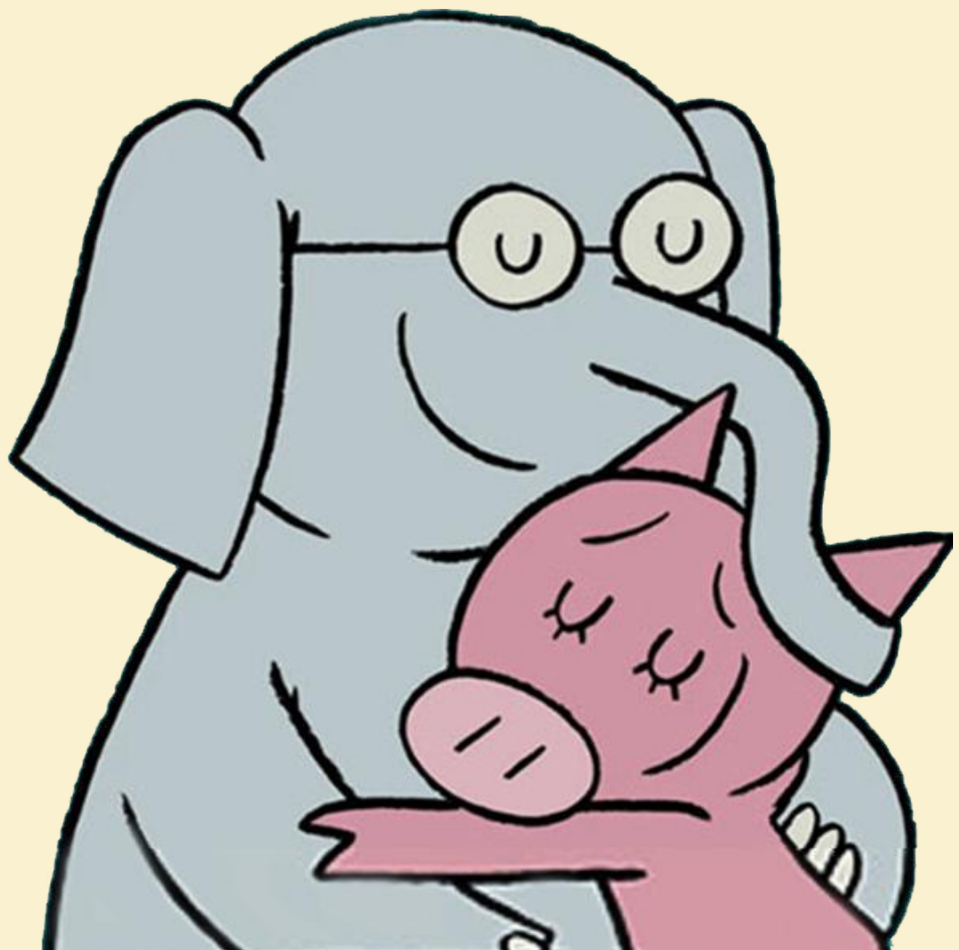
His work has earned two Theodor Seuss Geisel Awards, five Geisel Honors, and an Eisner Award. *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* was also the inaugural inductee into the Picture Book Hall of Fame.

Willems has published more than 70 children's books—over 50 *New York Times* bestsellers—translated into 26 languages worldwide. Before becoming a full-time author, he won six Emmy Awards writing for Sesame Street.

His work extends across television, theater, and exhibitions, including animated series, musical adaptations, touring exhibits, and collaborations across music, dance, visual art, and digital media. His art has been exhibited internationally, including major retrospectives at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and The New York Historical in New York City.

Over the past decade, Willems has become the most produced playwright of Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States, writing or co-writing four musicals based on his books. In 2023, he co-founded the Hidden Pigeon Company to expand the reach of his characters and stories.

Mo Willems is a former child.



Deborah Wicks La Puma

is a composer, music director, and orchestrator and one of the most produced Theatre for Young Audiences artists working today.

Her musicals include *Ella Enchanted* (based on the book by Gail Carson Levine), *Oliverio: A Brazilian Twist*, and *Einstein is a Dummy* with playwright Karen Zacarías, as well as the Off-Broadway hit *She Persisted* (based on the book by Chelsea Clinton) with playwright Adam Tobin.

She has collaborated extensively with bestselling children's author Mo Willems, composing *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play*," *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience*, and *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus: The Musical*. Their collaboration also extends to television, including the HBO Max adaptation of *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Underground Rock Experience* and the upcoming animated series *Unlimited Squirrels.*

As a music director and orchestrator, La Puma has worked with major regional theatres including the Guthrie, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

She holds an MFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and a bachelor's degree from Stanford University. Her honors include the Harold Oaks Award for Sustained Excellence in TYA, an Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best Family Musical, the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, an NEA New American Works Grant, two Parents' Choice Awards, and a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Musical Adaptation.

A LETTER FROM

Chad Bradford

In *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, we have the opportunity to see friendship through the eyes of "the first time."

The ever-ebullient Piggie pulls the cautious Gerald out of his shell and invites him into an adventure neither of them has experienced before. In those invitations — to dance, to celebrate, to risk embarrassment, to repair hurt — we witness something essential: growth rarely happens alone. It happens because someone believes in us enough to say, "Come with me."

We watch them attend their first party, learn to share the spotlight, navigate conflict, and discover the joy of simply being seen.

The show asks us to remember our own "first times" — the moments that stretched us, startled us, and ultimately shaped us.

Less a traditional narrative and more a metaphor, this story reflects the lifespan of a friendship — from first meetings to seemingly final good-byes.

The great author and thinker Brené Brown describes trust and friendship as a jar of marbles. Trust, like friendship, isn't built in one grand gesture. It is built through many small moments. Each time someone keeps a

promise, shows up consistently, respects a boundary, or acts with integrity, they add a “marble” to the jar. Over time, those small deposits create something strong enough to hold our most vulnerable selves. Yet just as steadily, trust can be diminished when those moments are neglected and marbles are lost.

Theatre for Young Audiences gives us a space to explore these truths with honesty and joy. It honors the emotional lives of young people and reminds adults that growth is not linear, tidy, or quiet. It is musical. It is messy. It is brave. And often, it is made possible because someone stands beside us and says, “Everyone left, but you stayed.”

Our story asks: Who do we share our marbles with? What happens when one is taken away? What does it truly mean to be “bestus” friends?

We hope you enjoy *Elephant & Piggie’s “We Are in a Play!”*, and that, like our heroes, you remember that love lets us grow.

AMFA CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR – CHAD BRADFORD
MUSIC DIRECTOR – TIM COOPER
CHOREOGRAPHER – MORIAH PATTERSON
SCENIC DESIGN – CHAD LOWELL
COSTUME DESIGN – ANTHONY MCBRIDE
LIGHTING DESIGN – GRIFFEN BIRDSONG
ADDITIONAL SOUND DESIGN – BALEIGH ALMOND
STAGE MANAGER – BALEIGH ALMOND

CAST

GERALD THE ELEPHANT
GRANT WATKINS

PIGGIE
EMILY SWENSKIE

SQUIRRELLES - LADARIUS LAMAR, BRIANNA EAST, AND CHLOE CLEMENT

DELIVERY DOG AND
ICE CREAM PENGUIN - DAKOTA MANSFIELD

ENSEMBLE – BEAR LEWIS, ELLIE MACK, EVIE SLABAUGH, PIPER WALLACE

UNDERSTUDIES - GEORGEANNE BURBANK, DAKOTA MANSFIELD, SARAH NICHOLS

PRODUCTION CREW

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR &

MASTER CARPENTER – MICHAEL KLUCHER

PRODUCTION MANAGER – LIZ MCMATH

COMPANY MANAGER – RIVKA KUPERMAN

CARPENTRY & RIGGING – JEFF BAILEY,

MARK HANSEN, AARON BURNSIDE, AND JON

HATTON/ROCK CITY THUMPS

SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST - BALEIGH ALMOND

COSTUME SHOP MANAGER – ANTHONY MCBRIDE

STITCHERS – DAKOTA MANSFIELD, LIZ MCMATH,

RIVKA KUPERMAN

WIG STYLIST – EMILY SIEMENS

AUDIO LEAD – LUKE MITCHELL

SOUND BOARD OPERATOR - JESSI PERREN

PROPS MASTER – MARGO GIFFORD

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER – SHAINA TIPPITT

BACKSTAGE RUN CREW – GEORGEANNE BURBANK

AND SARAH NICHOLS

SPECIAL THANKS TO

NORTH LITTLE ROCK THEATRE ARTS

MEET THE CAST

GEORGEANN BURBANK
UNDERSTUDY

Georgeann is excited to return to AMFA. She holds a B.A. in Theatre from Henderson State University and lives in North Little Rock. Favorite credits include CHARLOTTE'S WEB, A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD, ROMEO & JULIET, SWEENEY TODD, and PHOTOGRAPH 51.

CHLOE CLEMENT
SQUIRRELLE

Chloe is a Little Rock–based actor, singer, and dancer excited to return to AMFA. She holds a musical theatre degree from Columbia College Chicago and has toured internationally with PAW PATROL LIVE! and BABY SHARK'S BIG BROADWAY TOUR.

BRIANNA EAST
SQUIRRELLE

Brianna holds a B.A. in Music with a minor in dance from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Recent credits include FROZEN, THE WIZARD OF OZ, WHITE CHRISTMAS, FOOTLOOSE, and LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS. She also performs with Untapped Inc.

MEET THE CAST

LADARIUS LAMAR
SQUIRRELLE

Ladarius is proud to return to the AMFA stage. He recently directed BREAKING THE BOX at AMFA and has appeared in CHICAGO, RENT, CLYBOURNE PARK, AS YOU LIKE IT, and DREAMGIRLS.

BEAR LEWIS
ENSEMBLE

Bear is making his stage debut at AMFA. A fourth grader at The Anthony School, Bear lives in the MacArthur Park neighborhood. When he's not performing, he enjoys biking, reading, playing video games, and spending time with his brothers.

ELEANOR "ELLIE" MACK
ENSEMBLE

Ellie is excited to return to AMFA after appearing in JUNIE B. IN JINGLE BELLS, BATMAN SMELLS! A sixth grader at Joe T. Robinson Middle School, Ellie enjoys singing, piano, saxophone, and performing with her school and church choirs.

MEET THE CAST

DAKOTA MANSFIELD
DELIVERY DOG / ICE CREAM PENGUIN

Dakota is thrilled to make his AMFA Children's Theatre debut. He began acting at age seven and has appeared across Arkansas in productions including HAIRSPRAY, A NEW BRAIN, FULLY COMMITTED, and A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD.

SARAH NICHOLS
UNDERSTUDY

Sarah is delighted to return to AMFA's Children's Theatre. Previous credits include WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD and AN UNLIKELY HERO. She holds a BFA in Theatre from Arkansas State University and has also performed at Murry's Dinner Playhouse.

EVIE SLABAUGH
ENSEMBLE

Evie is excited to make her first appearance at AMFA. A fourth grader at Episcopal Collegiate School, she has performed in ANNIE JR., SHREK JR., and THE LITTLE MERMAID JR. and is a member of her school's Wildcat Chorale.

MEET THE CAST

EMILY SWENSKIE
PIGGIE

Emily is an artist, educator, and performer with an MFA in Theatre Performance and Pedagogy from Texas Tech University. Favorite roles include HAIRSPRAY, CHICAGO, CINDERELLA, VINEGAR TOM, and SPRING AWAKENING.

PIPER WALLACE
ENSEMBLE

Piper is thrilled to return to AMFA after appearing as Junie B. in JUNIE B. IN JINGLE BELLS, BATMAN SMELLS! Other credits include MATILDA THE MUSICAL and VIOLET at TheatreSquared and ANNIE at Murry's Dinner Playhouse.

GRANT WATKINS
GERALD THE ELEPHANT

Grant is delighted to return to the AMFA Children's Theatre after 25 years. Recent credits include productions at Murry's Dinner Playhouse, The Rep, and UCA Summer Theatre, and he was last seen at AMFA in JUNIE B. IN JINGLE BELLS, BATMAN SMELLS!.

theatre etiquette

ARRIVE EARLY

Arriving 15-30 minutes early allows time to locate your tickets, buy concessions, make a final trip to the restroom, and find your seats.

TURN OFF ELECTRONICS

Lights and sounds from phones and other electronic devices are distracting to other patrons as well as the performers. Photography and videography is not allowed during the performance.

BE AISLE KIND

Say “pardon me” and “thank you” as you move through the aisle; tuck your belongings under your seat to remove tripping hazards; stand up, when possible, to let others move past you when finding their seats. Be sure to take all your belongings with you when you leave and throw away any rubbish on your way out.

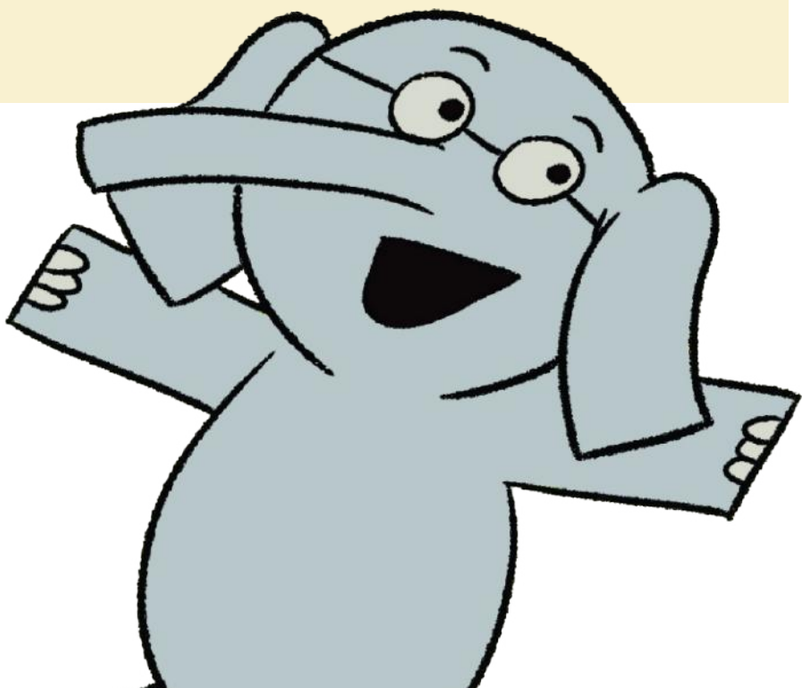
PLAY YOUR PART

Watch and listen; laugh at funny bits; applaud at the spectacular. Be present and in the moment with the performers.

CLICK HERE FOR A FUN VIDEO ON THEATRE ETIQUETTE

continue the conversation

After seeing *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*, what moments stood out to you the most, and how did Gerald and Piggie show what it means to be a good friend—even when they felt worried, frustrated, or unsure? How do you show you are a good friend?



We can't wait to see you again this summer!

JUNE
6-14

FLURFFY IN THE LAND OF ALMOST AWAKE

JULY
16-19

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

PRESENTED BY SHAKE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMFA AND THE NEW YOUNG PLAYERS PRODUCTION OF THE REVELERS

JULY
10

10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU SCREENING

AUG
12-16

FILMLAND

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMFA AND ARKANSAS CINEMA SOCIETY

See yourself on stage?

We are holding auditions for *Flurffy in the Land of Almost Awake*, *The Revelers*, and more productions in our 2025-2027 season.

YOUTH AUDITIONS
SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026
10 A.M. – 12 P.M.

PROFESSIONAL AUDITIONS
SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026
1 – 5 P.M.