

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Tara Borman (Signe) Tara is thrilled to be reuniting with her favorite ladies (and Pastor) for a triumphant return to the stage! Tara is an original cast member of the *Church Basement Ladies* having performed her role all over the country, including in the production's original home base, and Tara's hometown - Minneapolis, MN. Tara can also be heard on numerous *Church Basement Ladies* cast albums, and is excited to join the original cast again this summer to begin rehearsals for a brand new production in Minnesota! Tara completed two seasons on the six star Silversea cruise ships back in 2018/2019, and since then, Tara has had a small break from the theatre, getting a "real" job and adopting a senior chihuahua named "Happy". Tara is overjoyed to be performing again! Thanks to Curt for the opportunity!

Jessica Bradish (Mavis & Company Manager) Jessica is thrilled to be joining the cast of *Church Basement Ladies*! Originally from Des Moines, IA, she received her BFA in musical theater performance from Wagner College in NYC. Past favorite roles include Retta Cupp in the national tour of *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, Lee in *Cowgirls* at Pioneer Theatre Company in Utah, Christmas Past in the National Tour of *A Christmas Carol*, and of course 7 seasons as a Burning Hills Singer in *The Medora Musical*! Love and thanks to Ryan, Babba, and all of her friends and family for their support.

Roxanne Britz (Karin - understudy) Roxanne has been playing the role of Karen in the *Church Basement Ladies* series for over 12 years . She was an original cast member in the *Nunsense* regional Midwest premiere playing Sister Leo . She has also performed with Minnesota Opera, The Guthrie and the *Medora Musical* . Roxanne played Mrs. Howell in the 2016 Minneapolis Fringe Festival best selling show *Gilligan-the Musical* and has appeared in many commercials and films including ABC's *In an Instant* .

Dorian Chalmers (Karin/ Mavis-understudy) Dorian Chalmers is thrilled to be back in an apron again! As an original cast member of the hit musical *Church Basement Ladies*, she has originated the role of Karin Engelson in all 8 installments of the show. She travels the midwest sharing music and silly antics with *The Looney Lutherans*. She performs regularly with *County Roads: The Life and Music of John Denver*, as well as a variety of other musical projects. Dorian is also proud to be the President of the Minnesota Lyme Association. Much love to Perry and Danica!

Tim Drake (Pastor) I'm very excited to be touring the country for the 20th Anniversary of *Church Basement Ladies*! It's been a great ride! Between the eight versions of *CBL* I've also appeared in *How to Talk Minnesotan*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *A Closer walk With Patsy Cline* , *Ring of Fire* , *Diamond Studs*, and *Guys on*

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Ice. It's hard to believe we started this journey twenty years ago ! Thanks to all of you for showing up all these years. You're the reason we're still rolling!

Gregory Eiden (Pastor – understudy) Gregory Eiden is grateful, as always, to be a part of *Church Basement Ladies*. Recently, he produced his original musical, *War Of The Worlds, A Tribute to Old-Time Radio*. Some favorite shows have been: *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change, Almost Maine, Tony 'n Tina's Wedding, A Year With Frog And Toad, Sisters Of Swing* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Other musicals he's written are: *SuperHero: The Musical from The Cubicle, Gift Of The Magi* and *Ice Fish'n Op'ner*. As always, he wishes to thank his parents for their love and support.

Autumn O'Ryan (Vivian) A true "Road Warrior", this is Autumn's 6th National Tour of *Church Basement Ladies'*, as Vivian Snustad. She has also performed the role in regional theatres throughout the nation. A proud Michigander, she has a BFA in Musical Theatre from the University of Michigan and has "trodded the boards" across the US for 35+ years. Favorite past productions: *Sister Act, The Full Monty, Bridges of Madison County, Beauty and the Beast, Man of La Mancha, Nunsense, Alaska Cabin Nites, White Christmas* and *Oklahoma!* (X5). An avid hiker...Autumn will be starting the Appalachian Trail in May. Many Thanks to Curt Wollan and his Troupe family. "Happy Trails" to all of us.

Janet Paone (Vivian – understudy) As an original cast member Janet has played Vivian in many places. Her favorite was opposite Barry Williams a.k.a. Greg Brady from *The Brady Bunch* at KC New Theatre. Most recently she played Countess in Ten Thousand Things' *Dear World*, Janet in *Love, Loss and What I Wore* (National Tour Troupe America) and Margaret Lake in the Ivey award-winning *Gabriel* for WSTC. Janet has sung with the MN Opera for many years and with New York City Opera in *La Boheme* and *Carmen*. She is best known for her "turn" as Josephine Vitale in *Tony and Tina's Wedding* at Hey City Theater.

Jeanna Zenz (Signe – understudy) Jeanna Zenz is a singer and actor from Watford City, ND. She attended Minnesota State University Moorhead for Musical Theatre and moved to New York City to pursue that dream. Her theatre credits include the *Medora Musical* (Medora, ND), *Twas the Night Before Christmas* (Dollywood, TN), *Macbeth* (NYC), *Urinetown* (NYC), and *The Wedding Singer* (MN). Follow her on social media at @jeannazenz.

WHO IS WHO IN THE TOURING STAFF

Ella Egan (Stage Manager) Ella Egan is a Twin Cities-based stage manager and carpenter. She is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota. This is her first show with Troupe America, and her first time touring! Her past projects include *She Kills Monsters*, *Energy & U*, and *Oresteia House of Atreus* at the University of Minnesota, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* at the Court Theatre in Christchurch, NZ, and various Zoom workshops. Ella is sad to be leaving her roommates' cats behind, but so excited to be on tour!

James Eischen (Master Electrician) Lighting Design: *Medora Musical* (2019-2021); *Superman Becomes Lois Lane* (History Theatre); *Jekyll & Hyde* National Tour (Touring Theater Associates); *Ring of Fire* National Tour (Troupe America Inc.); Numerous productions at: Troupe America, Lyric Arts Anoka, Normandale Community College, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, Umbrella Collective, Old Log, Plymouth Playhouse, Maples Rep, Duluth Playhouse, Lyric Opera of the North, Festival Opera, University of Minnesota Duluth, Seventh House Collective. Teaching: University of Minnesota Duluth, Lighting Faculty (2013-2016). Training: B.F.A., University of Minnesota Duluth, Theater Arts: Design/Technical.

Ryan Milligan (Production Manager/ Sound Design) Ryan Milligan is a freelance Production Manager, Sound Designer/Engineer, and Musician based out of Astoria, NY. His previous work for Troupe America includes the national tours of *CBL 5* and *6*, and *Pump Boys and Dinettes*. He is also production manager and sound designer for Troupe America's sister company, StageWest Entertainment, and the *Medora Musical* in Medora, ND. Other work includes the Professional Performing Arts School, 54 Below, and Gamiotics Inc. in NYC, Rave On Productions and the Nebraska Theater Caravan's National Tour of *A Christmas Carol* in Omaha, NE, and The Old Creamery Theatre Company in Amana, IA.

Tyler O'Brien (Technical Director) This is Tyler's third tour as a Technical Director, first being *Church Basement Ladies: Away In The Basement* (2016) and *Church Basement Ladies: Rise Up O' Men* (2019).

WHO IS WHO IN THE CREATIVE STAFF

Trina Benedict (Costumer) Trina Benedict is happy to be back as the costumer for *Church Basement Ladies*. Trina's most recent designs have included *The Medora Musical*, *Ring of Fire*, and *The Medora Gospel Brunch*. She also works for the Minnesota Opera.

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Dennis Curley (Music Director) Dennis Curley is a native of Syracuse, NY, and a graduate of Northwestern University (Evanston, IL). He has composed music for three shows in the *Church Basement Ladies* series (2—*A Second Helping*, 6—*Rise Up, O Men* and 7—*You Smell Barn*). Dennis is the arranger of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* and *Schoolhouse Rock Live Too!* (both published by MTI). He tours the Upper Midwest with *Country Roads: Dennis Curley Sings the Music of John Denver*, is a co-founder and executive producer of Table Salt Productions (TableSaltProductions.com), and can be found on the web at DennisCurley.com.

Wendy Short Hays (Choreographer) has been associated with Troupe America for over twenty years. In that time she has choreographed such favorites as *A Day in Hollywood*, *A Night In The Ukraine*, *Nunsense*, *Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?*, *Pump Boys And Dinettes*, *1940's Radio Hour*, and *Diamond Studs*, for which she earned the Twin Cities Drama Critic Award for choreography. She was on the writing team for *The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters* and her original choreography of *Pump Boys And Dinettes* has been produced over 24 times locally, on national tour, and for an extended run at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. She is the Artistic Director of VISTA Productions which was chosen from over 400 applicants to represent Minnesota at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her work has also been seen on the stage of the Medora Musical, Artistry Theatre, Hey City Stage, Great American History Theatre and numerous national tours. She is a member of SDC union.

Scott R. Herbst (Lighting Design) Scott has had a long and varied career in the theatre and most recently in landscaping. After over 30 years as a Designer for Troupe America, Scott has moved from the Great Indoors of the Theatre to the Great Outdoors working as a Designer for Southview Design, one of the premier landscaping firms in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Over the years, Scott has had the opportunity to work with some great actors including William Christopher, Gavin MacLeod, and Mackenzie Phillips and looks forward to more freelance projects in the future.

Drew Jansen (Composer/ Lyricist) Drew recently moved back to Little Rock following 35 years as an Honorary Minnesotan. In addition to "*Church Basement Ladies*," Drew penned the score for "*How To Talk Minnesotan*" and many other musicals. He played "Ernie" on Comedy Central's cult classic "*Let's Bowl!*", and, following a 26 year hiatus, returned as a writer/composer for Season 13 of the Peabody Award-winning "Mystery Science Theater 3000." Drew continues to enjoy commercial work (on-camera and voice-over), playing and singing for private functions, and traveling Arkansas and the world with his husband, entertainer Jimmy Martin.

Janet Letnes Martin (Co Author of *Growing Up Lutheran*) Janet Letnes Martin and the late Suzann Nelson's co-authored book, *Growing Up Lutheran*, is the inspiration for the wildly popular *Church Basement Ladies* musicals. She is a humorist who has written and/or co-authored twenty bestselling books about her Norwegian/American Lutheran

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upbringing in Hillsboro, ND. A graduate of Augsburg College in MPLS, MN, she has been speaking and entertaining audiences for thirty-five years. Her passion is genealogy, and it has helped her to figure out why she thinks and acts the way she does! This widowed mother of 3 daughters, and grandmother to 7 grandchildren, lives in Hastings, MN.

Suzann Nelson (Co Author of *Growing Up Lutheran*) could put “ditto” under Janet’s bio. Their books and performances as the humorous duo, “*Those Lutheran Ladies*”, draw upon life experiences growing up as hardworking, church attending, 100 percent Norwegian-Lutheran farm girls. This is the nucleus of the heartwarming *Church Basement Ladies* musicals. She attended Universities in Minnesota and Oslo, directed a Norwegian language camp and wrote curricula. Changing from jeans into three-piece suits, she dabbled in government, wrote public policy reports, and struggled to put on pantyhose. In time, humidity and hot flashes prompted her to team up with Janet for her next act. By then, Suzann, husband Ron, and daughters Senja and Siri, lived in Grand Rapids, MN. After widowhood set in, she started her online bookstore -www.ruralroutebookstore.com. She spent her days looking for misplaced things and laughing with her four grandkids, and her nights were spent pondering her mortgage. Suzann quite unexpectedly passed away on March 14, 2021, and her children have since found her misplaced things and are thankful her legacy lives on in the *Church Basement Ladies* performances. Her online bookstore remains active, and her grandkids are still laughing at their grandma’s antics.

Jim Stowell (Co- Playwright) An award-winning professional actor, director, playwright and storyteller. Cofounder of two theater companies that brought twenty new plays to the stage. Written and directed eleven full cast plays including two children's plays, three book adaptations and a Spanish language play. Written and performed twelve one man plays that were commissioned and produced by six theaters in Minneapolis/St. Paul. His work has been performed on National Public Radio and Minnesota Public Television, seen at The Sundance Film Festival, The Toronto Film Festival and The National Storytelling Festival.

Curt Wollan (Producer/Director) is the Executive Producer and Director of Troupe America Inc., that for forty years ran The Plymouth Playhouse in the Minneapolis/ St Paul area, premiering such hits as *How To Talk Minnesotan*, *The Musical*, *The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters*, and the entire *Church Basement Ladies* series of musicals. In the summer, he produces and directs the famous *Medora Musical* in Theodore Roosevelt National Park which in the past year has been featured on NBC Nightly News, The Travel Channel, MSNBC, and received a two page spread in the Sunday New York Times. Curt has produced and directed many National Tours including *Steel Magnolias*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The 1940’s Radio Hour*, *Hank Williams – Lost Highway* starring Jason Petty, and Stephen King's *Ghost Stories*. He has also co-produced three National Tours of *Forbidden Broadway*, directed *M*A*S*H’s* Jamie Farr and William Christopher in the National Tour of *The Odd Couple*, and directed the National Tours of *Moon Over*

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Buffalo starring Gavin MacLeod, *The Sunshine Boys* starring Dick Van Patten and Frank Gorshin, and *Same Time, Next Year*, starring Mackenzie Phillips and Adrian Zmed. As a free-lance director, his work has been seen at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, Theatre Under The Stars in Houston, The Barter Theatre, Kansas City's New Theatre Restaurant, and at Dollywood where he directed several productions with Dolly Parton. Curt is the recipient of the Twin Cities "Kudos" Award for direction of *Diamond Studs*, Indianapolis's "Mitty Award" for Best Musical *Ring Of Fire*, AARP'S "50 Over 50" Award, and Luther College's Distinguished Service Award.

Erica Zaffarano (Set & Properties Design) Erica Zaffarano has been a *Church Basement Ladies* fan since she experienced the first one! She has worked with Troupe America and Curt Wollan with tours of *Pump Boys and Dinettes* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, for *Ring of Fire* and *The Medora Musical* in North Dakota, *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Grumpy Old Men* at Circa 21 in Rock Island, Illinois plus *CBL, Away in a Manger* and *Sinatra: Christmas, My Way* in the Twin Cities. There is no better comfort food than hotdish or comfort for the soul than the Church Basement Ladies!

Jessica Zuehlke (Co Playwright) Jessica writes and performs her stories from teaching, traveling, and caregiving. She creates original scripts within and for all communities. Co-creating *Church Basement Ladies* generated a new script, *Pen Pals* the true story of pen pal girls from Minnesota and Germany after WWII. Theater and Education are driving forces for Jessica. She began with a puppet stage and a classroom in her childhood backyard. Onto a BA and an MA, she has trained and worked in professional theater, as a roster artist for both COMPAS and MSAB, and artistic director of theater schools both private and public.

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