The world premiere of NATURAL SHOCKS was presented in October 2018 by WP Theater.

(Lisa McNulty, Producing Artistic Director; Michael Sag, Managing Director)

NATURAL SHOCKS is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York
Cast and Creative

Angela.................................................................................................................. Brittany Nelson
Playwright............................................................................................................. Lauren Gunderson
Director................................................................................................................... Maryanna Clarke†
Producer ................................................................................................................. Tennessee Women’s Theater Project
Stage Manager........................................................................................................... Alexis LaVon
Videographer............................................................................................................. James Denham
Video and Sound Editor........................................................................................... David Nelson
Lighting Design......................................................................................................... Katie Gant
Sound Design............................................................................................................. Chris Clarke
Camera Operators......................... James Denham, David Nelson, Cariianne Lance Poag

† Member, League of Professional Theatre Women

TWTP is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre.

How It All Began

“When I grow up, I want to be just like you — I want to act . . . and I want to type.” Those words, spoken by my then 7-year old daughter, Kate, changed my life forever. In that instant I realized I had to give her something more to aspire to than that! What followed were a couple of years of soul searching, two and a half years of a daily commute from Hendersonville to MTSU, a husband who got real good at cooking, a whole lot of miles racked up on my car, a degree (better late than never!), and ultimately the birth of Tennessee Women’s Theater Project.

—Maryanna Clarke
**About our Artists** (in alphabetical order)

**Chris Clarke (Sound Design)** Chris’s love is the “unpainted” side of the theater, and his energy goes into making sure the quality of sound and projection effects rises to the high standard set by the director, the actors and the design team. He has worked on sound and projection design for all TWTP’s productions, and counts *Voices of Nashville, Defying Gravity, Almost, Maine, Kingfisher Days* and *Warriors Don’t Cry* among his favorites.

**Maryanna Clarke (Director)** The Founder and Artistic Director of TWTP, Maryanna holds a degree in Theatre with a minor in Entrepreneurship, and directs the company’s productions. She created and curated TWTP’s annual festival of works created by women, *Women’s Work*. Maryanna thanks everyone involved with the production of *Natural Shocks* for their patience, and for sharing their talents with her and TWTP (“As always, a lovely journey and a real adventure. Being at the helm of TWTP for nearly 20 years has been the best job EVER!”); her family in NJ for their continued support and unconditional love (“See you soon!”); her husband, Chris, for being her partner in life, her artistic wingman, and TWTP’s Lifter of Heavy Objects; and her daughter, Kate — the Founder of the Feast!

**James Denham (Videographer)** is a director, editor, videographer/cinematographer and camera operator. He Studied Advertising, Multimedia & Broadcasting at Western Kentucky University. His projects range from feature films and TV, to music videos and live events. [jamesdenham.com](http://jamesdenham.com)

**Katie Gant (Lighting Design)** is a local theatrical designer and stage manager. She currently also works for The Gaslight Theatre, Hume Fogg HS’s theatre department, Blackman HS’s Theatre Department, and Nashville Ballet. Her titles include lighting designer, sound designer, stage manager and prop master depending on the day. One of her favorite projects is THE URBAN MUSIC PROJECT — an adult marching band that performs custom musical arrangements and mashups for anything you could dream up... from choral Christmas concerts at TPAC to 60th birthday party parades. She was the production designer and AD for the film BLACK HOLLER.

**Lauren Gunderson (Playwright)** has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including 2019/20. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn
(Lauren Gunderson bio, cont’d.)

Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU’s Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her newest play *The Catastrophist*, about her husband virologist Nathan Wolfe, premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the Miss Bennet plays with Margot Melcon, and her audioplay *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* is available on Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*, *Exit Pursued by a Bear*, *The Taming*, and *Toil and Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists*, *The Book of Will*, *Silent Sky*, *Bauer*, *Natural Shocks*, *The Wickhams*, and *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book "Dr. Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon" is available from Two Lions/Amazon. She is currently developing musicals with Ari Afsar, Dave Stewart and Joss Stone, and Kait Kerrigan and Bree Lowdermilk. LaurenGunderson.com

Alexis LaVon (Stage Manager; Props Master) is an arts enthusiast who grew up in Nashville by way of Chicago. She recently worked as stage manager on the productions of *La Cage Aux Folles* (Circle Players) and *The Last Season* (Kennie Playhouse Theatre). She has numerous productions to her credit and has worked with the following companies in Nashville: Sista Style Productions; Kennie Playhouse Theatre; The American Negro Playwright Theatre; Destiny Theatre Experience; Dream 7 Productions; Circle Players; Street Theatre; Nashville Children’s Theatre; Tennessee Women’s Theater Project; and Chaffin's Barn. She is happy to be back with the Maryanna, Brittany, Chris & Katie for another fantastic production. “Hugs and Kisses to our team - Love you guys so much! Audiences Enjoy the Show and Thank you for supporting Live Theatre!”

Brittany Nelson (Angela) is a wifey, momma of three, an actor, singer, makeup artist, fitness instructor, and lover of all things creative. She studied Theater and Dance at MTSU. You might have seen her on the TWTP stage as Heather in *Sistas: The Musical* and as Lynn in *Secrets of a Soccer Mom*. Other cherished roles include Veronica in *God of Carnage* (4th Story Theater), Elizabeth in *The Christians* (Act 1), and Shelby in *Steel Magnolias* (Murfreesboro Center For The Arts). One of her favorite roles was Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday* (Murfreesboro Center For The Arts). It was her first time working under the direction of Maryanna Clarke, founder of TWTP. “I’d like to thank Dave, aka the best hubs on the planet, for being SuperDad while I was in rehearsals! Thank you, Maryanna, for another wonderful adventure and for trusting me with such an amazing character. I love you. And thank YOU for streaming our show!”
Dave Nelson (Video and Sound Editor/Camera Operator) graduated with a degree in Digital Media Communications at Middle Tennessee State University in 2004. He began editing video right out of college with The Apologetics Group, followed by a stint at Ginghamsburg Church in Tipp City, OH as Director of Video. For the past 12 years, he has worked in IT for Ramsey Solutions while doing video on the side. He is happily married to the star of the show, Brittany Nelson, and loves to hang with his three silly kids Bug, Micah, and Noah.

Carianne Lance Poag (Camera Operator) is a long-time friend of the company, and her first professional set design job was with TWTP. She has built sets for TWTP’s Nickel and Dimed (2006), Defying Gravity (2007) and Almost, Maine (2008). She left theater to work in film (Hannah Montana; That Evening Sun; Stoker) and TV (Nashville), returning to her first theater home occasionally to help TWTP with projections and projectors, rope swings, and last-minute carpentry jams. Recently, she has devoted most of her time to production and crew chores with her son Arthur and daughter Lillian. She is delighted by the opportunity to work on this production of Natural Shocks with a group of people she started out with. “We’re all ecstatic to work together again.”

Special Thanks

TWTP wishes to thank . . . Kate Clarke, for speaking the words that started all this; everyone who has served on our Board of Directors, everyone who has served as a volunteer, our generous sponsors and donors, and everyone who has ever attended one of our shows over these last many years. We have been blessed, and we will be eternally grateful. We couldn’t have done this without them — without you!

When it is finally safe, please support local theater!

“If theater holds a mirror up to nature, why are there not as many women’s faces in that reflection as I see around me?”

— Maryanna Clarke, TWTP Founder
Notes from the Director

On April 20, 1999, the day of the shootings at Columbine High School, playwright Lauren Gunderson was a junior in high school. That tragedy was the catalyst for her activism. In 2018, after the shooting at Parkland’s Stoneman Douglas High School, she — like so many of us — had had enough. She had been working on Natural Shocks and, as she says, “. . . instead of closing my eyes and thinking back to being a junior and watching the news in horror during my AP US History class and thinking about those poor mothers and please god someone do something about this,” she decided to be the someone who would do something. Along with her friend and fellow theater activist Christina Wallace, she set out on a quest to bring Natural Shocks to communities all over the country.

On April 20, 2018, the 19th anniversary of Columbine, TWTP had the distinct honor of being one of over a hundred companies across the nation to host a free reading of Lauren’s complex, moving, heartbreaking and, yes, funny new play. In partnership with Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, we presented a reading in a campus lecture hall. Brittany Nelson read the role of the charming, quirky, complex character Angela; Molly Breen read the stage directions; and folks were asked to make a donation to Moms Demand Action.

When the professional rights were finally available, and with Brittany again in the role of Angela, we brought it to our stage. We ran for 1 weekend. Then a tornado struck Nashville, and we lost power at our theater. A week after the tornado, COVID-19 struck the country. We cancelled our season, and went into a state of suspended animation, which lasted much longer than any of us had initially anticipated. We have all suffered. Some lost jobs, some lost businesses, and worst of all, some lost loved ones. And it’s not over yet.

We are a resilient lot, we human beings, and some of us used this pause in normal to learn new skills (I learned how to make bagels and cut my own hair!). Some of us — myself included — used the time as a period of discernment. I came to a couple of realizations: first, that I had taken TWTP as far as I could; second, that I deeply missed my family in New Jersey, and wanted to be closer to them. I discerned that it was time for TWTP to close up shop, and for us to move back home.

This production of Natural Shocks is TWTP’s swan song, so it is fitting that it is a different kind of show for us: emotionally difficult and often impossibly challenging — just like this past year and a half has been. But the show and this time are not entirely without hope. We must live in hope that we can accomplish something. We must live in hope that we can change things. We must live in hope.

Tennessee Women’s Theater Project, and my time as its Artistic Director, have come to an end. But I live in hope that what we created over nearly 20 years has had meaning — has made a difference. I live in hope that I will find something meaningful to do with the rest of my life. I live in hope that we will find our way out of this emotionally difficult and often impossibly challenging time. I live in hope.

Blessings to you all,
Maryanna Clarke