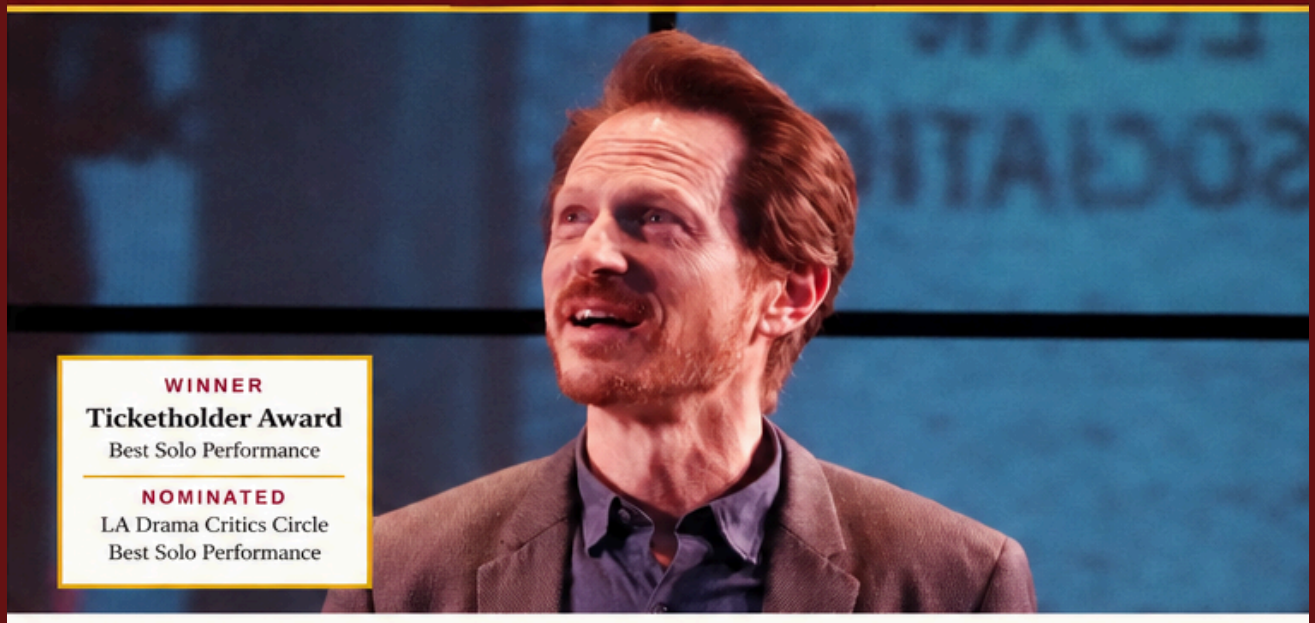
RUSKIN GROUP
THEATRE



Make it your holiday tradition

STARRING THE REMARKABLE

LEO MARKS

in

A Wonderful Life

One actor. All of Bedford Falls.

Adapted and performed by Leo Marks

"It's A Wonderful Life" was based on the story,
"The Greatest Gift" by Philip Van Doren Stern.
"The Greatest Gift" is used by permission of
The Greatest Gift Corporation.

Directed by Drew Barr

**"Uproarious and uplifting.
One man creates a miracle."**
SPLASH MAGAZINE

November 28 – December 23

The Audre Slater Foundation Stage · 2800 Airport Ave, Santa Monica

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presents

A Wonderful Life

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CAST

Leo Marks

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR
Drew Barr

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Michael Redfield

SOUND & PROJECTION ENGINEER
Keith Stevenson

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
Caitlin Ramsey

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / PRODUCER
John Ruskin

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Michael R. Myers

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Nicole Millar

SET BUILDERS
Ryan Wilson & Drew Wilson

PUBLICIST
Judith Borne

SOCIAL MEDIA
Amy Ruskin

From Story to Stage

Philip Van Doren Stern

AUTHOR OF THE GREATEST GIFT

Philip Van Doren Stern (1900-1984) was a historian, novelist, and editor. In 1943, Stern published "The Greatest Gift", the short story on which the 1946 film "It's A Wonderful Life" was based. Stern authored over 40 books, fiction and non-fiction. Many of Stern's works were about the Civil War; others were on typography, fantasy, pre-historic art, automobiles, and more. During World War II, Stern worked as general manager of the Armed Services Editions, sending over 122 million copies of specially engineered pocket-sized books – 1,324 titles in all – to American servicepersons stationed throughout the world.

Drew Barr

DIRECTOR

He directed the Dutch-language premiere of the National Theatre of Great Britain's War Horse at Amsterdam's Royal Carré Theatre and the Australian premiere of War Horse, which ran in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. He was Resident Director of War Horse on Broadway at Lincoln Center Theater. Most recently, he directed Harvey Fierstein's Casa Valentine for ActOut Theatre in Lexington, KY, where he also directed Tony Kushner's Angels in America, Parts One and Two. In New York, he directed the premiere of Neal Brennan's 3 Mics (Lynn Redgrave Theater), Brian Friel's Lovers and Frank Marcus's The Killing of Sister George (TACT), and the Off-Broadway premieres of Adam Bock's The Typographer's Dream and Karl Gajdusek's Greedy (both for Clubbed Thumb). Regional work includes Great Lakes Theater, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, PlayMakers Rep, Portland Stage, Perseverance Theatre, Boise Contemporary Theater and Wood River Repertory. In Los Angeles, he directed Leo Marks in This Wonderful Life (Rogue Machine). He has also directed for SciFest LA, Sierra Madre Playhouse and AMDA College of the Performing Arts, where he is a member of the acting faculty. He has taught and directed at Juilliard, NYU Grad Acting, SUNY Purchase, University of Delaware PTTP, University of Washington, and UNC Chapel Hill.

Leo Marks

ADAPTER AND PERFORMER

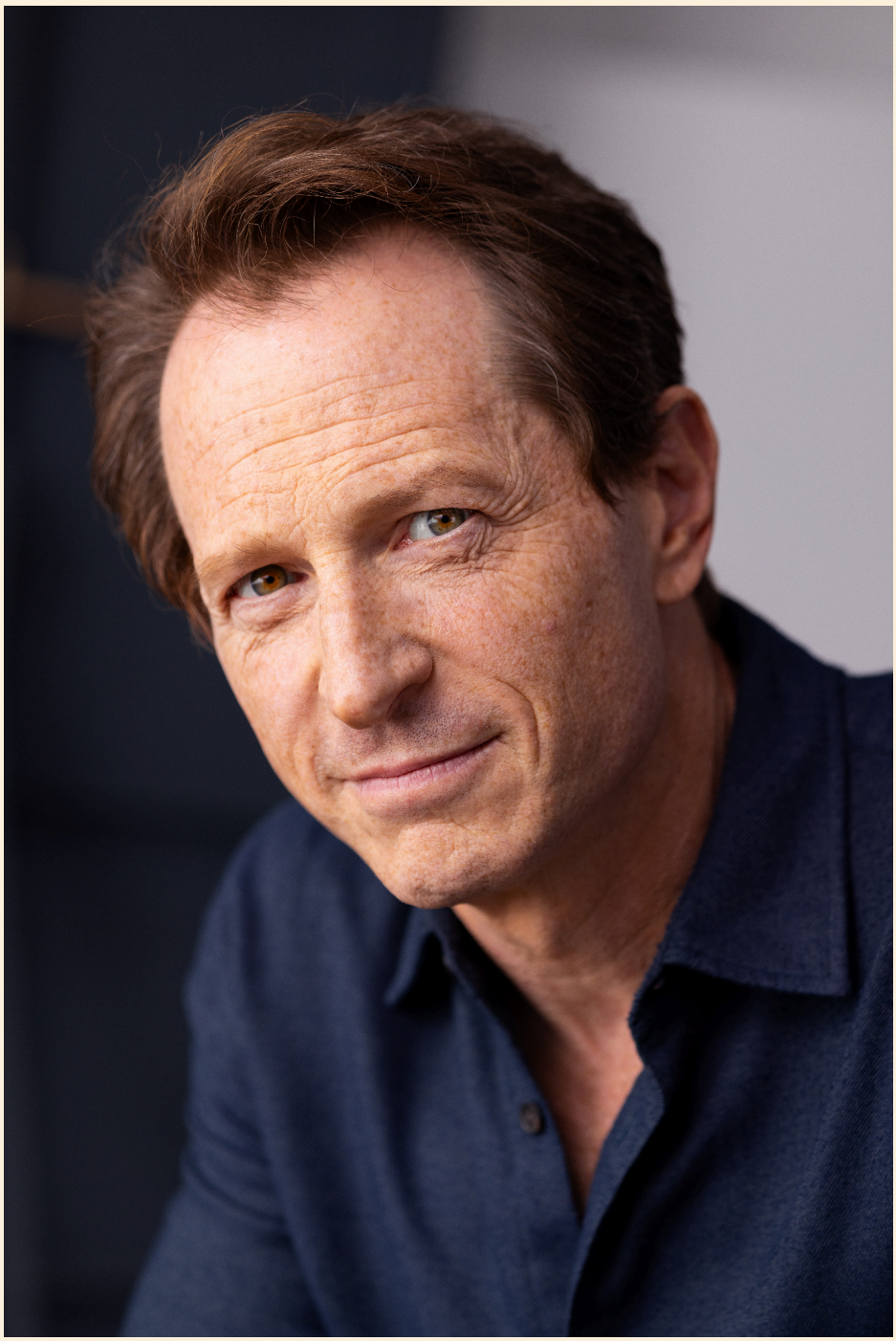
Leo Marks won an Obie Award for Heather Woodbury's Tale of 2Cities: An American Joyride on Multiple Tracks, was a founding member of New York's Elevator Repair Service and received an L.A. Drama Critics Circle award nomination for playing every resident of Bedford Falls in This Wonderful Life (Rogue Machine, directed by Drew Barr) as well as a Ticketholders/LA award for Best Solo Performance.

Selected LA credits include Tom Jacobson's Crevasse (L.A. Drama Critics Circle Finalist, Lead Performance), Jake Broder's UnRavelled (The Wallis), If I Forget (The Fountain), The Hothouse, Three Days in the Country, and Wedding Band (Antaeus), Measure Still for Measure, Everything That Never Happened and The Missing Pages of Lewis Carroll (Boston Court), Mysterious Circumstances (Geffen Playhouse), A Perfect Wedding (Kirk Douglas Theatre), Hamlet in Jessica Kubzansky's acclaimed production, and many appearances with Evidence Room (including The Cherry Orchard (LA Weekly award nomination).

World premieres include How to Write a New Book for the Bible (Berkeley Rep and Seattle Rep; Bay Area Critics Circle nomination), Lincolnesque (Old Globe Theatre), The Language Archive and Smokefall (South Coast Rep) and Somewhere in the Pacific (Playwrights Horizons). Other regional work includes The Lehman Trilogy (Ensemble Theatre Company) and productions at Shakespeare Theatre (D.C.), ACT's The Strand Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Cleveland Playhouse, Alley Theatre, and Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre. Recent on-camera credits include guest starring in FBI: International and as "Red" in Oscar nominee Pedro Kos' feature film In Our Blood.

Leo shared the 2023 L.A. Drama Critics Circle Gordon Davidson Award and Stage Raw's "Queen of the Angels" award for co-leading the SB1116 Coalition for California's small theatres. Leo is also a Senior Atlantic Fellow with UCSF's Global Brain Health Institute, and recently received an Alzheimer's Association Pilot Award for Global Brain Health Leaders, for his nonfiction book in progress, The Anatomy of Denial, or, the Many Ways of Not Knowing Oneself.

Leo Marks



ADAPTER AND PERFORMER

The Theatre

John Ruskin

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

After graduating from the University of Colorado in Boulder, John continued his studies at the Yale School of Drama and the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, England. John then attended the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre and studied with Sanford Meisner and Richard Pinter. John then joined the acting faculty of the Neighbourhood Playhouse at the request of Sanford Meisner and became his apprentice. Years later, John moved to Los Angeles, where he founded his school of acting to continue to teach Meisner's work.

John founded the Ruskin Group Theatre Company with the goal of developing and producing great original works, powerful revivals, and to support and encourage a creative artistic community. RGT is proud to provide outreach programs to children in need with the "Healing Through the Arts" program. We have taken our actors into Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA to work with and entertain the children. Past programs involved working with at-risk youth, foster children, people in prison, and the elderly. John wants to thank everyone who volunteers, comes to support this theatre, and keeps the dream of small theatre alive. John is honored to work each day with every one of the amazing artists at the school and theatre. He is most grateful to his wife Amy and their sons Bodhi & Cooper for their constant love and support.

The Producers

Michael R. Myers

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

He has produced more than 80 theatrical projects at Ruskin Group Theatre since 2002, helping establish the company as a vital part of the Los Angeles theatre community. Among his producing credits is the world premiere of Rex Pickett's Sideways the Play, which went on to productions at La Jolla Playhouse and beyond. He also directed and developed the world premiere of Sneaky Ole Time: The Music of Paul Overstreet, with other world premieres including Rainbow Bridge and Digging Up Dad.

Beyond the stage, Myers has been a longtime advocate for the arts in Santa Monica, serving 12 years on the Santa Monica Arts Commission, including 10 years as Chair. In 2026, he spearheaded a $1.5 million capital campaign and oversaw the development and build-out of Ruskin Group Theatre's new Performing Arts Center at Santa Monica Airport, creating a new home for theatre, music, education, and the arts. He has also taught the Meisner technique at the Ruskin School of Acting since 2003, working with generations of actors.

Of all the things 2026 brought, including a new theatre, the highlight was marrying his wife, Sophie Owens-Bender. Some things are bigger than opening night.

Nicole Millar

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

She graduated from The Meisner Technique Two-Year Program at The Ruskin School of Acting in 2005 and continues to hone her craft in acting through the Master Graduate Class. Her other training includes James Kemp's teachings with Yat Malmgren (LAMDA, 2019), UCB LA's improv (2015), Paul Sand's Second City improv (2014), and Commedia dell'arte with Danny Passer (2004). She graduated with a Merit Diploma in "Performing Arts & Media" in 1991 from Hammersmith & West London College, England. She moved to the United States to pursue her acting career, which now includes work in stage production and over fifteen years with The Ruskin Group Theatre.

When not at the theatre, Nicole is also co-caring for her 90+-year-old Mum :) Happy Holidays to you and yours !!

Behind the Scenes

Caitlin Ramsey

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

She got her start in stage managing in high school, managing multiple plays and dance showcase productions. After taking a break during college to study engineering, she came back to stage managing for the Ruskin Group Theater in Santa Monica. Since, she has managed multiple productions for Ruskin as well as stage managing the debut production of “The Mostly True Story of the Common Scold”. When not at the theater, Caitlin can be found either being the human slave to two very opinionated felines or riding roller coasters at any one of the theme parks around.

Keith Stevenson

SOUND & PROJECTION ENGINEER

He is an actor, writer, and sometimes sound designer. He is a longtime member of Pacific Resident Theatre and Rogue Machine Theatre. He recently designed sound for HONOUR and GRANGEVILLE at the Ruskin and OUT WITH A BANG at PRT.

THE SHOW'S SIGNATURE COCKTAIL

The Bedford Falls Old Fashioned



$5

BARKER BAR

In the Ruskin Group Theatre lobby