



CAST BIOS

Avery Allen (Mr. MacAfee) is a sophomore at East Valley High School, where he starred as the Villainous Narrator in *Tell Tale Heart* and sings with the EVHS Rock Band. Though this is his debut on stage with Places!, he was a light operator for last spring's *The Secret Garden*. He started singing at the age of 9 and has since picked up a few instruments, expanded his singing knowledge, and found enjoyment in acting, which encouraged him to audition for *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Hannah Arnett (Kim MacAfee) Music has always been center stage in Hannah's life. She has been singing and dancing before she could speak a complete sentence, has been playing piano since 5 years of age, violin for 4 years, and now is thrilled with performing music theater. Her latest appearances include ensemble roles in *Les Miserables* and *Hello Dolly!*, followed by a supporting role as Rapunzel in *Into the Woods*.

Sloane Bereche (Reporter 2/Parent) is 12 years old and entering 7th grade. This is her debut performance with Places! Productions, and she couldn't be more excited. She previously starred in various roles at other local youth theaters, most recently as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Nahla in *Lion King*, and Mrs. Gloop in *Willy Wonka*. Sloane enjoys all aspects of performing including both singing and dance. When she's not on the stage, she can be found sharpening her skills on the basketball court. She would like to thank her director and the Places! team for this opportunity, as well as her fellow cast members for putting their all into this fantastic show. She hopes you enjoy *Bye Bye Birdie!*

Kya Bess (Girl 1/Trainman/Teen) is a junior high student who enjoys being on the stage! Kya is going into her fifth season as a competitive hip hop dance team member, but has been taking recreational dance classes since the age of 3. *Bye Bye Birdie* is Kya's third summer show with Places! Productions. Last year she was in *Legally Blonde* and summer of 2021 she was in *Beauty & the Beast*. Kya is also very active within her school. She is a member of the student council, NJHS and was accepted into Advanced Drama for the 23/24 school year. "Thank you for coming, enjoy the show!"

Liam Chacon (Randolph) is a sixth grader from Saint Timothy's Catholic School. Liam is a member of the school's drama club. Liam has previously performed as part of the drama club's *Christmas Nativity* show as one of the Three Wiseman, as well playing the character of Schroeder in the club's performance of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*. Liam also plays the piano and takes guitar lessons as well.

Mara Chiles (Rosie) is very excited to be playing Rosie in *Bye Bye Birdie*! She has been doing shows with Places! Productions for 8 years, her last role being Madame Thenardier in *Les Mis*. Mara hopes you enjoy this wonderful showing of *Bye Bye Birdie*!

Hayley Christesson (Margie/Gloria) just graduated eighth grade and is looking forward to being a freshman at Williams Field High School. This past year she played the role of Urleen in LFPA's production of *Footloose*. Some of her favorite roles with Places! have been playing a Delta Nu in *Legally Blonde*, Ensemble in *Les Mis* and *Beauty and the Beast*. She is so excited to be a part of the production of *Bye Bye Birdie*. She would like to thank Allison and Rachel for helping guide her for several years in her love for theater, music and dance!

Ashton Churchill (Mr. MacAfee) (16, they/them) is a junior in high school and honored to play Mr. MacAfee in *Bye Bye Birdie*. Past and current roles include Fagin (*Oliver*), The Trunchbull (*Matilda*), Thenardier (*Les Miserables*), Moonface Martin (*Anything Goes*), and many more. Their current dream role is Beetlejuice—and they can even do the voice. Ashton makes any part a hilarious performance to remember, including their first musical called *The Boy Who Cried Aliens*, written by their mom for an afterschool program in the third grade. They received a standing ovation.

Georgia Cleveland (Deborah Sue) is so happy to be joining Places! Productions again for *Bye Bye Birdie*. She has been with Places! since she was in 2nd grade. Some of her favorite shows she has been in include *Little Mermaid*, *Shrek*, *Guys and Dolls*, and of course, *Bye Bye Birdie*. Georgia is an incoming freshman and her electives are dance and French. When Georgia is not doing a musical, she enjoys dancing.

Izzy Cons (Alice/Girl 1/Reporter 1) fell in love with musical theater in 3rd grade and has been performing ever since. She's had the blessing of playing some very exciting roles such as Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*), Ellie (*Freaky Friday*), Fantine (*Les Misérables*) Katherine Plumber (*Newsies*), the voice of Audrey II (*Little Shop of Horrors*), and many more. She is so excited to be back with Places! for another amazing summer show. She hopes you enjoy the show that this cast and crew have worked on for hours on end. As you're reminded to silence your phone, don't mind if you hear some ringing from the stage; there's some hot new gossip about Kim MacAFee and her steady!

Gracie Cook (Penelope) is 13 years old and will be attending Williams Field High School in the upcoming school year. She has been performing since she was 5 years old. Some of Gracie's recent shows are *Les Miserables*, *The Secret Garden*, *Legally Blonde*, *Velveteen Rabbit*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. Some of her most recent hobbies are performing, dancing, hair, and hanging with friends. She would like to thank her family and friends and all of the Places! Productions board for getting her this far. Enjoy the show!

Lauren Devey (Ursula Merkle/Deborah Sue) will be a sophomore at American Leadership Academy this year. She has been acting for 4 years and is a member of the International Thespian Society. Most recently, she played the role of Little Red Riding Hood in her school's production of *Into the Woods*, for which she won the award for "Best Supporting Actress in a Musical". She is also a two-time recipient of her school's "Spirit of Drama" award. This is Lauren's third season with Places! Productions. She played the role of Chutney Wyndham in *Legally Blonde Jr.* and was part of the incredibly talented ensemble cast of *Les Miserables*. This season, Lauren is excited to join both casts of *Bye Bye Birdie*, playing multiple roles for each. Her love of all things from the 1950's makes starring in *Bye Bye Birdie* feel like an absolute dream come true. In addition to acting, Lauren studies voice and ballroom dance, plays the piano, and is a talented sketch artist.

Sariyah Flynn (Mrs. Merkle) will be entering her freshman year of high school in the fall. She has performed with Places! for several years and is a part of Presto!

Lindsay French (Helen/Sad Girl) will be a sophomore at Higley High School next year. Some of her favorite roles have been Iris Kelly in *Fame Jr* at AYT, Mayzie LaBird in *Seussical Jr* at LFPA, and Britt in *We Will Rock You* at Places! Productions. In her free time, she enjoys dancing and is on her high school pom team. She would like to thank Allison for this opportunity.

Mohika Gauani (Helen/Gloria/Reporter 2) This is Mohika's second show with Places!, after playing Fantine in *Les Misérables* this past winter. She is so excited for everyone to see the show!!

Phoenix Gladney (Harvey Johnson/Mr. Johnson) is a 16 year old musician and artist ready for their third show with Places! Productions. Aside from music and art, they like to write, cook, read, and act. They extend their thanks to any families attending the show, and even more thanks to their fellow actors, who are working so hard to bring the best to the audience! They hope you all enjoy the show.

Taylor Greaves (Parent) is performing for the first time with Places! Productions. She has caught the acting bug and is dipping her feet into this new experience. She attended Legacy Traditional School during elementary and junior high, where she played basketball for the last 3 years and has won MVP the last two years. Taylor will now be going to High School, where she is enrolled in drama 1 as one of her electives. Taylor would like to thank her mom for putting her in this program and Mr. Mills for telling her about Places! Productions.

Olivia Haller (Alice/Randolph MacAfee) has spent most of her life on stage. This is her 12th Places! performance, following roles in *Annie*, *At the Bandstand!*, *The Happiest Place on Earth*, *Harmony High*, *Alice in Wonderland* (March Hare), *Type One*, *Shrek*, *Beauty and the Beast* (Lumiere), *We Will Rock You* (Oz), *Legally Blonde* (Gaelen), *Les Mis*, and *The Secret Garden*. A sophomore, Olivia also sings and dances in the Presto! show choir.

Ayden Iwan (Conrad Birdie/Freddie/Parent/Teen) is very excited to be back on the stage in Places! Production's *Bye Bye Birdie* as Conrad Birdie. Some of his past roles include Marius (*Les Mis*), Dickon (*The Secret Garden*), and Percy Jackson (*The Lightning Thief the Musical*). Ayden would like to thank everyone at Places! Productions for all the hard work and effort put into this show!

Kevin Jacobs (Harvey Johnson/Mr. Johnson) is thrilled to be performing in this year's production of *Bye, Bye Birdie!* Kevin is 15 years old and has performed in school productions of *The Wizard of Oz*, *Hello Dolly*, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, and *Into The Woods*. Kevin has received awards for Outstanding Ensemble Member in *Hello Dolly* and *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. He was inducted into the International Thespian Society in March 2023. He is the youngest of 4, likes to hang out with friends and play video games, and he loves his dog Charlie. Kevin expresses gratitude to his friends and family for supporting him and helping him grow.

Dante Johnson (Albert Peterson/Reporter 1/Parent) Performances include *Guys and Dolls* (Sky-LFPA), *We Will Rock You* (Galileo- Places!), *Freaky Friday* (Adam- LFPA), *Little Women* (Laurie- Places!), *Beauty and the Beast* (Beast- Places!), *Shrek* (Donkey-Places!), *Aladdin* (Aladdin- LFPA), *Les Mis* (Javert- Places!), and *The Secret Garden* (Archibald- Places!). He is a member of Presto, and teaching assistant for Ping, and recently placed in the top 3 finals of NATS Nationals Musical Theatre and will head to San Diego in early July to compete in the finals. Dante's performances are dedicated to the fight against cancer. You can find him on Instagram @blacksheep_8000!

Mady King (Kim MacAfee/Teen) is excited to join the cast of *Bye Bye Birdie!* She has been performing with Places! since the beginning where she was an orphan in *Annie Jr.* Favorite credits include, Places! Productions *Les Miserables* (Cosette), *Legally Blonde* (Serena), *The Crucible* (Betty Parris), and *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* (Belle). In addition to musical theater, Mady enjoys being a part of Places! Productions' PRESTO Performance group. She sincerely thanks the Places! Team for all their love and support!

Cecily Kinnaman (Mayor's Daughter) This is Cecily's debut performance with Places Productions!, and she is starting off by doing two shows at once: *At the Bandstand* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. She is homeschooled and will attend Eagleridge Enrichment as a 5th grader in the Fall. Some of her favorite previous roles include: Cruella in *101 Dalmatians*, Duffy in *Annie*, the Lamp Vendor in *Aladdin*, and a lioness in *The Lion King*.

Danielle Lee (Mrs. Peterson) is an incoming junior at BASIS Mesa. This is her third Places! Productions musical with her other two being *Les Misérables* (Old Woman) and *Legally Blonde* (Courtney, Pforzheimer). At school, she is in the Advanced Drama class and played the Mayor of Munchkinland in the schoolwide production of *The Wizard of Oz*. She would like to thank Places! Productions for driving her theater experience once again with this new role and the cast for making such a funny, amazing show!

Alexis Martin (Parent) is thrilled to be a part of both *Bye Bye Birdie* and *At the Bandstand!* Alexis just finished 8th grade at BASIS Mesa, where she starred in the school musical as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz!* Other roles include Host 1 (*Rock and Roll Forever*), Mr. Pinkerton (*Pinkalicious*), and the titular character in *Winnie the Pooh*. She would like to thank the cast and crew of *Bye Bye Birdie* and *At the Bandstand* for this amazing opportunity! "Enjoy the show!"

Hyrum McClure (Albert Peterson) (15) would like to thank the directors and team at Places! Productions for giving him the opportunity to play Albert. He recently played Jack in ALA Gilbert North's production of *Into the Woods*, Honza Kosek in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, and took on multiple small roles in the Places! Productions show *Les Miserables*. Hyrum is on the Varsity Ballroom Team and a member of the Show Choir at ALA Gilbert North. He appreciates all of the support from family and friends.

Peta Nichols (Margie) Peta Nichols is excited to be given the chance to perform in another amazing show with Places! Productions. She is relatively new to acting but has been seen as Grace in *Annie Jr.* at Mesa Arts Center and Whitney in *Legally Blonde*. She would like to thank the Places! team for this amazing opportunity. She hopes everyone enjoys the show!!

Izzy Redwitz (Mrs. MacAfee/Mayor's Wife) is an 8th grade student. She has a passion for theater, music, singing, and dance. Her past shows include *The Addams Family*, *All Shook Up*, *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*, *Les Miserables School Edition*, and *The Secret Garden*. She has competed in the Musical Theatre Competition of America and sings in the choir at Highland Junior High School. Izzy thanks her family, friends, directors, and teachers who have supported and taught her over the years. She is excited to be a part of *Bye Bye Birdie* and looks forward to performing with such fun and talented actors.

Ava Saba (Rosie/Ursula Merkle/Sad Girl) is 17 years old and going to be a senior this year. She is thrilled to be back on the Places! stage once again. She was most recently seen as Lily in *Secret Garden* and Eponine in *Les Miserables* with Places! Productions. Some of her favorite roles she's played are Scaramouche in *We Will Rock You*, Beth March in *Little Women*, and Fiona in *Shrek* with Places! Productions. Other shows she has been in are *Lion King*, *All Shook Up* and *42nd Street* with AYT and *Matilda* with Valley Youth Theatre. As always, she wants to thank Allison Houston Zuccaro for always believing in her!

Piper Searcy (Penelope) has been in love with musical theater since she was seven years old. She has done many performances for summer camps and was recently seen in Places' *Les Mis* and *The Secret Garden*. Her favorite role she ever played was Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast*. She still loves musical theater with a passion! She recently got an acting award at her school and was the youngest to receive it. She would like to thank her family and friends for being so supportive and loving!

Sophia Steimle (Mrs. Peterson/Mrs. MacAfee) is going into her fourth year of acting in her senior year of high school. Most recently, she was seen as the Scarecrow in BASIS Mesa's production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Reeya Sthapit (Mrs. Merkle) is a singer and has been in *Urinetown* at Basha High School. She would like to thank her parents, her brothers, and her dog, Sani.

Jayda Vannoy (Nancy) is 14 years young and is attending Learning Foundation and Performing Arts. She has been singing since she was 2 years old. She recently started performing last year, and she has had a solo performing "My New Philosophy" as Sally Brown. This will be her first performance with Places! Productions, and she looks forward to many more! She would like to thank her mother, sister, and all of the staff at Places!

Julia Vollstedt (Nancy) This is Julia's first show at Places!, and she's so grateful for the opportunity they have given her. Though she's new to Places!, she is not new to theater, with

highlights such as Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods* and Dance Captain and assistant choreographer in *Hello Dolly*. She's been in choir for six years and has done Ballroom for four.

Audrey Williams (Mayor's Wife) was last seen on the Places! stage in *Legally Blonde Jr.* last summer. She also performs in her school's theatre program.

Davin Williams (Hugo Peabody) is ecstatic to be playing Hugo in the senior cast of *Bye Bye Birdie* at Places! Productions for his fifth show there. In the past, he has played several roles across many theaters including Places!, Desert Ridge High School, and AYT. Davin sings in the Advanced Vocal Ensemble at Desert Ridge High School, as well as playing piano. He would like to thank Allison for helping him join the theater world, and his choir teacher Albert for helping him realize his love of music.

Jackson Wood (Conrad Birdie/Freddie/Ed Sullivan/Mayor) just graduated from high school and was most recently seen at Places! In *The Secret Garden* (Neville- youth cast, Dickon u/s- adult cast), *Les Mis* (Jean Valjean) and *Legally Blonde* (Warner). Past Places! shows also include *We Will Rock You* (Galileo), *Little Women* (Professor Bhaer), *The Crucible* (Willard), and *Beauty and the Beast* (Gaston). He was awarded first place in category at AZ NATS and is a member of Presto, Places' performance troupe.

Zayden Zahorka (Hugo Peabody/Ed Sullivan/Mayor) is a fifteen-year-old homeschooled sophomore. He's excited to return to Places! for *Bye Bye Birdie*. He was previously seen in Places! *The Secret Garden*, EVCT's *The Lion King Jr.*, & *Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Clause*. Zayden has been active in drama and choir, and when he isn't rehearsing, you can find him reading, golfing, or playing basketball. Zayden is thankful for everyone at Places! and for friends and family that continue to support him.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

Rachel Espericueta (Choreographer) recently choreographed Places! Productions' *Secret Garden*, *Legally Blonde*, *We Will Rock You*, *Little Women*, and *Little Match Girl*. She was last seen on stage as Abigail Williams in Places! Productions' *The Crucible*. Rachel has choreographed for Presto and Ping, along with *At the Bandstand* and *The Happiest Place on Earth*, a musical revue. She would like to thank her family for all their love and support, along with the *Birdie* cast and crew.

Abby Gordon (Stage Manager) will begin her senior year at ASU as an Engineering major this Fall. She was most recently seen as Martha in the adult cast of *The Secret Garden* and had the incredible opportunity to direct *Rock and Roll Forever* last year. She is so excited to be back on the

production side of Places! this summer. She would like to thank Allison for another great summer show experience!

Tim Mills is the proud Assistant Director of Places! Productions! His assistant directing credits with Places! before *Bye Bye Birdie* YPE include *Annie Jr.*, *Aladdin Jr.*, *Hairspray Jr.*, *The Happiest Place on Earth*, *GTK Footloose*, *Shrek the Musical*, the short film *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *We Will Rock You*, *Legally Blonde Jr.*, and *Les Miserables School Edition*. Before Places!, he co-directed *Annie* and *Bye Bye Birdie* at his school. His Places! Directing credits include the one-act Play *Remember Me* and the musical *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* He has enjoyed being a part of Places! for seven years, since the beginning, and watching the theatre grow! "Thank you Allison for being the best Director for which to work! Thank you to all of you for making Places! a part of your summer plans. Enjoy!"

Allison Zuccaro (Director/Music Director) is the Founding Artistic Director of Places! Productions. She graduated from ASU in 2012 with a BM in Music Theatre and Minor in Justice Studies and performed as a member of Actors' Equity Association before deciding her heart was truly in teaching and directing. Over the last 20 years, she performed in over 30 productions and has now directed nearly as many. She is currently the performing arts instructor at East Valley High School and runs a private voice studio in Queen Creek. She thanks the amazingly talented *Birdie* cast and crew, the Places! Board, all of our incredible volunteers, her brilliant parents, her supportive husband John, YOU for supporting the arts, and Liz Rhodes, who, for the last 17 years, encouraged Allison to pursue her dreams and believed in her more than she ever believed in herself.