



# NEVERMORE

VOYAGE INTO THE  
NETHERWORLD

CHARLESTON  
**STAGE**

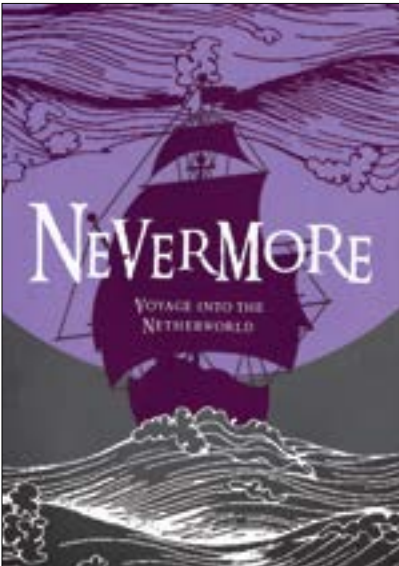
**EDUCATION GUIDE**

Education Guide Information by Derek T. Pickens

Charleston Stage, now celebrating its 42nd Season, is in residence at the Historic Dock Street Theatre. In this intimate setting no student is more than 50 feet from the stage. Charleston Stage is South Carolina’s largest resident professional theatre. More than a half million students have attended Charleston Stage’s fully professional productions at the Historic Dock Street Theatre over the past 42 years. Charleston Stage school shows feature dazzling scenery, stunning costumes, and casts of professional actors.

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By Julian Wiles

## SYNOPSIS:

In September of 1847, Edgar Allan Poe boarded a steamer in Baltimore for an overnight trip to New York. Five days later, never having arrived in New York, Poe was found wandering the Baltimore streets delirious and raving mad. Taken to a nearby tavern he soon died. His death and final days remain a mystery. *Nevermore* speculates on what might have happened on that final dreary nightmare voyage. Featuring scenes from Poe's own stories, "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Gold Bug," "The Cask of the Amontillado," and more, and includes Poe's real visit to Sullivan's Island in 1817 where some speculate he met the love of his life —Annabelle Lee.

## CHARACTERS:

The world of *Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld* is filled with many characters that live in the mind of Edgar Allan Poe. These are the main characters we meet during his journey, however there are many others that pop up here and there.

**Annabel Lee** - the eternal love of Poe

**Edgar Allan Poe** - a poet, lost in his own creations

**Young Poe (Edgar Allan Perry)** - a young Poe serving in the military

**Young Annabel Lee** - a young girl in love

**Annabel's Father** - a stern, well-meaning man

**Captain Jeremiah Reynolds** - a sea captain with a dark past

**Captain Amos Nimrod** - a sea captain who is not at all who he seems

## RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS:

### Social Studies:

- Charleston Areas Explored: Sullivan's Island, Fort Moultrie
- The History of Edgar Allan Poe

### ELA:

- Poetry and Short Stories

## THEMES EXPLORED:

- Dreams
- Inspiration
- Death
- Revenge
- Wonder
- Confidence vs. Doubt

## RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 11 & UP

## GLOSSARY

**Ad Infinitum** - again and again in the same way; forever.

**Amontillado** - a medium dry sherry.

**Benefactor** - a person who gives money or other help to a person or cause.

**Cad** - a man who behaves dishonorably, especially toward a woman.

**Cask** - a large barrel-like container made of wood, metal, or plastic, used for storing liquids, typically alcoholic drinks.

**Consort** - a wife, husband, or companion, in particular the spouse of a reigning monarch.

**Court-martial** - a judicial court for trying members of the armed services accused of offenses against military law.

**Delirious** - in an acutely disturbed state of mind resulting from illness or intoxication and characterized by restlessness, illusions, and incoherence of thought and speech.

**Dissever** - divide or sever (something).

**Eros** - the Greek god of love, son of Aphrodite. Roman equivalent Cupid.

**Fabricate** - invent or concoct (something), typically with deceitful intent.

**Maelstrom** - a powerful whirlpool in the sea or a river.

**Incorrigible** - (of a person or their tendencies) not able to be corrected, improved, or reformed.

**Ingress of Egress** - entering the exit.

**Inebriated** - being drunk.

**Kinsman** - a man who is one of a person's blood relations.

**Libation** - a drink poured out as an offering to a deity.

**Litard** - light wood for fires.

**Macabre** - disturbing and horrifying because of involvement with or depiction of death and injury.

**Malarial Fever** - an intermittent and remittent fever caused by a protozoan parasite that invades the red blood cells. The parasite is transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical regions.

**Mizzen** - the mast aft of a ship's mainmast.

**Nor'easter** - a storm or wind blowing from the northeast, especially in New England.

**Ocracoke** - a barrier island in eastern North Carolina, part of the Outer Banks.

**Ostentation** - pretentious and vulgar display, especially of wealth and luxury, intended to impress or attract notice.

**Pestilence** - a fatal epidemic disease, especially bubonic plague.

**Piazza** - the veranda of a house.

**Plutonian** - of or associated with the underworld.

*Rapturous* - characterized by, feeling, or expressing great pleasure or enthusiasm.

**Sepulcher** - a small room or monument, cut in rock or built of stone, in which a dead person is laid or buried.

**Seraph** - an angelic being, regarded in traditional Christian angelology as belonging to the highest order of the ninefold celestial hierarchy, associated with light, ardor, and purity.

**Steamer** - a ship, boat, or locomotive powered by steam.

**Sword of Damocles** - a legendary courtier who extravagantly praised the happiness of Dionysius I, ruler of Syracuse. To show him how precarious this happiness was, Dionysius seated him at a banquet with a sword hung by a single hair over his head.

**Temperance** - abstinence from alcoholic drink.

**Terra Incognita** - unknown or unexplored territory.

**Viscount** - a British nobleman ranking above a baron and below an earl.





## PLAYWRIGHT

### Julian Wiles

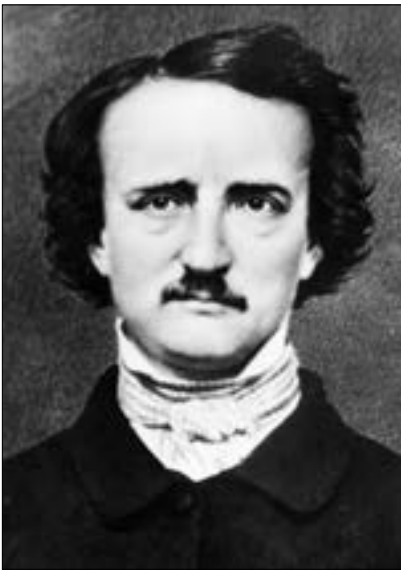
Director, designer and playwright Julian Wiles founded Charleston Stage in 1978. As Charleston's resident professional theatre company, it has grown into one of South Carolina's largest arts institutions. Wiles grew up on a cotton farm in Ft. Motte, SC. He attended Clemson University, received a bachelor's degree in history from the College of Charleston in 1974 and an MFA in dramatic art from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1976. Wiles has written or adapted 27 original plays and musicals including *Blitzen!*; *a boy and his piano*; *the boy who stole the stars*; *Denmark Vesey: Insurrection*; *FrUITCaKeS*; *Gershwin at Folly*; *Helium*; *Inga Binga*; *Nevermore! Edgar Allen Poe, the*

*Final Mystery*; *NigHt of tHe pterodActyls* and *The Seat of Justice*. Wiles is a recipient of the 2010 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Awards for the Arts, the highest honor in the arts awarded by the state of South Carolina. In 2019 Mr. Wiles was inducted into the South Carolina Theatre Hall of Fame, which honors South Carolinians who have made outstanding contributions, achieved careers of distinction, and are widely recognized as accomplished practitioners of theatre.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Nevermore!* premiered in 1994 at the Dock Street Theatre under the name *Nevermore! Edgar Allan Poe, The Final Mystery*. The show was subsequently produced at the Dock Street Theatre in 1999, 2006, and most recently in 2012. The new 2019 production has undergone a few rewrites and has a slight title change, as the show is now called *Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld*.

## FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT



“The fact that the life of Edgar Allan Poe, perhaps the most famous mystery writer of all time, ended in mystery was a play that just had to be written,” explained playwright Julian Wiles. In *Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld* I set out to imaginatively uncover the shadowy questions surrounding of Poe’s nightmarish final days. Was his death it caused by madness? drink? foul play? Using the eerie circumstances of his final days I speculated on what might have happened to the famous author when he met his final demise. Without giving too much away, I can tell you that this voyage will take audiences into the worlds of some of Poe’s famous tales, including “Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Pit and Pendulum,” “The Premature Burial,” and even “The Gold Bug,” which is set on Sullivan’s Island! Many of Poe’s famous poems, including such favorites as “Annabel Lee, A Dream Within a Dream,” and of course, “The Raven” make appearances as well. Altogether more than 14 of Poe’s famous tales and poems are woven into the script.

And *Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld* explores Edgar Allan Poe’s real life Charleston connection. In 1827, at age 18 Poe, ran away from home, assumed the alias of Edgar A. Parry, joined the army and for over a year was stationed at Ft. Moultrie on Sullivan’s Island. Some have speculated that while here in Charleston, he met the love of his life, “the beautiful Annabel Lee in this “Kingdom by the Sea.” Poe lived in a land of shadows and speculation that followed him even beyond his death.

With dazzling new sets and costumes, and mysterious special effects and disappearances, this new production of *Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld*, celebrates the mind of the master of the macabre.

## WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

Edgar Allan Poe did disappear for five days prior to his death, his whereabouts and activities are completely unknown. It is believed he boarded a ship for New York but even that is not absolutely certain.

We do know that he was found delirious, wandering the streets of Baltimore. Recognized by an acquaintance, he was taken to a nearby tavern and a doctor friend of Poe’s sent for. The doctor and Poe’s relatives arranged for Poe’s transfer to nearby Washington Hospital.

Throughout the night that followed, Poe remained delirious and delusional. Long into the

night he called out, over and over again, for someone named “Reynolds”, but no one there knew who that was. Finally, Poe was calmed down. Three days later, after fading in and out of consciousness, but without regaining coherence, he died.

His enemies and literary rivals were quick to blame Poe’s drinking on his demise. There is no doubt, Poe had a problem with alcohol but many scholars believe that, in his last years, Poe was also battling with severe mental illness. After the death of his wife Virginia to tuberculosis, most agree, Poe was severely depressed and never the same again.

He did make an effort to stop drinking, even joining the Richmond Sons of Temperance, but soon his was drinking again. Many believe this led to Poe’s madness although he himself said the drink didn’t make him mad, the madness made him drink. Some scholars have suggested that Poe showed the symptoms of hypoglycemia, which would explain his low tolerance for alcohol and his delusional behavior at times. Whatever the diagnosis, Poe’s mental condition was certainly severely impaired at the time of his death.

Who was the mysterious “Reynolds” to whom Poe called out? Many believe he was Jeremiah Reynolds, a minor Antarctic explorer of the 19th century. Reynolds, like many during this last age of exploration, believed that somewhere in the Antarctic region there was an entrance to the center of the earth, perhaps to a land of paradise. Poe used this theory and the journals Reynolds had written about his Antarctic expeditions in two of his stories. Both his short novel, “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym” and “Manuscript Found in the Bottle” tell tales of ghostly, ghastly and ultimately ill-fated voyages to the Antarctic.

While the inspiration for Poe’s fascination with the Antarctic can be traced to Jeremiah Reynolds there is little solid information as to the identity of Annabel Lee. Poe’s poem, “Annabel Lee,” was one of the last, perhaps the last poem Poe penned before his death. No one knows the identity of his beloved Annabel Lee, however. Perhaps she is someone biographers have failed to discover. Most likely she was a creature only of Poe’s vivid imagination. Charleston author and publisher Mrs. Elizabeth Verner Hamilton, in the Tradd Street Press’s Sullivan’s Island Edition of “The Gold Bug,” speculates that perhaps Annabel Lee was a young Charleston belle who became Poe’s first love. Poe was after all, stationed at Sullivan’s Island when he was only 17, young, impressionable and adventurous. He had run away from home, joined the army under the alias Edgar A. Perry and found himself stationed at Ft. Moultrie on Sullivan’s Island. If indeed, Annabel Lee was a Charleston girl, this would of course, make Charleston the fabled “kingdom by the sea.” This is all mere speculation, however. But wonderful speculation, so wonderful that I borrowed this premise for *Nevermore*.

One final note. For the past 40 something years, on the anniversary of Poe’s death, a mysterious lady appears at cemetery where Poe is buried. Each year, she appears at midnight and leaves a bottle of cognac and a single white rose on his grave. No one knows the identify of this ghostly visitor.

## FACTS ABOUT POE

- He was born Edgar Poe in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 19, 1809
- The second child of English-born actress Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe and actor David Poe, Jr.
- He had an elder brother, William Henry Leonard Poe, and a younger sister, Rosalie Poe.
- His father abandoned their family in 1810, and his mother died a year later from consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis).
- Poe was then taken into the home of John Allan, a successful Scottish merchant in Richmond, Virginia, who dealt in a variety of goods including tobacco, cloth, wheat, tombstones, and slaves. The Allans served as a foster family and gave him the name “Edgar Allan Poe”, though they never formally adopted him.
- In 1824 Poe served as the lieutenant of the Richmond youth honor guard as Richmond celebrated the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette.
- Poe may have become engaged to Sarah Elmira Royster before he registered at the one-year-old University of Virginia in February 1826 to study languages. The university, in its infancy, was established on the ideals of its founder, Thomas Jefferson. It had strict rules against gambling, horses, guns, tobacco and alcohol, but these rules were generally ignored. Jefferson had enacted a system of student self-government, allowing students to choose their own studies, make their own arrangements for boarding, and report all wrongdoing to the faculty. Poe gave up on the university after a year, and, not feeling welcome in Richmond, especially when he learned that his sweetheart Royster had married Alexander Shelton, he traveled to Boston in April 1827, sustaining himself with odd jobs as a clerk and newspaper writer.
- Unable to support himself, on May 27, 1827, Poe enlisted in the United States Army as a private.
- Poe’s regiment was posted to Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina, and traveled by ship on the brig Waltham on November 8, 1827.
- Poe finally was discharged on April 15, 1829, after securing a replacement to finish his enlisted term for him. Poe traveled to West Point and matriculated as a cadet on July 1, 1830.
- Poe secretly married Virginia, his cousin, on September 22, 1835. He was 26 and she was 13, though she is listed on the marriage certificate as being 21. On May 16, 1836, he had a second wedding ceremony in Richmond with Virginia Clemm, this time in public.
- In June 1840, Poe published a prospectus announcing his intentions to start his own journal, *The Stylus*.
- On January 29, 1845, his poem “The Raven” appeared in the Evening Mirror and became a popular sensation.
- One theory, dating from 1872, indicates that cooping– in which unwilling citizens who were forced to vote for a particular candidate were occasionally killed – was the cause of Poe’s death.





**6th, 7th, and 8th Grade**

**ELA - Principles of Reading | Standard 4** - Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

**Indicator** - 4.2

**7th Grade**

**ELA - Language, Craft and Structure | Standard 12** - Analyze and critique how the author uses structures in print and multimedia texts to shape meaning and impact the reader.

**Indicator** - 12.1

**High School - English I through IV**

**ELA Principles of Reading | Standard 4** - Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. **Indicator** - 4.1

**ELA Principles of Reading | Standard 7** - Analyze the relationship among ideas, themes, or topics in multiple media, formats, and in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities.

**Indicators** - 7.1, 7.2

**ELA Principles of Reading | Standard 8** - Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.

**Indicator** - 8.1

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Please feel free to adjust activities to meet the needs of your classroom.

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### READING AND ANALYSIS

*Nevermore* is based on the true life events of Edgar Allan Poe, but it also visits the worlds of many of his stories and poems. It is suggested that your class read the following works to be familiar with their plot:

- "Annabel Lee"
- "The Raven"
- "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym"
- "The Tell-Tale Heart"
- "Masque of the Red Death"
- "The Oblong Box"
- "The Gold Bug"
- "A Dream within a Dream"
- "The Pit and the Pendulum"
- "The Murders at the Rue Morgue"
- "The Fall of the House of Usher"
- "Hopfrog"
- "The Premature Burial"
- "The Bells"

### EXPERT SHARE

Split your students up in to 4 or 5 groups and assign each of them one of the above works by Edgar Allan Poe. Have them read it as a group and then discuss what happens. At this point, someone from each group is chosen as their group's "expert." When you give the signal, their expert moves to another group and tells that group about their story/poem, and the group shares their story before the expert moves on to the next group. Continue rotating until the experts are back at their group. This exercise can be repeated for multiple days until all of the works of Edgar Allan Poe have been covered.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Please feel free to adjust activities to meet the needs of your classroom.

### THE RAVEN

Have your class read “The Raven,” first alone, and then do a group reading aloud. Use the following questions to start a discussion:

1. Poe’s rhyming scheme requires numerous internal rhyming words within each line, in addition to line-endings. He also uses alliteration extensively (“flirt and flutter”). Is the effect formulaic and stifling, or dreamily mesmerizing (as any good supernatural encounter should be)?
2. Identify and describe the meaning of several of Poe’s borrowed allusions, particularly those that are mythological (such as “Plutonian”) and Biblical (“Seraphim” and “Tempter”).
3. Why did Poe choose a raven, supposedly a “non-reasoning creature”? What does it symbolize? Why was it so important to Poe that it could speak (why not choose a parrot instead?)

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### Journal/Writing Question

Poe’s truly did disappear in the days leading up to his death, however no one knows where he was or what he was doing. Julian Wiles used his own artistic license when writing about his disappearance in *Nevermore*, but it is not the definitive answer to what happened to Poe. Where do you think he went? What do you think he was up to? Use your favorite of Poe’s stories or characters and write your own version of what happened during those fateful five days.

## CONTENT WARNINGS

*Nevermore! Voyage into the Netherworld* may not be appropriate for younger audiences as it has scary moments, occurrences of death, and mention of death by suffocation, drowning, and decapitation. The show also depicts drinking and drunkenness, the cutting of a person wrist, and the use of the words “hell” and “damnation.”

**The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe**

<https://www.eapoe.org/works/>

**“Poe on Sullivan’s Island” - Literary Traveler**

<https://www.literarytraveler.com/articles/poe-on-sullivans-island/>

**“A Refresher on Edgar Allan Poe”**

<https://ed.ted.com/featured/kpxLn1Hp>

**Knowing Poe - Classroom Connections**

<http://knowingpoe.thinkport.org/classconn/lessonplans.asp>

***Edgar Allan Poe, Buried Alive* - American Masters TV Episode (SCETV Passport Membership Required)**

<https://www.pbs.org/video/edgar-allan-poe-buried-alive-ryhi5z/>



## DOCK STREET THEATRE



For almost 300 years audiences have delighted in performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre which stands on the site of the very first theatre building in America which opened its doors in 1736. The current building, originally The Planter's Hotel was built in 1803 and in 1937 was converted into the Dock Street Theatre know today. Charleston Stage presents over 150 performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre playing to theatre goers from every state in the union and many foreign countries. The Dock Street Theatre, newly renovated in 2010, is currently owned and managed by the City of Charleston. Other

performing arts groups including Spoleto Festival USA perform here annually.

On February 12, 1736 the Dock Street Theatre opened with a performance of *The Recruiting Officer*. Built on the corner of Church Street and Dock Street (now known as Queen Street), the Historic Dock Street Theatre was the first building in America built exclusively to be used for theatrical performances. Flora, the first opera performance in America, took place at the Historic Dock Street Theatre.

The original Dock Street Theatre was probably destroyed by the Great Fire of 1740 which destroyed many of the buildings in Charleston's French Quarter. In 1809, the Planter's Hotel was built on this site and in 1835 the wrought iron balcony and sandstone columns of the Church Street facade were added. A number of notable persons worked and patronized the Planter's Hotel including the noted 19th Century actor Junius Brutus Booth (father of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth). Robert Smalls, an African-American Civil War hero, who stole a steamboat in the harbor and sailed it out past the Confederate-held Ft. Sumter and turned it over to the blockading Union Fleet, served as a waiter in the hotel's dining room prior to the war. Charleston's famed Planter's Punch was first introduced here.

After the Civil War, the Planter's Hotel fell into disrepair and was slated for demolition. But in 1935, after Milton Pearlstine made the property available to the City of Charleston and at the urging of Mayor Burnet Maybank and other notable citizens, the original building became a Depression Era WPA (Works Progress Administration) project. At that time, the present theatre was constructed within the shell of the

## DOCK STREET THEATRE



Planter's Hotel. The hotel's grand foyer became the grand foyer of the theatre and the hotel's dining room now serves as the box office lobby. The beautiful woodwork and mantels of the second floor drawing room were salvaged from the Radcliffe-King Mansion (circa 1799) which stood at the corner of George and Meeting Streets and was razed to build the College of Charleston gymnasium, another WPA project. Modeled on eighteenth century London playhouses by Charleston architect Albert Simons, the present Dock Street Theatre's new stage house and auditorium were built in the hotel's courtyard. The local carpenters who were put to work as a part of this Depression era relief effort utilized locally grown and milled native black cypress for the beautiful warm wooden interior. Following this \$350,000 renovation, The Historic Dock Street Theatre's second grand opening took place on November 26, 1937. Notables in the audience included author DuBose Heyward (*Porgy*) who was named writer-in-residence.

The Historic Dock Street Theatre reopened for the third time on March 18, 2010 after a three year, \$19 million dollar renovation by the City of Charleston. This extensive full-scale renovation brought the historic theatre into the 21st century with state-of-the-art lighting and sound, modern heating and air conditioning, and new restrooms and seating. In addition, the theatre was made seismically secure and fully handicapped accessible. Extensive sound-proofing was added to ensure that outside noises no longer intruded on performances inside.

## HAVE KIDS WHO'D LIKE TO TAKE ..... THEATRE CLASSES?



### **Acting Classes**

#### **200+ Students Attend Acting Classes After School**

Charleston Stage's TheatreSchool offers classes year round for students from kindergarten through high school at Charleston Stage's West Ashley Theatre Center. Acting classes for students of all ages and abilities are taught by members of Charleston Stage's Professional Resident Acting Company. Classes range from beginning classes to performance workshops and performance troupes. Classes culminate in mini-performances held at the West Ashley Theatre Center. Tuition scholarships are available for need-based students.

**Register online today at [CharlestonStage.com](http://CharlestonStage.com)!**



### **ArtReach In-School Workshops**

#### **Bringing Professional Actors Into the Classroom**

Charleston Stage's Resident Professional Actors provide dynamic workshops in area schools through a partnership with Engaging Creative Minds. Workshops use theatrical skills to teach academic subjects and can be combined with a school matinee performance experience. For information on booking ArtReach workshops, contact Marybeth Clark, Director of Education, at (843) 225-3900 or [mclark@charlestonstage.com](mailto:mclark@charlestonstage.com).



### **TheatreWings High School Apprenticeships**

#### **A Tuition-Free Apprentice Program For Teens**

The TheatreWings High School Apprentice Program is designed to allow talented young people the opportunity to work directly with theatre professionals and gain first-hand experience in professional theatrical production. Students explore acting, stage management, lighting and sound, as well as set and costume design and construction. Designed for highly dedicated students, TheatreWings requires more than 100+ hours of apprenticeship each season. For information contact Jesse Siak, Associate Director of Education, at (843) 225-3900 or [jsiak@charlestonstage.com](mailto:jsiak@charlestonstage.com).

**For more information on our programs, call the Education Office at (843) 225-3900 or visit [CharlestonStage.com](http://CharlestonStage.com).**