


standby



# standby



written & directed by: robert gomes

produced by: d shroff

runtime: 24 minutes 17 seconds

shooting format: digital

# standby

## story

### logline:

A disheartened, but dedicated middle-aged gay actor, working as a standby for an off-Broadway show, has his love for his art reawakened — with a jolt — in this valentine to the Theater.

### synopsis:

Jerry, a quiet and dispirited middle-aged gay actor, works as a standby for the hit off-Broadway show, *The Con Artiste!*

Facing financial woes, loneliness, and questioning his art, he spends the day in rehearsal with a flirty young actor, the stage manager, and his bored fellow-understudies.

At curtain time, when the lead actor calls in sick, Jerry is thrust into the star's dressing room and a whirlwind of last minute preparations.

The curtain rises and, on cue, he walks onstage into the blazing lights to face not only an expectant audience, but also the possibility of a personal and artistic triumph — or failure.

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# standby



**Reed Birney** (Jerry, the standby)

Reed Birney won the 2016 Tony Award for his performance in *The Humans*. Other Broadway appearances include: *1984*, *Gemini*, *Picnic* and *Casa Valentina* (Tony nomination, Drama Desk Award).

His many off-Broadway appearances include: *Lunar Eclipse* (Second Stage Theater), *Chester Bailey* (with his son, Ephraim), *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Obie and Drama Desk Awards), *Bug* (Obie award), *I'm Gonna Pray for You So Hard* (Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk Award nominations), *You Got Older* (Drama Desk Award nomination), *Uncle Vanya* (Drama Desk nomination), *The Dream of the Burning Boy* (Drama League, Outer Critics Circle nominations), *Blasted* (Drama Desk Award nomination), and *Homebody/Kabul*. In 2011, he received a Special Drama Desk Award honoring his career as an actor.

His film credits include: *The Menu*, *Mass* (Gotham nomination, Robert Altman Award), *Four Friends*, and *Horizon—an American Saga, Part Two*. TV credits include: *American Horror Story*, *Poker Face*, *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, *House of Cards*, *Girls*, *High Maintenance*, *Succession*, *The Blacklist*, and *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

He won a 2006 Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Performance and in 2011 Actors' Equity awarded him the Richard Seff Award.

# cast



**Kelly Bishop** (Glenna, the leading lady)

Kelly Bishop started her career as a dancer. After appearing in the Broadway shows *Golden Rainbow: Promises, Promises* and *On The Town*, Bishop originated the role of Sheila Bryant in the groundbreaking musical *A Chorus Line*. The role was largely based on Bishop's own life, and would earn her the 1976 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical.

Other Broadway credits include: *Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, Neil Simon's *Proposals*, and *Bus Stop*.

The actress is also a beloved figure onscreen, having appeared in films like *Dirty Dancing* as Marjorie Housman, mother to Jennifer Grey's character Baby.

Other film credits include: *An Unmarried Woman*, *Wonder Boys*, *Miami Rhapsody*, and *Friends with Kids*. Bishop is especially well known for her role as Emily Gilmore, the old-money matriarch on *Gilmore Girls*. Her other TV credits include: *Étoile*, *Shrinking*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Halston*, and *The Good Wife*.

She is the author of the critically acclaimed *The Third Gilmore Girl: A Memoir*.

# standby



Pat Nesbit (Trish, a fellow standby)

Pat has appeared on Broadway in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *The Young Man from Atlanta*, and *So Long On Lonely Street*. She appeared in the First National Tours of Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues* (as Rowena); and *Copenhagen*. She also toured in the Actor Theatre of Louisville's production of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Off-Broadway credits include *Spinning Into Butter* at Lincoln Center Theater; *Emily* at Manhattan Theatre Club; *The Skin Game* and *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, both at the Mint Theater Company; and *English Teachers*, *Ladies of the Fortnight* and *The Whole Truth*, all with Manhattan Class Company.

Pat has worked extensively in regional theater and is a four-time Carbonell Award winner for her performances in *The Price*, *Collected Stories*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *The Middle Ages*, all at the Caldwell Theatre. She stars in the short film *Dressed*.



AJ Cedeño (Marco, a fellow standby)

AJ Cedeño is an actor and voiceover artist best recognized for his recurring role as John Sellers in Amazon's *Z: the Beginning of Everything* opposite Christina Ricci, as well as his tenure as the commercial spokesman for *Nissan USA*.

Theater credits include the off-Broadway productions of *March Madness* (Abingdon Theater), *Austin* (Theater Row), *Strawberry & Chocolate* (directed by Tony Award-winner Roger Robinson), and the Signature Theater's highly acclaimed production of *Incident at Vichy* (directed by Michael Wilson).

His select film credits include lead roles in *Straighten Up and Fly Right* (Slamdance Grand Jury Winner), *The Last Nazi* (opposite co-star Reed Birney), and Matthew Newton's *Among the Beasts* (opposite Tory Kittles).

Television credits include a recurring role on *Royal Pains* (USA), as well as appearances on *FBI: International*, *Girls5Eva* (opposite Renée Elise Goldsberry), *Younger* (opposite Sutton Foster), *The Good Wife* (directed by Emmy-nominee Josh Charles), *Elementary* (opposite Lucy Liu), and many others.

A native of the Midwest, AJ is an alumnus of the University of Notre Dame - where he played Division-I college football - and also holds a graduate degree from the Case-Western Reserve University/Cleveland Play House MFA Actor Training Program.

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Safiya Harris (Faith, a fellow standby)

Safiya Harris had her Broadway debut as Rebecca Gibbs in *Our Town* (Broadway); Off-Broadway Credits include: Ensemble (Ophelia Understudy) in *Hamlet* at Shakespeare in the Park; *Pato, Pato, Maricon* and *Death of Hayden Waverly* at Ars Nova. Regional: Viola in *Twelfth Night* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare), Rosalind in *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Theater of NJ).

She is a teaching artist with The Classical Theater of Harlem, and a 200 Hr Certified Yoga Instructor. You can find her music on all streaming platforms under SAFIYA. *Authenticity is where True Love is found.*



Jenelle Chu (Claire, the stage manager)

Jenelle Chu is a Chinese-Vietnamese American actor and teaching artist from St. Louis.

As an actor she has worked on Broadway in *Junk* (Lincoln Center Theater) and *Bernhardt/Hamlet* (Roundabout). Regional credits include the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Oklahoma City Repertory Theater, People's Light Theatre, Shakespeare & Company, American Conservatory Theater, Papermill Playhouse, and Bucks County Playhouse.

TV credits include *Prodigal Son*, *New Amsterdam*, *Madam Secretary*, *Instinct*, and *Elementary*. She appears in the short film *White Flags* with AC Productions.

She is a co-founder and co-director of Encompass Collective, an acting training collective for and by people of the Global Majority.

Training: BM in Vocal Performance (University of Missouri - Kansas City); MFA in Acting (Yale School of Drama).

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# standby



Grace Dumdaw (Tanny, the young leading lady)

Grace Dumdaw (they/them) is a Kachin actor, singer, filmmaker, and photographer born in Myanmar and raised in Louisiana. They currently reside in New York City. A graduate of Swarthmore College, Grace has a BFA in Stage, Screen, & New Media, as well as Peace & Conflict Studies. Their additional acting education includes Larry Moss Studio, Prague Film School, Stella Adler Studio of Acting, and Upright Citizens Brigade NYC.

Grace has appeared on the TV shows: *And Just Like That...*, *Succession*, *The Equalizer*, *FBI: Most Wanted*, *The Blacklist*, *The Watcher*, and more. They are best known for starring as the love interest of singer Zayn Malik in his music video for *Love Like This*.

In their spare time, Grace directs videos and sings in a band called *Chanpan*. Most importantly, Grace is a passionate advocate for the Kachin people of northern Myanmar, their ethnic group. Their goal is to use their art to raise awareness of the civil unrest and injustices faced by ethnic minorities worldwide,



Justin Withers (Ben, the young leading man)

Justin Withers is an actor, singer and dancer born in Chicago, Illinois. At age 13, Justin moved in with family in NYC to pursue training and a career in the performing arts. He's been chasing that dream ever since!

Recent credits include: Off-Broadway: *Days Of Rage* (Second Stage Theater, Dir. Trip Cullman). Regional Theatre: *Love All* (La Jolla Playhouse); *American Underground* (Barrington Stage Company); *Thirst* (Contemporary American Theater Festival).

TV: *The Night Agent*; *The Good Fight*. Film: *A Shot Through the Wall*; *A Good Old Day*.

Education: B.F.A from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University; Justin also studied abroad at Shakespeare's Globe in London for six months.

Having had the experience of being a standby himself, Justin was very drawn to this project and is thrilled to have been a part of telling this story. He would like to thank his family for their continued support and God, for never ending grace.

# cast



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**Chuck Blasius** (Curtis, the dresser)

As an actor: *Bette and Kate Join The Line* (with Robert Kahan at The Duplex); Ken Nintzel's productions of *Pansy Acts*, *Piano Bar*, and *Sonata Da Camera Obscura* (Ontological Theatre); *Lapse* and *'Twas the Night...* (P.S. 122); Grant James Varjas' *Accidentally, Like A Martyr* (Paradise Factory); *I Could Say More* (Hudson Guild); *The Village* (Dixon Place, Soho Playhouse).

Chuck is a member of the Dramatists Guild and a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

[www.chuckblasius.com](http://www.chuckblasius.com)

# cast



**Brian Keane** (Donny, the stagehand)

National tour: *War Horse*. Theatre: *Orpheus Descending* (TFANA), *London Assurance* (Irish Rep), *Timon of Athens* (NYSEF), *Happy Now?* (Primary Stages), *Misanthrope* (CSC), *All My Sons* (Roundabout), *1776* (Muny), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Guthrie), *Macbeth* (Old Globe), *The Winter's Tale* (Yale Rep), *Frost/Nixon* (Bay Street Theatre), *Book of Days* (Arena Stage).

Television: *Chicago Fire*, *The Gilded Age*, *FBI: International*, *Dopesick*, *Billions*, *City on Fire*, *Evil*, *Kevin Can F Himself*, *Love, Death + Robots*, *Chicago PD*, *House of Cards*, *Blue Bloods*, *Gypsy*, *The Blacklist*, *Elementary*, *Gotham*, *The Good Wife*, *Person of Interest*, *Law & Order*.

Film: *Bear City* trilogy, *Going Under*, *Campfire*, *Moratorium*.

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**Robert Gomes** director, screenwriter, producer

Robert Gomes is a filmmaker and actor living in New York City.

He produced the award-winning short films *Deflated*, directed by D Shroff; and *Pew! Pew! Pew!* He also produced segments for the online news magazine *Out at the Center* which was presented by The LGBT Community Center in New York City.

As an actor, he appeared on Broadway in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* and *Racing Demon*. His off-Broadway credits include *Still at Risk*, *Dan Cody's Yacht*, *Dada Woof Papa Hot*, *The Temperamentals*, *Only You*, *Shmulnik's Waltz*, *As Is* and *The Sum of Us*. Some regional credits include: *The Winter's Tale*, *August: Osage County*, *Angels in America*, *The Substance of Fire* and *Brooklyn Boy*.

On film, he appeared in *The Way I Remember It*, *Body/Antibody*, *An Englishman in New York* (opposite John Hurt), and the HBO film *Daddy*. His TV appearances include *Forever*, *Unforgettable*, *Sex and the City*, *Ed* and *Law and Order*.

# crew



**D Shroff** producer

D Shroff is a filmmaker and production designer based in Austin, TX.

His award-winning short film, *Deflated*, played in more than thirty film festivals internationally, and was shortlisted for the prestigious Iris Prize. The film also received three distribution deals, and is part of Peccadillo Picture's *Boys on Film* anthology. *Deflated* is the first film in his *Broken Arrow* series: a group of stories exploring gender and sexuality through the eyes of Chris, a boy growing up in the suburban sprawl of the American Bible Belt.

Some of his most recent film and television design credits include Travis Mathew's *Discreet*, Lisa Donato's *There You Are*, Daniel Stuyck's *The Eternal*, and the Wanda Sykes-produced *Talk Show the Game Show*.

He has also designed commercial work for clients including AT&T, Facebook, Budweiser, Google, IBM, USAA, and Dell.

D is excited to bring his experience and love for filmmaking to the production of *standby*.



Mary J. Davis / MBL Productions executive producer

Mary is a Broadway, off-Broadway, and film producer.

Early off-Broadway productions include *The Shoemaker* starring Danny Aiello; and *She's of a Certain Age*. Mary also co-produced the New York premiere of *The Pretty Trap*, Tennessee Williams' one act version of *The Glass Menagerie*. Mary and Seth Rudetsky produced James Wesley's *Unbroken Circle*. She was also a producer for the musical *Disaster!*, both on and off-Broadway. Mary co-produced James Wesley's *Art & Science*, which had a successful run in Dallas.

In addition, she produced *C.O.A.L.: Smart Blonde* by Willy Holtzman, starring the amazing Andrea Burns; *Fern Hill* by Michael Tucker, starring Jill Eikenberry and John Glover (all at 59E59). On Theatre Row, Mary produced *A Persistent Memory*, *Pressing Matters*, and *Unraveled*.

MBL has also produced the independent film *Evergreen*, winner of 5 awards on the festival circuit. Mary has several other plays in the early stages of development.



Clara Peterson line producer

Clara Peterson is a producer who studied political science at Wellesley College and Oxford University before moving to New York City to pursue a career in film.

With roots in professional project management and DIY filmmaking, she works across commercial, corporate and indie landscapes and specializes in creatively leveraging micro-budgets to create high-quality, entertaining indie films.

Her short and feature films have premiered and won awards at Oscar-qualifying festivals including Tribeca, Slamdance, Woodstock, Hawai'i International, Indy Shorts and others. She has worked in casting on *Uncut Gems*, *Marriage Story* and principal searches for Disney, Warner Brothers, Showtime and more.

As a producer, she seeks out stories with a clear arc and a distinctive voice that are quirky, funny, heartwarming or all three.



**Jamal Solomon** cinematographer

Being from Brooklyn has left an indelible mark on Jamal's cinematography — "Finding the beauty in that visceral environment and how the two interacted with each other was always fascinating to me. Even at a young age, when I didn't understand art, [I knew] THIS was ART."

Jamal has been working in the industry for 8 years in New York City, as well as internationally. Shooting short films, feature length movies, as well as artistic videos for brands and artists has brought him the insight of understanding the needs of all types of stories and genres. In 2014, he won the Zeiss Precision Image Award; following that, his contribution behind the camera on the short film *Flowers*, allowed for the film to win Best Short at the 2016 American Black Film Festival. The film went on to air on HBO throughout 2017. 2018 brought opportunities in television, with TVOne's *UNCENSORED* series where Jamal lenses episodes featuring Lala Anthony and Charlemagne. The latter episode garnered the network's highest rating for the season.

For him, these momentous achievements cemented the belief that improvement is key and should be utilized in strengthening each and every frame.



**Soleita Kabwasa** costume designer

Soleita Kabwasa is a highly skilled and creative costume designer and stylist with a rich background in garment restoration, manipulation, screen printing, embroidery, beading, and dyeing to name a few. Fluent in French, Soleita has built an impressive career, contributing her talents to a variety of projects ranging from commercial campaigns, tv shows, featured films, to world tours and music videos.

Notable works include lead stylist roles for *Benjamin Moore COTY 2024* campaign , and assisting in wardrobe for Ms. Lauryn Hill's 25th-anniversary international tour.

Her portfolio showcases a commitment to artistic excellence and a deep understanding of fashion's role in storytelling.

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**Rob Odorisio** production designer

Rob Odorisio has worked as a designer on Broadway and off-Broadway productions, including *The Sisters Rosenzweig*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Stomp*. For TV he was art director on *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*, ABC's *The Standup*, Fox's *Urban Anxiety* and *The Guiding Light* (three Emmy nominations).

His film work includes: *Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll*; *Neptune's Rocking Horse* and *The Rub*. He is currently the art director for *CBS News* (Emmy nomination).



**Matthew Kyle Levine** editor / colorist / additional scoring

Matthew Kyle Levine is a writer / director / cinematographer / editor based in upstate NY.



**Stephanie Klapper, CSA** casting director

Stephanie's work is frequently seen on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regionally, internationally and on television, film and the Internet.

Projects she has been involved with have won numerous awards including Tony, Obie, Artios, Pulitzer Prize, Sundance Audience Award, Cannes Prize du Publique and Comic Con awards. Ongoing projects in New York and for many regional theatres. Numerous independent feature films.

Member of Casting Society of America and League of Professional Theatre Women.



**Victoria Astuto** composer

Victoria Astuto is a composer based in the Hudson Valley, NY.

# crew

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unit production manager	Clara Peterson
assistant director	Hollye Swinehart
gaffer	Rutuja Sawant
1st AC	Chris Evora
2nd AC/media manager	Jay Jackson
key grip	Adam Holoubek
location sound mixers	Philip Kim, Jonathan Holdforth
script supervisor	Rebecca Watson
steadicam operator	Stephen Rathier
art director	Noah Mefford-Lee
storyboard artist	Sam Llyod
prop master	Madison Maroney
set dressers	Gabriella Herrera, Josef Reisenbichler

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hair stylist	Ebone Alloway
makeup artists	Kelley Coleman, Shaun Gibson
sound editor	Matthew Kyle Levine
visual effects	Spitshine VFX
VFX post supervisor	Grant Pichla
lead compositor	Josh Bonzheim
VFX artist	Rylie Quinn
casting assistant	Emma Balk
graphic designer <i>The Con Artiste!</i>	Salvatore Garguilo
photographer <i>The Con Artiste!</i>	Marc Parroquin
set production assistants	Kelis Candelaria, Timmy Lewis, Natalie Ortiz
art department production assistants	Steve Demasi, Robert Macaulay
drivers	Daniel Hirsch, Elkan Durham, Ari Veach



# standby

## a statement from director robert gomes

*standby* is about the fear of failure, and the re-igniting of passion — for art and for life.

As a professional actor, I've been a standby, or understudy, many times in my career. While it can be a rewarding and challenging job, there are drawbacks: the anxiety of never knowing when you might, at a moment's notice, have to go on for another actor, giving your version of their performance of their role, and the ever-so-slight ego blow (even though you're compensated) of sitting on the sidelines.

This film is about some of the joys and heartaches of a standby's life.

Every play, every musical you see has a team of hard-working standbys sitting backstage. *standby* is my tribute to those unsung actors .

-robert gomes



standby

# contact

for the birds productions

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producer   d shroff

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