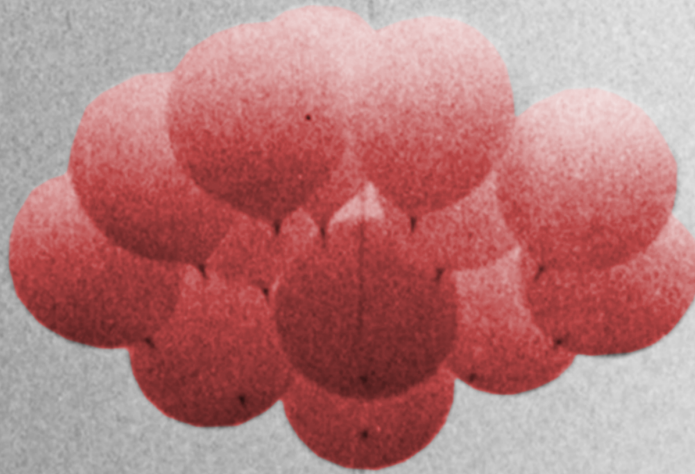


ONWARD AND UPWARD

a workshop production



director

Rebecca Salzhauer

musical director

Griffin Strout

performances

December 2nd to 4th

auditions

Early September

*music and book by Charlie Romano • lyrics and book by Will Wegner
based on the play Up (The Man in the Flying Chair) by Bridget Carpenter*

We're so excited that you're interested in auditioning for *Onward and Upward*. This new musical will be workshopped throughout the semester and will culminate in a series of staged readings from December 2nd to 4th. In this packet, you'll find a brief description of the show, a character breakdown, and information about auditions and the commitments of the rehearsal process.

If you're interested in working on the show in a technical capacity (unfilled roles are listed [here](#)) please email our producer, Will (will.wegner@yale.edu).

We've tried to make this packet as comprehensive as possible, but we know that you may still have questions for us! We invite you to attend our joint audition workshop with the team for *The Light in the Piazza* at 3 PM on Sunday, September 5 in the Hopper Cabaret. During the workshop, you'll be able to meet members of the team, learn more about auditioning for a musical, and ask any questions you may have! You can RSVP on Facebook [here](#).

THE SHOW

Based on Bridget Carpenter's play [*Up \(The Man in the Flying Chair\)*](#) and inspired by the true story of "Lawnchair" Larry Walters, *Onward and Upward* is a new musical by Will Wegner ('22) and recent alumnus [Charlie Romano](#) ('19).

Synopsis: In 1982, Walter Griffin made national headlines after tying a cluster of weather balloons to a lawnchair and flying 16,000 feet into the sky. Nearly two decades later, Walter is still searching for his next great invention, but struggles to get his ideas off the ground. His wife, Helen, encourages him to seek out a steady job, while their son, Mikey, searches desperately for recognition of his own. After a surreal encounter with his idol, high-wire artist Philippe Petit, Walter believes he has secured his ticket to success, and goes to great lengths to fund his new prototype. In the meantime, Mikey finds an unlikely friend in Maria, his pregnant classmate, who soon lands him a profitable job at her Aunt Chris's questionable small business. Helen is overjoyed at her family's newfound stability, but soon discovers that their situation is more precarious than it seems, threatening to topple down off the wire at any moment.

THE CHARACTERS

WALTER GRIFFIN, mid 40s, an aspiring inventor, married to Helen. Walter floats through life with his head in the clouds, unable to move on from the achievements of his past. Despite his earnest efforts to remain a supportive father and husband, he is easily influenced by his fantastical visions, and often fails to recognize his family's real needs. **Range:** F#2 — A4 [*Chest*] — Eb3 [*Falsetto*]
[**Content Notice:** *Walter's character engages in suicidal ideation, and his death may be implied onstage.*]

HELEN GRIFFIN, late 30s, a postal carrier, married to Walter. Staunchly practical, Helen is solely responsible for the continued stability of her household. Her commitment to Walter is frequently tested by his delusions of grandeur, and she is increasingly aware of the impact of his declining mental health. Nonetheless, she wishes more than anything to keep herself and her family afloat. **Range:** A3 — F#5

MIKEY GRIFFIN, 17, their son, a high school senior. Unlike his father, Mikey doesn't have any clear aspirations, and struggles to find where exactly he fits into the world. However, after discovering his innate talent for sales, he begins to understand that his father's view of the world has instilled in him a deeply warped sense of masculinity, fatherhood, and responsibility. **Range:** G3 — A4
[**Content Notice:** *Mikey shares an intimate moment with Maria, which may include kissing and touching.*]

MARIA, 16, a junior at Mikey's school, pregnant. Maria is sharp, perceptive, and frequently sarcastic, displaying a level of maturity beyond her years. She is eager to share her wisdom with anyone who will listen, and is flattered by Mikey's attentive admiration. More than anything, Maria has learned to fend for herself and her child, even when it means leaving her loved ones behind. **Range:** F#3 — G#5
[**Content Notice:** *Maria shares an intimate moment with Mikey, which may include kissing and touching.*]

AUNT CHRIS, mid 40s, Maria's aunt, a small business owner. Aunt Chris is the kind of loud, fun aunt you love to bring around the kids, but might not trust to be their babysitter. She generously offers Mikey a job after a tarot reading, but is chiefly loyal only to her business and family. **Range:** C4 — E5
[*The actor playing Aunt Chris also plays Helen's mother and another small role.*]

PHILIPPE PETIT, between 30 and 50, a high-wire artist. An actual historical figure, Petit appears only as a figment of Walter's imagination. He is the voice in Walter's head that encourages him to reach for the next big thing and to never look back. At first charming and witty, he becomes a presence of increasing darkness as Walter's desperation deepens throughout the show. **Range:** F#3 — G#3
[*The actor playing Philippe Petit also plays several smaller roles.*]

Note: The listed vocal ranges are those from the current draft of the score, but due to the nature of the workshop process, all ranges are flexible. We want the songs to sound beautiful in your voice!

HOW DO I AUDITION?

1. Sign up for a 15-minute audition slot [here](#). If you can't find a time that works, reach out to Will (will.wegner@yale.edu) or our director, Rebecca (rebecca.salzhauer@yale.edu) and we can figure out another time for you to come in or schedule a virtual audition. Auditions will be held in the **Hopper Cabaret** in the basement of Hopper College, just downstairs from the dining hall.
2. During the audition, you'll **sing a 32-bar cut** (about 1-2 minutes) of a song of your choice. If you have a contemporary musical theater song ready, we'd love to hear that. If not, you can prepare a musical cut from the show, which you can find—in the form of sheet music, an accompaniment track, and a plunk track—in [this folder](#). Or, if you prefer, you can perform anything else you'd be excited to sing. If you bring in your own song, just be sure to bring printed sheet music for Griffin, our musical director, who will accompany you on the piano.
3. Next, you'll **read a side from the show**. Pick one from the attachments below and decide which character you want to read as (no need to memorize!). A member of the audition team will read the other character's lines. After you read once, Rebecca will probably offer an adjustment and ask you to read it again to see what a mini-rehearsal together would be like.

After auditions, we'll be holding callbacks during the evenings of Thursday, Sept. 9 and Friday, Sept. 10. We'll let you know if you're called back by the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 8.

If you have any questions about the process, from how to find sheet music to how to find the room, please email Rebecca (rebecca.salzhauer@yale.edu) or Griffin (griffin.strout@yale.edu).

THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

As a workshop, our rehearsal process will be primarily focused on digging into the script and the songs, rather than staging the show or adding in technical elements. As an actor, you'll become an expert on your character and a vital creative voice in the process. During rehearsals, we'll learn music, rehearse scenes and songs, and talk about what's working and what's not. In between rehearsals, Will and Charlie will be working to revise the script and score using insight from the workshop. Throughout the semester, we hope to emphasize process over product.

In that vein, *Onward and Upward* will be a lower time commitment than a typical musical at Yale, and our rehearsal schedule will be relatively flexible. Depending on COVID regulations and other commitments, we expect to have a few meetings (a read-through and some music rehearsals) in September and October, followed by more regular rehearsals in the second half of the semester (about 3-6 hours a week for each actor). The week of the readings, we'll rehearse for 3-4 hours each day.

SIDE 1: PETIT / WALTER

PETIT

Bonjour!

WALTER

Philippe Petit!

PETIT

It is a privilege to finally speak with you *tête-à-tête*.

WALTER

It really is! I mean—the privilege is all mine! I didn't think we'd ever meet. But then, this morning, I saw you up there. On the wire.

PETIT

And everything changes on the wire. A bird doesn't use a leash.

WALTER

A bird doesn't use a leash.

I still remember watching your Twin Towers walk on TV. There are so many things I want to ask you!

PETIT

Since that day, everyone has wanted to know, "Why, Petit? For what?" But there is no "what." There is no "why." Just a man in the sky, forcing you to dream!

WALTER

Wow.

PETIT

Everyone watching understood that they would tell their children about me. Taxi drivers left their taxis. Streets were gridlocked. All the people on Wall Street stopped trying to make money.

WALTER

They looked up.

SIDE 2: HELEN / WALTER

HELEN

How's the hoverpad?

WALTER

Actually, things didn't go so well in the test run this morning. With Mikey. So I'm going in another direction.

HELEN

What direction? Down?

WALTER

I've already got plans for something new. I've got most of the materials lying around from past projects. So I'll only need a few hundred dollars.

HELEN

Only?

WALTER

Please, Helen, don't start.

HELEN

(Quietly.)

They're going to cut my hours down. I asked them not to, but they said they didn't have a choice. It's budgetary. They're cutting them by a third.

(Beat.)

HELEN

Do you want to say anything?

WALTER

What do you want me to say?

HELEN

I want you to say that you're going to find a way to—I want you to say that you'll get a job.

WALTER

A job? I'm *already* working all day, every day. I'm drawing up plans. Building. Looking for opportunities.

HELEN

There's a difference between having a job and "looking for opportunities."

WALTER

And I gave a presentation at the opening of the City of Industry Mall two weeks ago—

HELEN

A job, Walter, a place that you go to every day—

WALTER

I've done that, I—

HELEN

Not in a long time.

WALTER

Just going somewhere, just "showing up" is not—it's not who I am. It's not what I'm supposed to do.

HELEN

What are you supposed to do? Tell me. What are you supposed to do?

(Beat.)

HELEN

When I was a little girl, I did not go to sleep at night and dream about sorting mail. I'm not getting any younger. I don't want to get younger, that's not what I mean. All I want is just a ... a moment of breath.

SIDE 3: MARIA / MIKEY

MARIA

What's your name?

MIKEY

Mikey. Mikey Griffin.

MARIA

How old are you?

MIKEY

Seventeen.

MARIA

That's too old for "Mikey." I'm going to call you Michael.

(MIKEY is silent.)

MARIA

Would you like to know what you can call me?

MIKEY

(Embarrassed.)

Right, yeah, of course.

MARIA

I'm Maria.

MIKEY

It's, uh, nice to meet you.

MARIA

So, Michael. Are you a junior here at glorious San Pedro High?

MIKEY

I'm a senior, actually.

MARIA

Oh, that's *perfect*, because I'm a junior, and I'm only into older guys.

(MIKEY is mortified. MARIA laughs.)

MARIA

Kidding. I am a junior, though. I actually just moved here. How is it?

MIKEY

It kinda sucks.

MARIA

Yeah, that's the impression I get. It reminds me of Alcatraz. Minus all the water. So what do you do for fun around here?

MIKEY

Uh, homework?

MARIA

You're funny. What's your story, Michael?

MIKEY

My story?

MARIA

Everybody has a personal mythology. Their own symbols. You've got some story.

MIKEY

I doubt it.

MARIA

We can debate it later. Do you have a girlfriend?

MIKEY

(Incredulous.)

No.

MARIA

Yeah, I coulda guessed that. You have a kind face, and I know how teenage girls can be. But it's okay. Anybody who peaks in high school is a dismal failure, bound to be on a downward spiral for the rest of their lives. That's what my aunt says, anyway. And at this point, I think I've seen it enough times to agree.

SIDE 4: AUNT CHRIS / MIKEY

AUNT CHRIS

Picked up line dancing in Reno, Nevada. *Goddamn* that's a shithole but you gotta do something to get outta your room. I taught some routines to Maria 'cause what the fuck's the point of doing a line dance alone?

AUNT CHRIS

So you're in Maria's class.

MIKEY

We met in the hallway, actually.

AUNT CHRIS

How romantic.

So, what's your story, kiddo? You rich?

MIKEY

No.

AUNT CHRIS

Poor?

MIKEY

I don't know. Kind of.

AUNT CHRIS

What's your dad do?

MIKEY

He invents things.

AUNT CHRIS

So you're poor.

MIKEY

The stuff he invents is really cool.

AUNT CHRIS

Could I go into a store and *buy* something he made?

MIKEY

Patents are really complicated.

AUNT CHRIS

Kiddo, you're poor, and that's because your dad isn't making it, and your mom's job, whatever it happens to be, is carrying you.

(MIKEY says nothing.)

AUNT CHRIS

Am I wrong?