

THE
AVENEL

PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER



MY BIG GAY
ITALIAN FUNERAL
October 7-17, 2021

AvenelArts.com
732-314-0500

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Anthony J. Wilkinson
(Writer/Anthony)

A born and raised New York native, Anthony is a graduate of NYU's College of Arts and Sciences for English and Creative Writing. He started his career at ABC Daytime's *One Life to Live* and during his fourteen years there he worked his way up to the position of Associate Director. While in that position he earned three Daytime Emmy Awards, seven nominations and was a two-time recipient of the Directors Guild of America Award. Anthony's original production of *My Big Gay Italian Wedding* started his other passion in the theatre world, when it opened Off-Broadway in 2003 at the Actor's Playhouse and later moved to Theatre Four in the spring of 2004. In 2006, Anthony wrote and starred as "Rio La Rocca" in the Off-Broadway production of "Boys Just Wanna Have Fun". Anthony restaged *My Big Gay Italian Wedding* in September of 2009 at the St. George Theatre for an audience of almost 2,000 people. After much discussion and huge debates with regards to the topic, its rave reviews and success prompted an explosive revival on Restaurant Row with a full out Equity cast in April of 2010. The run was expected to last six weeks and wound up extending 14 times in the same location. Aside from New York City, the Wedding has already played in multiple cities in the US as well as Edinburgh, London, Vancouver, Hong Kong, and parts of France. On March 1, 2018, the film "Puoi Baciare Lo Sposo" opened all over Italy, an Italian film version based on the play "My Big Gay Italian Wedding." The film has been distributed with subtitles across different parts of the world and is available here in the US on Amazon and Netflix. In June of 2013 Anthony opened the sequel to *My Big Gay Italian Wedding*, *My Big Gay Italian Funeral*. The funeral ran for over two years at St. Luke's Theater in New York City and has also been licensed in multiple locations by Samuel French. Wilkinson's next chapter, "My Big Gay Italian Midlife Crisis" opened at the Theater Center Off-Broadway in November of 2015. *My Big Gay Italian Midlife Crisis* has also been published and has already been licensed in Kentucky, New Jersey, and Michigan. In 2017, Wilkinson received his first Supporting Actor Emmy Nomination for his role on the Amazon series "Tainted Dreams." Later that year he launched the latest chapter of the series "My Big Gay Italian Christmas," which opened in Atlantic City at the Golden Nugget Casino and has played the last two holiday seasons. He is currently the Executive & Artistic Director for the Avenel Performing Arts Center.



Sonia Blangiardo
(Director)

Sonia is a 3x Emmy winner and 8x nominee, with over 25 years of experience as a producer/director who is currently directing on NBC's Days of Our Lives for which she won her 2018 Best Directing Emmy for. Sonia is the creator, director, and executive producer of the 8x Emmy nominated Tainted Dreams, currently streaming on Amazon. Sonia is also the co-owner of The Usual BS Productions, founded with Brandon Goins. The Usual BS Productions focuses on writing and creating both scripted series and films of varying genres, as well as unscripted concepts and live theater. She was the Executive Producer of C.A.W.L. (College Arm Wrestling League) To Arms, which aired on ESPN in May 2014. Sonia's resume includes producing/directing on All My Children, One Life to Live, As the World Turns and General Hospital.



Brandon Goins
(Peter)

Brandon is thrilled to be returning to the familia of "My Big Gay Italian Funeral" over 6 years after his Off-Broadway debut with the show. Brandon has since created the production company, The Usual BS Productions, with wife & director, Sonia Blangiardo-Goins. Together, they have created & produced many projects for stage and screen including the Emmy nominated Amazon series, "Tainted Dreams."

Instagram: @TheBrandonGoins

www.brandongoins.com • www.theusualbsproductions.com



Debra Toscano
(Aunt ToniAnn)

Debra Toscano is thrilled to reprise her role as "AUNT TONIANN" in "MY BIG GAY ITALIAN FUNERAL" Other credits: MELISSA in the Emmy Nominated "TAINTED DREAMS, "SISTER" in "SISTER'S XMAS CATECHISM" DONATELLA in "HOUSEWIVES OF SECAUCUS", CAROL in "GIRLS NIGHT", and was a winning contestant on "DON'T FORGET THE LYRICS!" Her cd titled, "MY ANGEL" is available on iTunes. For all other credits, pictures, and info. Check out her IMDB: www.imdb.me/debratoscano



Eddie Acosta
(Maurizio/Diamondelle)

This is Eddie's second role in the My Big Gay Italian series, first starring as Rodney/Mrs. Polinsky In Italian Wedding. Eddie is an aspiring actor and is very excited to be a part of this production. Eddie is also known as New Jersey's Hardest Working Housewife, Anida Tension. Having performed in the NYC/NJ LGBTQ+ nightlife for the last 15 years and is currently nominated for multiple NYC Nightlife Glam Awards.



Nick Barbati
(Howie)

Nick is best known for appearing on Logo TV's Finding Prince Charming - television's inaugural all-gay dating show. Nick has also previously appeared in My Big Gay Italian Funeral (Howie) and My Big Gay Italian Midlife Crisis (Frankie Crunches) and serves as the Associate Dean of Campus Life at Rider University.



Tricia Gozzi Shutte
(Lucia)

Tricia is thrilled to be back after playing the role of "Brenda" in The Housewives of Secaucus. TV/Commercials include As the World Turns, Sex & The City, Verizon, A&E, Good Housekeeping, The Movie Channel, & Shoprite. She is a singer with her band, The Strangers (www.thestrangersnj.com) and is a Creative Arts Therapist for at-risk youth. Proud Rutgers & NYU graduate. Love to her family, friends, J, & her son JJ.
Instagram: @triciagozzi



Alexa Harris
(Ondine)

Alexa is thrilled to be performing in "My Big Gay Italian Funeral." Alexa is an Actress, Writer and Director whose comedic sketches have been featured Off Broadway. Alexa has previously appeared in the award winning one woman show "Memoirs of A Painted Woman." She currently works as a director at T.A.P NYC. To find out more visit www.alexaharris.me



Laurie Kirk
(Angela)

Credits include Frances in "No Sex Please, We're British", Mrs. Van Daan in "The Diary of Anne Frank", Queen Margaret in "Richard III", Liz in "Present Laughter", Polonius in "Hamlet" and Lizzie in "Kentucky Fried Calamari". Special thanks to husband Mike and their children-Chris, Kevin, Tommy, Eleni, Chelsea. Always grateful and highly blessed.



**Marta
(Vidalia)**

Bit by the acting bug, just two short years ago, Marta has appeared in all four of the "My Big Gay Italian" series of plays, both on the Off Broadway and Atlantic City stages, and now at APAC. When not on stage, Marta has been honored to serve as Woodbridge Township's Director of Planning, for more than two decades.



**Taso Mikroulis
(Dominick)**

A Chicago native, Taso just won a best acting award for his portrayal of Christian in his short he co-produced/wrote called "The Weekend". Watch his other award-winning film "Prego" online. Credits include Law & Order SVU, Girls, Do Not Disturb, Rent, Aida, and Into the Woods.



Anthony Pampalone
(Ezio/Lou)

Anthony Pampalone is beyond excited to portray Ezio/Lou in "My Big Gay Italian Funeral". Born and raised in Colonia, Anthony is a Colonia High School graduate and later went on to study Human Resources/Business Management from Kean University. Anthony would like to thank Anthony Wilkinson and the cast for this opportunity. He cannot wait to see where his journey in life takes him next.



Marissa Paoella
(Maria)

Marissa is best known for her role as Liz in the Amazon Prime film "Fall Nights in China Grove." She recently graduated from Clemson University with a BA in Theatre and played Lucy in "Bright Star" at the Brooks Center. Shoutout to Papa Ed, Britt, Justin, Mom, Dad, Dan, and Claire for being badass readers!



Geri Rosetti
(Aunt Donna)

Geri Rosetti's previous roles include Luscious Lucille in "My Big Gay Italian Mid-Life Crisis", Aunt Donna in "My Big Gay Italian Funeral", Sister Fabiana in "My Big Gay Italian Christmas", and the role of Connie Scuccifuffio at APAC. Thank my family and friends for their unending support and Anthony Wilkinson for the opportunities, his friendship, and the love he shares with us all.

Robert Levinstein
(Production Stage Manager)



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ACTING THE PART

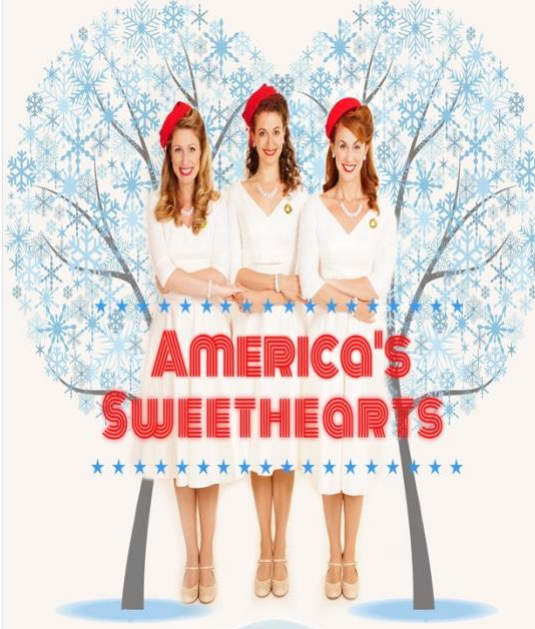
This in-person 6 week course is designed for students looking to cultivate and refine their acting skills. The class will work on commercial acting, monologues, and scenes that are written for the young performer. Students will utilize acting techniques learned in class to expand their repertoire for any future auditions. The class will end with an informal showcase performed for family and friends on the APAC stage on Nov. 23.

TUESDAYS 4PM - 6PM
OCTOBER 12 - NOVEMBER 23
\$300 Tuition
FOR AGES 9-14

Call or Email for more information!
732-588-8903 - Carrie.Rubino@avenelarts.com



November 17 - 21



December 2 - 5

BOX OFFICE PHONE NUMBER
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