

[Exclusive: Mandy Greenfield founds independent production company](#)

The former Williamstown Theatre Festival artistic director launches Red Yes Studio with a slate of nine new plays and musicals.

[Ruthie Fierberg](#) | October 30, 2024 . 9:13 AM



Mandy Greenfield (Credit: Maggie Studio)

Mandy Greenfield has been producing theater for her entire career. She spent her earliest professional days in the offices of established commercial producers, started a nonprofit theater company and a for-profit production company, served as an artistic producer for Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC) from 2003-2014 and led Williamstown Theatre Festival as artistic director from 2014 before resigning in 2021. Now, Greenfield has announced her own commercial production company: Red Yes Studio.

Through the company, Greenfield is focusing on developing new work.

Greenfield is a writer-driven producer — the relationship specifically between a producer and writer ignites her, and muscular writing draws her to a play or musical. That emphasis on writing is actually evident in her company's name.

For more than a year during the pandemic, Greenfield found herself mentally paralyzed, unable to read anything on a page. But eventually, in 2021, she reread James Joyce's "Ulysses." "It was really the first book, if I'm being honest, that I could disappear into again," Greenfield told Broadway News. "I was so swept up in the magnitude and glory of that writing, which I experienced very theatrically. It reconnected me with the power of extraordinary writing." In the final chapter — the most impactful for Greenfield — the words "red" and "yes" — as she put it — "crash up against each other." Red Yes is now a permanent reminder of transportive writing, the kind Greenfield wants to develop and produce.

Greenfield already has a track record for producing this type of work — albeit under the auspices of institutional theaters. But now she's ready to dive head-on into the commercial realm. "This sort of sense that an institution is a parachute of some sort, I think is a little bit of an illusion," Greenfield said, alluding to the fact that nonprofit producing still carries a great deal of risk. But much of that work, specifically theater pieces that originated at Williamstown, continued on to commercial productions.

Six plays and one musical that had been produced by Williamstown under Greenfield's tenure bowed on Broadway, in particular. Greenfield oversaw world premieres of "The Sound Inside," "Lempicka" and "The Cost of Living," the latter of which went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. She also co-commissioned and produced "Grand Horizons," and commissioned and developed "Jaja's African Hair Braiding."

While at Williamstown, if a production transferred to another theater, sometimes Greenfield remained involved and sometimes she didn't. Red Yes puts Greenfield in a position to stay with a project from inception. "I've just heard [from artists] over the years how valuable and sustaining the integrity of a process is with a producer that goes the distance," said Greenfield. "So it seemed high time to conceive [projects] that way, rather than make it and hand it off."

Current projects

Red Yes already boasts an impressive lineup. For its first venture, the company teamed up with Off-Broadway's New Group to develop and produce Jessica Goldberg's new play "Babe," which began previews on Oct. 29. Starring Marisa Tomei (who Greenfield got on board), "Babe" explores the compromises one woman has made to get to the top of a male-dominated business: record producing.

Also on the development slate is Sonya Kelly's new play "The Last Return," directed by Tony winner Rebecca Taichman, and the new musical "Treasure," with a book by four-time Tony nominee Rick Elice and a score by Benjamin Scheuer.

Red Yes has also commissioned two new musicals and two new plays and co-commissioned a new play. "The Ghost Writer," which Greenfield commissioned from playwright Daniel Goldfarb and composer-lyricist Tom Kitt, is an adaptation of the Philip Roth novel of the same name. "This is actually the first dispensation of rights to any Philip Roth material to be made into a musical," Greenfield noted. It's also the only work on Red Yes's current list that is based on existing material.

Greenfield has also commissioned an untitled original musical, inspired by the film "A Place in the Sun," from book writer Julia Jordan and British-popstar-turned-composer-lyricist Emeli Sandé. Also under commission is Calamity West's new play "Inside the World of Somewhere Else" and a new play by Kendell Pinkney. Finally, the

company has co-commissioned a new play by Sarah Treem with American Conservatory Theater San Francisco, which will be directed by the company's artistic director, Pam MacKinnon.

“Part of why I took on a couple of partner projects was because with all of this work being such long lead, by definition, I wanted the company to have activity and really find our way into the commercial space,” Greenfield said. That’s also what motivated Greenfield to make Red Yes a co-producer on the upcoming Broadway musical “Redwood,” written and directed by Tony nominee Tina Landau with a score by newcomer Kate Diaz.

“The work on this slate is juicy, sexy, fearless,” Greenfield described.

The list of names on this roster is striking – but the combinations of talents and the unique pairings speak to Greenfield’s own skill and vision. “I’m saying this earnestly: It’s what I do,” she said. “I’m trained to think about artistic alchemy and how to put together a set of ideas, a process and artists who, together, can see and work toward a North Star we all identify. That is the great joy of being a producer.”

The new model

Greenfield has not only earned the trust of these artists but of a group of investors. Unlike many production companies, Red Yes does not recruit investors on a project-by-project basis. Instead, financiers invest in the company and, as the principal, Greenfield assigns the funds.

And these investors are specifically interested in supporting work from start to finish. In fact, part of the incentive is that Red Yes will grant them access to witness parts of the theater-making process. “It’s investment in the life of a project,” Greenfield said. “I created a new model, and I’m going to see how it goes.”

Part of that new model is developing a single work across multiple mediums. “Some of those projects are already in development across other media, whichever they are suited for,” Greenfield said. “Not all things can become all things, but there are some projects on that list that we’re already thinking about developing either for television or in film or in podcasts.”

It’s a philosophy similar to that of production company Madison Wells. And Greenfield believes the cross-media approach will only serve theater. “We spend so much time lamenting the problem of how to create audiences, and, to me, there’s such a natural synergy,” Greenfield said. “One thing I learned doing that Audible season [with Williamstown in 2020] is that you’re not cannibalizing. You’re growing your audience. There is the data to back that up.”

“Get the quality right, create across media simultaneously, control the distribution of it,” Greenfield punctuated.

No matter the medium, “extraordinary, elevated, excellent writing” will propel Red Yes.

After all, the moniker represents that Greenfield is devoted to “reinvesting in words” and “the reminder of the possibility of where great art can take us.”

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