NOV 8 – DEC 8

FALSETTOS

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
WILLIAM FINN

BOOK BY WILLIAM FINN
AND JAMES LAPINE

DIRECTED BY
NICK BOWLING

MOVEMENT DIRECTION BY
WILLIAM CARLOS ANGULO

MUSIC DIRECTION BY
OTTO VOGEL

court THEATRE

Timeline Theatre Company

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

We're delighted to welcome you to William Finn and James Lapine's *Falsettos*, groundbreaking when it first premiered in 1992 and resonant as ever, thanks to its beauty, inimitable music and lyrics, depth of emotion, and poignancy.

Originally conceived as two separate one-act musicals—*March of the Falsettos* (1981) and *Falsettoland* (1990)—those resounding pieces came together to form the *Falsettos* we know and love today. Now, thirty-two years after its premiere, this production once again unites two dynamic entities: Court Theatre and TimeLine Theatre Company.

A partnership such as this is only possible in Chicago. This city has a remarkably supportive, expansive, and uniquely literary theatre community, so a collaboration between two of Chicago's most dramaturgically rich companies simply makes sense. Court reimagines classic theatre to illuminate our current times. TimeLine explores stories that connect history with the sociopolitical issues of today. *Falsettos* is a natural intersection of our complementary and mission-driven organizations.

However, Finn and Lapine didn't set out to craft a piece of classic theatre, nor were they aiming to write a history play. They were responding to life in the moment—celebrating coming out and coming into one's own—and bringing queer characters and an extended, blended family to the stage with an authenticity that was rarely seen in American plays and musicals at that time.

Looking back through the lens of more than three decades, *Falsettos* deserves its due as both a trailblazing classic and an exemplification of a pivotal moment in time. It portrays an era of awakening and tremendous uncertainty, not unlike our own, and intimately depicts a turning point for the LGBTQIA+ community through a family's journey of highs, lows, love, and loss.

Guiding this journey is Nick Bowling, whose visionary leadership and body of work have distinguished him as one of Chicago's most renowned directors. Much like the aforementioned uniting of distinct parts, here too is another full-circle *Falsettos* moment: Nick is a co-founder and Associate Artistic Director of TimeLine. More than 25 years ago, he served as Casting Director—and later Associate Artistic Director—at Court. Nick has made an indelible imprint on both our organizations, and we know his powerful storytelling will impact you as well.

We couldn't be happier to unite, uplift, and rejoice in the classic mastery of *Falsettos*. Thank you for joining us.

With gratitude,

PJ Powers
TimeLine Theatre
Artistic Director

Mica Cole
TimeLine Theatre
Executive Director

Angel Ysaguirre
Court Theatre
Executive Director

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Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director

PJ Powers, *Artistic Director*
Mica Cole, *Executive Director*

NOV 8 - DEC 8, 2024

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DIRECTED BY NICK BOWLING

MOVEMENT DIRECTION BY WILLIAM CARLOS ANGULO

MUSIC DIRECTION BY OTTO VOGEL

Arnel Sancianco U.S.A., Scenic Designer
Theresa Ham U.S.A., Costume Designer
Maggie Fullilove-Nugent, Lighting Designer
Josiah Croegaert, Lighting Designer
Stephanie Farina, Sound Designer
Sarah Ramos, Sound Designer
Sammi Grant, Vocal and Dialect Consultant
Deborah Blumenthal, Production Dramaturg
Batsmoke Entertainment, Roller Skating Instruction
Sheryl Williams, Culture and Consent Consultant
Becca McCracken C.S.A., Casting
Kate Ocker,* Production Stage Manager
Katrina Herrmann,* Assistant Stage Manager

Setting: Various locations in New York City, 1979-1981.

Please note: This production contains flashing lights and water-based haze.

Falsettos is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com.

Falsettoland was produced Off-Broadway by Maurice Rosenfield and Lois Rosenfield, Inc. with Steven Suskin.
National Tour originally produced by The Globe Theatre, Artistic Director Jack O'Brien, Managing Director Tom Hall.
Falsettos was originally produced on Broadway by Barry and Fran Weissler.

The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Court Theatre is a constituent of the League of Resident Theatres and the Illinois Humanities Council. Court Theatre and TimeLine Theatre are constituents of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events. Court Theatre acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

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CAST

Ensemble *(in order of appearance)*

Marvin ..... Stephen Schellhardt*
Whizzer ..... Jack Ball*
Mendel ..... Jackson Evans*
Jason ..... Charlie Long
Jason (alternating) ..... Eli Vander Griend
Trina ..... Sarah Bockel*
Dr. Charlotte ..... Sharriese Hamilton*
Cordelia ..... Elizabeth Stenholt

Musicians

Conductor ..... Otto Vogel
Synthesizer ..... Harper Caruso
Percussion ..... Alek Boggio
Flute, Clarinet, Alto Sax ..... Sophie Creutz
Bassoon ..... Eva Butcher

Dance Captain

Dan Gold

Understudies

Jodi Gage (*Trina*)
Dan Gold (*Marvin*)
Natalie “Nat” Renee Savoy (*Cordelia, Dr. Charlotte*)
Sam Shankman (*Mendel*)
Josh Pablo Szabo (*Whizzer*)

*Denotes a member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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PRODUCTION CREW

Assistant Director ..... Myesha-Tiara
Assistant Dramaturg ..... Molly Sharfstein
Associate Casting Director ..... Celeste M. Cooper
Rehearsal Accompanist ..... Elena Gill
Associate Scenic Designer ..... Lauren M. Nichols
Scenic Artists ..... Michael A.C. Besancon U.S.A.,
Sarah Lewis U.S.A. , Julie Ruscitti U.S.A.
Carpenters ..... Cordell Brown, Danny Durst, Brian Wasserman
Properties Artisan ..... Persephone Lawrence
Assistant Costume Designer ..... Lucy Elkin
Costume Shop Assistant ..... Jessica Donaldson
Stitcher ..... Eric Guy
Wardrobe Technician/Deck Crew ..... Sebastian Van Horn
Wig Technician ..... Hannnah Lunt
Assistant Lighting Supervisor ..... Emily Brown
Electricians ..... Dare Azizi, Emily Brown, Kenneth Martin
A2 ..... Christine Burquest
Audio Crew ..... Angela Joy Baldasare, Joe Court
Floor Manager ..... Amanda Blanco
Crew Cover ..... Alex Umekubo
Young Performer Supervisor ..... Maddie Curtin

Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO,CLC.

Special thanks to Bri Sudia, Rebecca Makkai, Jennifer Brier, Sheila E. Jelen, Osnat Strulov-Shlain, Sean Hennessy/ Riverside Chess Club, Richard Asch, Elizabeth Law, Jim Huberty, Danny Kopelson, John Spencer, Ronn Smith, and Kirk Purvis.

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court THEATRE

2024/25 SEASON UP NEXT

FEB/MAR 2025

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

By Lorraine Hansberry
Directed by Associate Artistic Director
Gabrielle Randle-Bent

A stunning portrayal of a family's fight for dignity and the right to dream. As the Youngers await their recently deceased patriarch's life insurance check, they allow themselves to imagine a bigger life—a life with room to breathe—until those plans are thrown into jeopardy. Hansberry's language rings as wise and prescient as ever in her moving answer to Langston Hughes's question, *What happens to a dream deferred?*

WORLD PREMIERE
APR/MAY 2025

BERLIN

By Mickle Maher
Based on the graphic novel by Jason Lutes
Directed by Senior Artistic Consultant Charles Newell

An unforgettable mosaic of intersecting narratives set amidst the decline of Weimar Germany. This world premiere commission brings Jason Lutes's exhilarating and acclaimed graphic novel to life. Fascism is taking hold; revolutionaries are organizing; creatives are trying to capture the ineffable nature of their changing city; and—as everything falls apart—everyone is faced with a choice: abandon Berlin or fight to survive.

SONG LIST

ACT I

"Four Jews in a Room Bitching" ..... Jason, Whizzer, Marvin, Mendel, Trina
"A Tight-Knit Family" ..... Marvin
"Love Is Blind" ..... Mendel, Trina, Marvin, Whizzer, Jason
"Thrill of First Love" ..... Marvin, Whizzer
"Marvin at the Psychiatrist" ..... Jason, Mendel, Marvin, Whizzer
"My Father's a Homo/Everyone Tells Jason to See a Psychiatrist" ..... Jason, Trina, Marvin, Whizzer
"This Had Better Come to a Stop" ..... Whizzer, Trina, Mendel, Marvin, Jason
"I'm Breaking Down" ..... Trina
"Please Come to Our House" ..... Trina, Mendel, Jason
"Jason's Therapy" ..... Jason, Mendel, Trina, Marvin, Whizzer
"A Marriage Proposal" ..... Mendel, Trina, Jason, Marvin
"A Tight-Knit Family" (Reprise) ..... Marvin, Mendel
"Trina's Song" ..... Trina
"March of the Falsettos" ..... Mendel, Jason, Whizzer, Marvin
"Trina's Song" (Reprise) ..... Trina
"The Chess Game" ..... Marvin, Whizzer
"Making a Home" ..... Mendel, Trina, Jason, Whizzer
"The Games I Play" ..... Whizzer
"Marvin Hits Trina" ..... Marvin, Whizzer, Jason, Mendel, Trina
"I Never Wanted to Love You" ..... Trina, Mendel, Jason, Whizzer, Marvin
"Father to Son" ..... Jason, Marvin

ACT II

"Falsettoland/It's About Time" ..... Full Company
"The Year of the Child" .... Jason, Trina, Marvin, Mendel, Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia
"Miracle of Judaism" ..... Jason
"The Baseball Game" ..... Full Company
"A Day in Falsettoland" ... Mendel, Whizzer, Trina, Jason, Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia
"Raquetball" ..... Whizzer, Marvin, Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia, Trina, Mendel
"The Fight" ..... Full Company
"Everyone Hates His Parents" ..... Mendel, Jason, Marvin, Trina
"What More Can I Say?" ..... Marvin
"Something Bad is Happening" ..... Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia
"Racquetball II" ..... Whizzer, Marvin, Trina, Cordelia, Dr. Charlotte
"Holding to the Ground" ..... Trina
"Days Like This" ..... Full Company
"Cancelling the Bar Mitzvah" ..... Trina, Jason, Mendel
"Unlikely Lovers" ..... Marvin, Whizzer, Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia
"Another Miracle of Judaism" ..... Jason, Dr. Charlotte
"You Gotta Die Sometime" ..... Whizzer
"Jason's Bar Mitzvah" ..... Full Company
"What Would I Do?" ..... Marvin, Whizzer, Mendel
"Unlikely Exit" ..... Orchestra

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court

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BY LISA PETERSON & DENIS O'HARE
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DIRECTED BY CHARLES NEWELL
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Photo of Timothy Edward Kane by Michael Brosilow.

IN CONVERSATION

DIRECTOR NICK BOWLING,
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR WILLIAM CARLOS ANGULO,
AND MUSIC DIRECTOR OTTO VOGEL

Just after the first day of rehearsal, Director Nick Bowling, Movement Director William Carlos Angulo, and Music Director Otto Vogel sat down to discuss Falsettos. This show is as surreal as it is grounded; playful as it is heartbreaking, and their conversation was equally wide-ranging, covering Stravinsky; the terror, newness, and joy of coming out; surrealism; and roller skating. It did not disappoint.

Below is an excerpt of their conversation. Read on to get a glimpse into the process and hear directly from the creatives bringing William Finn and James Lapine's modern masterpiece to life.

Otto: *Falsettos* is classic theatre—it was monumental, and still is. It's a new moving portrait set to music that is so weird and zany. It's funky and it's so strange. It's a musical language that I've had to learn, and all the actors are learning, and it's going to be very special.

Nick: And it's also very catchy! There are moments of very classical musical theatre, and then more strange pieces of music—as you were saying—but the truth is, many of the songs are earworms. I find it going through my brain all the time.

Otto: "The Year of the Child" is one of my favorite songs; it's very catchy, very pop-y. And "The Baseball Game" really pushed me to the limits of the inventiveness of musical theatre. The rhythm of this whole musical is very much like Stravinsky—I can't explain it.

William: It feels so contemporary to me. It feels like it could have been written this year, really, and not just musically (even though, musically, it does sound like a contemporary opera).

Otto: I love opera, but contemporary opera wishes it could be like *Falsettos* [laughs]. It made the rule book. This show is music, after music, after music. There are crazy shifts. You get this whiplash that you're not expecting as an audience. And, as an audience, it doesn't give you permission to sit back and applaud.

Nick: Usually, you have scene, song, scene, song, and those scenes allow you to sit back and listen. With a sung-through musical, you keep sitting forward throughout. There's an engine to it that continues moving forward, and it feels almost like the movement never stops. And, Otto, that's your job [laughs], to keep this thing propelling forward.

William: When everything is underscored and everything is sung through, there's so much emotional richness and information coming from the music. There's so much to excavate. Getting to figure out how to color that in physically provides a lot of opportunities.

Nick: What would you say is the physical style of the show, does it have one?

William: You've talked a lot about Impressionism—how *Falsettos* is about these people doing an impression of family, or an impression of a relationship, or an impression of a marriage. These people are performing these roles, more than anything, so—physically—we're playing with the moments when the actors pull out of that performance and talk directly to the audience. Jason is very forthright with his feelings. Apart from him, all of these people are trying to present a version of themselves that they want everyone else to see. In the case of Whizzer and Marvin, there weren't a lot of examples of how queer relationships could work, so we see Marvin calling Whizzer his "friend" and not knowing how to talk to his son about these things. They're figuring out how to perform.

> "The show is filled with the past and present all at the same time, so it unleashes our creativity and our freedom to let it be surreal."

Nick: In a way, he can't help but perform. For the past forty years, he has been living a lie and performing. He's trying to be real, but he doesn't know how because, emotionally, he's an adolescent, like his own son. This whole show is about moving from adolescence to adulthood. The beautiful and sad part is that Marvin's doing that because he was put into a closet—whether he was put there by himself, or society, or all of the reasons that a gay man wouldn't want to come out in 1979—and he has stunted his own growth. He comes out and the first thing he says is, "I want everything. I want it all." And, in a way, I think he deserves that because, for forty years, he didn't get to say what he wanted. Marvin is such a flawed character, and I think it's mostly because he's like a young boy, a child, trying to figure all of that out.

William: Thinking about the title, "falsettos" is playing with the way that some gay men talk, and it also literally refers to an unchanged voice; someone who hasn't gone through puberty yet. I'm excited about the "March of the Falsettos" number because we're treating it like a dream sequence: Trina sings about these little boys who rule the world, and how the people in charge—including the men in her life—are really just immature boys. In this number, the men are dressed to look like little boys who are performing the role of adults with power. So, when thinking about the physical world, we're trying to figure out that sense of play. I'm interested in the Marvin/Jason relationship; the idea that Jason is a mini version of his dad, and that's why Trina is so worried about him. You talk a lot about these characters having the spirit of a boy, and how they're playing a really elaborate game until the very end of the show.

Nick: Most of the show is that game. It's treated like a game of chess, it becomes a game of racquetball, and we even get power running (all these great '80s references!). There are board games throughout, too. We're using games as an inspiration for the show, even down to the set design.

William: There are really exciting opportunities for world-building through the set, but also the movement. *Falsettos* takes place in such a juicy period. We're coming out of the disco era, and moving into Jazzercise and hip hop, and then we're in the '80s and the whole family goes to the roller rink. Maybe one of them is really amazing, and maybe one of them has to hold the wall the whole time, and maybe Jason has to hold Mendel's hand the whole time, and they're all figuring it out together, which, in a way, echoes the spirit of the piece. They're all just kind of a bit wobbly and trying to figure it out.

Nick: It's the gayest thing I can remember from 1980 … there were disco lights and mirror balls, and everybody's on skates and dancing and wearing outlandish clothing, short shorts, and bright colors. There's a freedom about skating. The first half of the show should feel really fun, and all the furniture's on wheels, and the actors are on wheels, and the whole thing moves like crazy. And that's how coming out of the closet feels for Marvin.

William Finn wrote a musical with a gay protagonist, who is not a victim and is in control of his own destiny. That was a very unusual thing. There were very few plays and few musicals before this that had a leading, gay character who was not a fop, a comic, or a tragic victim, but was someone who was flawed, and mistaken, and trying to be better. And that makes it so important. This play addresses coming out in this period, and the sexual revolution, and the terror and the newness of it all. I was there. It was a scary time to step out and say, "I'm gay. I want to live a life like this. I want the world to know it." Marvin talks about wanting to keep part of the past and marry it with his present to create a new type of modern family. The show is filled with the past and present all at the same time, so it unleashes our creativity and our freedom to let it be surreal. William Finn is so intellectual and the lyrics are very, very fast and smart, but he's more interested in how something makes you feel, rather than how it makes you think. He's interested in getting to your gut by going through your mind.

William: If you could be any role in the play, what role would you be?

Otto: Cordelia. She has a little princess track, which is so fun.

William: Dr. Charlotte might be my favorite. If I could play anyone, though, it'd probably be Jason. He's the only one who's not really performing.

Nick: Jason, the character, would have been born the same year that I was born. I have to say, though, I don't connect as much with Jason, even though that should make sense. I connect so strongly with Marvin. I remember those feelings of coming out of the closet, and wanting to figure out my life. It took me until I was 22 and it affected me in a lot of ways. I couldn't even choose what characters I wanted to play as an actor, because I didn't know who I was yet; I didn't want to admit who I was.

William: There was nobody like Marvin, prior to this show. We typically want queer characters in musicals to be young and beautiful and falling in love, and I can't think of any adult men in musicals who are portrayed how Marvin is portrayed, which makes this show feel very up-to-date.

Nick: There's an idea that has become more common: Whose shoulders am I standing on? In a way, we're standing on Marvin's shoulders, as shaky as they may be. He's a mess, but he's standing up. He's trying to create a life.

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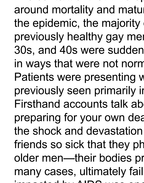
FALSETTOS NOW AND THEN:
AN AGING TEXT OFFERS PERSPECTIVES ON GROWING UP

BY DRAMATURG DEBORAH BLUMENTHAL

As a graduate student at the University of Chicago nearly fifteen years ago, I studied the American AIDS plays and how we think about their lifetimes as scholars, audiences, and artists. I wrote about how time and the practice of revival had made these texts into history plays that they were not originally written to be. They were written as urgent portrayals of their moment, but time had infused them with a dramatic irony they hadn't been built with. In essence, "now" receded into "then," and newer audiences brought with them newer information—they knew more than the characters did about what was going to happen.

The lifetimes of these texts have created a knowledge gap between their characters and their audiences. *Falsettos* depicts some of the earliest days of the AIDS epidemic seen in an American theatrical text; for a show that takes place in 1981, that gap is the widest of all. In June of that year, the CDC issued a report that was the first official documentation of what would later be known as AIDS. Whizzer would've been one of its earliest victims. In 1981, concrete information was scarce. The term "AIDS" would not be used for the first time until 1982. The virus that causes it was discovered in 1983. With texts that take place later in the epidemic, modern audiences know more about what will unfold as it drags on. In this case, they possess the details of what it would be—or that it would be at all. Act One of *Falsettos* began as a one-act called *March of the Falsettos*, written, set, and first performed before AIDS was on anyone's radar.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MMWR

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REPORT

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Pneumocystis **Pneumonia — Los Angeles**

In the period October 1980-May 1981, 5 young men, all active homosexuals, were treated for biopsy-confirmed *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia at 3 different hospitals in Los Angeles, California. Two of the patients died. All 5 patients had laboratory-confirmed previous or current cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection and candidal mucosal infection. Case reports of these patients follow.

In June 1981, the CDC publishes an article in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR): *"Pneumocystis Pneumonia—Los Angeles." The article describes cases of the rare lung infection, Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), in five young, previously healthy gay men.*

When the full text of *Falsettos* premiered almost ten years later, the presence of AIDS informed how audiences watched Act One in a way it could not have when *March of the Falsettos* stood on its own—the impending epidemic became a dark undercurrent that the characters know nothing about. For audiences, *Falsettos* is a show about AIDS, an epidemic that would extend far beyond the bounds of both the story and its original production; for the characters, the term "AIDS" does not exist as they navigate an illness first known as gay cancer, gay plague, or GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency).

In many ways, *Falsettos* is also a show about facing uncertainty and growing up. For Jason, it's a literal coming of age coupled with the upheaval of adolescence. For his father, it's a different journey toward maturity, taking responsibility for his actions, and navigating the precarity of Whizzer's health. The context of the AIDS epidemic also holds weight around mortality and maturity. In the beginning of the epidemic, the majority of patients were young, previously healthy gay men. Individuals in their 20s, 30s, and 40s were suddenly facing death and dying in ways that were not normal for their age group. Patients were presenting with opportunistic infections previously seen primarily in weak and elderly people. Firsthand accounts talk about the strangeness of preparing for your own death at a young age, and the shock and devastation of visiting hospitalized friends so sick that they physically resembled much older men—their bodies prematurely aging and in many cases, ultimately failing. This first generation impacted by AIDS was one for whom time accelerated. Prompted to grow up quickly as the difficulties of late-life came early, they were saddled with experiences beyond their years, like caring for terminally ill friends and lovers, watching them die, and attending funerals on a weekly basis.

While the argument above deals with the knowledge gap between characters and audiences in the performance of aging texts, there is another significant knowledge gap that bears discussion. *Falsettos* is an innately Jewish show—and it's Jewish at its heart in a key way that goes beyond the many direct references in the text. One of Judaism's core values is bikur cholim, Hebrew for "visiting the sick"—a mitzvah, or obligatory Jewish commandment, as well as an act of gemilut hasadim (loving kindness), a foundational social value in Jewish teaching. The obligation of bikur cholim is not simply to visit those who are ailing, but to care for them, look after them, and help alleviate their suffering. In modern times, it's seen as having a more general spiritual effect: decreasing loneliness, providing a listening ear, or a hopeful, cheerful presence.

Jewish tradition also asserts a need to acknowledge and name suffering and sickness, and the importance of bearing witness to loss. It holds that potentially unsettling passages in the Torah—including several chapters entirely focused on graphically detailing illness—must not be skipped, but rather chanted aloud, discussed, and grappled with. Jewish mourning rituals center on acknowledging loss before healing can begin. You would think, then, that even despite not knowing how or why these people were sick (a knowledge gap of a different sort, but a knowledge gap all the same) the Jewish community would not turn away.

However, despite liturgy around treating the ostracized and suffering with dignity, historians have found no evidence of an organized American Jewish response in the earliest—and perhaps most difficult—years of the AIDS epidemic. Most Jewish leaders were silent—some rabbis refused to lead burial rituals for AIDS victims and obstructed AIDS education and activism. Synagogues in individual communities generally did not respond to the crisis unless they were specifically gay synagogues, which had begun forming in the 1970s and acted as local beacons of support.

The first initiative on a widespread organizational level did not come until 1985—over four years into the epidemic. A gay and lesbian synagogue in San Francisco (the same synagogue where, on Yom Kippur that September, a gay rabbi had delivered one of the first two documented Jewish sermons to mention AIDS) successfully lobbied for the Reform Jewish movement to adopt a resolution on AIDS. It called for funding, resources, and prohibition of discrimination against people with AIDS and their families, and resulted in the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's Committee on AIDS. Additional initiatives across Jewish movements followed, more broadly aligning action with the values of bikur cholim and gemilut hasadim.

Marchers from Sha'ar Zahav, a San Francisco gay and lesbian synagogue, at Lesbian & Gay Freedom Day Parade circa 1986.

Contrasting this with what we see in *Falsettos* highlights the utter extraordinariness of what Jason does in the second act when he chooses to have his bar mitzvah in Whizzer's hospital room. When a child becomes a b'nai mitzvah, it signals the start of their obligation as a Jewish adult to fulfill the commandments. Jason's acceptance of Whizzer, illness and all, shows a deep connection to Jewish values—as does his decision to forego a lavish party in his honor to include a loved one who is ailing. Further, holding the event in the hospital—in a place where illness and mortality are inescapable—directly acknowledges suffering. By embracing these values as part of the very ritual of entering into Jewish adulthood, he meets the transition by facing discomfort head-on and showing care for someone whose condition would lead society to ostracize others like him—a show of enormous maturity. He grows up.

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TAKING A CUE FROM THE LESBIANS, DYKES, AND SHIKSAS OF *FALSETTOS*

BY JENNIFER BRIER, PHD

Photo of first rehearsal by Joe Mazza.

The first act of *Falsettos* is about the complex relationship between five Jews: a once-heterosexual couple and their son; a now gay male couple, where one partner has only recently come out and left his wife, and the other is his lover, a prolific and long-out gay man; and a heterosexual male doctor, who is everyone's psychiatrist. On the surface, this act is about gay liberation and what it meant for men to have the freedom to desire and have sex with one another. Right below that surface, it is about how straight women and their children experienced gay liberation as both male sexual freedom and a rejection of the heterosexual nuclear family. Deeper still, it is about how gay liberation battled the homophobia rampant in the 20th century but did not take on how harmful patriarchy could be for gay men, women, and children. Not to put too sharp a point on it, but the opening number features four men exclaiming "BITCH" dozens of times, and a woman carrying a laundry basket.

The budding queer (an anachronistic term—"queer" would not be a reclaimed descriptor until well into the '90s) we meet in Act One is living in a world where gay male liberation and patriarchy are deeply intermingled. The "Tight-Knit Family" has a patriarch at its head: Marvin sings, "kid, wife, and lover, will have to admit, I was right. I cushioned the fall. I want it all." The "all" for Marvin is to control all the other characters, his ex-wife, his son, and his lover. In "This Had Better Come to a Stop," Marvin commands, "Whizzer's supposed to always be here, making dinner, set to screw. That's what pretty boys should do. Check their hairlines, make the dinner, and love me." Trina responds from her point of view, "I chopped it and served his food. The asshole forced me…. And still the bastard divorced me." The song ends with Trina and Whizzer addressing Marvin, "You've got a temper that redefines temper and – this had better come to an end!" They are the ones who have taken the brunt of the fall.

Trina, the only woman in Act One of *Falsettos*, responds to Marvin's controlling behavior by alternating between an angry mess and an exhausted one, a mess made by Marvin's patriarchal wrath. She sings, "I'm breaking down…. It's me who is the matter, talking madder than the maddest hatter…I only want to love a man who can love me or like me or help me." Three songs later, she is betrothed to her psychiatrist and teary-eyed that men are the problem: "I'm tired of all the happy men who rule the world…Happy, frightened men who rule the world. Stupid, charming men. Silly, childish jerks." Why does Trina's anger so quickly turn to self-loathing and defeat?

The tempo shifts when Marvin feels threatened by Trina being with another man and perceives Whizzer to be playing games with his heart. The song "Marvin Hits Trina," is a turning point for this throuple. Marvin shouts, "Trina, how I despise your need for stupid conversation." The song ends with Whizzer declaring he does not (cannot?) love Marvin, and Marvin smacking Trina. Who could love Marvin, with his demands for having it all at the expense of everyone around him?

Patriarchy meets its match in the second act, where Marvin, who has effectively alienated his entire family (biological and chosen), confronts an emerging, as yet unnamed, global pandemic and finds solace in a pair of lesbians living next door. Since AIDS is the subject of the brilliant dramaturgical note by Deborah Blumenthal, I will not write about the devastation that *Falsettos*, as a play, attempts to foretell or the 40+ years of history of AIDS. Nor about how HIV continues to hurt us all to this day, but I will say that Finn and Lapine were historically accurate to place women, especially lesbians, in the mix of what hospital care was like for some of the first gay white men to be dying from this unknown illness in 1981. The lesbians we meet in the opening song of Act Two—not "women with children," as in Act One, but "spikey lesbians, women internists," and "shiksa caterers" —are the feminist heroes of the play. They offer the true antidote to patriarchy. They are also the only gentiles, the only Black person, and the people (save Mendel) who do not make their romantic lives with men. They are feminists who take care of everyone. Dr. Charlotte belts out to her lover, Cordelia, "Do you know how great my life is?... Saving lives and loving you."

It is in a pair of songs that feature the lesbians—both in conversation with one another, and singing in unison—that I hear feminist anthems. In "Something Bad is Happening Here," Dr. Charlotte names that people dismiss her as a dyke and also a bitch: "People might think I'm very dykish. I make a big stink when I must—but goddamn; I'm just professional … If I'm a bitch—well, I am what I am. Just call me doc. Don't call me lady… Bachelors arrive sick and frightened…Something bad is happening." Dr. Charlotte is the only person in *Falsettos* to come close to naming what we would very soon know as AIDS. Then Cordelia displays her love and care for her lover. She sings "She's my doctor, and I love her. She's got passion. She's intelligent…and I love her." These lesbians, dykes, and shiksas model for every other character what love can look like: it is not having it all, it is caring about them all.

The most surprising and redemptive song for me is "Unlikely Lovers." Sung by the gay and lesbian couples toward the end of the second act, it portrays a kind of feminist hope for the characters of Falsettoland. Marvin whispers, "I can't help but feeling I've failed. Let's be scared together. Let's pretend that nothing is awful." He and Whizzer embrace in the hospital bed and declare to one another, "I love you." When Dr. Charlotte and Cordelia appear, they become four unlikely lovers, singing in harmony. Four *queer* lovers, who have a glimpse at survival but only because they sing in unison.

***JENNIFER BRIER**, PhD, is a professor in Gender and Women's Studies and History at the University of Illinois Chicago. Her research and teaching are largely focused on exploring the historical intersections of gender, race, and sexuality. Her first book,* Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Response to the AIDS Crisis *(University of North Carolina Press, 2009) argues that AIDS provides the perfect lens through which to see the complex social and political history of the 1980s and 1990s. Brier is also a public historian of LGBTQ History and HIV/AIDS. She co-curated the award-winning exhibition, "Out in Chicago," on LGBT history in Chicago at the Chicago History Museum, Surviving and Thriving: AIDS, Politics and Culture, a traveling exhibition for the National Library of Medicine, and I'm Still Surviving, a living women's history of HIV/AIDS, www.stillsurviving.net.*

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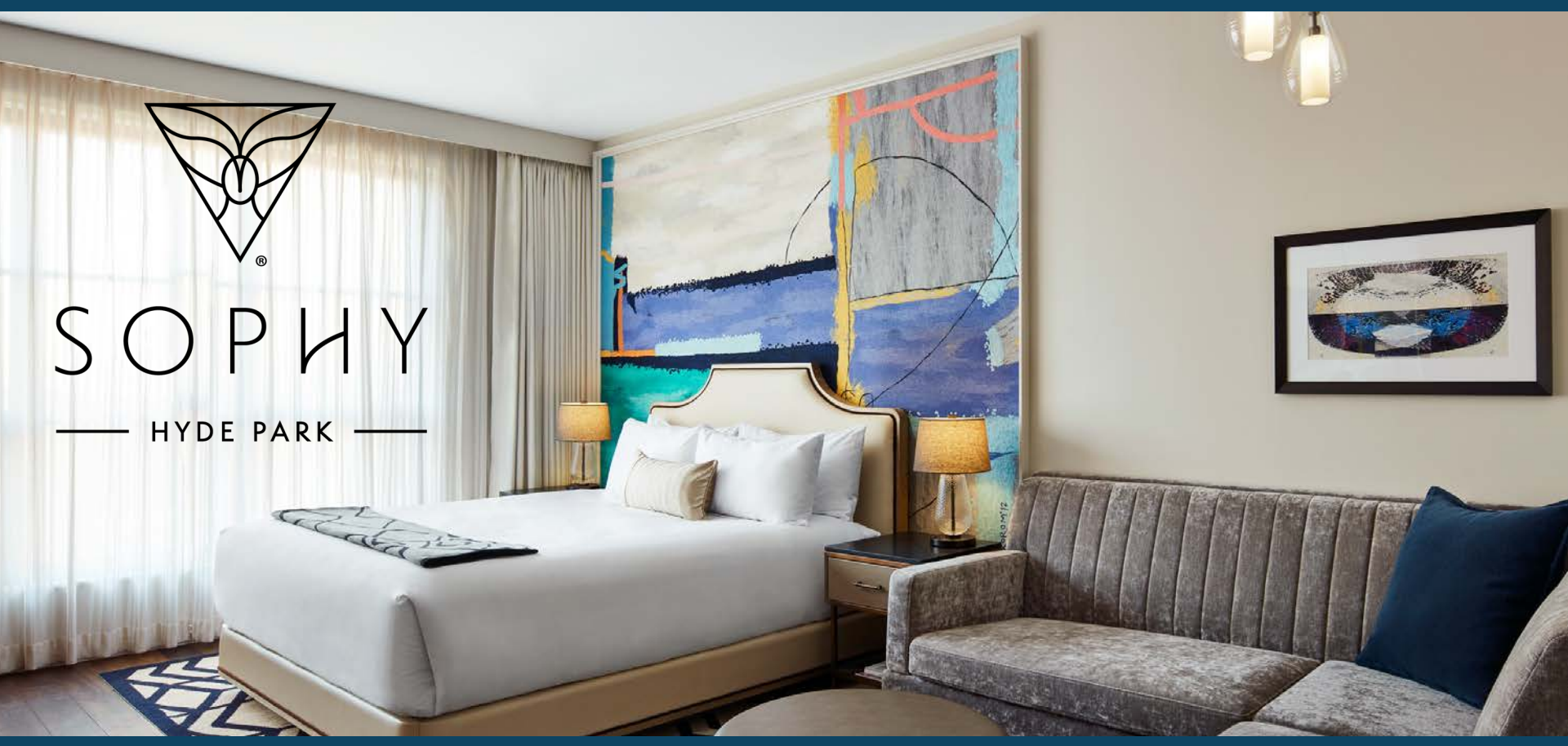

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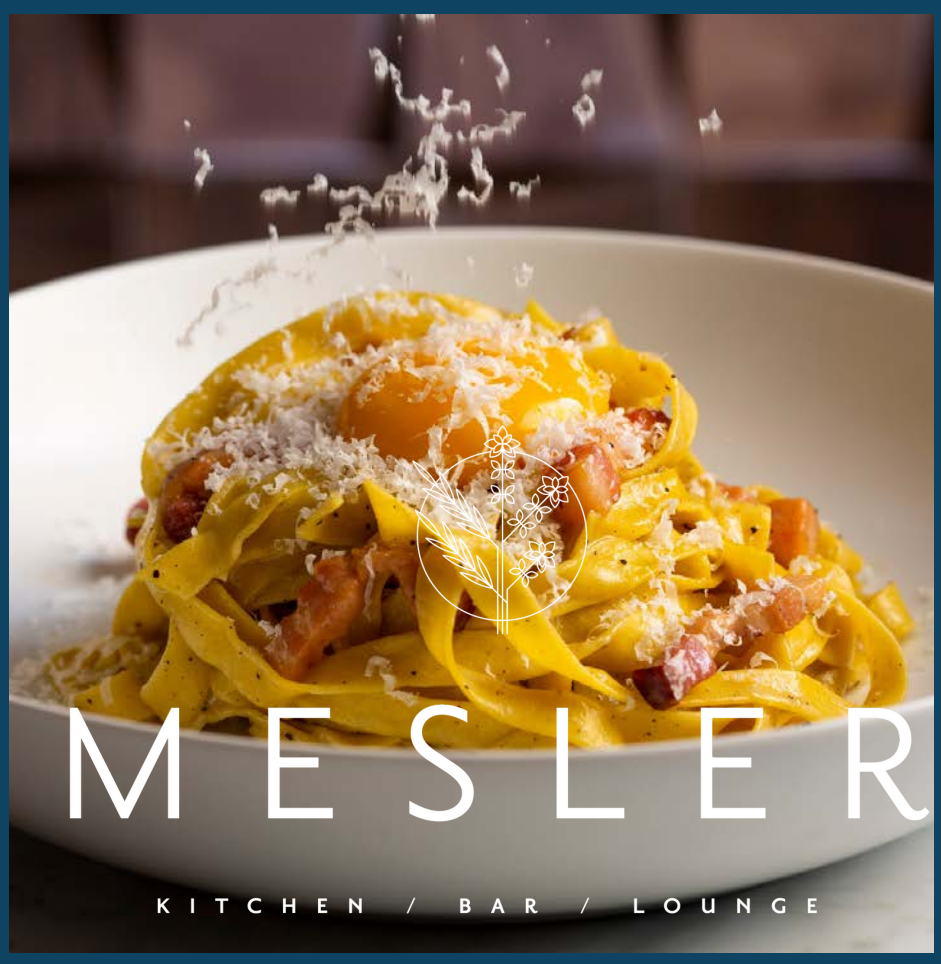

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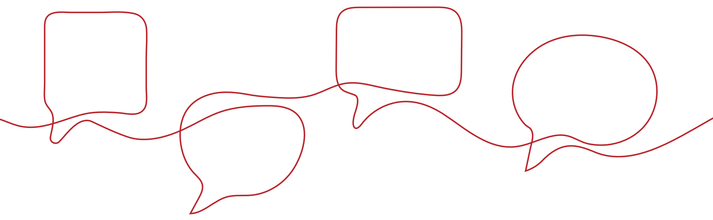
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

BY GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT,
SENIOR ARTISTIC PRODUCER



In *Falsettos*, solidarity begins at home, or, rather, next door. Dr. Charlotte and Cordelia offer much-needed support to Marvin and Whizzer during Whizzer's illness. While this act of care is moving in and of itself, it is also representative of a much broader wave of lesbian activism in the fight against AIDS.

Lesbian allyship to gay men was indispensable, but not necessarily a given. In the early days of the gay and lesbian liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, the lesbian community faced sexism (from the gay community, the heterosexual community, and even feminists) and had to fight for visibility. However—due to President Reagan's blatant, calculated neglect of the LGBTQ+ community during the AIDS crisis and the subsequent devastating human toll—the only way forward was together. Lesbians stepped up by providing care; raising awareness and campaigning; donating blood for treatments, as men who had sex with men were banned from donating blood (these lesbians called themselves "Blood Sisters" and the donation ban persisted until 2023); and advocating against the medical system's violent erasure of LGBTQ+ individuals and trans people (who continue to face disproportionate rates of new infection and violence). They did so while also facing their own risk factors (such as poverty, survival sex, and intravenous drug use, for example), supporting members of their own community who had contracted HIV/AIDS, and – at times – navigating their own illness. Lesbian activists founded the Lesbian AIDS Project in 1992 and housed it in the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) to call attention to these crucial intersections.

The actions of Dr. Charlotte, Cordelia, and the real-life advocates carrying out this work demonstrate the urgent necessity of being united in our pursuit for liberation, as described in the program for the first production in Court's season, *East Texas Hot Links*. And while our world may be different from that of *Falsettos*, queer communities' pursuit of justice is far from complete.

In the time of *Falsettos*, the lesbian community was fighting their own vulnerability and the disappearance of their brothers. In our time, we fight the disappearance of our trans and non-binary siblings, particularly trans women of color and those who live with HIV/AIDS.

We invite you to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Charlotte and Cordelia and combat invisibility with information.

The Anatomy of Transmisogynoir

Marsha's Plate: Black Trans Podcast

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TIMELINE THEATRE *BACKSTORY* MAGAZINE

A hallmark of the TimeLine experience is the company's custom *Backstory* magazine, created for every show. The latest issue offers behind-the-scenes content, articles with further historical context, and artist insights—including a timeline tracing the early history of the AIDS epidemic.

Check out the *Backstory* created for *Falsettos*, continue to learn, and deepen your understanding of Falsettoland. Explore and enjoy!

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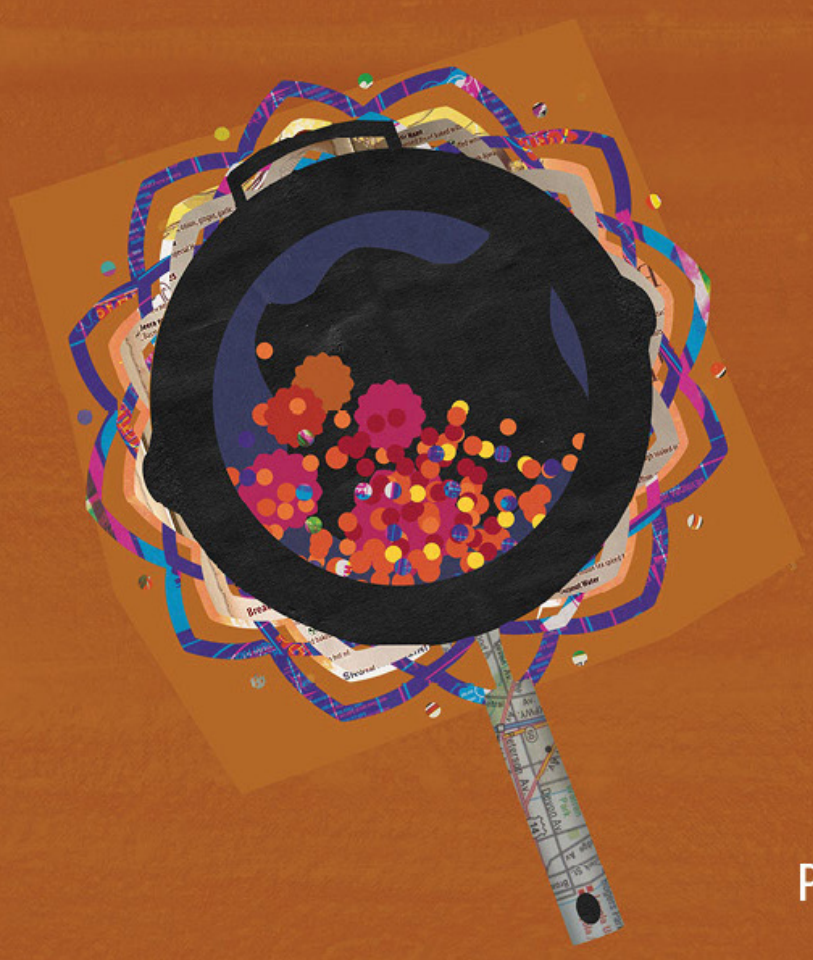

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"BEYOND THE SYNAGOGUE": JEWISHNESS IN *FALSETTOS*

BY SHEILA E. JELEN, PHD

In her recent book, *Beyond the Synagogue: Nostalgia as Jewish Religious Practice*, Rachel B. Gross counters the "arguments of worried pundits" that American Judaism is under threat. Rates of intermarriage and the decline of synagogue memberships lead some to believe that American Judaism is shrinking but in Gross's eyes, the opposite is true: American Judaism is expanding.

RUGELACH PASTRIES

To Gross, if we can reconceptualize our understanding of Jewish religious practice—unlinking it from the religious institutions with which it has long been associated—we'll see that American Judaism is actually "evolving and flourishing." Gross takes us to historic synagogues, to delicatessens, and to museums on her journey to find new, American-Jewish religious sites that fall outside the conventional parameters of what has generally been considered "religious." So, is *Falsettos*, in this vein, a "religious" play? I would contend that it is.

In *Falsettos*, a bar mitzvah serves as the catalyst for a redefinition of Jewish religious practice in Gross's terms. Trina and Marvin, a divorced couple, insist that their son Jason go through the traditional religious coming-of-age ritual against the backdrop of some very non-traditional family configurations. Marvin has left Trina for his lover Whizzer, who subsequently is felled by AIDS. Jason's psychiatrist Mendel marries Trina, and Dr. Charlotte and her partner Cordelia, Marvin's neighbors, ply this complex extended family with food to support them through Whizzer's death. Although the bar mitzvah is the central event organizing *Falsettos*, it is the food wending its way through the play that signals its religious undertones.

KNISHES

Cordelia is the cook at the heart of the play and she enters, singing: "Here's dietitic knishes, gefilte fishes. Food that's from the heart. So take a bite and see if all of your friends agree it's good." Food has become the glue that ties the dysfunctional, loving, group together. The whole cast sings: "Yummy, yummy, yummy, yummy, yummy, Yum… There'll be food like never before, what a day to remember! This is the year, is the year, is the year of Jason's bar mitzvah." The play is punctuated by queries such as the following: "Tell me how it tastes. Tell me if it's good. Tell me, dear, if you'd like seconds." At one point, Cordelia appears in the hospital where Marvin is visiting Whizzer, carrying a tray of food, and she says: "Hello. Rugelach, gefilte fish. It's so good you'd think it's Italian. Also a soup made from chicken that, though unexotic, is antibiotic. Oh, I'm up to my ass in a kosher morass. For aches and croup, try my chicken soup." Marvin and Cordelia turn to Whizzer and say, "Today you seem to be on the way to recovery. Oh, Whizzer, I want to applaud. It's days like this we almost believe in God. Days like this we almost believe in—" and Cordelia interjects "Gefilte fish" while Marvin says, "God." Cordelia returns: "Canadelach."

MATZAH BALL SOUP

Gefilte fish, chicken soup, Canadelach [matzah balls], and God become one and the same in this rousing homage to Jewishness in America during the AIDS epidemic, a religious community defined not by its institutions, but by its commitment to change and to food.

Jason, skeptical (as most bar mitzvah boys are) about the meaning of this ritual he is being forced to undergo, decides at the last moment to move the bar mitzvah to Whizzer's bedside in the hospital, bringing the family and the food and the blessings and the love along with him. He redefines the bar mitzvah, the age-old Jewish ceremony, within the context of a new blending of communities—the Jewish community with the gay community, the American community with the East-European one implied in the selection of culinary delicacies invoked throughout the play. Religious studies scholar Kathryn Lofton says, "Whatever else religion might be, it is a way of describing structures by which we are bound and connected to one another." *Falsettos* showcases those connections with a satisfying serving of delicious, Jewish, fare.

GEFILTE FISH

***SHEILA E. JELEN**, PhD, is a Professor of Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture and a Professor of the History of Judaism at the University of Chicago. Professor Jelen formerly taught at the University of Kentucky, Lexington where she was the Zantker Professor of Jewish Literature, Culture, and History and Director of the Program in Jewish Studies. She received her PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in 2001 and previously taught in the English Department and the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Maryland, College Park from 2001 through 2018.*

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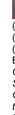
CAST PROFILES



JACK BALL (*Whizzer*) is excited to be making his Court and TimeLine theatre debut! Chicago area credits: *Little Shop of Horrors* (Paramount); *Dunsinane* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Hansel and Gretel* (Broadway in Chicago); *The Coast Starlight* (Milwaukee Rep); *Hit the Wall* (Inconvenience). Broadway: *The Book of Mormon*. TV: *Chicago P.D.*; *Chicago Fire*; *Chicago Justice*; *Somebody, Somewhere*; and *Sirens*. Film credits include *Henry Gamble's Birthday Party*, *An Acceptable Loss*, *Kill the Monsters*, *Room Six*, and *What Happened with Magdalena*. Thank you to my agents at Stewart Talent and to my family! Love you all so much.

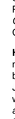
SARAH BOCKEL (*Trina*) is making her Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Chicago area credits: *Into The Woods* and *Cinderella* (Paramount); *Parade* (BoHo); *Into The Woods* (The Hypocrites). Broadway: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Northeast American tour: *Beautiful* and *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*. Regional: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Ogunquit Playhouse). TV: *The Equalizer*. She is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University and is represented by Stewart Talent. Love to Dylan, Warren, and Josh. @debockel.

JACKSON EVANS (*Mendel*) is making his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Chicago credits: *The Full Monty*, *Beauty and the Beast* (Jeff Nomination – Performer in a Supporting Role), *School of Rock* (Paramount); *Guys and Dolls* (Drury Lane); *Anything Goes* (Jeff Nomination – Performer in a Supporting Role, Porchlight); *Ride the Cyclone* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Lyric); *Boys in the Band* (Windy City Playhouse). Touring: *The Realish Housewives* (The Second City). Film: *Christmas is Canceled*. TV: *Paper Girls*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Sirens*. The most heartfelt and infinite thank you's to Dr. Peter Riedell and all the doctors and nurses at the University of Chicago!

SHARRIESE HAMILTON (*Dr. Charlotte*) is making her Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Credits include: *The Nacirema Society*, *Wonderful Town* (Goodman); *It Came from Outer Space*, *Pericles* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas* (Studio Gloria); *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Rock of Ages*, *James and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane); *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Porchlight); *Thaddeus and Slocum* (Lookingglass); *Rock of Ages* (Mercury); *Passing Strange*, *The Wild Party* (Ballroom); *Come from Away* (Broadway National/Australian tour). TV: *Chicago Fire*, *Empire*.

CHARLIE LONG (*Jason*) is thrilled to be making his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Recent credits include Charlie Bucket in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Paramount); *Billy Elliot*, *School of Rock*, *The Sound of Music* (Paramount); *The Music Man* (Marriott); and *Matilda* (The Fireside). Many thanks to the incredible *Falsettos* team, teachers, coaches, friends, family, and Paonessa Talent Agency! @Charlie_Long_Official.

STEPHEN SCHELLHARDT (*Marvin*) is making his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Chicago credits include *Fun Home*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Into the Woods* (Paramount); *The Full Monty*, *Little Women*, *Cabaret* (Marriott); *The Hot Mikado* (Drury Lane). National tours: *Altar Boyz*. International credits: *Persuasion* (Chamber Opera Chicago). Stephen is a Jeff Award-winning artist and proud graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama. Extreme thanks to Nick Bowling and the entire *Falsettos* team for this opportunity, and to the loves of his life, Devin and Abby. www.stephenschellhardt.com.



ELIZABETH STENHOLT (*Cordelia*) is so happy to make her Court and TimeLine Theatre debut with this beautiful show! Elizabeth is a recent Jeff Award-winner for her role as Medium Alison in *Fun Home* at Paramount Theatre. Some of her other Chicago credits include *Grease*, *Shrek*, *A Christmas Carol* (Drury Lane); *The Wizard of Oz*, *Fun Home* (Paramount); *Peter Pan: A Musical Adventure* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Airline Highway*, *Love Kills* (Steppenwolf); *Arcadia*, *TRYST/or the mayor* (Writers). Thank you to my agents at DDO! Thank you to my family and the people whom I call my family. MDJPGP+SRKRK. Your love, friendship, and support mean everything to me.

ELI VANDER GRIEND (*Jason, alternating*) is honored to make his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut. Eli was last seen as Bruce in *Matilda the Musical* (Fireside Dinner Theatre). Chicago credits include *Billy Elliot*, *School of Rock* (Paramount); and *A Christmas Carol* (Metropolis). Eli is a member of the ETC Tap Company. He trains in tap, ballet, contemporary, and hip hop at Extensions Dance Center in Chicago. Many thanks to his coaches and teachers, the Ovation Academy for the Performing Arts, the *Falsettos* team, and amazing agents at Talent X Alexander! Instagram: @elivandergriend.

ALEK BOGGIO (*Percussion*) is excited to make his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Chicago credits include *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Haven). Regional credits include *The Three Musketeers* (Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center); *Natasha, Pierre, and The Great Comet of 1812* (The Collective); *Pig* (The Collective). Instagram: _its_alek.

HARPER CARUSO (*Synthesizer*) is a Jeff Award-nominated musical director, actor, and musician based in the Chicago area. She is a very proud queer Jew making her Court and TimeLine Theatre debut with this production. Chicago credits include *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Haven); *9 to 5: The Musical* (Metropolis); *The Band's Visit*, *Once* (Writers); *Tick, Tick…BOOM!* (BoHo). Much love to Nidhi and our cat, Theo. Instagram: @harpercaruso.

SOPHIE CREUTZ (*Flute, Clarinet, Alto Sax*) is making her Court and TimeLine debut. Recent Chicago credits include: *Beauty and The Beast*, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Marriott); *Anything Goes* and *Sunday in the Park with George* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *9 to 5* (Metropolis); and *Alice by Heart* (Kokandy).

EVA BUTCHER (*Bassoon*) is a bassoonist and doubler, a recent Chicago transplant from Atlanta, GA. Recent Chicago theater credits include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Paramount), *Carousel* (Music Theater Works), and *1776* (Marriott). Atlanta theater credits include *Phantom of the Opera* (national tour); *The King & I* (national tour); *Ever After* (world premiere, Alliance); *Caroline, or Change* and *Assassins* (Jennie T. Anderson Theatre). She was the principal bassoonist of the Atlanta Pops Orchestra from 2014-2023. She now resides in Chicago with two dogs, three cats, her trumpet-playing husband, and—between the two musicians—an absurd number of mouthpieces.

JODI GAGE (*u/s Trina*) is a Chicago-based actor. Theatre credits include: *Romeo & Juliet* (Oak Park Festival); *Inanimate* (Theater Wit); *Night Watch* (Raven Theatre); *The Writer* (Steep Theatre); *Merrily We Roll Along* (Blank Theatre); *Next to Normal* (Dunes Summer Theatre); *Song of Home* (Chicago Physical Theater Festival); *Richard III* (u/s). *Judgment Day* (u/s) (Chicago Shakespeare); *A Christmas Carol* (Pittsburgh CLO); and more. She toured internationally in *Song of Home* (Theatre Lumina). TV credits: *Chicago Med*. jodigage.com.

DAN GOLD (*u/s Marvin/Dance Captain*) is making his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Recent Chicago credits include *1776*, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Damn Yankees* (Marriott Theatre); *Jersey Boys* (Mercury); *Tales in Ragtime* and Bill in *Tarzana Mia!* (Music Theater Works); and *110 in the Shade* (BoHo). He also performs with The Four C Notes: A Tribute to Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. Huge thanks to Big Mouth Talent, his family, and the entire Court Theatre/TimeLine Theatre team.

NATALIE "NAT" RENEE SAVOY (*u/s Cordelia, u/s Dr. Charlotte*) is excited to make their Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Chicago theatre credits include Sister *Act* (Metropolis); *The First Deep Breath* (Victory Gardens); *Get Out Alive* (Steppenwolf's Lookout Series). Regional Credits include *Get Out Alive* (California Centre for the Arts). TV and commercial credits include *The Chi*, Cash App, Foxtrot, and more! Nat gives special thanks to their supportive family, loved ones, and agents at DDO!

SAM SHANKMAN (*u/s Mendel*) is thrilled to be making his Court and TimeLine Theatre debut. Some previous Chicago credits include *Fiddler on the Roof*, *South Pacific*, *Mary Poppins*, *Shrek* (Drury Lane); *Young Frankenstein* (Mercury); *Little Shop of Horrors* (Citadel); *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* (Northlight); as well as credits with Marriott, Chicago Shakespeare, Theatre at the Center, Porchlight, and Blank. Represented by Stewart Talent; Northwestern University graduate. Thanks to the *Falsettos* team, and all of my love to Adam! IG: @samshankman.

JOSH PABLO SZABO (*u/s Whizzer*) is making their Court and TimeLine Theatre debut! Credits include *Assassins* (Non-Equity Jeff Award – Ensemble, Musical), *Hello Again* (Theo Ubique); *Rent* (Porchlight); *Cruel Intentions: The '90s Musical* (Kokandy); *Evita* (Drury Lane); *Ragtime* (Music Theater Works); *Dex & Abby* (Pride Arts); *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (Metropolis); *Book of Mormon* (The Jacobins). Other credits: *9 to 5* (Tantrum Theater). Follow their journey: @joshpabloszabo.

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ARTIST PROFILES

WILLIAM FINN (*Music, Lyrics, Book*) received two Tony Awards—Best Book of a Musical (with James Lapine) and Best Original Score—for *Falsettos*. He also wrote and composed the Tony Award, Best Score, of *The Faliettes*, and *Falsettoland* (Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Musical; two Los Angeles Drama Critics Awards, two Drama Desk Awards, the Obie and Lortel awards and Guggenheim Fellowship in Playwriting), and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, which was the Tony winner for more than 1,000 performances on Broadway, has produced over thousand productions worldwide, and is currently one of the most performed musicals in the United States according to Theatre Communication Group.

JAMES LAPINE (*Book*) is a leading American playwright, director, librettist, playwright, and filmmaker. Among Lapine's most notable works: *Sunday in the Park with George*, created in collaboration with Stephen Sondheim. It won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Lapine and Sondheim collaborated again on the Tony award-winning *Into the Woods* and *Passion*. He collaborated with William Finn on *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland*, which were later presented on Broadway as *Falsettos* (Tony Awards for Best Book and Best Score), as well as the musical *A New Brain*. In 2011, he was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame and was the lyric recipient of the Peabody Award and an Emmy nomination for his documentary *Six by Sondheim*.

NICK BOWLING (*Director, TimeLine Associate Artistic Director*) was the founding Artistic Director and is now Associate Artistic Director and a Company Member of TimeLine Theatre, where he directed more than 30 productions. At TimeLine, he returns to Court Theatre, where he served as Associate Artistic Director from 1993 ago alongside then Artistic Director Charles Newell. Bowling has Chicago theatrical credits directing credits at TimeLine include The Lehman Trilogy (with Vanessa Redgrave), *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The History Boys*; and many others. Other Chicago credits include 1776 (Marriott), *A Christmas Story* (Paramount), *Guys and Dolls* (Northestern University), *A Catered Affair* (Drury Lane), and others. Bowling is the recipient of eight Jeff Awards for Outstanding Direction.

WILLIAM CARLOS ARGUILO (*Movement Director*) is a director, choreographer, playwright, and educator from Chicago. His work spans the creation of culture, using music and dance vocabulary, experience, and imagination to cultivate identity. Theater credits include MTC, Roundabout, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Nora, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Chicago Shakespeare, Ford's Theatre in DC, The Ark, PCLO, and more. He is a member of Lincoln Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), and the Alliance of Latine Theatre Artists (ALTA). And he currently serves as Director of Education for Teatro Lab New York where he teaches and trains choreographers. Current commissions: 1400MC, Lincoln Center, and Portland Center Stage.

TONY VOGEL (*Music Director/Conductor*) is a music director and conductor hailing from New Orleans. A graduate of the Juilliard School and Bienen School of Music, he earned his bachelor's degree in Voice and Piano Performance. At Bienen, his highlights from behind the baton include Ragtime, Pippin and The Scottsboro Boys. He made his professional debut as a music director this summer with Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* He has also directed two one-act operas and assisted on Lyric Opera's *Kings Forge Opera's production of A Single Man*.

ARNEL SANCIANCO (*Scenic Designer*) is an award-winning designer with a multitude of recognized portfolio. Court credits include Photograph 51 (Lindsay Jones Award), *Bella Bella Linhart*, and *The Moustrap*. TimeLine credits: The Christmas Lady, *Matilda*, *Mamma Mia!*, Regional credits include Dreamgirls (McCarter, Goodspeed), *The Nacirema Society*, *Lottery Day* (Goodman), *Red*, *The Color Purple* (Trinity), *Once on This Island* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Ragtime*, *Pippin*, *Cry Pretty*, *Cover and Gone* (Huntington), *Chor Boy*, *I Am Not Your Negro*, *Mixed Blood Daughter* (Steppenwolf). He is an in depth look at his work visit www.ArnelDesigns.com. Instagram: @arnelsanciano.

THERESA HAM (*Costume Designer*) is a Chicago based costume designer. Recent TimeLine credits include The Audience. Other Chicago credits: Chicago Shakespeare, Paramount, Marriott, Victory Gardens, Porchlight, Drury Lane, Northlight, TimeLine, and Northlight, among others. Regional highlights include Alliance, Asolo, Arizona Theatre Company, Ogunquit Playhouse. Film work includes *Green Pastures* and *Mass Hysteria*. Ham is the recipient of three Jeff Awards for Outstanding Costume Design, and the Ensemble Award. She also received the 2018 Barrymore Award for Outstanding Costume Design. Ham is a supervisor, tee costume shop at Loyola University Chicago. She received an MFA from Illinois State University and a BA from Eastern Illinois University.

JOSIAH CROEGAERT (*Lighting Designer*) is excited to be lighting again after a year of hiatus in crime. Maggie! Court: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Assistant), *Ain't Misbehavin'*, Chicago: *Pouin (Fire!)*, *Mothers* (The Gift), *Fetch!*, The Best Man (Northlight), *Ain't* (Paramount), Theo Ubique). **Last Hermanos** (Red Orchid). Co-Lighting Designer/Underdog Productions: *Tribute Review*, Theopentry Opera (Theo Ubique): Assistant: *What the Mountain Saw* (Theo Ubique), *Rent* (Porchlight). Graduate of Columbia College Chicago BFA. josiahcroegaert.com

MAGGIE FUELLOVE-NORQUIST (*Lighting Designer*) first visited Court Theatre in 1995 to help strike the Tech Nugget, to see Sleuth. Later that year she performed on that same stage. Since then, she has been collaborating as a lighting designer, manager, and teacher in the Chicago theatre community, including Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Court, The Theatre School at DePaul, The Neo-Futurists, The Bluff, The Hypothetic, and Lincoln Park Zoo. Internationally, Maggie is a leader in this community, championing inclusive and equitable practices in lighting and for all practitioners. Maggie would like to thank her parents, Kathleen, Jeff, Ivy, and especially Josiah, best lighting partner in life!

STEPHANIE FARINA (*Sound Designer*) is Chicago-based sound designer and sound mixer making her Court and TimeLine Theatre debut. Recent sound design credits include Ironbound (McCarter); Revolutionists), The Nairrema Society (Goodman), The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Indiana Rep). Mixing credits include Dreamgirls, The Prom, Fiddler on the Roof, and more (Lyric); and 10 years at the Goodman Theatre. Farina is the Interim Sound Department Chair at The Theatre School at DePaul University, as well as a programmer in the IATSE Local 2 of Chicago. Stephaniefarinasound.com

SARAH RAMOS (*Sound Designer*) returns to Court after designing the Gospel at Colonus (Lyric) and Ain't Lace, and having previously spent nine seasons at the Sound and Video Department. Designing credits include: Goodman, Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Lyric, Lane, Writers, American Blues, Theo, About Face, The Gift, Congo Square, Bailiwick, Teatro Vista, The Hypothetic, Chicago Shakespeare Chamber Theatre, First Stage, Renaissance Shakespeare, Indiana Repertory Theatre. She is alumnus of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and a native of Texas.

CAMMI GRANT (*Vocal and Dialect Consultant*) is thrilled to return to both Court and TimeLine after working on *Disney: The Unforbidden Kingdom* (Court) and *Black Sunday* (TimeLine). Other credits include: *A Christmas Carol* (Goodman), *Lost Side Story* (Lyric); *The Band's Visit*, *Once* (Writers), *Dreamgirls* (Paper Mill), *Ragtime* (Marriott), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Drury Lane), *Rent*, *Pal Joey*, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, *Cabaret* (Lyric Opera/Porchlight), *All Shook Up*, *Gettin' Gritt*, and *Beast on the Moon* (Raven). Assistant Vocal Director/Dialect Coach: *Ragtime* (Lyric), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Drury Lane). Grant is an AEA member and serving on the board of the Stage Managers' Association.

PJ POWERS (*TimeLine Artistic Director*) was a founder of TimeLine Theatre Company in 1997 and became Artistic Director in 1999. He has overseen the production of more than 80 plays, including 14 world premieres and more than 40 Chicago premieres. As a playwright, TimeLine has garnered 60 Jeff Awards, including 11 for Outstanding Production, as well as awards for excellence in arts management, including the 2016 Arts Leadership Award from Arts Alliance Illinois Institutions. As an actor, he has appeared in 18 productions at TimeLine; he also has appeared at Writers, Northlight, and Shattered Globe.

MICA COLE (*TimeLine Executive Director*) joined TimeLine in May 2022. A native of Chicago on the South Side, she has worked as an arts administrator and champion of Chicago theatre for nearly two decades, most recently as a national consultant for cultural institutions seeking to develop and extract leadership paradigm. Mica served eight years as the Secretary Producer and Director of Oregon Shakespeare Festival and has produced more than 50 shows, including world premieres and dozens of new plays with regional theatres across the country. She serves on the board of the League of Chicago Theatres Board and as treasurer of Producers' Association of Chicago Area Theatres (PACAT).

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE (*Court Executive Director*) has been Court's Executive Director since 2018. Prior to this role, he served as Executive Director of Illinois Humanities. During his tenure there, the organization established a number of new programs demonstrating the contribution that the humanities can make in addressing today's most pressing challenges. Previously, he was the Director of Special Community Investments at Chicago Community Trust, where he served on the Board of the Poetry Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Northern Illinois Business Justice, and Chicago Dancemakers Forum.

GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT (*Court Service Producer*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her recent highlights include *Antigone, The Island*, and The Tempest for the Minor of Venice (co-directed with Charles Newell) at Court Theatre, *1919* (Steppenwolf), and *The Magical Thinking* (Remy Bumppo). She is a co-founder of the Black Theatre Collaborative program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement. She has a BA in Drama from Stanford University, an MA in Performance Studies, Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and is a PhD candidate at Northwestern University.

HEIDI THOMPSON SAUNDERS (*Court Service Producer*) has dedicated her professional career to Chicago theatre, including 15 years at Court Theatre where she is proud to be part of the leadership team. Prior to joining the Court, Heidi worked as a stage manager and technician for many storefront theatres and spent four years as the Executive Director of Playwrights Rep. Heidi has served on committees or boards for Actors Equity, Resident Theaters, Gabriel Green Legal Aid, the Chicago Family Theatre Commission, the Second Comedy Association, the Illinois Theatre Association, and is currently Chair of the Board of the League of Chicago Theatres. Heidi has an AB and MBA from the University of Chicago, and lives in Hyde Park with her family.

REECA MCCRACKEN (*Court Service Producer, Cultivation*) celebrates her twentieth year of coming to Court Theatre to call the Tony Award-winning Court Theatre home for eight years, and for the past two years as Cultivation Manager. She serves as Secretary on the Executive Board of the Chicago Artists COALition (CAC) and is an Artists Award-winner for Lyric's *Fiddler on the Roof*. She has been an Adjunct Professor for the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, Loyola, Vagabond, the Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, and others. She has dedicated her career to advocating for and celebrating underrepresented Chicago artists. Much love and gratitude to her family.

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ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Winner of the 2022 Regional Theatre Tony Award, Court Theatre reimagines classic theatre to illuminate our current times. In residence at the University of Chicago and on Chicago's historic South Side, we engage our audiences with intimate and provocative experiences that inspire deeper exploration of the enduring questions that confront humanity and connect us as people.

Court Theatre defines classic theatre as texts from any culture, tradition, or era that resonate throughout time and speak to our present moment.

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COMING SOON

We can't wait to share upcoming public programs in conversation with Lorraine Hansberry's masterpiece, *A Raisin in the Sun*, the next production in Court's 2024/25 season.

Coming in the new year.

Sign up for our email newsletter to be the first to know.

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ABOUT TIMELINE THEATRE

Mission and History

TimeLine Theatre Company presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues. Our collaborative organization produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

From the moment in 1997 that six founders each pitched in $50 to launch the company, TimeLine has worked to become one of Chicago's leading cultural institutions by creating theatre that is more than just a few hours in a seat. Our team of Company Members works collaboratively to present riveting stories that link our past, present, and future—exploring today's social and political issues through the lens of the past and inspiring ourselves to re-imagine tomorrow.

And the TimeLine experience extends well beyond the stage, encompassing meticulously researched and interactive lobby experiences, opportunities to discuss the show with artists, ways to take action on whatever the art inspires, and more.

It is a mission unique in Chicago, and beyond.

Now celebrating our 28th season, TimeLine has presented 92 productions, including 14 world premieres and 42 Chicago premieres. Our work has been recognized in Chicago and elsewhere with more than 50 awards for artistic and business excellence, including the prestigious 2016 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions. And we have been honored with 60 Jeff Awards, including an award for Outstanding Production 11 times.

Living History

Founded in 2006, the Living History Education Program brings TimeLine's mission to Chicago Public Schools, working with students on creative exercises related to historically inspired stories on TimeLine's stage and elsewhere in literature. During arts integration residencies of six to 13 sessions, students explore connections between history, art, and their own lives, developing critical thinking and communication skills.

In 2018, Living History launched a new program, TimeLine South—a unique arts program that provides teens a safe space for self-expression, creativity, and ensemble building on the south side of Chicago.

Living History continues to grow and extend its reach beyond the classroom and across the city. Recent and soon-to-launch programs include TimeLine Uptown, TimeLine's first after-school program at Uplift Community High School in our new neighborhood, and TimeLine Next Generation, a program for young adults ages 18-25.

A New Era

TimeLine is laying the foundation for our next era. After more than 25 years of adapting within rented facilities, we're establishing the first home of our very own in Uptown at 5035 N. Broadway, creating a new cultural asset for Chicago. Far more than just a theatre, this inviting and accessible facility will be a welcoming gathering space for entertainment, education, and community.

TimeLine's new home will feature an intimate black box theatre seating up to 250 audience members, expanded area for the immersive lobby experiences that are a TimeLine hallmark, new opportunities for education and engagement, room to allow audience members to arrive early and stay late for theatergoing experiences that extend far beyond the stage, and more.

For further information, please visit **timelinetheatre.com**.

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Company Members are the artistic leaders of TimeLine Theatre Company, working collaboratively together to shape the artistic vision and choose the programming for the organization.

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Resident Dramaturg

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Director of Living History

Ashli Rene Funches
Charles Andrew Gardner
Marcus D. Moore
Lexi Saunders
Ana Velazquez
Teaching Artists

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Interim Director of Development

Rosie Schultz
Director of Donor Engagement

Leah Taylor
Institutional Giving Manager

MARKETING

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Director of Marketing and Communications

Emma Schoenfelner
Marketing and Development Assistant

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Audience Services Manager

Sam Hurwitz
Audience Services and Executive Assistant

Katie Bevil
Leo Miller
Cailyn Murray
Eva Nyman
Audience Services Staff

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Finance Friend
Bookkeeping and Financial Services

Jay Kelly PR
Public Relations

Sterling Strategies
Strategic Management

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