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# ALMOST, MAINE

BY JOHN CARIANI  
DIRECTED BY KAREN ESTRADA



**Cody Estle**  
Artistic Director

**Libby Amato**  
Managing Director

Presents

# ALMOST, MAINE

by John Cariani

**Directed by**  
Karen Estrada

**Scenic Design**  
Lisa Schlenker\*

**Costume Design**  
Amy Horst

**Lighting Design**  
Greg Hofmann\*

**Sound Design and Composition**  
Brian Grimm

**Properties Design**  
Madelyn Yee

**Intimacy and Fight Director**  
Gaby Labotka

**Stage Manager**  
Kira Neighbors^



\*Member of United Scenic Artists Local 829

^Member of Actors' Equity Association

**November 20 – December 15, 2024**

Generously sponsored by Patty Compton, Donna Martynski, and Christine Symchych and Jim McNulty.

Next Act Theatre's 2024-25 Season is supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.



ALMOST, MAINE was developed by  
The Cape Cod Theatre Project.  
Professional Premiere Production:  
Portland Stage Company,  
Anita Stewart, Artistic Director,  
Tami Ramaker, Managing Director  
Originally produced in New York by  
Jack Thomas/Bulldog Theatrical and Bruce Payne.

Proud Member of:



Next Act Theatre | 255 S. Water Street | Milwaukee, WI 53204 | 414.278.0765 | info@nextact.org

## THE CAST



<i>Rachael Zientek</i> .....	Ginette/Glory/Waitress/Gayle/Hope
<i>Jake Horstmeier</i> .....	Pete/Jimmy/Chad/Phil/Man
<i>Rudy Galvan*</i> .....	East/Steve/Lendall/Randy/Dave
<i>Bree Beelow*</i> .....	Sandrine/Marvalyn/Marci/Rhonda

### Understudies

Ginette/Glory/Waitress/Gayle/Hope – **Alicia Rice**;  
Pete/Jimmy/Chad/Phil/Man – **Mohammad N. ElBsati**;  
East/Steve/Lendall/Randy/Dave – **A.J. Magoon**;  
Sandrine/Marvalyn/Marci/Rhonda – **Ashley Rodriguez**

*Understudy will not substitute for listed player unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.*

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association



### Time:

**Not too long ago—or maybe a long time ago—on a cold, clear, moonless, slightly surreal Friday night in the middle of the deepest part of a northern Maine winter.**

### Place:

**Various locales in Almost, Maine, a small town in northern Maine that isn't actually a town and that doesn't quite exist.**

**The play will be performed with one 15-minute intermission.**

## ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

<i>Production and Facility Manager</i> .....	Katie Anderson
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i> .....	Nat Goeller*
<i>Technical Director</i> .....	Adam Hastings
<i>Wardrobe Manager</i> .....	Shelby Kaishian
<i>Scenic Artist</i> .....	Carri Dahl
<i>Light Board Operator</i> .....	Faith Lensmith
<i>Lighting Technicians</i> .....	Jonnie Painter, Star Howard, Faith Lensmith, Maaz Ahmed, Jonah McGinnis
<i>Scenic Carpenters</i> .....	John Knippel, Rollie Layman, Aaron Sewell, Steve Watson
<i>House Management Staff</i> .....	Kaylene Howard, Ariana Manghera, Caroline Norton, Audwin Short, Barbara Slagter, Elisebeth Sparks, Matthew Torkilsen
<i>Ticket Office Manager</i> .....	Christine Yündem
<i>Ticket Office Staff</i> .....	Diane Caspari, Pia Russo, Audwin Short

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Love is the best part about being human, even when it arrives with its full tapestry of emotions—joy, grief, comfort, surprise, heartbreak, embarrassment, and yes, even a bit of corniness. This sweetheart of a play doesn't shy away from the real, sometimes ridiculous and frustrating, often beautiful nature of human connection. It embraces the vulnerability and bravery love requires, and the inevitability that it's often as awkward and uncomfortable as it is profound. Plus, it's funny, which is personally my favorite way to deal with the serious consequences of romance.

A window of magic, punctuated by the northern lights, opens up—so briefly—in order that the residents and visitors of *Almost* can connect to each other in ways they were uncertain were possible. And while it's set in a small town in northern Maine, *Almost* and northern Wisconsin are on very similar latitudes, doncha know. We recognize these chilly but warm-hearted folks—unhip, down-to-earth, a little quirky, and full of hope. And the aurora borealis, more often visible in those far reaches of our state, have recently been experienced in our neck of the woods as well.

If that little window of magic can happen here, perhaps—this holiday season—we can imagine that the world is far from settled and that believing in love—true, wild, unexplainable, ordinary, extraordinary love—is possible. That it is the necessary work of being human and alive.

*ALMOST, MAINE* lives in that space: the intersection of love and ordinary life, where the universe feels most expansive and full of wonder, and a cute romantic comedy can be profound.

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Milwaukee Chamber Theatre  
John Cariani  
Laura Gordon



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DIRECTED BY LAURA GORDON

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2024

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## FEATURING



CASSANDRA BISSELL



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ELIZABETH LEDO



LAURA GORDON  
DIRECTOR





We have great news for patrons who require a hearing boost while attending our shows. Longtime supporter Milan Racic honored his beloved late wife Gordana with a generous memorial gift. Milan's donation was used to install a state-of-the-art Induction Loop listening system at Next Act. (The black striping you see on the theatre's floor along the front rows is part of the new system.) This greatly improves the listening experience for patrons who have special "T-coil" hearing aids, as well as for those who rely upon conventional sound augmentation. The

Loop replaces our older radio signal system, offering a much better quality of sound with far less background noise.

T-coil listeners simply need to switch their aids to the Loop setting. For conventional listeners, handy receiver packs with headphones are available at the Concessions Counter. The same strong sound will be available through either method of listening. We hope you take advantage of this terrific improvement and enjoy Next Act's intimate brand of theatre even more!

Many, many thanks go to Milan for his tremendous generosity. We believe that Gordana would have heartily endorsed this thoughtful and practical gift. Special thanks is also due to Nancy Einhorn for her advocacy and support of this project.

## AUDIO LOOP INSTRUCTIONS

**T-Coil Listeners:** Simply set your hearing device to the Loop setting and enjoy the show.

**Conventional Listeners:** Check out a receiver and headphone set at the Concessions Counter. The House Manager can instruct you on its use, but here are some simple instructions.

Like a transistor radio, the small box has an off-on and volume knob; turn on and adjust for your comfort level. You will need to be in the seats to receive the Loop signal.

The box works directionally; that is, it matters which way it is pointing.

- **In most of our seating,** the box works best when held up straight, with the volume knob on top, and the flat back pointing toward the stage.
- **In the front rows,** you will get the strongest signal with the box laying flat on your leg, with the flat back pointing straight to the floor.

Please ask the House Manager for assistance, if needed. We hope you enjoy the show.



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**JOHN CARIANI (Playwright)**

John Cariani is an actor and a playwright. He has appeared on Broadway and Off-Broadway, at regional theaters across the country and in several films and television shows. He's been nominated for a Tony Award and has done movies with Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken and Ed Asner. Most people seem to know him from *LAW & ORDER*, where his character, Forensics Tech Beck, is alive and well in reruns. As a playwright, John is best known for his first play, *ALMOST, MAINE*, which premiered at Portland (Maine) Stage Company in 2004 and opened Off-Broadway in 2006. It has since become one of the most frequently produced plays in the United States and has been translated into nearly twenty languages. His other plays include *CUL-DE-SAC* (Transport Group), *LAST GAS* (Portland Stage Company, Geva Theater Center) and *LOVE/SICK* (Portland Stage Company, Hartford TheaterWorks). Both *ALMOST, MAINE* and *LAST GAS* are published by Dramatists Play Service. Originally from Presque Isle, Maine, John is a graduate of Amherst College. He lives in New York City. [www.almostmaine.com](http://www.almostmaine.com)

**KAREN ESTRADA (Director)**

Karen Estrada is an actor, director and theater educator who calls Milwaukee home. Previously at Next

Act, she performed in *SILENT SKY* and *LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR*, and was the director of the Next Actors program for just under a decade. Karen has had the pleasure of working with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, First Stage, Renaissance Theaterworks, Third Avenue PlayWorks, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, and is a three-time alumna of the Disney on Classic tour of Japan and Taiwan. Karen is proud to have directed pieces for Renaissance's Br!nk Briefs, Chamber Theatre's Young Playwrights Festival, First Stage's

world premiere *ON THE WINGS OF A MARIPOSA* and the Young Company's *LITTLE WOMEN*, Marquette University, Forward Theater's monologue festival and *JEEVES SAVES THE DAY* at Third Avenue PlayWorks this past summer.

**RACHAEL ZIENTEK (Ginette/Glory/ Waitress/Gayle/Hope)**

Rachael Zientek is a Milwaukee native and is so excited to be making her Next Act debut in *ALMOST, MAINE*. She's performed with many Wisconsin companies such as Forward Theater, Northern Sky Theater, Renaissance Theaterworks, Skylight Music Theatre and Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. She was last seen in *ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!"* at First Stage. Enjoy the show!

**JAKE HORSTMEIER (Pete/Jimmy/Chad/Phil/ Man)**

Jake is thrilled to be making his Next Act Theatre debut with this incredible team of artists. As an actor/musician/educator, Jake has worked in New York City, regional theatre, independent film, commercials and new media. Recent Milwaukee credits include *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY*, *SCHOOL OF ROCK*, *NOISES OFF* and *MAMMA MIA!* with Skylight Music Theatre; and *THE LIGHTNING THIEF (u/s)* with First Stage. Next, you can see him playing Marlin in *FINDING NEMO* at First Stage. Film credits include *SHERMAN PARK* and *THE DRY LINE*. As a singer/songwriter he performs under the monikers Lake Juke and Dacada Summer. He received his MFA in Acting from Purdue University. He is a teaching artist with the Milwaukee Rep and is part of the BFA Acting faculty at the UW-Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts. He sends all the love to his family.



**RUDY GALVAN (East/Steve/Lendall/Randy/Dave)** Rudy (He/Him) returns to Next Act after appearing in THE MOUSETRAP. New York: STUTTER (Staged

Reading with Roundabout Theatre); LABYRINTH Theatre's Barn Series; YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED (Loading Dock's Forklift Series); STUBBORNESS AND BONE (Arthouse Productions). Chicago: UNCLE BOB, AMERICAN BUFFALO (Mary-Archie Theatre); LORD OF THE FLIES (Steppenwolf Theatre); PRIVATE LIVES, THE GENTLEMAN CALLER (Raven Theatre); UNITED FLIGHT 232 (The House Theatre); A LIFE EXTRA ORDINARY (The Gift Theatre) and many others. Regional: SWEAT (Asolo Rep). Film/TV: HIS THREE DAUGHTERS (Netflix), CHICAGO PD (NBC), SEARCH PARTY (Max), SLICE (A24), SHAMELESS (Showtime) and the infamous MEGAN IS MISSING. Representation: DDO Artists Agency, WEG Talent.



**BREE BEELOW (Sandrine/Marvalyn/Marci/Rhonda)**

Bree is so excited to return to Next Act this season! You may have seen her last as Marie Antoinette in THE REVOLUTIONISTS. Bree also served as Assistant Director on last season's SCARECROW. She is an actor, director and teacher based in Milwaukee. She has a Master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy, as well as a BA in Theatre Performance and Musical Theatre. Other acting credits include THE TAMING (Next Act); BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER, SPONGEBOB, ELF, HOLES, SHREK (First Stage) and MARRIED ALIVE, HANDS ON A HARDBODY (William Street Rep). Bree is overjoyed to be working with such a talented and amazing team. A huge thank you to everyone for their love and support during this process. [www.breebeelow.com](http://www.breebeelow.com)



**ALICIA RICE (Understudy for Ginette/Glory/Waitress/Gayle/Hope)**

Alicia is excited to be returning to Next Act, having previously served as choreographer for GOD'S SPIES, THE LAST WHITE MAN and BLOOD AT THE ROOT. She graduated with a BFA in Acting from the University of the Arts before going on to study, teach and compete in ballroom dance. She is grateful for this opportunity to (possibly) perform for the Next Act audience. Favorite past performances include Elena in UNCLE VANYA, Katherine in THE TAMING OF THE SHREW and Inez in NO EXIT (Off the Wall Theatre), as well as Theater RED's BONNY ANNE BONNY, in which she played the title role.



**MOHAMMAD N. ELBSAT (Understudy for Pete/Jimmy/Chad/Phil/Man)**

Mohammad is excited to be back at Next Act. Directing credits: Assistant Director, THE TREASURER at Next Act Theatre and MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE at Vanguard Productions. Acting credits: THE WHO & THE WHAT (Afzal U/S), Milwaukee Rep; BACK OF THE THROAT and LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR, Next Act Theatre; MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING and KING LEAR, Optimist Theatre; RED, BY JEEVES, RED HERRING, THE METROMANIACS, SONS OF THE PROPHET, CITY OF ANGELS, PRIN, AN EMPTY PLATE IN THE CAFÉ DU GRAND BOEUF and OMNIUM GATHERUM, Windfall Theatre; DR. FAUSTUS and CALL ME ISHMAEL, Off the Wall Theatre; and SIGNIFICANT OTHER, Boulevard Theatre. Exhibit credits: "Chasing Rainbows" and "Ordered Chaos": Acrylic paintings. Mohammad would like to thank his family and friends for their

continuous love and support. Instagram: @mnelbsat and @elbsatart.



**A.J. MAGOON**  
(Understudy for East/  
Steve/Lendall/Randy/  
Dave; Marketing  
Director)

A Milwaukee-based arts administrator and actor,

A.J. holds a BA in Theatre Arts and a minor in Public Relations from Marquette University. He was a founding member of Summit Players Theatre and served the company for nine years, including four years as Executive Director. He has also worked administratively with First Stage, Theatre Gigante and Theatre Nervosa. In addition to his behind-the-scenes work, A.J. has been seen onstage with First Stage, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Theatre Gigante, Summit Players Theatre, Acacia Theatre Company, Brigata Theatre, The Boulevard Theatre, Kith & Kin Theatre Collective, The Constructivists, Seat of Our Pants Readers Theatre, Quasimondo Physical Theatre, Sunstone Studios, Voices Found Repertory, Bard and Bourbon, Theatre Nervosa, Windfall Theatre and Cooperative Performance. Outside of theatre, he enjoys baking and spending time in the great outdoors.  
www.ajmagoon.com



**ASHLEY RODRIGUEZ**  
(Understudy for  
Sandrine/Marvalyn/  
Marcia/Rhonda)

This is Ashley's first production with Next Act Theatre!

She was recently seen as Alyssa Green in THE PROM with Bombshell Theatre and in EVITA as Peron's Mistress at Skylight Music Theatre. She also had the pleasure of appearing in various roles in Renaissance Theaterworks' BEST OF BR/INK BRIEFS. Some other credits include Heather Chandler (HEATHERS, Outskirts Theatre Co.), Alice

(THE LION IN WINTER, Pride Theatre Company), Witch (INTO THE WOODS, Forte Theatre) and Madame De Tourvel (LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES, College of Lake County). She completed her BFA at the University of Wisconsin Parkside and her AFA at the College of Lake County.



**KIRA NEIGHBORS**  
(Stage Manager)

Kira is delighted to be working at Next Act Theatre for the first time! After studying Stage Management at

The University of South Carolina, Kira made her way to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she began her professional stage management career. Select Midwest stage management credits include ROSENCRANTZ & GULDENSTERN ARE DEAD (Court Theatre); PRELUDE TO A KISS A MUSICAL, LITTLE WOMEN, THE NATIVITY VARIATIONS and THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); THE WANDERERS (Forward Theater); LAUGHS IN SPANISH, THE ISLAND and THE THANKSGIVING PLAY (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre); Door Shakespeare's 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024 seasons.

**LISA SCHLENKER (Scenic Designer)**

Ms. Schlenker is delighted to return to Next Act to work on these poignant love stories with Karen and this amazing team. By day, Lisa serves Northern Sky Theater as Resident Designer and Production Manager, telling stories in the north woods of Wisconsin. For over three decades, Lisa has devoted time and passion to advancing skills in prop making, scenic design and production management. A proud member of the Production Managers Forum, the Society of Prop Managers and United Scenic Artists Local 829 IATSE, Lisa's book with co-author Sandra Strawn, *The Properties Director's Tool Kit*, is available through Focal Press and on Amazon.com.



Recent design credits: LUMBERJACKS IN LOVE (Milwaukee Rep); WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME (Forward Theater); L'ELISIR D' AMORE, SONGBIRD (Florentine Opera); HELL'S BELGIANS, THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTERS, GIRLS ON SAND, REALITY TRIP (Northern Sky). Projects coming soon: A DOLL'S HOUSE (MCT); VIVA LA MAMA (Florentine Opera); BUYER AND CELLAR (RTW); ESPERANZA RISING (First Stage).

### **AMY HORST (Costume Designer)**

She/They. Previously at Next Act: STONES IN HIS POCKETS, DEAR ESTHER, EARS ON A BEATLE, COYOTE ON A FENCE, AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL ROBESON, LOMBARDI, MARY'S WEDDING, HOW TO WRITE A NEW BOOK FOR THE BIBLE, LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR, THE CHRISTIANS, THREE VIEWINGS, RED HERRING, PIPELINE and THE TIN WOMAN. A graduate student at UWM in the Masters of Sustainable Peacebuilding program, Amy is interested in the intersections of non-extractive practice, liberation and fun in the theater and elsewhere. Thank you to my favorite teachers, Birger, Thomas and the MSP family.

### **GREG HOFMANN (Lighting Designer)**

Selected designs: A CHRISTMAS CAROL, NAKED MOLE RAT GETS DRESSED, RIDE THE CYCLONE (Alliance Theatre); RIDE THE CYCLONE (MCC Theater); NELL GWYNN, PETER PAN; A MUSICAL ADVENTURE, LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, RIDE THE CYCLONE, ROAD SHOW (Chicago Shakespeare); RIDE THE CYCLONE (ACT Seattle); MAN OF DESTINY (American Players Theatre); MARK TWAIN'S RIVER OF SONG (Milwaukee Rep); BEAUTIFUL, BILLY ELLIOT, SCHOOL OF ROCK, ROCK OF AGES, KINKY BOOTS, SECRET OF MY SUCCESS, WIZARD OF OZ, ELF, JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, MAMMA

MIA!, HAIRSPRAY, OKLAHOMA!, TOMMY, MARY POPPINS, ANNIE (Paramount Theatre); ROCK OF AGES, THE GAME'S AFOOT, LES MISÉRABLES, OLIVER! (Drury Lane); FLYING LOVERS OF VITEBSK, AIRNESS, LEWISTON/ CLARKSTON, MARJORIE PRIME, OUTSIDE MULLINGAR, SILENT SKY (Forward Theatre). Greg has also designed over 100 productions for Cedar Fair amusement parks across the country. More information at [www.hofmannlightingdesign.com](http://www.hofmannlightingdesign.com).

### **BRIAN GRIMM (Sound Designer and Composer)**

Brian is thrilled to collaborate on his first ever show with Next Act Theatre! He is a multi-instrumentalist composer, performer and sound designer based out of Madison, WI. Grimm performs as a soloist and in the bands Lovely Socialite, Brennan Connors and Stray Passage, The Five Points Jazz Collective, and Vardo. Selected Sound Design Production Credits: KING JAMES, THE GARBOLOGISTS, THE WANDERERS (Forward Theater Co.); IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, I CARRY YOUR HEART WITH ME, CHRISTMAS CAROL, BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA (Third Avenue PlayWorks); OAK (Urbanite Theater); THE MAGNOLIA BALLET (About Face Theatre); SHINSAI: JAPANESE TSUNAMI (American Blues Theater); OAK, TWO MILE HOLLOW (Phoenix Theatre); MARY'S WEDDING (Indiana Repertory Theatre); DREAMLAND, BEFORE THE 19TH, SHRAPNEL (ReAct Theater); THIS IS NOT SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH, THE LIVES OF CUT FLOWERS (NoExit Performance and IndyFringe Theatre). More info and design notes at [www.grimmusik.com](http://www.grimmusik.com)

### **MADELYN YEE (Properties Designer)**

Madelyn is a Milwaukee-based freelance scenic and props designer. Scenic credits include THE LIGHTNING THIEF and THE GRACIOUS SISTERS (First Stage); THE HOW AND THE WHY (Renaissance

Theaterworks); BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA (Third Avenue PlayWorks); SONGBIRD (Florentine Opera); THE GIFT OF THE MAGI (American Players Theatre); scenic and props for HOOPS and ANARCHISTS, and scenic and projections for INDECENT (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre). Prop credits include WHERE DID WE SIT ON THE BUS? and MISERY (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre). Much love to Joe and Poesy.

### **GABY LABOTKA (Intimacy and Fight Director)**

Gaby (she/they/anything respectful) is a Puerto Rican-American, Chicago-based, multi-disciplinary artist who works as an actor, director, intimacy director, fight director, playwright and choreographer across the country. They are a fierce advocate for respect, empathy, representation, inclusion and safety in the theatre, and they are dedicated to making art that reflects those values. Selected Recent Credits include: A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (Shattered Globe Theatre, Intimacy and Fight Director); DIRECTORS HAVEN 7: SKYFLINT (PART 1) (Haven Chicago, Director); MOTHERS (The Gift, Intimacy and Violence Director); LUCY AND CHARLIE'S HONEYMOON (Lookingglass, Intimacy Director); THE WRITER, OUR DEAR DEAD DRUG LORD (Steep Theatre, Intimacy and Fight Director); REVENGE SONG (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Assistant Director and Assistant Fight Director); LA RUTA (Steppenwolf, Fight Director - ALTA Award Outstanding Fight Choreography) and PARADISE SQUARE (Broadway, Intimacy Director). Training: Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, Society of American Fight Directors, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA), Pig Iron Advanced Performer Training, Illinois State University (BA, Acting and Directing with Exceptional Merit in the Arts). [@theatre\\_warrior](http://www.gabylabotka.com)

### **ADAM HASTINGS (Technical Director)**

Adam is delighted to be working with Next Act Theatre again this season! As the proud owner of Spotlight Construction Co. – collaborating with Next Act, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Forward Theater Company, The Fireside and Black Arts MKE, among others throughout theatre and entertainment industries – he would like to thank the highly talented production and creative team behind ALMOST, MAINE and hopes you enjoy the show.

### **CARRI DAHL (Scenic Artist)**

Carri is happy to be painting with Next Act Theatre this season as part of the team at Spotlight Construction. Her work has also been seen on the stages of Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Forward Theater Company, Renaissance Theaterworks, Northern Sky Theater and Florentine Opera Company. She also enjoys egg tempera painting and the company of her delightful cats.

### **SHELBY KAISHIAN (Wardrobe Manager)**

Shelby has been working with costumes and running around backstage since 2011. They've proudly been able to call Next Act Theatre their home since the 2016/2017 season and have been with Renaissance Theaterworks since the 2021/2022 season. They've also worked with the Florentine Opera, Kohl's Wild Theater, Milwaukee Ballet and Skylight Music Theatre. They'd like to thank their dad, HP, for sparking their interest in theater, helping them get her foot in the door and being a wacky behind the scenes inspiration.

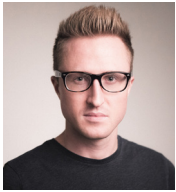
### **NAT GOELLER (Assistant Stage Manager)**

Nat (they/them) is incredibly proud to be a Milwaukee-based stage manager. Their commitment to the bit has granted them the opportunity to wear many hats, but their favorite hat will always be a story-teller. Select previous credits at Next Act include THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY (SM), THE TREASURER (SM), SCARECROW (ASM), THE MOUSETRAP (ASM) and SPLASH HATCH ON THE

E GOING DOWN (ASM). Other worlds Nat has worked with include Renaissance Theaterworks, Black Arts MKE, She/Her Productions, Summit Players Theatre, Kohl's Wild Theater, Waukesha Civic Theater, Princeton University Festival and Carroll University. They would like to recognize Celeste, Francisco and Emilio for keeping the good times rolling.

### **FAITH LENSMTITH (Light Board Operator)**

Faith (they/them) is very excited to be back with NAT and RTW for their third season. Faith has been wearing many different theatrical hats since 2019. Since starting at Next Act, Faith has been primarily the lighting technician and board operator, but they are very excited to step back into the world of stage management for a few shows this season. They would like to thank Lori Woodall for having poured her heart and soul into all of her theatre students over the years; Faith would not be where they are without her guidance.



### **CODY ESTLE (Artistic Director)**

Cody Estle became the Artistic Director at Next Act Theatre in December 2022. Previously, he served as the Artistic

Director at Raven Theatre in Chicago. His directing credits include THE TREASURER at Next Act Theatre; EVERY BRILLIANT THING at The Weidner; THE LUCKIEST (2022 Jeff Award nominee for Best Production and Best Director), SUNDOWN, YELLOW MOON, HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE (named by Windy City Times as the best of Chicago theatre in 2019), THE GENTLEMAN CALLER (2019 Jeff Award winning new play by Philip Dawkins), THE ASSEMBLED PARTIES, A LOSS OF ROSES (named by Chicago Tribune honorable mention as one of the year's best in 2016), DIVIDING THE ESTATE, VIEUX

CARRÉ (named by Chicago Tribune as one of the year's best in 2014), GOOD BOYS AND TRUE, BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS, BOY GETS GIRL and DATING WALTER DANTE at Raven Theatre; THE GARBOLOGISTS and BY THE WATER (named by Chicago Sun-Times honorable mention as one of the top theatre productions of 2017) at Northlight Theatre; DAMASCUS at Strawdog Theatre; FIVE MILE LAKE at Shattered Globe Theatre; AMERICAN HERO at First Floor Theatre; SCARCITY at Redtwist Theatre; THE SEAGULL and WATCH ON THE RHINE at The Artistic Home; DON'T GO GENTLE at Haven Theatre; UNCLE BOB at Mary-Arrchie Theatre and HOSPITALITY SUITE at Citadel Theatre. In April 2025, he will direct CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION at Next Act Theatre. Cody has been named a "Person to Watch" by American Theatre Magazine and a "Notable Leader in Arts and Entertainment" by BizTimes Milwaukee. He is a member of SDC and an alumnus of Columbia College Chicago.



### **LIBBY AMATO (Managing Director)**

Libby Amato joined Next Act Theatre in 2004 as a House Manager and has worked continually for the company in a variety

of roles, including Ticket Office Attendant, Actor, Deck Manager, Administrative Coordinator and Business Manager, before being promoted to Managing Director in 2023. Libby has worked extensively in the Milwaukee theatre community, including as Development Associate for Skylight Music Theatre from 2016 to 2018 and as Co-Founder and Company Director of Umbrella Group Theatre, a small non-profit theatre company, from 2014 to 2017. Over the years, she has worked with many local theatre companies in areas including acting, stage managing, directing and teaching. These companies include First Stage, Renaissance

Theaterworks, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Forward Theater, In Tandem Theatre, All In Productions and Milwaukee Irish Arts, among others. She also made a brief foray outside of the arts world to work with Independence First, a local non-profit organization serving people with disabilities. In addition, Libby owns and operates Abbondanza Soap Co., a natural soap and body product company. She is a graduate of Carroll University.



**KATIE ANDERSON**  
(**Production and Facility Manager**)

Katie is a technical theatre specialist who has worked on just about every type of live

event you can think of. After graduating from Kalamazoo College in 2015 with her B.A. in Theatre and Studio Art, Katie went on to work as the Lighting/Sound Design Intern at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, designing shows and teaching volunteers of all ages. After her internship, she went on to work for Exclusive Events, Inc. in St. Louis, MO as a technician, building scenery and lighting for corporate meetings, weddings, live concerts and everything in between. Eventually, she moved up to Milwaukee to work for Blizzard Lighting as a full-time repair tech, while continuing to freelance as a technician and designer for live music and street festivals around town. Her favorite shows she has worked on include CARRIE: THE MUSICAL, ROMEO AND JULIET, TK NEW PLAYFEST, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, STILL LIFE WITH IRIS, HAIRSPRAY, IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY), OF MICE AND MEN, SIDESHOW, PEER GYNT and A CHRISTMAS STORY: THE MUSICAL. When not in the theatre, Katie enjoys knitting, rock climbing, swing dancing and cuddling her two cats.



**CAROLINE NORTON**  
(**Administrative and Artistic Manager**)

This is Caroline's third year with Next Act, and second in her role as Administrative and Artistic Manager. In

addition to her work here, she has worked in administration and education with Skylight Music Theatre, First Stage and Summit Players Theatre. In addition to her efforts in arts administration, Caroline is an actor and director who has worked with companies such as Renaissance Theaterworks, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Summit Players Theatre, The Constructivists, Milwaukee Irish Arts, Sunstone Studios, Forte Theatre, Voices Found Repertory and Kohl's Wild Theater. Outside of theatre, Caroline enjoys reading, camping and running her small business, Millennial Granny.



**PIA RUSSO (Education Manager)**

Pia is a multidisciplinary theatre educator who finished her degrees in Theatre Arts and Secondary Education from Marquette

University in 2022. Their favorite shows they did at Marquette include ANTIGONE, MAMMA MIA! and GIDIONS KNOT. They've taught a little at a lot of places, including Wauwatosa West, Pius XI High School, West Allis-West Milwaukee School District, Maple Dale Middle School (with Pink Umbrella Theatre Company) and Milwaukee Youth Theatre, and they've even done some theatre with grown-ups at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre and Renaissance Theaterworks. She also interned at Door Shakespeare, where she mostly overcame her fear of bugs, and she helped run the Next Actors program with her predecessor Grace DeWolff before taking over. When not at Next Act, she can be found playing board games, rock climbing, chilling with her roommate and cats and yelling about how much she loves her students to anyone who will listen.

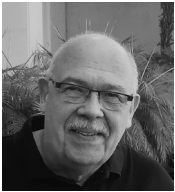




**TAWNIE THOMPSON  
(Development  
Manager)**

Tawnie is an actor, fight director, podcaster and writer. After graduating from UW-Whitewater

with a BFA in Theatre and relocating to Milwaukee in 2013, she began studying stage combat and holds of certifications with the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) and Dueling Arts International (DAI). She has since worked with a wide variety of theatre companies as both a performer and fight director. Tawnie has worked in the non-profit space for four years. In her spare time, Tawnie can be found playing tabletop games, backpacking, biking, rock climbing and cheering for the Chicago Red Stars.



**THOMAS DARROW  
(Administrative  
Volunteer)**

Tom is a retired paralegal and teacher who has been enjoying Milwaukee area professional and

community theatre for more than 30 years. He started his volunteer theatre career at In Tandem Theatre, where he provided his computer and organizational skills for five years. Since 2019, Tom has been offering the same skills to Next Act. When he is not working at the theatre, he is pursuing his hobbies of genealogy and US road trips and international travel.



**JIM TOTH (Lobby  
Gallery Curator)**

Since the 2014- 15 season, Jim has been curating and installing art exhibits for Next Act's lobby gallery.

Drawing on his connections as an artist and retired art educator, he has brought in a wide variety of artists whose work complements our productions and enriches our patrons'

theatre experiences. Jim is especially pleased when the art and the play seem to have been meant for each other, as with ARTERYink's organ-oriented designs and the heart transplant theme of Sean Grennan's THE TIN WOMAN. Before retiring, Jim had a two-career history, first as an Art Teacher and K-12 Art Coordinator for the South Milwaukee School District and then as the Director of Exhibits for the Betty Brinn Children's Museum. In addition to his volunteer work for Next Act, he serves on the board for the Milwaukee Area Teachers of Art and as President of the south side community choir Cantare Chorale. He is also an artist whose carved cement sculptures have been in numerous group shows over the years, most recently at MIAD this September. Jim and his wife Karen are long-time residents of Bay View.

**ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION  
("Equity")**

Equity, founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers. Equity fosters the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. Equity is governed by its own members through an elected Council, representing principal actors, chorus actors and stage managers living in three regions: Eastern, Central and Western. Members-at-large participate in Equity's governance through a system of regional Boards and Committees. Equity has 28 designated area liaison cities with over 100 members each.

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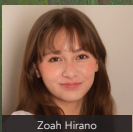
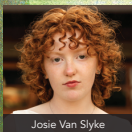
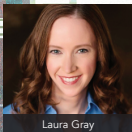
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Next Act Theatre engages the hearts and minds of audiences with intimate, compelling productions intended to stimulate thought, foster the exchange of ideas and promote the development of new perspectives and understanding.

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The Charles D. Kakuk Legacy Society, named for the late Charles D. Kakuk, long-time Next Act Theatre Managing Director, recognizes individuals who have made a lasting impact on Next Act Theatre through their generous planned gift. To learn more about including Next Act Theatre in your estate planning, please call Tawnie Thompson, Development Manager, at 414-278-7780 or email [tawnie@nextact.org](mailto:tawnie@nextact.org).



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Derin Bjugstad	John DiMotto	Susan Schoenfeld
Michael Burzynski <sup>†</sup>	Cathryn Jakicic <sup>†</sup>	Sandy Zingler

<sup>†</sup> = Past Board President

**FOOD AND BEVERAGES** – Drinks may be taken into the theatre, but food is not permitted.

**ENTERING AND EXITING THE THEATRE SPACE** – Please use walkways to access the seating areas and refrain from crossing over the stage.

**CANCELLATION POLICY** – Next Act does not cancel or reschedule performances due to inclement weather or sporting events, nor do we offer refunds in these circumstances. Any cancellations due to COVID-19 will be handled with ticketholders on a case-by-case basis.

**LATECOMER POLICY** – Latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate time in the performance. This may be at the intermission. *Seating may not be permitted 30 minutes after the start of a performance. If you are running late, please call the Ticket Office at 414-278-0765.*

**HEARING LOOP LISTENING SYSTEM** – The theatre is equipped with an advanced technology Hearing Loop listening system. The system will broadcast directly to those with T-coil hearing aids. Portable assistive listening devices for conventional listening are also available and may be checked out at the Concessions Counter.

**LOST PROPERTY** – Items left at the theatre are kept in Lost & Found for 30 days. Call the Ticket Office at 414-278-0765 if you have lost an item.

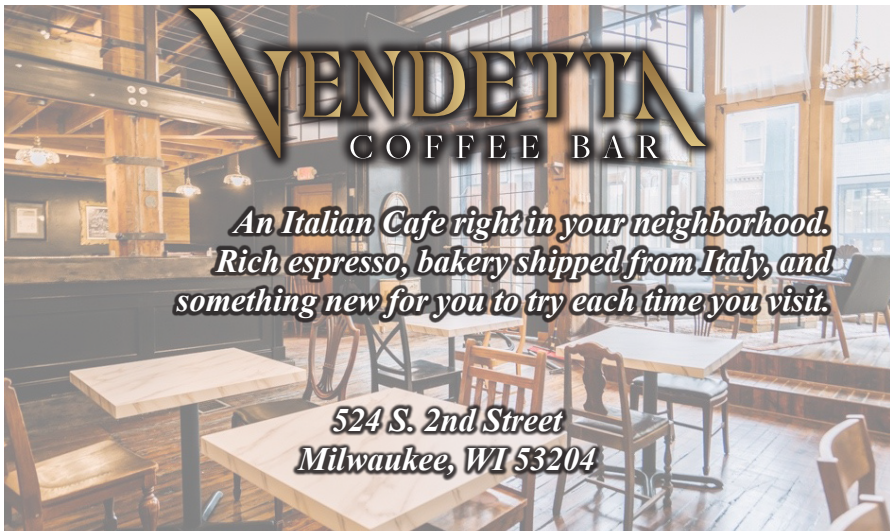
**TICKET EXCHANGES** – Subscribers may exchange their tickets, without fee, up to 48 hours prior to the performance (price adjustments may apply). Single ticket buyers may exchange their tickets for a fee of \$5 per ticket up to 48 hours prior. Exchanges are based strictly on availability. Patrons are strongly urged to request exchanges well in advance.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES** – NO cameras or recording devices of any kind are allowed in the theatre. Please turn off all electronic equipment including cell phones.

**SMOKING** – The Next Act Theatre facility is a smoke-free environment.

**DISCOUNTS** – Seniors, educators, veterans and active service members receive a \$5 discount per ticket on advance sales. Students receive a ticket rate of \$16 plus fees for all performances. Individuals may also purchase half-price rush tickets one half-hour prior to curtain, based on availability. Discounts are not available on performance run extensions.

**GROUP DISCOUNTS** – Groups of 10 or more receive a discount of 20%. To book groups, contact A.J. at 414-278-7780. Discounts are not available on performance run extensions.





# THE CHILDREN

BY LUCY KIRKWOOD  
DIRECTED BY MARIE KOHLER

**NOV 20 - DEC 15, 2024**

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