

INTIMATE
NEXT ACT
THEATRE
POWERFUL

SWING

STATE



BY

REBECCA GILMAN

DIRECTED BY

CODY ESTLE



Cody Estle
Artistic Director

Libby Amato
Managing Director

Presents

SWING STATE

by Rebecca Gilman

Directed by
Cody Estle†

Scenic Design
Jeffrey D. Kmiec*

Lighting Design
Noele Stollmack*

Costume Design
Jason Orlenko*

Sound Design
Josh Schmidt*

Properties Design/Firearms Coordinator
Jim Guy

Fight Choreographer
Brian J. Gill

Stage Manager
Nat Goeller^



The Director is a Member of the
**STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



*Member of United Scenic Artists Local 829

^Member of Actors' Equity Association

February 11 – March 8, 2026

Producing Sponsor Donna Martynski

Associate Sponsor Sandra Zingler

Co-Sponsors Judges John and Jean DiMotto, Pam Frautschi, and John McGivern

Media Partner



Next Act Theatre's 2025-26 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.



Swing State received its world premiere at Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Ill., on Oct. 17, 2022, Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director; Roche Schulfer, Executive Director. The Goodman production of Swing State was subsequently produced by Audible Theater (Kate Navin, Head of Audible Theater) in New York City, opening on Sept. 17, 2023.

Produced by special arrangement with
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THE CAST



<i>Tami Workentin*</i>	Peg Smith
<i>Jack Lancaster</i>	Ryan Severson
<i>Kelli Strickland</i>	Sheriff Kris Callahan Wisnefski
<i>Elyse Edelman*</i>	Deputy Dani Wisnefski

Understudies

Peg Smith – Maureen Chobanoff, Ryan Severson – Isaac “Izzi” Brust, Sheriff Kris Callahan Wisnefski – Caitlin Compton, Deputy Dani Wisnefski – Caroline Norton

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

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association



PLACE:

Cardiff Township, somewhere in the driftless area of Wisconsin.

TIME:

Mid-July to late August, 2021

The play will be performed without intermission.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

<i>Assistant Director</i>	Amy K. Bates
<i>Production and Facility Manager</i>	Katie Anderson
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Star Howard
<i>Technical Directors</i>	Aaron Sewell, Steve Watson
<i>Wardrobe Manager</i>	Shelby Kaishian
<i>Scenic Artist</i>	Carri Dahl
<i>Light Board Operator</i>	Isaac “Izzi” Brust
<i>Lighting Technicians</i>	Ashton Karp, Rollie Layman, Lumi Shalae, Beck Trumbull

ADDITIONAL NEXT ACT THEATRE STAFF

<i>Artistic Associate</i>	Elyse Edelman
<i>Administrative Volunteer</i>	Thomas Darrow
<i>Marketing Director</i>	A.J. Magoon
<i>Marketing Intern</i>	Leslie Lopez*
<i>Patron Services Manager</i>	Wyatt Meyer
<i>Administrative and Artistic Manager</i>	Caroline Norton
<i>Development Manager</i>	Tawnie Thompson
<i>Volunteer Art Coordinator</i>	Jim Toth
<i>Ticket Office Staff</i>	Jennifer Averitt-Zweber, Audwin Short, Christine Yüendem
<i>House Management Staff</i>	Kaylene Howard, Ariana Manghera, Audwin Short, Barbara Slagter, Elisebeth Sparks, Matthew Torkilsen

*Participant in Next Act Theatre’s Inclusion, Equality and Opportunity Internship

PHOTO POLICY



Please note: photography and video recording are strictly prohibited during the performance. Photos of the stage are not permitted if an actor is present.

Next Act Theatre welcomes you to take photos in the theatre before and after the performance! Feel free to capture and share your experience. However, if you are sharing images to social media, in addition to tagging Next Act Theatre, we ask you to please credit the production designers below:

Jeffrey D. Kmeic
Scenic Design

Noele Stollmack
Lighting Design

Jim Guy
Properties Design

SPECIAL THANKS

David Anderson
Kirsten Fitzgerald
Bianca Gonzalez
Goodman Theatre Prop Department
Margaret Hasek-Guy
Mindy Knoll
Milwaukee Chamber Theatre
Renaissance Theaterworks
University of Wisconsin – Parkside Department of Theatre Arts

NEXT ACT THEATRE
PURE ENTERTAINMENT

2026-27 Season

Trayf



Directed By
Lindsay Joelle Elyse Edelman

Sept 16 - Oct 4, 2026

The Boys From Baraboo

By
Heidi Armbruster

Directed By
Cody Estle

Dec 2 - 20,
2026



In the Next Room

or the vibrator play



By
Sarah Ruhl
Directed By
Laura Rook

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2027

At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen



By
Terry Guest

Directed By
Dee Dee Batteast

April 21 - May 9,
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Friends,

One of the first things I said I would do when I became the Artistic Director here at Next Act was to program plays set in Wisconsin. I believe it is important to tell stories that reflect the audience who comes to see them. This production is me keeping that promise.

SWING STATE originally opened in Chicago in 2022, where it was a great success. So much so that it transferred Off-Broadway in New York City. I was able to see the play in New York, and after seeing it, I knew I needed to bring it here.

What makes our production especially meaningful is that this is the Wisconsin Premiere of *SWING STATE*, a play set in the Driftless Area of our state. The play reflects the red and blue of Wisconsin's political landscape. We live next to people who don't always think the same way we do, yet we still have to find common ground to get things done. In our current political climate, that is often much easier said than done.

The play takes place just after the pandemic, and these characters, like all of us, are trying to return to some sense of normalcy. Emotions run high as they struggle to move forward. One of the central questions of the play is: "*How do we recover?*" And the answer is different for each of us. There was a tremendous amount of grief coming out of those years, and in many ways, we are still recovering. There is a clear marker between who we were before and who we are now.

This is a vulnerable play, for both the actors and the audience. It is beautifully written and reminds me of classic plays that ask actors to simply sit, talk and truly listen to one another. There is a deep hunger in these characters to connect, because connection is fundamentally human.

That is one of the things I love most about live theatre: we gather in a dark room with strangers to share an experience and connect. Losing that during the pandemic was incredibly hard. My hope is that this play reminds us of that human desire to connect and reminds us that, not so long ago, that connection was taken away. It encourages us to seize each day, because we never know what may happen.

Ultimately, this is the hope of *SWING STATE*: no matter the cards we're dealt, good or bad, we keep going, one day at a time.

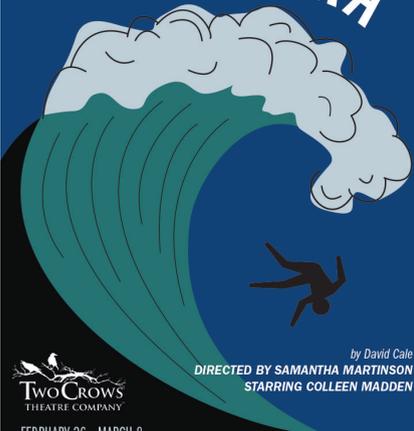
Yours,



Cody Estle
Director

From the writer of 'Harry Clarke'

SANDRA



by David Gale
DIRECTED BY SAMANTHA MARTINSON
STARRING COLLEEN MADDEN

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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.

Our Induction Loop listening system was a gift from longtime supporter Milan Racic, honoring his beloved late wife Gordana. Special thanks are also due to Nancy Einhorn for her advocacy and support of this project.

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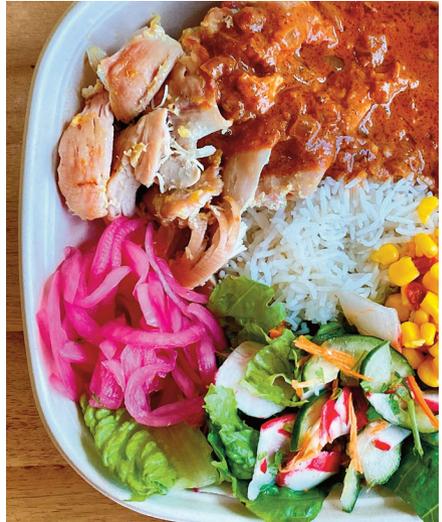
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FRESH INDIAN FARE

REBECCA GILMAN (Playwright)

Rebecca Gilman's plays include *SWING STATE*, *LUNA GALE*, *BOY GETS GIRL*, *TWILIGHT BOWL*, *SPINNING INTO BUTTER*, *BLUE SURGE*, *THE GLORY OF LIVING*, *THE SWEETEST SWING IN BASEBALL*, *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*, *DOLLHOUSE*, *THE CROWD YOU'RE IN WITH* and *A WOMAN OF THE WORLD*. Her plays have been widely produced, including by the Goodman Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, Lincoln Center Theater, Audible Theater, the Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Hampstead Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, The Acting Company, New York Theatre Workshop and MCC Theater. Among her many awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, the Harper Lee Award, the Scott McPherson Award, the Prince Prize for Commissioning New Work, the Roger L. Stevens Award, the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright and the George Devine Award. *BOY GETS GIRL* received an Olivier nomination for Best New Play, and she was a finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for *THE GLORY OF LIVING*. Gilman received her MFA in playwriting from the University of Iowa, and she is an artistic associate at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago.


**CODY ESTLE
(Director, 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 *CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION* and *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. 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.


**TAMI WORKENTIN
(Peg Smith)**

Tami has enjoyed a long history with Next Act, where she appeared last season as Marty in *CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION*.

Please look for Tami and her husband Jim Pickering in the title roles of *GEORGE & GRACIE: A LOVE STORY*, a play she has written for them, at the Milwaukee Rep, Spring 2026, followed by a co-production with Northern Sky Theatre in Fall 2026. Additional credits: Milwaukee Rep, Renaissance Theaterworks, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, First Stage, Peninsula Players, Northern Sky, Third Avenue PlayWorks, Optimist Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare and the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Regional credits include Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre, Organic Theatre, Bailiwick Repertory Theatre, Rochester Civic Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare-in-the-Park Fort Worth and Taproot Theatre, Seattle. Tami is also a licensed Medical Massage Therapist: stillmassage.com.


JACK LANCASTER
(Ryan Severson)

Jack is so excited to work with Next Act Theatre. Jack was an understudy in the World Premiere of SWING STATE at Goodman Theatre in

Chicago, which he followed to New York for its Off-Broadway run. Afterwards, he joined the cast for the World Premiere of REVOLUTION(S) also at Goodman Theatre. Los Angeles credits include the West Coast Premiere of BACON by Sophie Swithinbank (Rogue Machine Theatre) and AS YOU LIKE IT, TITUS ANDRONICUS and RICHARD III (Independent Shakespeare Co.). Television credits include THE BEAR (FX), SHINING GIRLS (AppleTV+), POWER BOOK IV: FORCE (Starz) and CHICAGO MED (NBC). On film, he can be seen in WEIRD: THE AL YANKOVIC STORY (Roku). He is represented by DDO Artists Agency and LEWK Management. Jack received his BFA from the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago.


KELLI STRICKLAND
(Sheriff Kris Callahan Wisniewski)

Select Production Credits: RYAN'S PUB TRIVIA NIGHT, Third Avenue PlayWorks; BOTANIC GARDEN, The Weidner;

HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES (Jeff Nominated - Best Actress), GOOD BOYS AND TRUE, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, Raven Theatre; SCAPEGOAT, New Colony Theatre; WE'VE GOT A BADGE FOR THAT, Filet of Solo Festival - Lifeline Theatre, Livebait Theatre and Tour; SOUTHERN HERITAGE, Filet of Solo Festival - Lifeline Theatre; THE VILLE, Bare Bones Theatre; THE MOST FABULOUS STORY EVER TOLD, BRAVE SMILES, SURVIVE THIS, Bailiwick Repertory Theatre; SNAPSHOTS, 20% Theatre Co.; THE MEMORANDUM, METAMORPHOSIS, Entelechy Theatre Co.; THE IMAGINARY INVALID, TARTUFFE, Avenue Theatre Co.; FRANKENSTEIN'S CHILDREN, Women's Theatre Alliance; Feature Film - HANNAH

FREE. Kelli is the Executive Artistic Director of the Weidner at University of Wisconsin - Green Bay.


ELYSE EDELMAN
(Deputy Dani Wisniewski, Artistic Associate)

Elyse is grateful to work and create at Next Act Theatre, where she serves as Artistic Associate and

has acted and directed. Her Wisconsin credits as an actor and/or director include multiple productions with Renaissance Theaterworks, Forward Theater Company, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Third Avenue PlayWorks, First Stage, In Tandem, Children's Theater of Madison, American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Rep and Door Shakespeare. Regionally, she has worked across the country, including many years in the Twin Cities. Some favorite regional credits include The Guthrie, Park Square Theatre, Mixed Blood, Minnesota Shakespeare Company, the Playwrights' Center, Utah Shakespeare Festival and Riverside Theater. She is a member of the Advisory Company at Forward Theater Company and serves on the core faculty of First Stage's Young Company. Training: University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA; LISPA. Website: clyseedelman.com.

NAT GOELLER (Stage Manager)

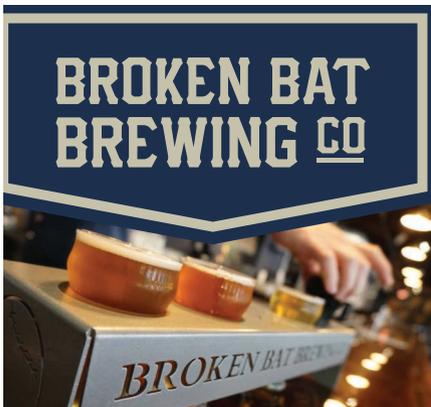
Nat (they/them) is incredibly proud to be a Milwaukee-based stage manager. Their commitment to the bit has granted them the opportunity to wear many hats, but their favorite hat will always be a story-teller. Select previous credits at Next Act include BOSWELL (SM), SANCTUARY CITY (SM), CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION (SM), THE CHILDREN (SM) and THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY (SM). Other worlds Nat has worked with include Door Shakespeare, Renaissance Theaterworks, Black Arts MKE, She/Her Productions, Summit Players Theatre, Kohl's Wild Theater, Waukesha Civic Theatre, Princeton University Festival and Carroll University. They would like to recognize Celeste, Francisco and Emilio for keeping the good times rolling.

JEFFREY D. KMIEC (Scenic Designer)

Jeffrey D. Kmiec is an award-winning Production Designer for theatre and television. His designs have been seen on NBC, Apple+, Comedy Central and the CW, and on stages with Norwegian Cruise Line, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Theatre Under the Stars, Fulton Theatre, Maine State Music Theatre, The REV, North Shore Music Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre, Marriott Theatre, TimeLine Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre, Raven Theatre, The Artistic Home, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, American Players Theatre, Next Act Theatre, Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, Heritage Theatre Festival and The Children's Theatre of Charlotte. Jeffrey received his MFA from the University of Virginia, BA from Illinois State University and is a member of USA 829.

NOELE STOLLMACK (Lighting Designer)

Noele's lighting has appeared onstage at The Brooklyn Academy of Music, Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, Verizon Hall, The Library of Congress Theatre, as well as the opera companies of Santa Fe, Ontario, Houston, Portland, Vancouver, New Orleans, Nashville, Madison and Milwaukee. Regional design for the theatre includes Jeff Daniels Purple Rose Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Houston's Alley Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; Wisconsin's Peninsula Players, Milwaukee Rep, American Players Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, First Stage and Forward Theater Company. As Lighting Director for Houston Grand Opera, she supervised the lighting and special effects for over 50 productions. Her AIA award-winning architectural and public space lighting is installed throughout the Midwest. Member United Scenic Artists Local 829.



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JASON ORLENKO (Costume Designer)

Jason is delighted to return to Next Act, where he has previously designed CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION, THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY, THE MOUSETRAP, THE REVOLUTIONISTS, SILENT SKY and THE TAMING. Jason's costumes have graced the stages of the Milwaukee Rep (MY WAY, THE ALL NIGHT STRUT, LADY DAY), Skylight Music Theatre (XANADU, MAMMA MIA, KISS ME KATE, SWEENEY TODD), Renaissance Theaterworks (BUYER & CELLAR, THE MOORS, THE WOLVES, THE VIOLET HOUR), Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Northern Sky, First Stage, Forward Theater, Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre, In Tandem Theatre, Rep of St. Louis, Cardinal Stage and Milwaukee Opera Theatre. Other professional credits include five summers at American Players Theatre, the Florentine Opera, the Hangar Theatre and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Up next: PETER PAN & WENDY at First Stage and GEORGE & GRACIE: A LOVE STORY at the Rep. Jason resides in Milwaukee with his husband Brick, where he is Assistant Professor of Costume Design at UW-Milwaukee.

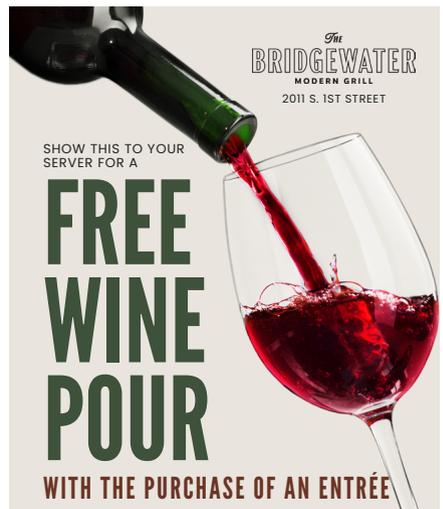
www.jasonorlenko.com

JOSH SCHMIDT (Sound Designer)

Josh is excited to return to Next Act Theatre after previously designing BOSWELL, CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION, THE CHILDREN, THE TREASURER and THE MOUSETRAP, among others. Select Wisconsin credits: TRIBES, MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM (American Players Theatre); THE COAST STARLIGHT, THE CHOSEN, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (Milwaukee Rep); SWITZERLAND, THE MOORS, WITCH (Renaissance Theaterworks); CLYDE'S, A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN, MISERY (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre). Broadway: BUG (Manhattan Theatre Club), THERESE RAQUIN (Roundabout/ Studio 54), HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES (Walter Kerr), BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS (Nederlander). Film: songs, orchestration and score (with Marius de Vries) for THE END (Final Cut for Real/Neon). Upcoming commission: FALLINGWATER (Met Opera).

JIM GUY (Properties Designer/Firearms

Coordinator) Jim is proud to continue his long association with Next Act with SWING STATE. Recent Next Act productions include THE MOUSETRAP, THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY and CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION. Jim has been a props professional since joining the resident company of the Cleveland Play House more than 45 years ago. His work has appeared On and Off-Broadway, on tour, in print, on television, in museums and on stages of theater, opera and ballet companies nationally. He has propped an estimated 600 plays, musicals and operas. Jim was Properties Director at Milwaukee Rep from 1998 to 2022. He now freelances and teaches – most notably bringing his Firearms Safety for Stage workshop, which is the framework for his upcoming book, to theaters, colleges and organizations nationwide. Jim is a proud member of the professional Prop Managers and Educators association, the Society of Prop Managers (S*P*M), for which he served as President for 15 years. He was born in a log cabin. He never tells a lie.



BRIAN J. GILL (Fight Choreographer)

Most recently seen at Next Act in Bill Cain's *THE LAST WHITE MAN*, Brian is thrilled to be serving as fight choreographer for *SWING STATE*. He is a member of the Society of American Fight Directors where he holds the rank of Advanced Actor Combatant and an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at UW-Parkside. Fight credits include many Parkside productions as well as Southwest Shakespeare Company. A proud member of Actor's Equity, his Milwaukee acting credits include Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Renaissance Theaterworks, First Stage and Milwaukee Rep. Chicago credits include Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Victory Gardens, Drury Lane Oakbrook and Remy Bumppo Theatre. Internationally, Brian has performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Shakespeare's Globe, London, as a member of the first International Artistic Fellowship.

**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 Abbonanza Soap Co., a natural soap and body product company. She is a graduate of Carroll University.

**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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Mission

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 x7 or email tawnie@nextact.org.

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LATECOMER POLICY – Latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate time. *Seating will 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.*

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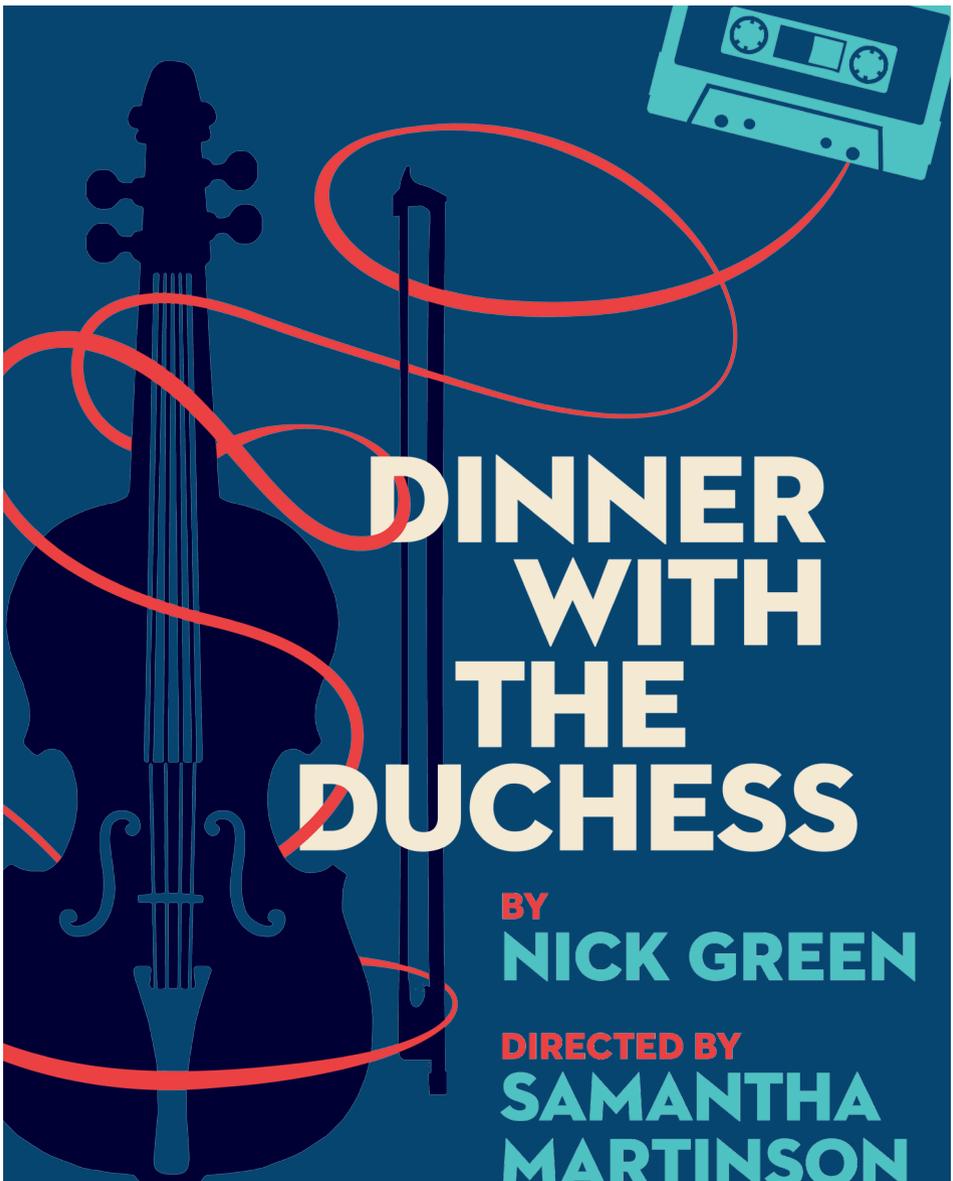


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