Christopher Mannelli and Mark Cuddy. Photo by Huth Photography.

Christopher Mannelli and Mark Cuddy. Photo by Huth Photography.

Geva Theatre Center is many things to many people. To some, it’s an entertainment venue for a great night out. To others, it’s a place for learning and intellectual stimulation. For theatre artists, it’s a home to showcase craft and ambition. For staff, it’s a professional family of collaborators. For students, it’s a laboratory for creativity and identity. For subscribers, it’s a tradition. For donors, it’s a quality of life necessity.

For us, as non-profit CEOs, it’s a privilege to be entrusted with our region’s foremost professional theatre, the largest in New York State outside of Manhattan, and a fixture of our downtown community for 46 years. Inside the pages of this Geva Guide you’ll get a glimpse of some of the extraordinary people with whom we work. You’ll read about pacesetting programs that we have launched, and their impact on individuals. And you’ll take a look behind the scenes at the magical talents of our artisans and craftspeople.

We are also stewards of this historic building at the corner of Clinton and Woodbury, across from Washington Square Park. Our building has been a community gathering place for over 150 years. We embrace the responsibility to welcome all residents of our region to Geva in an effort to find common ground through artistic expression and civic discourse. Everyone is welcome.

In Geva productions you see yourself, your neighbor; our past and our future.

We choose and produce plays and musicals especially for you. Our staff makes them right here in Rochester (they are not on tour). You can rest assured that when you see a play on a Geva stage, it was created for the people of the Rochester region. And you also know that our mission to produce theatre of the highest professional standard means that when you see a show at Geva it will be as good - or better! - than anything you can see across the country.

Thank you for your commitment. We are confident that you will enjoy this incredible 47th season, which we are so proud to share with you.

Welcome!

Welcome!

Mark Cuddy, Artistic Director
Christopher Mannelli, Executive Director

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Nicole A. Watson is the associate artistic director at Round House Theatre as well as a freelance director and educator. She is an associate artist at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, a New Georges affiliated artist, an alum of the Women’s Project Lab, the Drama League, and a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers. As a director she has worked at The O’Neill Theater Center, Baltimore Center Stage, Playmakers Rep, Theater Latte Da, Asolo Rep, and Equity’s Netherland during the last 20 years. As an educator she has worked at the University of Rochester in the Theater Department. She has received her Bachelor’s Degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and M.F.A. from NYU/Tisch School of the Arts.

I am thrilled to be coming back to Geva for my fifth production, Viertone, this spring. I work all over the globe but working at Geva is special to me for a few huge reasons. Working locally at such a wonderful and distinctive institution means I get to share my work with my family and friends here in Rochester and that isn’t possible when I’m out of town. Designing at Geva keeps me connected to the theatre community here in Rochester and that means a lot to me. I am also really proud of the work we have made at Geva. I have been thrilled at how the productions I’ve worked on have turned out and that includes three world premieres, so I’m not just working locally when I am at Geva, I am also working at a level I am really proud of the work we have made at Geva. Thanks for bringing me back!”

Seth Reiser is a lighting and set designer who works in theatre, opera, dance and music. Recent work in western NY includes The Royale, Lake Effect, and Heartland directed by Pirronne Yousefzadeh, and The Magician’s Nephew directed by Shelley Butler, all at Geva. New York credits include Bernstein’s Mass with the NY Philharmonic directed by Elkhana Pulitzer; Somebody’s Daughter directed by May Adrales at Second Stage; Mike Daisey’s The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs at the Public Theater; The Mysteries directed by Ed Ickander at the Flea; Reggie Watts and Tommy Smith’s Radio Play at PS 122, directed by Kip Fagan; Taylor Mac’s Obie Award-winning production of The Lily’s Revenge at HERE Arts. Regional credits include Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Dallas Theatre Center, Two River Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, Trinity Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Seattle Repertory, The Denver Center Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth, American Repertory Theatre, and Playmakers Repertory, among others.

Brian Quijada is an actor, playwright, and composer originally from Chicago, now based out of New York. Brian has spent most of his career acting in new plays Off-Broadway, regionally, and internationally, but occasionally is seen acting and heard voice acting on TV shows and Spanish ad campaigns.

Brian Quijada
Writer & Gctor


Guy Paul
Gctor

Nicole A. Watson works at the O’Neill Theater Center, where she has worked as an associate director on over 50 productions. She has directed new plays at the Denver Center Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, Trinity Repertory, Shakespeare Festival, Dallas Theatre Center, and regional productions across the country. She has also taught at Hunter College, The Maggie Flanigan Studio, and Groundtruth Theatre Festival.

Nicole A. Watson
Director

Seth lives in Rochester with his wife, Mary, and their two children, Marion and Wyatt. He teaches design at the University of Rochester in the Theater and Dance departments. He received his Bachelor’s Degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and M.F.A. from NYU/Tisch School of the Arts.

Seth Reiser
Lighting Designer

Brian Quijada returns to Geva Theatre Center where he directed the premiere of Nicole A. Watson’s play The Niceties. With Geva’s commitment to artistic excellence, programming rich and compelling stories for the stage, and championing new writers, I could not ask for a better place to work,” she commented. “Mark Cuddy and Pirronne Yousefzadeh are a terrific team and I am so excited that they invited me to direct Eleanor’s play. The Niceties is a thought provoking play that I believe will engage the hearts and minds of Geva’s audiences.”

NICOLE A. WATSON
Director

Guy is thrilled to be at Geva Theatre for the first time this fall to direct Eleanor Burgess’s play The Niceties. “With Geva’s commitment to artistic excellence, programming rich and compelling stories for the stage, and championing new voices, I could not ask for a better place to work,” she commented. “Mark Cuddy and Pirronne Yousefzadeh are a terrific team and I am so excited that they invited me to direct Eleanor’s play. The Niceties is a thought provoking play that I believe will engage the hearts and minds of Geva’s audiences.”

Guy Paul
Gctor

awakening of Scrooge, the audience may arrive fed up with the season, but leave the theatre with a lighter heart. And I’m the lucky guy who gets to lead them on that journey 10 times a week!”

Brian Quijada
Writer & Gctor

In addition to Where Did We Sit on the Bus?, regional credits include How We Got On and Amens at Actors Theatre of Louisville’s Humana Festival; Best Generation at Merimack Repertory Theatre; No More Sad Things at Boise Contemporary Theatre; and 3 seasons at Eugene O’Neill Center’s National Playweights Conference. On TV he has appeared in Blue Bloods (CBS) and Manhattan Love Story (ABC).

I am immensely excited to come up to Geva to present Where Did We Sit on the Bus?,” commented Brian. “Having only heard amazing things about the theatre company and being a big fan of the season, I am honored to be part of the lineup. I am very much looking forward to taking in the Rochester culture and meeting the patrons and staff of a company committed to doing new and exciting work.”

BRIAN QUIJADA
Writer & Gctor


BRIAN QUIJADA, Writer & Gctor

In addition to Geva, Mr. Paul has appeared regionally at Ford’s Theatre, Goodspeed, Globe Theatre, Guthrie Theatre (three seasons), Actor’s Theatre of Louisville, others. TV credits include “Patrick Melrose,” “Father Brown,” “Black Sails,” “Life on Mars,” “The Sopranos,” “Law & Order,” “George Washington: The Forging of a Nation,” and “The Cowardly Dog.” Film credits include The Sense of an Ending, Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them, The Fifth Estate, and Hyde Park on Hudson. Mr. Paul currently resides in London with his wife, actress Harriet Walter.

GUY PAUL, Gctor

BRIAN QUIJADA, Writer & Gctor

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BRIAN QUIJADA
Writer & Gctor
Did you know...

As a non-profit professional theatre, Geva Theatre Center relies on charitable contributions from individuals, foundations, and businesses to allow us to make live professional theatre accessible and affordable. The theatre must raise in excess of $2 million in donations annually in order to enrich the lives of thousands of people through Geva’s Wilson Stage and Fielding Stage productions, and education and engagement programs. Support from donors also allows us to develop and present exciting new theatrical works by the finest contemporary playwrights.

If you are a Geva subscriber but are not yet a donor, we invite you to consider making a charitable donation to the theatre. There are many ways to support Geva. Here are just a few:

• Make a gift of any size to the Geva Annual Fund
• Join the Director’s Forum or Producer’s Circle and enjoy access to the Lipson Lounge and other benefits
• Sponsor a scholarship for our Summer Academy theatre conservatory
• Adopt a seat in the Wilson Stage and have your name affixed to the seat
• Become a member of the Legacy Society by including Geva in your estate planning
• Attend Summer Curtain Call, the theatre’s annual fundraising gala

If you are age 70-1/2 or older and taking a required minimum distribution (RMD) from an IRA, you can use part of that distribution (up to $100,000) to make a donation to Geva tax-free. Geva must receive your donation by Dec. 31 for you to apply it to that year’s tax return.

In keeping with our production season, Geva’s fiscal year runs from August 1 to July 31. The earlier in our fiscal year the theatre receives contributions, the better able we are to plan for the remainder of the season.

All donors of $250 or more annually or recognized in our playbills for all Wilson and Fielding Stage productions, and on signage in the theatre vestibule for an entire year.

For more information about how you can help to support Geva or to learn about additional opportunities, please contact the Advancement Office at (585) 420-2004.

Thank you for your patronage of your non-profit professional regional theatre and your consideration of additional charitable support!
The Life of A New Play

By Jenni Werner, Literary Director/Resident Dramaturg

For over 25 years, Geva has been a committed partner in the creation of new theatre. Over time, 145 full-length plays and hundreds of short plays have been supported through one or more workshops through our new play programs, produced by Geva’s Literary Department. And our two stages have been the home for the world premieres of 33 plays and musicals in those 25 years. But where does a play go, you might ask, after its world premiere production in Rochester?

And the answer is simply “everywhere.” Those 33 plays have gone on to over 150 productions at theatres around the country and across the globe. The same stories that you see first here in Rochester go on to intrigue, entertain, and inspire audiences in other cities, interpreted by new companies of directors, actors and designers.

Let’s highlight a recent Geva premiere, one which is particularly worthy of celebration this year, after a year celebrating the birth of Frederick Douglass and as we approach the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment which prohibits the denial of the right to vote. Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, who put the rights of men and women above everything in the pursuit of equal rights for all. They were strategic thinkers who understood the long game. And who pushed and prodded those in power to acknowledge the righteousness of their cause. They didn’t always agree about the means but they were rock solid on the ends. In the times of their deepest disagreements, they remembered the human being on the other side of the issue.

The fall of 2017, Geva produced the world premiere production of Mat Smart’s The Agitators which will feature most of the creative team from Geva, including director Valerie Curtis-Newton, who also directed The Seattle production at AJ Epstein Presents this past spring was directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton, who also directed the first reading of The Agitators in Geva’s 2016 Festival of New Theatre. Returning to the script two years after her first encounter with it, Curtis-Newton found it just as relevant. “We need agitators as much now as ever. People who will stay in the room when it gets tough and carry on the fight. People like Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, who put the rights of men and women above everything in the pursuit of ‘equal rights for all.’ They were strategic thinkers who understood the long game. And who pushed and prodded those in power to acknowledge the righteousness of their cause. They didn’t always agree about the means but they were rock solid on the ends. In the times of their deepest disagreements, they remembered the human being on the other side of the issue.”

Of course, the timeliness of the script and the relevance of these historical fights for equality make The Agitators particularly attractive in today’s environment. And yet, other Geva world premieres have gone on to great successes as well. Wendy MacLeod’s hilarious Women in Jeopardy is an excellent example. Geva’s 2015 production of the play transferred to the Cape Playhouse in Massachusetts right after closing here at Geva. And since then, it’s had an incredible 38 productions, with six more in the works for this upcoming season!

We are proud to play a role in creating new work for the American theatre, and are always especially thrilled to invite our audiences to be the very first to experience these new stories for the stage. As plays premiered here at Geva go on to long, healthy lives around the country, they’ll carry this tag line in the playbills for every production “World Premiere Production by Geva Theatre Center, Rochester, NY.” And we thank you, our community, for being an integral part of every play’s incredible journey, from their earliest first readings to their most polished closing nights.
As a non-profit theatre, Geva has public service at its core. We’re continually striving to serve Rochester by telling stories that speak to our communities and by fostering a welcoming and inclusive space for our audiences. This season, we introduce the Engagement Department—Geva staff dedicated to nurturing relationships between Geva and members of Rochester’s communities who may or may not have ever been served by a Geva production. Guiding us in this work is Pirronne Yousefzadeh, Director of Engagement & Associate Artistic Director.

“People come to Geva for the entertainment, they come for the theatre. “

Pirronne also participates in season planning and hiring of guest artists. She comes to this with experience directing at Geva—her work has riveted audiences on the Fielding Stage for three consecutive seasons: The Lake Effect (2016-2017), Heartland (2017-2018), and the Kitchen Theatre Company’s production of The Royale (2018-2019). This season, Pirronne is directing Queen on the Fielding Stage, and Vietgone on the Wilson Stage. She also approaches engagement work like a director.

“My job as a theatre director is conceptualization,” says Pirronne. “It’s about developing a point of view towards a production. So when I look at the scripts of the plays we’re doing this season, and I’m looking at it from the vantage point of the Director of Engagement, what I’m trying to do is conceptualize a larger engagement approach around each production, and specific programming that serves that mission.”

As a child of Iranian immigrants who came to the U.S. in the early 1970’s, Pirronne was drawn to theatre for its sense of community. Today, she has refined that initial impulse into a conscious mission to bring people together through theatre. In meeting Rochester community members, community leaders, and leaders of other non-profit organizations, Pirronne has found an eagerness to deepen relationships with Geva. It’s the work of the Engagement Department to listen to their needs and find ways to serve them—through productions or otherwise.

Pirronne offers another perspective on whose experiences—playwrights’, directors’, and other artists’—will shape the worlds on our stages, and how each artist’s work may serve Rochester’s communities. Surrounding Geva’s production season, the Engagement Department will coordinate special events and initiatives—inside and outside our building—that are deeply connected to our plays and the communities they serve. At Geva, engagement work is artistic and artistic work is engagement.

Pirronne imparts, “The future of the American theatre depends on us thinking of engagement not as a separate accessory department, but as an essential ingredient that is at the nucleus of any vibrant, relevant regional theatre.” And she’s excited for what’s in store at Geva.
Geva welcomes more than 200 visiting artists each season. For the first few weeks of their stay here, they spend most of their days in rehearsal, but once a show is up and running, they have more free time to explore our city.

We asked them about their favorite places to visit, and here are the top ten Rochester landmarks visited by Geva artists:

1. **Fuego Coffee Roasters**
   - low-key, minimalist coffee shop serving house roasts, tea, hot chocolate, and baked goods.

2. **Native Eatery and Bar**
   - one of Rochester’s newest eateries featuring an eclectic menu and fabulous cocktails

3. **Parkleigh**
   - one of the best places in town to find unique gifts

4. **Susan B. Anthony House**
   - one of the great historical sites of Rochester

5. **The Strong National Museum of Play**
   - The cast from Geva’s In the Heights at the Strong Museum. Photo by Goat Factory Media Entertainment.

6. **The Playhouse/Swillburger**
   - set in an old church building in the South Wedge, this trendy hangout offers burgers, cocktails and vintage arcade games

7. **Salingers’**
   - a relaxed, local bar in the heart of Rochester’s East End, it offers TVs, a small patio and bar games

8. **Dinosaur Bar-B-Que**
   - Excellent barbeque within walking distance of the theatre

9. **KeyBank Rochester Fringe Festival’s Silent Disco**
   - a great way to unwind after coming off stage

10. **Owl House**
    - creative, vegan-friendly American plates and craft beer served in a snug house with a bohemian vibe

Which of these artist favorites will you visit next?

Celebrating 45 Years in Business

Tune into the best local morning show, the Wake Up Club, Monday - Friday from 5:30a-10a for all the hottest music, latest news, and community updates. Keep your dial on 103.9 or listen to us live at wdkk.com!
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Opening Night Dates, times, shows and artists subject to change.

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Audio Description
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Opening Night

This season Scott Falkowski begins a new role at Geva as Guest Services Manager. He takes over the role from Tom Clark, who retired in June from Geva after 25 years of service.

A Buffalo native, Scott is a graduate of Lancaster Central School and SUNY Fredonia where he earned a B.A. in Arts Administration and Theatre.

Prior to coming to Geva, Scott was employed by the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York first as a Subscription Services Associate, then as a Treasurer in the Box Office of the famed Studio 54 Theatre. From 2005-2006 he took a leave of absence to work at 101 Productions LLC as the House Seat Manager for Monty Python's Spamalot on Broadway as well as The History Boys. He returned to Studio 54 to resume work as a Treasurer. In 2009 he was promoted to Assistant Head Treasurer. In 2011 he moved to Rochester to close the gap of a two year, long-distance relationship, eventually marrying his husband, Dan Howell (also a SUNY Fredonia graduate) in 2016.

Scott took a one-year break from the theatre world to pursue his other passion, culinary arts, by working in the catering department at Wegmans, as well as becoming a Chef II in the prepared food department. This experience has been invaluable to his work here at Geva where he was formerly in charge of events and where he is now working closely with the Geva Kitchen and Godot's Bar on a daily basis.

In 2012, Scott returned to his love of theatre by working as the Subscriptions Services Coordinator and co-managing the Box Office at Geva until October 2014 when he accepted the position of Events Manager in the Advancement Department, where he remained until this most recent change in role.

Now as Guest Services Manager, Scott oversees Godot's Bar, the Geva Kitchen, the Lipson Lounge and our over 500+ volunteer ushers.

Scott is thrilled to take on this new role, combining his love of theatre with culinary arts and customer service. “I am excited to continue the wonderful work that has been put in place by my predecessor and friend, Tom Clark,” said Scott. “I look forward to implementing some changes to help the theatre not only meet, but exceed the expectations of our wonderful and loyal patrons.”

The 2019-2020 season marks Scott’s seventh season with Geva and he is already hard at work with his dedicated team to create another wonderful year of memories for all who attend productions and events here throughout the year.

Scott lives in the South Wedge with his husband, Dan, and their two Shih Tzu dogs, Albus and Percy Dumbledog. He is grateful that he made the decision to move back upstate and create a home here in Rochester and at Geva.

### 19-20 EVENTS CALENDAR MAR - JUN

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### Changing of the Guard

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I never saw my hometown until I stayed away too long
I never heard the melody until I needed the song
- Tom Waits

My first experience of Geva was as an audience member in the mid 90s. I was 14 and had been performing in school and community theatre productions for a few years, but had not experienced much professional theatre. A friend had been cast in Geva’s To Kill A Mockingbird and I was very interested to see the show. It was formatted to say the least. I remember every detail of that production distinctly, the lighting, the scenery, and especially the performances. I was hooked.

The next year, I was accepted as part of Geva’s recently created Summer Academy and received some of my first professional theatre training. That summer gave me many tools which have served invaluable in my acting career, my first insights into Shakespeare, the power of a strong and responsive ensemble, and mentors who continue to advise and guide me to this day.

I kept up with Geva over the years, throughout school, travel and jobs in New York. Then a few seasons back, Geva’s Director of Education, Skip Greer, recommended me for a workshop of Women in Jeopardy!, a new comedy being presented as part of the Play’s in Progress series. The workshop went well and led to me being offered the role of Temner when the play was fully produced in the following season.

The opportunity to return to Rochester and to Geva for a fully produced world premier production was incredibly meaningful. As a teenager, seeing and working with professional theatre makers on Geva’s stages gave me a foundation of education and experience on which I have built a career as a performer and an artist. But it gave me something else as well. Productions like Picasso at the Lapin Agile, The One Eyed Man is King, and Famous Ophelia gave me dreams of being one of those actors on that stage. And coming back to the place where all that started, being invited to sit at the table, seeing my name on the dressing room door, and joining the ranks of those same actors I admired was absolutely the fulfillment of those childhood dreams.

SCOTT RAD BROWN

Scott is a graduate of Webster Conservatory in St. Louis, and was in the Geva Summer Academy class of 1998. He returned home to Geva as an actor in Wendy MacLeod’s Women in Jeopardy!

Music, exploring characters, mastering choreography, and discovering all the technical elements from stage management to sound, was exhilarating. Yet I knew it was a special moment for me, as I was so thrilled to be learning from professional directors and actors. But it is with today’s hindsight that I can see how formative and inspiring those early days at Geva really were.

Over the next few years, my family and I saw countless productions at Geva. My high school took several field trips to see student performances. I heard about the Summer Academy program from friends in my school’s drama club, and auditioned in middle school and early high school. I spent two summers working on my craft at Geva’s Summer Academy. I had incredible faculty mentors and made lifelong friends. In senior year of high school, my drama club participated in the Stage Door Project, in which I was able to see 10 plays. Almost while working on the script myself. We met with other students from across the city and presented our scenes on the Wilson Stage under the wonderful mentorship of Skip Greer. Working with the professional directors and actors on our own scene work was an opportunity that I had not been afforded (or even imagined possible) up until that point.

I graduated high school and left Rochester to pursue a BFA in Drama at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. There was absolutely no question in my mind that I needed to be an artist, actor, and informed, thoughtful human being after what I had been exposed to thus far artistically. Since graduating college, I have been in and out of NYC working and auditioning. Some of the greatest “full circle” moments I’ve had were walking into an audition studio in midtown Manhattan and seeing Mark Cuddy, Skip Greer, Don, as, and Melissa Ann Kennedy behind the table. Seeing those faces that are responsible for my early training and initial love of theatre truly felt like a family reunion.

In a completely surreal turn of events, I came back to work with Mark, Skip and Don as the dance and movement faculty for Geva’s 2018 Summer Academy. It was incredible to me that 12-14 years after first met these generous teachers, I became their colleague. To say it was an honor is an understatement. I have learned so much about myself and how to be a great teacher from watching them work. Being back in Rochester, working at Geva, and seeing those friends faces every day was a much anticipated homecoming. “Thank you” is not enough for the gifts Geva has given me.
Can Theatre Save the World?

By Jenni Werner, Literary Director/Resident Dramaturg

“As it is a way of ending the world with meaning it is also a way of allowing the world to express itself.” — Bert O. States, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater

As we look out at the world today, it's easy to get bogged down by the myriad challenges we face. There are indisputable crises all around us, and the ways in which we respond to each of these crises is critically important — our solutions define who we are as a society, what our priorities are, how well we live up to the aspirations of our ancestors. As a theatre artist, it can sometimes feel like an odd juxtaposition, something a little like: “This horrible thing just happened, and in order of doing something about it, I am going to play-pretend.” Sometimes stories, the art of theatre, feels inconsequential. But is it? In these increasingly divided and often isolating times, can theatre actually offer a way forward?

Of course, I think that theatre has an important role to play in our world today. But I have a vested interest — I've devoted my career to this art form. Thankfully, I'm not alone. One theory about the social importance of theatre is that, by allowing audiences to step into a world other than their own, theatre and other narrative art forms encourage the growth of empathy. This is frightfully important today, as our ability to understand how other people feel seems to be on the decline. A 2010 University of Michigan study announced the shocking statistic that the average person feels less connected to distant others feel less distant and caring for them less difficult. Numerous studies have researched the impact of theatre training on our ability to build empathy. One notable exception was occurred in 2017, when the heartbeats of twelve audience members were monitored at a performance of Dreamgirls on London’s West End. During the performance, the individuals’ pulses rose and fell in unison, suggesting that the communal experience of theatre creates a common physiological experience. The story onstage created a relationship not only between the character and a particular audience member, but between audience members as well — it brought strangers closer together. Their pulses even remained in tune during intermission, suggesting a lasting impact. If this is true, then each time we sit together in the dark, sharing the experience of a story together, we move one step closer to bridging the empathy gap, to working towards those communal goals that will, ultimately, save us all.

But few scientific studies explore the impact of theatre training on our ability to build empathy. One notable exception was occurred in 2017, when the heartbeats of twelve audience members were monitored at a performance of Dreamgirls on London’s West End. During the performance, the individuals’ pulses rose and fell in unison, suggesting that the communal experience of theatre creates a common physiological experience. The story onstage created a relationship not only between the character and a particular audience member, but between audience members as well — it brought strangers closer together. Their pulses even remained in tune during intermission, suggesting a lasting impact. If this is true, then each time we sit together in the dark, sharing the experience of a story together, we move one step closer to bridging the empathy gap, to working towards those communal goals that will, ultimately, save us all.

What role does theatre play in all of this? Zaki posits that storytelling is a critical aspect of our humanity because it allows us to ‘unteather’ from our own lives and experience someone else’s. “Since people first coziied up around a fire together,” he says, “we’ve told stories: first out loud, now on paper and screens. Surrounded by real people, we spend much of our free time pretending that people who never existed experienced things that never happened. Recently, psychologists have begun telling a new story about stories. More than a diversion, narrative arts are an ancient technology: performance-enhancing drugs for untheatre. Stories helped our ancestors imagine other lives, plan for possible futures, and agree on cultural codes. In the modern world, they help in a new way: flattening our empathic landscape, making distant others feel less distant and caring for them less difficult.”

We need to know where it can start — a student matinee of To Kill a Mockingbird, a class in our Summer Academy, a guest artist visit to a Rochester classroom — but we’re thrilled where that might lead. And we’re thrilled when they come home.
New Words, New Worlds.
New Plays on Stage

By Jenni Werner,
Literary Director/Resident Dramaturg

Consider this: How is a piece of art created? If we spend much time thinking about what we experience in the theatre, what we hear on the radio or what we see on the walls of a museum, we can probably imagine that there has been a certain amount of trial and error, of experimentation and exploration. Most of the time, that exploration has been done long before anyone other than the artist is in the room to see it. But if you want to see creation in process, attend a reading of a new play. Throughout the year, Geva’s Literary Department hosts workshops of new plays, where playwrights, directors, dramaturgs and actors spend several days investigating, exploring and interpreting a new piece of writing for the stage. And on the final day, we invite an audience to join the experiment with us, hear the play read aloud, and talk to the playwright about their work.

We are thrilled to invite you to the following readings of new plays in our 2019-2020 season. Tickets are always free, but we do ask that you make reservations, because seating is limited.

Festival of New Theatre

Oct. 8: Solitude by Carolyn E. Kourofsky
Solitude is inspired by the true story of Edith Bone, a doctor and journalist who is unjustly accused of being a British spy in 1949 Hungary; in solitary confinement for seven years, how will she survive?

Oct. 11: Rochester Bake-Off
Now in its sixth year, a creative experiment, the outcome of which can never be predicted: Geva will present a challenge to Rochester-area playwrights to create a short piece in just three days, inspired by a uniquely Rochester experience.

Oct. 12 and 13: Young Writers Showcase
Five short plays written by Rochester area teens, including: Tales You So by Jessi Opert; It’s Cold Here by Sophia Milazzo; Semifinals by Mina Stevens; Caprice by Bella Callari; and letters by Heather Hillman.

Oct. 16: The Sea and the Stars by Harrison David Rivers
Simon is a lifeguard. Finn is terrified of water. Both are adrift, with broken hearts, returning to the tiny beach town of Jupiter and to families who need them. A play about love, karaoke, and the sea.

Oct. 18: Lulu in Rochester*
by Allison Gregory
Inspired by real life, Lulu in Rochester follows the fascinating partnership between famously reclusive silent-film star Louise Brooks and acclaimed George Eastman Museum film curator James Card. When James persuades his irreverent idol to move to Rochester and watch her celebrated films for the first time, Louise must confront the myths and perceptions that have shaped her life, and shed light on the mystery of why “Lulu” inexplicably disappeared at the height of her fame.

Oct. 20: Africantic by Universes*
An immersive audiovisual theatrical experience by UNIVERSES, one of the nation’s premiere theatre ensembles. Africantic identifies, maps, deconstructs and reconstructs the musical DNA chains that bind us. From the complexities of spiritual ancestral rhythms and chants, across the middle passage into the Americas (where African deities entangle, with Catholic Saints), from work songs and field hollers all the way to today’s music, Africantic explores the importance of music and the social movements that have shaped us. Africantic’s roots run deep.

Oct. 20: Dangerous Dress*
by Catherine Triesschmann Miller
A return to that brief moment in the 1850s when dangerous women dared to fight for equality while wearing pants! Very few styles of dress impeded women’s movements more than the tight corsets and large hoop skirts of the antebellum era, yet when suffragists challenged the fashion, few things generated greater outrage. This play will center around Seneca Falls historic icons Amelia Bloomer and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as they challenge inequality by changing their wardrobes.

For more information on either of these programs, visit https://www.gevatheatre.org/artists/play-submission/
Mark Bissonnette

Props Shop Manager

Mark Bissonnette is beginning his 22nd season at Geva. A native of Michigan, he is a graduate of University of Michigan – Flint. Prior to Geva, he spent 11 seasons at Actors Theatre of Louisville. The first show that he worked on here was Picasso at the Lapin Agile. As the Props Shop Manager, his job is very detail-oriented. Geva’s sets are renowned for their detail and his favorite show is whatever show he happens to be working on at the time. A standout production was The Race of the Ark Tattoo (2004). Set in a yard sale, the set was made up of hundreds of props. Mark gets to do a lot of shopping and is frequently visiting local antique and thrift shops. He keeps an eye out for things that Geva might be interested in having in its already huge store of props. In addition to the smaller props that are stored and catalogued in Geva’s building, the props department maintains a large warehouse of furniture.

Butch Kane

Props Artisan

The 2019-20 marks Butch Kane’s 20th season at Geva. Just prior to coming to Geva, Butch hand-made circuit boards for a local firm and worked for a company that did detailed interior paintwork. At Geva, he is responsible for some of the trickier props and special effects, such as the umbrella which closed by itself in last season’s production of The Magician’s Daughter. Sometimes props artisans must create extraordinary things – items that seem to be something that they are not. Butch’s favorite part of the job is trouble shooting and problem solving. Throughout his career at Geva, Butch has worked on hundreds of shows. Some of his favorites include American Buffalo and Freud’s Last Session on which Butch worked on the countless number of artifacts and figurines which decorated Sigmund Freud’s study.

Theresa Pierce

Properties/Swing Carpenter

The 2019-2020 Season is the third season at Geva for Theresa Pierce. She is a graduate of SUNY Fredonia where she received her B.F.A. in Theatre Production and Design with a concentration on Scenic Design. Theresa’s specialties include paper props, props that need to be printed, upholstered props and items that need to be sewn. Her favorite things to make are fake food. In this season’s production of La Cage aux Folles, Theresa was tasked with making the burned chicken appear to be smoking. For her every day is different with problem solving and learning something new. One of her more challenging tasks recently was to learn bookbinding when she was creating the diary used by Anne in The Diary of Anne Frank.

Food for Thought

Yes, some of the food that you might see in a play is real (the stuff that is actually eaten), but much of it is created just to look real. Three of the photos below show props from La Cage aux Folles, and three show real food items. Can you tell the difference?

The disastrous dinner party in La Cage aux Folles gets even worse when the butler, Jacob, burns the chicken. Which is the prop chicken?

As the six Cagelles are bonding backstage, Chantal is enjoying some takeout noodles. Which one is real take-out and which one is “fake-out?”

Hors d’oeuvres are passed around when the Dindons come over to meet Jean-Michel’s family. Which mini quiches were used in the show?

The diary prop Theresa created for Anne Frank from start to finish.

Answers:
Choice B is the chicken prop, Choice A is the fake take-out, Choice B is not real quiche.

Some of the most comments most frequently-heard from Geva audiences regard the incredible detail featured on the theatre’s sets. Much of that detail can be attributed to the creative efforts of Geva’s Props Department. (A prop is basically anything movable or portable that can be used to furnish space on stage.) The Props Department fulfills all of Geva’s needs for props for shows whether the challenge is making a Midwestern tavern look like a fully-stocked and operational bar where anyone could order a drink (as in last season’s Hard Cell), or decorating a nightclub in St. Tropez (as in this season’s La Cage aux Folles). Let’s meet the members of Geva’s Props Department!
Celebrating Artistic Director
Mark Cuddy’s 25th Season at Geva

Many friends have provided generous support to help underwrite Mark’s artistic season.

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Nocon & Associates
Nan & Tom Hildebrandt
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Chuck Lundeen & John Williams
Michael & Frances Millard
Wolfgang Pfizenmaier
Kelly & Kathleen Shea
Mimi & Sam Tilton
Linda Cornell Weinstein & Sherwin Weinstein
Jack & Barbara Kraushaar
Peter & Beth Messner

You too can help support this milestone season. For more information, contact Laura Sadowski at (585) 420-2041 or lsadowski@gevatheatre.org.
19/20 SEASON

Wilson Stage Series
- La Cage aux Folles SEP 3 - OCT 6
- The Niceties OCT 22 - NOV 17
- Queen NOV 6 - NOV 24

Fielding Studio Series
- Slow Food JAN 14 - FEB 9
- Once FEB 19 - MAR 22
- Cry it Out MAR 4 - MAR 22
- Looks Like Pretty MAR 31 - APR 26
- Where Did We Sit on the Bus? APR 22 - MAY 10
- Vietgone MAY 3 - MAY 31

Cover Photos: The cast of La cage aux Folles. Photos by Goat Factory Media Entertainment.