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Newtown

APRIL 16 - MAY 12, 2024

By Dan O'Brien

Directed by Elizabeth Williamson

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As Geva Theatre's new Executive Director, I am honored to introduce Dan O'Brien's gripping *Newtown* to our audiences in a world premiere production directed by Geva's Artistic Director Elizabeth Williamson. My favorite moments in the theatre are when audiences encounter compelling work on the stage for the first time and with *Newtown*, we directly respond to our mission to illuminate the fullness of our many human experiences. For me, theatre has always provided an effective platform to share stories about provocative topics in our society. Dan O'Brien's range of work regularly embraces real life circumstances through the power of storytelling.

Prior to my arrival, Elizabeth and Dan gathered a group of artists together in a developmental workshop to explore the text and journey of the script. New play development always requires time to explore, gestate, revisit, and rewrite before the rehearsal process even begins. We are able to engage in this extended activity only through the generous support of our contributors and funders. In this case, Geva Theatre is the recipient of a prestigious grant from The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation's Theatre Visions Fund for the development and production of new work. Only one of these grants is awarded each year and Geva Theatre is fortunate to be this year's recipient, allowing not only for our production of *Newtown*, but also for the opportunity to commission new work for the future.

We are grateful for the participation of the Mental Health Association of Rochester throughout the run of *Newtown* to provide care and information for our artists, staff, and audiences while grappling with subject matter that may prove deeply emotional. A representative from MHA will be with us in the lobby at each performance to provide resources for those who are interested. Although twelve years have passed since the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, the tragedy of that day continues to live with us as we bear witness to ongoing gun violence across our nation.

We also welcome audiences to engage with us and further explore the themes of the play through our Geva Insights on Tuesday, April 23 and Mondays at Geva on April 29. You will find more information about these events on pages 14 and 15, as well as information about our *Centering Indigenous Voices* engagement events later in June on page 35.

I am grateful to be here in Rochester to share in this production of *Newtown* at the theatre I have been invited to lead alongside Elizabeth Williamson. I look forward to engaging in dialogue about the theatrical experiences that inspire you as I learn and grow in my new community.

With deep gratitude to our 23/24 Season Sponsor ESL Federal Credit Union, our Honorary Season Producer Dr. Dawn Lipson, and our Media Sponsors News 10 and Warm 101.3, we are pleased to present *Newtown*.



James Haskins
Executive Director

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TICKETS Tickets can be purchased online at GevaTheatre.org, or by phone at 585-232-4382.

Box Office Hours are:

Tuesday - Saturday ... Noon - 8:00pm

Sunday ... Noon - 7:00pm

Monday ... Closed

Telephone: (585) 232-Geva (4382)

Gift Certificates in any dollar amount may be purchased year round from the Box Office.

Group Rates are available for groups of 10 or more. Call the Box Office at 232-4382 or email groups@GevaTheatre.org for more information.

Student Rush Tickets are available from \$15 for all non-sold out performances, beginning 2 hours prior to curtain time. Students must present valid ID. One ticket per person.

Geva THEATRE

ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON

Artistic Director

JAMES HASKINS

Executive Director

Presents

NEWTOWN

By **DAN O'BRIEN**

Directed by **ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON†**

Scenic Design
NICK VAUGHAN†

Costume Design
ILONA SOMOGYI†

Lighting Design
EMMA DEANE†

*Original Composition
& Sound Design*
ANDRÉ PLUESS†

Dramaturg
FIONA KYLE

Assistant Director
OLIVIA SPENARD

Production Stage Manager
JULIA BREGY*

Assistant Stage Manager
**KEVIN GREGORY
DWYER***

Production Assistant
KAYLYN N. NICHOLS

Casting
**THE TELSEY OFFICE
KARYN CASL, CSA**

Production Manager
PATRICK HEYDENBURG

General Manager
THALIA SCHRAMM

Newtown is derived closely from research into the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. *An Unseen Angel*, by Alissa Parker, and "The Reckoning," Andrew Solomon's profile of Peter Lanza in *The New Yorker*, have been particularly helpful sources. The names of characters and some details of history have been altered because the play is ultimately a fiction, and imagined by necessity.

Commissioned as part of the American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle by Oregon Shakespeare Festival Director Bill Rauch; Executive Director Cynthia Rider and The Public Theater Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham

Newtown is sponsored by The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation's Theatre Visions Fund program.



Geva is a proud partner of  in the Geva-Brockport Alliance.

A Spanish-language version of this program is available at the Box Office and online at GevaTheatre.org. Translator: Marisol Galarza-Ruiz.

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THE CAST
(In Order of Appearance)

Sarah.....Kellie Overbey*
 Ethan.....Max Chemin*
 Naomi.....Kate Abbruzzese*
 Matthew.....Jonathan Walker*

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Open Captioner.....Samantha Geffen
 Sign Interpretation Program Coordinator.....Luane Davis Haggerty
 Artistic Intern.....Jake Tomishen
 Director of Artistic Sign Language.....Matthew J. Schwartz
 Sign Interpreters.....Samantha Geffen and Eric Severson
 Audio Description Program Coordinator and Consultant.....Rene Latorre
 Audio Descriptor.....Shawnda Urie



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



†Members of the the Stage Directors and Directors and Choreographers Society, an independent national labor union.



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



Geva Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a consortium of regional theatres throughout the nation; Actors Equity Association (AEA), the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States; the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), an independent national labor union; and United Scenic Artists (USA), a union of scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers.



Geva Theatre is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for the American Theatre.



Geva Theatre is a member of the National New Play Network, an alliance of non-profit professional theatres dedicated to the development, production, and continued life of new plays.



Please note that the taking of photographs or use of recording devices during the performance is not permitted. Cell phones and all other electronic devices are strictly prohibited in the theatre.

Shining a spotlight on creativity.

The arts enrich all our lives and are an integral part of our culture and heritage. It's why we support arts organizations within our community. They inspire, entertain, move, and inform us in so many ways. Without the arts our community would not be the vibrant and diverse place we enjoy today.

KeyBank thanks Geva Theatre Center for making a difference.

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SAVE THE DATE

GEVA THEATRE
CURTAIN CALL

JUNE 7, 2024

6:00PM - 9:00PM

A fundraising gala and auction in support of Geva Theatre's education and engagement programming

Visit gevatheatre.org/curtaincall for more information on tickets, sponsorships, and more!

SOMETHING LIKE HOPE: AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT, DAN O'BRIEN

Playwright Dan O'Brien returns to Geva Theatre with the World Premiere of his impactful new play, *Newtown*. He discussed his work and history with the theatre with Fiona Kyle, the Dramaturg for the production.

In addition to being a playwright, you are also a highly lauded poet. How does poetry influence your playwriting?

I suppose I write poems like a playwright and I write plays like a poet. When I write a play I care about the language, the specificity and rhythm and sound, but the dialogue has to of course feel natural in the mouths of the characters, has to be their attempts to communicate imperfectly in the moment with other characters. When I write a poem I'll half-think about how a monologue works onstage: the question or need that drives the language, and the change in thought or emotion that lets me know when a poem is finished, has meaning. Sometimes I write poems in character, or in the voice of a "persona," as poets like to say. Sometimes I tell stories with my poems. Writing poetry is an intensely introspective preoccupation. Maybe writing poetry helps me imagine the interior lives of my characters. These characters may never have the opportunity to deliver their private, subtextual poems to an audience – thankfully so! – but if I get to know them deeply, then hopefully my audience will too.

You often explore trauma in your writing, yet I am always left with a feeling of hope after I've read or seen your work. Can you speak to the relationship between trauma and healing, and how that manifests in your writing?

Writing has always been for me an attempt to transform pain into something like hope. I started writing in adolescence, not long after my older brother tried to kill himself – an event I witnessed. I grew up with a burden of secrecy: my brother's suffering, and the emotional and verbal abuse in my family, was never to be divulged. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I developed obsessive-compulsive disorder, and I found that writing – and writing as honestly as I could about my childhood – saved me; saved me emotionally, psychologically, and saved me because writing led me toward literature and the theatre where I found friends, love, purpose. I've needed desperately to write during other periods of trauma in my life: when I was disowned by my parents in my early thirties, and when my wife and I were both treated for cancer in 2015-16. Trauma happens to everybody and if we're lucky art can help. And one doesn't have to be an artist to help and be helped; one has to express the truth and begin to heal.

Your play, *Newtown*, is inspired by the shooting that occurred on December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and you've written other plays that are based on real events, such as *The Ballad of George Zimmerman* and *The Body of an American*. How do you approach writing about real events?

Early in my career I wrote a lot of historical plays, and when I write nonfictional plays that take place in the modern era I think of them similarly: I want to get it right; I want to be accurate, in terms of the facts, and responsible when I take some poetic license. I'm drawn to true stories that nevertheless contain unknown or unknowable gaps, as is the case with *Newtown*. This play imagines two scenarios that certainly didn't take place as I've depicted them: the play's Part One imagines a mother's one-sided conversation with her disturbed son; Part Two imagines a meeting between a mother and father of a child killed at Sandy Hook, and the shooter's father. (This second scene derives in part from Alissa Parker's memoir *An Unseen Angel*, in which Parker briefly describes the meeting she and her husband had with Peter Lanza five weeks after the Sandy Hook shooting.) The fictional element is crucial with this play: while writing, it seemed morally imperative that I imagine myself as each of these characters in order to more fully engage with what happened at Sandy Hook, push through my fear and denial, and reckon with some profound questions about myself and our culture.

What is your history with this play?

Ten years ago I was commissioned to write a play about the history of guns in the U.S. The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary was so recent that it didn't seem to qualify as a historical subject. Then my research for this commission was interrupted by my previously mentioned cancer experience, and in the meantime there were more school shooting, and mass shootings – so many that Sandy Hook seemed to recede into the national subconscious. With time it was clearer to me that Sandy Hook was one particularly shocking horror in an ongoing cycle of horrific violence. By the time I began to research this play in earnest, and to write its early drafts, Sandy Hook had become American history, and its story seemed to have a lot to say about where we were, where we are, and where we're going as a society.

Can you share how being a father has influenced the writing of *Newtown*?

I completed a first draft of the play when my daughter was in kindergarten, and I've been workshoping it and revising it in the years since. She's my only child, and her experience with Active Shooter Drills has made this a very personal play to write. Personal but not unique, as we are all living with the trauma of mass shootings, all over the country, in and out of schools. I have felt a certain urgency as a parent, wanting to ask many of the questions that the characters in this play ask, in search of answers that might help create a safer world for our children. In the script I have dedicated *Newtown* to "the children," by which I mean the children killed at Sandy Hook, but also the children growing up today.

You have a long history of working with Elizabeth Williamson, Geva's Artistic Director and the Director of *Newtown*. Can you talk about the projects you've worked on together and how those experiences shape your working relationship as playwright and director?

I'm extremely fortunate to have known and worked with Elizabeth Williamson for over a decade. She directed an early workshop of *The Body of an American* at Pioneer Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, then helped guide that play toward its off-Broadway premiere at the Cherry Lane Theatre in 2016, as co-produced by Primary Stages and Hartford Stage, where she was the Associate Artistic Director/Director of New Play Development. Elizabeth has directed and developed several of my plays, at various venues over the years, always giving me help and

encouragement. She's one of the smartest, kindest theatre artists I know: patient, empathetic, keenly perceptive. She is both an innovator and a storyteller at once. She believes that plays can do many things, as do I, but that one crucial thing a play can do is challenge the artists, and by extension the audience, especially when the subject of the play requires it.

You made your Geva debut in 2002 with *Key West* on the Fielding Stage and returned in 2009 with the World Premiere for *The House in Hydesville* on the Wilson Stage: what is it like for you coming back to Geva with another World Premiere?

When I learned that Elizabeth would be the new Artistic Director at Geva I was thrilled, because I love both Elizabeth and the theatre, and it seems like a good match: my experience of Geva audiences is that they're supportive of new work that takes risks. When I learned that *Newtown* would premiere at Geva – I just felt lucky. I've always felt an affinity for Rochester, its culture, and its political and spiritual history. When I first came here in 2002 I had an uncanny feeling of familiarity with the place. Premiering *Newtown* here feels like a kind of homecoming, and I'm grateful.



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The Mental Health Association of Rochester promotes mental wellness through a spectrum of culturally competent programs and services.

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ENGAGEMENT AT GEVA

Engagement at Geva Theatre's overarching objective is to connect more people and organizations with the art presented on its stages. To build more connected relationships with existing patrons and partners. To build new and meaningful

relationships with people and organizations with whom we have traditionally had no or little connectivity, the sticky kind of connectivity that endures.

Leading these initiatives is Rachel Y. DeGuzman, Geva's Director of Engagement. For more information, contact Ms. DeGuzman at rdeguzman@gevatheatre.org.

Engagement at Geva programs are sponsored, in part, by Volvo Cars Rochester.

Mondays at Geva

The stages are dark on Monday evenings at Geva, so the art and action shift to the lobby and café where brilliant local visual artists, performers, musicians, and speakers broaden our consideration of the onstage productions. Geva Theatre invites the community to join us for a series of art openings and to party for a couple of hours each month!

Mondays at Geva Event for Newtown:

MONDAY, APRIL 29 6 - 8 p.m.



Henry Avignon

Features a collection of 26 art works created by Rochester based artist **Henry Avignon** - that were presented to the families of the victims murdered in the Sandy Hook mass shooting. At the time Avignon said about this work - "I set out to find a mode of creation, to hone in on a process that would allow me to create 26 works that would have the impact read of prayer, to enable a platform for all manners of positive meditation on the memories of the victims, to be a point of comforting focus through which one might keep vigil." These pieces are generously loaned to Geva Theatre for this exhibition by **Constellation Brands**. **Henry Avignon** and **Kelly McCormick Sullivan**, aunt of victim **Catherine Violet Hubbard**, will speak at the event. Refreshments will be served.

Mondays at Geva Event for *The Color Purple*:

MONDAY, JUNE 3 6 - 8 p.m.



**Lavonne
Barfield-Wilson**

This event will feature an exhibit from artist **Lavonne Barfield-Wilson** who draws inspiration from a THE COLOR PURPLE quote of Shug Avery when she says to Celie, "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it...People think pleasing God is all God cares about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back." The exhibit will be composed of mixed media and acrylic on canvas pieces all incorporating the color purple in different hues, values, textures, and forms.

Lavonne Barfield-Wilson of LoveOn Artwork Originals is a God-gifted, multi-faceted artist and educator, who believes Art is a form of communicating with God. Art is helpful, Art is healing, Art is Necessary, Art is Love and everything is always better with Love On It!

Geva *Insights*

Geva Insights is a series of post-performance conversations with thought leaders, experts, and members of the community who contextualize or provoke more in-depth consideration of play's themes presented in Geva's 23/24 season. It was conceived of as a unique opportunity to strengthen our connectivity to new and existing communities in our region.

These unscripted, unrehearsed chats are productions of Geva's Engagement department. All *Geva Insights* conversations are videotaped and posted on Geva Theatre's YouTube page.

Geva Insights for Newtown:

TUESDAY, APRIL 23

immediately following the performance



Isaiah Santiago

Will feature a post-performance, on-stage conversation with Commissioner **Isaiah Santiago**, who was elected to the Rochester City School District Board last November when he was 19 years old. Santiago is a freshman at St. John Fisher University studying political science. He has advocated for youth in Rochester for the past three years, fighting youth gun violence and the stigma against mental health. Isaiah founded the We Got This organization, an organization working to end gun violence by allowing youth to get involved in arts and music. At 16 years old, he started a free after-school program for at-risk youth to experience the process of creating and recording music.

Geva Insights for The Color Purple:

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

immediately following the performance



Dr. Tokeya C. Graham

Dr. Tokeya C. Graham (she/her) is a multi-award-winning educator, writer, entrepreneur, creative, and community steward. Her work centers racial equity, literacy, healing, and community care. Graham's desire to create a better world informs her partnerships with historically excluded communities to create access and equity. Dr. Graham is the founder of Soulustainable Living LLC, an equity, education, and leadership consulting firm. She is also a well-respected anti-racism educator and community activist working to dismantle oppressive systems. Dr. Graham's transformative messages have been widely praised by engaged audiences. She is a committed volunteer who donates time, money, and other resources to many local organizations. Her volunteer work often propels her to leadership roles. Dr. Graham has served on various boards of directors for almost 30 years. Her goal is to be a beneficial presence in the world.

Engagement Program
Sponsor:



Volvo Cars Rochester

WHO'S WHO

KATE ABRUZZESE (Naomi) Off-Broadway:



Workshops of *Richard II*, *As You Like It* (The Public Theater), *Pound* opposite Christopher Lloyd, *An Evening With The Macbeths* (Red Bull Theatre).

Regional: Sarah in *Espejos: Clean* (Hartford Stage, Syracuse Stage), Margot Wendice in *Dial M For Murder*, Gwendolen Fairfax in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (The Old Globe), Miranda in *The Tempest*, Allie in *Dairyland* (Chautauqua Theater), Stephanie in *Black Dick* (O'Neill Playwrights Conference), Shelby in *Steel Magnolias* (Cincinnati Playhouse), Portia in *Julius Caesar*, Hamlet in *Hamlet* (Shakespeare & Company), Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (Baltimore Center Stage). TV/Film: *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *The Equalizer*, *The Blacklist*, *NCIS: NOLA*, *The Chaperone*. Two-time winner of the Red Bull Short New Play Festival; O'Neill Semifinalist. MFA, NYU Graduate Acting.

MAX CHERNIN (Ethan) (he/him) most recently



appeared in the award-winning Broadway revival of Jason Robert Brown and Alfred Uhry's *Parade*. He made his Broadway debut in Steve Martin & Edie Brickell's *Bright Star* and also appeared in the 2017 revival of *Sunday In The Park With George*. Other New York credits include: *Brooklynite* (Vineyard Theatre), *Bernstein's Mass* (Lincoln Center), and *The Golden Apple* (New York City Center) Regionally, Max led the world premiere of *Passing Through* at the Goodspeed Opera House and has played the title roles in *Daddy Long Legs* (Theatre Raleigh) and *Elf* (North Carolina Theatre, Pioneer Theater Company) TV/Film: *Dickinson*, *The Blacklist*, *Mozart In The Jungle*, *The Family*, and Adam Sandler's *The Week Of*. BFA: University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. maxchernin.com

KELLIE OVERBEY (Sarah) (she/her)



Broadway: *The Coast of Utopia*, *Twentieth Century*, "Q.E.D.", *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Present Laughter*, *Buried Child*. Drama Desk noms for *Women Without Men* (The Mint) and

Sleeping Rough (Page 73). Lorel nom for *The Savannah Disputation* (Playwrights Horizons.)

Other off-Broadway: *Mary Page Marlowe* and *Animals Out of Paper* (2nd Stage); *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn and Betty's Summer Vacation* (Playwrights Horizons); *No Good Things Dwell in the Flesh* (A.R.T. NY, Sept. 2023 NYT Critic's Pick.) Film & TV: *Imitation Girl*, *Sweet and Lowdown*, *Outbreak*, *Bull*, *FBI*, *Blindspot*, *Blue Bloods*, *30 Rock*, and *The Good Wife*. As a writer: *That's What She Said* (Sundance 2012), *My Wife's Coat* is featured in 29th Samuel French Off-Off-Broadway Festival Plays, and *Mobius* was a finalist for the 2022 O'Neill Playwrights Conference. E.D. of AisFor.org. Proud member of AEA (Councilor) & SAG-AFTRA.

JONATHAN WALKER (Matthew) (he/him)



Broadway: *The Assembled Parties*, *20th Century*, *After The Fall*, *Rocky*. Off-Bway: World premieres include plays by Richard Greenberg, Donald Margulies, Lorena Gale, Doug

Wright, James Lapine, Thulani Davis, Peter Parnell and Charles Busch. Theaters include: MCC, The Public Theater, Playwright's Horizons, Primary Stages, Roundabout, Manhattan Theater Club, The Cherry Lane, The New Group. Regional includes: The Guthrie, Berkeley Rep, Yale Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe. TV: *Bull*, *The Blacklist*, *The Endgame*, *Bluebloods*, *Madam Secretary*, *Quantico*, *Person Of Interest*, *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *The Carrie Diaries*, *The Big C*, *Sex And The City*, *Chappelle's Show*, lots of *Law And Order* and the upcoming Ryan Murphy mini-series, *Gladiator*. Film includes: *The Chaperone*, *Bridge Of Spies*, *It Had To Be You*, *Man On A Ledge*, *Michael Clayton*, *People I Know*, *Heights*, *Far From Heaven*.

ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE TEAM

DAN O'BRIEN (Playwright) (he/him) is a playwright, poet, and nonfiction writer. His recognition for playwrighting includes a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Horton Foote Prize, and two PEN America Awards. This is O'Brien's third premiere at Geva Theatre, where he is grateful to be working with longtime collaborator Elizabeth Williamson. O'Brien's play *The Body of an American* was produced off-Broadway in 2016 at the Cherry Lane Theatre in a co-production between Primary Stages and Hartford Stage, directed by Jo Bonney, after a premiere at Portland

Center Stage, directed by Bill Rauch; at the Gate Theatre in London, directed by James Dacre; and at theaters around the US and the UK. In 2023 O'Brien published *Survivor's Notebook*, his fifth poetry collection; *From Scarsdale*, a memoir; and *True Story*, a trilogy of plays. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, actor and writer Jessica St. Clair, and their daughter Isobel.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON (Director, Artistic



Director) (she/her) joined Geva as Artistic Director in 2022, to launch the theatre's 50th Anniversary Season.

An Obie Award-winning director, Williamson is known internationally for her work as a dramaturg, director, adapter, and producer. Broadway: Matthew López' *The Inheritance* (Tony, Olivier, Critics Circle, Evening Standard, GLAAD, and Drama Desk Awards for Best Play, Outer Critics Circle Honoree), *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Tony Award for Best Musical), *Anastasia*. West End: *The Inheritance*. Off-Broadway: Sarah Gancher's *Russian Troll Farm*, Dan O'Brien's *The Body of an American*. Regional: About Face Theatre, ACT, the Alley, Cal Shakes, Court, Hartford Stage, the La Jolla Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Pioneer Theatre, Steppenwolf, Theatre de La Jeune Lune, TheaterWorks Hartford, TheatreSquared, the Westport Country Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival. Williamson previously served as Associate Artistic Director and Literary Manager at Pioneer Theatre Company in Salt Lake City and as Associate Artistic Director and Director of New Play Development at Hartford Stage. She received a 2007 NEA Fellowship in Literary Translation and is a member of SDC and LMDA. Education: M.St., Oxford University; B.A., Bennington College; trained at the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq.

JULIA BREGY (Production Stage Manager)

(she/her) is thrilled to be returning for Geva's 2023/24 season. She would like to thank her family and friends for all of their support. New York: *DiscOasis NYC* (Constellation Immersive), *Proud Ladies* (James William Productions). Regional: *Russian Troll Farm* (Geva Theatre), *Measure for Measure* (Fiasco Theatre/Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Christmas Carol* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Fun Home* (Speakeasy Boston), *Little Women* (Perseverance Theatre). International:

Little Mermaid (Metta Theatre London/Underbelly Fringe Festival), *I Do Need Me & I'm Not a Bit Like a Clown* (Metta Theatre London).

EMMA DEANE (Lighting Design) (she/her) is an Indigenous lighting designer, and a citizen of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation. Previous work with Geva includes 2023's *Jane Eyre* and 2024's *Dial M for Murder*. Recent credits include work with Guthrie Theater, Signature Theatre, PlayCo, New York Theater Workshop, Hartford Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, Kansas City Rep, Round House, St. Louis Rep, Yale Repertory Theater, The Fisher Center, Court Theatre, The Goodman, Steppenwolf Theater Company, Northlight Theatre, and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. MFA - Yale School of Drama. USA 829.

KEVIN GREGORY DWYER (Assistant Stage Manager) (he/him) Geva: *FRIDA...A Self Portrait*, *A Christmas Carol 2023*, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*. Regional: *A Chorus Line*, *EVITA* (The REV Theatre Co). National Tours:

The Book of Mormon. Chicago: *An American in Paris*, Disney and Cameron Macintosh's *Mary Poppins*, *The Color Purple*, *And Then There Were None*, *Matilda*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Drury Lane Theatre); *Macbeth*, *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*, *Madagascar*, *King Charles III*, and *Othello* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *This Is Our Youth* and *Lord of the Flies* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Dutchman/TRANSit* (American Blues Theater). Boston: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Coriolanus* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company); *Betrayal*, *Private Lives*, *Captors* (Huntington Theatre Company). Mr. Dwyer received his BA in Stage/Production Management from Emerson College and is a proud AEA Member.

FIONA KYLE (Dramaturg) (she/her)

Dramaturg: *Jane Eyre* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Jane Eyre*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Newtown* (Geva Theatre); *small quiet good*, *Family Tree*, *Leviathan* (Clay & Water Playwright's Retreat, Clamour Theatre Company); *Randy's Dandy Coaster Castle*, *Faculty Portrait* (3B Development Series at IRT Theater); *Jane Eyre*, *Cloud 9*, *Seder* (workshop), *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Having Our Say* (co-production with Long Wharf Theatre), *A Christmas Carol* (Hartford Stage); *Bomber's Moon* (Williams Street Repertory); *Beneath*

WHO'S WHO

the Gavel (Bated Breath Theater Company at 59E59); *The Lily's Revenge*, *The Shape She Makes* (American Repertory Theater); *Boxcutter Harmonica* (Minnesota Fringe Festival); *BACK* (Poetic Theater Productions). Associate Dramaturg: *Russian Troll Farm* (Geva Theatre). Assistant Dramaturg: *Queens for a Year*, *Anastasia*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Body of an American*, *Rear Window* (Hartford Stage). Education: MA Ohio University; MFA A.R.T./MXAT Institute at Harvard University.

KAYLYN N. NICHOLS (Production Assistant) (she/they) is a Freelance Stage & Events Manager newly based out of Rochester, NY. They recently graduated from the University of Memphis with their BFA in Technical Theatre & Design with a Concentration in Stage Management during the Summer of 2023. They have previously worked with Playhouse on the Square, Theatreworks, and Germantown Community Theatre in Memphis, TN, and with Bristol Valley Theatre in Naples, NY. Kaylyn would like to thank Julia & Kevin for bringing them on for this new play as their Production Assistant, it's been a blast! They would also like to thank their wonderful partner, Ian, for their incredible love & outstanding support. Website: kaylynnicholssm.weebly.com

ANDRÉ PLUESS (Sound Design) Projects include the Broadway productions of *The Minutes*, *33 Variations*, *I Am My Own Wife* and *Metamorphoses*, as well as the Lincoln Center production of *The Clean House*. His designs/compositions have been featured at regional theaters throughout the country including the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, McCarter Theatre, Center Theatre Group, Seattle Repertory, Yale Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Steppenwolf Theatre, the Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, The Huntington, South Coast Repertory and Playwrights Horizons. He has received numerous awards for composition and sound design including multiple Joseph Jefferson Awards, an Ovation Award, a Barrymore Award, a Lortel Nomination and Drama Critics Circle Award. Based in Chicago, Andre is an ensemble member of Lookingglass Theatre Company.

ILONA SOMOGYI (Costume Design) (she/her) previously at Geva, *Jane Eyre* Recent Credits include: *Idaspe*, a Baroque opera

premiere at Quantum Theater in Pittsburgh; London West End: *Nice Fish* (Previously at St. Ann's Warehouse and ART). Broadway: *Clybourne Park*. Off-Broadway: *Gloria* (Vineyard, Goodman Theater) *The Body of an American*, *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *Dinner With Friends*, *My Name is Asher Lev*, *A Soldier's Tale* (Zankel Hall), *Jerry Springer: The Opera* (Carnegie Hall.) and the original production of *Wit*. Many regional credits at Arena Stage, Glimmerglass Opera, Ahmanson/CTG, Goodspeed Opera House, Hartford Stage, Guthrie Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Oregon Shakespeare Fest., Huntington Th., Long Wharf and Yale Rep. She's an MFA graduate of and Professor at The David Geffen School of Drama at Yale. She is also the Founder and Executive Director of Ball & Socket Arts in her hometown of Cheshire, CT.

OLIVIA SPENARD (Assistant Director) (she/her) is an actor, playwright, and director from Rochester, NY. She is thrilled to be working on the premiere of *Newtown* with this extraordinary company. Recent Credits include *The Girls* (writer/performer) at Dixon Place, *Dial M for Murder* (u/s Margot, Maxine) at Geva Theatre, and *The Wallpaper Project* (writer/director) at Fordham University. She works in Education at Geva Theatre and is inspired, especially when engaging with students, by the hope and resilience at the core of this play. BA: Fordham University. Special thanks to Elizabeth and Dan for this opportunity. Love always to Luke and Claire.

NICK VAUGHAN (Scenic Design) (he/him) is a Houston-based interdisciplinary artist and sometimes set designer who generally collaborates with his husband Jake Margolin. Solo exhibitions include the OCU Art Center, McClain Gallery, The Blaffer Art Museum, DiverseWorks, the OSU Museum of Art, the Invisible Dog, Art League Houston, Aurora Picture Show, Devin Borden Gallery and non-traditional community-facing venues. Select Theatrical credits: Geva *Jane Eyre*, Off-Broadway *The Royale* (Lincoln Center); *Roosevelvis* (The Vineyard); *Mission Drift* (The National [London]); *Architecting* (National Theater of Scotland). Regional *Jane Eyre*, *Henry V*, *Seder*, *Cloud 9* (Hartford Stage). *Dance* [with Jake Margolin] *Weathering* (NYLA) *Calving* (Unusual Symptoms, Bremen) *Thank*

You For Coming: Space (ICA Boston/Peak Performances) *Thank You For Coming: Play* (BAM); *Thank You For Coming: Attendance* (Danspace Project/Walker Art Center).

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JAMES HASKINS (Executive Director) (he/him) is honored to join Artistic Director Elizabeth Williamson, the Board, and staff of Geva Theatre as its new Executive Director. Most recently, James served as Managing Director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis after having completed a twelve-year tenure as Managing Director of The Wilma Theater in Philadelphia in partnership with Artistic Director Blanka Zizka. James began his work in theater administration at Circle Repertory Company and went on to



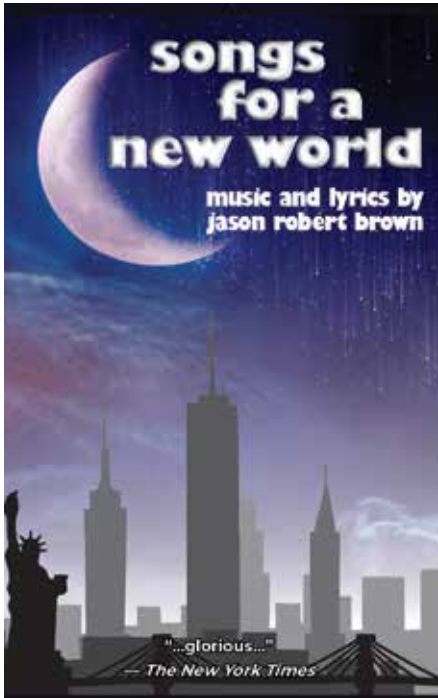
work with a variety of theaters in New York and Seattle, most notably the Seattle Group Theatre. Upon moving to Philadelphia, he first worked as Managing Director of InterAct Theatre Company, while also serving on the Board of the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia as Chair of the Barrymore Awards Oversight Committee. He subsequently moved into the Executive Director position of the Theatre Alliance before joining the Wilma. As a theater artist, James acted in many productions before turning to theater administration and is most proud of his directorial and dramaturgical work on the plays of his husband Michael Whistler. James holds an MFA from the University of Washington and a BA from The College of Wooster in Ohio, where he previously served on the alumni board. Following the pandemic shutdown, Haskins joined committees of the Minnesota Arts and Culture Coalition and the Professional Non-profit Theatre Coalition to help build support and funding for arts and culture. In Philadelphia, he served on the Cultural Advisory Committee under former Mayor Michael Nutter, who officiated his wedding ceremony.

Geva Theatre is pleased to announce the launch of its Engagement Committee

The Engagement Committee will offer advisement to the Geva Engagement Department on its artistic and cultural inclusion practices as well as on its connectivity to people and organizations with whom Geva has had little or no relationship in the past. The Committee will also provide a forum in which to collectively expand members engagement to people, spaces, places, and to dream. Rachel Y. DeGuzman, Geva's Director of Engagement, Community Partnerships & Public Curation, will facilitate the Engagement Committee.

The Geva Engagement Committee:

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Jason Robert Brown's *Songs for a New World*'s a song cycle featuring a variety of characters in a variety of locales, from a Spanish galleon in 1492 to a contemporary New York penthouse apartment. The characters (including Mrs. Santa Claus) are each facing a personal dilemma - a "moment of decision," according to the composer - and reflect about life, love, and making choices.

(The Department of Theatre and Music Studies' previously scheduled production of *The Prison* will be presented during the 2024-25 season.)

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ABOUT GEVA THEATRE

Geva Theatre is a not-for-profit theatre company dedicated to creating and producing singular theatre productions and programs that serve the Rochester region and beyond, by illuminating the fullness of our many human experiences.

Founded in 1972 by William Selden and Cynthia Mason Selden, Geva was originally housed in the Rochester Business Institute building on South Clinton Avenue. In 1982, Geva purchased and converted its current space – formerly a NYS Arsenal designed by noted Rochester architect Andrew J Warner and built in 1868 – and opened its new home at the Richard Pine Theatre in March 1985. Geva operates two venues – the 516-seat Elaine P. Wilson Stage and the 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Stage.

As one of the country's leading theatre companies and a member of the national League of Resident Theatres, Geva produces a varied contemporary repertoire from musicals to world premieres celebrating the rich tapestry of our diverse community. We draw upon the talents of some of the country's top actors, directors, designers, and writers who are shaping the American Theatre scene.

Geva's Education Department serves thousands of students annually through student matinees, in-school workshops, the acclaimed Summer Academy training program, and other programs. Geva's New Play Development Programming offers new and established writers a nurturing environment from which to take their work to the next level. Geva has presented approximately 400 play readings and workshops since its inception. Nearly 70 Geva-developed plays have had subsequent productions around the country. Geva's Engagement Department produces multifaceted programs such as Geva *Insights* that deepen the appreciation of the work on our stages, provide opportunities for regional dialogues, and help fulfill Geva's anti-racism commitments through collaborative programming.

An active member of the Rochester community, Geva offers a multitude of opportunities for our audience and community members to engage with live theatre and the country's best artists. Since the breadth of Geva's programming cannot be sustained on ticket sales alone, this contribution to the region's cultural, social and economic vitality is recognized by grants and charitable contributions from federal, state and local government agencies, national and local foundations, and businesses and individuals from throughout the region.

For more information: GevaTheatre.org.

A land acknowledgement creates a more accurate picture of the history of the lands and waterways we call home and pays respect to the Indigenous People who have stewarded them from time immemorial. At Geva, we offer this statement as part of our anti-racist values and to help us all unlearn and relearn the history that has brought us here to the land we call the United States. With this understanding, we can envision a new path forward, led by the principles of equity and justice.

American society as it exists today owes its identity and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams and resources to making the history that led to this moment. Some were stolen and enslaved here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in search of a better life, and some have stewarded this land for more generations than can be counted. Acknowledging the hardships and atrocities that many peoples have suffered on American soil is critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. By honoring this truth, we begin this effort to acknowledge what has been purposefully buried.

There are 567 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and Native villages) in the United States. Additionally, there are tribes located throughout the United States who are recognized by their respective state governments.



Graphic by Eric E. Doxtator

Geva's Acknowledgment

We are gathered in the ancestral and unceded territory of the Onöndowa'ga, or "the people of the Great Hill." In English, they are known as Seneca people, "the keeper of the western door." Together, with the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora, the Seneca make up the sovereign Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We pay respects to their elders, past and present. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, genocide and migration that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.

To learn more about the Native people in our region and the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794, visit ganondagan.org.

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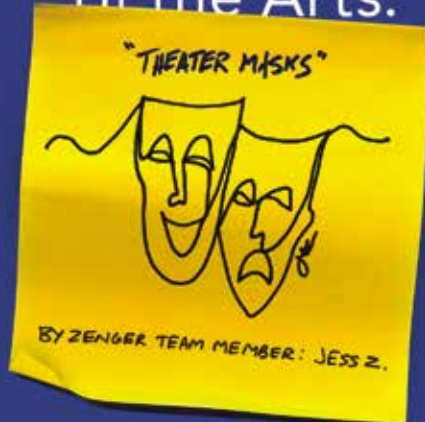
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Bodymind Float Center
Peggy Boucher
Breathe
Bristol Valley Theater
Buffalo AKG Art Museum
Buffalo Sabres

Margaret & Tim Busch
California Closets
CenterStage Theatre at the JCC
Comedy at the Carlson
The Corning Museum of Glass
Crisp Rochester
Crumpets
Deborah Jean & Co.
Delmonico's Italian Steakhouse
The Distillery
Dogtown
Don's Original Resturant & Pub
Hope Drummond
Empire Attractions
Encore Chocolates
Ethan Allen at Eastview Mall
Eye Openers Optical Fashions
F. Oliver's
Finger Lakes Coffee Roasters
Finger Lakes Opera
Gallery Salon
Genessee Country Museum
Genrich's Florist & Greenhouse
George Eastman Museum
The Glimmerglass Festival
Joanna & Michael Grosdonia
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Geva Theatre
in association with Friends of Ganondagan and NTID
and in affiliation with Native Voices
presents

EMBRACING THE INDIAN, *Centering Indigenous Voices*

A free two-day event – June 27 & 28, 2024
Both Performances and the Symposium will be ASL Interpreted



June 27

Kaha:wi Dance Theatre in **THE MUSH HOLE**

Free performances at 2 and 7 pm,
pre-registration required.
Robert F. Panara Theatre at NTID/RIT
52 Lomb Memorial Dr, Rochester, NY 14623

The MUSH HOLE is a theatrical dance performance about truths of Canada's first Indian residential school - The Mohawk Institute. From 1828-1970, State and Church attempted to forcefully assimilate children from Six Nations and surrounding First Nations into Euro-Christian society and sever the continuity of culture from parent to child. *The MUSH HOLE* weaves through the traumatic memories of two generations of Survivors. Visceral performances by an all-Indigenous cast, cinematic imagery and musical score, catapult audiences into the bricks and mortar of the school. Created from Survivors testimonials, it is a story about hope and finding light in dark places.

June 28

INDIGENOUS THEATRE SYMPOSIUM

Free event, 8:30 am to 4 pm,
breakfast/lunch provided, pre-registration required.
Geva Theatre, Fielding Stage 75 Woodbury Blvd., Rochester, NY 14607

The Indigenous Theatre Symposium will feature keynote remarks from Santee Smith (Kahnnyen'kehàka Nation, Turtle Clan), artistic director of Kaha:wi Dance Theatre; an Indigenous Playwrights Panel Conversation with creatives such as DeLanna Studi (Cherokee) who Geva audiences got to know through her play *AND SO WE WALKED* last season and who will be Geva Theatre's 2024/26 artist in residence; a film screening of *UNSEEN TEARS*: as well as a special panel composed of Young Native Playwrights – presented in collaboration with Native Voices. The Indigenous Theatre Symposium project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. It will be live streamed in collaboration with HowlRound Theatre Commons.

Register Here: https://gevatheatrecenter.formstack.com/forms/the_mush_hole_registration
For more information contact Rachel DeGuzman, rdeguzman@gevatheatre.org


Geva
THEATRE

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Presenting a play
Produced by a team
GANONDAGAN

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Dance Theatre

KAHA:WI
DANCE THEATRE



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