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RESERVATIONS/INFORMATION:
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Aurora Players is a member of the Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce (GEACC), American Association of Community Theatre (AACT), Theatre Association of New York State (TANYS), Western New York Alliance of Community Theaters (WNY ACTS!), and The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

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PARTICIPATION

Aurora Players is a non-profit organization and all work (technical support, actors, administration) is performed entirely by volunteers. Auditions for every production are open to members and non-members alike. Aurora Players encourages anyone interested to get involved, either on-stage or backstage. It's a great opportunity for families, no experience is necessary, and all are welcome! Visit our website for more information on membership, shows, and events: auroraplayers.org.



AP ONLINE

Looking for an easy way to purchase tickets securely and find out more about Aurora Players? Our website, auroraplayers.org, contains information on this season's shows, including photos and videos, auditions, volunteer opportunities (both for shows and to work on committees) and much more. Be sure to bookmark the site and stop back often to stay informed about new opportunities and events.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the organization is to create interest in and foster enthusiasm for the dramatic arts; to provide a medium of expression for those who love the theatre; and to be the means of bringing together in organized activities all those whose interest centers around drama.

DONATIONS

Our Pavilion is over 100 years old and anyone who has lived in an older home knows the project list never ends, but available funds, labor, and time usually do. If you – or someone you know – have resources, talents, or ideas that could help Aurora Players, please contact us at info@auroraplayers.org.

Your help will be greatly appreciated!

Our website is managed by Ian and Gina Ronan. Questions, comments and suggestions should be sent to info@auroraplayers.org.

Be sure to follow Aurora Players on **Facebook and Instagram**.



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"When I volunteer here, I get to meet so many cool people who want to bring another world to life on the stage just like me, and seeing the audience enjoy the finished product is its own reward!"

Quinn Gabuski

"It's never too late to start being artistic - even for a retired civil engineer!"

*Randy West,
 volunteer since 2023*

"Aurora Players gave me a purpose and a sense of belonging when I needed it most."

*Dori Shear McGowan,
 volunteer since 2012*

"I volunteered for AP because of my love of theater and music. Everyone has been super nice and welcoming, and I have made many new friends, even though I'm a little shy. I am very happy to be involved!"

*Neal Bachman,
 volunteer since Spring 2024*



AP volunteers enjoyed getting together on April 8, 2025 for a movie night and refreshments at the Aurora Theater & Popcorn Shop.

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Aurora Players established the Community Partner Award in 2000 to recognize the contributions made on our behalf by local companies and organizations, and to demonstrate our appreciation for their enduring efforts and continued participation in our activities. The award has been conferred upon the following partners:

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Honoring Our Beginnings: Reflections from Tom Durham, Jack Maeder and Harriet Woodworth

*Celebrating the volunteers who built Aurora Players—
one seat, one curtain, one memory at a time*

Before Aurora Players had dressing rooms or a green room, before new seats and upgraded sound systems, there was a simple pavilion in Hamlin Park—and a community of volunteers who brought it to life with vision, determination, and heart.

Their contributions weren't measured in dollars, but in borrowed trucks, salvaged chairs, buckets of paint, and hours of work. As Aurora Players continues to evolve and thrive, we take a moment to look back with three longtime members/patrons/volunteers—Tom Durham, Jack Maeder and Harriet Woodworth—who generously shared memories of earlier days.

A Theater Built by Many Hands

Tom Durham remembers around 1973 as a pivotal year. "I was 29," he says, "and we were bringing in new seats from Rockwell Hall at Buffalo State." The seats were solid cast iron—beautiful, heavy, and difficult to work with. "They came connected in long rows," he explains. "We had to cut them apart, and it took six to ten people just to carry one row. They sagged in the middle, so we needed someone on each end and a few people in between."

Leveling the seats required placing small wooden blocks under the front legs. The installation took weeks. "I remember John Spooner helping—he may have been president at the time. Most of the guys were older than me, in their late 30s to early 50s."

Transporting the seats was its own challenge. "Billy Lucas and Paul Martin worked at Fisher-Price," Tom says. "The company had always supported Aurora Players, and they loaned us a truck. Without that, we never could have gotten them here."

Harriet Woodworth's and Jack Maeder's memories reach back further—to 1960–62, before the era of formal upgrades. "It was more loosely run back then," Harriet says. "If you had a few hours, you'd walk across the street to Ma Hubb's candy store and get the key to the building. Then you'd go in and sew, paint, or work on the set."

The business side of things was different too, Harriet remembers. "Emma English used to sell tickets from a card table! She set it up in the

Seaman Hood & Morey department store on Main Street. She'd have just a shoebox of cash—and they let her do it!"

The earliest "improvement" she recalls didn't even come from Aurora Players: "The Kiwanis Club poured a concrete stage at the back. That was the first big change I remember." Before that, the Pavilion's sides could be lifted for airflow. "My husband Dick's parents grew up in East Aurora and remembered going to dances there. They said the sides would be raised and girls would sell concessions from beneath the flaps. It was completely open."

Back then, there were no permanent seats. "We borrowed chairs—from schools or even funeral homes," Harriet says. "Someone would just bring them in and set them up" Eventually, the owner of the Aurora Theatre donated old chairs, which became the Pavilion's first real seating. "But even those seats were uncomfortable," Jack recalls, "so when Buffalo Stage College renovated its auditorium in the early 1970s, we got a crew together to go down there to get those seats."

The Realities of Performing

Harriet, Jack and Tom all have many stories about the challenges of performing in the early space. "There were just two back doors along with stage right and left," Harriet says. "To change sides, you had to go through the park. I once came in wearing a dress with a long train. It was fall and I ended up bringing all these leaves onstage with me!" The addition of the bandstand by Kiwanis allowed cast and crew to finally enter without trekking through the elements.

Bathrooms were another issue. "The men just went out in the park," Harriet laughs. "The women had to walk to the concrete block building—still in the same place it is now." There was one bathroom in the dressing room, but no one used it during shows. "You could hear it flush from the audience!"

The auditorium itself could be just as problematic. Heating was inconsistent, and comfort was never guaranteed. "The heaters were hung in the corners at the back of the auditorium but they were so noisy we couldn't keep them on during a play," Jack recalls with a wry tone. "One full audience night, when the curtain came down at the end of the first act, they turned the heaters on for the first time—and a swarm of bees came out, furious at the disturbance. A young woman was stung in a rather tender spot and had to be carried to the hospital on a stretcher. She recovered quickly, Jack notes, but the incident gave her theatre experience a whole new twist on the phrase *"bitten by the theatre bug."*

This was an era when smoking was simply part of life. "It was hard to get people to work on the sets, and some definitely wouldn't do it if they couldn't smoke," Jack notes. And before we had a green room, cast members would wait quietly in the hallway outside what is now the box office. "We all just sat in chairs, no one talking. Everyone smoked then, and I was always so afraid the place would catch fire," said Harriet.

Tom also remembers the physical limitations of the space in the 1970s. "Stage left was tiny—just a few feet and a door. Stage right had stairs that went up to what's now the prop loft, which doubled as a dressing room and makeup area. Agreeing with Tom, Jack said, "From the time I joined in 1960, it was always cramped back there and sometimes they pulled up semi-trailers to use as dressing rooms at the back doors if we had a really big cast." Tom remembers changing in a trailer behind the stage during *Oklahoma!*

Lighting and sound were run from the left of the stairs that now lead to the orchestra loft off stage right. "There was a peephole to watch the stage and cue a tape recorder for sound effects," said Tom. After that, "There was a wooden platform built above the entrance to the auditorium," Harriet says. That platform was used mainly to operate a follow-spot for musicals. "A young man—maybe Bill Estabrook—worked from up on the platform," continued Harriet, "It's amazing what they managed to accomplish with so little."

Many moments were quite humorous in hindsight. "We used to leave the exit doors open



John K. Glenn, J. Porter Hurd, and Edwin H. Bebee are installing seats in the Roycroft Community Auditorium that originally came from the East Aurora High School (now the Main Street School). Because the old seats tipped forward slightly, the Players are correcting the difficulty by fastening blocks of wood under the front supports.

for circulation," Harriet says, referring to the early 1970s. "Streaking was popular then. Every now and then, you'd hear a whoop and someone would run through. The audience would laugh. The actors would glance out and say, 'Extra attraction tonight!' and carry on."

From Modest Roots to a Bright Future

Aurora Players has come a long way—from folding chairs and borrowed tape decks to professional-grade seating, lighting, and facilities. But the essence remains the same: community, creativity, and dedication.

The Pavilion has been transformed. Today's space is more comfortable, accessible, and refined—but the spirit of those early volunteers is still in the walls, in the wood, and in every cue taken in the dark.

"We didn't have much," Tom says, "but we made it work."

And thanks to those who built it—one board, one bolt, one light cue at a time—we have the foundation to keep moving forward. ■

Do you have memories or photos you'd like to share? We'd love to hear about them and share with the membership through the SRO. Please write us at info@auroraplayers.org and we'll be in touch to help you share your story!



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- Your support helps to fund our youth programs, including the Annual Youth Scholarship and our ProjectSTAGE summer education and mentoring program.
- Through your support, Aurora Players productions attract visitors to East Aurora and enhance the image of our community's charming, artistic and creative heritage.

Please e-mail Kelly Campbell, Fundraising Chair, at kanncampbell@gmail.com or call us at (716) 687-6727 to discuss your sponsorship options today! More information is also available at www.auroraplayers.org

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THEATRE IN HAMLIN PARK

A Miraculous Journey with Theater in Hamlin Park

by Rebecca Caufield

Edward Tulane was a porcelain rabbit. He lived a life of luxury and was loved by Abilene, a young girl who treasured him, dressed him in fancy clothes, and brought him everywhere with her. Edward, though, cared nothing about Abilene's love; he had been far too preoccupied with how dapper his hat looked and whether his tie was straight.

One day, Abilene accidentally lost Edward and, suddenly, Edward found himself on an unexpected and extraordinary journey. He traveled through the hands of strangers—each with their own story of love, loss, and hope. At each stop along the way, Edward learned of his host's struggles and grappled with his own unfamiliar emotions that had begun to surface. It was a tale of love, transformation, and a rabbit with nice shoes.

The cast went on their own journey to create this beautiful play for our audiences. The production featured some brand-new faces in the Aurora Players company, along with well-known veterans of the Theatre in Hamlin Park outdoor stage. Cast members learned new instruments just for this show, and others learned how to do puppetry. Actors experimented with accents, unconventional costumes, and a set that shaped and reshaped right before the audience's eyes.

In fact, even the star of the show went on a miraculous journey to reach the Roycroft Pavilion. The Edward dolls (yes, plural—you see, just like other diva actors, we needed to give our dolls plenty of time off to recuperate between shows) were handmade in Colorado, especially for a production of *Edward Tulane* by Merely



Players in Durango. After their December run, the Edwards made the 1,500-mile journey to Florida, where they appeared in a March production with The Story House in Niceville. After closing night in The Sunshine State, they traveled another 1,200 miles north to East Aurora to star in the July and August production.

If you headed to the library to check out the novel *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by Kate DiCamillo (author of *Because of Winn-Dixie* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, among others), it would almost certainly have been found in the children's section. You would not have been fooled; in the great tradition of other works of art like *The Giving Tree*, *Oh, The Places You'll Go!* and *The Iron Giant*, *Edward*

Tulane had equal appeal for adults.

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane was directed by Brian Tabak and assistant director Carolyn Quigley Marzierski and featured six talented Western New York actors, some of whom played as many as twelve different characters. Performances took place evenings throughout July and August on the outdoor stage at the Roycroft Pavilion in Hamlin Park. Audiences brought blankets, lawn chairs, and their favorite snacks and enjoyed the magic of live—free—theatre under a canopy of trees and the evening sky.

Audiences joined Edward on his journey—and many found a piece of their own story along the way. ■

AURORA PLAYERS THEATRE IN HAMLIN PARK



Scenes from
Theatre in
Hamlin Park
production of
*The Miraculous
Journey of
Edward Tulane*.

KEEP THE FOOTLIGHTS GLOWING

For over 90 years, Aurora Players has been a significant part of the cultural wealth of East Aurora and Western New York communities. Our patrons tell us they return again and again because Players' productions offer opportunities to share the many worlds of theatre and enjoy the characters that inhabit those worlds. To many of our members, the historic Roycroft Pavilion is the place to support artistic creativity and be creative.

You can help to keep the footlights of our beloved theater glowing and assist members of our community to continue the mission of Aurora Players:

"To create interest in, and foster enthusiasm for, the study of the dramatic arts."



Please consider remembering
AURORA PLAYERS
in your will or estate plans.

Planning for your future can be a very personal and private decision. Many of our friends and patrons share the desire to guarantee our future as a vital part of the community and have already made this decision to continue their generosity to Aurora Players beyond their lifetime.

Leaving a gift to Aurora Players in your will or estate plan is very simple. We encourage you to speak with your own attorney or financial advisor during your planning if you are interested. It can be as easy as stating the following:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to the Aurora Players, Inc. - federal tax identification number 16-6052466, a non-profit organization having an office at P.O. Box 206, East Aurora, New York 14052, the following..."

Your support makes our work possible today and for years to come.
Thank you for your generosity.

2025 Roberta Rathbun Scholarship Winner



Scholarship winner Gwyneth Huson of Hamburg with Scholarship Committee Member Roger Stephenson

In May, the Aurora Players Board of Directors awarded the Roberta Rathbun Scholarship for Theatrical Arts to Gwyneth Huson of Hamburg, New York. Miss Huson, a 2025 Graduate of Hamburg High School was selected from a group of highly-qualified, talented students. She will attend the State University of New York at Fredonia in the fall and will matriculate in the Musical Theater program.

Miss Huson performed at Hamburg High School throughout her high school years including leading roles in *Mary Poppins*, *Into the Woods*, and *The 39 Steps*. Other shows include *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Addams Family Musical* and *Shrek High School Edition*. Outside of high school, she has also performed with Springville Center for the Arts in *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Sound of Music*. She also appeared at Rocking Horse Productions Young Performers Showcase twice. Miss Huson is also an avid singer, performing with the Buffalo Niagara Youth Chorus, Shea's Kenny Spotlight Ensemble, Erie County Music Educators Association All County Chorus and New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Conference All State Mixed Chorus where she earned a perfect score of 100 on a Level 6 NYSSMA solo.

When speaking about theater Miss. Huson says "I know that success in musical theater goes beyond raw talent. It requires passion, resilience, and a willingness to learn. My ultimate goal is to build a musical theater career, whether performing on stage, collaborating with other artists, or working behind the scenes to create something meaningful. I want to be a part of a community that brings joy, inspiration, and healing to others through music and storytelling. This dream isn't just about personal achievement, it is about making a difference in a world through the arts."

The Roberta Rathbun Scholarship for Theatrical Arts was conceived as an effort to encourage the formal study of theater arts among students in Western New York. It was named in honor of Roberta Rathbun, who was a major creative force behind many Aurora Players productions for more than 50 years. The \$1,000 award represents a tangible expression of Aurora Players' commitment to fostering the growth of interest and participation in the world of theater in our community. The scholarship is granted to a graduating senior pursuing a college degree in a theater-related major at an accredited institution of higher learning. If you know a 2026 senior who would like to apply please visit auroraplayers.org or email at info@auroraplayers.org. ■



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ProjectSTAGE Concludes 2025 Summer Sessions

What an amazing summer we had at ProjectSTAGE. With a record number of students, it was quite the undertaking but well worth the effort. Watching the children grow so much in the two weeks that they are with us is so amazingly rewarding.

Theater kids are a truly unique bunch. I don't know how many times I've heard the phrase, "I've finally found kids just as strange as me." It doesn't take long for them to start to feel more comfortable being themselves and suddenly they seem to come alive. Soon, the imaginations really start to run wild and personalities explode. Then we get to teach them how to channel it onto the stage or behind the stage as the teen assistants got to do this year during Act 1 and 2.

This program has such an amazing impact on these kids and this year was no exception. As I pack up all materials and file away all the pictures, I can't help but think about all the new friendships that will live on past this summer simply because they finally found their people. ■

Erin Francis – *ProjectSTAGE Producer*



ACT 3

Running ProjectSTAGE Act 3 was a new experience for me. While I have directed and also have run acting workshops here at AP, teaching young students how to act was fairly new to me and I chose to make it even more challenging for myself by deciding to work with them on directing original plays. And, luckily, this talented group was more than up to the task. They read the 10 minute shows I chose, including two of my own (all blind submissions) and chose 7 plays, including my plays, which was a nice surprise.



Over the two weeks of the program, they cast the shows, then directed each one with an eye to details such as blocking and characterization. I was very impressed by the level of talent they brought to this program which was made apparent during the two evenings of their show, "Motorist Mayhem." I feel I was very fortunate to work with this extremely talented group and hope I work with them again in some capacity in the future! ■

Pat Hoefler – *Act 3 Director*

ACT 2

ProjectSTAGE Act 2 was once again, a blast. The kids love a murder mystery, so it was fun to be able to play around with "Too Many Detectives at the Murder Mansion", which had a bit of mystery, but also many comedic elements. Script aside, the two weeks of working with this group of middle schoolers was full of laughter and creativity. I love how open and kind everybody was, including our producer Erin Francis, and all of the teen assistants involved. It was nice seeing the campers make connections with one another within the first week, and I think that is part of the magic of theatre.



Molly Conrad – *Act 2 Director*

ACT 1

As the director of our youngest students, those in Act 1, I learn new things from them every day they show up. One of the biggest lessons I learned this year was "there's always room for one more." I thought I had everything figured out when I ordered scripts for a play that had roles for 23 actors—the exact number of kids who had registered. AND every role had about the same number of lines—which is rare. (ProjectSTAGE kids are very interested in knowing which roles have the most lines and which have the least. They can tell you the number for each extreme). It was perfect! I couldn't believe my luck in finding such a perfect play for the group.

...And then we had another kid who wanted to join in and I couldn't say no. We ended up

with 26 wonderful kids who were enthusiastic and funny, and sweet and so eager to get on stage. That's when it really was perfect. It gave me a chance to channel my inner Tom Durham and create some new parts and dialogue. And every single one of those kids was right where they should have been. "Porridgegate" was a huge success. These kids are amazing—learning all of their lines and pulling a show together in 8 days!!! I am in awe every year!

Twelve of the 26 actors I worked with in Act 1 will move up to Act 2 next summer. While I am sad to have them leave Act 1, it gives me such great hope for the future of this program. I can't wait for next summer to see the new group of kids who will join us and become a part of Aurora Players. ■

Kimberly McAtee – *Act 1 Director*





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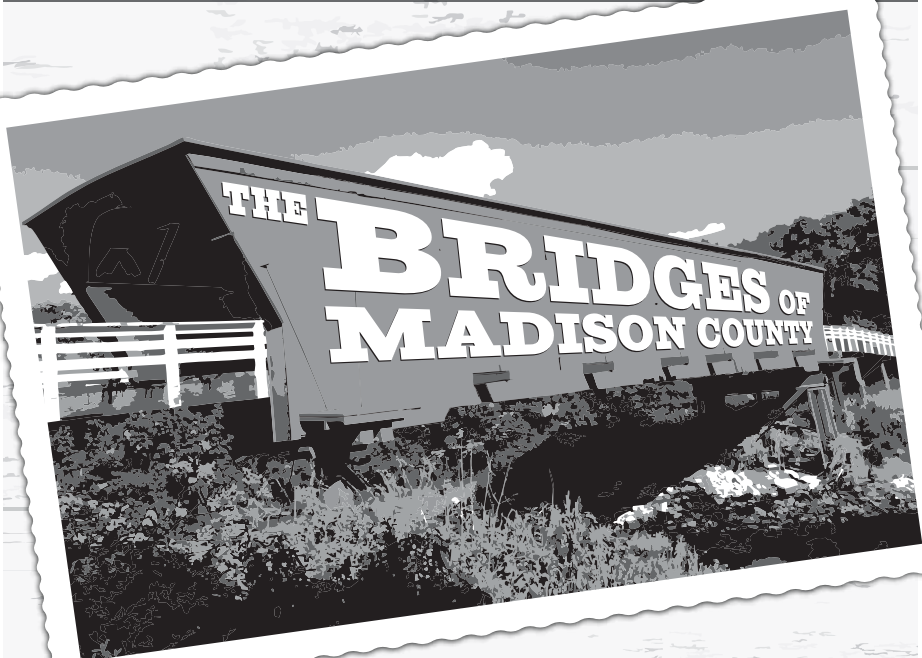
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A Message from AP's President



"Theatre promotes us to give power to truth, to take risks and to advocate for new and diverse voices. Theatre reminds us that we are not alone. Not only are we sharing space and an experience with the artists who are performing, we are sharing the experience with fellow audience members."

– Acting Studio Chicago

We're so glad to see you here in our freshly renovated theater at the Roycroft Pavilion! Take a look around — and have a seat (a brand new one, at that). Thanks to the incredible generosity of the Scott Bieler Family Foundation, we now have beautiful new seating that makes the theater experience more comfortable, accessible, and enjoyable for everyone.

We're kicking off our 2025–2026 season with three fantastic shows we can't wait to share with you:

The Bridges of Madison County — a heartfelt musical about love, choices, and finding connection.

Murder on the Orient Express — Agatha Christie's classic mystery adapted by Ken Ludwig — filled with twists, turns, and sharp humor.

Shakespeare in Love — a romantic and witty celebration of theatre, inspiration, love, and a bit of chaos — based on the original film.

Making the holidays even brighter, we're thrilled to welcome back Mike Randall for **Charles Dickens Presents: A Christmas Carol** — a special three-performance event in early December.

Aurora Players is enriched by the diversity of our performers and audiences. Each person brings their own story and perspective, adding depth to the stories we share. We celebrate and embrace those differences—they build empathy, understanding, and connection—which is at the heart of live theatre.

To our amazing sponsors, patrons, members, season ticket holders, and volunteers — thank you. Your support, energy, and love for live theatre make everything we do possible. Because of you, Aurora Players continues to bring quality community theatre to the southtowns, year after year.

We're excited for this new season, this refreshed space, and most of all — to share it all with you. Welcome back, and enjoy the show!!



Sincerely,

Tim Musial

President, Aurora Players Board of Directors

The Cast (In Order of Appearance)

Francesca	REBECCA RUNGE
Carolyn	MOLLY ENSTICE
Michael	SAM OLSZEWSKI
Bud	JASON GONSER
Marge	DORI SHEAR MCGOWAN
Charlie	STEVE WENDELL
Robert	MERRICK ALLEN
Marian/State Fair Singer.	ALEXANDRA MONTESANO
Chiara/Ensemble	KATELYN GARD
Paolo/Ensemble	MATTHEW TOURIS
Ensemble	EMERSON DISCH, LIAM HINMAN, PATRICIA HOEFLE, LACIE KOWALCZEWSKI, TIM MUSIAL, ROSALIE STEPHENS, EMMA UNWIN

THE ORCHESTRA

Conductor	BENJAMIN DAVIS
Violin	CAELEY MARSH
Viola	JOYCE FRIEDMAN
Cello	CONOR SULLIVAN
Piano	PAUL BLACKWELL
Guitars and Mandolin	LEAH ZICARI
Bass	ERIC NEFF
Percussion	MARY MOEBIUS
Vocals on "Closer to You"	MARY RAPPL BELLANTI

Director's Note

Fate—it's so easy to "see" it, to justify coincidences in our daily lives as more than just coincidences; the idea that we can somehow be tied to another person by some universal string is prevalent in so many stories of romance. Robert James Waller's 1992 novel, *The Bridges of Madison County*, explored this idea in such a compelling way that it became a 1995 feature film with Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood. It still had a story to tell, and even songs to sing, and so Jason Robert Brown and Marsha Norman developed it into a Broadway musical in 2014. That's where my exposure to the property began.

I was privileged to see the original Broadway production in its closing days, and was immediately struck by the way it touched each and every audience member. The themes are such that I wept for different reasons than the person next to me might have wept. The score stuck with me, and I've been trying to gain the courage to direct it for years. After my wonderful experience with Aurora Players in 2022, I knew that I wanted this show in this space. The intimacy of the Roycroft Pavilion (and the comfort of the brand new seats!) and the dedication of AP's audiences means that I know people will see and appreciate this story.

I have so many people to thank for their input, encouragement, and dedication to this production. Chief among them are—obviously—the cast and crew. Special recognition goes to Laurie Oravec, who has always been my biggest Aurora Players advocate, and Ben Davis, who has helped me guide this incredible cast musically. Kevin Leary, who lent his immense talent to musical staging, and who has always supported and challenged me artistically and professionally. Alex Montesano, who helped preserve and enhance Kevin's vision. Fran Landis, whose expertise is second to none and who has forgotten more about musical theater than I'll ever know. And David Bondrow, who gave me my first chance at directing, and makes me feel like I've always got a voice.

At its heart, *The Bridges of Madison County* is a story of impossible choices: between passion and duty, freedom and responsibility, fleeting joy and lasting love. Through its music and drama, the show invites us to reflect on the beauty and pain of life's crossroads. I'm so privileged to bring this sweeping musical to life, watch as audience members hear and relate to this powerful score and its themes, and listen to the Roycroft Pavilion filled with the sounds of a modern musical theater craftsman: Jason Robert Brown. I hope you enjoy this production and continue to support Aurora Players and the rest of their INCREDIBLE 2025-2026 season.

— Nathan Andrew Miller

Setting & Musical Numbers

Time: Four days in 1965 and the following years

Place: Winterset, Iowa

ACT ONE

"To Build a Home" Francesca and Company
"Home Before You Know It" Bud, Michael, Carolyn, and Francesca
"Temporarily Lost" Robert
"What Do You Call a Man?" Francesca
"You're Never Alone" Bud and Company
"Another Life" Marian
"Wondering" Robert and Francesca
"Look At Me" Francesca, Robert, Company
"The World Inside a Frame" Robert
"Something From a Dream" Bud
"Get Closer" Marge and Radio Singers
"Falling Into You" Robert and Francesca

ACT TWO

"State Road 21/The Real World" . . State Fair Singer, Michael, Carolyn, Company
"Who We Are and Who We Want to Be" Robert, Francesca, Company
"Almost Real" Francesca
"Before and After You/One Second & a Million Miles" . . . Robert and Francesca
"When I'm Gone" Charlie, Bud, Company
"It All Fades Away" Robert
"Always Better" Francesca, Robert, Company

Intermission and Recording Policy

There will be one 15-minute intermission between Act One and Act Two.

As a courtesy to the actors and audience members, and in compliance with Aurora Players policy and its contractual obligations, we ask that you do not use [flash] cameras, audio recording, and video recording devices during the performance.

VIDEO RECORDING OR MAKING OF ELECTRONIC OR OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VISUAL RECORDINGS OF THIS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTING RECORDINGS OR STREAMS IN ANY MEDIUM, INCLUDING THE INTERNET, IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED, A VIOLATION OF THE AUTHOR'S RIGHTS, AND ACTIONABLE UNDER UNITED STATES COPYRIGHT LAW. **THANK YOU.**

Production Crews

Director	NATHAN ANDREW MILLER
Music Director	BENJAMIN DAVIS
Producer/Assistant Producer	LAURIE ORAVEC, Roger Stephenson
Costumes	GINNY MIORI, Kim Hicks
Stage Managers	ALLI PELLETREAU, Karen Philips
Rehearsal Stage Manager	V. JADE PROFFITT
Assistant Stage Manager/Crew	Neal Bachman
Set Design	RANDY WEST
Set Construction	RANDY WEST, Neal Bachman, Matt Bohlen, John Dana, Ben Petryszak, Firefly Weber
Set Painting/ Decoration/Furnishing	JULIE DANA, John Dana, Kim Hicks, Ben Petryszak, Firefly Weber
Projection Photos	NANCY SHEEHAN JOHNSON, Tim Musial
Props/Set Furnishing	TARA POTZLER, Reneé Ronan, Cathy Schrader
Lighting/Sound	LOWELL SYLWESTER, Kelsey Reusch, Riven Schwartzott
Artistic Painting	ANN MARGARET MUNLEY
Curtains	LOWELL SYLWESTER, Randy West
Marketing	REBECCA CAUFIELD, Patricia Hoefler, Katrina Leuzinger-Owens, Mary Loliger, Tim Musial, Laurie Oravec, Johnny Woods
Social Media/Promotional Videos	MARY LOLIGER, Jeff Wick
Program	LAUREN MESMER, Tim Musial
Graphics, Flyer, Program Cover	TIM MUSIAL
Photography	MADISON SZABLEWSKI, Dori Shear McGowan
Front of House Coordinator	MARK ECKSTEIN
House Managers	Dennis Bernhard, Catherine Burkhart, Mark Eckstein, Mary Eckstein, Jeff Maris, Kimberly McAtee, Bruce Oravec, Laurie Oravec, Cathy Schrader, Others not available at press time
Box Office/Intermission Concierge	Gail Ruth Arthurs, Joe Cassidy, Liz Cassidy, Rebecca Caufield, Carine Mardorossian, Kimberly McAtee, Rebecca Popiel, Darlene Schmigiel, Cathy Schrader, Gail Stengel, Roger Stephenson, Johnny Woods, Others not available at press time
Ushers/Refreshment Stand	Dennis Bernhard, Matt Bohlen, Jennifer Brayman, Barb Campbell, Melissa Cumming, Barb Einstein, Rachelle Francis, Edwin Heary, Carol Howard, Cher Mackiewicz, Jeff Maris, Ellen Moomaw, Denise Mosser, Sarah Pictor, Jessica Rasp, Mary Ann Reisdorf, Melissa Willey, Others not available at press time

Cast & Directors Who's Who



Nathan Andrew Miller – Director – Nate is thrilled to make his directorial debut at Aurora Players, where he previously played the Baker in the 2022 production of *Into the Woods*. Nate has been acting and directing in WNY since 2014. A proud Niagara University graduate, Nate began his career working for the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire for one season, and made his post-university professional debut in Buffalo at Irish Classical Theatre in *Lion in Winter*. As an actor, Nate has worked with Irish Classical Theatre, Alleyway Theatre, New Phoenix Theatre, Kenan Center, and the Lancaster Opera House, where he also directs. He briefly ran his own theater company, Pared Down Productions, where he served as Artistic Director, as well as performed and directed. Outside of theater, Nate is an avid pickleball player, and enjoys spending time with his children. Love and gratitude to family, especially Liam and Riley. For Terry, Billy, Scot, and Donny.



Benjamin Davis – Music Director – has been a music teacher in Western New York for 25 years, 20 of them in East Aurora. After a long time away from the theater community, he recently returned to the stage in the role of Captain Arthur Keller in our spring production of *The Miracle Worker*, followed by a turn as the great tenor Tito Morelli—Il Stupendo—in June's *Lend Me a Tenor*. Ben has directed productions, both plays and musicals, for high schools in Buffalo and Rochester, and will make his directorial debut with Aurora Players' upcoming production of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*.



Merrick Allen – Robert Kincaid – Merrick is thrilled to make his Aurora Players debut alongside such a passionate and talented cast and crew. After graduating from SUNY Fredonia with a BFA in Musical Theatre, Merrick has been a part of many productions in Western New York including, among others, *Sound of Music* (Rolf), *Grand Horizons* (Brian), and *Chess* (Anatoly) at Lancaster Opera House. He also recently appeared with O'Connell & Company in *Oklahoma!* (Curly). He would like to thank his incredible friends, special thanks to my Mom & Dad for their unending love and constant support.



Emerson Disch – Ensemble – is absolutely thrilled to return to Aurora Players following her role as Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*. She has also performed at Lancaster Opera House in *The Wizard of Oz* (Nikko/Ensemble), *The Night Before Christmas* (Elf) and *A Christmas Story* (Helen Weathers), and with Western Door Playhouse in *Cheaper by the Dozen* (Ernestine). Additional experience includes *High School Musical* (Sharpay), *The Jungle Book* (Shanti), *Once Upon a Time* (Belle), *The Lion King* (Timon), *Finding Nemo* (Dory), *The Cat in the Hat* (Thing 1), *Frozen* (Anna), *Shrek the Musical* (Donkey), *Seussical* (Cat in the Hat) and *Annie* (Molly). Emerson plays piano, guitar and flute, and sings with the Buffalo Niagara Youth Chorus. Emerson is incredibly grateful to her music and theatre teachers, and her family, for their continued support and encouragement.

Cast & Directors Who's Who



Molly Enstice – Carolyn Johnson – is very excited to be in her first production with Aurora Players! Molly graduated with a BFA in Musical Theater from Nazareth College. More recently, she completed the Independent Training Program at Broadway Dance Center in NYC. Since returning to Buffalo, Molly has been working behind the scenes on movies shooting in Buffalo. Outside of theater, she loves to do Pilates and Yoga and is currently becoming a Pilates instructor. Soon, you can see her at Rocking Horse Productions playing Beth in *Little Women* and singing in their upcoming Cabaret. Molly would like to thank her family and friends for their continued support.



Katelyn Gard – Chiara/Ensemble – is thrilled to be joining Aurora Players for *The Bridges of Madison County*! A native of Western New York, Katelyn is an actor, singer, and voiceover artist. Her recent credits include Jerusha in *Daddy Long Legs* (Dramatic Dynamics), ensemble in *The Informer* (ART), and Bea in *Shades of Blue* (Main Street Studios). She is an avid dancer and advanced stage combatant with the SAFD, with a soft spot for well-timed harmonies. When not performing, you may find her baking, thrifting, or daydreaming about travel adventures she can't afford. Katelyn would like to thank her family and friends for their endless love and support. She hopes you are swept away by this story and its beautiful music as much as she is.



Jason Gonser – Bud Johnson – There have been many wonderful Aurora Players' roles that Jason has performed, but his selected on-stage credits include: *James and the Giant Peach*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *Into The Woods*; *Little Shop Of Horrors* (Lead Actor Award, and Excellence in Performance Award from TANYs); and *The Boys Next Door* (Inclusive Theater of WNY). Jason has a BA in Theatre from SUNY Geneseo and has been recognized for his significant contributions to Aurora Players, including serving on the Board of Directors. Currently Co-Chair of AP's Membership Committee, he is past recipient of a Working Award (2012) and the John C. Briggs Service Award (2019-2020). Jason works at the East Aurora office of Astronics Luminescent Systems, Inc. as Inventory Control Manager.



Liam Hinman – Ensemble – Liam is thrilled to be a part of this production! He is a freshman at Iroquois High school. In middle school, he was cast in *Newsies* as Albert and William Shakespeare in *Something Rotten*. He has also performed in Music Academy of Western New York roles, including the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, Mr. Wormwood in *Matilda*, Troy Bolton in *High School Musical* and Beadle in *Sweeney Todd*. He would like to thank everyone at Aurora Players and the directors for accepting and letting him have a chance to be a part of such an amazing show!

Cast & Directors Who's Who



Patricia Hoefler – Ensemble – Patricia is very excited to be back on stage in a musical, something she hasn't done in over 20 years! While she has acted in a number of plays, her last musical role was Fraulein Schneider in *Cabaret* for Academy Players in Rhode Island. Most recently, she directed the holiday production of *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*. Prior to that, she directed the acclaimed drama *Proof*. She earned her MFA from Rhode Island College where her focus was on directing and playwriting. She is very active with AP, currently serving as vice president on the Board of Directors. She is often seen volunteering for front of the house as house manager. When not at the theater, she is singing with the choir at Saint John Vianney's church or is teaching online. She is grateful for the support of friends and her son and his fiancée.



Lacie Kowalczewski – Waitress/Ensemble – Lacie is beyond thrilled to be in this production. She is currently in 10th grade at Orchard Park High School. She began her involvement in theatre in 2022 and has been in over 13 shows. Some of her favorites include: Ariel in *The Little Mermaid Jr.* (The Room Theater Company); ensemble in *James and the Giant Peach* (Aurora Players); Clarissa in *Alice by Heart* (Springville Center for the Arts); and Grandma Addams in *The Addams Family Jr* (the Room Theater Company). Outside of theater, Lacie enjoys her friends and volunteer work. She would like to thank her friends and family for always supporting her, her amazing voice teacher, Heather Holden, for getting her where she is today and, finally, Nate, Ben and Laurie for giving her this amazing opportunity.



Alexandra Montesano – Marian/State Fair Singer/Dance Captain – is excited to make her Aurora Players debut. She is no stranger to the WNY stage, having performed in *Crazy for You* (Tess), *Chess* (Ensemble), and *The Pajama Game* (Gladys Hotchkiss) all at the Lancaster Opera House. She has also performed at Shakespeare in Delaware Park in *Measure for Measure* (Ensemble) and at the Historic Palace Theater in *42nd Street* (Peggy Sawyer). When not on stage, Alexandra is a high school science teacher, drama club advisor, and a proud dog owner. She would like to thank Nate for this opportunity as well as her family and friends for their endless support. Enjoy the show!



Tim Musial – Ensemble – An Aurora Players Life Member, Tim enjoys photography, gardening, and raising backyard chickens for eggs and entertainment. He finds theatre to be a great way to learn about the world, people, and himself. He's pleased to be part of this production and embraces the challenges presented by the music and in helping to create the ever-changing scenes the show requires, even though his line dancing "skills" aren't boot-scootin' worthy.

Cast & Directors Who's Who



Sam Olszewski – Michael Johnson – Sam is thrilled to be doing his first show with Aurora Players. He is a junior at University at Buffalo pursuing a BFA in Musical Theatre. Some of his favorite credits include: *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (Linus) at the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center; *Oklahoma* (Mike) at O'Connell and Company; *Kinky Boots* (Harry) and *Tarzan* (Ensemble), both at the Palace Theatre. Sam would like to thank his family and friends for always supporting him.



Rebecca Runge – Francesca – Rebecca, a Hamburg resident, is ecstatic to be returning to Aurora Players. Previous AP performances include *Grease* (Marty), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Gymnasia), *She Loves Me* (Ilona Ritter), *Bright Star* (Lucy) and *Into The Woods* (The Witch). Other local performances include *Spamalot*, *My Fair Lady*, *Baby*, and *Oliver!* with the Lancaster Opera House, *It Shoulda Been You* with O'Connell and Company, *The Light In the Piazza* with Second Generation Theatre, and *Talley's Folly* with Red Thread Theatre. When not on stage, Rebecca can be found at the piano, her sewing machine, or on a bike ride with her husband, Evan, and her sons, Elliot and Oliver.



Dori Shear-McGowan – Marge – Dori is thrilled to be back on stage after playing the Giant and Red's Granny in *Into the Woods* (Fall 2022). She joined this cast just days before tech rehearsals—fitting for a proud “late bloomer” who only began acting in 2020 with *Hair* (“Mom #1”) and continued in 2021 with *The Philadelphia* (“The Sassy Waitress”). A lifelong performer at heart, Dori once danced on *Soul Train* in the 1980s and entertained her family with comedy and impersonations—never dreaming it would one day lead her to Aurora Players. Offstage, she is an accomplished photographer (capturing many AP productions) and a professional hair stylist.



Rosalie Stephens – Ensemble – Rosalie is a zealous young performer who feels at home on stage. Most recently, she was seen at AP in our spring production of *The Miracle Worker* as part of the Ensemble. This past summer she loved playing Randi MacAfee in *Bye Bye Birdie* for Spotlight Performing Artists. Favorite roles have been Little Anna in *Frozen, Jr.* and Junie B. Jones in *Junie B. Jones, The Musical*. Rosalie loves to sing and spends many weekends performing with Bello Music Studio. She enjoyed singing the National Anthem at a Bisons game with the Bello Bellas this summer! She is homeschooled and is in her ninth-grade year. After high school, Rosalie dreams of being accepted into the Sight and Sound Conservatory Program and performing on their stage as her future career.

Cast & Directors Who's Who



Matthew Touris – Paolo/Ensemble – Matthew is ecstatic to be back at Aurora Players after playing James Keller in *The Miracle Worker* last spring. Matthew has previously been in *The Addams Family* as Mal and *Two by Two* as Ham. He took on his first assistant director position for *Fiddler on the Roof* at Springville Center for the Arts. When Matthew is not on stage, he makes music and videos for his YouTube channel called Multiverse Theory 716, and comes up with funny voices and silly characters for his preschool class he teaches during the day. Matthew is very grateful to work with this incredibly talented cast and has learned a lot in a short time from this well accomplished director. God is Good.



Emma Unwin – Ensemble – This is Emma's first production with Aurora Players and she is thrilled to be in this show. Emma has also appeared in community theatre productions at the Historic Lockport Palace's 100 Year Celebration and Ghostlight Theatre's production of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Emma participates in ROAR show choir and her past Music Academy of Western New York credits include: *High School Musical 2* (Peaches); *Wizard of Oz* (Glinda); *Little Mermaid* (Chef Louis); and *Matilda* (Tommy). Emma is 12 years old and in the 8th grade at St. Mark's School. Previous school productions include: *Willy Wonka, Jr.* (Veruca Salt); *Moana, Jr.* (Hei Hei); *Lion King Kids* (Nala); and *Broadway Dreams* (Ensemble). Emma would like to thank her Director for this opportunity!



Steve Wendell – Charlie – Steve played the Mysterious Man in Aurora Players' 2022 production of *Into The Woods* and he's happy to be back one more time. He's appeared in dozens of musicals in Fredonia (his hometown), Jamestown and other places. A few favorites through the years have been *Working*, *Chicago*, and *Hairspray*. Steve recently had two original pieces produced, a show about the TONY awards at the Fredonia Opera House and an original musical at Lake Shore Center for the Arts. He and his wife, a talented writer, have five adorable grandkids, all under the age of five.



Ginny Miori – Costumer – This is Ginny's first show as costumer for Aurora Players. She previously assisted as a sewist for the Theatre in Hamlin Park production of *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Ginny has had a lifetime of experience with costuming, having costumed her own children in plays and serving at the “uniform mom” for a high school marching band. She has particularly enjoyed becoming a part of the Aurora Players community.

2025-2026 Board of Directors

President	Tim Musial
Vice President	Patricia Hoefler
Recording Secretary	Rebecca Caufield
Members-at-Large	George Lambert, Kimberly McAtee, Gail Stengel, E. Roger Stephenson
Treasurer.....	Lowell Sylwester

Aurora Players Board meetings are held monthly.

All are welcome to attend general membership meetings:

November 12, 2025 (7:00pm at the historic Roycroft Pavilion).

Aurora Players is a member of American Association of Community Theatre (AACT),
The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP),
Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce (GEACC),
Theatre Association of New York State (TANYS), and
Western New York Alliance of Community Theaters (WNY ACTS!).

Special Thanks

Kevin Leary, Alli Pelletreau, Karen Phillips,

Aurora Theatre and Popcorn Shop, Bee Newspapers,

East Aurora Advertiser, Elma Press,

Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Village of East Aurora

Please Support Western New York Community Theatre

Alden Christian Theatre Society, The Ghostlight Theatre,
Inclusive Theater of Western New York, Niagara Regional Theatre Guild,
Rocking Horse Productions, Springville Players, Towne Players of Ken-Ton

Committee Chairs

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Facility	Lowell Sylwester
Finance	Gail Stengel
Front of House	Mark Eckstein
Fundraising	Board
Historian	Kim Hicks, Dori Shear-McGowan
Marketing	Laurie Oravec
Membership	Jason Gonser, Christie Koester-Welsby
Nominating	Patricia Hoefler
Playbill	Kelly Campbell, Tim Musial
Play Reading	Mary Eckstein
Props and Set Furnishings	Tara Potzler, Renee Ronan
Publicity and Public Relations	Laurie Oravec, Patricia Hoefler
Readers Theater.....	Catherine Burkhart, Jeff Maris, Karen Phillips
Scholarship Program	Rebecca Caufield, E. Roger Stephenson
SRO Editor	Rebecca Caufield
Volunteerism	Tim Musial, Laurie Oravec
Web Masters	Katrina Mae Leuzinger-Owens, Tim Musial, Laurie Oravec

EVENTS

Banquet 2025.....	Rebecca Caufield
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AD HOC COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENTS

GEACC Business & Tourism Council	Laurie Oravec
Graphics	Tim Musial, Lauren Mesmer
ProjectSTAGE	Erin Francis
Script Library.....	Play Reading Committee, Rebecca Caufield, Kim Hicks
Strategic Planning.....	Board
Theatre in Hamlin Park	Justyne Harris
Theater Seating Replacement Working Group	Bruce Oravec

2025-26 PRODUCERS

<i>The Bridges of Madison County</i>	Laurie Oravec
<i>Charles Dickens: A Christmas Carol</i>	Amy Sue Matthews
<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i>	Kimberly McAtee
<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	Sofia Kull, E. Roger Stephenson
<i>ProjectSTAGE</i>	Erin Francis
<i>Theatre in Hamlin Park</i>	Justyne Harris

*We would like to thank all of these members for their volunteerism,
their continued efforts, and their never-ending support of Aurora Players.*

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE CHAIRS ARE KEY TO AP's SUCCESS

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Donors

We gratefully acknowledge the following donors for their additional support of Aurora Players.

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In Appreciation

We gratefully acknowledge our Patrons, Members, Season Ticket holders, and Donors and sincerely thank them for their continued support. For information on becoming a Patron, joining Aurora Players, purchasing season tickets and gift cards, or donating to Aurora Players, please visit our Box Office during intermission or pick up a brochure in the lobby.

Season Tickets :: Patron Packages :: Membership

FLEXIBLE SEASON TICKET PACKAGES

Aurora Players season tickets packages are available for sale through October 31, 2025.

Season tickets holders enjoy the following benefits:

SAVE OVER 15% – A season ticket package of three tickets costs just \$50 – that's a savings of \$10 for three adult tickets.

FLEXIBILITY – Use your tickets how you choose. Use all three for one show for multiple people or use one ticket per show for an individual—the choice is yours!

EARLY ACCESS – Secure your seats before ticket sales open to the general public.

NO LIMIT ON SAVINGS – Buy unlimited season ticket packages through October 31, 2025 — enjoy multiple shows throughout the season with friends and family!

BECOME AN AURORA PLAYERS PATRON

Revenue from ticket sales and concessions covers just the cost to produce shows, pay utilities, insurance and other ongoing expenses. Patron donations enable us to upgrade equipment, pay for special projects, offer community programs, and improve our beautiful space here at the historic Roycroft Pavilion Theater.

Patrons receive at least three season ticket packages, access to discounted tickets, and grateful acknowledgements on our patron plaques in the theater lobby and all programs.

Recent patron donations have allowed us to renovate the auditorium, purchase two additional laptops, and a new copier. Our current wish list includes painting the outside of the building and completing renovations behind the stage. ***Perhaps you can help us reach this year's goals!***

Patron Packages start at \$250 and are partially tax-deductible (net of season ticket value). More information at www.auroraplayers.org or please call our box office at **716-687-6727**. We'd love to hear from you!

AURORA PLAYERS MEMBERSHIP

Members of Aurora Players elect our Board of Directors and vote on important matters such as changes in the corporate Bylaws and Financial Policy. You can become a member with an annual donation of as little as \$20.00 for a single membership (\$15 for students) or \$30 for families. ***Members enjoy the following benefits:***

EARLY ACCESS – Secure your seats before ticket sales open to the general public.

QUARTERLY E-NEWSLETTER – Stay in the loop on the latest Aurora Players news and special events.

DIRECT NOTICE – Be among the first to know about auditions, shows, special meetings and other important information via email.

SOCIALIZE! – Join fellow members for at least two membership meetings per year and the annual banquet in September.

Annual memberships expire on September 30th of each year.



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 volunteer@auroraplayers.org

 716-687-6727

 www.auroraplayers.org

**NO EXPERIENCE? NO PROBLEM!
WE'LL SHOW YOU THE ROPES!**

A Milestone Moment for Aurora Players

On Friday, October 3, we celebrated the completion of the year-long renovation of the auditorium you're sitting in today!

During a joyful ribbon-cutting ceremony, Scott Bieler and Board President Tim Musial unveiled the newly refreshed space. Guests "test-drove" the new seats while enjoying a medley of favorite Aurora Players musicals arranged by Bob Sowyrda, and a special performance by several cast members from *The Bridges of Madison County*.

The Scott Bieler Family Foundation Auditorium—made possible through the generosity of the Foundation, countless volunteer hours—features brand-new seating for the first time in more than 90 years, offering improved comfort and accessibility. Additional upgrades include refinished wood floors, new carpeting, and fresh paint in the auditorium and lobby.

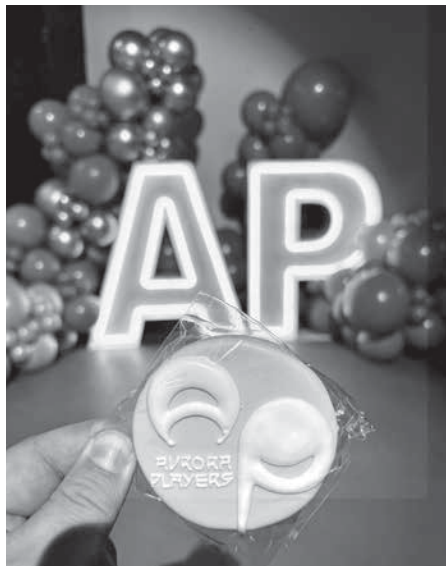
It was a truly special day—one that adds a bright new chapter to our rich AP history.



A Milestone Moment (cont'd)



Scenes from the October 3 ribbon-cutting celebration, marking the completion of renovations to the newly named Scott Bieler Family Foundation Auditorium.



Special Holiday Show! Tickets On Sale Now!

Mike Randall

Charles Dickens Presents:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



December 4, 5, 6 – 7:30 pm :: auroraplayers.org

Autographs



The Bridges of Madison County

CELEBRATING 92 YEARS OF COMMUNITY THEATRE



AURORA PLAYERS PRESENTS OUR 2025-26 SEASON



Directed by
**Nathan Andrew
Miller**

Musical Direction
Benjamin Davis

**October 10-13, 17-20,
and 27-29, 2025**



Directed by
Benjamin Davis

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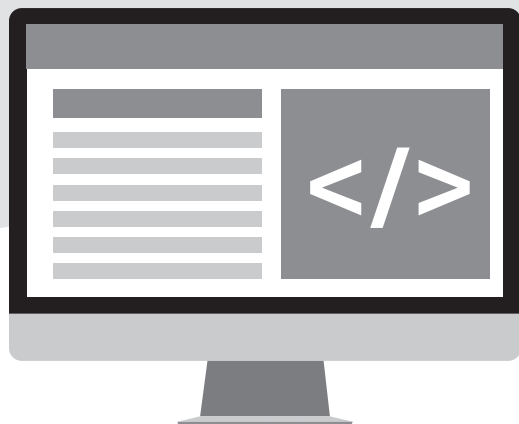
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SCAN ME

MEET THIS SEASON'S PLAYWRIGHTS...

The Bridges of Madison County

*Book by Marsha Norman, Music and
Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown*

*Based on the novel
by Robert James Waller*

Based on the best-selling novel, and developed by Tony Award winner Jason Robert Brown (*The Last Five Years*, *Parade*, *Songs for a New World*) and Pulitzer Prize winner Marsha Norman, *The Bridges of Madison County* captures the lyrical expanse of America's heartland along with the yearning entangled in the eternal question, "What if...?" Winner of the 2014 Tony Award for Best Score and Orchestrations, this sweeping romance about the roads we travel, the doors we open and the bridges we dare to cross will leave audiences breathless.

Jason Robert Brown is the ultimate multi-hyphenate - an equally skilled composer, lyricist, conductor, arranger, orchestrator, director and performer - best known for his dazzling scores to several of the most renowned musicals of our time, including the generation-defining *The Last Five Years*, his debut song cycle *Songs for a New World*, and the seminal *Parade*, for which he won the 1999 Tony Award for Best Score.

Jason Robert Brown has been hailed as "one of Broadway's smartest and most sophisticated songwriters since Stephen Sondheim" (Philadelphia Inquirer), and his "extraordinary, jubilant theater music" (Chicago Tribune) has been heard all over the world, whether in one of the hundreds of productions of his musicals every year or in his own incendiary live performances. The New York Times refers to Jason as "a leading member of a new generation of composers who embody high hopes for the American musical." Jason's score for *The Bridges*

of *Madison County*, a musical adapted with Marsha Norman from the bestselling novel, received two Tony Awards (for Best Score and Orchestrations). *Honeymoon In Vegas*, based on Andrew Bergman's film, opened on Broadway in 2015 following a triumphant production at Paper Mill Playhouse. A film version of his epochal Off-Broadway musical *The Last Five Years* was released in 2015, starring Anna Kendrick and Jeremy Jordan and directed by Richard LaGravenese. His major musicals as composer and lyricist include: *13*, written with Robert Horn and Dan Elish, which opened on Broadway in 2008 and was subsequently directed by the composer for its West End premiere in 2012; *The Last Five Years*, which was cited as one of Time Magazine's 10 Best of 2001 and won Drama Desk Awards for Best Music and Best Lyrics (and was later directed by the composer in its record-breaking Off-Broadway run at Second Stage Theatre in 2013); *Parade*, written with Alfred Uhry and directed by Harold Prince, which won both the Drama Desk and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best New Musical, as well as garnering Jason the Tony Award for Original Score; and *Songs for a New World*, a theatrical song cycle directed by Daisy Prince, which has since been seen in hundreds of productions around the world since its 1995 Off-Broadway debut, including a celebrated revival at New York's City Center in the summer of 2018. *Parade* was also the subject of a major revival directed by Rob Ashford, first at London's Donmar Warehouse and then at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Jason conducted his orchestral adaptation of E.B. White's novel *The Trumpet of the Swan* with the National Symphony Orchestra, and recorded the score for PS Classics. Future projects include a new chamber musical created with Daisy Prince and Jonathan Marc Sherman called *The Connector*; an adaptation of Lilian Lee's *Farewell My Concubine*, created with Kenneth Lin and Moisés Kaufman; and a collaboration with Billy Crystal, Amanda Green, Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel on a musical of

Mr. Saturday Night. Jason is the winner of the 2018 Louis Auchincloss Prize, the 2002 Kleban Award for Outstanding Lyrics and the 1996 Gilman & Gonzalez-Falla Foundation Award for Musical Theatre. Jason's songs, including the cabaret standard "Stars and the Moon," have been performed and recorded by Ariana Grande, Audra McDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, Billy Porter, Betty Buckley, Renée Fleming, Jon Hendricks and many others, and his song "Someone To Fall Back On" was featured in the Walden Media film, *Bandslam*.

As a soloist or with his band The Caucasian Rhythm Kings, Jason has performed concerts around the world. For the past four years (and ongoing), his monthly sold-out performances at New York's SubCulture have featured many of the music and theater world's most extraordinary performers. His newest collection, "How We React and How We Recover," was released in June 2018 on Ghostlight Records. His previous solo album, "Wearing Someone Else's Clothes," was named one of Amazon.com's best of 2005, and is available from Sh-K-Boom Records. Jason's 2012 concert with Anika Noni Rose was broadcast on PBS, and he was the featured soloist for a live episode of Friday Night Is Music Night, broadcast live from the London Palladium and featuring the BBC Concert Orchestra. His collaboration with singer Lauren Kennedy, "Songs of Jason Robert Brown", is available on PS Classics. Jason is also the composer of the incidental music for the Broadway revival of *You Can't Take It With You*, David Lindsay-Abaire's *Kimberly Akimbo* and *Fuddy Meers*, and Kenneth Lonergan's *The Waverly Gallery*, and he was a Tony Award nominee for his contributions to the score of *Urban Cowboy the Musical*. He has also contributed music to the hit Nickelodeon television series, *The Wonder Pets* as well as *Sesame Street*. Jason spent ten years teaching at the USC School of Dramatic Arts, and has also taught at Harvard University, Princeton University and Emerson College.

For the musical *Prince of Broadway*, a celebration of the career of his mentor Harold Prince, Jason was the musical supervisor and arranger. Other New York credits as conductor and arranger include *Urban Cowboy the Musical*

on Broadway; *Dinah Was*, off-Broadway and on national tour; *When Pigs Fly* off-Broadway; William Finn's *A New Brain* at Lincoln Center Theater; the 1992 tribute to Stephen Sondheim at Carnegie Hall (recorded by RCA Victor); Yoko Ono's *New York Rock*, at the WPA Theatre; and Michael John LaChiusa's *The Petrified Princ* at the Public Theatre. Jason orchestrated Andrew Lippa's John and Jen, Off-Broadway at Lamb's Theatre. Additionally, Jason served as the orchestrator and arranger of Charles Strouse and Lee Adams's score for a proposed musical of *Star Wars*. Jason has conducted and created arrangements and orchestrations for Liza Minnelli, John Pizzarelli, and Michael Feinstein, among many others.

Jason studied composition at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., with Samuel Adler, Christopher Rouse, and Joseph Schwantner. He lives with his wife, composer Georgia Stitt, and their daughters in New York City. Jason is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and the American Federation of Musicians Local 802. Visit him on the web at www.jasonrobertbrown.com.

Marsha Norman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and co-chair of Playwriting at Juilliard. She won a Tony for *The Secret Garden*, and another nomination for *The Color Purple*. Her first play, *Getting Out*, received the John Gassner Playwriting Medallion, the Newsday Oppenheimer Award, and a citation from the American Critics Association. Other plays include *The Laundromat*, *The Pool Hall*, *Loving Daniel Boone*, *Trudy Blue*, and her newest play, *Last Dance*. Published collections of her works include *Four Plays*, *Collected Works of Marsha Norman, Vol. 1*, and a novel, *The Fortune Teller*. She has also worked extensively in television and film and has an upcoming play for the UN about trafficking and violence toward women. She is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, a former advisory member of the Sewanee Writers Conference, and current vice president of The Dramatists Guild of America. She serves on the boards of the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Independent Committee for Arts Policy. Ms. Norman was elected to the Agnes Scott College Board of Trustees in 2003.

She lives with her two children in Monterey, MA and New York City. ■

(courtesy of Musical Theatre International)

Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express

Adapted for the stage
by Ken Ludwig

Ken Ludwig's clever adaptation of the Agatha Christie classic boasts all the glamour, intrigue and suspense of Dame Agatha's celebrated novel, with a healthy dose of humor to quicken the pace.

Ken Ludwig has had six productions on Broadway and eight in London's West End. His 34 plays and musicals are staged around the world and throughout the United States every night of the year.

His first play, *Lend Me a Tenor*, won two Tony Awards and was called "one of the classic comedies of the 20th century" by The Washington Post. *Crazy For You* is currently running on London's West End. It was previously on Broadway for five years, on the West End for three, and won the Tony and Olivier Awards for Best Musical.

In addition, he has won the Edwin Forrest Award for Contributions to the American Theatre, two Laurence Olivier Awards, two Helen Hayes Awards, the Charles MacArthur Award and the Edgar Award for Best Mystery of the Year. His other plays include *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Leading Ladies*, *Baskerville*, *Sherwood*, *Twentieth Century*, *Dear Jack*, *Dear Louise*, *A Fox on the Fairway*, *A Comedy of Tenors*, *The Game's Afoot*, *Shakespeare in Hollywood*, and *Murder on the Orient Express*. They have starred, among others, Alec Baldwin, Carol Burnett, Kristen Bell, Tony Shaloub, Joan Collins and Henry Goodman.

His book *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, published by Penguin Random House, won the Falstaff Award for Best Shakespeare Book of the Year, and his essays on theatre are published in the Yale Review. He gives the Annual Ken Ludwig Playwriting Scholarship at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and he served on the Board of Governors for the Folger Shakespeare Library for ten years. His first opera, *Tenor Overboard*, opened at the Glimmerglass Festival in July 2022. His most recent world premieres were *Lend Me A Soprano* and *Moriarty*, and his newest plays and musicals include *Pride and Prejudice Part 2: Napoleon* at Pemberley and *Lady Molly* of Scotland Yard.

His plays include commissions from the Agatha Christie Estate, the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Old Globe Theatre, and the Bristol Old Vic. For more information visit www.kenludwig.com. ■

(courtesy of Concord Theatricals)

Shakespeare in Love

Based on the screenplay by Marc
Norman and Tom Stoppard

Adapted for the stage by Lee Hall

Based on the Academy Award-winning movie, this enchanting, hilarious, romantic stage play reimagines William Shakespeare's creative process – and explores his inspiration – as he writes *Romeo and Juliet*.

Tom Stoppard's most recent play, *Leopoldstadt*, opened at Wyndham's Theatre in 2020 and transferred to Broadway in 2022. It won multiple Awards, including an Olivier Award and Tony Award for Best Play. He wrote his first play, *Enter a Free Man*, whilst working as a journalist in Bristol. His plays include *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *After Magritte*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (a play for actors and orchestra written with



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André Previn), *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink*, *The Invention Of Love*, *The Coast Of Utopia*, *Rock'n'Roll*, *Dogg's Our Pett*, *New-Found Land*, *Dogg's Hamlet*, *Caboot's Macbeth* and *The Hard Problem*. Adaptations include *Tango*, *Undiscovered Country*, *On The Razzle*, *Rough Crossing* and *Dalliance*. Translations include *The Seagull*, *Henry IV*, *Ivanov*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The House Of Bernarda Alba* and *Largo Desolato*. He has written eight Evening Standard Award-winning plays and five of his plays have won Tony Awards.

Radio plays include *Darkside* (set to Pink Floyd's album *The Dark Side of the Moon*), *On Dover Beach*, *If You're Glad, I'll Be Frank*, *Albert's Bridge* (Italia Prize Winner), *M Is For Moon Among Other Things*, *The Dissolution Of Dominic Boot*, *Where Are They Now?*, *Artist Descending A Staircase*, *The Dog It Was That Died* and *In The Native State*. Television adaptations include *Parades End* (BBC/HBO), *A Walk On The Water* (from *Enter A Free Man*), *Three Men In A Boat* and *The Dog It Was That Died*. Original television screenplays include *Another Moon Called Earth*, *A Separate Peace*, *Neutral Ground*, *Teeth* and *Professional Foul*, which won awards from BAFTA, the Broadcasting Press Guild and Squaring The Circle. He adapted his television dramatisation of Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* for BBC Radio.

Screenplays include *Anna Karenina*, *Despair*, *The Romantic Englishwoman*, *The Human Factor*, *Brazil*, *Empire Of The Sun*, *The Russia House*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Poodle Springs*, and *Shakespeare In Love* (with Marc Norman), which won him an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, a Golden Globe and the Broadcast Film Critics and American Guild Awards for Best Screenplay 1998. He directed and wrote the screenplay for the film of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, which won the Prix d'Or at the Venice Film Festival 1990 for Best Film.

Tom Stoppard is a CBE and was knighted in 1997.

Lee Hall was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1966 and studied English Literature at Cambridge University. He has worked as a writer in theatre, TV, radio and film. He has been writer in residence at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Live Theatre, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Theatre: *Wittgenstein on Tyne*, Live Theatre 1996; *Bollocks*, RSC Fringe, 1998; *Genie*, Paines Plough, 1998; *Cooking With Elvis*, Live Theatre/West End 1999 - nominated for an Oliver Award for Best Comedy; *Spoonface Steinberg*, Ambassadors Theatre, London 2000; *Two's Company*, Live Theatre/Bristol Old Vic, 2001; *Billy Elliot the Musical*, 2004 - Oliver Award Best Musical; *Pitmen Painters*, Live Theatre, Newcastle/Royal National Theatre/National tour/Broadway, 2007-2010.

Theatre adaptations: *Leonce and Lena* (Büchner), The Gate Theatre, 1997; *Mr Puntilla and his man Matti* (Brecht) Almedia Theatre, 1998, *A Servant to Two Masters* (Goldoni) RSC/Young Vic 1999; *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Collodi), Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, 2000; *Mother Courage* (Brecht), Shared Experience/Ambassadors Theatre; *The Good Hope* (Heijermans) Royal National Theatre, 2001; *The Barber of Seville* (Beaumarchais), Bristol Old Vic, 2003.

Opera: Adaptation of *Il Pagliacci/The Comedians* for the English National Opera, 2008. TV: *Spoonface Steinberg* 1997, BBC; *A Prince of Hearts* 1998, BBC; *Wind in the Willows* 2007, BBC.

Film: *Billy Elliot*, Working Title Films, 2000. His screenplay for *War Horse*, directed by Steven Spielberg, came out in 2011. ■

(courtesy of Concord Theatricals)



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AP CELEBRATES THE 2024-25 SEASON

A September Soirée

We were delighted to return once again to the picturesque Suncliff on the Lake in Derby for the 2025 Aurora Players Banquet. This year's gathering felt especially festive as the evening opened with a breathtaking sunset spilling gold tones across the horizon, while the twinkling lights of Buffalo shimmered across the water, creating a truly magical backdrop. Against this scenic setting, we came together to reflect on and celebrate the remarkable 2024–2025 season—a year filled with creativity, collaboration, and countless memorable performances.

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed reconnecting with friends old and new, sharing stories, and reminiscing about favorite productions. A beautifully prepared dinner buffet offered an array of delicious dishes, followed by an irresistible selection of desserts that quickly became a highlight of the night. The program also included a lively and good-spirited trivia game that kept everyone on their toes. The contest came down to a nail-biting tiebreaker—Shakespeare's exact birthdate—adding a perfect theatrical twist to an evening that celebrated not only our shared love of the arts but also the enduring sense of community that defines Aurora Players. The evening closed with the recognition of the individuals whose extraordinary dedication and contributions continue to make Aurora Players thrive.



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Don Wesley – *The Miracle Worker*

Mark Eckstein, Director and **Mary Eckstein**, Assistant Director
– *Lend Me A Tenor*

Brian Tabak, Director and **Carolyn Quigley Mazierski**, Assistant Director
– *A Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*

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