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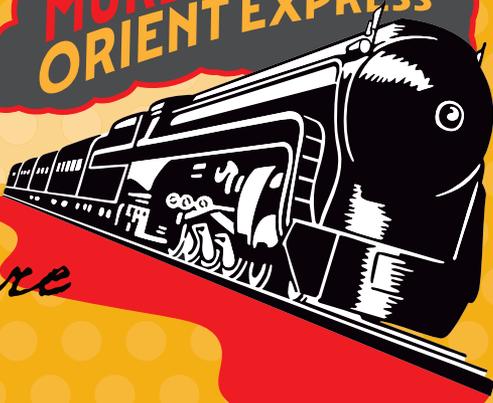
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RESERVATIONS/INFORMATION:
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Aurora Players is a member of the Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce (GEACC), American Association of Community Theatre (AACT), Theatre Association of New York State (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.

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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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2005	The Roycrofters-At-Large Association	2017	Nativity Lutheran Church
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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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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. ■



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:

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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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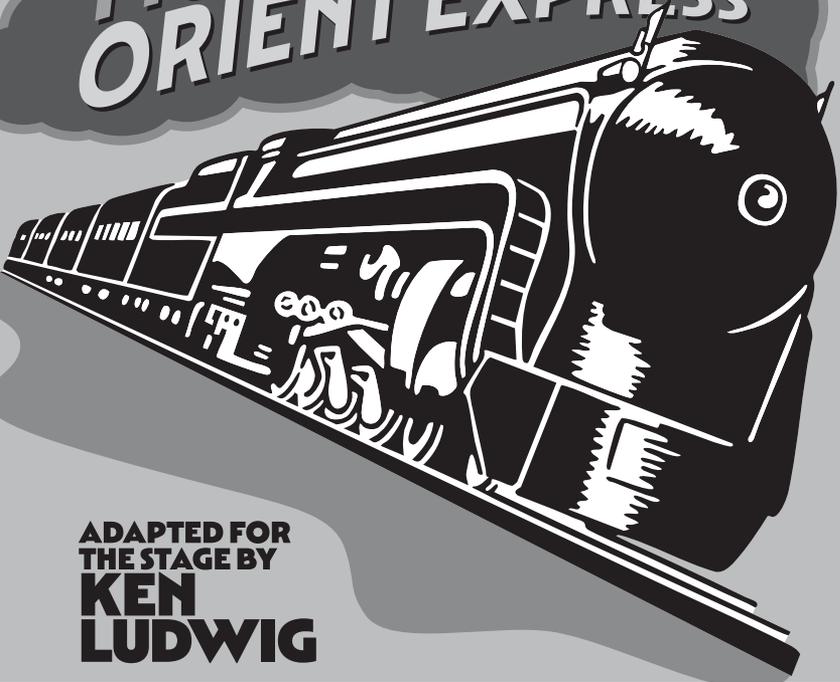
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A Message from AP's President



“From the start it has been the theatre’s business to entertain people. It needs no other passport than fun.”

– Bertolt Brecht

*As we present **Murder on the Orient Express**, I’m reminded that theater, at its heart, is its own kind of mystery. Before the curtain rises, the stage is quiet and full of possibility. Then, in an instant, everything transforms—the stage becomes a snowbound train, a group of actors becomes a world of suspects, and we’re all invited to step into the unknown together.*

Stories like this feel especially powerful on stage because every moment is shared—the suspense, the laughter, the collective gasp at the final reveal. That shared sense of discovery is something only live theater can truly create.

*We hope you’ll join us again at the end of May and into June for **Shakespeare in Love**, where romance, comedy, and backstage mischief collide in a joyful love letter to the theater itself.*

Thank you for being part of the murder, the mystery, and the magic. Now we hope you will lean forward in your seats, piece together the clues and second-guess everything!

Enjoy the show!



Sincerely,

Rebecca Caufield

President, Aurora Players Board of Directors

The Cast (In Order of Appearance)

Joshua Verby.....HERCULE POIROT

Lucas Smith.....SAMUEL RATCHETT/HEAD WAITER

Zach Wilcox.....COLONEL ARBUTHNOT

Megan Mahaney.....MARY DEBENHAM

Tara Potzler.....HELEN HUBBARD

Nick Benstead.....HECTOR MACQUEEN

John Kehoe.....CONSTANTINE BOUC

Chris Biggie.....PIERRE MICHEL/SYRIAN OFFICER

Jessica K. Rasp.....PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF

Erin Kosich.....GRETA OHLSSON

Anne Gerace.....COUNTESS ANDRENYI

FEATURING THE VOICES OF

Isabelle Benstead.....SONIA ARMSTRONG

Emerson Disch.....DAISY ARMSTRONG

Benjamin Davis.....COLONEL ARMSTRONG

Lucas Smith.....RADIO OPERATOR

Director's Note

It's been an ambition of mine to produce an Agatha Christie story with my own vision for over 30 years. For as long as I can remember, I've been enamored of the large ensemble mystery trope. I love the interplay of the characters, the shifting allegiances and prejudices, the discoveries of motives and motivations. At 10, I saw my first production of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*. I loved the stagecraft and the characters, but especially the compelling and convoluted mystery. By high school, I had started planning my own "perfect" adaptation of *And Then There Were None*, selecting the ideal cast, mapping out the house—even composing the score.

For my directorial debut at Aurora Players, I pitched three shows...none of which were *Murder on the Orient Express*. That train didn't leave the station until Nancy Johnson, costumer extraordinaire, suggested I give this particular show some additional consideration. I read the script, finding it to be funny, exciting, and emotional, while maintaining the essence of the novel; and because it was a modern adaptation, it felt perfectly suited for a 21st century audience.

I've loved researching the history and geography of the story; understanding the cultural and societal forces at play in 1934; looking at fashions and technologies of the time; crafting sound cues and selecting music. But most of all, I've loved the people. My goal was to build the playground and then ask people to come play. Before auditions I knew what the sets and the costumes would look like. Props had been sourced and designed, sound and music compiled and edited. I read the play over and over, reread the novel, watched several filmed versions, and spent a lot of time thinking about who the characters are. And then the fun really began: finding the people to join the environment we'd created.

The success of a show like this is also dependent upon assembling the right group of actors to embody the eccentric characters onstage. I extend my sincere thanks to this group, who have worked together with great camaraderie and passion—and not a whiff of ego!—and made every rehearsal a joy.

Additionally, I need to acknowledge my deep gratitude to people without whom this show would not exist: Karen Phillips, our tireless stage manager, who has kept everything running smoothly and made excellent coffee; my producer, Kimberly McAtee, who I've known for 20 years as a colleague, mentor and friend; Randy West, equal parts engineer and artist, whose enthusiasm and encouragement have been key in developing the production; and Kevin Kujawa, who answered every one of my dozens of questions with, "We can do whatever you want and then found a way to make that happen." The collaboration and mutual support among this group has been consistently inspiring.

Thank you for being here. I am so very excited to share *Murder on the Orient Express* with you.

Benjamin Davis

Synopsis & Setting

The world-famous detective, Hercule Poirot, finds his well-earned vacation to Istanbul cut short by a summons from Scotland Yard, requesting his assistance on a case. He secures passage home aboard the pride of the Wagon-Lit, the legendary Orient Express. Only hours into the journey the train runs into a snowbank on the track, and Poirot finds himself caught up in a mysterious murder on-board the stopped train. Can Poirot deduce the murderer from among his eccentric fellow passengers? Will he solve the mystery before tragedy strikes again?

ACT ONE

An afternoon and evening in January 1934. Istanbul.

ACT TWO

The next day, aboard the Orient Express, snowbound in the former Yugoslavia.

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.

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Production Crews

Director	BENJAMIN DAVIS
Producer	KIMBERLY MCATEE
Costumes	NANCY JOHNSON
Stage Managers	KAREN PHILLIPS, Neal Bachman
Stage Crew	Matt Bohlen, Logan Noel, Jenna Smolinski, Heather Telban, Michael Telban
Set Design	RANDY WEST
Set Construction	RANDY WEST
Set Painting/Decoration/Furnishing	JULIE DANA, John Dana, Benjamin Davis, Lindsay Harris, Tim Musial, Laurie Oravec
Intimacy Coach	JILL RITTINGER
Props/Set Furnishing	Reneé Ronan, Cathy Schrader
Lighting/Sound	KEVIN KUJAWA
Scenic Painting	CHRISTY FRANCIS
Curtains	LOWELL SYLWESTER, Randy West
Tech Dinner	KIMBERLY MCATEE
Marketing	REBECCA CAUFIELD, Patricia Hoefler, Katrina Leuzinger-Owens, Mary Loliger, Tim Musial, Laurie Oravec, Johnny Woods
Social Media/Promotional Videos	MARY LOLIGER, Benjamin Davis
Program	LAUREN MESMER, Tim Musial
Graphics, Flyer, Program Cover	TIM MUSIAL
Photography	DORI SHEAR-MCGOWAN, Mary Loliger
Front of House Coordinator	MARK ECKSTEIN
House Managers/Assistants ...	Dennis Bernhard, Rebecca Caufield, Mark Eckstein, Mary Eckstein, Patricia Hoefler, Jeff Maris, Amy Sue Matthews, Kimberly McAtee, Tim Musial, Cathy Schrader, Others not available at press time
Box Office/Intermission Concierge	Gail Ruth Arthurs, Kimberly McAtee, Barb Davis, Patricia Hoefler, Rebecca Popiel, Luann Roberts, Cathy Schrader, Gail Stengel, Johnny Woods, Others not available at press time
Ushers/Refreshment Stand	Dennis Bernhard, Patti Best, Matt Bohlen, Jennifer Brayman, Ab Crown, Mike Fedele, Rachelle Francis Edwin Heary, Carol Howard, Cher Mackiewicz, Jeff Maris Joanne Miller, Ellen Moomaw, Denise Mosser, Barbara O'Connor Sarah Pictor, Lydia Pikul, Luann Roberts, Cathy Schrader, Chris Wieder, Melissa Willey, Others not available at press time

Director & Cast – Who’s Who



Benjamin Davis – Director – Ben has enjoyed every minute of his first directing experience with Aurora Players. After many years away from the stage, Ben has lately been seen onstage in the Roycroft Pavilion as Captain Keller in *The Miracle Worker* and Tito Morelli in *Lend Me a Tenor*. Most recently, he served as musical director for *The Bridges of Madison County*, directed by Nathan Andrew Miller. Favorite past roles include Arnold Wiggins (*The Boys Next Door*), Captain Corcoran (*HMS Pinafore*) and Scarecrow/Hunk (*The Wizard of Oz*). Ben has been a music teacher in WNY for the past twenty-five years and, as such, has a pretty bad case of tinnitus.

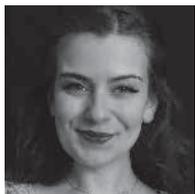


Nick Benstead – Hector MacQueen – Nick is thrilled to be appearing in his second Aurora Players production. Previously, he starred as Max in *Lend Me A Tenor* and acted as the Assistant Director/Production Stage Manager for *The Miracle Worker* with Aurora Players, as well as starred as the leading roles of the past 5 shows at Springville Center for the Arts: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Two by Two*, *The Addams Family*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Music Man*. You can see him next with the Aurora Players in *Shakespeare in Love* coming in late May/early June. He would like to thank Ben for the wonderful opportunity to bring Hector to life, as well as his wife, Isabelle, for being the one that keeps him going day after day.



Chris Biggie – Pierre Michel/Syrian officer – Chris is thrilled to once again be on stage with Aurora Players. He has also appeared with AP in *Rumors* (Ernie), *Hair* (Hubert), *Present Laughter* (Fred), and *Spider’s Web* (Constable Jones), along with ensemble roles in Theatre in Hamlin Park’s productions of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Offstage, he works as an IT Specialist by day and also enjoys learning to play keyboards/synthesizers with ambitions of composing for film or television in the hopefully not-too-distant future. He’s sincerely grateful to be part of such a talented cast in this production and have the opportunity to step back onstage.

Director & Cast – Who’s Who



Anne Gerace – Countess Andrenyi – Anne is very excited to be making her debut on the Aurora Players stage as Countess Elena Andrenyi! Some of her recent credits include *Carrie: The Musical* (Sue Snell) with Bellissima Productions, *Antigone* (Antigone) and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey) with Buffalo State University. Anne is currently a junior at Buffalo State University, majoring in Writing and Theater. She would like to thank her family and friends for their constant love and support.



John Kehoe – Constantine Bouc – John is very happy to be returning to the Aurora stage. You may have seen him here as Wadsworth in *Clue*, Ken Gorman in *Rumors*, or Lloyd Boateng in *One Man, Two Guvnors*. You can also catch him at ComedySportz most weekends throughout the year. He is a big fan of pudding and punk rock music. He wants to thank this beautiful wife, Sheryl, and his mom and kids for their tremendous support!!



Erin Kosich – Greta Ohlsson – Erin is feeling humbled to be surrounded by such talented new friends in her first performance with the Aurora Players! Her last role was Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but that was while she was a college student (a long, long, LONG time ago)! Erin currently teaches knitting and sells knitting-related supplies as part of her small business, The EWE’s Yarn Gathering. She is also the Director of the Before and After School Program for the YMCA at Charlotte Avenue Elementary (where she has been playing the children LOTS of ABBA music to help her get into her Swedish character)! Erin would like to thank her friends and family for cheering her on through this new adventure and extra thanks to Ben for this wonderful opportunity!



Megan Mahaney – Mary Debenham – Megan is excited to be back at Aurora Players! She was recently in *Carrie: The Musical* with Bellissima Productions and *Iolanthe* with Opera Lytes. Some of her favorite productions were *Lizzie and Alice By Heart*, with Bellissima Productions, *Wicket* with O’Connell & Company, *The Rocky Horror Show* at the Lancaster Opera House, and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Rumors*, and *Hair* with Aurora Players. Thank you Mom for taking care of Jinju so I can enjoy my hobby! Thank you Dad for supporting every show! Remember to always be kind.

Director & Cast – Who’s Who



Tara Potzler – Helen Hubbard – Tara is delighted to be back onstage with Aurora. She was last seen as Julia in *Lend Me a Tenor*. Some favorite roles include Mrs. Baker in *Butterflies are Free*, Belinda/Flavia in *Noises Off* and Karen in *Plaza Suite*, with Aurora Players and various local companies. When not on stage, Tara can be found searching for one more old pet to rescue. Thanks to everyone for their love and support!



Jessica K. Rasp – Princess Dragomiroff – Being a huge Agatha Christie fan and having read all her books, Jess is excited to play this part from one of Dame Christie’s most popular novels. It became even more thrilling when she discovered that Veanne Cox, whom she met a few years ago, originated the role in the first production of Ken Ludwig’s adaptation of *Murder on the Orient Express* at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton. Most recently, Jessica played Ouiser Boudreaux in *Steel Magnolias* with Rocking Horse Productions. You may not believe this, but she played that same role 20 years ago at Aurora Players! Working with various local theatre companies, you may have seen her acting or designing or selling tickets. Some favorite roles: *On Golden Pond* (Ethel), *When Worlds Collide* (Marley), *The Golden Girls Lost Episodes* (Sophia), *Lord Arthur Saville’s Crime* (Lady Julia Merton), *Charlotte’s Web* (Goose), *Dracula* (Renfield), *Barefoot in the Park* (Mrs. Banks), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Lady Bracknell), *The Wizard of Oz* (Wicked Witch of the West), and *The Divine Sister* (Agnes).

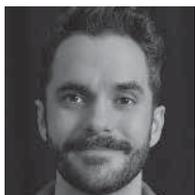


Lucas Smith – Samuel Ratchett/Head waiter – Lucas is an avid actor/singer who has been performing across Western New York for nearly a decade. He has worked with numerous local theater companies, including Niagara Regional Theater Guild, Raiders of Niagara, Starry Night Theater, Kenmore Towne Players, and Rocking Horse Productions. He is thrilled to be joining Aurora Players for the first time. Favorite recent roles include Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Starry Night Theater), Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Starry Night Theater) and Hero in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Niagara Regional Theater Guild). Lucas also has several years of experience as a barbershop tenor with the Friends of Harmony. When he isn’t singing onstage or at karaoke, Lucas works on Grand Island as a research chemist for Thermo Fisher Scientific. He would like to thank his incredible wife, Samantha, also a local actress, for her unwavering support of his frequent and turbulent nonsense.

Director & Cast – Who’s Who



Joshua Verby – *Hercule Poirot* – Joshua is thrilled to be making his debut with Aurora Players. A regular performer at Buffalo Improv House and Buffalo Comedy Collective, Joshua’s recent stage credits include *Line Please* (Alford) as part of Springville Center for the Arts’ *The Nature of Love: Short Play Showcase*. Additionally, Joshua has performed with Rocking Horse Productions in *Death of a Salesman* (Happy Loman) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Steve Hubbell). He would like to thank his friends and family for their love and support.



Zach Wilcox – *Colonel James Arbuthnot* – Zach is thrilled to make his Aurora Players debut as Colonel Arbuthnot! This is the first time he’s been on stage since college, and couldn’t be more excited. His first hometown community theater role was Kurt von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, and he’s been hooked ever since. Favorite past roles include the Narrator in *Into the Woods*, Rolf in *The Sound of Music*, and Ken de la Maize in *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*. Since moving to Buffalo, Zach has appeared as an extra in several WNY films, and has played guitar in Buffalo area Porchfests. When he’s not engaged in creative pursuits, he spends his days as a programmer. Zach would like to thank Ben for this fantastic opportunity, his incredible castmates, and his ever-supportive wife.

Coming to the outdoor stage this summer from Theatre In Hamlin Park!

A Bit About Agatha Christie



Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time and, in many languages, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 66 crime novels, 150 short stories, over 20 plays, and six novels written under the name Mary Westmacott. Her work includes *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, and the genre-defining *And Then There Were None*.

Agatha Christie’s first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was written towards the end of the First World War, in which she served in the VAD*. In it she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. It was published by Bodley Head in 1920.

In 1926, after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her first masterpiece. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was the first of her books to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship that lasted for 50 years and well over 70 books. Ackroyd was also the first of Agatha Christie’s books to be dramatized – under the title *Alibi* – and to have a successful run in London’s West End.

By 1930, Agatha had introduced a new character to act as detective. When she created Miss Marple, Agatha did not expect her to become Poirot’s rival, but with *The Murder at the Vicarage*, Miss Marple’s first full-length outing, it appeared she had produced another popular and enduring character.

The Mousetrap, her most successful play of all, opened in 1952 and is the longest-running play in history.

Agatha Christie was made a dame in 1971. She died in 1976.

Agatha Christie Limited (ACL) has been managing the literary and media rights to Agatha Christie’s works around the world since 1955, working with the best talents in film, television, publishing, stage and on digital platforms to ensure that Christie’s work continues to reach new audiences in innovative ways and to the highest standard. The company is managed by Christie’s great grandson James Prichard.

Visit www.agathachristie.com for more information.

*The Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) was a volunteer organization formed in 1909 by the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance to provide nursing assistants, ambulance drivers, and administrators for military hospitals in World War I.

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Aurora Players Board meetings are held monthly.

All are welcome to attend general membership meetings:

April 9, 2026 (7:00pm at the historic Roycroft Pavilion).

Aurora Players is a member of American Association of Community Theatre (AACT),
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EVENTS

Banquet 2026	Rebecca Caufield
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ProjectSTAGE	Erin Francis
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Strategic Planning	Board
Theatre in Hamlin Park	Justyne Harris

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, Mark Eckstein
<i>ProjectSTAGE</i>	Erin Francis
<i>Theatre in Hamlin Park</i>	Rick Lattimer

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

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Lynn Fischer

Colleen Murphy

Marie Speranza

Bonnie Floyd

Timothy Musial

Julie Tirone

Julie Francisco

Jeanne Navagh

Mark Tramont

James Goller

Anna Nold

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Backdrop Painting: Howling Woman



A Serbian winter scene by Christy Francis of Howling Woman Studio

Last year I met Christy Francis, a local artist and the owner of Howling Woman Studios on Main Street in East Aurora. Since then, I've also been fortunate to be able to call her a friend. Attending a workshop in her studio over the summer, I saw a tiny 4 x 4-inch impressionistic painting she had done of a winter night, and I could immediately feel the cold and the quiet isolation of the scene. I purchased it to hang over my desk, and it was one of the first images I shared with the production team to make clear the vibe I wanted this production to have.

When I asked Christy to paint the scenic mural for Murder on the Orient Express I showed her a photo of winter in the mountains in Serbia, where I imagined the Orient Express might have been stopped by a snowbank. Using that as inspiration, she created the beautiful mural on the back wall of the Roycroft Pavilion that features throughout our production. I'm so grateful for her generosity and her work, and although I haven't told anyone yet, I plan to remove the entire wall when it's all over so I can keep the painting at my home.

Christy is a multidisciplinary teaching artist offering paintings, art prints, and photography. Her work is in a number of private collections within (and beyond) Western New York. Her clients are individual and commercial, including Meet & Eat Charcuterie, Magic Bear Beer Cellar, Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House, Trocaire College, Canisius University, and TEAM VIA (New York City Real Estate Advisors). She describes herself as a contemporary of Lisa Frank, a neon enthusiast, and she believes in ghosts and great art.

Christy is a former instructor for the Arts Management Program at University at Buffalo, and a marketing consultant. Please check out her work online and in person.

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Musical Direction
Benjamin Davis

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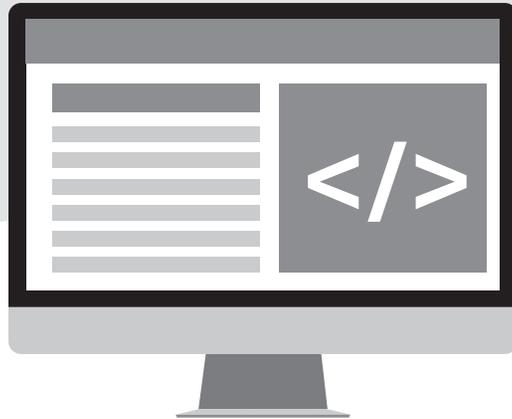
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MEET THIS SEASON'S PLAYWRIGHTS...

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 Lipka'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* (Buchner), 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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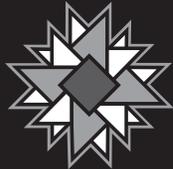
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AP CELEBRATES THE 2024-25 SEASON

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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Rebecca Runge, Choreographer – *James and the Giant Peach* *The Musical*

Patricia Hoefler – *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberly*

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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Deep appreciation is extended to our producers, costumers, stage managers, actors, musicians, set designers, builders, painters, furnishers and decorators, prop masters, lighting and sound technicians, hair and makeup stylists and production crews for their dedication and efforts to ensure the artistic and financial success of our productions. *They are all stars of Aurora Players.*

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