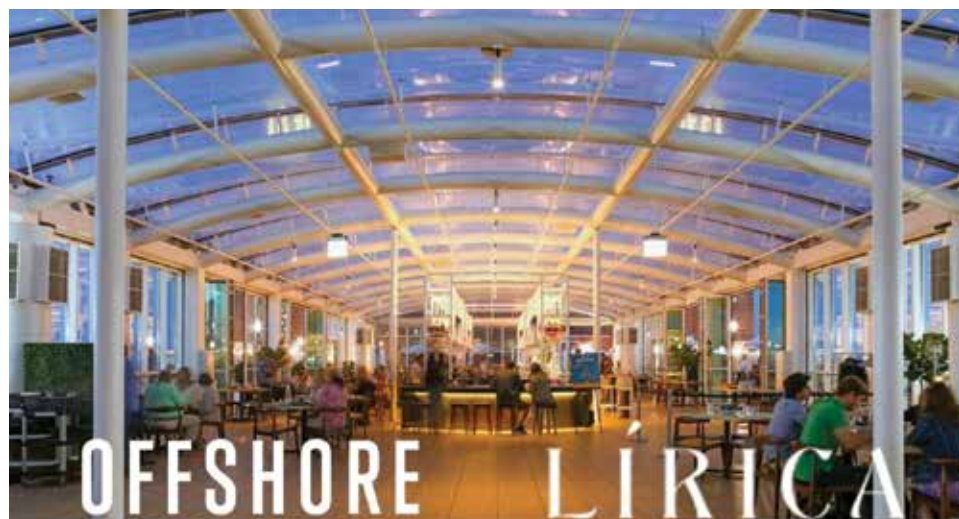


CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER



# ILLINOISE

a new kind of musical



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# WELCOME TO CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

We are delighted to welcome you to *Illinoise* in our glorious venue, The Yard. We are proud to have joined a group of theaters to co-commission this innovative, exciting new musical that is the namesake of our great state of Illinois. You are among the first to experience this theatrical event, which will go on to a run in New York City this spring.

At the heart of our mission is storytelling that is powerful, emotional, entertaining, and inspiring. It is especially meaningful to have this new work in The Yard being performed alongside Shakespeare's masterpiece *Richard III* in the Courtyard Theater. Two revelatory pieces that explore life, love, and the human condition in such different ways. Shakespeare—a writer of his time for our time—and Sufjan Stevens, Justin Peck, and Jackie Sibblies Drury—powerful, groundbreaking voices of today.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater will continue to bring original work to the stage, nurturing new voices through commissions alongside Shakespeare's great works of theater. The intersection between artists of today and Shakespeare, a writer whose voice continues to have so much to say and debate about the world we live in now is a place that we invite you to enjoy. Never has there been a better moment for you to transport yourselves into the magical world of theater in all its different iterations. Reflect upon the past, learn about the present, and make Chicago Shakespeare Theater your theatrical home.



**Edward Hall**

Artistic Director  
*Carl and Marilynn Thoma Chair*



**Kimberly Motes**

Executive Director





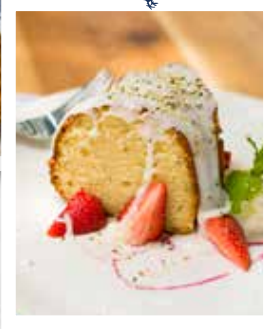
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# About CST

A Regional Tony Award recipient, Chicago Shakespeare Theater produces a bold and innovative year-round season—plays, musicals, world premieres, family productions, and theatrical presentations from around the globe—alongside education programming for students, teachers, and lifelong learners, and engagement with communities across the region.

Founded in 1986, the Theater has evolved to present as many as twenty productions and 650 performances annually and has been honored with numerous awards. Chicago Shakespeare is the city's leading presenter of international work and has toured its own productions to five continents. The Theater is also dedicated to welcoming the next generation of theatergoers.

A national leader in the field, the Theater's arts-in-literacy programs support the work in classrooms across the region for tens of thousands of students each year by bringing complex texts to life onstage and through professional learning opportunities for teachers. Now in its twelfth year, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks is a key component of CoLab, the Theater's year-round program rooted in engagement with neighborhoods and collaborations with local artists.

As a nonprofit organization, Chicago Shakespeare is, at its core, about people: connecting audiences and artists, partnering with teachers and students, and sharing with friends and neighbors. It is in this spirit that the Theater upholds its commitment to be an increasingly diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible organization. The Theater strives to engage today's artists and audiences in active and critical conversations with the work of its namesake, William Shakespeare.

Located on Chicago's iconic Navy Pier, Chicago Shakespeare's campus features the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, and the Thoma Theater Upstairs. Onstage, in classrooms and neighborhoods across the city, and in venues around the world, Chicago Shakespeare is a multifaceted cultural hub—inviting audiences, artists, and community members to share powerful stories that connect and inspire.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### *In Memoriam*

Richard J. Franke

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# Students in conversation with setting the stage for

A national leader in the field, Chicago Shakespeare Theater's arts-in-literacy programs support the work in classrooms across the region by bringing complex texts to life onstage and through professional learning opportunities for teachers.

## **Students own their voices onstage**

Hundreds of high school students and their teachers from around Chicagoland participated in our 7<sup>th</sup> annual Chicago Shakespeare Slam this fall. A series of workshops and school rehearsals culminated in the high-energy Final Bout in the Courtyard Theater in December. These talented young people collaborated to make Shakespeare's timeless text their own.



# Shakespeare's work— lifelong learning

## 20 years of professional development

Meaningful connections are being forged with our 20<sup>th</sup> cohort of Bard Core, a year-long seminar for Chicago Public School teachers. The hands-on curriculum introduces drama-based strategies for engaging students with Shakespeare and other challenging texts and has now impacted the classroom learning of countless students over two decades.



## Meet our new leader in education

Nora Carroll has been named Director of Lifelong Learning and Education, Ray and Judy McCaskey Education Chair.

A graduate of the University of San Diego and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, she has performed with major regional theaters nationwide—including Chicago Shakespeare Theater—and has shared her passion for the arts with students ages 10–24. In this role, Nora will uphold our mission to create learning experiences for all audiences.

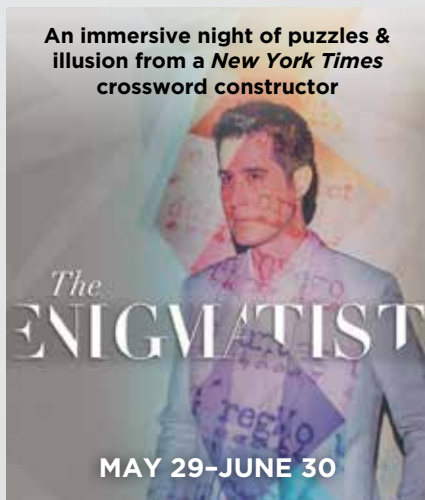


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Chicago Shakespeare Theater is proud to recognize the sustaining partnership of our Major Season Supporters, whose visionary support ensures that we live out our artistic mission for audiences today and for generations to come.



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Carl and  
Marilynn  
Thoma



presents

# ILLINOISE

Music & Lyrics by **SUFJAN STEVENS** based on the album *Illinois*

Story by **JUSTIN PECK** and **JACKIE SIBBLIES DRURY**

Directed and Choreographed by **JUSTIN PECK**

Music Direction  
& Music Supervision  
**NATHAN KOCI**

Music Arrangements  
& Orchestrations  
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Scenic Design  
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Lighting Design  
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Sound Design  
**GARTH MacALEAVEY**

Costume Design  
**REID BARTELME and  
HARRIET JUNG**

Props Design  
**ANDREW DIAZ**

Masks  
**JULIAN CROUCH**

Associate Director  
& Choreographer  
**ADRIANA PIERCE**

Associate Music Director  
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JOANNA PISANO**

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**POLK & CO.**

This production was originally commissioned, developed, produced and premiered at the Fisher Center at Bard (Gideon Lester, Artistic Director and Chief Executive; Aaron Mattocks, COO; Caleb Hammons, Director of Artistic Planning and Producing; Jecca Barry, Producer) in July 2023. [fishercenter.bard.edu](http://fishercenter.bard.edu).

*Illinoise* is a co-commission of the Fisher Center at Bard, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Park Avenue Armory, Southbank Centre, TO Live, and the Perelman Performing Arts Center | PAC NYC and is produced in association with ArkType / Thomas O. Kriegsmann. It has been made possible with a commissioning grant from The O'Donnell-Green Music and Dance Foundation, residency support from Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals, and the Ted & Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund. Its creation was generously supported by Emily Blavatnik and the Blavatnik Family Foundation. Additional support was received from the Fisher Center's Artistic Innovation Fund, with lead support from Rebecca Gold and S. Asher Gelman '06 through the March Forth Foundation.

The *Illinoise* Health Fund was generously supported by The Ted & Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund, Cynthia and Ronald Beck, Henry L. Kimelman Foundation, and Charles and Deborah Adelman. This fund is used to provide health coverage for the cast members of the production during its engagements at Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the Park Avenue Armory.

# Illinoise

Prologue (or, A Conjunction of Drones ...)

## ACT I

Three Stars (or, Concerning the UFO Sighting near Highland, Illinois)

The Long Hike (or, The Black Hawk War ...)

Come On! Feel the Illinoise!

a story about John Wayne Gacy, Jr.

a story about Jacksonville

a story about Zombies

a story about The Man of Metropolis Steals Our Hearts

## ACT II

Decatur

Chicago

To the Workers of the Rock River Valley Region, I Have an Idea Concerning  
Your Predicament

Casimir Pulaski Day

Prairie Fire That Wanders About

In This Temple as in the Hearts of Man for Whom He Saved the Earth

The Seer's Tower

The Predatory Wasp of the Palisades Is Out to Get Us!

## ACT III

Chicago (reprise)

The Tallest Man, the Broadest Shoulders

Epilogue (or, Riffs and Variations... and Out of Egypt ...)

# About Today's Performance

**The performance will run 90 minutes with no intermission.**

*Illinois* is a fictional show.

If we can help accommodate you during your visit, please speak with our House Manager. The staging features strobes, flashing lights, and haze effects. For your safety, we ask that you keep aisles and doorways clear. We request that you refrain from taking any photography and other video or audio recordings of the production.

***Illinois* explores themes of mental health, including depictions of suicide.** If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).



## Character Descriptions

**WAYNE** A poet & murder balladeer who shares a story about the serial killer John Wayne Gacy, Jr. (*or: the damning cycle of exclusion borne of outcasts forced to sympathize with monsters*)

**MORGAN** A griot & expert debater who shares a story about the attempts to understand a lineage, and find the lessons left by those who came before. (*or: ancestry is more than DNA, it's how we see, how we move, how we talk to God*)

**JO DAVIESS** A historian & horror enthusiast who shares a story about the hold The Founding Fathers have on the American Imagination (*spoiler alert: They are zombies!! They're out to get us!!*)

**CLARK** A dreamer & amateur comic book illustrator who shares a story about Superman (*or: the seductive fiction of the individual hero*)

**HENRY** A memoirist in denial who eventually shares a tragic and true tale about first loves ...

### The 3 Figures in Henry's story...

**CARL** Henry's childhood best friend, and first love, and a hero of sorts—brave, playful, and unknowable

**SHELBY** Henry's other childhood best friend, and Carl's first love—a figure of goodness, sweetness, and heartache

**DOUGLAS** Henry's first adult love, a mirror Henry doesn't feel deserving of: passionate, optimistic, present

# Company

## CAST

Star / Player	KARA CHAN
Carl / Player	BEN COOK
Jo Daviess / Player / Dance Captain	JEANETTE DELGADO
Shelby / Player	GABY DIAZ
Clark / Player	ROBBIE FAIRCHILD
Anâkwa / Player	CHRISTINE FLORES
Morgan / Player	RACHEL LOCKHART
I-94 East Bound / Player / Dance Captain	CRAIG SALSTEIN
Douglas / Player	AHMAD SIMMONS
Estrella / Tap Dancer / Player	BYRON TITTLE
Henry	RICKY UBEDA
Wayne / Player	ALEJANDRO VARGAS

Swings: **JADA GERMAN, ZACHARY GONDER,**  
**DARIO NATARELLi** (Fall Captain), and **TYRONE REESE**

## VOCALISTS

Vocalist / Keyboard	ELIJAH LYONS
Vocalist / Electric Guitar	SHARA NOVA
Vocalist / Electric Guitar / Acoustic Guitar / Percussion	TASHA VIETS-VANLEAR

## MUSICIANS

Conductor / Keyboard / Banjo / Vocals	NATHAN KOCI
Associate Music Director	SEAN PETER FORTE
Piano / Accordion / Vocals	
Flute / Percussion / Vocals	DOMENICA FOSSATI
Drums / Vocals	DANIEL FREEDMAN
Violin / Viola / Percussion / Vocals	DAN GALAT
Oboe / Percussion / Vocals	KATHY HALVORSON
Acoustic Bass / Electric Bass / Vocals	ELEONORE OPPENHEIM
Electric Guitar / Acoustic Guitar / Banjo / Percussion / Vocals	BRETT PARNELL
Trumpet / Vocals	CHRISTOPHER SCANLON
Horn / Vocals	KYRA SIMS
Vibraphone / Percussion / Vocals	JESSICA TSANG



## ADDITIONAL CREDITS

### RICK STEIGER

Production Stage Manager

### CHRISTOPHER R. MUNNELL

Stage Manager

### NARISSA AGUSTIN

Assistant Stage Manager

### JENNIFER APARCIO

Stage Manager, Chicago, AEA

### CHRIS SWETCKY

Technical Director

### LILY GUERIN

Associate Scenic Designer

### COBY CHASMAN-BECK

Associate Lighting Designer

### JEFF ENGLANDER

Moving Light Programmer

### GARTH MacALEAVEY

Audio Engineer

### DANIEL DH SEO

Associate Costume Designer

### PAULA COHEN

Production Wardrobe Supervisor

### GINA RODRIGUEZ

Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor

### NATHAN THATCHER

Copyist and Music Assistant

### DANIE KOHN

Acrobatics Coordinator

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**JENNA READY** *General Manager*

**JOANNA PISANO**

*Associate Producer & Manager*

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Tap Dance Choreography

by **JUSTIN PECK** with

Tap Dance Improvisations

by **BYRON TITTLE**

This Production was rehearsed at

Park Avenue Armory in New York City.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Charles and Deborah Adelman, Salman Al-Rashid, Cynthia and Ronald Beck, Jana Bezdek, FourthWall Theatrical, Daniel Goldring, Shreyas Gupta, Henry L. Kimelman Foundation, Jill Hunter, Aleen Kim, Jen Hoguet, Rosanne Leshner, Dianne McKeever, Janine Racanelli, Susan Rose, Cameron Sczempka, The Ted & Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund, Peter L. Thorén, Patricia Delgado, Jessica Dessner, Di Glazer, Eric Winterling Studios, Alicia Graf-Mack, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, The Juilliard School, Joffrey Ballet, Erin Kilmurray, Lisa Moran, NETworks Presentations, Park Avenue Armory Production Staff, and Amanda Stephens.

# Profiles



**KARA CHAN** (*Star/Player*)  
**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** Pam Tanowitz Dance, Twyla Tharp Dance, *The Hard Nut* (Mark Morris Dance Group); *Artemis in Athens* (Lar Lubovitch Dance

Company); *Peter & the Wolf* (Guggenheim Museum); Janis Brenner & Dancers, Dance Heginbotham, Gleich Dances. **EDUCATION:** BFA, The Juilliard School; Contemporary Program at Jacob's Pillow, Springboard Danse Montreal, Youth America Grand Prix. **AWARDS:** Dance Magazine's 2020 "25 to Watch", Juilliard's Career Advancement Fellowship. Chan is a NYC based freelance dancer & dance educator, originally from Vancouver, Canada. She assisted Ms. Tharp in the staging of *Deuce Coupe* and *Ghostcatcher* at American Ballet Theatre in 2019. [www.karachandance.com](http://www.karachandance.com)



**BEN COOK** (*Carl/Player*)  
**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Newsies* (national tour); *Mean Girls*, *Tuck Everlasting*, revival of *Ragtime* (2009), *Riff* in revival of *West Side Story*

(2019), *Billy Elliot: The Musical*. **FILM:** Mouthpiece in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning remake of *West Side Story*, *Race* in *Newsies: The Broadway Musical*, Beckett in *Happiness for Beginners* (Netflix). **TELEVISION:** *Happiness for Beginners* (Netflix); *Pretty Little Liars*, *The Penguin* (HBO/Max); *Law & Order: SVU*, *30 Rock* (NBC); *FBI* (CBS); *Veep* (HBO); *The First Lady* (Showtime).



**JEANETTE DELGADO** (*Jo Daviess/Player/ Dance Captain*)  
**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** Principal dancer with the Miami City Ballet, performed in works by George

Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, and Paul Taylor, among others, recently performed in Twyla Tharp's masterpieces *Upper Room* and *Nine Sinatra Songs* (New York City Center); world premiere of *Illinois*

(Bard Fisher Center); originated feature roles with choreographers Justin Peck, Alexei Ratmanský and Liam Scarlett. **FILM:** *Ill* in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning remake of *West Side Story*. **AWARDS:** Princess Grace Award in Dance. Delgado is a freelance artist based in NYC, originally from Miami, Florida. (she/her)



**GABY DIAZ** (*Shelby/ Player*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** world premiere of *Illinois* (Bard Fisher Center); Jennifer Lopez's Las Vegas show *All I Have*; Season 12 of *So*

*You Think You Can Dance Tour*; Shaping Sound Company; Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. **OFF BROADWAY:** Andy Blankenbuehler's *Only Gold*. **FILM:** *Tick Tick... Boom!*, Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning remake of *West Side Story*, *Spirited*, *Maestro*. **TELEVISION:** all-star on seasons 13, 14 & 16 of *So You Think You Can Dance* (FOX). **AWARDS:** 2023 Chita Rivera Award winner; 2015 America's Favorite Dancer, winner of season 12 of *So You Think You Can Dance*. Diaz is originally from Miami, Florida, and trained in various styles of dance since the age of 3.



**ROBBIE FAIRCHILD** (*Clark/Player*)  
**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** principal dancer from 2009 to 2017 premiering roles in new works by Christopher Wheeldon, Justin Peck,

Alexei Ratmanský, Wayne McGregor, Peter Martins, Angelin Preljocaj (New York City Ballet). **BROADWAY:** Jerry Mulligan in 2015 Tony Award-winning musical *An American in Paris* (Tony Award Nomination, Best Actor in a Musical). **REGIONAL:** *Monster* in *Mary Shelly's Frankenstein* (Signature Theatre); Harry Beaton in *Brigadoon* (New York City Center); Mike Costa in *A Chorus Line* (Hollywood Bowl); Bill Calhoun in *Kiss Me Kate* (Roundabout Theater Company, 2017 Gala). **INTERNATIONAL:** Jerry Mulligan in *An American in Paris* (London's West End in 2017 and Australia in 2022), Will Parker in *Oklahoma!* (Royal Albert Hall, London). **FILM:**

Tom Hooper's *Cats*; *An American in Paris* Live (West End Production); *The Chaperone*; *NY Export*: *Opus Jazz*. **TELEVISION**: *Soundtrack*, *Julie's Greenroom* (Netflix); *Mixtape* (FOX); *Oklahoma!* (BBC Proms); *Romeo in Romeo and Juliet*, Carousel Boy in NY Philharmonic's *Carousel* (PBS's *Live from Lincoln Center*); *Dancing with the Stars*, *Live with Kelly and Michael* (ABC); *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *60 Minutes* (CBS). **AWARDS**: Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Theater World, National Dance, Astaire Award, nominated for the Evening Standard and Drama League Awards, all for his role of Jerry Mulligan in *An American in Paris*; Chita Rivera Award. Fairchild is represented by CAA. This upcoming spring he will be leading the cast of the new stage adaptation of the Oscar-winning film *The Artist* in the UK. @robbiefairchild



## CHRISTINE FLORES

(*Anãkwa/Player*)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE**:

Debut. **DANCE**: Pam Tanowitz Dance, Dance Heginbotham, Metropolitan Opera, Company XIV, Keigwin +

Company, Danielle Russo Performance Project, NVA & Guests, Shinsa Collective; featured as a dancer in Hozier's "Almost (Sweet Music)" and Lexxe's "Joyride" music videos. **OFF-BROADWAY**: Marie Claire/Sugar Plum in Austin McCormick's *Nutcracker Rouge*. **EDUCATION**: BFA in dance, New World School of the Arts; Springboard Danse Montreal, Contemporary Program at Jacob's Pillow, Cunningham Fellowship workshops. **AWARDS**: *Dance Magazine's* "2021 25 to Watch." Flores is originally from Toronto, Canada and is currently based out of New York City.



## RACHEL LOCKHART

(*Morgan/Player*)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE**:

Debut. **DANCE**: works by world-renowned choreographers Robert Battle, Ohad Naharin, Camille A. Brown, Sidra Bell, Rena Butler, Wayne McGregor, Sonya Tayeh, Norbert De La Cruz, Jawole Zollar, Jermaine Spivey, Spenser Theberge, *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*

(The Metropolitan Opera). **TELEVISION**: premiered on season 17 *So You Think You Can Dance* (FOX); *East New York* (CBS); performed with Doja Cat at 2023 Video Music Awards (MTV). **EDUCATION**: Lockhart Performing Arts Institute (under her mother's direction); Alabama School of Fine Arts, BFA in arts; The Juilliard School, The Juilliard School Summer Intensive, Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Program, Kyle Abraham AIM, Body Traffic, Joffrey Ballet, Anthony Burrell's Breaking Barriers, Atlanta Dance Connection. **AWARDS**: numerous scholarships for summer dance programs. Lockhart is a native of Birmingham, Alabama, and has set multiple works that range from addressing worldly issues to cultural experiences, some of which have been selected for the Black Lives Rising Dance Film Festival, Dance Against Cancer Youth Movement, Made By Women Festival, Dance Theatre of Harlem's Open House and Juilliard Choreographic Honors. (she/her)



## CRAIG SALSTEIN

(*I-94 East Bound/Player/*  
*Dance Captain*) **CHICAGO**

**SHAKESPEARE**: Debut.

**DANCE**: joined American Ballet Theatre's Studio Company in 2000, the main company in 2002,

and was promoted to soloist in 2007. His credits there include Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, first sailor in *Fancy Free*, Bronze Idol/Head Fakir in *La Bayadère*, Birbanto in *Le Corsaire*, Gamache in *Don Quixote*, Puck in *The Dream*, Peasant Pas de Deux/Hillarian in *Giselle*, Champion Roper in *Rodeo*, Neapolitan Dance in *Swan Lake*, Eros in *Sylvia*, Devil in *Three Virgins and a Devil*, leading roles in *Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes*, *In The Upper Room*, *Sinfonietta*, *Symphonic Variations*. **BROADWAY**: ensemble member and dance captain of the revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. **FILM**: associate choreographer to Justin Peck in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning remake of *West Side Story* and Netflix's *Maestro* directed by Bradley Cooper. **EDUCATION**: trained with Mia Michaels, Ballet Academy of Miami, Miami City Ballet. **AWARDS**: 1995 Grand Champion of Ed McMahon's *Star Search*. Salstein is originally from Miami, Florida, and is one of a set of triplets.



## AHMAD SIMMONS

(Douglas/Player)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **DANCE:** River North Dance Chicago, Parsons Dance, Eisenhower Dance Detroit. **BROADWAY:**

*West Side Story, Hadestown, Carousel, Cats.*

**OFF BROADWAY:** *Only Gold, A Chorus Line* (New York City Center). **REGIONAL:** *Illinoise* (Bard Fisher Center). **TOUR:** *Hamilton* Philip Company (Dance Supervisor). **FILM:** *Maestro, Better Nate Than Ever, Ringing Rocks*

(executive producer; director Gus Reed);

*xXPonyBoyDerekXx* (producer; directors

Gage Tarlton and Carlos Cardona).

**TELEVISION:** *Fosse/Verdon, Dirty Dancing,*

*Jimmy Kimmel Live* (ABC); Tony Awards,

Kennedy Center Honors (CBS); *The Today*

*Show* (NBC). **EDUCATION:** BFA, Point Park

University. Simmons recently directed and

choreographed Jay Armstrong Johnson's

*I Put A Spell on You*, benefitting Broadway

Cares and Ali Forney Center. He is a NYC-

based performing artist, choreographer,

director, and producer. He is the co-founder

of Arterial Projects (arterial-projects.com).

@ahmadsimmons



## BYRON TITTLE (Estrella/ Tap Dancer/Player)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **DANCE:** decade-

long company member of

Bessie award-winning tap

dance company Dorrance

Dance; assistant to

Michelle Dorrance for her American Ballet

Theatre debut (2018); commercial credits

include Janet Jackson, Doja Cat, Hugh

Jackman, Jason Mraz, and Nicki Minaj. **FILM:**

*In The Heights* (2021). **EDUCATION:** studied

tap dance privately with Kendrick Jones II

and David Rider and trained at Broadway

Dance Center and Steps on Broadway.

**AWARDS:** 2019 Princess Grace Foundation

Dance Fellowship Award. @byrontittle



## RICKY UBEDA (Henry)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **BROADWAY:** *On*

*the Town, Cats* (Chita

Rivera Award Nominee),

*Carousel, West Side Story.*

**OFF-BROADWAY:** *Freddie*

*Falls in Love* (Signature

Theatre Company). **FILM:** *Flaco in West Side*

*Story, Maestro, In the Heights.* **TOUR:**

*Shaping Sound Dance Company.* **TELEVISION:**

*So You Think You Can Dance* (Fox), *Fosse/*

*Verdon* (FX). **AWARDS:** Season 11 winner of

*So You Think You Can Dance.*



## ALEJANDRO VARGAS

(Wayne/Player)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **DANCE:** performed

works by Ohad Naharin,

Aszure Barton, Camille A.

Brown, Omar Román de

Jesus, Rena Butler, Jamar

Roberts, among others. **EDUCATION:** fourth

year at the Juilliard School, Nederlands Dans

Theater, and Ballet BC. **AWARDS:** recognized

in 2020 at the state level for the National

Honors Society for Dance Arts, New Jersey

Governor's Award in Arts Education. Vargas

is originally from Rahway, New Jersey,

where he began dancing at Dancin' In the

Spotlight, and continued his training,

graduating from the Union County Academy

for Performing Arts. (he/him)



## JADA GERMAN (Swing)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **DANCE:** company

member with The

Metropolitan Opera

Ballet, Twyla Tharp

Dance (In the Upper

Room at New York City

Center); and has danced with Ballet

Collective, Francesca Harper, Alan Lucien

Øyen, Claudia Schreier; while at Juilliard,

performed works by Ohad Naharin, Bobbi

Jene Smith, Azure Barton, Olivia Ancona,

Trisha Brown; an alumna of the b12 dance

festival, Jacob's Pillow, Orsolina 28, and

others. **EDUCATION:** BFA in dance, The

Juilliard School - May 2022. German is a

native of Frisco, Texas, and began dancing

competitively before attending Booker T.

Washington HSPVA. She is working as a

freelance dancer based in NYC.



## ZACHARY GONDER

(Swing) **CHICAGO**

**SHAKESPEARE:** Debut.

**DANCE:** works by Austin

McCormick, Aszure

Barton, Pam Tanowitz,

Richard Alston, Gustavo

Ramirez Sansano, Crystal

Pite, performer with Pam Tanowitz Dance,

PARA.MAR Dance, Brian Brooks Moving



Company, Mark Morris Dance Group, Zvi Gotheiner Dance, Studio 189, Lyric Opera of Chicago. **EDUCATION:** Chicago Academy for the Arts, under the tutelage of Randy Duncan; Juilliard School, 2018. Gonder was born north of Chicago and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY.



## DARIO NATARELLI

(Swing/Fall Captain)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** Vail Dance Festival artist (2016-2023); The Kennedy Center (choreographer/soloist); Jazz At Lincoln

Center (Jared Grimes), *Newsies*, *Cabaret*, among others. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Oliver!*, *Tap Dance Kid* (Encores!); Ayodele Casel's *Artists At The Center* (Co-Choreographer with Michelle Dorrance/performer); *Tappin' Thru Life*. **FILM/TELEVISION:** *Maestro* (Justin Peck); *SNL* (NBC); Netflix, Amazon, *Breaking Brooklyn*, Macy's Parade, national commercials, and more. **EDUCATION:** BFA MT, Pennsylvania State University; LaGuardia Arts High School. Ntarelli teaches tap dance at Broadway Dance Center, is a YoungArts finalist, and US Presidential Scholar in the Arts. He is an Artist-In-Residence at The American Tap Dance Foundation. @dario\_natarelli



## TYRONE REESE (Swing)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **DANCE:** performed works by Rena Butler, Justin Peck, Ohad Naharin, Aszure Barton, Jamar Roberts, among others. **EDUCATION:**

Alabama School of Fine Arts under the direction of Wes Chapman; Mobile Ballet under the direction of Katia Garza. **AWARDS:** 2020 Houston Youth America Grand Prix award, 2020 national YoungArts Foundation award winner in ballet. Reese is originally from Mobile, Alabama, and is a recipient of Juilliard's Greene Foundation scholarship. (he/him)



## ELIJAH LYONS

(Vocalist/Keyboard)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:**

Debut. **REGIONAL:** *Sing Street* (Huntington Theatre). **OFF-OFF**

**BROADWAY:** *Rathskeller: A Musical Elixir* (New Ohio

Theater). **EDUCATION:** The New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts.



## SHARA NOVA (Vocalist/

Electric Guitar)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut.

**CREDITS:** recording artist and touring member of Sufjan Stevens' band for *Illinois*, singer / songwriter of My

Brightest Diamond with 5 albums, her latest single being "Black Sheep," and work with Detroit Opera. **COMPOSITION:** The Crossing, Conspire, Roomful of Teeth, yMusic, BBC Concert Orchestra, Cincinnati Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, among others. **RECORDINGS:** Sufjan Stevens' *Age of Adz*, Nova's Baroque opera *You Us We All*, Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Penelope* and *Unremembered*, David Lang's *Death Speaks*, The Decemberists' *Hazards of Love*, NPR's Top Ten Albums of 2023 *The Blue Hour*. **AWARDS:** Nova has been an Artist in Residence at The Park Avenue Armory, MassMOCA for *Ocean Body*, featured artist at Carnegie Hall and MOMA (NYC), The Momentary (AR), Opera America Discovery Grant awardee, Kresge Arts fellow, Knight Grant recipient, United States Artists fellow, three-time Grammy nominee (2023).



## TASHA VIETS-VANLEAR

(Vocalist/Electric Guitar/ Acoustic Guitar/ Percussion)

**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut.

**CREDITS:** 2018 *Alone at Last*, 2021 critically acclaimed *Tell Me What*

*You Miss the Most* (indie record label Father/Daughter Records); toured across the United States as a headliner and opener for bands and artists including Hand Habits, Helado Negro, Nilüfer Yanya, Jamila Woods, Vagabon, Jeff Tweedy, Japanese Breakfast, Snail Mail, Julien Baker, and has appeared at Sled Island (Calgary, Canada); FORM (Arcosanti, Arizona); Pitchfork Music Festival (Chicago, Illinois). Viets-VanLear

played two sold-out album release shows (Sleeping Village, Chicago). She is a singer, songwriter and guitar player based in Chicago and is currently working on her third album with collaborator Gregory Uhlmann in Los Angeles, due to be released in 2024. Her music is available to stream wherever you listen to music, under the name Tasha.

**DOMENICA FOSSATI** (*Flute/Percussion/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** World Music Festival of Chicago. **REGIONAL:** Summerstage, Brooklyn Academy of Music, BRIC Theatre, Celebrate Brooklyn, Apollo Theatre, National Sawdust, Ryman Auditorium (Grand Ole Opry), Groundup Music Festival. **INTERNATIONAL:** Trans Musicales Festival, Eurokkee Festival (France); Querétaro (Mexico); Fusion Festival (Germany); Paradiso (Netherlands). **FILM:** *Little Orphan Annie* (2014). **TELEVISION:** *Late Show with Stephen Colbert* with Bright Eyes (CBS); *Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* with Andrea Bocelli, *America's Got Talent* (NBC); *Latin Grammy Awards* (Univision). **EDUCATION:** BFA in music, University of North Texas; MFA in music performance, New York University. **AWARDS:** Latin Grammy 2018. Domenica is an alumni of the U.S. Department of State's music cultural exchange program, OneBeat, and was the program director of OneBeat Sahara. She is also the frontwoman of New York indie-dance group, Underground System.

**DANIEL FREEDMAN** (*Drums/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **INTERNATIONAL:** World Tours with Angeliqúe Kidjo 2010-2016, David Byrne 2018, Anat Cohen 2006-2018, Omer Avital 2012-2016, Claudia Acuña 1999-2003. **REGIONAL:** Carnegie Hall, Village Vanguard, JLC, Disney Hall, Coachella, Ryman Auditorium. **FILM:** David Byrne's *American Utopia* directed by Spike Lee. **TELEVISION:** *Saturday Night Live*, *Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* (NBC); *Late Show with Stephan Colbert*, *CBS Sunday Morning* (CBS); *Jools Holland Show* (BBC); *PBS Live, The Marvelous Ms. Maisel*. **SELECTED RECORDINGS:** David Byrne's *David Byrne American Utopia Cast Recording*; Angeliqúe Kidjo's *Spirit Rising*; Sting's *If on a Winters Night*; Avishai Cohen's *Flood, The Big Rain*; Anat Cohen's *Notes From The Village, Claroscuro, Luminosa*; Omer Avital's *Think With your Heart*,

*Suite From the East, New Song*; Ben Wolfe's *13 Sketches* featuring Wynton Marsalis; Jason Lindner's *Premonition*; Daniel Freedman's *Trio, Bamako By Bus* featuring Meshell Ndegeocello, Lionel Loueke, Pedrito Martinez, *Imagine That, Ghost Modern*. **EDUCATION:** Studied with artists including Max Roach, Barry Harris, Vernell Fournier, Billy Higgins, José Luis "Changuito" Quintana; Manhattan School of Music. Freedman co-leads the band Saha Gnawa with Moroccan music master Maalem Hassan Ben-Jaafar.

**DAN GALAT** (*Violin/Viola/Percussion/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** performs with his ensemble Missing Piece, which commissions and curates new works for violin, cello, and other objects and instruments, including a March 13<sup>th</sup> premiere of the complete version of "diminishing fifths" by Shi-An Costello for detuned instruments (Experimental Sound Studios). Performances by Galat with Fulcrum Point New Music Ensemble, Chicago Composer's Orchestra (concertmaster), Bach Cantata Vespers, Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and others. **EDUCATION:** Bachelors and Masters degrees in violin performance, Indiana University. Galat is a listener, collaborator, experimenter, educator, potter, community music organizer, and violinist who teaches creative string orchestra at Urban Prairie Waldorf School, integrating improvisation and composition in student-led group music making for all students. (he/they)

**KATHY HALVORSON** (*Oboe/Percussion/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** principal with the Symphony Orchestra de Minería in Mexico, oboist with Sylvan Winds since 2008 (including two CDs), Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, American Symphony, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Argento Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, principal with the Westchester Philharmonic and the Northeast Pennsylvania Philharmonic. 12 CDs as principal oboe with the Toronto Chamber Orchestra under Kevin Mallon and Nicolas McGegan **BROADWAY:** *On the Town*, North American tour of *Les Misérables*. **INTERNATIONAL:** Rotterdam Philharmonic, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Calefax Reed Quintet, Netherlands Balletorkest, and many others. **RECORDINGS:** pop, jazz, folk, and world music arrangements and

improvisations on the CDs *Unraveled* and *Palette* with her oboe trio Threeeds, 2023 release of Folklorkestra *A Strange Day In June*, of which she is a member. **EDUCATION:** New England Conservatory, Rutgers University with Jonathan Blumenfeld and Matt Sullivan, Royal Conservatory (Netherlands) with Bart Schneemann. Halvorson has also worked with the Mingus Epitaph, jazz bassoonist Michael Rabinowitz, and Björk, and is one of the most versatile oboists working today, as both an improviser and accomplished classical oboist.

**ELEONORE OPPENHEIM** (*Acoustic Bass/Electric Bass/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** big dog little dog (a duo with composer and violinist Jessie Montgomery); acoustic trio with art-pop auteur Glasser and multi-instrumentalist Robbie Lee, avant folk-jazz supergroup the Hands Free (with James Moore, Caroline Shaw, and Nathan Koci); work with established composers Philip Glass; Steve Reich; Meredith Monk; Missy Mazzoli's all-star, all female "bandsemble" Victoire; and Florent Ghys' low strings, drums powerhouse Bonjour; Bang on a Can All-Stars; artists from the indie rock, jazz, and folk worlds; Daniel Fish's groundbreaking reimagining of *Oklahoma!* (Broadway/Off-Broadway). **EDUCATION:** the Juilliard School, Yale School of Music, Stony Brook University. Oppenheim is a writer, arranger, chamber musician, soloist, recording artist, and large ensemble player, who very much enjoys working in theater. She also runs a new music program for teens called Face the Music (Kaufman Music Center) and teaches and manages ensembles at Special Music High School.

**BRETT PARNELL** (*Electric Guitar/Acoustic Guitar/Banjo/Percussion/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Oklahoma!* **OFF BROADWAY:** *The Coast Starlight*, *Fiddler on the Roof*. **REGIONAL:** *Cradle Will Rock*, *Kaiser Von Atlantis*. **EDUCATION:** MM in classical guitar performance.

**CHRISTOPHER SCANLON** (*Trumpet/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Radio City Music Hall, The Kennedy Center, Mexico's Palacio de Bellas Artes, Vienna Musikverein, Zurich Tonhalle, Opera Houses of Dubai and Tokyo, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, International Women's Brass Conference, International Trumpet Guild Conference, Co-Principal Trumpet (Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra in Switzerland since 2008); Boston Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony. **BROADWAY:** *The Phantom of the Opera*, *West Side Story*, *An American in Paris*, *Kiss Me Kate*. **RECORDINGS:** Deutsch Grammophone, Naxos, Mode Records, Mark Records. **TELEVISION:** *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (CBS); and the award-winning *Mozart in the Jungle* (Amazon). Scanlon is Assistant Professor of trumpet at Northern Illinois University where he teaches applied trumpet, chamber music and coordinates the brass area, has served as the Chamber Music Chair of the Ryan Anthony Memorial Trumpet Competition, and is a Bach Performing Artist. He travels internationally for concerts, masterclasses, and residencies as a member of the award-winning, Chicago-based, Axiom Brass. [www.chrisscanlonmusic.com](http://www.chrisscanlonmusic.com)

**KYRA SIMS** (*Horn/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** worked as backing French hornist for artists Earth, Wind & Fire, Jon Batiste, Carole King, Lizzo, performances worldwide as both a soloist and a collaborative musician. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Carmen Jones*, *Superhero*, *Soft Power*, *Whisper House*. **TOUR:** *Spamalot*. Sims resides in NYC and writes, directs, and performs regularly as co-artistic director and member of the award-winning experimental theatre company The New York Neo-Futurists.

**JESSICA TSANG** (*Vibraphone/Bass Drums/Shaker/Sleigh Bells/Tambourine/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **REGIONAL:** *Illinoise* (Fisher Center at Bard); *No One's Safe* (Banff Centre); *Ecstasies of Influence* (matralab); *There Might Be Others* (New York Live Arts). **EDUCATION:** MM in percussion, McGill University; BM in percussion, Mannes School of Music. **RECORDINGS:** *sound shadows*, *party of one* (madeFor Records). [www.jesssang.net](http://www.jesssang.net)



## SUFJAN STEVENS

(*Music and Lyrics*) is a singer, songwriter, and composer living in New York. His preoccupation with epic concepts has motivated two state records (*Michigan* and

*Illinois*), a collection of sacred and biblical songs (*Seven Swans*), an electronic album for the animals of the Chinese zodiac (*Enjoy Your Rabbit*), a full length partly inspired by the outsider artist Royal Robertson (*The Age of Adz*), a masterwork memorializing and investigating his relationship with his late mother (*Carrie & Lowell*), and two Christmas box sets (*Songs for Christmas, vol. 1-5* and *Silver & Gold, vol. 6-10*). BAM has commissioned two works from Stevens, a programmatic tone poem for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (*The BQE*) and an instrumental accompaniment to slow-motion rodeo footage (*Round-Up*). He has collaborated extensively with the New York City Ballet choreographer Justin Peck (*Year of the Rabbit, Everywhere We Go, Countenance of Kings, Principia, The Decalogue, and Reflections*). Stevens contributed three much-lauded songs to Luca Guadagnino's critically acclaimed film *Call Me By Your Name*, including the Oscar and Grammy-nominated song "Mystery of Love." In 2020, he shared *Aporia*, a collaborative new age album made with his stepfather Lowell Brams, and his eighth studio album, *The Ascension*, a reflection on the state of humanity in freefall and a call for a total transformation of consciousness. In early 2021, he released *Convocations*, a five-volume, two-and-a-half-hour requiem mass for present times. In the fall of 2021 Stevens collaborated with Angelo DeAugustine on *—A Beginner's Mind—* featuring songs inspired in part by popular films. In October 2023, Stevens' tenth solo studio album, *Javelin*, was released and made its way on to countless "Best Albums of 2023" lists.



## JUSTIN PECK (*Director and Choreographer/Story*)

is a Tony Award-winning choreographer, director, filmmaker, and dancer based in New York City. He is currently the acting Resident Choreographer

of New York City Ballet. Peck has created and developed over 50 dance and theater works for stages around the world, including

Lincoln Center, Broadway, Palais Garnier, Sydney Opera House, and Brooklyn Academy of Music. He has created extensively for film, most notably choreographing Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* (2021). Honors include the Tony Award for Best Choreography for *Carousel* (2018), the National Arts Award (2018), the Golden Plate Honor from the Academy of Achievement (2019), the Bessie Award for Outstanding Production for *Rodeo* (2015), and the World Choreography Award for the film *West Side Story* (2021).



## JACKIE SIBBLES DRURY

(*Story*) Plays include *Marys Seacole* (OBIE Award), *Fairview* (Pulitzer Prize), *Really, Social Creatures*, and *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the*

*Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915*. The presenters of her plays include Donmar Warehouse, The Young Vic, Lincoln Center Theatre's LCT3, Soho Rep., Berkeley Rep, New York City Players, Abrons Arts Center, Victory Gardens, Trinity Rep, Woolly Mammoth, Undermain Theatre, InterAct Theatre, Actors Theater of Louisville, Company One, Bush Theatre, and *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*. Drury has developed her work at Sundance, Bellagio Center, Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep, Soho Rep, Writer/Director Lab, New York Theatre Workshop, Bushwick Starr, LARK, and MacDowell Colony, among others. She has received a PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award, a Steinberg Playwright Award, a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a Jerome Fellowship at The LARK, a United States Artists Fellowship, a Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, and a Windham-Campbell Literary Prize in Drama.

**NATHAN KOCI** (*Music Direction & Music Supervision/Conductor/Keyboard/Banjo/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut.

**BROADWAY:** Associate music director *Hadestown* (8 Tony Awards); *Oklahoma!* (Tony Award-Best Revival/OBIE Award).

**TOUR:** *Hadestown, War Horse* (1st National).

**REGIONAL:** *Most Happy in Concert* (Williamstown Theater Festival/Bard Summerscape). **INTERNATIONAL:** *The Great Yes, The Great No* (dir. William Kentridge);

*The Head and The Load* (dir. William Kentridge). **DANCE:** *Principles of Uncertainty*



(Maria Kalman/John Heginbotham, BAM Next Wave). **OPERA:** *The Source* (Ted Hearne/Daniel Fish, LA Opera/Santa Fe Opera/BAM Next Wave), *Cold Blooded* (Alicia Hall Moran, National Sawdust). **SELECT RECORDINGS:** *The Hands Free* (New Amsterdam Records); *The Solomon Diaries Vol 1-3* (Adhyropa Records); *The Opposite of a Train* (Shrimp Records).

**TIMO ANDRES** (*Music Arrangements & Orchestrations*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **COMMISSIONS:** Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Takács Quartet, Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw, Barbican, Segerstrom Center for the Arts. **ORCHESTRA:** LA Philharmonic/Green Umbrella, North Carolina Symphony, Britten Sinfonia, Albany Symphony, New World Symphony, Metropolis Ensemble, North Carolina Symphony. **RECITAL:** Lincoln Center, Wigmore Hall, San Francisco Performances, the Phillips Collection, (le) Poisson Rouge **OTHER:** *Principia* (arranger) by Sufjan Stevens with the New York City Ballet. **RADIO:** *New Sounds* (2023); *NPR Tiny Desk* (2024). **RECORDINGS:** Sufjan Stevens's *Reflections* and *The Decalogue* (Asthmatic Kitty); *I Still Play, Home Stretch, Shy and Mighty* (Nonesuch Records). **AWARDS:** 2016 Pulitzer Prize Finalist (*The Blind Banister*), 2021 Grammy Award nomination (*The Arching Path*). **EDUCATION:** Yale School of Music. Andres is a Yamaha/Bösendorfer Artist and is on the composition faculty at the Mannes School of Music at the New School.

**ADAM RIGG** (*Scenic Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Lincoln Center Theater). **REGIONAL:** world premiere of *A Transparent Musical* (Center Theatre Group); *El Niño* (Metropolitan Opera); *White Girl in Danger* (Second Stage Theater/The Vineyard Theatre); *Create Dangerously* (Miami New Drama); *On Sugar* (NYTW, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Scenic Design); *Cul/ud Wattah* (Lucille Lortel Award Nomination, The Public Theater); *Fefu and Her Friends* (TFANA, Henry Hewes Design Awards Special Citation for Scenic Design); *soft* (MCC Theater); *Is God Is* (Soho Rep). **AWARDS:** Tony Nomination, Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Set Design, Special Drama Desk Award, 2022. Rigg is an award-winning set and costume designer based in New York. They have designed more than 50 world-premiere productions. adamriggdesign.com

## BRANDON STIRLING BAKER

(*Lighting Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **OFF BROADWAY:** Lincoln Center, Hollywood Bowl, Walt Disney Concert Hall. **REGIONAL:** Kennedy Center, New York City Ballet, Walt Disney Concert Hall, San Francisco Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Boston Ballet, among others. **INTERNATIONAL:** Sydney Opera House, Australian Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Finnish National Ballet, and many others. **AWARDS:** Knight of Illumination Award, Lotus Foundation Prize. Baker is an award-winning lighting designer of theatre, opera, and dance, best known for his extensive work with director and choreographer Justin Peck where they have collaborated on over 30 premieres worldwide since 2010. Recent collaborations with Sufjan Stevens and Justin Peck include *Everywhere We Go, Reflections, In the Countenance of Kings*, and *Year of the Rabbit*. www.stirlingbaker.com

## GARTH MACALEAVEY

(*Sound Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CREDITS:** *The Night Falls* by Ellis Ludwig Leone; *Song of Songs* by David Lang (choreography by Pam Tanowitz, SummerScape and Barbican Center); *Old Man in the Sea* by Paola Prestini (ASU Gammage); *In Our Daughter's Eyes* by Du Yun; Grammy-nominated *Soldier Songs*, *Black Lodge* and *Dog Days* by David T. Little; Pulitzer Prize-winning *p r i s m* by Ellen Reid; *Aquanetta* by Michael Gordon (SummerScape, 2019); Nick Cave's *The Let Go*; Peter Sellars & Regg Roc Grey's *FLEXN* (Park Ave Armory); *A God of Her Own Making* by JOJO ABOT & Esperanza Spalding; *Spatial ... no problem* by Lee Scratch Perry/Mouse on Mars. **EDUCATION:** contemporary percussion and classical music, UCSC under the tutelage of Willie Winant. MacAleavey is a leader in new-music, opera, and theatrical sound design with a specialty in spatial sound, immersive theater, and classical instrument reinforcement, and serves as Director of Sound and Technical Design at Brooklyn's National Sawdust. In partnership with Meyer Sound, he is an expert in Constellation, Space Map and speaker systems design.

## REID BARTELMÉ

(*Costume Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Counterpoint* (Hubbard Street Dance, Chicago). **BROADWAY:** *Bob Fosse's DANCIN'*. **REGIONAL:** *Bob Fosse's DANCIN'* (The Old Globe); *Illinoise* (Fisher Center at Bard). **INTERNATIONAL:** *Dispatch Duet* (Royal

Ballet); *The Ninth Hour* (Ballet National de Cuba); *Un Autre Passion* (Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève); *New World* (Ballet am Rhine); *Watermark* (Australian Ballet); *Snow* (NorrlandsOperan). **DANCE:** *Song of Songs* (Pam Tanowitz Dance); *Under the Folding Sky* (Houston Ballet); *Law of Mosaics* (New York City Ballet); *Finale Finale* (San Francisco Ballet); *Thousandth Orange* (Boston Ballet); *Curious Kingdom* (Pacific Northwest Ballet); *Rotunda* (New York City Ballet); *All at Once* (Paul Taylor Dance Company); *Four Quartets* (Pam Tanowitz Dance); *Heatscape* (Miami City Ballet); *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes* (New York City Ballet). **EDUCATION:** AAS in fashion design, Fashion Institute of Technology; MFA in dance, University of the Arts. **AWARDS / FELLOWSHIPS:** Research Fellowship at NYU Center for Ballet and the Arts, 2017; Research Fellowship at New York Library for the Performing Arts, 2018. **PERFORMANCE COMMISSIONS:** 2018 & 2019 Guggenheim Works and Process (Guggenheim Museum), 2015 Fashion Show (Museum of Art and Design).

**HARRIET JUNG** (*Costume Designer*)  
**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Counterpoint* (Hubbard Street Dance, Chicago). **BROADWAY:** *Bob Fosse's DANCIN'*. **REGIONAL:** *Bob Fosse's DANCIN'* (The Old Globe); *Illinois* (Fisher Center at Bard). **INTERNATIONAL:** *Dispatch Duet* (Royal Ballet); *Ballet des Porcelaines*, *The Ninth Hour* (Ballet National de Cuba); *Un Autre Passion* (Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève); *New World* (Ballet am Rhine); *Watermark* (Australian Ballet). **DANCE:** *Song of Songs* (Pam Tanowitz Dance); *Under the Folding Sky* (Houston Ballet); *Law of Mosaics* (New York City Ballet); *Finale Finale* (San Francisco Ballet); *Thousandth Orange* (Boston Ballet); *Curious Kingdom* (Pacific Northwest Ballet); *Rotunda* (New York City Ballet); *All at Once* (Paul Taylor Dance Company); *Four Quartets* (Pam Tanowitz Dance); *Heatscape* (Miami City Ballet); *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes* (New York City Ballet). **FILM:** *It Goes Quiet*. **EDUCATION:** BA in molecular and cell biology, University of California Berkeley; AAS in fashion design, Fashion Institute of Technology. **AWARDS / FELLOWSHIPS:** Research Fellowship at NYU Center for Ballet and the Arts, 2017; Research Fellowship at New York Library for the Performing Arts, 2018. **PERFORMANCE COMMISSIONS:** 2018 & 2019 Guggenheim Works and Process (Guggenheim Museum), 2015 Fashion Show (Museum of Art and Design).

**ANDREW DIAZ** (*Props Design*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Doubt*, *The Sign In Sidney Brustein's Window*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *Leopoldstadt*, *Birthday Candles*. **REGIONAL:** *Jonah*, *Primary Trust*, *The Wanderers* (Roundabout Theater); *White Girl In Danger*, *Camp Siegfried* (Second Stage); *English*, *Kimberly Akimbo* (Atlantic Theater). **TELEVISION:** Nickelodeon, Walt Disney Productions, *SNL*. **AWARDS:** Henry Hewes Design Award. **SPECIAL THANKS:** Patrice Escandon, BNG Industries, Stephen Kurowski.

**JULIAN CROUCH** (*Masks*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Addams Family*, *Big Fish*, *Head Over Heels*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Tony Nomination). **OPERA:** *The Egyptian Helena*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Ernani* (La Scala Opera, Milan); *Così Fan Tutti*, *Falstaff* (Teatro Del Maggio, Florence); *Satyagraha*, *The Enchanted Island*, *Doctor Atomic*, *Marnie* (English National Opera/Met Opera); *The Barber Of Seville* (Dutch National Opera); *The Magic Flute* (Welsh National Opera); *King Arthur* (Berlin Staatsoper). **CREDITS:** co-directed, co-composed, designed *Jedermann* (Salzburg Festival); co-created *The Aging Magician* (BMP at the New Victory Theater); designed *The Nutcracker* for Christopher Wheeldon (Joffrey Ballet); *Cinderella* (Dutch National/San Francisco Ballet). Crouch's production *Birdheart* played for the Dalai Lama in Brussels and toured as far as Zimbabwe and Abu Dhabi. He was recently Artist in Residence at New York's Park Avenue Armory and was the first commissioned artist for the BRIC House Fireworks Residency Program in Brooklyn, NY. Crouch is a Libretto Fellow for the American Lyric Theater and recently designed *Orpheus in the Underworld* for the Voksoper, Vienna. He is an independent mask maker, director, designer, librettist, illustrator, and musician, and a co-founder of Improbable, and co-director and designer of *Shockheaded Peter*.

**ADRIANA PIERCE** (*Associate Director & Choreographer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Carousel*. **REGIONAL:** Paper Mill Playhouse. **DANCE:** Miami City Ballet, New York City Ballet. **FILM:** *West Side Story*. **TELEVISION:** *Fosse/Verdon* (FX). **EDUCATION:** School of American Ballet. Pierce is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of #QueertheBallet.

**SEAN PETER FORTE** (*Associate Music Director/Piano/Accordion/Vocals*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *MJ the Musical*, *Hadestown*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. **OFF-BROADWAY:** *Here We Are*. **TOUR:** *Into the Woods* (Fiasco Theater). **REGIONAL:** *Illinoise* (Bard Summerscape); *Most Happy* (Williamstown Theatre Festival / Bard Summerscape); *Cinderella* (Paper Mill Playhouse); *Bullets Over Broadway* (Ogunquit Playhouse). **EDUCATION:** BM in classical piano performance, University of the Pacific.

**RICK STEIGER** (*Production Stage Manager*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Back To The Future: The Musical*, *Flying Over Sunset*, *Head Over Heels*, *An American In Paris*, *Act One*, *War Horse*, *Twyla Tharp's Come Fly Away*, *The Royal Family*, *13, Rock 'n' Roll*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Woman In White*, *Caroline, or Change*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *Elaine Stritch: At Liberty*, *Michael John LaChiusa's The Wild Party*, *Epic Proportions*, *The Civil War*, *Titanic*, *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Hercules*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the George C. Wolfe productions of *Mother Courage And Her Children*, *This Is How It Goes*, *Radiant Baby*, *On The Town* (The Public Theater). **INTERNATIONAL:** *An American In Paris* (Paris, London, Tokyo).

**CHRISTOPHER R. MUNNELL** (*Stage Manager*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Funny Girl*, *Head Over Heels*, *Michael Moore: The Terms of My Surrender*, *An American In Paris*, *Act One*, *War Horse*. **REGIONAL:** *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, *Soundtrack of America* (The Shed), *Kings* (The Public Theater). **TOUR:** *An American In Paris* (Asia Tour).

**NARISSA AGUSTIN** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Appropriate*, *Here Lies Love*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Cost of Living*. **OFF-BROADWAY:** *Sorry for Your Loss*, *Lucy* (Minetta Lane Theater); *Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board Members* (Soho Repertory Theater); *Out of Time* (The Public); *The Crusade of Connor Stephens* (Jerry Orbach Theater). **TOUR:** *Waitress* (NETworks, Lulu Tour). **REGIONAL:** *A Strange Loop* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company). **EDUCATION:** BFA in stage management, University of Miami. (she/her)

**JENNIFER APARICIO** (*Stage Manager, Chicago*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Black Sunday* (TimeLine Theatre Company, Playwrights Collective); *The Lehman Trilogy* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *Household Spirits* (Theatre Wit); *You Had a Good Run*, *Layalina* (Goodman Theatre, New Stages Lab); *Paris* (Steep Theatre); *Exercise Your Demons*, *Mexodus* (Victory Gardens, Ignite New Play Program). **CHICAGO PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT:** *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (The Gift Theatre); *The Writer*, *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* (Steep Theatre). **REGIONAL:** *Trapped! A Musical* (Penobscot Theatre). **EDUCATION:** B.A. in theater, Columbia College Chicago.

**NATE KOCH** (*Executive Producer*) is a Lortel award and Drama Desk award-winning executive producer and the founder and CEO of NVK. Over the past 15 years he has developed a rare skill set that combines high-level creative development, rigorous financial and strategic analysis, and operational acumen for both proscenium and immersive theatrical works. He has executive produced David Byrne's *Theater of the Mind* (Denver Center), *Love Around the Block* (Hermès), Hebru Brantley's *Nevermore Park* (Pilsen, Chicago) *Sweeney Todd* (Barrow Street Theater), and *Queen of the Night* (Paramount Hotel). In addition to leading NVK, Nate is the COO of Seaview, a Tony and Olivier award-winning theater and film company. B.F.A., NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

**NVK** (*General Management*) is a NYC-based management firm founded by Nate Koch in 2016 that specializes in two practice areas: performing executive-level creative supervision and general management for theatrical productions and providing COO/CFO business management advisory services to entertainment businesses within the theatrical sector. NVK engages with ventures and businesses across the entire spectrum of the theatrical landscape, including large-scale immersive/site-specific works, nonprofits, branded experiential marketing projects, and Broadway, affording the company a uniquely 360° awareness of each sector of the industry, and with it, the ability to cross-pollinate a diverse array of organizational approaches, financial models, and technological innovation. Current and recent productions: *Illinoise*; *Love Around the Block*, an immersive musical for Hermès; and projects in development with Christine Jones, Steven Hoggett, and Pasek & Paul. Current business management clients: Seaview, KORINS Studio, David Byrne's Arbutus Foundation, Marathon Digital, Plate Spinner Productions, P3 Productions, and Fiona Rudin Productions.

## ARKTYPE / THOMAS O. KRIEGSMANN

(*Booking Agent*) specializes in new work development and engagements worldwide with Kaneza Schaal, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Peter Brook, Victoria Thierée-Chaplin, Yael Farber, Anna Deavere Smith, Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen, Peter Sellars, Julie Taymor, John Cameron Mitchell, and more. Recent: 600 Highwaymen's *A Thousand Ways*, nora chipaumire's *Nehanda*, Sam Green's *32 Sounds* w/JD Samson (Oscar Shortlist, Cinema Eye Best Feature), Bryce Dessner's *Triptych* w/ Roomful of Teeth, John Cameron Mitchell's *The Origin of Love*, Big Dance Theater / Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Man in a Case*, and Nalaga'at Deaf-Blind Theater's *Not by Bread Alone*. He recently closed the first citywide edition of the *Under the Radar*. Upcoming: Bryce Dessner & Kaneza Schaal's *Ocean Vuong Project*, Sam Green's *Trees* with Yo La Tengo, and Penny Arcade's autobiographical epic *The Art of Becoming*. He is a founding member of CIPA (The Creative & Independent Producer Alliance). More information at [arktype.org](http://arktype.org).

## FISHER CENTER AT BARD

The Fisher Center develops, produces, and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs, and tours them nationally and internationally. As a premier professional performing arts center, and a hub for research and education, the Fisher Center supports artists, students, and audiences in the development and examination of artistic ideas—offering perspectives from the past and present—as well as visions of the future. The Fisher Center demonstrates Bard's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity. Home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley. Building on a 164-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. [fishercenter.bard.edu](http://fishercenter.bard.edu)

## RICK BOYNTON

(*Creative Producer*) focuses on current and future artistic planning and production, as well as the development of all new plays, musicals, and adaptations for Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST). Projects include: *The Notebook* (CST, Broadway), *SIX* (CST, American Repertory Theater, Citadel Theatre, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, Broadway), *The Book of Joseph*, *Ride the Cyclone* (CST, MCC Theater, 5th Avenue Theatre /American Conservatory Theater, Alliance Theatre), *Sense and Sensibility* (CST, Old Globe), *Cadre* (co-director) (CST, Johannesburg, Grahamstown, Edinburgh, Vancouver), *Othello: The Remix* (CST, London, Germany, Edinburgh, South Korea, New York), *Funk It Up About Nothin'* (CST, Edinburgh, Australian tour, London), *A Flea in Her Ear* (CST, Williamstown Theatre Festival), *The Three Musketeers* (CST, Boston, London), *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, *Murder for Two* (CST, New York), and *The Feast: an intimate Tempest* (in collaboration with Redmoon Theater). Former artistic director of The Marriott Theatre and multiple Joseph Jefferson Award-winning actor, he has starred in productions nationally, including CST's production of *A Flea in Her Ear* as Camille (Joseph Jefferson Award, After Dark Award). As casting director/associate at Jane Alderman Casting, projects included:

the television series *Early Edition*, *Missing Persons*, *Untouchables*, and *ER*; the films *While You Were Sleeping* and *Hoodlum*, among others; and numerous national tours. Boynton is a member of the Tony Awards Nominating Committee. He has lectured at his alma mater Northwestern University and is the former president of the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre.



## EDWARD HALL

(Artistic Director, *Carl and Marilyn Thoma Chair*).

This winter's *Richard III* marks Edward Hall's debut production as artistic director since joining Chicago

Shakespeare Theater in Fall 2023. He previously directed the Jeff Award-winning *Rose Rage* trilogy at CST in 2003. Edward has built his love of Shakespeare around original interpretations of the Bard's plays, staging acclaimed productions in London's West End and on tour around the globe. He led the UK's Hampstead Theatre for nearly a decade, transforming it into one of the nation's most successful theaters for new work development, with over 100 world premieres. He was the founder and Artistic Director of Propeller Shakespeare for twenty years touring across the US, Europe, Asia, and beyond. He has served as an Associate Director at the National Theatre and Old Vic in London. His extensive film and television credits include *The Heist Before Christmas* starring Timothy Spall, *Blithe Spirit* starring Dame Judi Dench, multiple HBO and BBC series, and the season 4 finale for *Downton Abbey*.



## KIMBERLY MOTES

(Executive Director)

Kimberly Motes joins CST this season after serving for over seven years as Managing Director for the Tony Award winning Children's Theatre

Company (CTC), the nation's largest and most acclaimed theater dedicated to multi-generational audiences. During her tenure, CTC produced 46 plays/musicals including 15 commissioned new works and six co-productions/transfers, increased contributed income, completed a \$25 million capital campaign, and achieved the highest ticket sales in its history. Kimberly has held leadership roles in the arts and higher education in Minnesota including Senior Vice President of Institutional Advancement at the University of St. Thomas, Vice President of Institutional Advancement for the College of Saint Benedict, Managing Director at Theater Latté Da, and Executive Director at the Cowles Center for Dance and the Performing Arts. Kimberly spent 13 years in Washington, DC, where she was the Director of Development at Arena Stage and led adult arts education programming and a ballet training program with legendary ballerina Suzanne Farrell at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Her career began at The Washington Ballet. She has also served on grant panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

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*Chicago Shakespeare productions are made possible in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency and a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.*

*Chicago Shakespeare is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national service organization of non-profit theaters; Shakespeare Theatre Association; Arts Alliance Illinois; the League of Chicago Theatres; and Ingenuity, Inc.*

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Actors' Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 45,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)



The Director-Choreographer of this production is a member of the **STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.

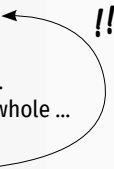


UNITED  
SCENIC  
ARTISTS

The scenic, lighting, and costume designers of this production are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of IATSE.



# Selections from Henry's

It's difficult for me to think about Carl (difficult to write that name) (and it hurts that it's difficult) (the whole point of us was that it was easy together) 

I know it will be easier for me, eventually, if I write it all down. But trying to put words to our whole ... to put us to words feels ... Sort of impossible.

(So why am I about to write a bajillion pages in this journal right now?)

\* \* \* \* \*

And now, it's days later.

I couldn't—I didn't write anything because it feels too hard to do—too vulnerable, too embarrassing, and too ... fixed?

Writing it down makes it real?

Putting things into words,

I'm afraid it will make what we were to each other ... cliché? Or seem small? Or pathetic?

(  )

(tear mark because I made myself cry in my new journal, like a dork)

\* \* \* \* \*

I came back to this (again) because I know that I need to write out what we were to each other (or just what Carl was to me), and that if I'm truly *writing from the heart*, then that's the best I can do.

(I've been to therapy, obviously.)

(Not enough, obviously.)

My heart keeps changing.

I keep changing. Which changes Carl

\* \* \* \* \*

I should start at the beginning.

When my dad remarried, we moved to a small town that was prone to wild, freakish things: an escaped *lion* that walked down main street, a *wild alligator* in a *mudslide*.

All of that was years before I was born, and when I got there the only strange thing in the whole town was me.

Or maybe that's the story I tell myself about it because all I remember about my childhood before I met Carl I was mostly alone.

And then one day, suddenly, **we were us**, and I wasn't alone anymore.

It wasn't perfect—

(well, sometimes it was—sometimes it was warm and sunlight and grassy and pure) there was a lot of uncertainty, and jealousy, and so so so many mixed messages (because we never talked about anything even though we always talked about everything)

But to me, Carl was better than anyone I could have imagined.

At that time.

(Now I know—Douglas is more than I could—Douglas is better than I deserve—Douglas is—

\* \* \* \* \*

Carl was so smart.

One of those people that's not just smart, they're somehow everything? Everything a little bit more than me, anyway, first in young ways:

(making grass whistle, skipping stones) and eventually in less young ways: (catching and holding glances, looking back without blushing at all) ...

And throughout our adolescence, in young ways and grown ways, Carl was always a half step ahead, just out of straining reach, just past the tip of my tongue.

\* \* \* \* \*

I'd imagine what it would be like to sit with Carl and admit my love.

I'd imagine it all the time, and it went many different ways, none of them good. In my imagination I would say I love you, and Carl would recoil in horror, or hurl insults or fists ...

*I made a lot of mistakes, in my mind.*

# Journal, shared selectively

In real life, we parted angrily, without fists.  
And without any admittance of love.

\* \* \* \* \*

My family, historically, is comprised  
of men who made mistakes.  
So in a way, I'm continuing our legacy.  
Obviously this country is really f'ed up.  
The whole world is f'ed up.  
(me being afraid to write f\*ck  
in my own journal might be the  
most midwestern thing about me?)  
I feel like I'd be less f'ed up  
if I could stop dwelling on the past.  
That's probably true for a lot of us—  
that we're better off being guided by who  
we want to be, rather than who we were.  
I talked about that with a friend  
of mine recently, and they swore they  
felt an earthquake—  
Like something trying to  
push out of the ground below us.  
My friend said it was our forefathers:  
*"they tremble with the nervous thought  
of having been, at last, forgot"*

I couldn't feel anything.

Maybe I couldn't feel it because I too am  
obsessed with the past—with my own past.  
I let my own nervous thoughts rule my mind  
more often than I'd like to admit.  
But as a society—I don't know what to make of  
our obsession with our relatively short and  
sadist history. (And I'm ... not the only one.)

Obviously that *nervous thought* keeps  
reverberating through our society,  
and seems to gain force and  
monstrousness in its reverberations,  
shaking us all with such violence  
that makes me ...  
sometimes hopeless, sometimes desperate,  
sometimes courageous ...  
It makes me want someone stronger  
to swoop in to save me from all of us.  
*A man of steel, man of heart.*

That was Carl, or so I thought at one time.  
But Carl couldn't save me  
from anything. None of us can save  
anyone from anything.  
That's not true—  
My love Now, saves me every day.  
My friends Now, save me every day.  
And just because Carl couldn't  
save me then, it doesn't mean  
that we weren't friends.  
It just means ... that we were young.  
And I'm still young Now, so that means ...  
we were just children.

I'm worried I'm still a child.  
When I look at my love in the  
middle of the night, I imagine  
what it would be like to leave.  
I don't want to, of course, I love Douglas  
completely, unconditionally,  
But being left means that leaving is  
an unconscious constant thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

I want to spend less time  
questioning our entire friendship  
just because of how it ended.

I think we really did  
*celebrate our sense of each other.*

And I'm lucky, incredibly lucky to be  
in a place in my life where I have  
new friends, different friends,  
none as old a friend as Carl would be,  
but these newer old friends will be  
in my life for a longer time. I know it.  
*We have a lot to give one another.*

And so, from where I am now,  
I feel that I need to close the chapter  
on my disbelief in our love.  
(I need a new journal!!!  
Among other things ... )  
It's felt so scary (impossible) to say  
it quite simply, but ... in truth:  
*My friend is gone. He ran away.*  
*But, I can tell you, I love him each day.*

by Jackie Sibbles Drury

# A Conversation with Justin Peck

Visit [chicagoshakes.com](http://chicagoshakes.com) to explore more ideas and stories behind the art on CST's stages.

## ILLINOISE

- MUSIC & LYRICS BY SUFJAN STEVENS (BASED ON THE ALBUM *ILLINOIS*)
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- DIRECTED & CHOREOGRAPHED BY JUSTIN PECK
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## Interview Excerpts from the January 2024 feature article in *Newcity* magazine by Mary Wisniewski.

### How did Sufjan Stevens' *Illinois* inspire a musical?

**Justin Peck:** The album is one of the great albums of a generation. It's an album that inspired me as a young person, as a teenager growing up in New York City, and it's also an album that gave me the instinct that Sufjan Stevens would have the ability to write music for movement and for storytelling. A few years later, I ended up crossing paths with Sufjan and we started to work together, mostly making dances at New York City Ballet. All along, I would talk to him about this idea of taking *Illinoise* and developing it into a theatrical stage production. It took several years of on-and-off conversations about it, and eventually Sufjan gave me his blessing to take those next steps and develop it through my own lens as a storyteller and a dancemaker.

The show is first and foremost about honoring the music, honoring this album, and presenting an authentic sonic experience of that album in a live theater. And then it's also about telling a story, taking the audience on a journey. It's impossible to encapsulate everything that's in Sufjan's music and his lyrics in one arc. So I tried to focus on developing a story that felt very personal... a coming-of-age story for a young person who has that tried-and-true experience of moving away from their hometown to the big city and finding their sense of community and belonging, and sense of self and voice.

It's also a show that incorporates the entirety of the album. I know Sufjan toured the album quite a bit when it first came out. But he never performed the whole album in its entirety. So, it will be the first time as an audience member you'll get that full experience of that magnum opus.



### **What is it about this album that drew you to this music?**

The first thing I was blown away by was Sufjan's genre-defying ability. You listen to this song cycle, and it takes you through so many variations of sound, from folk songs and folk tales to these sweeping instrumental anthems to abstract music to songs that almost sound like show tunes. The scale of it and the command he has over how he assembled this album is just overwhelmingly gorgeous.

For me, too, it's really about the stories he tells. Even though there's some novelty and some cleverness about the writing he does about towns in Illinois and historical facts and figures... when you boil it down, it's more about the intimate lyrics and poetry. That's what I tried to lead to with in this stage production. It's listening closely to the poetry and getting a chance to be in conversation with it and respond to it. There's such intimacy and personal themes that run through it and it's so universally appealing to so many of us.

### **What choreography are you using—Ballet? Tap?**

The choreography is a real amalgamation of styles I have been inspired by over the years—everything from tap dance to hip-hop to ballet to breakdancing to modern dance. It's all woven through this show. The genre-defying approach of the dance language is inspired by the genre-defying quality of the album... The dance takes on a similar tone where it's movement styles I've honed over years and years and years of working, and now they're being applied to this project in a unique way.

### **Why Chicago Shakespeare Theater?**

They have a wonderful team. They have a real eye for presenting new, bold, and exciting work. Especially in recent years, they've been great risk-takers of shows that are in development. Naturally, there's a built-in audience for this music in Chicago. Lastly, The Yard felt like the perfect festive environment for this show. I can't explain it, it's the feel of the place. ■

*Pictured: left to right, original company members  
Ricky Ubeda & Ben Cook, photo by Matt Murphy*

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