



FEATURED PRODUCTION

APRIL-MAY 2022



Prelude to a Kiss by Craig Lucas tells the tale of Peter and Rita who fall in love and marry. On their wedding day they are met by an Old Man who wishes to kiss the bride. Peter begins to suspect that something has happened during the honeymoon. When he sees the Old Man again, he has a conversation with him and begins to understand what has taken place.

Director **Maggie Mumford**, Producers **Carol Strachan** and **Alan Wray** are proud to present *Prelude to a Kiss*.

The cast of this provocative production includes **Smithchai Chutchainon** (Peter), **Brianna Goode** (Rita), **Cliff Rieger** (Old Man), **Christine Tankersley** (Mrs. Boyle), **Deja Elliott** (Aunt Dorothy/Ensemble), **Brendan Chaney** (Uncle Fred/Ensemble), **Casey Kniseley** (Taylor), **Kelly Trott** (Leah/Ensemble), **Joey Pierce** (Tom), and **Amber Kelly-Herard** (Waiter/Ensemble).

June 4—25, 2022

by **Craig Lucas**

Produced by
Carol Strachan
and
Alan Wray

Directed by
Maggie Mumford

Our talented production staff consists of Production Assistant **Donna Kenley**, Stage Managers **Melissa Dunlap** and **Cleo Potter**, Costume Designers **Mary Wallace** and **Ceci Albert**, Intimacy Choreographer **Ruben Vellekoop**, Hair/Makeup Designer **Robin Maline**, Lighting Design by **JK Lighting (Jeff Scott Auerbach and Kimberly Crago)**, Master Electrician **Kimberly Crago**, Property Designer **Shelby Baker**, Sound Designer **David Correia**, Rigger **Russell Wyland**, and Photographer **Juan Torreblanca**.

The show contains adult themes and language.

Christopher Gould, **Suzanne Golden**, and **Dodger Productions** presented the Circle Repertory Company Production of *Prelude to a Kiss* on Broadway. The show was commissioned and originally produced by **South Coast Repertory** with support from the National Endowment of the Arts.

Order your tickets now!

★ **Call the Box Office** ★

(703) 683-04961

The Little Theatre of Alexandria

Frank D. Shutts II, President
Stacey Becker, Governor for Membership
Griffin Voltmann, *Floodlight* Coordinator
Linda Wells, *Floodlight* Editor

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THERE IS
NO DARKNESS
BUT
IGNORANCE

SHAKESPEARE MONTH 2022

CELEBRATING 458 YEARS OF SHAKESPEARE THIS APRIL

COUNCIL CORNER: LTA'S SHAKESPEARE GARDEN

ZELL MURPHY LTA COUNCIL

The end of April, the 26th to be exact, marks the birthdate of William Shakespeare. So I thought it quite appropriate to devote this month's column to the LTA garden established in his name—our very own Shakespeare Garden.

Prior to its formal establishment in May 2017, the garden existed as an unmaintained patio with random plantings. **Carolyn Winters**, former LTA President and Council Director, would stop by the space on occasion and “weed and plant bulbs.” She had been wanting to transform the area for years. As Council Director, she promoted the idea of creating a formal garden and financing it through donations.

An initial layout was drawn up by Greenstreet Gardens in August 2016. Then, with the support of the LTA Board and the LTA Council membership, a Shakespeare Garden Committee was established in December of 2016 to organize and run a “Buy a Brick” fundraising campaign. The original committee members included **Carolyn Winters**, **Robin Worthington**, **Genie Baskir**, **Tina Anderson**, and **Sharon Field**.

Why was the garden named the “Shakespeare Garden”? Well, D.C. has its own Shakespeare Garden associated with the Folger Shakespeare Library. There's also the

Shakespeare Garden located in New York City's Central Park. Shouldn't Alexandria have its own Shakespeare Garden?

The “buy a brick” campaign was a success, and the garden was officially established with a dedication and ribbon cutting on June 14, 2017. The official program stated that the garden was “dedicated to our Brick Donors who made Alexandria's first Shakespeare Garden a reality.” The ceremony was attended by local city officials and included a performance of Shakespearean snippets by **Heather Sanderson's** “Young Shakespearean Players.”

In February 2018, **Lloyd Bitteringer** was tapped to be the garden committee's new chairperson, with committee members including **Robert Kraus** and **Heather Sanderson**. Under Lloyd's tenure as chair, the committee focused on adding plants from Shakespeare's plays—especially plants that grow in the shade with minimal sun. In March 2018, a sundial (secured by **Ron Field** and purchased from the Mount Vernon gift shop) and trellises were added to the garden. In February 2020, a sign showing the masks of comedy and tragedy was hung on the back wall opposite the Council Green Room. And then, a year later, a bronze plaque was added with a quote from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* proclaiming: “I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it.”

Continued on Page 8




JULIET'S BOUNTY

RECLAIMING ONE OF SHAKESPEARE'S "STRONGEST" HEROINES

KATHLEEN BARTH LTA MEMBER

Juliet Capulet from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the best-known characters from Shakespeare's canon, yet she's also one of the most misunderstood. Over the course of *Romeo and Juliet*'s production history, from Elizabethan England to the present, Juliet's character has undergone extensive revisions. Famed 18th-century actor David Garrick made many changes to the text to suit his audience's sensibilities, hiding Juliet's precocity. In Victorian England, Juliet's relationship with Romeo was portrayed with a chasteness bordering on stale. During the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Franco Zeffirelli's landmark film adaptation showcased Juliet's awareness of her sexuality. Amid all these changes to how we have portrayed Juliet on stage over the centuries, we've lost her true essence. Today, readers and audiences often dismiss Juliet as a dull and passive heroine in favor of some of Shakespeare's cross-dressing female characters. A closer reading of Juliet's speeches and actions reveal a vastly different young woman at the heart of Shakespeare's



They say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.
Or, if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo, but else not for the world.
II.ii.95-102

Juliet begins her argument by asking Romeo if he loves her: "Dost thou love me?" (II.ii.95), then outlines the consequences of delivering an empty promise: "Yet if thou swear'st/Thou mayst prove false. At lovers' perjuries,/ They say, Jove laughs" (II.ii.96-98). She then demands Romeo announce his love if he truly means it: "O gentle Romeo/ If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully" (II.ii.99-98). Juliet concludes her argument by informing Romeo that if he considers her a prize easily won, she'll reject him: "Or, if thou thinkest I am too quickly won/ I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay, so thou wilt woo, but else not for the world" (II.ii.100-102). This is the first instance

"A vastly different young woman at the heart of Shakespeare's most indelible tragedy"

most indelible tragedy than the silly damsel audiences consider her today and have considered her in past centuries.

Shakespeare's most brilliant characters (such as Hamlet and Iago) demonstrate a commanding intelligence over other characters in their plays through their use of rhetoric. Juliet is no exception in her own play. Through her speech, Shakespeare portrays Juliet as a supremely eloquent young woman who speaks intelligently and thoughtfully on the subject of love.

In this excerpt from the balcony scene, Juliet employs rhetoric to persuade Romeo to be honest about his feelings for her:

Dost thou love me? I know thouthough wilt say "Ay,"
And I will take thy word. Yet, if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false. At lovers' perjuries,

where Juliet tries persuading Romeo not to swear his love, but rather pronounce it honestly to remain true to himself and to her. Moments later, when Romeo tries swearing his love by the moon, Juliet stops him:

O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.
II.ii.114-116

Juliet tells Romeo not to swear his love for her by the moon and creates a contrasting image for a celestial body frequently used for romantic imagery. Juliet reminds Romeo that the moon "monthly changes in her circled orb" (II.ii.115) and she wouldn't want him to use a heavenly body that constantly changes unless his love shifts like the moon: "lest that thy love prove likewise variable" (II.ii.116). By stopping Romeo from

swearing his love on empty romantic symbols, Juliet seizes control over Romeo.

Although Romeo came to Juliet's balcony to woo her, it is Juliet who woos and controls Romeo through her power of persuasion. Just as Shakespeare's tragic heroes speak persuasively regarding traditionally masculine subjects like power, politics, and death, Juliet speaks with an equal degree of authority about love, demonstrating her intelligence through the language of romance.

Another element to the common misinterpretation of Juliet is the audience's perception of Juliet as a passive character displaying little to no resistance to what happens to her. This perception of Juliet could not be further from what is revealed in the text. Juliet displays multiple acts of rebellion that reveal her sense of agency and desire to establish control in her life.

When we first meet Juliet, her mother, Lady Capulet, asks Juliet her thoughts about marriage to which Juliet answers "it is an honor that I dream not of" (I.iii.71). Juliet describes marriage as a prospect that she does not dream of, implying that it does not exist in her thoughts. Through implication she resists what she must know are her parents' intentions for her, without being able to resist outright. In Renaissance Europe, and therefore the world of Romeo and Juliet, young women married when and whom their parents told them to, so Juliet could not refuse, only indicate reluctance. In the same scene between Juliet, her mother, and the Nurse, Juliet further conveys her unwillingness to bend to her parents' will when her mother asks if she could like their choice of husband, Paris:

I'll look to like, if looking liking move.
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.
I.iii.103-105

Juliet responds to her mother—with another cunning, disarming use of wordplay—by proclaiming that she'll decide for herself if she likes Paris. Juliet reveals her antipathy toward marriage and the idea of "liking" Paris in these mild acts of resistance.

Through her subtle messaging and clever wordplay, Juliet refrains from overtly expressing her true feelings in front of her parents. This skill reveals another facet of her intelligence and a survival tactic, which we soon discover is necessary when Juliet faces her father's wrath.

As the play progresses, Juliet's acts of resistance become more significant and more explicit, especially her decision to marry Romeo. However, Juliet's most notable and overlooked rebellion occurs when she confronts her mother after receiving the news that she will marry Paris:

I will not marry yet, and when I do I swear
It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,

Rather than Paris.
III.v.121-123

Juliet no longer remains subtle and openly defies her parents' wishes in this speech with her overt refusal to marry Paris. When Juliet's father receives the news of her refusal, he explodes in a fury and leaves Juliet in her anguish. Juliet then turns to her trusted Nurse, who has been Juliet's most devoted ally in her quest to marry her beloved Romeo, but even the Nurse encourages Juliet to forget Romeo and marry Paris instead. The Nurse's betrayal prompts Juliet to take matters into her own hands by misleading her.

Well, thou has comforted me marvelous much.
Go in and tell my lady I am gone,
Having displeased my father, to Lawrence's cell
To make confession and to be absolved.
III.v.244-246

Juliet lies to the Nurse, telling her that she will see Friar Lawrence to confess with the hope of absolving her of the sin displeasing her father. Juliet's deception becomes clear when the Nurse exits, and Juliet proclaims to herself: "I'll to the Friar to know his remedy" (III.v.254). While Juliet will still visit Friar Lawrence she is not going to confess, but rather seek his help in finding a solution to her predicament. Even alone, with no one in her inner circle to help her and with a much easier solution in front of her, Juliet seeks to remain with the man she loves and thus strives to shape her own future.

Our modern hunger for "strong" women on stage and screen has generated a desire for masculine qualities in female characters. Perhaps this explains why Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines such as Rosalind, Viola, and Portia have become so popular today while Juliet is often dismissed. Although these cross-dressing women are brilliant in their own distinct ways, their male disguises do not inherently make them strong while Juliet's femininity does not inherently make her weak. Juliet displays her (dare I say it) strength through her commanding use of rhetoric as she speaks persuasively on romance and her earnest desire to marry the man of her choice. Perhaps Juliet's greatest tragedy is not her doomed romance with Romeo, but rather the lack of value we place on her femininity, that causes us to ignore the extraordinary depth of her intelligence and courage.

Kathleen Barth is a producer and award-winning director with a lifelong interest in Shakespeare scholarship and feminist theory.



SOMETHING ROTTEN AUDITIONS

FRANK D. SHUTTS II LTA PRESIDENT

Something Rotten written by John O'Farrell and Karey Kirkpatrick

Music and Lyrics by Karey and Wayne Kirkpatrick

Directed by Frank D. Shutts II

Choreographed by Stefan Sittig

Music directed by Christopher Tomasino

Produced by Rachel Alberts, Bobbie Herbst, and Russ Wyland

Audition Location & Dates:

The Little Theatre of Alexandria

600 Wolfe St., Alexandria, VA 22314

Saturday, May 14 at 2 pm.

Sunday, May 15 at 6 pm.

Callbacks – May 17 – by Invitation Only

Performance Dates:

July 23-August 13, 2022

All auditions will be at The Little Theatre of Alexandria

600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria, Virginia

For questions regarding this production and auditions, please

email: asklta@thelittletheater.com

Synopsis

Set in 1595, the story follows the Bottom brothers, Nick and Nigel, who love the theatre and try to make theatre...and they are completely overshadowed by William Shakespeare.

Audition Notes

All races and ethnicities are welcome. Please prepare 24 bars of an up-tempo song, not from the show, and be prepared to dance. An audition pianist will be provided. Callbacks will include cold readings from the script. Please bring a headshot and résumé, if you have them, and be ready to list all conflicts on a provided schedule. Rehearsals begin immediately and are usually Tuesday-through-Thursday nights and weekend afternoons until Tech Week.

Auditionees should be prepared to provide vaccination cards at the audition table and masks are required to be worn at all times, except when the actual audition occurs. All actors in the production must have provided proof of complete vaccination. Masks will not be worn when on stage and will be required during rehearsals at the discretion of the producers and director. Those cast must be, or must become, members of The Little Theatre of Alexandria at the performer's rate or higher.



book by **Karey Kirkpatrick**
and **John O'Farrell**

music & lyrics by

Wayne Kirkpatrick
and **Karey Kirkpatrick**

JUL. 23 – AUG. 13, 2022

— BOX OFFICE —

703-683-0496

www.thelittletheatre.com

Something Rotten! is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).
All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.MTIShows.com

THANK YOU, *BLUE STOCKINGS!*

LLOYD BITTINGER, MARGARET CHAPMAN, CHRISTINE FARRELL, PRODUCERS

We thank the amazing cast of *Blue Stockings*, those who were cast almost two years ago and returned to complete the show, and those newly cast for this production, for providing an excellent history lesson on struggling for and acclimating to social change in 1896 England. These 20 actors, many of them doing double-duty with 25 roles to play, brought the story to life with remarkable clarity.

We also had a top-notch production staff of over 30 people, many of whom came back after months of shutdown due to the global pandemic.

We are very proud of the contribution our production made to the overall LTA season despite the struggles imposed on everyone in keeping theater alive during difficult times.



WELCOME ARACELY ODE

STACEY BECKER LTA GOVERNOR FOR MEMBERSHIP



Dear LTA members,

I am excited for you to meet Aracely Ode, the new Chair of our Welcome and Inclusion Committee (formerly "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion").

Aracely moved here from Peru in April 2020. Her daughter Ilanah takes classes at LTA on a scholarship. Aracely volunteers at LTA at the Box Office and as an usher. Aracely learned about our theatre when a friend invited her to see *Will Rogers' USA*. She was overjoyed to find a theater near her home in Old Town Alexandria.

Aracely has been involved in theater her whole life. She taught theater and English classes in elementary schools as well as acted and directed at theaters in Peru. She received her degree in Communications, Art, and Science from the Pontifical Catholic University in Lima, Peru.

When I asked her why she wanted to chair the committee, her response was "diversity is important, especially nowadays. I want to promote values of accepting our differences. Theater is for everybody. No matter age, political affiliation, race. Theater is a way to communicate and express without judging."

She had me at "Theater is for everybody."

Please say hello to Aracely when you see her at the theatre. Also, if you were a previous member of the DEI committee or would like to join the new committee, please email me at membershipgovlta@gmail.com, or Aracely at Aracely.ode.jaime@gmail.com

I hope to see you around the theatre.

Stacey Becker

"SHAKESPEARE GARDEN"

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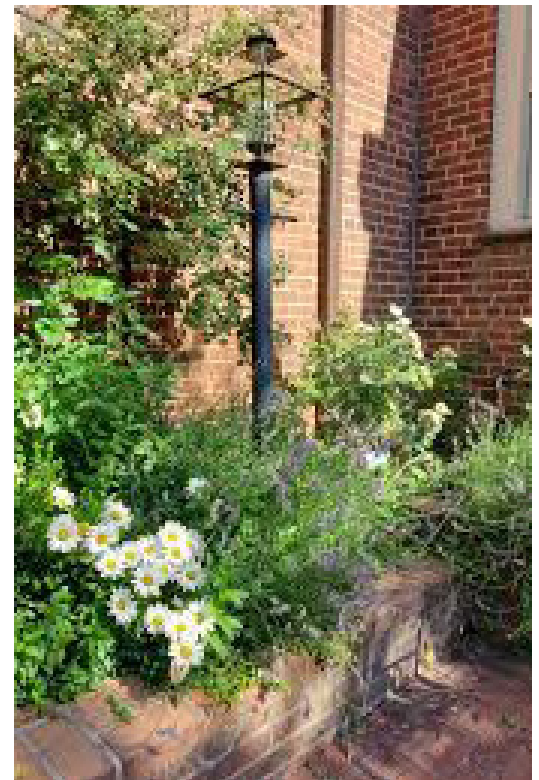
In February 2021, Lloyd transferred the committee leadership reins over to **Paul Donahoe**, who, since then, has added an aesthetic element or two, including small twinkling lights among the many plants. Paul wants to do things to encourage more people and activities in the garden. For example, during the warm weather months, open the doors to the garden during show intermissions. He is always looking for unique new plantings to bring more color to the garden. The LTA Council funds annual maintenance of the garden, provided by Greenstreet Gardens.

LTA's Shakespeare Garden is used and loved by many. According to **Heather Sanderson**: "The Shakespeare Garden has proved invaluable to LTA's youth students. We set up tents in the summer, and the kids use it for lunches and breaks during camps."

As I close this column, I offer up one more interesting historical tidbit: The iron fence around the garden on St. Asaph Street came from the White House (long before the garden was established; most likely, around the time the theatre building was completed in the early '60s).

Please take a moment this spring and while away your time in LTA's Shakespeare Garden.

—**Zell Murphy**, 2022



BUILDING LTA'S LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

LUANA BOSSOLO CHAIR, LTA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

As LTA marks its 88th year in 2022, we need to focus on growing our volunteer community and building a leadership pipeline to carry us into the future for many more decades. Whether you joined LTA during season 2021-2022 or have been volunteering for a few years or longer, you can have an impact on LTA's future and can help expand our leadership pool.

- Attend the annual meeting on **June 13th** and cast a ballot in the LTA board election
- Keep your LTA membership current, a criterion for voting in elections and serving on a committee or the Board of Governors.

Seven Board of Governor slates are open for the LTA 2022 election. In the coming weeks, all LTA members will receive information about the candidates running for the board. Familiarize yourself with the candidates' statements before the annual meeting so you are prepared to vote. Individuals with current 2021-2022 membership status are eligible to cast a ballot.

Nominations are permitted at Annual Meeting from the floor. However, all nominations are subject to a review of candidate suitability. Full descriptions of Governor duties are available online.

Scan here to learn more about LTA
Board of Governors duties



EDUCATION UPDATE

HEATHER SANDERSON LTA GOVERNOR FOR EDUCATION

A stage where every man must play his part... these lines from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice seem an apt way of summing up what it takes to operate LTA, where volunteers play a major part in the running of our 88-year-old organization.

Youngsters also get to play a part in volunteering at LTA, through our Student Ambassador Program, which since its inception in 2018 has given high school students an opportunity to serve the LTA community in a myriad of ways. They've helped with classes and camps, organized and sorted costumes, served on light crews, worked on set builds and tear downs, chaperoned at parades, performed at Open Houses and local events, ushered, set up and served at Opening Night parties, and assisted back-stage with our youth and adult showcases. Most recently, two of our newest Ambassadors



have taken on the task of organizing our lending library.

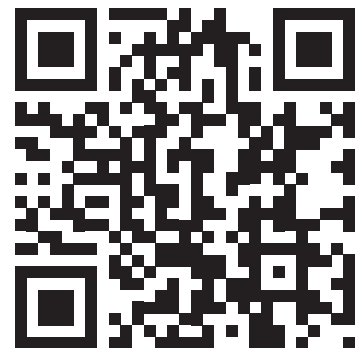
This summer several of our Student Ambassadors will once again work as Camp Counselors for our Summer Camp program. All of the Ambassadors were once former students, and it's great to have them back in this capacity.

Also returning to LTA this summer in the position of Camp Director is former LTA instructor Kimberly Smith-Salmon. We look forward to welcoming Kim and thank former Camp Director Michael Page for his creativity and commitment over the last seven years to making LTA's camp the go-to place in the area for young thespians. (Michael will still be around this summer, but devoting his time and talents to teaching camps.)

For full summer camp details see thelittletheatre.com/summer-camps/#camplist. You'll find over 50 camps to choose from for ages 3-8th grades. There's morning, afternoon and all day camps, offering instruction in Acting, Singing, Dancing, Improvisation, Puppet Making, Shakespeare, Sketch Writing, and more. We also have extended day options, and this year we have a special one week only online evening option for grades 9-12. Thanks to the generosity of LTA's Council, a limited number of partial scholarships are available.

For details on the Student Ambassador Program see thelittletheatre.com/education/#otherops.

Scan here to learn more about this year's LTA educational programs
See you this summer!





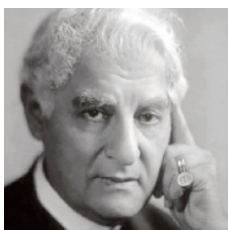
MAY 2022 IS
JEWISH AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH

The Little Theatre of Alexandria Celebrates

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

During May, Jewish American Heritage Month recognizes the contributions American Jews have made, and continue to make, to the history, culture, and society of this country. These remarkable individuals have contributed to the theatre community. The origins of Jewish Heritage Month began in 1980 with the establishment of Jewish American Week. Beginning in 1981, presidents started designating a Jewish American Heritage Week in April or May. In 2006, George W. Bush was the first to proclaim May as Jewish American Heritage Month.

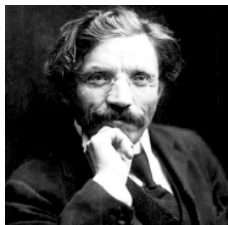
Join us in celebrating these theatrical pioneers and luminaries from America's Jewish community.



David Belasco, (July 25, 1853 – May 14, 1931), an American theatrical producer and playwright whose important innovations in the techniques and standards of staging and design were in contrast to the quality of the plays he produced. From 1873

to 1879 he worked in several San Francisco theatres as actor, manager, and play adapter, and in the latter years toured in *Hearts of Oak*, which he co-wrote with James A. Herne. Belasco moved to New York City in 1880, becoming associated there with the Frohmans as manager of the Madison Square Theatre and later of the Lyceum. In 1890 he leased a theatre and became an independent producer. Feeling the pressure of the monopolistic Theatrical Syndicate, he built his own theatre in 1906. Belasco was the first American producer whose name, regardless of star actor or play, attracted patrons to the theatre. He chose unknown actors and elevated them to stardom. He also preferred playwrights whose success depended upon his collaboration. **He gained a reputation for minute attention to detail, sensational realism, lavish settings, astonishing mechanical effects, and experiments in lighting.** He maintained a large permanent staff that worked constantly to perfect surprising effects. **This work led to the virtual elimination of footlights and to the first lensed spotlights.** As a result, he brought a new standard of production to the American stage. Because of his austere, cleric-like dress and personal manner, he came to be known as the “Bishop of Broadway.”

Sholem Aleichem, (February 18, 1859 – May 13, 1916) born in Ukraine, was a



popular author, humorist, and playwright noted for his many Yiddish stories of life in the shtetl. He is one of the preeminent classical writers of modern Yiddish literature. Drawn to writing as a youth, he became a private tutor of Russian at age 17. He later served in the Russian provincial town of Lubny (now in Ukraine) as a “crown rabbi” (official record keeper of the Jewish population; despite the word rabbi, it was not a religious position). While at Lubny he began writing in Yiddish, though he earlier composed his articles in Russian and Hebrew. He published more than 40 volumes of novels, stories, and plays in Yiddish. (He also continued to write in Russian and Hebrew.) His works were widely translated, and he became known in the United States as “the Jewish Mark Twain.” He was the first to write in Yiddish for children. Adaptations of his work were important in the founding of the **Yiddish Art Theatre in New York City**, and the libretto of the musical **Fiddler on the Roof** (1964; film 1971) was adapted from a group of his Tevye the Dairyman stories, which have been translated many times over. *Fiddler on the Roof* was the first commercially successful stage production about Jewish life in Eastern Europe.



George S. Kaufman (November 16, 1889 – June 2, 1961) was the most successful playwright in the American theater during Broadway’s golden years between the two World Wars. His particular brand of sharp comedy and satire

produced forty-five Broadway plays, the majority of which were successes; all but one of which were written in collaboration with other authors. He was also a talented and precise director of his own work and

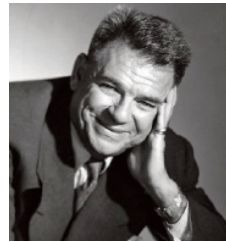
several other popular plays and musicals. Renowned as a humorist and wit, he was a charter member of the famed Algonquin Round Table. **Kaufman worked with most of the major theatrical talents of his era and was the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes for drama including the first Pulitzer ever awarded to a musical.**



Ben Hecht's (February 28, 1894 – April 18, 1964) now-legendary partnership with fellow newspaperman Charles McArthur scored its first Broadway hit in 1928 with *The Front Page*, followed by *Twentieth Century* in 1932. He wrote copiously

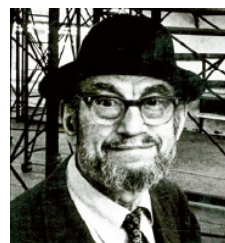
for both stage and screen throughout the '30s. While this aspect of Hecht's life has since been eclipsed by the immortality of his best plays and movies, for Americans paying attention to such things during the WWII era, Ben Hecht was one of the country's most visible advocates for anti-fascist and pro-Jewish causes. Hecht donated his services as a proud propagandist, writing several newspaper editorials, speeches, and pamphlets, but he captured the most attention by turning to the theatre, conceiving of a spectacular pageant advertised as "A Mass Memorial Dedicated to the Two Million Jewish Dead of Europe." *We Will Never Die* was first performed at Madison Square Garden on March 9, 1943, and in many ways was **the nation's first Holocaust drama**. Hecht and Billy Rose, who served as "producer," enlisted many fellow Jewish Broadway luminaries, actors of stage and screen, and a cast of literally hundreds of extras, including a chorus of exiled rabbis. Between two New York performances and a five-city national tour (during which Hecht added a scene depicting the recent Warsaw Ghetto uprising), the pageant reached large audiences and received even more exposure through press coverage in each city. As many later Hollywood activists would learn, Hecht knew that reporters pay more attention to your cause when celebrities are attached. "By aggressively calling attention to his people's plight at a time when so many others were afraid to make waves, Hecht redefined what it meant to be an American Jew." He wrote another theatrical pageant-drama, *A Flag Is Born*, it opened in the fall of 1946 (starring Paul Muni as an aged Holocaust survivor) for a four-month run on Broadway, followed by a national tour. (In Broadway annals it's most famous for casting the pre-*Streetcar* Marlon Brando). **Hecht's political pursuits certainly paved the way for many subsequent**

followers of all backgrounds in the performing arts to similarly leverage their celebrity in the name of social justice.



Oscar Hammerstein II, (July 12, 1895 – August 23, 1960), an American lyricist, musical comedy author, and theatrical producer influential in the development of musical comedy and known especially for his immensely successful collaboration

with the composer Richard Rodgers. Between 1920 and 1959 he wrote all or part of about 45 musical dramas for stage, film, or television. Among Hammerstein's best known early works are *Rose Marie* (1924; music by Friml); *The Desert Song* (1925; music by Romberg); and the Jerome Kern musicals *Sunny* (1925) and *Show Boat* (1927), which include the perennial favorites, "Ol' Man River" and "Only Make Believe." He teamed with Richard Rodgers in creating *Oklahoma!* (1943; winner of the Pulitzer Prize, 1944), *Carousel* (1945), and *South Pacific* (1949; Pulitzer Prize in 1950), combining bright tunes with relatively sophisticated stories—a blend then unfamiliar to the stage but later widely adopted. Hammerstein's lyrics are often marked by a simplicity and sensitivity perhaps best exemplified by "If I Loved You" (from *Carousel*). Rodgers and Hammerstein formed a music publishing firm, Williamson Music, Inc., and from 1949 were theatrical producers for their own works as well as for those of many others. Other musical comedies with Rodgers include *The King and I* (1951), *The Sound of Music* (1959), *Flower Drum Song* (1958), and the film *State Fair* (1945). Hammerstein won Academy Awards for the songs "The Last Time I Saw Paris" from *Lady Be Good* (1941) and "It Might as Well Be Spring" from *State Fair* (1945). In addition, he received three Tony Awards for *South Pacific* and one for *The King and I*.



Boris Aaronson, (October 15, 1898 – November 16, 1980) the son of the Grand Rabbi of Kiev, Ukraine, enjoyed educational and cultural opportunities denied to most of the Jews of his time. He showed artistic talent early in childhood

and took to calling himself "The Outlaw" because he was always looking for ways to escape from his large, traditional family. By the time of the Russian Revolution

in 1917, he had found a mentor in Alexandra Exter, a Paris-trained artist who was one of the principal designers at the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre. In 1922, he left Russia, moving first to Berlin and then on to New York, where he quickly established himself as a designer in the bustling Yiddish theater world. Of particular note are the sets he designed for multiple Yiddish Art Theater productions directed by Maurice Schwartz, including adaptations of *Stempeniu*, *The Fiddler* in 1928 and *Roaming Stars* in 1930 (both of which were based on stories by Sholem Aleichem). In the 1930s Aronson worked at the Group Theater with legendary figures such as Elia Kazan, Harold Klurman, and Clifford Odets. **Then he moved up to Broadway, designing the original sets for many of the most famous dramas ever produced**, including *The Time of Your Life* (1939), *Cabin in the Sky* (1940), *The Country Girl* (1950), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), *I Am a Camera* (1951), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View from the Bridge* (1955), *Bus Stop* (1955), and *The Diary of Ann Frank* (1955). After *Fiddler on the Roof*, in 1964, he formed a highly collaborative relationship with *Fiddler's* producer Harold Prince, eventually receiving four Tony awards for *Cabaret* (1966), *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), and *Pacific Overtures* (1976). The last production Aronson worked on was a CBS performance of *The Nutcracker* for Mikhail Baryshnikov in 1977. He died on November 16, 1980. Two days after his death, a new revival of *Fiddler* opened in New York based on his original designs.



Lillian Hellman (June 20, 1905 - June 30, 1984) was an American playwright and motion-picture screenwriter whose dramas forcefully attacked injustice, exploitation, and selfishness. In the 1930s, after working as a book reviewer, press agent, play reader, and Hollywood scenarist, she began writing plays. Her dramas exposed some of the various forms in which evil appears—a malicious child's lies about two schoolteachers (*The Children's Hour*, 1934); a ruthless family's exploitation of fellow townspeople and of one another (*The Little Foxes*, 1939, and *Another Part of the Forest*, 1946); and the irresponsible selfishness of the Versailles-treaty generation (*Watch on the Rhine*, 1941, and *The Searching Wind*, 1944). **Criticized at times for her doctrinaire views and characters, she nevertheless kept her characters from becoming merely social points of view by writing credible dia-**

logue and creating a realistic intensity matched by few of her playwrighting contemporaries. Hellman, a long-time supporter of leftist causes, detailed in *Scoundrel Time* (1976) her troubles and those of her friends with the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings during the 1950s. Hellman refused to give the committee the names of people who had associations with the Communist Party; she was subsequently blacklisted though not held in contempt of Congress. Her collected plays, many of which continued to be performed at the turn of the 20th century, were published in 1972.



Jean Rosenthal (March 16, 1912 – May 1, 1969) was a pioneer in theater lighting design, finding new aesthetics for dance performances and theater productions. "Light is quite tactile to me. It has shape and dimension." Inspired by the paintings of Rembrandt and Monet, Rosenthal mastered the technical and poetic aspects of stage lighting. She used light's form, color, and movement to express the intention of performance. Carefully integrating light into the overall texture of a piece, Rosenthal believed that "the most successful and brilliant work a lighting designer can do is usually the least noticeable." Rosenthal studied at the Neighborhood Playhouse School and became enamored of the famed faculty member Martha Graham. She helped out with various aspects of production and technical work for Graham's performances, then enrolled at Yale to gain more technical training. In 1938 she became a production assistant at Orson Welles's Mercury Theater. **She composed lighting for major Broadway plays including 1957's *West Side Story*, 1960's *Becket*, 1964's *Fiddler on the Roof*, 1965's *The Odd Couple*, and 1966's *Cabaret*.** She continued working with Graham throughout her career until her death, calling their collaborations a renewal of her interior spirit.



Adolph Green (December 2, 1914 – October 23, 2002) was a playwright, performer, and lyricist, and with his partner Betty Comden, constituted the writing team of Comden and Green. The pair turned out lyrics, books, and screenplays for six decades of American hit musicals. At home primarily on Broadway (*Wonderful Town* 1953, *Bells Are Ringing*

1956, *On the Twentieth Century* 1978), they also spent years in Hollywood at MGM, producing film musicals like *On the Town* (1949), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), and *The Band Wagon* (1953). Leonard Bernstein with his first great stage success, the ballet *Fancy Free* (1944), had plans to turn it into a Broadway musical. Bernstein approached Comden and Green to write the book and lyrics, which they were only too happy to do, taking the opportunity to include substantial parts in it for themselves. The smashing success of the result, *On the Town* (1944), encouraged them to follow with two more musicals, *Billion Dollar Baby* (music by Morton Gould, 1945) and *Bonanza Bound* (1947). They continued to work with MGM, writing screenplays for famous actors such as June Allyson, Peter Lawford, Ginger Rogers, and Fred Astaire. In the 1950s Comden and Green returned to Broadway, with the revue *Two on the Aisle* (1951) starring Bert Lahr and Dolores Gray, *Wonderful Town* (Tony Award, Best Musical, 1953) with Rosalind Russell and Edie Adams as two Ohio sisters trying to find their way in the Big City, and *Bells Are Ringing* (Tony Award nominee, Best Musical, 1957) starring Judy Holliday. With tunes like "Just in Time," "Long Before I Knew You," and "The Party's Over," this score proved to be among their finest and most popular. *Say, Darling* followed in 1958 (meanwhile they furnished the screenplay for the film version of *Auntie Mame*), and in the same year a revue called *A Party with Betty Comden and Adolph Green* brought them in person to the Broadway stage doing some of their early sketches; another version of it was mounted almost twenty years later. The next decades brought repeated triumphs on Broadway stages: *Do Re Mi* (Tony Award nominee, Best Musical, 1961), *Subways Are For Sleeping* (1961), *Fade Out – Fade In* (1964), *Hallelujah, Baby!* (Tony Awards, Best Composer and Lyricist, Best Musical, 1968), *Applause* (Tony Award, Best Musical, 1970), *Lorelei* (1974), *On the Twentieth Century* (Tony Awards, Best Book of a Musical, Best Original Score, 1978), a staged version of *Singin' in the Rain* (Tony Award nominee, Best Book of a Musical, 1986), and *The Will Rogers Follies* (Tony Award, Best Original Score, 1991). Among other credits are six songs for Mary Martin's *Peter Pan* (1954), a modernized *Die Fledermaus* for the Metropolitan Opera, and stage vehicles for Carol Burnett, Leslie Uggams, and Lauren Bacall. Comden and Green received Kennedy Center Honors in 1991.



Aaron Paddy Chayefsky

(January 29, 1923 – August 1, 1981) was an American playwright and screenwriter whose work was part of the flowering of television drama in the 1950s. He also wrote several critically acclaimed films. Chayefsky served during World War II in the

U.S. Army. On his return to New York City, he worked as a printer's apprentice, then began writing radio adaptations for *Theatre Guild on the Air* (1951–52) and mystery dramas for television series. His first full-length television play was *Holiday Song* (1952). His greatest success was *Marty* (1953), about the awakening of love between two plain people, a butcher and a school-teacher. The film version in 1955 won four Academy Awards, including one for Chayefsky's screenplay, and the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival. Two of his other television plays also were made into motion pictures: *The Bachelor Party* (1953; film 1957) and *The Catered Affair* (1955; film 1956). Another television drama, *Middle of the Night* (1954), became, in expanded form, Chayefsky's first stage play and marked his Broadway debut (1956). His next two stage productions, *The Tenth Man* (1959) and *Gideon* (1961), were on religious themes and attacked contemporary cynicism, while *The Passion of Josef D.* (1964) was a treatment of Joseph Stalin and the Russian Revolution. Chayefsky also wrote numerous film scripts and scenarios. In addition to *Marty*, he received Academy Awards for his screenplays for *The Hospital* (1971), about a depressed chief of medicine in a hospital experiencing many inexplicable deaths, and *Network* (1976), a brilliant satire of network television.



Judith Malina (June 4, 1926 – April 10, 2015) won acclaim as an actress, director, and producer through the experimental Living Theatre she co-founded with her husband, Julian Beck, in 1948. Malina was praised for her avant-garde, political

approach to directing. The Living Theatre toured the United States and France and performed street theater in Brazil before the company was expelled as incendiary. Malina used the theater for political awareness and action and advocated for the antiwar movement, Women Strike for Peace, and the Industrial Workers of the World. Malina also performed as an actress, wrote

poetry, and taught at NYU and Columbia University. She received many honors for her work, including an Obie Award, the Paris Critics Circle medallion, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 2004.



Wendy Wasserstein (October 18, 1950 - January 30, 2006) won the Pulitzer Prize in 1989 for *The Heidi Chronicles* and was the first woman playwright to win a Tony Award. In 1973, Wasserstein joined the MFA program at The Yale School

of Drama and was the only woman in the playwriting program. Her thesis, *Uncommon Women and Others*, depicting five women friends over several years, was produced at the Phoenix Theater in New York in 1977. Wasserstein devoted her career to depicting intelligent, talented, nuanced women, such as the protagonists of her 1992 *The Sisters Rosensweig*. While she is mainly known for her dramas, she also wrote three musicals, various comedy skits for the television series *Comedy Zone*, and essays published in the *New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and other magazines.



Tony Kushner (born July 16, 1956) is an American dramatist who became one of the most highly acclaimed playwrights of his generation after the debut of his two-part play *Angels in America* (1990, 1991). His early plays include *La Fin*

de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse (1983), *A Bright Room Called Day* (1985), *Yes, Yes, No, No* (1985), and *Stella* (1987). His major work, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, consists of two lengthy plays that deal with political issues and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s while meditating on change and loss—two prominent themes throughout Kushner's oeuvre. The first part, *Millennium Approaches* (1990), won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award for best play; the second, *Perestroika* (1991), also won a Tony Award for best play. *Angels in America* proved to be extremely popular for a work of its imposing length (the two parts run seven hours in total), and it was adapted for an Emmy Award-winning television film that aired in 2003. In addition to his work for the stage, Kushner contributed screenplays to Steven Spielberg's films *Munich* (2005; co-written with Eric Roth) and *Lincoln* (2012).

Kushner also authored the children's book *Brundibar* (2003; illustrated by Maurice Sendak) and coedited (with Alisa Solomon) the essay collection *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2003). **He received the National Medal of Arts in 2013.**



Harvey Fierstein, (born June 6, 1954) is an American comedian, author, and playwright who is best known as the author of *The Torch Song Trilogy*, which centers on gay families. He often speaks out about gay rights issues.

With a bachelor of fine arts degree (1973) he soon made a career in New York theatre and playwriting. He won a part at age 16 in Andy Warhol's play *Pork* (1971; staged at La MaMa), Fierstein went on to perform in more than 60 productions, in which he often played roles in drag. In the late 1970s Fierstein wrote a trilogy of plays (*The International Stud*, *Fugue in a Nursery*, and *Widows and Children First*), eventually performed together as *Torch Song Trilogy*. Seen all at once on Broadway (1982), in a production starring the author himself, the trilogy proved to be a powerful, profoundly moving statement that took audiences into the then little-known world of gay families and their struggle for self-acceptance and love. After winning Tony Awards for acting and writing, Fierstein went on to appear in the 1988 screen version of *Torch Song Trilogy*. Fierstein's Tony-winning book for the 1983 musical *La Cage aux Folles* (adapted from Jean Poiret's play) continued to move gay issues into the mainstream. In 2003, Fierstein elicited rave reviews on Broadway for his exuberant cross-dressing performance in the hit stage musical version of Waters' camp film *Hairspray*; he won his fourth Tony Award. He later appeared in Broadway revivals of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *La Cage Folles*. In addition, he wrote the librettos for the musicals *A Catered Affair* (in which he also starred); *Newsies, the Musical*; and *Kinky Boots*. Fierstein also wrote and produced *Casa Valentina*, a play based on the true story of a group of heterosexual married men in the early 1960s who met on the weekends at a rundown resort in the Catskill Mountains of New York, where they could freely indulge in their shared desire to dress and act like women. He then wrote and starred in *Bella Bella*. The monologue play was about U.S. politician Bella Abzug. Beyond Broadway, gay rights activists welcomed Fierstein's commentaries in the early 21st century on the public television documentary series *In the Life*.

—**Stacey Becker, 2022**

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Mark your Calendars!

- 6/4 *Prelude to a Kiss* Opens
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