

Creating Art Experiences

written by JESSICA BLANK & ERIK JENSEN

directed by COLLEEN LONGSHAW JACKSON



EXONERATED

OCTOBER 8 - NOVEMBER 7, 2021
STUDIO THEATER

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"....All the best performers bring to their role something more, something different than what the author put on paper. That's what makes theatre live. That's why it persists."

Stephen Sondheim

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Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) amplify and clarify sound by cutting down or eliminating ambient noise. Assistive Listening Systems are installed in both the Senney Theater and the Studio Theater and were completely overhauled during the summer of 2021 to improve sound quality and performance. Headsets may be used at any seat and, with the upgrade, induction neck loops are also now available for patrons who use hearing aids and cochlear implants with a "T" switch. **Ask your audiologist whether your hearing aid or cochlear implant has a "T" switch (telecoil) and how to use it with an assistive listening headset.**

Who can use an Assistive Listening Device?

Everyone! While induction neck-loops are only compatible with hearing aids and cochlear implants that include a "T" switch, the ear speaker can be used by anyone who wants a little volume boost.

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ALDs are designed to deliver sound directly to an individual and work using specific reserved radio frequencies so as to not conflict with any other devices or equipment in use by the theatre or our patrons. In addition, the ear speakers and the neck loops are designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. It's likely no one will even know you're using one.

Are Assistive Listening Devices available for every show and event at Beck Center?

YES! As long as the event is held inside the Senney or Studio Theater.

Do I need to request an Assistive Listening Device in advance?

You do not need to request an ALD in advance of arriving at the theatre and an ALD can be requested at any time during an event. ALDs are distributed on a first-come-first-served basis free of charge. You may request your ALD at the Customer Service desk in the Beck Center lobby.

Is there a cost for using an Assistive Listening Device?

No, ALDs are distributed free of charge on a first-come-first-served basis.

Do I need to sit in a specific place to use an Assistive Listening Device?

No, all of our ALDs will work from any seat in any of our three theatres.

Do you clean your Assistive Listening Devices?

Yes, we follow the manufactures maintenance recommendations and use antimicrobial wipes to clean all earpieces and neckloops when they are returned before placing them back into storage.

Do I need to arrive early to obtain an Assistive Listening Device?

While obtaining an ALD will not take very long, we strongly recommend that all patrons arrive AT LEAST 20 minutes before the performance to allow time to park, get to the theatre, and find your seat.

I have a hearing aid or cochlear implant, will an Assistive Listening Device work for me?

Induction neckloops are also now available for patrons who use hearing aids and cochlear implants with a "T" switch. Ask your audiologist whether your hearing aid or cochlear implant has a "T" switch (telecoil) and how to use it with an assistive listening headset. Patrons find this to be the best way to use the ALD's.

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House Information

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COVID SAFETY – All patrons are required to wear a proper face covering at all times. All patrons must provide proof of vaccination or negative COVID test and ID before entering the theater.

ACCESSIBILITY – Wheelchair ramps, an elevator, and accessible restrooms make all areas of Beck Center accommodating to all patrons. Theatergoers in wheelchairs should request seats in Row J.

BOX OFFICE HOURS – 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday; and open through intermission on performance dates. For ticket information visit beckcenter.org or call 216.521.2540 x10.

CELL PHONES – Please turn off all cell phones and audible devices as the sound and screen light are distracting to the audience and especially the cast. Texting is not permitted during performances. Copyrights strictly prohibit the photographing, audio or video recording of all productions. Cameras and cell phones may be confiscated.

LARGE PRINT PLAYBILLS – Are available upon request at our Customer Service desk.

FIRE – Exits indicated by red lights are the shortest route to safety. In case of an emergency, please walk to the nearest exit.

LOST & FOUND – Customer Service maintains a Lost & Found service as a courtesy to our patrons. Please report any misplaced items, lost or found, immediately.

PARKING – Convenient, free, on-site parking.

RECYCLING – Beck Center believes in recycling. If you decide to discard your playbill, bottles or cans, please do so in the designated recycling receptacles.

RESTROOMS — Restrooms are located on the ground floor near the garden court at the west end of the Galleria and on the second floor just outside the elevator.

SMOKING – Beck Center is a non-smoking facility. Smoking is permitted outdoors.

About Beck Center

Beck Center for the Arts is proud to be a part of Northeast Ohio's professional theater landscape. Like our colleagues Playhouse Square, Cleveland Play House, Dobama Theatre, and Great Lakes Theater, Beck Center has a letter of agreement with Actors' Equity Association. We hire professional actors from the Northeast Ohio region, including members of Actors' Equity. Specifically, we are a Small Professional Theater (SPT) based on the number of seats, number of our performances, and the maximum weekly hours of work we provide to actors. We are also a producing theater. We produce every show on our stages. Meaning we choose the play, cast and rehearse it, build the sets, props, and costumes, direct and perform the music, and design lights and sound, utilizing regional resources and talent, all for you, our valued patron of the arts. Thank you for supporting live theater!



The Ohio Innocence Project

Rosenthal Institute for Justice University of Cincinnati College of Law

This production is accompanied by post-show talkbacks care of **The Ohio Innocence Project**, featuring Pierce J. Reed (he/him) Program Director for Policy, Legislation, and Education, as well as one guest "exoneree" for each discussion.

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by JESSICA BLANK & ERIK JENSEN

directed by
Colleen Longshaw
lackson*

lighting designer
Tim
Chrisman

scenic designer

Walter Boswell

sound designer

Angie Hayes costume designer

Betty Pitcher

stage manager

Jamie Benetto

FEATURING:

ABRAHAM ADAMS* | ANDREA BELSER | ISAIAH BETTS | REMELL BOWENS SAMANTHA COCCO | AMY FRITSCHE* | STUART HOFFMAN | KEITH KORNAJCIK JOHN POLK | GREG WHITE

Originally produced in New York by The Culture Project, Dede Harris, Morton Swinsky, Bob Balaban, Harit Allan Buchman, Patrick Blake, David Elliot, Jane Bergere, Ruth Hendel, and Cheryl Wiesenfeld.

Poetry from Song Singing Songs by Delbert Tibbs used by permission.

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Audience Note

This play will be performed **WITHOUT** an intermission. Runtime: 1 hour 45 minutes

Cast of Characters

Stuart Hoffman Amy Fritsche*	
Greg White	
Isaiah Betts	
Keith Kornajcik	Male Ensemble 1
John Polk	Male Ensemble 2
Samantha Cocco	Sue, Sandra, Female Ensemble 1
Andrea Belser	Georgia, Female Ensemble 2
Mell-Vonti Bowens	David
Abraham McNeil Adams*	Gary

Production Staff

Artistic Director	Scott Spence
Director	Colleen Longshaw Jackson*
Stage Manager	
Assistant Stage Manager	Alexandra Snoddy
Technical Director	Mark DeVol
Associate Technical Director	Tim Chrisman
Scenic Designer	Walter Boswell
Lighting Designer	
Costume Designer	Betty Pitcher
Sound Designer	
Wardrobe Supervisor	

^{*} Member of the Actors' Equity Association (AEA)

Who's Who in the Company



SCOTT SPENCE (Artistic Director) is enjoying his 31st season at Beck Center! Since 1990, he has produced over 200 shows, directing over 100 himself. The list of favorites grows every season, and

includes PARADE, A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE, SWEENEY TODD, HAIR, PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE, THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION, REEFER MADNESS, THE FIX, ZOMBIE PROM, BLOODY BLOODY ANDREW IACKSON, EVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL, THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE, and the box office smash hits THE PRODUCERS and ALTAR BOYZ. Recently. Scott added to those favorites with productions of CITY OF ANGELS and MATILDA. He is very proud of the awards and acclamations Beck Center for the Arts has received over the past decade, and is especially grateful for having won the Northern Ohio Live Award for Achievement in Theatre in 2006. Outside of these walls, Scott's directorial assignments have included a remounting of Beck Center for the Arts' hit production of ALTAR BOYZ at Playhouse Square's beautiful Hanna Theatre, DAS BARBECÜ at Opera Cleveland, THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO at Case Western Reserve University's Eldred Theatre, OH DAD POOR DAD.... at Cleveland State University Summer Stages, and NOISES OFF at both Weathervane Playhouse in Akron and Berea Summer Theatre. An adjunct faculty member at Cleveland State University, Scott has also had the privilege to direct Sartre's NO EXIT and Strindberg's MISS IULIE.

Scott holds an MFA in Directing from Western Illinois University and is a trained stage fight choreographer, having studied extensively with the SAFD. As always, he dedicates all the work he does to his two extraordinarily talented leading ladies, Rachel and Carleigh. You both amaze me every day.



COLLEEN LONGSHAW
JACKSON* (Director) is
a Cleveland, Ohio native
and is thrilled to return to
the Beck Center, where she

and is thrilled to return to the Beck Center, where she was last seen as Aida in Aida. She is currently the Chief Diversity, Equity and

Inclusion Officer for the City of Shaker Heights. She is also an adjunct professor at Baldwin Wallace in the Musical Theatre department. Colleen holds both a BFA and MFA in acting from Kent State University. She most recently directed Dominique Moriesseaus', Blood at the Root at Cleveland State University and Idris Goodwins', Jacked! at Cleveland Play House. Acting credits include: Kiss me, Kate (National Tour). The Groove Factory (New York Music Theatre Festival), Hairspray (Northshore Music Theatre, Porthouse Theatre), Blackademics (Cleveland Play House), Pipeline (Cleveland Play House), The Full Monty (Northshore Music Theatre), The Piano Lesson (The Cleveland Play House), Starmites(Porthouse Theatre), Made in America (Dobama Theatre). A Christmas Carol (Great Lakes Theatre), The Color Purple (Karamu Theatre). South Pacific (Porthouse Theatre). Dreamgirls (Cain Park), Once On This Island, (Porthouse Theatre), Big River (Porthouse Theatre). Avenue X (Cain Park), Godspell (Porthouse Theatre), The Buddy Holly Story (Carousel Dinner Theater), Twelfth Night(Ohio

Shakespeare Festival).
Special thanks to my family and friends for all of their love and support. Now, let's go change the world!

JAMIE BENETTO (Stage Manager) Recently stage

managed: THIS GIRL LAUGHS, THIS GIRL CRIES, THIS GIRL DOES NOTHING, SHREK: THE MUSICAL, MY FIRST TIME, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, THE LITTLE MERMAID (both years), RUTHLESS!, THE SPITFIRE GRILL, HEATHERS: THE MUSICAL. She also works with Beck Center Youth Theater. Jamie has worked at Cleveland Play House as an Assistant Stage Manager and Production Assistant for RABBIT HOLE, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, DREAM A LITTLE DREAM, AND CROWNS and GOOD PEOPLE. Other area credits include Ntozake Shange's WHY I HAD TO DANCE at Oberlin College and Playhouse Square, THE SECRET GARDEN at Cain Park, and INTO THE WOODS and THE SEAGUIL at Great Lakes Theater.



ABRAHAM McNEIL
ADAMS* (Gary) was
born in Worland, Wyoming.
He holds a BFA from the
University of Utah and an
MFA from Ohio University.
For the last six years, Abe
has chosen Northeast Ohio

as his home. He has been privileged to work in a number of different theaters throughout the region including: Dobama, Talespinner Children's, None Too Fragile, Cleveland Public, Playwright's Local, Seat of the Pants, and Mamai Theater Company. Special thanks to his family both near and far for their unwavering support.



ANDREA BELSER (Georgia, Female Ensemble 2) Andrea is a native of Cleveland with a Bachelor of Arts in Theater Studies, minoring in Vocal Music and Dance from Wright State University.

Currently, she teaches dance and theater acting to students of all ages in a variety of theaters and outreach programs, including but not limited to Playhouse Square, Cleveland Play House, DANCEcleveland, and Great Lakes Theatre. She also performs as an actor, dancer, and/or singer around Northeast Ohio. In addition to onstage, Andrea also works backstage as a choreographer, stage manager, or dresser/ costume assistant. She has also been awarded 2008 Best Actress in Cleveland and nominated for the same in 2012.



ISAIAH BETTS (Robert) is elated to be performing for the first time with Beck Center of the Arts. He is very excited to relay such an important experience on the stage. This is his second

live-theater performance post-lockdown; he recently played Macbeth for Chagrin Arts. Over lockdown, he has recently appeared in Evergreen Theater Collective's LYSISTRATA as the Magistrate and A CHRISTMAS CAROL: THE

MUSICAL as Old Ioe. He also filmed feature indie BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS premiering later this year. Other professional credits include Oscar-Winning IUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH, CHERRY, Cleveland Public Theater's GLORIA as Shawn, and Wake Up and Live's BLACK AND BLUE RHAPSODY as Boy. Isaiah is 21 years old and graduated from the Chagrin Falls Academy for the Performing Arts, where he played Reverend Winemiller in a production of THE ECCENTRICITIES OF A NIGHTINGALE. He also does Standardized Patient work at Case Western Reserve University and is a performer for The Dinner Detective. In his free time, Isaiah loves to go on runs, design luxury suits and watch any anime he can find. Isaiah would like to thank his boyfriend, family and friends for always supporting his creative endeavors. Break a leg cast!



MELL-VONTI BOWENS (David) Mell-Vonti is ecstatic not only to be back on stage but to be back at Beck for the 4Th time! In the words of our old pal Donkey, "THIS IS

NICE!" All praises to the most High for being so amazing! Catch Mell-Vonti in Dobama Theatre's production of KILL MOVE PARADISE this Spring. (MellVontiBowensJr.com) (@ TheRealSup3rstar).



SAMANTHA COCCO (Sue, Sandra, Female Ensemble 1) makes her debut at Beck Center for the Arts with THE EXONERATED. She has been working on stage and on screen in Cleveland since

2017, including two appearances onstage at Playhouse Square in 2019. Favorite roles include Melissa in LOVE LETTERS, Phyllis in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, and Sunny Jacobs in THE EXONERATED (it's a great show, have you ever seen it?). By day she is the Administrator for the Social Justice Institute at Case Western Reserve University. Thank you for supporting live, local theater - especially now as we transition back to our beloved stages.

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AMY FRITSCHE* (Sunny) makes her Beck Center Debut. She is currently an Associate Professor of Acting, and Musical Theatre at Kent State University. She has directed a number of plays and musicals and

gave a TedX on "Theater as a medium of Social Change" through the lens of IRENA'S VOW. She has worked with Fox Animations Studios, toured nationally with ANNIE and internationally in the world premier of BEST INTENTIONS in London. England and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She performed at Cleveland Play House in the world premier of THESE MORTAL HOSTS. THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, and the reading of LITTLE ROW BOAT OR, CONJECTURE. Regionally, she has performed at Phoenix Theater. Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, CATCO Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, Dobama Theatre, Porthouse Theatre, Mamai Theatre and Odyssey Theater in Los Angeles. Favorite roles include, NEXT TO NORMAL (Diana), ARCADIA (Hannah Jarvis), SUPERIOR DONUTS (Officer Randy), 9 TO 5 (Violet), AS YOU LIKE IT (Rosalind), A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC (Countess Charlotte), ANNIE (Grace Farrell), CHAPTER TWO (Jenny) and VIOLET (Violet). She received the 2015 Cleveland Critics Circle Theater Award for Best Actress in a Musical for her portraval of Violet and the 2018 Cleveland Critics Circle Theater Award for Best Actress in a Musical for her portrayal of Diana in NEXT TO NORMAL. She is a proud member of SAG/AFTRA, AGVA, and AEA.



STUART HOFFMAN (Kerry) was last seen on the Reck

was last seen on the Beck stage in 2019's Glengarry Glen Ross. While lucky enough to have worked at most local theaters, he's kept busy this past year doing radio work with Radio on the Lake

Theatre, specializing in the art of the radio play. He will be seen next in Blank Canvas's remount of Cabaret in December. Thank you to Colleen and Scott for putting on this important piece of theater. Love to Nichole.



KEITH KORNAJCIK (Male Ensemble 2) returns to the Beck stage after an absence of 20 years, having previously appeared in Joe Orton's WHAT THE BUTLER SAW. In the intervening years, he has plyed his

trade at CLE theaters including: Bad Epitaph, Charenton, Clague, Cleveland Public Theatre, Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, Ensemble, Karamu, Playwright's Local and many others. Keith sends thanks to Barb and Scott Krauss for the continuing love and support.



JOHN POLK (Male Ensemble 1) returns to his Beck Center "home" after a nearly six-year "hiatus." Beck audiences may have caught his act in MARY POPPINS: THE MUSICAL

(Admiral Boom, The Chairman), LEND ME A TENOR (Henry Saunders), Urinetown: The Musical (Senator Fipp), and MY FAVORITE YEAR (King Kaiser), among other things. He's also appeared locally and regionally in such shows as KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN (The Warden), SIDE SHOW (Sir), and CABARET (Herr Schultz) at Blank Canvas Theatre. THE DROWSY CHAPERONE (Feldzieg), and LITTLE WOMEN: THE MUSICAL (Old Mr. Laurence) at French Creek Theatre, and MACBETH (Duncan) and THE WINTER'S TALE (Old Shepherd) at Oberlin Summer Theatre Festival, Much thanks to Scott and the whole production crew for this particular challenge, and to My Charming Wife, Laura, whose support and endless patience makes it all possible...and fun



GREG WHITE (Delbert)

an Actor and Director who has performed in the Cleveland area for decades. He was last seen at Dobama Theater as Kenyatta in Dominique Morriseau's SUNSET

BABY. He has also performed at Cleveland Public Theater in Lisa Langford's THE ART OF LONGING. Most of Greg's performances were at Ensemble Theater in several plays like VOODOO MACBETH as Banguo, EAST OF EDEN. THE GREAT GATSBY, DEATH OF A SALESMAN as Willy Loman and WATER BY THE SPOONFUL. He also directed SLOW DANCE ON THE KILLING GROUND.In 2015.he was recognized as Best Actor in Scene Magazine for his performance of Thurgood Marshall in THURGOOD and for Superior Achievement by the Cleveland Critics Circle for his performance of Chris Christopherson in Eugene O'Neill's ANNA CHRISTY, both for Ensemble Theater. Greg was last seen at the Beck Center in two separate productions of PETER PAN, playing his most memorable role as Nana the Dog. Greg received his training at the Ohio University School of Theater.

PRODUCTION

WALTER BOSWELL (Scenic Designer)

Walter is returning to Beck Center for the Arts after designing for previous seasons. His designs have also been seen at Baldwin Wallace College, Dobama Theatre, Karamu House, Lorain County Community College. Playwrights Local, and Theatre in the Circle. He also spent 18 years as the scenic and lighting designer for Middlebury College's summer program. Walter received the Cleveland Critics Circle Award for Scenic Design of THE ADDING MACHINE at Lorain County Community College in 1984 and THE HAIRY APE at Ensemble Theatre in 2017.

BETTY PITCHER (Costume Designer) is

the Wardrobe Manager and Costume Rental Coordinator at the Beck Center. Her Beck Center credits include: MATILDA, SHREK, GYPSY, LITTLE MERMAID, TRIALS OF ROBIN HOOD, SEUSSICAL, CINDER-ELLA, LARAMIE PROJECT, ALL GREEK TO ME, SNOW WHITE'S ADVENTURES, and SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK LIVE. She has been a costume designer for more than 12 years and has created custom costume pieces for Beck Center for the Arts, Player's Guild, Chagrin Valley Little Theatre and North Canton Playhouse. Betty would like to thank her son, Jeremy for "volunteering" her to "help" all those years ago. Betty's Costume Creations & Rentals (BCCR)

TIM CHRISMAN (Lighting Designer) is a graduate of the Technical Theatre program of Texas State University. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Tim was a recent addition to the Beck Center for The Arts professional theater staff, filling the role of Associate Technical Director and in house Lighting Designer. He is very excited to contribute to the revival of live theatre for the patrons of Beck Center and the Greater Cleveland area.

ANGIE HAYES (Sound Designer) has designed and mixed sound for productions at many area theaters and high schools. She has also recorded and sound designed for several podcasts, including Sidewalk, Munchen, MN, and a radio play series for The Endangered Species Theatre Project in Frederick, MD. She has a Bachelor Degree in Music from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, with an emphasis in Recording Technology and Music Business.

JESSICA BLANK & ERIK JENSEN

(Playwrights) Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen are writers, actors, and directors. Together, they are authors of THE EXONERATED, a play based on interviews they conducted with over forty wrongfully convicted death-row inmates across the United States. In 2002. Erik and lessica codirected The EXONERATED at the Actors' Gang Theater. That production was nominated for five Ovation Awards and three NAACP Awards: it won the Ovation for Best World Premiere Play. Bob Balaban's New York (Culture Project) and London (Riverside Studios) productions of THE EXONERATED won Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, Fringe First, and Herald Angel Awards, and were nominated for the Hull-Warriner Award and the John Gassner Playwriting Award. THE EXONERATED has also received awards from Amnesty International. the American Bar Association, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawvers. Death Penalty Focus, and Court TV, and was listed by the "New York Times" as "the number one play of 2002." It has been translated into Spanish, French, Italian, and Japanese, and was made into an award-winning movie for Court TV adapted by Jessica and Erik and starring Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, Brian Dennehy, Aidan Quinn, and Delroy Lindo. Their

new documentary play, AFTERMATH, based on interviews they conducted with Iraqi civilian refugees in Jordan, opened New York Theater Workshop's 2009-10 Off-Broadway season to rave reviews. That production, directed by lessica, was nominated for Drama League awards for Distinguished Production of a Play and Distinguished Performance (ensemble), and has toured internationally. As an actor. Jessica has appeared on television in "Rescue Me," HBO's "Bored to Death," "The Bronx Is Burning," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," "One Life to Live," and "Guiding Light"; film credits include "The Namesake" (dir. Mira Nair). "The Exonerated" (dir. Bob Balaban), "You're Nobody Till Somebody Kills You" (exec. prod. Spike Lee), and the indies "On the Road With Judas" (Sundance 2007) and "Undermind." She has acted in theaters throughout New York City, at the Sundance Film Lab. and internationally at the Dublin Theater Festival, LIBERTY CITY (co-written with April Yvette Thompson) ran Off-Broadway at New York Theater Workshop in 2008 (with Jessica directing) and was nominated for the Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk,

and Outer Critics Circle awards. Jessica's first novel, "Almost Home," was published by Hyperion in 2007, was optioned by Jon Bon Jovi's production company (with Jessica and Erik adapting the screenplay). Her second novel, "Karma for Beginners," was published by Hyperion in August 2009, and was nominated by the American Library Association as a 2009 Best Book for Young Adults, Jessica and Erik's writing has been published in several magazines and journals, including "The Believer," "The Dramatist," "Another Magazine," and "Theater History Studies." "Living Justice," their book on the making of THE EXONERATED, was published in 2005 by Simon and Schuster. Their work has been supported by the Ford Foundation, the Soros Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the MAP Fund/ Creative Capital, and the New World Foundation. They are married and live in Brooklyn with their daughter, Sadie, and their dog, Yoda.

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Actors and Stage Managers



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