



GULF SHORE
PLAYHOUSE

Kristen Coury, CEO & Producing Artistic Director

The Tenth Annual

← **NEW WORKS**
FESTIVAL →

THE REFUGEES by Brent Askari

September 15, 2023 at 7:30PM • DIRECTED BY Marshall Jones III

CIRCLE FORWARD by Deb Hiatt

September 16, 2023 at 4:00PM • DIRECTED BY Jeffrey Binder

THE LION TAMER by Ivan R. Lopez

September 16, 2023 at 7:30PM • DIRECTED BY Marshall Jones III

HRDZA by F. J. Hartland

September 17, 2023 at 3:00PM • DIRECTED BY Kristen Coury

NEW WORKS FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 at 7:30PM

THE REFUGEES by Brent Askari

Featuring

Arti Ishak * Steve Key*
Nuah Ozryel* David Whalen* Margot White*
Ethan Zeph*

Casting By
Michael Cassara, CSA

Stage Management
Rebecca R.D. Hamlin*

Directed By
Marshall Jones III

COO & Managing Director
Joel Markus

CEO & Producing Artistic Director
Kristen Coury

(*) Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional
Actors and Stage Managers in the United States



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the CAST

THE REFUGEES

by Brent Askari

YATES	David Whalen
POPPY	Margot White
WYNN	Ethan Zeph
SALMA	Arti Ishak
BARRY	Steve Key
SAMIR	Nuah Ozryel

CIRCLE FORWARD

by Deb Hiett

ETHAN	Daniel Allitt
LEXI	Arti Ishak
MIA	Beth Hylton
CALISTA	Carolina Miranda

THE LION TAMER

by Ivan R. Lopez

JUNIOR	Max Singer
STEVE	Ethan Zeph
JOSEPH WELLINGTON	William Parry
ANDERSON	Steve Key

HRDZA

by F. J. Hartland

MAREK	Jeffrey Binder
VERKA	Beth Hylton
LENKA	Carolina Miranda
ZUZANA	Maureen Silliman
PAVOL	Max Singer
YUNUS	Daniel Allitt
MATUS	Aiden Thayer
THE ACTOR	William Parry

ABOUT *the* PLAYWRIGHTS



BRENT ASKARI (*The Refugees*) is a Persian-American writer and actor. He is the winner of the 2019 National New Play Network Smith Prize for Political Theater for his play *The Refugees*. Other plays include *American Underground* (Runner-up winner Bonnie and Terry Burman New Play Award, produced at Barrington Stage Company 2019), *Hard Cell* (PlayPenn Conference 2017, produced at Geva Theatre Center in 2019), *White Party* (semi-finalist for O'Neill Conference, Finalist for Bay Area Playwrights Festival and Ashland New Play Festival), *Digby's Home* (Semi-finalist O'Neill, produced at Mad Horse Theatre), *Exiled Kings Of Persia* (Finalist Bay Area Playwrights Festival), *Cocktails and Travails* (Winner of Neil Simon Festival's National New Play Contest and produced at The Theater Project), and *Bending Reeds* (Semi-Finalist Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Blank Stage Living Room Series). In addition, he has had plays produced at or developed by Ensemble Studio Theatre LA, Vital Theatre, Melrose Theatre, The 78th Street Theatre, The Boston Theatre Marathon, American Theatre, The Drilling Company, Choice Theatricals, Penobscot Theatre Company, The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine, Swarthmore College, Eastern Connecticut State University, and the College of Southern Nevada. Brent has also been a finalist for the Actor's Theatre of Louisville's Heideman Award, the Reva Shiner Comedy Award, and the Mountain Playhouse International Comedy Playwriting Contest. He was part of HBO's New Writers Project and has written screenplays for Paramount Pictures, Marvel Films, MTV, and Reveille Entertainment. Brent is a National New Play Network affiliate artist and a member of Mad Horse Theatre Company.



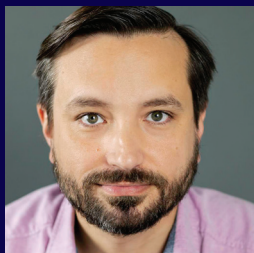
DEB HIETT (*Circle Forward*) Deb Hiett's new musical *The Sunny Survival Caravan* had its first reading as part of the 2023 Playwrights Union "First Peek" Series (Los Angeles). Some of Deb's full-length plays include *The Super Variety Match Bonus Round!* (premiered at Rogue Machine Theater, Los Angeles), *Miss Keller Has No Second Book* (premiered at Gulfshore Playhouse, Naples, FL), *The Escape Thingy* and *The Clearing in the Jacoby*, (both Finalists for the Reva Shiner Comedy Award). Her play *Call Time* was a Semifinalist in the 2022 Lanford Wilson New American Play Festival. She's twice been a Semifinalist for the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference and her play *The Presentation* was selected for the Samuel French Off-Off-Broadway Short Play Festival.

Deb's short film *Gratitude Jar Time Capsule* won "Best Comedy Television Pilot" at the 2020 Atlanta Comedy Film Festival and the 2021 Women's Comedy Film Festival in Atlanta. Her film "Open House" won Los Angeles Film Festival/FunnyorDie's "Make 'Em LAFF" Showcase, Best Comedy Short at the Women in Comedy Festival, and Best Video Short at iOWest's Funny Women LA Festival. She's also an actress and musician. More info at DebHiett.com.



F. J. HARTLAND (*Hrdza*) holds an MFA in Playwriting from Carnegie-Mellon University where he was a Shubert Fellow and the winner of the Bud Yorkin Playwriting Award. He made his New York City playwriting debut at the age of 23 when the Ensemble Studio Theatre workshopped his play *A Piano Player With Sad Brown Eyes*. Twice, he was the winner of the Samuel French OOBShort Play Festival. Other NYC venues where his work has been seen include: Emerging Artists Theatre, GayFestNYC,

the 13th Street Theatre, Lovecreek Productions, Quaigh Theatre, and Lincoln Center Library Theatre. In 2019, F.J.'s short play *Tina* was named Best Play in the Equity Library Theatre's Summer Short Play Festival. His ten-minute play *What the Puck?* was a finalist for the Heideman Award at the Actors Theatre of Louisville. His script *Waning Gibbous* was selected as the winner of the Second Annual Monologue Contest at Talking Horse Productions in Missouri in 2021. *Across a Crowded Room* took first place honors in the Little Theatre of Alexandria's One-Act Play Contest. Samuel French (now Concord), Original Works, *Barely Seen*, *Exposition Review*, *Next Stage Press Mini Plays Magazine*, and *The Louisville Review* have published his plays. In 2008 he was the recipient of a Playwriting Fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His full-length play *Games of the Mind* won Throughline Theatre's New Play Competition in Pittsburgh. Another play *Waiting for Fair* was chosen for the inaugural season of Pittsburgh Playhouse/Point Park University's Virtual New Play Festival. F.J. has made a record-setting eighteen appearances in the Pittsburgh New Works Festival, winning Best Play four times (for *Postcards from a Dead Dog*, *Funeral in the Rain*, *Shaving Lessons* and *Half-Windsor Knots*, and *The Perhaps*). Other Pittsburgh venues where his work has been produced include: Duquesne University, Bricolage, South Park Theatre, Future Ten, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, FirstNight Pittsburgh, Cup-A-Jo, and Pyramid Productions to name a few. In addition to being a playwright, F.J. is an experienced stage director (with more than 125 productions to his credit) and a professional actor (Actors Equity Association member since 1991).



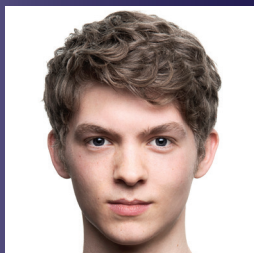
IVAN R. LOPEZ (*The Lion Tamer*) is a Cuban-American playwright and theatre artist. He has worked professionally as a playwright, director, actor, and clown in Miami, Atlanta, Denver, and New York. Most recently, his play *I Found This on the Web* premiered at Summer Shorts at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami. He is a member of the inaugural cohort of City Theatre's "Homegrown," a playwright development program supporting BIPOC voices. Ivan is on the theatre faculty at Florida International University, teaching dramatic literature and acting. He has an MFA from the National Theatre Conservatory in Denver. www.ivanrlopez.com.



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ABOUT *the* ACTORS



DANIEL ALLITT is an actor based in New York City. Earlier in the summer, he starred in the Co World Premier of *A Distinct Society* written by Kareem Fahmy and directed by Giovanna Sardelli at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. In 2022 he graduated from Rutgers Mason-Gross School of the Arts with a BFA in acting. Some credits at Rutgers include Sebastian and Viola in *Twelfth Night* staged at The Globe Theatre in London, and The Mastiff in Jen Silverman's *The Moors*. Recently, he has performed in a reading of Edwin Sanchez's upcoming work

Lottery Boy as Blake with The Tent Theater. Outside of acting, you can catch him most days at the local rock climbing wall.



JEFFREY BINDER (Director of *Circle Forward*) is an actor, playwright, and director. He has performed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, Regionally, and London's West End as well as on television and in film. Additionally, he served as Associate Artistic Director of Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples, Florida for six seasons. Acting: Broadway: *Lion King*, *Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Original Broadway Cast), *Mary Poppins*, *Side Man*. West End: *Side Man* (Premiere). NYC: *Music Hall* (US Premiere 59E59th), *Romance/The New Testament* (NY Premieres/

Neil LaBute, 59E59th), *Dr. Faustus* (Classic Stage Company), *Birth and After Birth* (Atlantic), *Princess Turandot* (Blue Light) Regional: *Ride the Cyclone* (McCarter Theatre), *The White Chip* (Merrimack Rep, World Premiere), *The God Game* (Premiere Gulfshore Playhouse/Capital Repertory Theatre), *Love in the Wars* (Premiere, Bard Summerscape), *The Master and Margarita* (Bard Summerscape), *Bob* (Humana 2011), *Tartuffe* (NJSF), Gulfshore Playhouse: Numerous productions including the one person *Higher* (filmed, also playwright), *An Iliad*, *Scapino* (World Premiere, also playwright), *My Fair Lady*, *Holmes and Watson*, *Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Price*. Television's "Damages" (recurring), "Law and Order," "L&O: Criminal Intent," "Guiding Light," "All My Children." Directing: *Maytag Virgin*, *The Lady Demands Satisfaction*, *In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play*, and the upcoming *Camelot* at Gulfshore Playhouse. MFA, NYU.



BETH HYLTON is delighted to return to Gulfshore Playhouse where she was last seen as M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*. Other performances at GP include *A Doll's House* (Nora), *Life* (x) 3 (Sonia), *Blithe Spirit* (Ruth). She is a member of the resident company of Everyman Theatre in Baltimore where she has performed in over 25 plays. Favorite performances there include *The Sound Inside* (Bella), *The Revolutionists* (Marie Antoinette), *Intimate Apparel* (Mrs. Van Buren), *Noises Off* (Belinda Blair), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Blanche) and *Outside Mullingar*

(Rosemary). OFF-BROADWAY: 59E59: *Handbagged* (Liz). OTHER NYC: NYC Fringe Fest; Vital Theatre Company; Gorilla Rep; founding member, Ground Floor Theatre Lab. Regional: Round House Theatre: *Throw Me on the Burnpile* and *Light Me Up* (Lamby), *Small Mouth Sounds* (Joan), *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn*, (Gwen), *Natural Shocks*(reading) ; Rep Stage: *The Heidi Chronicles* (Heidi), *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Theresa); Woolly Mammoth: *CollectiveRage* (Betty1), *Appropriate* (Rachael), *Martha Josie and the Chinese Elvis* (Josie); Center Stage: *Clybourne Park* (Bev/Kathy), *Beneatha's Place* (Harriet); Maltz Jupiter: *The 39 Steps* (The Woman); Delaware Theatre Company: *Blithe Spirit* (Elvira); Weston Playhouse: *Death of a Salesman* (Miss Forsythe, Christopher Lloyd as Willy Loman); Public Theatre of Maine: *The Cocktail Hour* (Nina), *On Golden Pond* (Chelsea); Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre: *House and Garden* (JoAnna), *Private Lives* (Amanda), *An Ideal Husband* (Lady Chiltern); Olney Theatre Center: *Hay Fever* (Myra), *The Savannah Disputation* (Melissa), *The Heiress* (Marian); PlayMakers Rep: *Hay Fever* (Sorel), *The School For Wives* (Georgette), *Look Homeward, Angel* (Laura), *Wit* (u/s Tandy Cronyn as Vivian Bearing); The Hipp: *Suddenly Last Summer* (Catherine), *Up* (Helen); Kennedy Theatre NC: *Skylight* (Kyra); Ford's: *The Heavens Are Hung In Black* (Mrs Winston), *Member of the Wedding* (Janice); Kennedy Center: *Mister Roberts* (Lieutenant Girard).



ARTI ISHAK (they/them) is an actor, director and writer, recently named a 3Arts Make A Wave Artist. Acting credits include *The Best Decision You Ever Made*, *Fantastic Super Great Nation Numero Uno* (The Second City); *KISS* (Haven); *Venus in Fur* (Circle); *Witch*, *Buried Child* (Writers); *Men on Boats* (American Theater Company). TV: *Southside* (HBO); *Dark Matter* (Apple TV); *Chicago Med* (NBC). Directing credits include short films *Shukran Bas* (Means of Productions), *ba la* (HF Productions), Theatre: *Same Sects* (Haven Chicago), *Hatefuck* (First Floor Theatre). Arti is staff with The Chicago Inclusion

Project, an instructor at Black Box Acting, and an organizer with SWANASA Central. They are represented by Paonessa Talent Agency. www.artishak.com



STEVE KEY is thrilled to join this cast for the premiere reading of *The Refugees* at Gulfshore Playhouse. Most recently he performed in Steppenwolf's *BUG*. Prior to that he was in The Alley's *The Humans*. Steve lives in NY where he worked on Broadway's *Sweat*, as well as the Off-Broadway productions of *The Effect* and *Blue Surge*. Steve's hometown is Chicago where he's worked with; Steppenwolf, Goodman, A Red Orchid, Northlight, Victory Gardens, Shattered Globe Theatre (where he's a former Artistic Director) and American Blues Theater (where he's an ensemble Member). Steve toured with *Sweat*,

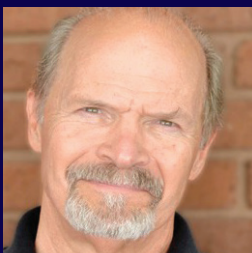
and the Broadway production of *August: Osage County*. He has worked at The Town Hall, in Galway IRL, The Ahmanson, in LA and The Kennedy Center, in DC. Steve has received 6 Jeff Awards and 4 nominations for Principal and Supporting Actor and Ensemble (equity and non-equity). Film: *Hayseed*, *1,000 Acres*, *At Any Price*, *Blackmail*, *Canvas*, *Public Enemies*, *Salvaging*, *Three Days*. TV: *"South Side"*, *"FBI: Most Wanted"*, *"The Good Fight"*, *"Elementary"*, *"Chicago Fire"*, *"Law & Order – SVU"*, *"Family Practice"*, *"Chicago Code"*, *"Boss"*, and *Mob Doctor*. For more info, visit: Stevekeyactor.com.



CAROLINA MIRANDA is so happy to be here at Gulfshore for the first time!!! Off-Broadway: *Americano!*, *A New Musical* (New World Stages) Touring: *Nick Jr. Live!* (1st Nat'l) Regional: *Jersey Boys* (Weathervane), *Elf: The Musical* (Argyle), & *Heathers: The Musical* (White Plains PAC). Most importantly, Carolina prides herself in preserving her inner child & spreading joy and silliness wherever she can! So much love to my parents for always supporting my dreams, my team at Take 3 Talent for always having my back, and the lovely folks of Gulfshore Playhouse for welcoming me into their home. We are creatures of love and nature: don't forget to honor both :) @carolinamakesnoise | carolinamakesnoise.com



NUAH OZRYEL Previous credits include NY: Off Broadway - *The Vagrant Trilogy* (The Public Theater), *The Art of Hijab*, *Kohl Black* and *The Right Way to Pray* (FiveMyles); *Rest Upon the Wind* (Skirball Center); *I Come From Syria* (Beit Jeddo). Regional: *Hard Cell* (Geva Theatre - Rochester). TV: "Madam Secretary" (CBS), "The Other Two" (Max), "Law & Order: SVU" (NBC), "Mr. Robot" (USA), "The Looming Tower" (Hulu) and "The Blacklist" (NBC). Film: *Moments Before* (Lithium Productions). BA: University of Toronto. MFA: Columbia University.



WILLIAM PARRY is happy to return to Gulfshore Playhouse and the pleasure of working with Kristen Coury again, having appeared here with Maureen Silliman in *Native Gardens* and *Love Letters*; as Joe Keller in *All My Sons*; Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady*; as well as several New Works Festivals. William's first show in NYC was the original *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He also originated roles in the Broadway productions of the rock musicals, *Sgt. Peppers...* and *Rockabye Hamlet*, directed by Gower Champion, as well as *Into the Light*, *The Leaf People*, and

Agamemnon at Lincoln Center. Also on Broadway: James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park* with George and *Passion* (both filmed for PBS), *Camelot* (HBO) as understudy to Richard Burton and Richard Harris. *Gypsy*, directed by Sam Mendes and starring Bernadette Peters, and *Groundhog Day*. His numerous off-Broadway credits include John Weidman and Sondheim's *Assassins* at Playwrights Horizons, and their Road Show at the Public. Also at the New York Shakespeare Festival: *The Knife*, *Cymbeline*, *Dispatches*, and *Wonderland in Concert* (with Meryl Streep). Bill has also performed in the National Tours of *A Few Good Men*, *The King and I*, and *Titanic* (as Capt. E.J. Smith.) In addition to the above-mentioned productions at Gulfshore, other favorites include: *All The Way*, *Saint Joan*, *The Rainmaker*, *The American Clock*, *Biloxi Blues*, and *Blanco!* at Goodspeed, where he and Maureen Silliman first met. Film and Television credits include *In & Out*, *Domestic Disturbance*, "Spencer for Hire", "One Life to Live", several episodes of "Law and Order" and "The Pretender". For radio listeners, two seasons on Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. In 2022, he was pleased to work on the premiere of *Knoxville*, a new musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, at the Asolo Theater in Sarasota. It was written and directed by a true luminary of the theater, the late Frank Galati.



MAUREEN SILLIMAN is excited to be returning to Gulfshore Playhouse having previously appeared in *Love Letters*, *Native Gardens*, *My Fair Lady*, *Vanya and Sonya* and *Masha and Spike*, *Miss Keller Has No Second Book* and many New Works Festivals. She was on Broadway in *Shenandoah*, *I Remember Mama* (with Liv Ullman) and *Is There Life After High School?*, and Off-Broadway in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (NY Shakespeare Festival), *Marathon Dancing*, *Reckless*, *Blue Window* (also on the West Coast -LA Drama Critics Award) and *Three Postcards*.

Maureen toured with *Fiddler on the Roof* (as Golde opposite Theodore Bikel), *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (with Shelley Winters - NJ Drama Critics Award) and *The Gingerbread Lady*. Her regional credits include *Falsettos* (Pittsburgh Public), *The Belle of Amherst*, *The Real Thing*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Two River Theater), *Zhivago* (La Jolla Playhouse), *The Cocktail Hour*, *A Shayne Maidel* (Delaware Theater Company), *The Goat* (Southern Rep) and *Pure Confidence* (Cincinnati Playhouse - Acclaim Award. Maureen was in the films *Blue Window* (PBS), *Reckless* and *Childhood's End*, and on TV in "Law and Order," "Feds," "Dixie :Changing Habits," "Sanctuary of Fear," as well as two years as Pam Chandler on "Guiding Light." Most recently, she had a recurring role on the new Apple TV series "Hello Tomorrow."

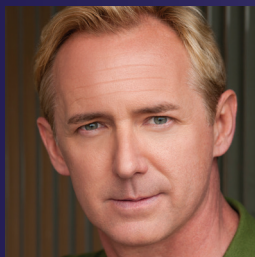


MAX SINGER is thrilled to be returning to Gulfshore Playhouse to help cultivate new work! Max received his Master of Fine Arts in Acting from University of California San Diego. He made his professional debut at the La Jolla Playhouse in the world premiere of *The Squirrels* directed by Tony Award® winner Christopher Ashley. His other theatre credits include *Hamlet* at TheatreLab NYC, *This Hair I Tear Is Mine* and *Echo in a Diner* at Lenfest Center For the Arts, *And Then You Wait* at La Jolla Playhouse's WoW Festival, *(w)holeness*, *Joshua*, and *The*

Clitorish at the Wagner New Play Festival, and *Wandering Feast* and *For Honor* at San Diego Repertory Theatre.



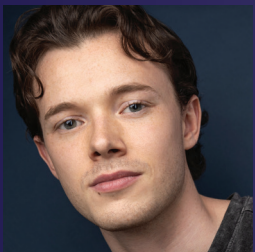
AIDEN THAYER is 15 years old and has been acting in local theaters (The Naples Players, Bonita Center for the Arts, Florida Repertory Theater and Gulfshore Playhouse) since he was eight. This is Aiden's third experience with Gulfshore Playhouse, and hopes for many more to come. Although the theatre is Aiden's true passion, he is a talented drummer and often performs with other musicians. He would like to dedicate this show along with all future ones to his grandmother, Joy.



DAVID WHALEN is thrilled to be back at GSP to work on this exciting play. GSP credits include: *The Price, An Enemy of the People, & Holmes and Watson*. Recently, David appeared in the acclaimed production of *Hamlet* at The Guthrie Theater, marking their 60th Anniversary. David's theatrical credits include: Roundabout Theatre, South Coast Rep (10 productions), Pittsburgh Public (12 productions), City Theatre Company (7 productions), Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (5 productions), Alley Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Center Stage in Baltimore, Arden Theatre, Folger Theatre, Hartford Stage, Everyman Theatre, Roundhouse Theatre, Huntington Theatre, Laguna Playhouse, McCarter Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Peoples Light & Theatre, Playmakers Rep, Virginia Stage, among others. AWARDS Performer of the Year by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, KEVIN KLINE. BARRYMORE, & HELEN HAYES. Representative FILM & TV credits: "The Loudest Voice," "FBI: Most Wanted," "American Pastoral," "Southpaw," "The Last Witch Hunter," The Fault In Our Stars, Jack Reacher, Cyril, Unsinkable, Checkmate, 61*, The Christmas Tree, Black Dahlia, My Bloody Valentine, Indictment: The McMartin Trial, Three Rivers, and George Washington in 1787: The American Constitution. Up next, David will appear in the World Premiere of *The Bluegrass Mile*, followed by *American Buffalo*. More at www.davidwhalenactor.net



MARGOT WHITE is thrilled to be making her Gulfshore debut with this timely, funny, and poignant premiere of *The Refugees*. Other favorite credits include: Broadway: *Farinelli & the King* (Belasco); *Love, Love, Love* (Roundabout); *Constellations* (MTC), Aaron Sorkin's *The Farnsworth Invention* (Music Box); Off-Broadway & Regional: *Dirty Dancing* (International Tour); *The Traveling Lady* (E.S.T, Dir Horton Foote); *Pericles* (Red Bull); *Unspeakable* (Harlem's Apollo); *Sweat* (Pioneer Theatre); *Talley's Folly* (The McCarter w/ Richard Schiff), *Curious Incident..* (CTRep), for which she received the CT Critics Circle Featured Actress Award of Excellence. TV/Film/Podcast: "FBI," "Bull," "Unforgettable," "L&O," "L&O: Criminal Intent," "Blue Bloods," "Limetown," "Ask for Jane," and a few other projects where she plays many a grieving widow. In addition to her acting career, she is the founder & creator of Sweets of Adversity, a baking company specializing in creative concessions for special events, along with catering the edible props for shows On and Off-Broadway. Many thanks to casting & creatives, family & friends, along with Henderson/Hogan & Robyn Bluestone for their stalwart support. More at the sites margotwhite.com & sweetsofadversity.com



ETHAN ZEPH is thrilled to be back at Gulfshore Playhouse! Previous Regional credits include: Action in *West Side Story* (The MUNY), Mordred in *Camelot* (Gulfshore Playhouse), Riff in *West Side Story, Anything Goes* (City Springs Theatre Company) Mark in *A Chorus Line, An American in Paris, The Sound of Music* (Music Theatre Wichita), Romeo in *Newsies, A Chorus Line* (Lexington Theatre Company) *Rock of Ages, Holiday Follies* (Lake Dillon Theatre Company), *Hairspray* (American Stage). Graduate of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Love to Zoë and Maple! @ethanzeph

the CREATIVE TEAM

KRISTEN COURY (Director : *Hrdza*; Founder and Producing Artistic Director)

Kristen founded Gulfshore Playhouse in 2004, after moving to Naples from New York City. Under her leadership, the Playhouse has grown to a staff of 52, an annual budget of \$8.2M with no debt, and led the charge to create a \$72M state-of-the-art Theatre and Education Center at the gateway to downtown Naples, which broke ground in late 2021. While in New York, she worked on Broadway for Walt Disney Theatrical's production of *Beauty and the Beast* and for Andrew Lloyd Webber's company, The Really Useful Group, working on *Sunset Boulevard* and *Joseph* and the *Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. She has directed many of the Playhouse productions to date including *My Fair Lady*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol*, *The Price*, and the World Premiere of *The God Game*. Kristen made her feature film directorial debut with *Friends and Family*, a comedy starring Tony Lo Bianco, Anna Maria Alberghetti, and Tovah Feldshuh, which was released around the US and Europe. Kristen has directed several new works, produced a CD, and worked on a variety of musicals in various stages of development. Kristen is also a frequent investor in Broadway productions, most recently the Tony Award-winning revival of *Once On This Island*. In 2021 Kristen was appointed to the Greater Naples Chamber Board of Commerce and was named one of the Top 100 Most Influential Business Leaders in Collier County. Kristen is a proud graduate of Leadership Collier, and was recently accepted into Leadership Florida, joining top leaders from across the state in a year-long program. Additionally, she was named a "Leading Lady" by *Naples Illustrated* in 2018, one of the Men and Women of the Year by *Gulfshore Life* in 2013, a "Star in the Arts" by the United Arts Council of Collier County in 2011, and one of the "Top 40 Professionals Under 40" by *Gulfshore Life Magazine* in 2008.

MARSHALL JONES III (Director : *The Refugees*, *The Lion Tamer*)

Marshall is excited to return to Gulfshore Playhouse once more. He last worked with this hidden jewel of a theater company in January of 2023 as director of *Mud Row*. Marshall is thrilled to once again direct *Mud Row* by Dominique Morisseau where he also directed this gripping family drama at Premiere Stages in N.J. After being on the faculty in the Theater dept at his alma mater since 2002, effective July 2022, Professor Jones transitioned to an administrative role in the newly created position of Associate Dean of Equity for the Mason Gross School of the Arts. Although he has years of producing experience, directing plays is Marshall's first love. In October 2020, he directed Premiere Stages' live, in-person critically acclaimed show about civil rights icon Fannie Lou Hamer starring veteran Broadway actress Rema Webb. For 13 years (2007-2019), he was the Producing Artistic Director for the Tony® Award-winning Crossroads Theatre Company where he directed several shows including the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center's inaugural production – *Paul Robeson*. Selected other directing credits include the world premiere of Walter Mosley's *Lift*, which later played Off Broadway; and Nikkole Salter's *Repairing a Nation*, which was recorded for TV broadcast on WNET's Theater Close-Up Series. In the spring of 2018, Marshall served as the Creative Consultant (replacement director) for the Off Broadway production of *Little Rock*, about the famed Little Rock Nine of 1957, which received NY Times Critic Pick. Marshall enjoys serving the community and the field as he proudly serves as the president of the NJ Theatre Alliance. Marshall is a proud 2020 Inductee in the Rutgers University African-American Hall of Fame. Much love to the four ladies in my life – my Ma, my daughters, and my brilliant bride.

MICHAEL CASSARA (Casting)

Michael casts theatre and film in New York City, and is thrilled to be returning for a twelfth season with Gulfshore Playhouse, where he has cast over 45 plays and musicals since 2009. Recent credits include *An American In Paris* (International Tour, dir. Christopher Wheeldon), *Spamilton* (NYC/Chicago/Pittsburgh CLO/national), *Enter Laughing* (York Theatre), *Gigantic* (Vineyard Theatre), *Forbidden Broadway* (last three editions/cast albums), *The 12* (Denver Center/world premiere). Film credits include *The Hyperglot* (Artios nomination for excellence in casting, dir. Michael Urie), *Contest*, *Grantham & Rose* (dir. Kristin Hanggi, starring Marla Gibbs, Jake T. Austin and Tessa Thompson). Other regional credits include productions for Ogunquit Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Denver Center, Old Globe, Asolo Rep, Hangar Theatre, and many more. Resident Casting Director for the New York Musical Festival (NYMF) since 2007 and the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT) since 2013. Michael is a native Clevelander and a member of the Casting Society of America.

REBECCA R.D. HAMLIN (Stage Manager)

Becky is thrilled to be making her debut at Gulfshore Playhouse. She has staged managed for numerous theatres including The Alley Theatre, Houston Shakespeare Festival, Stages Repertory Theatre, Houston's Main Street Theater and Resident Ensemble Players in Newark, DE. Among her favorite shows she has stage managed are *Camp David*, *Grounded*, *The 39 Steps*, *A Flea in Her Ear*, and *Michael Wilson's A Christmas Carol - A Ghost Story of Christmas*. Becky is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

SHANTEZ TOLBUT (Stage Manager)

Shantez "Shae" Tolbut is an Off-Broadway Stage Manager, Award-Winning Playwright, Poet, Arts Educator, and Artist hailing from the South Chicagoland area. Shantez has worked with some of the most notable people in the industry like Stevie Walker Webb, Amber Iman, James IJames and Saheem Ali. She has also worked in some of the most renowned theatres, venues and festivals across the country such as The Public Theater, The Flea Theater, Black Ensemble Theatre and National Black Theater.

As an emerging playwright, she was also the recipient of the 2022 Lorraine Hansberry Theater Writing Award by the Next Wave Initiative led by Broadway playwright and actor Douglas Lyons for her play *Blue InGreen*. Shantez is thankful to Jim, her cast and crew to be making her Gulfshore debut! "The future of theater is inclusivity and accessibility! Can't wait to celebrate the Tech, the Femmes, and all the Color on the stages of the present and the future!" BA-NEIU; MFA-SFC

JOEL MARKUS (COO & Managing Director)

is thrilled to be in his sixth season as Gulfshore Playhouse's COO & Managing Director. Joel enjoys working side by side with Kristen to produce Broadway caliber theatre while focusing on cultivating a great staff and culture. In his time at Gulfshore Playhouse, Joel has helped grow and double the theatre's budget, double the staff, has co-managed the design and construction of the new \$72M Baker Theatre and Education Center, new Production Shops construction project, has been instrumental in joining LORT (most recently, being on the negotiating committee for LORT and Actors' Equity Association), and navigated and guided the organization through the pandemic and Hurricane Ian. Joel's thirty year career has taken him to some of our nation's leading professional regional theatres. He most recently spent seven seasons at America's oldest theatre, the \$16 million producing Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Joel has played integral roles in the production of hundreds of plays over ten seasons at the Indiana Repertory Theatre, four years at Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY, five summers at the Weston Playhouse in Vermont, American Players Theatre in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, Massachusetts. Some of Joel's favorite professional experiences so far include Gulfshore Playhouse's production of *Native Gardens*, taking Gregg Coffin's *Five Course Love* off-broadway with Geva, producing Indiana Rep's world premier of James Still's *Amber Waves*, working with Adam Guettel on Weston Playhouse's NETC Moss Hart award-winning *Floyd Collins*, and managing North Shore Music Theatre's *Jekyll and Hyde*. At Walnut Street Theatre, Joel loved producing Broadway scale musicals, including *Annie*, *Grease*, *Mamma Mia*, *Memphis*, *Sister Act*, *Mary Poppins*, *Wizard of Oz*, and Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*. One of his favorite contributions has been establishing coproductions between regional theatres that are states apart, making efficient use of resources to enrich the cultural landscape and exchange for both communities. Other favorite gigs have been stage managing for The Monkees, Howie Mandel, Paula Poundstone, Peter, Paul, & Mary, and CBS Sports NCAA Final Four Tribute with Jim Nantz & Greg Anthony. Joel was awarded with a Creative Renewal Fellowship by the Arts Council of Indianapolis and Eli Lilly to study the production values of Cirque du Soleil. Teaching credits include Butler University, Franklin College, Indiana University, Nazareth College, Washington College, SUNY Brockport, and SUNY Oswego. Joel is a graduate of Indiana University and originally from Miami, Florida. Over these many years, Joel has had a front-row seat to the complex work of extraordinary theatre professionals. He is passionate about excellence in his role leading collaboration with everyone on the team – directors, designers, playwrights, administrators, educators, technicians, artisans, musicians, choreographers, and actors – in pursuit of shared artistic vision. Joel is overjoyed to invest these lessons now with the thriving Gulfshore Playhouse as it pursues ambitious goals for its cherished and discerning audiences.

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NEW WORKS FESTIVAL

SEPT 14-17, 2023

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At the Tenth Annual New Works Festival, you will experience a weekend of brand new plays read, in some cases for the first time aloud, by professional actors. The finalists are selected from over 100 plays submitted by playwrights from all over the country.

"Charming, spunky and ultimately heart-rending"
-The New York Times



26 MILES

by Quiara Alegría Hudes

OCT 14-29, 2023

PREVIEW: OCT 12 & 13

When Beatriz receives a late night call-for-help from her estranged teenage daughter Olivia, she spirits her away on an impromptu cross-country roadtrip. As they trek from Philadelphia to Wyoming, the tension at the heart of their relationship reaches a boiling point, but can they fix what is broken? In this hilarious and heart-torn coming of age story from the Pulitzer prize and Tonys-nominated playwright, 26 Miles is the story of a modern family rediscovering understanding, redemption, and love.

*"The perfect Christmas revue!
Crackles with energy and joy!"*
-LA Weekly

Winter Wonderettes

by Roger Bean

NOV 18-DEC 17, 2023

PREVIEWS: NOV 16 & 17

It's Christmas, 1960, and Santa has gone missing at the Starper's Hardware holiday party. A local singing group known as the Marvelous Wonderettes decide to use their talent and creativity to save the day! Featuring a collection of 1960s holiday hits like "Jingle Bell Rock," "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town," and more sung in "marvelous" four-part harmony, this delightful musical will put you right in the holiday spirit.

World Premiere Comedy
Part of the 2022 New Works Festival

THE REFUGEES

by Brent Askeri

JAN 13-FEB 4, 2024

PREVIEWS: JAN 11 & 12

After a well-to-do Connecticut family unexpectedly ends up as refugees in the Middle East due to a civil war in the United States, their charmed life comes to an abrupt end. Lawyer Yates, socialite Poppy, and their 17-year-old son Winn are suddenly fish out of water, at odds with their new home and with each other. When Yates gets involved in a hapless scheme to emigrate to Europe, Nijinsky ensue and the family is forced to choose between embracing their new reality or returning to the way things used to be. Equal parts hilarious and thought-provoking, *The Refugees* is a bold new comedy exploring patriotism, identity, and belonging.

"An absolute delight...like a breath of fresh air."
-BroadwayWorld

INTO THE BREECHES!

by George Brant

FEB 17-MAR 10, 2024

PREVIEWS: FEB 15 & 16

The year is 1942 and World War II has called millions away to Europe, including the leading players of *Oberea Play House*. Enter a group of passionate, albeit inexperienced, band of actresses who seize the chance to move from the sidelines to centerstage. For the first time, they will receive pay for their talents as they mount an ambitious production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Parts 1 & 2 and *Henry V*. Will their performance be a victory on the home front or a disaster of epic proportions? This sweet, hilarious, and heartwarming play celebrates the power of art to rally a community and see us through the darkest of times. These thespians will steal the spotlight and your heart!

*"A lingering and deeply satisfying sweetness...
for those moments when you sense a song in your heart."*

-The New York Times

She Loves Me

Book by Joe Masteroff

Music by Jerry Bock Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick

MAR 23-APR 21, 2024

PREVIEWS: MAR 21 & 22

In this beloved musical, the busiest sales season is quickly approaching for an ensemble of lovable clerks working in a charming 1930s European perfume. Among them are Georg and new employee Amalia who are constantly sparring on the job. Off the clock, their bantered words fall away into the sweet nothings they write in letters to their anonymous pen pals. But little do they know, their "Dear Friend" happens to be each other! Based on the play that inspired films *The Shop Around the Corner* and *You've Got Mail* and from the theatrical minds behind *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Cabaret*, this effervescent, witty, romantic musical is the perfect love letter to bid adieu to nearly two decades of performances at the Norris Center before moving into the Baker Theatre and Education Center in fall 2024.

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