

THE PUBLIC THEATER: OSKAR EUSTIS, Artistic Director; **PATRICK WILLINGHAM**, Executive Director
presents
RED BULL THEATER'S production of

HOW SHAKESPEARE SAVED LIFE

Written and Performed by **JACOB MING-TRENT**
Directed by **TONY TACONE**

Movement Director **TIFFANY RACHELLE STEWART**
Scenic Design **TAKESHI TAKA**
Costume Design **DANIELLE PRESTON**
Lighting Design **ALAN C. EDWARDS**
Original Music and Sound Design **JAKE RODRIGUEZ**
Projection Design **ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS**
Production Stage Manager **KARA KAUFMAN**
Company Manager **HEATHER ARNSON**
Production Manager **DREW FRANCIS**

RED BULL THEATER

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Originally commissioned and developed by Red Bull Theater and Folger Theatre.
A Co-production with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Folger Theatre.

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RED BULL THEATER is a not-for-profit theater in its third decade revitalizing the classics Off-Broadway. Our work is made possible by the leadership support of our invaluable Board of Trustees, the Estate of Eleanor Fink, the Howard and Marcia Owens Charitable Trust, and many generous individual contributors and institutions, including: Achelis & Bodman Foundation, Louis Alexander, American Express Matching Grants, Axe-Houghton Foundation, Robert Boyett, Casdin Family Foundation, Joanne Casey, Diane Cataldo, Constance Christensen, Joanna and Jonathan Cole, Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation, David DesJardins, Barbara Estrin, Fund for the City of New York, Google Grants, Jan Guifarro, Howard Gilman Foundation, Sally Huxley, Elliott and Ruth Joseph, KAM Foundation, Lucille Lortel Foundation, MacMillan Family Foundation, Marta Heflin Foundation, Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Amy Merrill, Michael Tuch Foundation, Evangeline Morphos, Noël Coward Foundation, Off-Broadway Angels, Betty and Michael Rauch, Jeffrey Richards, Richenthal Foundation, Daryl Roth, Roy Cockrum Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Kathryn Andrea Taras and Anthony Jay Elitcher, The Tony Randall Theatrical Fund, Susan and Charles Tribbit, and Joan and Steve Young. This production is also supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature. For a full list of supporters, go to RedBullTheater.com/Supporters.



Jacob Ming-Trent

JacobJACOB MING-TRENT

HOW SHAKESPEARE SAVED MY LIFE
WILL BE PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION.



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DEAR FRIENDS,

I have counted Jacob Ming-Trent a friend of mine, and a friend of The Public, for a long time. Perhaps his most memorable role downtown was as Odyssey Dog in Suzan-Lori Parks' amazing *Father Comes Home From the Wars*, and uptown as a luminous Falstaff in Saheem Ali's production of *Merry Wives*, adapted by Jocelyn Bioh. In both of those astonishing performances, Jacob combined his electric physical presence with tremendous vocal strength; his brilliant, sly comedy with profound and surprising vulnerability, and a mastery of language, both sacred and profane, that is purely American and utterly poetic. **We are lucky he is part of our family.**

But I really didn't know how lucky until I read the first draft of *HOW SHAKESPEARE SAVED MY LIFE*. I knew that Jacob had faced obstacles, but I was not prepared for the honesty and power of the story he tells in this autobiographical show. With a shock I realized how much I didn't know about how complicated this warm, generous man was, and how much of his history I had never guessed.

This is a beautiful, extraordinary show. It is a testament to Jacob that he made it; a testament to Shakespeare that the case made by the title seems true. You are in for a great evening.

Tony Taccone is one of my oldest and closest friends. We first met in 1979 in Berkeley; from 1980-1988 we led the Eureka Theater Company in San Francisco, which meant I spent my twenties joined at the hip with him. We fought, created, co-directed, shared, competed, and grew up together. He left Eureka to go to Berkeley Repertory Theatre as Associate Artistic Director, and I left to go to Los Angeles as Associate Artistic Director of the Mark Taper Forum. We've never lived in the same city since, but we've never been very far apart either—he's directed at every theater I have run since then. I am so pleased to welcome him back to The Public.

Jesse Berger and Red Bull Theater have carved out a remarkable, independent space in the New York theater scene for over two decades. I have loved watching the brilliant and idiosyncratic work he has done—always remarkable, never compromising, utterly him. I am so pleased that we finally have a chance to present Red Bull at The Public. I hope it won't be the last time.

Oskar

OSKAR EUSTIS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, THE PUBLIC THEATER

A
NOTE
FROM
OSKAR

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

JACOB MING-TRENT (*Playwright and Jacob*). Red Bull Theater: *Medea Re-versed* (Lortel nomination), *The Alchemist* (Lortel nomination). The Public: *The Harder They Come* (Lortel and AUDELCO nomination), *Merry Wives* (Falstaff, Drama Desk nomination), *Father Comes Home From the Wars* (Lortel Award, AUDELCO nomination), *Twelfth Night* (Sir Toby), *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*. Broadway: *Gypsy* revival (original cast), *Shrek the Musical* (original cast), *Hands on a Hardbody* (original cast). Other Off-Broadway: *Mother Courage* (CSC); *Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (TFANA); *Widowers' Houses* (Epic Theater Ensemble); *On the Levee* (Lincoln Center). Film: *Superfly*, *Forty-Year-Old Version*, *Snakes, R#J*, *Possession of Hannah Grace*, *The Bygone*, Julie Taymour's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and others. TV: "White Famous" (Showtime, series regular), "Watchmen" (HBO, series regular), "Ray Donovan" (Showtime, recurring), "Feed the Beast" (AMC, recurring), "Only Murders in the Building," "Wu-Tang: An American Saga," "New Amsterdam," "God Friended Me," "High Maintenance" and several more. Writer/creator: *Shake It Up: A Shakespeare Cabaret*, *Mac N Beth*.

TONY TACCONE (*Director*). Broadway: *Latin History for Morons*, *Wishful Drinking*, *Bridge and Tunnel*. New York: *The Harder They Come*, *Taking Over*, *Brundibar*. Regional: Berkeley Rep (artistic director for 22 years), The Guthrie, Center Theatre Group, La Jolla Playhouse, Yale Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Currently a professor of USC in directing.

TIFFANY RACHELLE STEWART (*Movement Director*) is a mother of three, a

choreographer, director, actress and the head of physical acting for the New Studio on Broadway at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She has directed and choreographed various productions from coast to coast, most recently *Taming of the Shrew* at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the world premiere of *How Shakespeare Saved My Life* at Berkeley Repertory and The Folger Shakespeare Theatre. Stewart has acted in numerous productions Off-Broadway, on Broadway and at many of the nation's top regional theatres. Film: *Hotel Pennsylvania*. TV: "Law & Order," "Elsbeth," "The Blacklist," "Law & Order: SVU," "Black Rose." Awards: Best Actress in a Drama Award from the New York Television Festival, a Lucille Lortel Award and an AUDELCO Award. MFA in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

TAKESHI KATA (*Scenic Design*). Broadway: *Bug* (Tony nomination), *Water for Elephants* (Tony nomination), *Prayer for the French Republic*, *Clyde's* (Drama Desk), Derren Brown's *Secret*. Off-Broadway: The Public, *Adding Machine* (Obie), Atlantic, NYTW, Playwrights, Rattlestick, Second Stage, Signature, Vineyard. Regional: Alliance, American Players Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Geffen, Goodman, Guthrie, Hartford Stage, La Jolla Playhouse, Mark Taper Forum, Steppenwolf, The Old Globe, Yale Rep. Teaching: associate professor, University of Southern California, School of Dramatic Arts.

DANIELLE PRESTON (*Costume Design*). Off-Broadway: *This Much I Know* at 59E59. Regional: Berkeley Rep, Folger Theatre, Studio Theatre, Theaterworks Hartford, Everyman Theatre, Barrington Stage Company, Berkshire Theatre Group, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Signature Theatre (D.C.) and Olney Theatre Center.



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Education: MFA in costume design from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

ALAN C. EDWARDS (*Lighting Design*). Off-Broadway: *American Moor* (Red Bull Theater); *My Joy Is Heavy* (NYTW); *An American Daughter* (La Femme); *Sally & Tom* (The Public); *Monte Cristo* (York); *Fires in the Mirror* (Lortel nom.), *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Signature NYC); *Harry Clarke* (Lortel Award) (Vineyard); *Kill Move Paradise* (Drama Desk nom.) (National Black Theatre). Regional: *Gatsby: An American Myth* (Norton Award); *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (A.R.T.); *Appropriate* (The Old Globe); *Paradise Blue* (Geffen Playhouse). West End: *Harry Clarke*. Education/training: MFA, Yale School of Drama.

JAKE RODRIGUEZ (*Original Music and Sound Design*). Red Bull Theater: debut. Other: *How Shakespeare Saved My Life* (Folger Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Oedipus el Rey*, *Don't Eat the Mangos* (Huntington Theatre Company); *Mother of Exiles*, *The Reservoir* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Private Lives* (Alley Theatre); *Between Two Knees* (Perelman Performing Arts Center); *Frankenstein Revived* (Stratford Festival). Awards: 2021 honorary MFA from American Conservatory Theater, 2004 Princess Grace Award.

ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS (*Projection Design*). Broadway: *Wishful Drinking*, *Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It* and *Latin History for Morons*. Off-Broadway: *Earnest Shackleton Loves Me*, *Through the Night*, *In the Wake*, *Taking Over*, *Horizon*, *Los Big Names*, *In Masks Outrageous and Austere*, *Bridge and Tunnel* and *Other*. Recent: *Fidelio* at Lyric Opera

Chicago, *Swan Lake* at Hong Kong Ballet, *Wabash and You* at Joffrey Ballet. Upcoming: *Nixon in China* and *Madama Butterfly* at Washington National Opera and *The Attic* with 7 Fingers at Goodman Theater.

KARA KAUFMAN (*Production Stage Manager*). Selected Off-Broadway: *The Receptionist*, *Meet the Cartozians* (Second Stage); *Five Models in Ruins 1981*, *Daphne* (LCT3); *Nomad Motel* (Atlantic); *Sojourners*, *Her Portmanteau* (NYTW); *The Revolving Cycles...*, *Hello From the Children...* (Playwrights Realm); *Kingdom Come* (Roundabout); *Today Is My Birthday* (P73); *Travels With My Aunt*, *John & Jen* (Keen Company); *SeaWife* (Naked Angels); *The Mysteries*, *Restoration Comedy*, *These Seven Sicknesses*, *Kaspar Hauser* (Flea); *Dani Girl* (EPBB); and *Lush Valley* (HERE Arts Center). Proud AEA member and Harvard grad.

MARY KATE BAUGHMAN (*Assistant Stage Manager*). NYC credits: *The Heart of Rock and Roll* (Broadway), *Seagull: True Story* (The Public Theater/MART Foundation), *Mexodus*, *The Disappear*, *Strategic Love Play* (Audible's Minetta Lane Theatre), *I'm Almost There* (BAM), *Malvolio* (The Classical Theatre of Harlem), *shadow/land* (The Public Theater). Regional credits: *Hairspray*, *Joan* (The Cape Playhouse); *Anastasia*, *Last of the Red Hot Mamas* (Bucks County Playhouse). Education: BFA, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

HEATHER ARNSON (*Company Manager*). Associate general manager at Michalos Theatrical Management. Selected credits: Red Bull: *The Running of the Red Bulls*, *Titus Andronicus* (AGM), *Richard II* (AGM).

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Off-Broadway: general manager: Ivan T. Productions' *Chekhov + Turgenev, About Love*. Associate general manager: *How My Grandparents Fell in Love, The Bookstore, The Lucky Star*. Director/developer: Ephraim Sykes' *For the Record* and *Blessins 'n Lessons*. Associate director: *Chez Joey; Pal Joey*/NYCC. TV/film/digital: director, writer, co-creator of the docu-series "Here's to the Ladies Who..." Director/concept creator: Writers Guild of America (WGAE + WGA) Awards. Literary: author of *Emma: Portrait of a Girl Lost and a Woman Found* (debut novella, 2026 release).

DREW FRANCIS (*Production Manager*). 2026: *How My Grandparents Fell in Love, The Bookstore, Beau, False Steps, Storm of Forgetting at Odyssey Works, Blue, Lucky Star, Songs About Trains, The Hang by Taylor Mac* (Drama Desk). Events technical director at NYU Steinhardt. Other venues: The Armory, St. Ann's Warehouse, Wheelhouse Theater, Directors Company, BAM, Lincoln Center, JACKArts, Bushwick Starr, New Ohio, RipeTime, Japan Society, The Flea and others.

CANDI ADAMS PR (*Press Representative—Red Bull Theater*). Current: *Warriors* by Lin-Manuel Miranda & Eisa Davis; *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, music by Jason Robert Brown, book by Taylor Mac. Broadway: Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Freestyle Love Supreme* (Sundance/tour/Vegas); Al Pacino in *The Merchant of Venice*; Brian Stokes Mitchell in *Man of La Mancha*. Off-Broadway: *The Jonathan Larson Project; Fiddler on the Roof*, dir. by Joel Grey; *A Walk on the Moon; Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Press for award-winning The Public Theater: *Hamilton, Fun Home*, David Byrne's *Here Lies Love*, free Shakespeare in the Park.

POWERFUL COMMUNICATIONS (*Culture and Community Consultant*). Powerful Communications provides organizations with mission-aligned strategies and engagements from the rehearsal room to the board room. Past partnerships: *Titus Andronicus, Richard II, The Imaginary Invalid, Medea Re-Versed* (Red Bull Theater); *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (BAM and Broadway); Barrington Stage Company; HVSF; and others.

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 50,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and

foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence.

RED BULL THEATER brings rarely seen classic plays to dynamic new life for contemporary audiences. Our work unites a respect for tradition with a modern sensibility. Red Bull Theater is named for the rowdy Jacobean playhouse that illegally performed plays in England during the years of Puritan rule, and was the first London theatre to reopen after the Restoration. This bold spirit is central to our identity. With the Jacobean plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as our cornerstone, Red Bull Theater is New York City's home for dynamic performances of great plays that stand the test of time. The company also produces new works that are in conversation with the classics. Red Bull Theater delights and engages the intellect and imagination of audiences. A home for artists, scholars and students, we strive to make our work accessible, diverse and welcoming to all theatregoers. Educational as well as entertaining, our work keeps a rich and vital tradition thriving. Red Bull Theater believes in the power of great classic stories and plays of heightened language to deepen our understanding of the human condition. We believe in the special ability of live theatre to create unique, collective experiences. And we believe in the timeless capacity of classical theatre to illuminate the events of our times. Founded in 2003 with a production of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Red Bull Theater has been acclaimed by *The New York Times* as "a dynamic producer of classic plays" and by *Time Out New York* as "the most exciting classical theatre in New York." Red Bull Theater serves adventurous theatregoers with Off-Broadway productions, Revelation Readings and the annual Short New Play Festival. The company also offers outreach programs including Shakespeare in Schools, bringing professional actors and teaching artists into public school classrooms; Bull Sessions, free post-play discussions with top scholars; podcasts; and acting intensives in classical actor training led by veteran theatre professionals. In over 20 years, Red Bull Theater has produced 28 Off-Broadway productions and over 200 Revelation Readings of rarely seen classics,

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

serving over 5,000 artists and providing quality artistic programming to an audience of over 200,000. The company's unique programming has received ongoing critical acclaim, and has been recognized with Lortel, Drama Desk, Drama League, Calloway, Off Broadway Alliance and Obie nominations and awards.

THE PUBLIC THEATER continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theatres, The Public has long operated on the principles that theatre is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Works and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *Hair* in 1967, The Public

continues to create the canon of American theatre and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 64 Tony Awards, 197 Obie Awards, 63 Drama Desk Awards, 66 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 72 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

FOLGER THEATRE. The award-winning Folger Theatre in our nation's capital bridges the arts and humanities through transformational performances and programming that speak inclusively to the human experience. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Karen Ann Daniels, Folger Theatre continues its legacy through exciting interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare and expands the classical canon through cultivating today's artists and commissioning new work that is in dialogue with the concerns and issues of our time. Folger Theatre

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thrives both on its historical stage and in the community, engaging audiences wherever they happen to be. For more on Folger Theatre, please visit folger.edu/theatre.

BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 6 million people have enjoyed more than 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 87 world premieres. Berkeley Rep shows have gone on to win eight Tony Awards, nine Obie Awards, 11 Drama Desk Awards, a Grammy Award, a Pulitzer Prize and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Through its annual seven-play season, together with up to four special event presentations, Berkeley Rep invites audiences to enjoy an eclectic range of theatrical experiences featuring diverse artistic voices, themes and perspectives. To formalize, enhance and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. Serving some 20,000 people a year, Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre ensures broad access to dynamic arts educational activities, especially for Bay Area youth, and provides immersive training for current and future theatre makers. In 2021, Berkeley Rep launched In Dialogue, a program that places its theatre-making skills and resources in service of the community. Using storytelling as an anchor, In Dialogue is developing long-term collaborations with local, socially centered organizations, as well as educating and activating our audiences around organizations whose work aligns with the themes of our productions. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities—which include the 600-seat Roda Theatre, 400-seat Peet's Theatre, Medak Center and a spacious campus in West Berkeley—are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.

Information in "Who's Who in the Cast" is provided by the production. Where opinions are expressed, they are those of the players, not necessarily those of PLAYBILL Magazine.

PRODUCTION STAFF FOR HOW SHAKESPEARE SAVED MY LIFE

Assistant Stage Manager.....	Mary Kate Baughman
Assistant Production Manager.....	Lamont Ford
Associate Scenic Design	Kate Schaaf, Zach Blummer
Associate Lighting Design	Max Doolittle
Associate Sound Design.....	Riley Oberting
Wardrobe Supervisor.....	Pamela Hughes
Light Board Operator	Destiny Scott
Video Systems Technician.....	Duncan Davies
Lighting Programmer	Zaid Dawsari
Production Electrician.....	Olivier Plamondon
Assistant Production Electrician.....	Akvinder Kaur
Electrics Crew.....	Aaliyah Stewart, Nya Mullins, Celina Feng, Peter Lopez, Persephone Squires, David Fitzpatrick, Nolan Belcher, Lillian Hilmes, Fatma Oukili, Julia Smith
A1/Head Audio Technician	Mike Lee
Audio/Video Crew	Lindsay Dievert, Eduardo Resendiz Gomez, Ish Roberts, Duncan Davies
Scenic Supervisor	Quinn Stone
Carpentry Crew.....	Kessler Jones, Destiny Scott, Omar Swaray, Jeremy Ragoobar
Deck Crew	Kessler Jones
Culture and Community Consultant	Powerful Communications/ Melle Powers, Melissa Shaw
Key Art Consultation	Plazm
Scenery	StoneDog Studios
Curtains.....	Rosebrand
Lighting and Projection Equipment...	4 Wall Entertainment
Sound Equipment	Five Ohm

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A NOTE FROM

HOW SHAKESPEARE SAVED MY

LIFE is testimony. It's an invitation to consider the many ways your life has been saved. I invite you to come with your preconceived notion—about Shakespeare, about the western world, about what it takes to survive the western world. When you come to this theater, you're not an audience member sitting with strangers; you're part of the congregation. So yes, you can stomp your feet. You can clap your hands. You can respond to my questions. You're also welcome to sit silently with your hands folded in your lap.

I want to inspire—inspire people to tell their own stories—to write, paint, rap, create. To think about the people who have saved their lives, and about how they might save a life themselves.

My life was saved; this play is my way of saving a life.

This play is an act of giving back. It's my way of challenging the forces that conspired to keep me down. I want to see audiences challenge what feels unchallengeable—to challenge hierarchies in the arts and in society, cultural myths about who belongs in the canon and who doesn't, the idea that certain art forms are only for certain people, and the belief that certain theaters are only for certain people. Let all doors be open and let all the people in. If this play inspires even one person to write, to join a class, to reach out to an artist they admire, to support or connect with a child or artist in need, it has done its work. Then, this play has struck a blow for humanity.

Thank you.

JACOB MING-TRENT
JACOB MING-TRENT
PLAYWRIGHT & PERFORMER

THE
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When Jacob first reached out to me with the first few pages of what has now become ***How Shakespeare Saved My Life***, I was immediately blown sideways by the fearlessness of his writing. Jacob's willingness to dive deeply and joyfully into his own journey, and the power of rhythm and Shakespeare in the nascent script, was immediately apparent. I was thrilled to be able to offer him a commission from Red Bull Theater to keep writing. As Jacob has continued to develop the play over several readings, workshops, and now our production, his bravery and insights as a performer and writer continue to astound. I am grateful to be able to bring this special event to audiences here in New York, and very thankful to all our partners on the rolling world premiere production that has enabled us to share Jacob's journey across the country – first at Berkeley Rep, then the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC, and now here at the Public Theatre – in this thrilling production directed by Tony Taccone with a crackerjack design team. At Red Bull Theater, we believe in the power of great classic stories and plays of heightened language to deepen our understanding of the human condition. We believe in the special ability of live theater to create unique, collective experiences. And we believe in the limitless capacity of classical theater to illuminate the events of our times. Jacob's play speaks directly to all these threads of our mission and builds community in all these ways. We couldn't be more excited to share his story and this work with you.

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Somewhere That's Ellen Greene

By Andrew Gans



Her name is Ellen Greene. Sometimes she is blonde, sometimes she is brunette, but she is always the remarkable stage and screen star who memorably created the role of Audrey in the original 1982 Off-Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors* and then preserved her acclaimed performance in the 1986 film version. The multitasking actor is currently hosting a series of 40th anniversary screenings of the Frank Oz-directed *Little Shop* film later this summer that will take her all over the country.

Little Shop of Horrors: 40th Anniversary Screening is currently scheduled through January 27, 2027. Warner Bros. Home Entertainment will also release the newly remastered film digitally in 4K Ultra HD and on 4K UHD Blu-ray Disc October 6.

Attendees to the screenings, it should be noted, will not only be treated to the screening of the 1986 cult film and a live interview with Greene, but the Tony-nominated performer will also share her heartbreaking, definitive rendition of Alan Menken and Howard Ashman's "Somewhere That's Green." Notes Greene: "That's actually why I took the play. 'Green' touched my heart, and I cried the first time I heard it—I was standing on the unemployment line at the time. I could immediately see and feel my Audrey deep inside of me waiting to be born. Usually if something touches me, I

know it will touch the audience."

Audrey lives deeply within Greene. In conversation, it's often hard to tell where Ellen stops and Audrey begins, or should that be where Audrey stops and Ellen begins? That was intentional, says Greene: "Howie [Ashman] gave me a lot of leeway, and this character just fell out of me. Some of the things I added to her, I have no idea where they came from. Also, the bond between me and Howie was so strong. We edited both acts together, and he let me change lines, such as: I said 'nightclub' was not funny, to which he asked, 'What's funny?' So I thought for a moment and replied, 'nightspot' with Audrey's accent (I always smiled inside when that got a laugh)."

Greene considers herself the "keeper of the flame" for the late Ashman, who wrote the book and lyrics for the stage musical, as well as the screenplay for the film adaptation.

"Howie would've been over the moon that it has lasted this long and that people love it . . . People who have loved this show and supported this show for over 44 years have my heartfelt gratitude. And I gratefully repeat, when they keep *Lil' Shop* alive, they keep my sweet friend Howard Ashman alive, who I loved very much. I so appreciate them supporting the show, supporting me and getting me, loving my Audrey, and, in turn, loving me."



What Is Mayor Zohran Mamdani's Favorite Musical?

By Andrew Gans, Diep Tran

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and the Theatre Development Fund announced August 13 that over 2,000 free tickets to Broadway shows will be made available to NYC high school students. Though the lottery is now closed, students have until September 13 to visit on.nyc.gov to receive a free, two-month TDF membership, which gives discounted tickets to Broadway and Off-Broadway shows (discounted tickets typically range from \$20 to \$40).

Mamdani made the announcement onstage at New York City Center, in an event that also included a performance of “New York” from *Two Strangers*, sung by Tony nominee Sam Tutty and a chorus of young New Yorkers.

“It is a privilege to be here as the first mayor to have ever played Curly in an eighth-grade production of *Oklahoma!* on the Upper West Side,” said Mamdani at the event with a wide smile, before adding with more seriousness: “There are so many kids growing up in our city for whom Broadway feels as if it is a world away, like something that only belongs to other people. We are together today to prove differently, to make it possible for kids from Sheepshead Bay to Morrisania (no matter how much money their parents make) to enter that different world, to experience that

magical moment when the lights go down, the curtain goes up, and they’re transported on the journey of a lifetime—one they will carry with them for decades to come. From the plays of ancient Greece to the public gardens of Mughal India to Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, history teaches us that the best art has always been made accessible to working people.”

Mamdani also said this TDF initiative was “one example of what is going to be a term-long commitment to the arts, to culture, and to ensuring that every New Yorker sees themselves in arts and culture.” This year, City Hall allocated a record \$323 million in funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs—which then distributes the funding to arts organizations around the city.

Mamdani was also asked what his favorite musical was. His answer: *In the Heights* (which will receive an upcoming production at New York City Center).

“Broadway is something that you typically think of as a portal to another world. And yet when I went to go see *In the Heights*, it was a world that I knew. But to see it on stage, to see it with the depth, the fluency, the talent, the art—it was incredible. I still sometimes wake up singing ‘96,000,’ and I want that experience for every New Yorker.”