
URBAN STAGES

urbanStages 
PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

A DEAL

by ZHU YI

directed by JOHN GIAMPIETRO

with ALAN ARIANO, PUN BANDHU, HELEN COXE,
LYDIA GASTON, WEI-YI LIN, SETH MOORE

scenic design
FRANK J. OLIVA

costume design
AUDREY NAUMAN

lighting & sound design
JOHN SALUTZ

projection design
RYAN BELOCK

technical director
KIM T. SHARP

prop master
KRYSTLE
HENNINGER

production stage manager
REBECCA KANE

assistant stage manager
JEANA HILLARY
CAPORELLI

press representative
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Frances Hill, Founder/Artistic Director
Antoinette Mullins, Development & Literary Director
Olga Devyatisilnaya, Financial Administrator/Company Manager
Peter Napolitano, Associate Producer/Director of Musical Theatre
Ilanna Saltzman, Outreach Program Director

Actors, Production Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.



CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Mr. Li	ALAN ARIANO
Peter & various roles	PUN BANDHU
Helena Minuit & various roles	HELEN COXE
Mrs. Li	LYDIA GASTON
Li Su & various roles	WEI-YI LIN
Josh Haley & various roles	SETH MOORE

PLACE & TIME

New York City and Shanghai: multiple locations. 2015.

The play takes place in Winter 2015, when Chinese families for the first time represented the largest group of overseas home buyers in the United States, and the USD/CNY exchange rate climbed from 6.31 to 6.59 within three months.

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to our 2017/2018 season.

Urban Stages is reaching beyond our shores producing plays that reflect international perspectives. Last spring, we premiered Ben Woolf's *Angry Young Man*, offering an English playwright's take on immigration. This fall we world premiere *A Deal* by Chinese playwright Zhu Yi, a dark comedy.

Zhu Yi is a phenomenal playwright. She has been published and produced in China. Her work has been presented in England, Scotland, Norway, Argentina and USA. This world premiere marks her first Off-Broadway production. Near the same time as our premiere, *A Deal* will tour throughout China. We are delighted to help introduce this pivotal piece of theatre on two continents.

We, here at Urban Stages, feel that now more than ever there is a need to acknowledge different experiences and champion diverse perspectives on the stage. This is one of many reasons we seek to bring our overseas neighbors closer to our orbit and promote understanding in engaging ways like the comedy *A Deal*.

Our outreach program will also reflect our efforts to reach into international waters. Outreach tours to all five boroughs of NYC, meaning we boast an incredibly multicultural audience, many with international backgrounds. We seek to expand upon ways to make our admission-free plays and workshops as diverse as our patrons. Current outreach programs include *African Dance and Folktales*, *Irish Dance*, *Indian Dance Workshop*, *Latin American*



The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, is strictly prohibited. Please turn off all electronic devices such as cellular phones, beepers and watches. The use of cell phones in the theatre is prohibited by New York City law.

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Drumming, Dances of the African Diaspora and many others.

Last but not least, please mark your calendars for our *Winter Rhythms* festival to open on December 12th through December 23rd This award-winning series brings over 100 musical artists to our stage in 22 one-night-only shows.

—Frances Hill

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

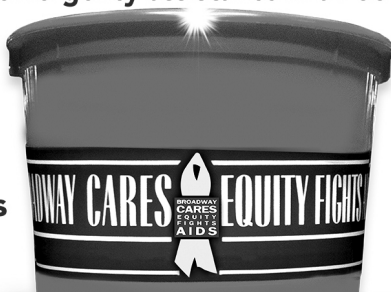
ZHU YI (*Playwright*) is a New York-based playwright and screenwriter, born and raised in Shanghai, China. MFA in playwriting, Columbia University. She received the First Prize at 2015 World Sinophone Drama Competition and Shanghai Drama Valley's 2015 Outstanding Playwright of the Year Award. She is a 2012–2013 Emerging Artist Fellow at New York Theatre Workshop, Youngblood alumni at Ensemble Studio Theatre, a member of Ma-Yi Writers Lab and a member of the Royal Court Theatre's International Playwrights Programme. Stage plays: *How Time Flies* (National Theatre of China); *You Never Touched the Dirt* (Spirit of '47, Edinburgh International Festival); *Holy Crab!* (Wellspring Theater, Taiwan; Círculo de Tiza, Mexico); *Apene i Himalaya* (Hålogaland Teater, Norway); *I Am a Moon* (Shanghai Grand Theater, China; Theater Emory, Atlanta, GA; FringeNYC; Edinburgh Festival Fringe; 3LD Art and Technology Center); *It Rained on Shakopee* (The Lake Superior Chamber Orchestra, Duluth, MN); *Long Life* (Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, China; People's Art Theater, China); *Long Distance Affair* (Bienal Arte Joven Buenos Aires, Argentina; Edinburgh Festival Fringe); *Lifetime Fairytale* (Riverside Theatre). Films: *Apolitical Romance* (Taipei Film Festival; Buenos Aires International Independent Film

Festival; New York Asian Film Festival; Udine Far East Film Festival, Italy; Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival), *Scrape* (Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival; Alcances Film Festival, Spain). zhuyizhuyi.com

JOHN GIAMPIETRO (*Director*) is a Brooklyn-based stage director of opera and theatre. Recent credits include *La Feldetà Premiata* at The Juilliard School, *The Turn of the Screw* and *Carousel* at Chautauqua Institution Festival of Music. He is a frequent director with Youngblood, Ensemble Studio Theatre's Obie Award-winning young writers group. At EST John directed *The New York Times* acclaimed production of *Year of the Rooster* by Olivia Dufault. Other opera and theatre productions seen at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Vermont Shakespeare Festival, Curtis Institute of Music, The Flea and NYU Tisch School of the Arts. He has directed over 20 operas for the Chautauqua School of Music where he is the principal stage director. John is a faculty member in the vocal arts department at The Juilliard School. Writing includes new English dialogue versions of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Der Schauspieldirektor*. Upcoming, a new English dialogue version of Nicolai's opera *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for The Juilliard School, in 2018.

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ALAN ARIANO (*Mr. Li*). Broadway: *The King and I* (Lincoln Center Theater); *M. Butterfly*, Jerome Robbins' Broadway, *Shogun: The Musical*, *Miss Saigon* (Original Company) and *Flower Drum Song* (tour). Off-Broadway: *Shanghai Moon* (opposite Charles Bush) and Prospect Theater Co.'s *Honor*. World premieres include Geffen Playhouse's *Extraordinary Chambers* and Portland Center Stage's *Snow Falling on Cedars*. Regionals include The Kennedy Center, The Muny, Dallas Summer Musicals, Walnut Street Theatre, Pioneer Theatre, 5th Avenue Theatre, TUTS Houston, Music Theatre of Wichita, Weston Playhouse, California Music Circus, Lyric Opera Chicago. TV: "The Path," "Gotham," HBO's "Tremé," "Harry's Law," "Leverage," "Law & Order," "As the World Turns," "One Life to Live" and "SNL." **PUN BANDHU** (*Peter* & various roles). Broadway: *Wit* (MTC). Off-Broadway: *The Treasurer* (Playwrights Horizons), *Plenty* (The Public Theater), *Faust* (Target Margin Theater), *Informed Consent* (Primary Stages, EST), *True and Solid Ground* (Soho Rep), *Vengeance Can Wait* (P.S.122). Regional: *Wellesley Girl* (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival), *The Bells* (McCarter Theatre), *The Catch* (Denver Center Theatre; Henry Award, Best Supporting Actor), *The Birds* (Yale Rep), *Far East* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Film: *The Judge*, Stephen King's *A Good Marriage*, *Late Phases*, *Burn After Reading*, *Michael Clayton*. TV: "Blue Bloods," "Blindspot," "Gotham," "Difficult People," "Law & Order," "Elementary," "Nurse Jackie," among others. New Dramatists' Bowden Award for Collaboration on New Plays. MFA Yale School of Drama.

HELEN COXE (*Helena Minuit* & various roles). Last seen in Amy Fox's *Good Results Are Difficult When Indifference Predominates* in EST's marathon series. Originally from Philadelphia she performed on, off and way Off-Broadway. New York credits include *Side Man*; *Tail! Spin!*; *Beauty on the Vine*; *Bug*; *As Bees In Honey Drown*; *Love*; *Janis*. Other credits *Hand to God* (Studio Theatre); *Good People*, *Betty's Summer Vacation* (Pittsburgh Public Theater); *Verano Place* (FringeNYC); *There's a light...* (Amios); Ice Factory Festival; New York Off Stage & Film; Cape Cod Theatre Project; Jewish Plays Project; and many things at the Ensemble Studio Theatre including *Zhu Yi's A Deal*. TV and film includes "The Tick;" "Black Box;" "The Knick;" "Elementary;" "The Blacklist;" "Law & Order;" *A Woman, a part*; *Red Rover*; *The Housetourant*; *Julie and Julia*; *Sherrybaby*. Upcoming: *Puzzle*. Member EST. She holds an MFA from A.C.T. in San Francisco and loves dogs. Congratulations to Zhu Yi and John.

LYDIA GASTON (*Mrs. Li*). Broadway: *The King and I* (2015 and 1996), *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Red Shoes* and *Shogun*. Off-Broadway: The Public Theater, Ma-Yi Theatre Group, NAATCO and Pan Asian Rep. Regional: *Bloody Mary* in *South Pacific*, *Lady Thiang* in *King and I* (Reagle Theatre, Boston), *Angelina* in *Precious Nonsense* (Kitchen Theatre Company, Ithaca). TV: co-star "The Sopranos" (HBO), "The Path" (Hulu). MA in Applied Theatre, CUNY School for Professional Studies. www.lydiagaston.com **WEI-YI LIN** (*Li Su* & various roles). Taiwanese. *A Deal* is Wei-Yi's Off-Broadway debut. Best Actress nominee in

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Planet Connection Film Festival (2015); won Best Acting in AFF in Dallas and Best Actor in L.A. Movie Awards (2015). Theatre work highlights: readings and workshops in La MaMa E.T.C., The Lark, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Ma-Yi Theater Company, The Kennedy Center, The O'Neill, *4000 Miles* (GabelStage, FL), *Kurukulla* (Signature Theatre), *The Seagull* (Nina; Schapiro Theatre), *Buddhas are Screaming in China* (lead. IATI Theater) and *I am a Moon* (lead; FringeNYC). Worked with Catherine Hardwicke on Lady Gaga's "Till It Happens to You" which received an Oscar nomination (2015) and her recent short *MA* (lead; Warner Bros) was selected in Tribeca Film Festival 2017. Linklater designated voice teacher trainee. Columbia University. MFA: Acting. www.weiyilin.com

SETH MOORE (*Josh Haley & various roles*) is an actor/writer living in New York City. He received his BFA from the University of Michigan. Theatre credits include *Fidelis* by Christina Gorman (The Public Theater); *Agnes* by Catya McMullen (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater/Middle Voice); *Restoration Comedy* by Amy Freed, *These Seven Sicknesses* by Sean Graney (The Flea); *Greater Angels* by Jason Williamson (*Exit, Pursued by a Bear*). Regional: *Good Men Wanted* (Arena Stage, Naked Angels). Film/TV: "Big Dogs" (upcoming, Choice Films), *Tznuut* (Borderline Films).

FRANK J. OLIVA (*Scenic Designer*) is an NYC-based scenic designer for New York Stage & Film, working primarily on new plays. Recent: *The Old Settler* (Billie Holiday Theatre); *We Will Not Be Silent and Welcome to Fear City* (Contemporary American Theatre Festival); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Two River Theater); *Communion and Angry Young Man* (Urban Stages); *Lost Not Found* (UP Theater). Frank is the winner of the 2017 Innovative Theater Award for Scenic Design. BFA/NYU. www.frankjoliva.com

AUDREY NAUMAN (*Costume Designer*). Recent credits: *Senior Production 2017* (Juilliard Dance), *La Fedeltá Premiata* (Juilliard Vocal Arts), *Mope* (Ensemble Studio Theatre, Youngblood), *36th Marathon of One Act Plays* (Ensemble Studio Theatre) and *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (upcoming, Juilliard Vocal Arts). Associate costume designer: *Rags* (Goodspeed Opera, des. Linda Cho). Assistant costume design: *Groundhog Day* and *Ghost the Musical* (Broadway, des. Rob

Howell), *In the Heights* (second national tour) and numerous productions at Juilliard as part of their Professional Apprentice Program (2013-2014). Wardrobe supervisor: Company XIV (2015 and 2016 seasons). Audrey is a native Floridian and an alumna of Florida State University.

JOHN SALUTZ (*Lighting & Sound Designer*) is a New York based lighting and sound designer working in theatre, dance and live performance. His work has been seen and heard at the York Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Queens Theatre in the Park, Poseidon Theatre Co., Hard Sparks, Via Brooklyn, Two Headed Rep, The Connecticut Ballet, Atlantic Acting School, Centenary Stage Co., Southeast Alabama Dance Co., Stella Adler Studio of Acting, The Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, FringeNYC, Theatre 167 and MCVTS Theatre. Additional information can be found at www.johnsalutzdesigns.com

RYAN BELOCK (*Projection Designer*) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Manhattan. As a designer, percussionist and actor, his primary work concentrates on integrating projected media with live performance. Off-Broadway: *Me & Ella* (York Theatre); *Party People* (The Public Theater); *Sojourners*, *Her Portmanteau* (New York Theater Workshop). New York: *Jane Eyre* (Center for Contemporary Opera). Regional: *Are You Now* (MetroStage); *Oklahoma!* (Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra); *Rags* (Goodspeed Opera); *The Masked Ball* (Austin Opera); *In the Heights* (Austin, TX); *And Then They Came For Me* (Indiana Rep). World premieres: *Sorin: A Notre Dame Story* (University of Notre Dame); *Colossal*, *Re/Connect* (Cohen New Works Festival). MFA: University of Texas. BA: University of Notre Dame. ryanbelock.com

KIM T. SHARP (*Technical Director*) is pleased to be part of the team bringing *A Deal* to the stage. He works regularly with Urban Stages in their efforts to champion new works by artists of diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition to technical support, Kim is a director, dramaturg and teacher. He served as Abingdon Theatre Company's associate artistic director and literary manager for 16 seasons. He continues to work with theatre artists to bring challenging and invigorating material to the stage. Thanks to Frances and everyone at Urban Stages for this opportunity.

KRYSTLE HENNINGER (*Prop Master*) has worked with Urban Stages on a number of

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projects including *Communion* (PSM), *Unseamly* (PSM and composer), *Winter Rhythms* (production manager and asst. to the producer), summer camp (SM), outreach program (SM). NY credits: *The Baroness* (PSM), *Seph* (PSM), *A Christmas Carol* (PSM), *The Weird Tree* (PSM), *Karaoke Bacchae* (PSM), *Women Are Crazy Because Men Are A**Holes* (SM), *Spot on the Wall* (ASM), *The Tooth of Crime* (PSM), *Brooklynite* (PM intern), *Peter and the Wolf* (ASM), *The House of Connelly* and *A Texas Trilogy* (PSM). Tour: two years with StarQuest Dance Competition (auditor), *A Gun Show* (sō percussion, SM). Krystle is a published playwright, songwriter and novelist with multiple projects in the pipelines. MFA: Stage Management, Columbia University. krystlehenninger.com

REBECCA KANE (*Production Stage Manager*) is a Queens-based stage manager, merchandise manager and playwright. When not stage managing for various companies in New York City, she works at Marquee Merchandise, The Juilliard School and StarQuest Dance Competition. Catch her original play *After Hours* in NY Winterfest Festival this February!

JEANA HILLARY CAPORELLI (*Assistant Stage Manager*). Off-Broadway: *Kid Victory* (Vineyard Theatre), *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (The Playwrights Realm), *Sweat* (The Public), *They Promised Her the Moon* (Miranda Theatre Company). Regional: The Cape Playhouse, Saint Michael's Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, Bucks County Playhouse and more. BFA: University of Central Florida. Love to C, C, K and J. jeanacaporelli.com

URBAN STAGES is an award-winning, not-for-profit, Off-Broadway Theatre Company founded in 1984 by current Artistic Director Frances Hill. We reach thousands of New Yorkers every year by touring free programs to over 100 neighborhoods while also offering an Off-Broadway experience like no other at our theatre in Manhattan. Our mission is to champion new works by artists of diverse backgrounds and to make these works available to all. We do this by discovering and nurturing artists through our Development Program, investing in artists through our Mainstage Program that produces new work Off-Broadway and by touring artists, admission-free plays/work-

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shops and more (including a summer camp for 10–14 year-olds) via our Outreach Program! We seek to give talents a venue to address the multi-faceted issues facing our contemporary world and the resources to develop their voices and gifts. We work hard to eliminate the economic and geographic barriers around art and theatre in order to make both more accessible and inclusive. Previous award-winning and critically-acclaimed productions have included AUDELCO-nominated *Mabel Madness* by Tony winner Trezana Beverley (2016), *The New York Times* Critic's Pick *Unseamly* by Oren Saffdie (2015), *The New York Times* Critic's Pick *Honky* by Greg Kalleres (2013), Jim Brochu's Drama Desk and Outer Critics' Circle awards nominated *Character Man* (2014), the 2010 AUDELCO Award winner for Best Musical *Langston in Harlem* (book by Langston Hughes, Walter Marks and Kent Gash, music by Walter Marks) and the Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Bulrushier* (2007).

STAFF FOR A DEAL

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SPECIAL THANKS

Michi Barall, Don Castro, Wayne Chang, Tina Chen, Alex Grubbs, Ibsen International, David Sihh, Shannon Tyo, Youngblood/EST, Mo Zhou. The play was developed as part of "New Text—New Stage II," an Ibsen International project for the development of new writing.

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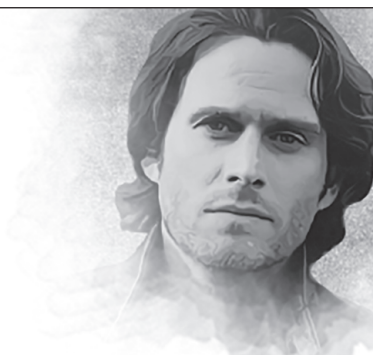
By Olivia Clement & David Gewirtzman

Name: Steve Pasquale

Current Show: Junk

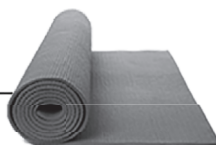
Hometown: Hershey, PA

Zodiac Sign: Scorpio



I'm drawn to theatre that is upsetting, challenging, hard.

In my dressing room you'll find A yoga mat



My favorite thing to do on my day off is See a movie, Have a great meal.

One book every actor should read is plays more than books, Read em all. See what moves you

One film every person should watch is Glory



A pre-show ritual of mine is an intense physical warm up. Get the Blood Flowing

Three words that describe me are He's such a...

My autograph

Steve Pasquale



OFF-BROADWAY VOICES: KEEP YOUR EYE ON HORIZONS

By Olivia Clement

Playwrights Horizons

Tim Sanford, the artistic director of Playwrights Horizons, has been at the Off-Broadway institution for more than 30 years—but when he first walked through the organization's doors in 1984, it was as a literary intern. He was also studying Proust at the time, and there's an idea from the French writer that still guides him today: the notion that there are as many styles as there are artists. "A true artist has their own voice," says Sanford. "The important thing is that the writer has their style that's authentic to them. ... They have something to say. There's a world that they're seeing and they want to share their world with us."

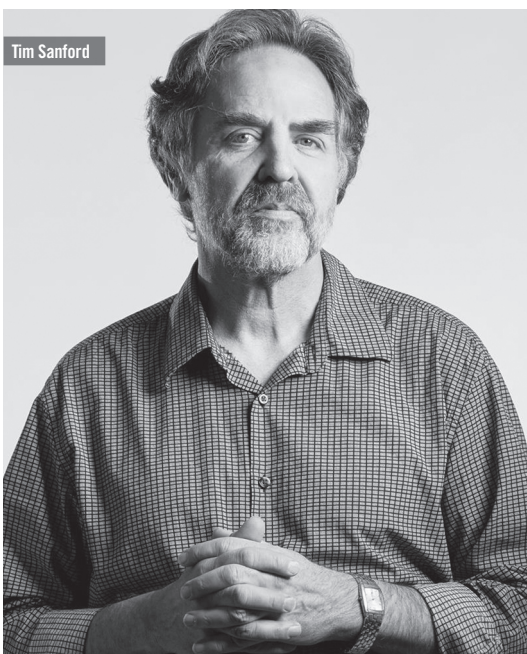
This philosophy is reflected each season in Playwrights Horizons' eclectic programming. In Sanford's own words: "There's no house style." The upcoming season is a slate of new plays that offers a spectrum of varying worlds: in Robert O'Hara's *Mankind*, women are extinct; in Clare Barron's *Dance Nation*, an army of pre-teen competitive dancers prepare for domination. Playwrights Horizons has produced everything from Annie Baker's *The Flick* (which won the Pulitzer Prize for its singular manipulation of time and dialogue) to James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim's beloved musical *Sunday in the Park with George* (another Pulitzer Prize winner). The overlying principle guiding the artistic director and his staff is the very mission on which the company was founded in 1971: to nurture American writers.

Playwrights Horizons has always been and continues to be a writers' theatre. What this means is that the organization remains one of the few to still accept unsolicited manuscripts. Sanford says that every play and musical that comes through his doors is read thoroughly by both he and his staff. It

also means that the theatre is committed to forging and maintaining solid relationships with its artists.

Though the theatre has a reputation for nurturing new writers, Sanford is dedicated to playwrights and composers at all stages of their careers. "It's about relationships," says the artistic director. "It's more fun to cultivate and encourage a writer than it is to reject a writer." That support doesn't only come in the form of a production; it's also in the company's New

Tim Sanford



Works Lab initiative, as well as its robust commissioning program. Sanford recalls commissioning a then-unknown Sarah Ruhl early in her career; she has now been produced on three occasions at Playwrights.

Though he has helped launch the careers of countless writers, Sanford is reluctant to call himself a mentor. "I think I bring experience and passion and hopefully some insights," he concedes. Thirty-three years of experience. And a bit of philosophy, too. ♦

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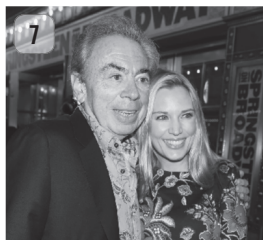
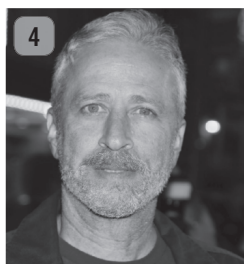
ON THE CARPET: WILL YOU WALK WITH ME OUT ON THE WIRE

Photos by Joseph Marzullo/WENN



OPENING NIGHT: SPRINGSTEEN ON BROADWAY

1. Tom Hanks 2. Jeff Richmond and Tina Fey 3. Nathan Lane 4. Jon Stewart 5. Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg 6. Christy Turlington 7. Andrew Lloyd Webber and his daughter Imogen Lloyd Webber 8. Laura Linney 9. Ricky Lauren and Ralph Lauren 10. Patti Scialfa and Bruce Springsteen



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ONSTAGE & BACKSTAGE: DEAR DIARY...

By Seth Rudetsky

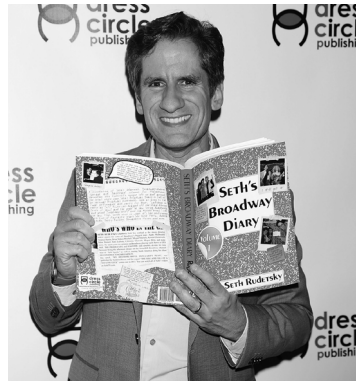
The third collection of my Playbill columns, Seth's Broadway Diary, was just published and I thought I'd highlight some of my favorite theatre stories from the book.

How do you get Barbra Streisand to record your song?

John Kander once told me that when he was working as a rehearsal pianist on *Funny Girl* he casually left handwritten sheet music out, trickster style. When Barbra picked it up and asked what it was, he told her that it was a song he wrote with Fred Ebb, but that it was *completely* not right for her. Of course, she then insisted upon hearing it... and that's how she came to record "My Coloring Book."

Just in case that story sounds apocryphal, David Shire and Richard Maltby, Jr., *also* shared a similar story about a song they'd written for Robert Goulet. Barbra heard about it, and they told her that it wasn't right for her at all because it was written for a man. Of course, she then insisted upon hearing it—and that's how she came to record "Starting Here, Starting Now."

As she said as Fanny Brice, "Don't tell me don't!"



Above: Seth Rudetsky reading from the first volume of *Seth's Broadway Diary*; Below: Barbara Walsh and Seth Rudetsky recreating Barbra's meeting with Elaine Stritch

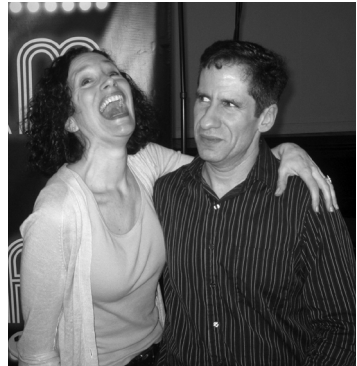
What's it like playing a role in front of the original star?

Barbara Walsh played Joanne in the revival of *Company* and Elaine Stritch told her, "I'm gonna come see the show, but I won't tell you when because I don't want you to be nervous knowing I'm in the audience."


Cut to: Elaine shows up one night doing her version of nondescript, sitting in the fifth row wearing a *white* suit with a *white* cap. If a lighthouse could get a ticket to a Broadway show, then Elaine was that lighthouse.

Afterward, Elaine went up to Barbara, held her face in her hands, and told her how wonderful she was.

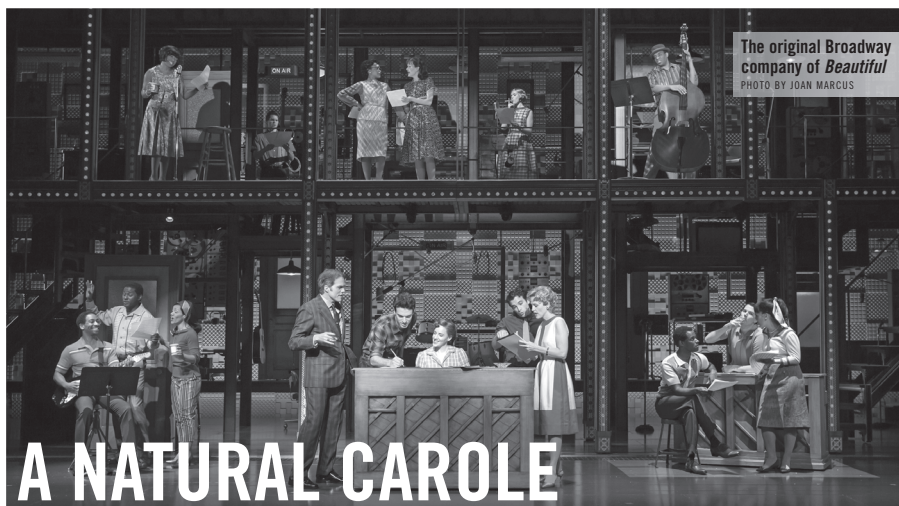
Someone then asked for a photo of the two of them, and suddenly Barbara was confused because she didn't hear any joke being told. Why would she think a joke was told? Because at the moment the picture was taken, Elaine threw her head back in laughter. As it turns out, Elaine liked to take all photos with her signature *At Liberty* head-thrown-back, mouth-agape pose. Barbara and I recreated the photo, with Barbara as Elaine!



Why doesn't Martin Short get work done? Marty mentioned to me that he's in his 60s but doesn't want plastic surgery because "no one ever looks at that person and says, 'Ooh, there goes that 38-year-old.' They say, 'There goes that 64-year-old who looks like a burn victim.'"

How does Marissa Jaret Winokur give herself a boost? I asked Marissa about her Tony Award for *Hairspray* and she told me that for a while she had it displayed on a shelf. Her brother hooked up two lights that shined on it and the lights were connected to a Clapper (as in "clap on... clap off"). Marissa said that any time she wanted to cheer herself up, she'd just clap twice and suddenly her Tony Award was fully illuminated. 

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How casting keeps Broadway's *Beautiful* from becoming a tribute concert

By Diep Tran

When auditioning for *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, the Broadway musical about the life and career of the famed singer-songwriter, it helps to be able to play an instrument. After all, King the character spends a majority of the musical behind a piano. “I have found over the course of all of these years that actors who do play the piano or play the guitar, tend to be more successful in the audition room,” explains Stephen Kopel, the show’s casting director. “They have a built-in comfort level and sort of understand what it’s like to write a song, what it’s like to sing at a piano and sing your music to people. Those sort of intangible things definitely make the connections to the character stronger.”

Though Kopel is careful to add that “it’s not a prerequisite for the show,” there are certain things that are. Actors who want to audition are encouraged to “get to know, not only the *Tapestry* album, but all of [Carole King’s] work. Maybe read her book, maybe do a little bit more research about the time period—that sort of stuff is important to us in terms of influencing people and helping them build a character that’s their own,” says Kopel.

The casting director has been with the show since the beginning, and he admits that casting actors to portray real-life people is especially difficult. “You definitely have a responsibility to do right by all of these

people,” he says. That is why the real-life Carole King, Barry Mann, and Cynthia Weil (all depicted onstage) have final approval over every actor, “so that they are as excited and feel as good about the people playing them onstage as we do,” says Kopel.

But to Kopel, the hardest part of casting the show is the ensemble. Because *Beautiful* is a jukebox musical, the score features songs written by King and made famous by The Shirelles, The Righteous Brothers, and The Drifters. The ensemble members play those musicians, singing songs such as “One Fine Day” and “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?” “You’re casting the ensemble, but you actually need every single person in [it] to be a star in their own right because they have huge step-out moments in iconic songs,” says Kopel.

It’s a tough balance to strike and that is why Kopel sits behind the *Beautiful* audition table every week; he also travels to “at least eight or nine cities throughout the year” to scout talent. If he does his job right, the onstage characters sound and act like real people, and not like a cover band or a Carole King imitator.

“We really do everything we can to ground the story in reality,” he says. “Everyone who sees the show sees that there’s a particular acting style that you may not associate with jukebox musicals, that’s very truthful and organic and real.”

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MAP TO THE STARS

Stay up-to-date on your favorite performers' projects with Playbill Universe

By Robert Viagas

Playbill Inc. is proud to announce the newest service in its family of theatre-related offerings: Playbill Universe, where fans can keep up-to-date with their favorite Broadway luminaries' latest concerts, personal appearances, and non-theatre projects. And our stars are already cheering.

"It's long overdue that such a listing exists!" Tony nominee Laura Osnes (*Bandstand*, *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*) says. "The Broadway fanbase is so extensive—as are the Broadway artists and their projects—so keeping up via separate social media platforms (or lack thereof) is nearly impossible. I am thrilled that Playbill has finally solved this problem and our loyal followers can see at a glance what we're all up to. There is now no excuse for not knowing about or missing your favorite performer's appearance!"

"I'm psyched about Playbill Universe for a billion reasons. Maybe two billion reasons," says the Tony-nominated star of *School of Rock*, Alex Brightman. "I make a lot of noise on my own, promoting shows I'm either in or writing, and Playbill Universe will make it that much easier to be noisy. I'm an actor and writer that likes to know what my fellow actors and writers are up to. Anything that can make this community tighter is a worthwhile tool in my opinion."


Tony-winning Theatre Hall of Famer Brian Stokes Mitchell says, "As I look backward, I realize that I have always had multiple interests in the arts. I also learned early on in my career that the more skills you have, the more you work. Playbill Universe is the one place that gives me the opportunity to let people know what is going on in all aspects of my career—upcoming television,

film, or Broadway appearances; times and locations of my upcoming concerts, local, national, and international.

Betty Buckley, the Tony-winning star of *Cats* whose album *Story Songs* was released this spring, says, "So happy to hear about the launch of Playbill Universe! Looking forward to reading about what all my friends and colleagues are up to!"



Christy Altomare, currently on Broadway as the title character in *Anastasia*, says, "Playbill Universe keeps fans connected as we continue to create, perform, and share our hearts with the world." And Tony-winning *Gypsy* star Laura Benanti cheers Playbill Universe, saying, "Broadway will always be my true love, even as I flirt with television and other mediums. How exciting that there is now a website dedicated to these adventures!"

Don't be left out of those adventures—see what your favorite performers are doing now and in the near future at Playbill.com! 

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THE POETRY OF PLAYWRITING

Anna Ziegler became a playwright almost by accident—but her skill is very definite

By Olivia Clement

Anna Ziegler in rehearsals
for *The Last Match*
PHOTO BY JENNY ANDERSON

There is a reason that Anna Ziegler is a playwright, even if she didn't always intend on becoming one.

As an English major in college, a young Ziegler dreamed of being a poet. But on "a whim," and at the encouragement of one of her teachers, she applied for the playwriting graduate program at NYU; and so life turned out a little differently—and probably for the best.

Ziegler's work has been seen on the West End (her *Photograph 51* lured Nicole Kidman back to the stage after nearly two decades), in New York, and around the United States. This fall, the Brooklyn-based playwright has two plays Off-Broadway: *The Last Match*, currently running at Roundabout Theatre Company, and *Actually*, which began previews October 31 and runs through December 14 at Manhattan Theatre Club.


As in *Photograph 51*, both *Actually* and *The Last Match* break the fourth wall—the characters speak directly to the audience. In *The Last Match*, which sees two tennis champs battle it out on the court at the U.S. Open, the audience acts like a crowd at a sports match, their alliances shifting back and forth as the characters reveal more about themselves. In *Actually*, which recounts a tale

of alleged sexual assault on a college campus as told by the two students involved, the audience must decide whose version of the story to believe. The technique is one of the things that drew Ziegler to playwriting.

"I'm interested in [theatre] as an art form that can do that," says Ziegler, "that's uniquely able to break that wall and invite the audience to be a part of the play."

Her plays don't just invite the audience to become involved, they implore them to make judgment calls and decisions. And more often than not, her audiences will be divided.

"I like the idea that they are coming away with different interpretations and that there isn't just one valid way to interpret a play," says Ziegler. "The plays that I'm drawn to don't tend to be wrapped up in neat bows. I'm into whatever ambiguities we can reflect onstage because I think that's the world we live in."

Though her plays reflect the real world, they've also been praised for their lyrical nature—a nod to her original love of poetry. "Certain plays of mine do still fulfill that need I have to write in that way," she says. "I love seeing plays that are somewhat lyrical, and I feel like it's part of my charge to keep writing in that vein." 

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