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OCT. 15 - 24, 2021



#DMPlayhouse

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WELCOME



David R. Kilpatrick Executive Director

Thank you for joining us for today's performance of *Escaping the Labyrinth*. As this is a world premiere production, we know you have not seen it anywhere before; we are the first! We are particularly grateful for you. Your presence today is a testimony to your belief in The Playhouse, your trust in our productions, and your willingness to try something you haven't seen before. As much as we all enjoy new interpretations of productions that we are comfortable with, know, and have enjoyed prior, it is just as important to the theatre's future to experiment too! If you think about it, long ago, *Cabaret* made a world premiere, as did *The Sound of Music*. We appreciate your support of this new production.

Of course, this is not the first time The Playhouse has put an original script on the stage. *Girls' Weekend* and *Choices*, plays by local playwright Karen Schaeffer were well received. Several years ago, the play *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, was a huge success! These are just three examples of our effort to bring new works to our stage. For several years in the 1960s and 1990s, The Playhouse sponsored new play competitions. I foresee a future where we will regularly present new stories as part of every season as our mission is to serve the whole community by presenting everyone's stories.

We want to thank AACT (American Association of Community Theatre) for the NewPlayFest, a national new play festival that takes place over a two-year period. We were one of six theatres invited to present a production this cycle and it has been an honor and privilege to be able to work with the team at AACT, in particular with Kathy Pingel, (yes The Playhouse's past Kate Goldman Children's Theatre artistic director and education director) who served as dramaturge for this play. AACT has made this a rewarding experience for the playwright, the director, and the entire cast.

Most importantly, we thank you, our audience and supporters, who trust The Playhouse to create the best theatre possible. It is your belief in us that gives us the confidence to take chances and to experiment as we explore what theatre is and what it could be. We are ordinary people doing extraordinary theatre for the whole community! Thank you for playing your part!



From all the volunteers, cast, crew, and staff at The Playhouse...

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To make a donation, please contact:

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Escaping the Labyrinth AACT NewPlayFest

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The Tribute Program provides an opportunity to celebrate milestones such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and graduations. It can also be a way to honor the memory of friends and relatives.

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Century Club

In our first century, The Des Moines Playhouse changed lives one at a time. The Century Club is a celebration of The Playhouse's first 100 years. The goal is to increase the endowment by \$1 million, one gift at a time. The culmination of small gifts from many supporters will create a sustainable future for your theatre.

Cornerstone Level (\$5,000+) Lee Ann Bakros Harry Bookey & Pamela Bass-Bookey Jan Burch & Robert Mitchell Steve & Renee Schaaf

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Heritage Level (documented estate plan gift) We also recognize those who have included The Playhouse in their estate plans prior to the Century Club.

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An * indicates a deceased donor.

Don't see your name? Those listed in this program have generously supported The Playhouse since January 1, 2021. If we've made a mistake, please contact Jada Smith, office administrator, at 515.974.5356 or jsmith@dmplayhouse.com. Gifts of \$100 or more are listed in every playbill throughout the season. Gifts under \$100 are recognized in the spring musical playbill each year. Donors listed are current from January 1, 2021 to October 1, 2021.



HOUSE INFORMATION

COVID-19 UNIQUE POLICIES

- · Guests are required to wear face coverings while inside the building.
- Hand sanitizing stations are located throughout the lobbies for public use.
- Guests with COVID-19 symptoms such as a temperature of 100.4°F or higher or other symptoms, either before or during a performance, are asked to leave and exchange their tickets for a later performance.
- All tickets will be refunded or exchanged without fee upon request.
 - · Programs are accessed digitally.

GENERAL PRACTICES Accessibility 🚑 🗚

The Playhouse strives to make its facility and performances accessible to all quests. Our theatres are wheelchair accessible. Service animals are welcome. Assisted listening devices are available in the John Viars Theatre. If your hearing aid has a T-coil, toggle to that setting to receive the audio signal directly without any headset or other equipment needed. ASL interpreted performances and audio description performances are available upon request. For these and other needs, please call the ticket office with specific service requests.

Cameras

The taking of photographs and the use of recording devices are not allowed during a performance and are a violation of state and federal copyright laws.

Cancellations

If a show is cancelled due to bad weather, an email will be sent to ticket holders. Cancellations will be noted on the phone system, website, and social media sites. Tickets for a cancelled performance may be exchanged for another performance. Please be sure the ticket office has your email information and current phone in the event a performance is cancelled. The Playhouse does not sell its contacts and does not sell or trade its email addresses.

Concessions

A variety of beverages and candy may be available for purchase and are allowed in auditoriums. No outside drink or food are allowed. Staff reserve the right to denv alcoholic beverage service to anyone at their discretion.

Elevator

An elevator between levels is located at the east end of the building.

Emergency Exits

Please note the exit nearest your seat location. In the event of an emergency, guest services staff will provide direction.

Etiquette

Latecomers will be seated at an appropriate break in the play. Lobby chimes are sounded five minutes before curtain as well as the close of intermission. Disruptive, unruly guests, regardless of age, will be asked to leave. Cell phone ringers should be turned off.

Lost Items

Lost items will be held in the ticket office.

Free parking is available in The Playhouse lots and on streets surrounding the theatre. After 5:00 PM daily, free parking is available in the Shops at Roosevelt's east/back parking lot. Parking in the west/front Shops parking lot is always restricted to Shops customers. The Playhouse is not responsible for loss of any personal property left in vehicles.

Performance Content

The Playhouse does not rate subject matter as sensitivities vary from person to person. Questions about content, age appropriateness, or other aspects of the show such as strobe lights and other theatrical affects should be directed to the ticket office.

Performance Schedule

The regular John Viars Theatre performance schedule is 7:30 PM Wednesdays through Saturdays and 2:00 PM Sundays. The regular Kate Goldman Children's Theatre performance schedule is 7:00 PM Fridays, and 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM Saturdays and Sundays. The Family Holiday Classic performance schedule is 7:00 PM Wednesdays through Fridays, and 1:00 PM and 5:00 PM Saturdays and Sundays. All times are subject to change.

Preshow Talk

A preshow talk for each John Viars Theatre performance will begin 30 minutes prior to curtain in the west lobby.

Each audience member must occupy a seat and have a ticket, including infants.

Ticket Office Hours

The ticket office is open Noon to 5:00 PM, Tuesdays through Fridays, and 90 minutes prior to performances. Tickets are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, online. Ticketing fees are the same whether purchased online, by phone, or at the ticket office.

Des Moines Community Playhouse

831 42nd Street Des Moines, IA 50312









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ESCAPING THE LABYRINTH

Katy Merriman, Playhouse Artistic Director



As a theatre that often performs classic works, we rarely have an opportunity to communicate directly with a playwright. Whether fame or mortality create a barrier, the elusive playwright has traditionally not been involved in productions of their work past its premiere.

Normally when I direct a play, if we run into a line that is difficult to interpret or that we find problematic, I reach out to the play's publisher who will then contact the playwright's representation or, if the playwright is deceased, the estate that owns the work, to ask about making a change. It is

considered, they give their response, and the publisher passes that on to me. Often the answer is "no."

Working directly with Thomas Hischak, creator of *Escaping the Labyrinth*, has been a unique and thrilling process as we workshop the script. It is a luxury to be able to call up Tom (he asked me to call him that) on the phone to ask questions that come up in rehearsal, discuss critical moments in his play, and to collaborate with him directly on *Escaping the Labyrinth*. We began with a few early readings of the play in which I suggested line changes or adjustments and we tried to answer big questions from the people reading the play. Often, they picked up on issues as an audience that Tom and I hadn't considered because we'd been too buried in the material. The cast has infused this story with meaning and made connections that enrich the world of the play far beyond what I think Tom or I had expected.

Tom often writes based on his life experiences. He has personally visited every location in *Escaping the Labyrinth* and uses his observations to enhance each scene. The play feels episodic in that nearly every scene encounters a new character and spans nearly 60 years from start to finish. There is, however, a throughline with Bud's search for the person he knows is meant for him, no matter how unfathomable the circumstances. Whether his encounters with gods and goddesses are chance, fated, or intentional, there is something in him that earnestly pushes him to the final moments of his life, which (if you ask *our* cast) were fated from the start. Tom blends an alluring fantasy world with very real matters of the human heart.

As the premiering theatre, we've also been able to work with our production team members to create a world on the stage from the ground up. Every artistic choice about the show is the original interpretation of a location, a lighting look, or what a character is wearing. It is invigorating to make these choices and inspires me to start every production, regardless of the number of times it's been produced, with a blank slate and no creative limitations.

Tom Hischak and Kathy Pingel, the AACT NewPlay Fest dramaturge who has been by our side, have been a fantastic team to collaborate with. After months of discussion, analysis, trial and error, and discovery, we are so excited to present this world premiere production of *Escaping the Labyrinth*.

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647th Production 103rd Season Opening October 15, 2021 Closing October 24, 2021

Des Moines Community Playhouse Presents in the John Viars Theatre

ESCAPING THE LABYRINTH

By Thomas S. Hischak

Presented by AACT NewPlayFest, Mary & Russ Marshall, Mark & Darlene Pullen

Director: Katy Merriman
Scenic Designer: Nicholas Amundson
Costume Designer: Jessica Van Essen
Lighting Designer: Chris Hanian
Composer/Sound Designer: Mark Toebben
Properties Designer: Allyson Braun
Stage Manager: Jenna Darsee
Dramaturge: Kathy Pingel
Assistant Director: Toni K. Farris

Assistant Properties Designer: **Eileen M. Diaz**Assistant Stage Manager: **Samuel Amadeo**Playhouse Artistic Director: **Katy Merriman**

Cast *Indicates Playhouse Debut

Bud Schliemann	Nick Cornelison	Hester Dottie Flener*
Herman	Tyler Robinson	Sarge Madison Ray
Dee	Jillian Traskos*	Old BudJim Meade
Manos	Don Rothweiler	VoiceoversTim Harris, Jada Smith,
Julian	Clifton Antoine	Joe Smith, Robin Spahr,
Paula	Shelby Dale*	Meredith Toebben, Josh Visnapuu
Dr. Valency	Ken Reams	

Places & Times

Scene 1: Delphi, Greece, 1951 Scenes 2 & 3: Dayton, OH, 1958 Scene 4: London, England, 1961 Scene 5: St. Louis, MO, 1964 Scene 6: Pittsburgh, PA, 1966 Scene 7: Syracuse, NY, 1971 Scene 8: Delphi, Greece, 2009

"Myths which are believed in tend to become true." -George Orwell

Escaping the Labyrinth is presented without an intermission.

Escaping the Labyrinth is presented by arrangement with the American Association of Community Theatre.



Clifton Antoine (Julian) is an actor/comedian who has been in numerous stage productions, stand-up showcases, and improv comedy shows. At The Playhouse last season, he

appeared as Anthony in *I and You* and was one of the creators of and actors in *nature of the dream*. A graduate of Central College, Clif is a youth housing navigator at Primary Health Care. He enjoys playing basketball and video games, and is engaged to Olivia Coffin.



Nick Cornelison (Bud Schliemann) returns to The Playhouse, having made his debut as a youth in The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. With Locust Productions at the

Des Moines Social Club, he appeared in *R.U.R.* (Primus), *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom* (multiple characters), and, his favorite, *A Gaggle of Saints* (John). Nick, who is on staff at The Bartender's Handshake, enjoys roleplaying games, Magic The Gathering, and writing.



Shelby Dale (Paula) is a recent graduate of the University of South Dakota where she earned her B.F.A. in musical theatre. Some of her credits there include Agnes in She Kills Monsters, Hall

in Men on Boats, and The Hunchback of Notre Dame. At The Hilltop Theatre in Baumholder, Germany, she played Ariel in Disney's The Little Mermaid. Shelby works as a behavior technician at Stride Autism Center. She is an active reader, puzzler, and dance enthusiast.



Dottie Flener (Hester) is a double major/double minor at Drake University studying international business and accounting, and French and business law. This is her Playhouse debut, but she

has been in numerous roles at the Frankfort Community Theatre in West Frankfort, IL, including Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Mamma Mial, Disney's The Little Mermaid (Flotsam), A Charlie Brown Christmas, and, her favorite, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Hippolyta). Dottie's interests include dance, embroidery, linguistics, genealogy, and folk theology.



Jim Meade (Old Bud) has a rich history with The Playhouse. He served as the board's president, chaired the season ticket campaign, was a house manager, stage managed shows, and

volunteered on backstage crews. His numerous Playhouse stage credits span from 1974's *Play It Again Sam* to 1981's *Same Time Next Year*. More recently, he was in *Again and Again and Eventually* at Tallgrass Theatre. Jim is an attorney who enjoys bicycling, traveling, and virtually all spectator sports which involve a ball or puck.



Madison Ray (Sarge) has performed with the Des Moines Metro Opera, played Tom Collins in Rent (Playhouse), and was nominated for a Cloris Award for tick, tick...BOOM! (Des Moines

Onstage). Seeing an opportunity to uplift youths, Madison has served as a teaching artist (Kennedy Center trained) and this year wrote an original musical for Des Moines Public Schools and Turnaround Arts called *Power Up!* that is a virtual slice of life performance that gives a voice to students' lifestyles, perspectives, and values.



Ken Reams (Dr. Valency) is a longtime Des Moines favorite whose more than 80 varied shows on area stages over 50 years have included Cyrano de Bergerac, 1776, Winnie-the-Pooh,

and Mamma Mia! at The Playhouse; Arsenic and Old Lace and Fiddler on the Roof at the Ingersoll Dinner Theatre; Amadeus at the Drama Workshop; Our Town and 12 Angry Jurors at Ankeny Community Theatre; and Oliver! and Hello, Dolly! at Urbandale Community Theatre. Ken likes reading in his retirement.



Tyler Robinson (Herman) is involved in all areas of the arts: drawing, hip hop dance, recording and producing music, acting, photography and videography, anime, modeling, and DJing/

emceeing. He also enjoys longboarding. At The

Playhouse, he has been in *Sister Act* and *The Lion*, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. One of his favorite roles has been Marquis in *Hooded* with Pyramid Theatre Company. Tyler is earning his degree in physics at Onondaga Community College (Syracuse, NY).



Don Rothweiler (Manos) made his Playhouse debut as Cinderella's Father in Into the Woods. Other area appearances include 12 Angry Men, Ella Enchanted, and The Mystery

of Edwin Drood all at The Playhouse and It's a Wonderful Life, The Radio Play with Iowa Stage Theatre Company. He performs regularly with the Final Act Ensemble, The Playhouse's classic radio performance group. Don is a puppeteer and historical reenactor. He enjoys working as a character actor and mastering dialects.



Jillian Traskos (Dee) is an R.N. with UnityPoint making her Playhouse debut. Her last performance was in the title role in Antigone in high school although she has been in various

competitive short films since then. Jillian says her hobbies include eating her way around the world, tackling her To Be Read stack, and failing at training her dog.



Katy Merriman (Director/Artistic Director) has been an active member of the local theatre community since moving to Des Moines in 2013. Her Playhouse directing credits include the

recent co-production with Pyramid Theatre Company, A Love Offering (co-directed with Tiffany Johnson), Some Enchanted Evening, Stuart Little, I and You, The Roommate, Love Letters, and Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!" Prior to becoming artistic director, Katy appeared on The Playhouse stage in shows including Into the Woods (Cinderella), Les Misérables (Cosette), Completeness (Molly), and Legally Blonde the Musical (Elle Woods) and was the musical director for The Playhouse Performance Academy from 2016 to 2018. Katy worked with lowa Stage Theatre Company as a resident artist where her performance credits include The Glass

Menagerie (Laura) and Our Town (Emily). She also directed their 2018 production of Fun Home. Prior to her time in Des Moines, Katy worked with numerous theatres as a performer, director, and administrator. She has a Bachelor of Music from Butler University in Indianapolis, IN.



Nicholas Amundson (Scenic Designer) earned his B.F.A in theatre design and technology from the University of South Dakota. Working on theatre all over town, he has designed in

many different styles with StageWest Theatre Company (Ugly Lies the Bone, Marjorie Prime), Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre (The Hobbit, James and the Giant Peach Jr.). Noce (bare: A Pop Opera), and Kata Klysmic Productions (The Rocky Horror Show, Reefer Madness). He served as scenic designer for The New Mel Brooks Musical Young Frankenstein, Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka, A Chorus Line, Choices, Disney's The Little Mermaid, Ragtime, Catch Me If You Can and many more at The Playhouse. In the 2019-20 season, he directed and designed James and the Giant Peach in the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre. His favorite thing about theatre is creating outof-the-box ways to present a story that gives the audience something fun to experience.



Jessica Van Essen (Costume Designer) has spent much of her career in schools as a professor/ costume shop manager and working with professional theatres as a costume designer

and technician. She spent three seasons with the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, VA, as their costume designer and shop manager, designing such shows as William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Comedy of Errors* among others.



Chris Hanian (Lighting Designer) received his B.A. in theatre design and production from the University of Northern Iowa and has designed lights for shows across the country including

Always... Patsy Cline at New London (NH) Barn Playhouse and Lost Girl at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. Their past stage credits include

Paul in *Hair* (UNI Strayer Wood Theatre) and, at The Playhouse, *Singin'* in the Rain. Chris' interests include reading, writing, and biking.



Mark Toebben (Composer/Sound Designer) has composed music for many Playhouse productions including Silent Sky (2019 Cloris Award winner for Best Sound Design), F. Scott Fitzgerald's The

Great Gatsby; The Miracle Worker; Boeing, Boeing; The Hundred Dresses; Little House Christmas at Plum Creek; and Anne of Green Gables. He received a Playhouse Dionysos Award for Outstanding Performance for his multiple roles – Mr. Blandworth, Al Catraz, Detective McSmogg – in Miss Nelson Is Missing! In his retirement, Mark enjoys baking and exploring New Mexico with his wife, Alice Robertson.



Allyson Braun (Properties
Designer) returned to the world
of props design – an art she
had done for four years at North
Central College (Naperville, IL)
– with The Playhouse's summer

tent theatre productions of *Godspell, Plaza Suite,* and *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical.* Her most recent Playhouse stage role was Ella in *Ella Enchanted.* Allyson is COO of Merkle Retirement Planning and lives in Beaverdale with her husband, lan, and their two cats.



Jenna Darsee (Stage Manager) is a graduate of Luther College, Decorah, with a B.A. in art with an emphasis in printmaking and art history. She teaches K-5 art at Irving Elementary, Indianola,

and is currently marketing chair and was coconference chair for the recent Art Educators of Iowa conference. A former Playhouse intern, Jenna joined the theatre's education staff more than five years ago. She is a director, along with Nathan Jorgensen and David A. VanCleave, of HOPE! Drama Troupe.



Kathy Pingel (*Dramaturge*) was the director of education and youth pogramming at The Playhouse for 10 years. She also served as artistic director of the Kate Goldman Children's

Theatre. She holds a B.A. in theatre from Eastern Michigan University, an M.A. from Northwestern University in performance studies, and an M.A.T. from Northwestern. Kathy has adjudicated at state, regional, national, and international festivals for the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT). In 2017, she was named an AACT Fellow and in 2019 was given the prestigious Art Cole Lifetime Achievement Award. Since leaving Des Moines, Kathy has directed and taught in Kentucky, Oregon, Michigan, Iowa, Florida, Oklahoma, and Ansbach, Germany. Kathy's newest role is dramaturge for AACT's NewPlayFest.



Toni K. Farris (Assistant Director) began her Playhouse career more than 30 years ago, volunteering on the shift and properties crew for A... My Name is Alice. Since then, she has stage managed

various shows at area theatres and served as light board operator. At The Playhouse, she most recently was assistant director for *Plaza Suite* and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. Toni is an intellectual property legal assistant at Corteva Agriscience. She likes traveling, reading, and cheering on the Liverpool Football Club.



Eileen M. Diaz (Assistant Properties Designer) is a senior at Des Moines East High School. She creates in many visual arts mediums including sculpture, photography, screenprinting.

textiles, and painting. She plays piano, guitar, and ukulele. Her interests and activities include archery; mixed martial arts; building, fixing, and experimenting with electronics; and history. Eileen is also a movie buff who collects James Dean memorabilia.



Samuel Amadeo (Assistant Stage Manager) first appeared on The Playhouse stage as Claude Herdman in *The Best* Christmas Pageant Ever. A recent graduate of Drake University,

he works as the deputy finance director for the lowa Democratic Party. In his spare time, Sam likes reading adventure novels, listening to history podcasts, and playing kendama.



Thomas S. Hischak (*Playwright*) is an internationally recognized author, playwright, and teacher in the performing arts. He is the author of 38 published plays which are performed in

the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia. His playwriting awards include the Stanley Drama Award (New York City) for Cold War Comedy and the Julie Harris Playwriting Award (Beverly Hills, California) for The Cardiff Giant. Hischak was a winner in the AACT NewPlay Fest in 2016 for his comedy The Emperor of North America which was produced by the Silver Spring Stage in Maryland and published by the Dramatic Publishing Company. He is also the author of

24 non-fiction books about theatre, film, and popular music including The Oxford Companion to the American Musical, The Rodgers and Hammerstein Encyclopedia, Broadway Plays and Musicals, Through the Screen Door, The Tin Pan Alley Encyclopedia, Off-Broadway Musicals Since 1919. The Disney Song Encyclopedia, Broadway Lyricists, American Literature on Stage and Screen, Theatre as Human Action, The Film Composers Encyclopedia, and The Oxford Companion to American Theatre. Four of his books have been cited as Outstanding Non-fiction Books by the American Library Association and The Oxford Companion to the American Musical was cited as an Outstanding Reference Work by the New York City Public Library in 2008. Since 1983 he has been professor of theatre at the State University of New York at Cortland where he has received such honors as the 2004 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity and the 2010 SUNY Outstanding Achievement in Research Award. Tom is also a Fulbright scholar who has taught and directed in Greece, Lithuania, and Turkey. He currently teaches at Flagler College in St. Augustine, FL. www.ThomasHischak.com

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Sunny Liston, Mary Marshall,
Mark Morrison, Becky
Scholtec, Mary Whisenand,
Sherill Whisenand

Playhouse Partners: Dani
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Corpus, Peter Dean, Denise
Forney, Anne Frett, Pam
Gabby, Michael Howland,
Jill Lippincott, Rebecca
Masucci, Greg Millar, Mark
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Schmillen, Tony Tandeski,
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Due to print deadlines, these
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Guest Services: Rania
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Ann Barfels, Judy Block,
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Darlene Cangas, Dan Chase,
Judi Cooper, Carol Culmer,
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Scholtec, Maureen Sexton, Khamla Sithonnorath, Kristi Sithonnorath, George Sparks, Mary Staplin, David Vestal, Neli Vosloh, Nancy Ward, Sherill Whisenand, Mary Whisenand, Janet Whiteside

WITH THEIR EYES SPECIAL THANKS

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Jackie Schmillen
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Abunijaila, Judi Cooper,
Patty Davis, Maddie Davis,
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Debbie Jacobson, Ticket Office Manager

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Angela Lampe, Associate Artistic Director Jessica Van Essen, Costume Shop Supervisor

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Alexander Baker
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The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to include The Des Moines Community Playhouse as a producing theatre in AACT NewPlayFest 2022!

AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, highquality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. Many theatres across the country applied to be a producing theatre. More than 280 playwrights submitted scripts. Six theatres and six scripts were selected for full productions.

AACT helps theatres thrive. AACT provides networking, resources, and support to suit the needs of those involved in community theatre. AACT represents the interests of thousands of theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Military Services overseas.

This AACT NewPlayFest world premiere production of *Escaping the Labyrinth*, by Thomas S. Hischak is made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation and is sponsored by Dramatic Publishing Company (DPC). DPC publishes AACT NewPlayFest winning plays in anthologies and licenses future productions of the winning scripts. www.dramaticpublishing.com

Jack K. Avre celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party he sang with a barbershop guartet – one of his favorite activities – and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years and continued that interest when he moved to California. Frank was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book for a children's theatre production, and penning McSteg, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's Macbeth. Upon Jack's death, resources he left were used to create the Jack K. Ayre Foundation for the United States Coast Guard, of which he was a member during WWII, and the Jack K. and Agnes K. Ayre Foundation for Blind Children. His mother, Agnes, was a teacher and pioneer in educating the blind. In addition, the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation was created by the children of Frank Ayre Lee as a tribute to their father, who passed away in August 2012, and as a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest.









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