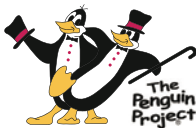


STANDING OVATION



October 13-15, 2023



THIS PLAYHOUSE PRODUCTION
IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY



Grassroots funding raised by Johnston High School Dragon Drama Boosters

Great Red Wine

*made in Iowa
from Grapes
grown in Iowa*



Iowa In the Dark

is a dry red with light, fresh notes. First impressions are tangy acid followed by black cherry fading to plum, a dry mid-palate, and a long, pleasing finish. Made from Marquette, St. Croix, Petite Pearl, and Steuben grapes grown in Iowa, it's a versatile wine that pairs well with grilled meat and spicy foods.

2021 Iowa Sabrevois

is a dry red with bold aromas of spices and leather on the nose followed by blackberry and plum notes with hints of baking spice, smoke, and licorice on the palate. Made from Sabrevois grapes grown in our Iowa vineyards, it pairs well with grilled meat.

2020 Iowa

Reserve Marquette

is a dry red with bright cherry notes and hints of baking spice on the nose and palate followed by a long, moderately acidic finish. Made from Marquette grapes grown in our Iowa vineyards, it pairs well with spicy foods.



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David R. Kilpatrick
Executive Director

Thank you for joining us today for our Penguin Project production *Disney's High School Musical Jr.* To create theatre is to celebrate skills, talents, and capabilities. Your attendance demonstrates that you believe in the value of the performing arts and that everyone should be able to participate.

For those who may not know, The Penguin Project is a national organization that understands theatre should be for all. Target participants are youths, ages 10-21, who perform a shortened version of a well-known musical. All roles are performed by young artists with developmental disabilities. They share the stage with dedicated peer mentors – youths of the same age who are there to support, guide and ensure that everyone succeeds. Together, all participants work side-by-side for more than four months of rehearsals to present three public performances. At the national level, The Penguin Project is committed to not letting anything inhibit a child's ability to participate in theatre and at The Playhouse it is primary to our mission, vision, and values.



Katy Merriman
Artistic Director

Once more, thank you for showing your support to our artists and mentors, our production team, and everyone who helped bring this program to life. We know it is a privilege to be your community theatre, serving the whole community. Thank you.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

<i>Wildcat Cheer</i>	Ensemble
<i>Start of Something New</i>	Troy, Gabriella, Ensemble
<i>Get'cha Head in the Game</i>	Troy, Ensemble
<i>Auditions</i>	Ensemble
<i>What I've Been Looking For</i>	Sharpay, Ryan
<i>What I've Been Looking For (Reprise)</i>	Troy, Gabriella
<i>Stick to the Status Quo</i>	Ensemble
<i>Counting on You</i>	Ensemble
<i>We're All in This Together</i>	Ensemble
<i>Bop to the Top</i>	Sharpay, Ryan
<i>Breaking Free</i>	Troy, Gabriella, Ensemble
<i>We're All in this Together (Reprise)</i>	Ensemble
<i>Don't Stop Believing</i>	Ensemble

A **Adventures** **in** **S** **Social** **D** **Development**

The logo features the text 'Adventures in Social Development' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters 'A', 'S', and 'D' are significantly larger than the other letters. The 'A' is red, 'S' is green, and 'D' is blue. The word 'in' is smaller and positioned between 'Adventures' and 'Social'. To the right of the text are three stylized footprints: a red one, a green one, and a blue one, arranged in a slightly curved path.

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Or, come check us out at our
Open House on 10/19/23 4:30-8:30 PM

New location:
8101 Birchwood Court, Suite B in Johnston

Website:
www.adventuresinsocialdevelopment.org

CAST LIST

Opening October 13, 2023

Closing October 15, 2023

The Des Moines Playhouse Production of

DISNEY'S HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL JR

Book by **David Simpatico**

Based on a Disney Channel Original Movie Written by **Peter Barsocchini**

Songs by

Matthew Gerrard & Robbie Nevil, Ray Cham, Greg Cham & Andrew Seeley, Randy Petersen & Kevin Quinn, Andy Dodd & Adam Watts, Bryan Louiselle, David N. Lawrence & Faye Greenberg, Jamie Houston

Music Adapted, Arranged and Produced by **Bryan Louiselle**

Sponsored by **Fareway Stores, Lincoln Savings Bank, and Workspace, Inc.**

Grassroots funding raised by **Johnston High School Dragon Drama Boosters**

Director: **Kim Van Haecke**
Music Director: **Derek Phelps**
Choreographer: **Natalie Thomas**
Scenic Designer: **Nicholas Amundson**
Costume Designer: **Joy Barlean**
Lighting Designer: **Virgil Kleinhesselink**
Sound Designer: **Travis Edrington**
Properties Designers: **Ann Unga, JP Unga**
Stage Manager: **Ash Howland**
Artistic Director: **Katy Merriman**

Program Coordinator: **Nate Weber**
Assistant Music Director: **Caitlyn Porter**
Assistant Choreographer: **Michael Beasley**
Mentor Coordinator: **Jessica Vaught**
Mentor Assistants: **Annie Mielke, Joy Mielke, Anna Sunstrom**
Peer Liaison: **Paul Honold**
Family Liaison: **Karen Honold**
Assistant Stage Manager: **Kailee Martens**
ASL Coordinators: **Trish Barton, Sherry Long**

Cast

In Order of Appearance

Names listed are Artist, Mentor

* Indicates a Playhouse Debut

Brainiacs.....	Mattias Fiser, Kyleigh Barlean* Leighton Buckley*, Annie White	Ryan Evans	DJ Brown, Porter Kimble
Jocks	Max Bird, Aya Haidar, Owen Jacob*, Ellie Wharff*, Stephen Togba, Emme Gustafson	Taylor McKessie	Elizabeth Janni, Emery Blackford
Thespians		Gabriella Montez	McKenna O'Meara, Julia Richer
Kelsi	Indigo Ekhardt, Paige Neighbors*	Jack Scott.....	Robert Thacker, Ridge Rutherford
Cathy/Cydra	Whitman Birk*, Lily Krizer	Ms. Darbus.....	Sabina Shelton, Liz Francis
James.....	Eli Dixon*, Ainsley Jenkins*	Coach Bolton.....	Alex Noah*, Maddie Deyen
Susan.....	Kamilla Freeman*, Maddie Sanders*	Ms. Tenny	Amara Dunham, Kylie Halstead
Chad Danforth.....	Eli Zimmerman, Silas Gustafson*	Martha Cox.....	Joshua Baldwin, Brecken Dirks
Zeke Baylor.....	Shea Hunt*, Julia Neighbors	Mentor Swing (Brainiac).....	Corley Blackford
Troy Bolton.....	Elias Andersson, Jackson Hamilton	Mentor Swing (Jock)	Sophia Gustafson
Sharpay Evans	Lani Dirks, Cambria Dirks	Mentor Swing (Jock)	Anna Nelson*
		Mentor Swing (Thespian).....	Ingrid Oakley
		Mentor Swing (Thespian).....	Jayne Stieler
		Mentor Swing (Jock)	Anabelle Weis*
		Mentor Swing (Brainiac).....	Gennie Weis

Time: Back to school after the New Year

Place: East High School - Albuquerque, New Mexico

Disney's High School Musical Jr. is presented without intermission.

Disney's High School Musical Jr. is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).

All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

www.MTIShows.com

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

CAST NOTES



Elias Andersson (*Artist: Troy Bolton*) is a seventh grader at Stillwell Junior High School, West Des Moines. He likes playing on his iPad and spending time with his mom, dad, and older brother,

Anton. Elias has taken classes at The Playhouse and was previously seen in last year's Penguin Project production of *Annie Jr.*



Joshua Baldwin (*Artist: Martha Cox*) attends Central Campus' 4Plus Program. He made his Playhouse debut in *Annie Jr* and has participated in theatre classes through Adventures in

Social Development in West Des Moines. Joshua loves acting and making people laugh. His interests away from the stage include weather, calendars, maps, watching scary Goosebump movies, cooking, and eating tacos.



Kyleigh Barlean (*Mentor: Brainiac*) is a seventh grader at Des Moines Merrill Middle School. She was inspired to be a mentor by her twin brothers, Luke and Logan, who both have

Down syndrome. Kyleigh is most excited to be able to make new friends from this experience. Her hobbies include crafts and gaming.



Maxwell Bird (*Artist: Jock/Cheer Squad*) has been in programs through Adventures in Social Development. In addition to being an actor, he competes as a gymnast in Special Olympics and

plays Miracle League baseball. He likes listening to music, watching movies, and hanging out with his friends. Max is in the senior plus program at Waukee Community Schools' Community Transition Center.



Whitman Birk (*Artist: Cathy/Cyndra*) is a seventh grader at Cowles Montessori, Des Moines. His hobbies include reading, writing, and collecting rocks.

Whitman loves playing with his cats, Maria and Hyena.



Corley Blackford (*Mentor: Brainiac Swing*) made her Playhouse debut as the title character in *The Velveteen Rabbit* (2021 Dionysos Award winner).

She has performed in numerous shows at CAP Theatre in Altoona and Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. A senior, Corley is dual enrolled at Johnston High School and Blackford Homeschool. She keeps fish and, in addition to theatre, participates in tumbling.



Emery Blackford (*Mentor: Taylor*) is a homeschooled eighth grader and was last seen on The Playhouse stage for Penguin Project's production of *Annie Jr* last year. With Des Moines

Young Artists' Theatre, she performed in *Seussical the Musical Jr.* Her CAP Theatre, Altoona, shows include *Into the Woods Jr* and *James and the Giant Peach Jr.* Em likes dancing, tumbling, and studying fashion design and make-up artistry.



DJ Brown (*Artist: Ryan*) is excited to make his return to The Playhouse stage. He likes re-enacting scenes from the musical theatre series, *Glee*. He has enjoyed being part of Adventures

in Social Development and loves spending time with family. DJ also likes creating with Legos. He has three chihuahuas.



Leighton Buckley (*Artist: Brainiac/Cheer Squad*) is delighted to be able to dance, sing, and be a part of a fun show. A seventh grader at Bondurant Farrar Middle School, she is

making her stage debut. Leighton's hobbies include drawing and writing stories.



Madison Deyen (*Mentor: Coach Bolton*) has been involved in shows at CAP Theatre, Altoona, and at Johnston High School. Maddie is a freshman at Des Moines Area Community College

studying special education. She also likes horseback riding and crafting. Maddie works at Target.



Brecken Dirks (*Mentor: Martha Cox*) is excited to join his sisters, Cambria and Lani, with the Penguin Project. A fifth grader at Dallas Center – Grimes Middle School, he enjoys playing

baseball, piano, and video games. Brecken also collects Pokémon cards, rocks, and baseball cards.



Cambria Dirks (*Mentor: Sharpay*) is a seventh grader at Dallas Center – Grimes Oak View. She made her Playhouse debut in Penguin Project's production of *Annie Jr.* She has taken a

Playhouse performance class, playing Goose Girl in *The Princess and the Goose Girl*. In addition to singing and acting, Cami plays piano and softball.



Lani Dirks (*Artist: Sharpay*) made her Playhouse debut as Annie in last year's Penguin Project production of *Annie Jr.* She is involved in drama at Dallas Center – Grimes High School

where she is a freshman. Lani likes playing baseball and teaching sign language, and is obsessed with penguins.



Eli Dixon (*Artist: James*) is a sixth grader at Goodrell Middle School, Des Moines and is excited to make his debut on The Playhouse stage. He enjoys singing, dancing, and making new friends.



Amara Dunham (*Artist: Ms. Tenny/Cheer Squad*) is excited to return to The Playhouse stage in her second Penguin Project production. At Johnston High School, where she is a senior, she

was in the ensemble for *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*. Amara is a member of the Johnston Sparkle cheer squad. She participates in Team RunFree adaptive running program.



Indigo Ekhardt (*Artist: Kelsi*) is a senior at Des Moines Roosevelt High School. She served on the set crew for their production of *Mamma Mia!* Indigo has

participated in Dance Without Limits since she was three years old. She likes making art and playing basketball and is an avid member of Roosevelt's Best Buddies program. Indigo has three brothers, Asher, Liam, and Miles.



Mattias Fiser (*Artist: Brianiac*) is a junior at Centennial High School in Ankeny. He is delighted to be able to perform with his friends from *Annie Jr.* He likes swimming, reading, watching TV

and programs on his Chromebook, and camping with the Boy Scouts.



Liz Francis (*Mentor: Ms. Darbus*) is active in mock trial, show choir, band, and cheerleading at Urbandale High School where she is a sophomore. She likes reading, writing, photography,

and sewing. Liz is excited to return to The Playhouse stage for her second Penguin Project production.

CAST NOTES



Kamilla Freeman (*Artist: Susan/Cheer Squad*) is excited to make her Playhouse debut. A ninth grader at Urbandale High School, she is involved in choir and band. Kamilla loves writing stories, watching YouTube, and hanging with family and friends.



Emme Gustafson (*Mentor: Jock*) is thrilled to be able to join the Penguin Project. She is an eighth grader at Grandview Christian School and enjoys acting, singing, reading, swimming, and hanging with friends.



Silas Gustafson (*Mentor: Chad Danforth*) is a fifth grader at Grandview Christian School. He enjoys playing soccer and basketball. Silas is excited to join Penguin Project this season.



Sophia Gustafson (*Swing: Jock*) is enjoying her first year as a mentor in The Penguin Project. She is a sophomore at Grand View Christian School and enjoys hanging out with friends, playing volleyball, singing, and doing anything adventurous.



Aya Haidar (*Mentor: Jock*) was named a Playhouse Volunteer of the Year for her work with Penguin Project and as a PIP (pre-intern program). When not at the theatre, she sings, plays tennis and soccer, and hangs out with friends and family. Aya is an eighth grader at Indian Hills Junior High in West Des Moines.



Kylie Halstead (*Mentor: Ms. Tenny/Cheer Squad*) is a junior at Northwest High School in Waukee and works as an early childcare provider in the Waukee School District. She was last seen on The Playhouse stage in *Annie Jr.* When not singing or dancing, Kylie likes riding her bike and playing ukulele.



Jackson Hamilton (*Mentor: Troy Bolton*) has taken several Playhouse classes and made his stage debut as Tommy in *Pippi Longstocking*. Jackson was most recently seen as Flounder in *Disney's The Little Mermaid* at Carousel Theatre in Indianola. He was nominated as a Jeanne Hopson Rising Star for the Cloris Awards. A sixth grader at Brody Middle School, he loves dinosaurs and prehistoric animals. He is an avid reader of chapter books and graphic novels.



Shea Hunt (*Artist: Zeke Baylor*) is a ninth grader at Southview Middle School in Ankeny, and is making his Playhouse debut. He is excited to be able to perform with other kids just like him. Shea's hobbies include swimming, riding on his scooter, and horseback riding.



Owen Jacob (*Arist: Jock*) is fifth grader at Jacob Academy homeschool, and likes swimming, fishing, and boating. He loves to perform and is excited to join his friends on The Playhouse stage for the first time.



Elizabeth Xiao Janni (*Artist: Taylor*) serves as an ASL worship leader at NorthPoint Church, performs with Dance Without Limits, and attends Deaf Club at Weeks Middle School where she is in seventh grade. Elizabeth loves animé and manga, sketching, biking, and spending time with her parents, James and Rebecca, siblings Andrew, Anna, Jacob, and Joshua, and dog Louie.



Ainsley Jenkins (*Mentor: James*) is excited to make her Playhouse debut. She is an eighth grader at Johnston Middle School and enjoys acting, video games, and hanging out with friends. Ainsley is a huge Harry Potter fan.

CAST NOTES



Porter Kimble (*Mentor: Ryan*) is a sophomore at Urbandale High School where he is involved in cross country and show choir. He is excited to get to be a part of his first Penguin Project production. Porter likes to collect thrifted clothes, Funko Pops, and Legos.



Lillian Krizer (*Mentor: Cathy/Cydra*) has participated in a summer camp at Altoona's CAP Theatre and danced for eight years with Pointe Academy. A seventh grader at Stilwell Junior High in West Des Moines, Lily plays flute, studies Tae Kwon Do, and likes Roblox, an online gaming platform.



Julia Neighbors (*Mentor: Zeke Baylor*) played Peggy in last year's production of *The Hundred Dresses*, and has taken several classes including Harry Potter summer camp and Broadway Stars. She plays the euphonium and is active in 4-H. She also works with foster dogs. Julia is in sixth grade at Summit Middle School in Johnston.



Paige Neighbors (*Mentor: Kelsi*) is excited to make her Playhouse debut. She is a freshman at Johnston High School. Paige loves reading, music, and collecting plants.



Anna Nelson (*Mentor: Jack Swing*) is excited to join the Penguin Project and make her Playhouse debut. An eighth grader at North Polk Middle School, she enjoys dancing, singing, and watching movies. Anna also likes to collect playbills, dresses, and books.



Alex Noah (*Artist: Coach Bolton*) attends Waukee Community Transition Center. His hobbies include video games, watching musicals, drumming, and Miracle League baseball. Alex is making his Playhouse debut and is excited to learn how to act, sing, dance, and be with friends.



Ingrid Oakley (*Mentor: Thespian Swing*) made her Playhouse debut as Gretl von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. She takes theatre classes at The Playhouse and Des Moines Performing Arts, and volunteers in guest services for Playhouse shows. A sixth grader at Night Monkey Elementary (homeschool), Ingrid plays piano and guitar, sings, dances, makes videos for YouTube, and sews.



McKenna O'Meara (*Artist: Gabriella*) is in a senior plus program at West Des Moines Valley High School where she is active in Best Buddies. She also studies dance and drama. McKenna was previously seen on The Playhouse stage as Miss Hannigan in the Penguin Project's production of *Annie Jr.*, a performance for which she received a Jeanne Hopson Rising Star Cloris Award.



Julia Richer (*Mentor: Gabriella*) is a sophomore at Urbandale High School where she is involved in Vitality show choir, UHS concert choir, and Best Buddies. She volunteers with Dance Without Limits and with children's ministries at her church. Julia enjoys swimming, hiking, and running.



Ridge Rutherford (*Mentor: Jack Scott*) is a sophomore at West Des Moines Valley High School. This is his first time participating in Penguin Project, but he has taken

CAST NOTES

classes at The Playhouse and is a PIP (pre-intern program). Ridge is excited to be able to share his love of theatre with others.



Madison Sanders (*Mentor: Susan/Cheer Squad*) is excited to make her Playhouse debut. A sophomore at Johnston High School, her hobbies include stargazing, swimming, and badminton.



Sabina Shelton (*Artist: Ms. Darbus*) is a homeschooled senior. With Des Moines Schools Home Instruction, she has appeared in *The Jungle Book*, *Murder Most Fowl*, and her favorite, *Sense and Sensibility*. Sabina also participated in The Playhouse's production of *Annie Jr.* She likes swimming, reading, drawing, and photography.



Jayne Stieler (*Mentor: Thespian Swing*) is an eighth grader at Weeks Middle School, Des Moines, who plays violin and runs cross-country. This is her second time participating with the Penguin Project and she has also been in The Playhouse's summer camp, William Shakespeare's *Star Wars*.



Robert Thacker (*Artist: Jack Scott*) has been involved in the performing arts through The Dance Program and Adventures in Social Development. He bowls and plays sports with Special Olympics, and likes to camp and fish, be an altar server, and design promotional products for the family business A-NOD for Situational Awareness LLC. Robert played Daddy Warbucks in *Annie Jr* at The Playhouse. He is a senior at Focus/East High School, where he learned how to use the sound board for the play *Rumors*.



Stephen L. Togba (*Artist: Jock*) loves to sing, dance, and be the center of attention so he is excited to be in his second musical. Stephen was on the track team at Indian Hills Elementary Junior High School, West Des Moines, and is now a sophomore at West Des Moines Valley High School. He loves to take photos and spend time with his family; his mother Dawine, stepfather Edwin, grandmother Victoria, and sisters Alfreda, Pandora, and Scarlett.



Anabelle Weis (*Mentor: Jock Swing*) is a sixth grader at Summit Middle School, Johnston. She likes to attend the Renaissance Fair and play Dungeons and Dragons. Anabelle enjoys swimming.



Gennie Weis (*Mentor: Brainiac Swing*) made their Playhouse debut in *with their eyes: September 11th: The View from a High School at Ground Zero*. They have also worked backstage at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. Gennie is a sophomore at Johnston High School and works at Scooters.



Ellie Wharff (*Mentor: Jock*) is a sixth grader at Indian Hills Jr. High School. She enjoys singing, dancing, art, reading, and biking. When Ellie is not at the theatre, she is out in nature busy collecting rocks and shells.



Annie White (*Mentor: Brainiac/Cheer Squad*) is thrilled to be a part of The Penguin Project again. She is excited to see and work with friends from last year and to be able to make new friends. Annie is in seventh grade at Summit Middle School, Johnston. She enjoys crafts, baking, watching YouTube, and going to musicals with her family.



Eli Zimmerman (*Artist: Chad Danforth*) enjoys singing and dancing and is excited to be in his third theatre production. He is an eighth-grade student at Johnston Middle School where he is in Impact show choir. Eli is also active in Boy Scouts.



Kim Van Haecke (*Director*) is thrilled to be back as director of the Penguin Project! Kim earned her master's degree in directing from Roosevelt University in Chicago and honed her skills directing HOPE! Troupe, Ankeny Community Theatre, and Valley High School's IHSSA team and in her teaching position with Des Moines Home Instruction Program. She has been teaching classes at The Playhouse for more than 20 years. Kim and her husband, Joe, enjoy traveling with their sons, Alex, Gabe, and Emmett, and spreading simple joy as they give train rides at the Downtown Farmer's Market.



Derek Phelps (*Music Director*) made their Playhouse debut as Younger Brother in *Ragtime*, later appearing in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, and most recently, *Kinky Boots*. Other stage credits include William Barfee in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Ankeny Community Theatre and Cogsworth in *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* at Post Playhouse (Crawford, NE). Derek joined The Playhouse staff as the volunteer and production coordinator in March.



Natalie Thomas (*Choreographer*) is a special education teacher at Northview Middle School in Ankeny. She is a choreographer for Simpson College, St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, and Children's Fantasy Theatre and Children's Fantasy Theatre in the Park in West Des Moines. On The Playhouse stage, Natalie has performed in *Ragtime* and *A Christmas Story, The*

Musical and choreographed *Annie Jr* last year. In her free time, Natalie likes hanging with her kids, watching trash TV with her husband, and eating chocolate.



Nicholas Amundson (*Scenic Designer*) earned his B.F.A in theatre design and technology from the University of South Dakota. He served as scenic designer for *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka*, *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, 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 out-of-the-box ways to present a story that gives the audience something fun to experience.



Joy Barlean (*Costume Designer*) has designed costumes for The Playhouse production of *Annie Jr* and *Anne of Green Gables* and worked as a seamstress for several other productions including *Singin' in the Rain* and *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*. She received her B.F.A. in theatre with a specialty in costume design from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She works as a member engagement specialist with Molina Healthcare of Iowa providing support to members that have long term healthcare needs. Working on the Penguin Project combines her passions of supporting people with disabilities and theatre. She enjoys spending time with her husband and three kids, doing just about anything outdoors. Kyleigh, her daughter, is a mentor in this production and her twin sons, Luke and Logan, hope to be artists in future Penguin Project productions.



Virgil Kleinhesselink (*Lighting Designer*) owns VTEC Productions sound company and is technical director at Des Moines Hoover High School where he designed lights for their production of *Les Misérables Jr*. Virgil began his Playhouse career in

CAST NOTES

1979 and since then has been involved with more than 200 shows as a designer or actor. He was inducted as a 2023 Playhouse Legend.



Travis Edrington (*Sound Designer*) has been a technical volunteer with The Playhouse since 2015. He can usually be seen behind or above the audience, running lights

or sound. Travis has a passion for safety, entertaining children, and aquatics. As an individual with high-functioning autism, sensory processing issues, depression, narcolepsy, anxiety, and probably a few other things, Spectrum Stories theatre workshops and The Penguin Project have been great ways for him to connect with kids and parents in similar situations. Travis is someone with whom these families can relate and look to for guidance.



Ann Ungs (*Properties Designer*) is the co-founder and president of Dance Without Limits, a local non-profit for dancers with disabilities, and a physical therapist at Unity Point Blank

Children's Hospital Pediatric Therapy Services. Ann has volunteered in guest services at The Playhouse for more than 10 years. She has also worked on properties crew and run crew and served as a followspot operator and dresser for several Playhouse musicals.



JP Ungs (*Properties Designer*) is a recent graduate of Drake University with a B.F.A. in theatre design and technology. Playhouse stage credits span *Disney's Alice in Wonderland Jr.* (Mathilda/Rose,

2013) to *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* (Actor 6, 2022) and *Guys and Dolls* (Lt Brannigan, 2022). They recently finished their first design outside of Drake as costumes and props designer for DMACC Ankeny Theatre's production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Their production roles at Drake for the '22-23 academic year included *The Theory of Relativity*

(assistant stage manager), *The Bacchae* (paint charge/scenic artist), Drake Student Theatre Productions (sound coordinator), *Silent Sky* (set design), and *The Bald Soprano* (assistant set design).



Ash Howland (*Stage Manager*) first became involved at The Playhouse through classes, later serving as an education intern for summer theatre classes.

Their production credits include master electrician for *Jesus Christ Superstar* and lighting designer for *A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes* at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle and assistant lighting designer for *Disney's The Little Mermaid* at Village Theatre in Issaquah, WA. At The Playhouse they have served on numerous backstage crews including stage manager for *Kinky Boots*. Ash is an assistant preschool teacher at Gan Shalom Preschool in Waukee and enjoys arts and crafts, video games, hiking, and their pet rats.



Caitlyn Porter (*Assistant Music Director*) made her Playhouse debut in *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella* and was most recently seen in *Kinky Boots*. Other stage credits include

Caitlyn/Nick in *Godspell* at Ankeny Community Theatre and Katskills Wintergreen in *The Humor Games* at Des Moines Lincoln High School. She graduated from the School of Music Vocations and is a piano teacher at Arrow Academy. In addition to playing piano, Caitlyn likes writing music, playing video games, and hanging out with friends.



Michael Beasley (*Assistant Choreographer*) has numerous Playhouse stage credits including *Kinky Boots*, *Guys and Dolls* (Vernon), *Charlotte's Web* (Second Narrator, Dionysos

Award recipient), and *Roald Dahl's Matilda The Musical* (Children's Entertainer/Big Kid). They

also were assistant choreographer for *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*. They received the 2022 Playhouse Spirit Award, given to an actor who has assisted a show in ways beyond their role. Beasley enjoys gardening, hiking, creating joy through macramé, and jamming with the family band.



Jessica Van Essen (*Assistant 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. Before moving back to Iowa, Jessica 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. She is delighted to bring the joy of live theatre to younger audiences as well.



Kailee Martens (*Assistant Stage Manager*) received her law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2022 and is now an attorney at the Iowa Department of Revenue. Although

this is her first production with The Playhouse, her credits include *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (Villager/Fork) and *The Wizard of Oz* (assistant stage manager) at Bemidji High School in Bemidji, MN. She was also involved in a law school theatre group called the Theatre of the Relatively Talentless where she performed as Bucky in *The Gunners New Groove*.



Jessica Vaught (*Mentor Coordinator*) has her degree in drama and theatre for youths from the University of Northern Iowa. While at UNI, she was a Playhouse summer education

intern. She recently served as drama director and head Large Group and Individuals speech coach at Urbandale High School. She has been on stage locally at Tallgrass Theatre Company. A paralegal

with Dorsey & Whitney LLP, she likes gardening, reading, playing board games, and taking walks with her family.



Annie Mielke (*Mentor Assistant*) has been involved with The Playhouse since 2005, performing in shows such as *The Hobbit* and *Charlotte's Web*, and teaching in the education department.

She was also the program coordinator for *Annie Jr.* A special education teacher for 11 years, she co-owns and operates Adventures in Social Development, a non-profit organization utilizing drama as the main tool for social skills development. A Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), she enjoys working alongside families to ensure just-right programs for their children.



Joy Mielke (*Mentor Assistant*) was last seen on The Playhouse stage as Mentor: Miss Hannigan in *Annie Jr.* Other Playhouse credits include *Gooney Bird Green* and *Her True Life Adventures*

(Beanie), *The Adventures of Nate the Great*, and *Singin' in the Rain*. She is earning her Bachelor's of Nursing from Mercy College of Health Sciences. In Joy's spare time, she enjoys reading, performing, and spending time with friends and family.



Anna Sunstrom (*Mentor Assistant*) is working towards her master's degree in mental health counseling from Grand View University. Her backstage credits with The Playhouse include

costume intern/dresser for the 2005 production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and as a dresser for *Shrek The Musical*. Other credits include *She Loves Me* (choreographer) and *Middle of Yesterday* (Leanna) at Ankeny Community Theatre, *Dracula* (Lucy) and *Tempest* (Iris) at Iowa Shakespeare Experience, and *The Producers* at Newton Community Theatre.

CAST NOTES



Paul Honold (*Peer Liaison*) has numerous area stage credits including *Go, Dog. Go!* and *Ragtime* at The Playhouse and *Annie, Six-on-Six, Guys and Dolls*, and *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, all at Urbandale Community Theatre. He received a 2022 Playhouse Dionysos Award for his work with the Penguin Project. The theatre cited the way he encourages and cheers on artists and mentors and helps to create a positive, accepting environment in which all participants can succeed.



Karen Honold (*Family Liaison*) is a training manager at Collins Aerospace. She loves to support her son, Paul, by jumping in and helping in any way she can backstage. Karen previously helped backstage for *Go, Dog. Go!* alongside Paul. She and her family love traveling and theatre.



Sherry Long (*ASL Coordinator*) has been working with The Playhouse since the start of the Penguin Project last year. This is her second performance working with deaf youths. She also worked as an interpreter during Penguin+. After graduating from Iowa Western Community College in 1995, she was an interpreter for Des Moines Roosevelt High School and assisted a deaf actress in *Agnes of God*. She is a Star Wars fan in her spare time, cosplaying as a dark Jedi and building her Mandalorian costume. She is working for the special education department in Johnston. She and her son, Nathan live in Des Moines. Sherry loves assisting deaf youths involved in theatrical productions.



Gage Cerrato (*Run Crew*) has enjoyed working at Adventureland Resort during the summer. He wanted to join the Penguin Project this year because his friends shared with him how much fun they had last year. Gage has loved

learning about theatre while operating the sound board and working backstage moving set pieces between scenes.



Alex Shaw (*Run Crew*) is attending the Urbandale School District Boost Program along with working part time at KwikStar. He enjoys anything Disney, technology, music, and NASCAR racing. Alex has enjoyed experiencing the opportunity to participate on the Penguin Project tech team for the first time.



Katy Merriman (*Playhouse Artistic Director*) has been an active member of the local theatre community since moving to Des Moines in 2013. She recently played the lead of *Girl in the Woods* production of *Once*. Her Playhouse directing credits include *Guys and Dolls*; *The Sound of Music*; the world premiere of *Escaping the Labyrinth*; the co-production with Pyramid Theatre Company, *A Love Offering* (co-directed with Tiffany Johnson); *I and You*; *The Roommate*; 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 Iowa 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*.

PRODUCTION CREWS

Technical Directors: **Nicholas Amundson, Paul Cartwright**

Run Crew: **Gage Cerrato, Sam Claassen, Catie Miller, Jeremy Origer, Alex Shaw**

Master Electrician: **Virgil Kleinhesselink**

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THE 2023-24 SEASON

JOHN VIARS THEATRE

Once

SEPT. 8-24, 2023

All is Calm

DEC. 1-17, 2023

Our Town

FEB. 2-18, 2024

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical

APR. 5-APR. 21, 2024

The Play That Goes Wrong

MAY 31-JUNE 16, 2024

School of Rock The Musical

JULY 12-28, 2024

KATE GOLDMAN CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Seussical TYA

OCT. 27-NOV. 5, 2023

A Charlie Brown Christmas

DEC. 2-17, 2023

Dragons Love Tacos

MARCH 1-10, 2024

Ivy+Bean The Musical

MAY 3-12, 2024

Little Shop of Horrors
2022-23 Season



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To donate to The Des Moines Playhouse, contact:

Ryan Crane, Director of Philanthropy, 515.974.5370, rcrane@dmplayhouse.com

GUEST INFORMATION

Accessibility

The Playhouse strives to make its facility and performances accessible to all guests. 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 deny 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, ushers 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.

Parking

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 restricted to Shops customers at all times. 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 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.

Safety Protocols

In order to best serve our whole community, The Playhouse respectfully requests the following items are not brought into theatre:

- Alcohol, drugs, illegal substances, or any paraphernalia associated with drug use
- Weapons of any type, including chains, knives, and firearms (excluding law enforcement officers)
- Pepper spray/mace/other chemicals
- Noisemakers such as air horns
- Laser Pens/Pointers of any type
- Fireworks

Tickets

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, Tuesday through Friday, and 90 minutes before each performance. 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



DMPlayhouse.com

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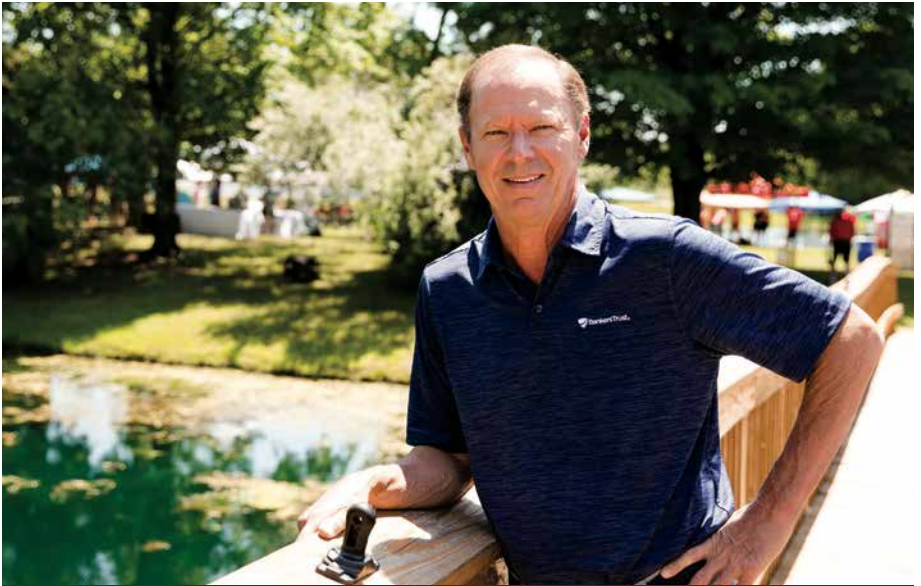
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CEO and President



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