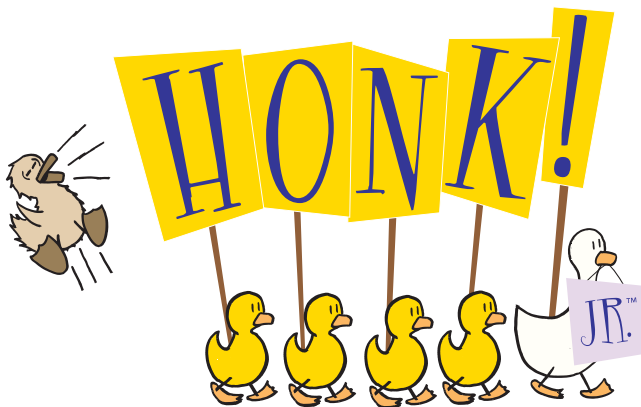
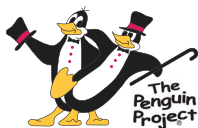


# STANDING VATION



August 14-17, 2025



THIS PLAYHOUSE PRODUCTION IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY



# 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.

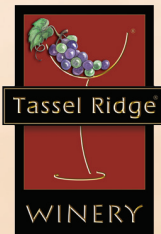
## ***2021 Iowa Sabrevois***

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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**Tassel Ridge Dry Red Wines...Simply Extraordinary®**

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**David R. Kilpatrick**  
Executive Director

Thank you for joining us today for our Penguin Project production of *Honk Jr.* Theatre skills, working together, communicating, meeting deadlines, and public speaking are tools that carry one through life regardless of career path. And creating art while secretly learning just makes it special for everyone as we have something to show for our work, even if it is only for four performances. Sharing your appreciation by being here today demonstrates that you, too, understand the value of the performing arts! Thank you.



**Katy Merriman**  
Artistic Director

For those who may not be aware, The Penguin Project is a national organization that understands theatre should be for all. Target participants are youths, ages 14-21, who present 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 together everyone succeeds. All members of the company work side-by-side for more than four months of rehearsals, classes, meetings, and games to be able to create the show you are seeing today. At the national level, The Penguin Project is committed to not letting anything prevent a child from participating. The Playhouse, under the dedicated leadership of Nate Weber and Derek Phelps, make this philosophy the highest value.

Again, thank you for showing your support to our artists and mentors, our production team, and everyone who helped bring this program to life. It is an honor to be your community theatre and to serve the whole community. See you next year!



THIS PRODUCTION IS  
GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY  
**NATIONWIDE**

**KATE GOLDMAN FAMILY SERIES  
IN THE STUDIO THEATRE**

Angels, shepherds,  
& a canned ham.  
**November 7-29, 2025**



**FOR TICKETS:**

**515.277.6261  
DMPlayhouse.com**

MUSICAL NUMBERS

"A Poultry Tale"	Drake, Ida, Maureen, Cat, Turkey, Grace, Ensemble
"The Joy of Motherhood"	Ida, Maureen, Ducklings
"Different (pre-reprise)"	Ida
"Hold Your Head Up High"	Ida, Ugly
"Look at Him"	Ida, Drake, Billy, Sunny, Beaky, Fluff, Ugly, Cat, Henrietta, Maureen, Grace, Turkey
"Different"	Ugly
"Play with Your Food"	Cat, Ugly
"Every Tear a Mother Cries"	Ida
"The Wild Goose Chase"	Greylag, Dot, Ugly, Cat, Ensemble
"The Joy of Motherhood (reprise)"	Drake
"Warts and All"	Bullfrog, Froglets, Ugly, Froglet Soloist, Ensemble
"The Blizzard"	Jaybird, Turkey, Ensemble
"Transformation"	Ida, Ugly
"Look at Him (reprise)"	Ugly, Drake, Ducklings, Grace, Ensemble
"Warts and All (reprise)"	Ugly, Ensemble
"Don't Stop Believing"	Company

### ADVENTURE CLUBHOUSE 2025-26 SEASON

For 4-6 year olds & their adults

**Stone Soup**  
Nov. 14, 2025

**Hansel & Gretel**  
Dec. 12, 2025

**The Mitten**  
Jan. 16, 2026

**Snow White**  
Feb. 13, 2026

**The 3 Little Pigs**  
Mar. 13, 2026

**Cinderella**  
Apr. 24, 2026

**Chicken Little**  
May 15, 2026





PURCHASE TICKETS  
**DMPLAYHOUSE.COM**

2 THE PLAYHOUSE 2024-25 SEASON

Opening August 14, 2025  
Closing August 17, 2025

CAST LIST

The Des Moines Playhouse Production of  
**HONK! JR**

Music by George Stiles  
Book & Lyrics by Anthony Drewe

Sponsored by **Fareway Stores, Sammons Financial Group, Variety–The Children's Charity**

Director: **Derek Phelps**  
Music Director: **Sarah Jorgenson**  
Choreographer: **Natalie Thomas**  
Scenic Designer: **Nicholas Amundson**  
Costume Designer: **Joy Barlean**  
Lighting Designer/Mentor Assistant: **JP Ungs**  
Sound Designer: **Travis Edrington**  
Properties Designers: **Aubrey Borcharding, Nate Weber**  
Stage Manager: **Ash Howland**  
Assistant Director/Mentor Assistant: **Kim Van Haecke**

Assistant Music Director/Mentor Assistant: **Jake Skarin**  
Assistant Sound Designer/Mentor Assistant: **Travis Edrington**  
Assistant Stage Manager/Mentor Assistant: **Jenny Bryant**  
Production Assistant: **Paul Honold**  
Technical Team Coordinators/  
Mentor Assistants: **Conlan Lingwall, Ethan Saltz**  
Family Liaison: **Karen Honold**  
ASL Interpreter: **Trish Barton**  
Program Coordinator: **Nate Weber**  
Artistic Director: **Katy Merriman**

**Cast**

In Order of Appearance  
Names listed are Artist, Mentor  
\* Indicates a Playhouse Debut

Drake.....	<b>Conlon Topf, Jaren Jorgenson</b>	Barnacles/Froglet.....	<b>Shea D. Hunt, Evan Siskow</b>
Turkey.....	<b>Elijah Zimmerman, Corley Blackford</b>	Pink Foot/Bullfrog .....	<b>Elias Andersson, Porter Kimble</b>
Henrietta/Girl Voice ....	<b>Leighton Buckley, Harper Butterworth</b>	Pink Foot/Bullfrog .....	<b>DJ Brown, Porter Kimble</b>
Maureen .....	<b>Sabina Shelton, Kylie Halstead</b>	Snowy/Froglet .....	<b>Maxwell Bird, Evan Siskow*</b>
Ida .....	<b>Izzabella Olson, Kylie Halstead</b>	Penny .....	<b>McKenna O'Meara, Julia Neighbors &amp; Julia Richer</b>
Cat.....	<b>Whitman Birk, Liam Jorgenson</b>	Mother Swan ....	<b>Anna Bylund, Julia Neighbors &amp; Julia Richer</b>
Grace .....	<b>Amara Dunham, Kyleigh Barlean</b>	Bewick.....	<b>Indigo Ekhardt, Julia Neighbors &amp; Julia Richer</b>
Billy.....	<b>Charlie Borcharding*, Jackson Hamilton</b>	Father Swan.....	<b>Mattias Fiser II, Jake Houangvan</b>
Beaky .....	<b>Eli Dixon, Harry Tuttle*</b>	Camera Crew .....	<b>Stephen Togba, Tiernan Topf</b>
Sunny .....	<b>Ivelle Bayasgalan, Madison Sanders</b>	Boy Voice .....	<b>Austin Borcharding*</b>
Fluff .....	<b>Kamilla Freeman, Mya Owens</b>	Farmer Voice.....	<b>Paul Honold</b>
Ugly .....	<b>Keir Jorgenson*, Vivian Perez*</b>	Swing Mentor .....	<b>Elizabeth Topf*</b>
Jay Bird .....	<b>Sawyer Hess, Tiernan Topf*</b>	Technical Artists.....	<b>Austin Borcharding, Alex Shaw, Robert Thacker</b>
Greylag .....	<b>Alex Noah, Charles Malone</b>		
Dot/Froglet .....	<b>Lani Dirks, Cambria Dirks</b>		

*Honk! Jr is presented without intermission.*

*Honk! Jr is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI, [www.MTIShows.com](http://www.MTIShows.com).*

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

## CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM NOTES



**Elias Andersson** (*Artist: Bullfrog/ Pink Foot*) is a freshman at Valley Southwoods in West Des Moines. He made his Penguin Project debut in *Annie Jr* (Rooster Hannigan/ Star To Be). Since then, he has

appeared in productions of *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Olaf) and *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Troy Bolton) and went on to play Si Crowell in *Our Town*. In addition to acting, Elias enjoys spending time with his family and playing video games.



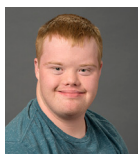
**Kyleigh Barlean** (*Mentor: Grace*) is a sophomore at Des Moines Roosevelt High School where she participates in marching band, track, and swimming. She is no stranger to Penguin Project and

served as mentor for *Disney's Frozen Jr* and *Disney's High School Musical Jr*. Kyleigh is a member of the North Side Swim Team and works as a lifeguard at Valley View Aquatic Center. She also works at Hy-Vee.



**Ivelle Bayasgala** (*Artist: Sunny*) is a freshman at Prairieview in Waukee. Her first theatre experience was performing in her school's production of *Camelot* and *Camelittle* (Troll). Since

then, she performed as Young Anna in The Penguin Project production of *Disney's Frozen Jr*. Ivelle is a gymnast and swimmer and enjoys baking. She is the 2024 Iowa Junior Teen Miss Amazing and recently participated in the National Miss Amazing 2025.



**Maxwell Bird** (*Artist: Snowy/ Froglet*) is a returning Penguin Project artist, having appeared onstage in *Annie Jr* (Drake), *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Jock/Cheer Squad Member), and

*Disney's Frozen Jr* (King). Max works in hospitality for Chick-Fil-A. He is a graduate of Waukee Northwest High School. Max loves music, going to the movies, and participating in Special Olympics gymnastics.



**Whitman Birk** (*Artist: Cat*) is an experienced actor, having performed with Seedlings Summer Camp at Tallgrass Theater Company and in *The Wizard of Oz* among other shows at Cowles

Montessori School in Des Moines. Whitman is now a freshman at Roosevelt High School. At The Playhouse, he was in *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Duke Weselton) and *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Cat-Loving Student). He enjoys playing Nintendo and has written a concept for a new game.



**Corley Blackford** (*Mentor: Turkey*) has volunteered in Playhouse guest services, served as an education PIP (pre-intern program), taken classes, stage managed

Performance Academy *Willy Wonka KIDS*, was a mentor with Penguin Project productions of *Disney's Frozen Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and *Annie Jr*, as well as played the title role in *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Corley is entering her second year at Des Moines Area Community College where she is a liberal arts major.



**Aubrey Borcharding** (*Artist: Properties Designer*) is a junior at Dallas Center-Grimes High School. She enjoys weightlifting and creating and selling art at the Grimes farmer's market. She is also

involved in girls' high school wrestling and the Des Moines High School Hockey League. This is her first Playhouse production.



**Austin Borcharding** (*Artist: Boy VO/Technical Team*) is a freshman at Dallas Center-Grimes High School. This is his first production at The Playhouse. His twin brother, Charlie, and sister, Aubrey, are

also in The Penguin Project. Austin plays hockey for Des Moines Youth League. He enjoys helping others and volunteers his time with the hospitality team at Lutheran Church of Hope. He is also a big fan of Iowa State University athletics and the Minnesota Wild.

## CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM NOTES



**Charlie Borcharding** (*Artist: Billy*) is excited to be in his first Penguin Project production alongside his sister, Aubrey, and twin brother, Austin. He is a freshman at Dallas Center-Grimes High School where

he sang Frank Sinatra's version of "Something Stupid" in the talent show. A music lover, he enjoys both his personal collection of vinyl records and his parents' collection of CDs and would love to own a jukebox. Charlie is a fan of University of Iowa athletics.



**DJ Brown** (*Artist: Bullfrog/Pink Foot*) is no stranger to Penguin Project, having appeared in *Annie Jr* (Pepper), *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Ryan), and *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Pabbie). He is a member

of the Miracle League and Adventures in Social Development and is active in his Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' youth group. He has two dogs, Pyro and Doc.



**Leighton Buckley** (*Artist: Henrietta/Girl VO*) is a freshman at Bondurant-Farrar High School and is excited to be returning to The Playhouse stage. Her last performance was in The Penguin

Project production of *Disney's High School Musical Jr* as a Cheerleader and Brainiac. She competes in Special Olympics in bowling, basketball, and track. Leighton's hobbies include drawing, cheerleading, dancing, singing, theatre, and anything where she can be creative.



**Harper Butterworth** (Mentor: *Henrietta/Girl VO*) is excited to be back for her second year with The Penguin Project after appearing in *Disney's Frozen Jr* as a townspeople. She is a freshman

at Johnston Middle School, where she is involved in show choir and runs cross-country and track. She also plays piano and studies voice.



**Anna Bylund** (*Artist: Mother Swan*) is a graduate of West Des Moines Valley High School. She was last onstage at The Playhouse in *Disney's Frozen Jr* as Queen Iduna and as a member of the Oaken

Family. She enjoys singing, volunteering around town, watching movies, and spending time with her friends and family.



**Cambria Dirks** (*Mentor: Dot/Froglet*) is a freshman at Dallas Center-Grimes (DCG) High School where she is in show choir. She made her Playhouse debut in Penguin Project's production of

*Annie Jr* (Mentor: Annie) and has since appeared in *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Mentor: Sharpay). Cambria has also been in productions of *Honk Jr* (Ensemble) and *Madagascar Jr* (Skipper) at DCG Oak View. In addition to singing and acting, Cambria plays piano.



**Lani Dirks** (*Artist: Dot/Froglet*) is no stranger to The Penguin Project, playing Annie in *Annie Jr* and Sharpay in *Disney's High School Musical Jr*. She is a student at the Iowa School for the Deaf and

likes playing baseball and cheerleading. In her free time, Lani enjoys reading, hanging out with friends, and teaching sign language. She is obsessed with penguins.



**Eli Dixon** (*Artist: Beaky*) is an eighth grader at Johnston Summit Middle School. He was last onstage at The Playhouse in *Disney's High School Musical Jr* as James. He enjoys singing, dancing, playing

games on his Nintendo Switch, and swimming.

## CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM NOTES



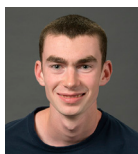
**Amara Dunham** (*Artist: Grace*) is excited to return to The Playhouse stage in her third Penguin Project production, previously appearing in *Annie Jr* and *Disney's High School Musical Jr*. She has also been seen

onstage in *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *Disney's Frozen*, and *Fiddler on the Roof* at Johnston High School. Amara is in her second year of college at Moody Bible Institute, studying children and family ministry. She also participates in Team RunFree, an adaptive running program.



**Indigo Ekhardt** (*Artist: Bewick*) is an experienced member of Penguin Project, having performed in *Annie Jr* (Lily St. Regis), *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Kelsi), and *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Castle Staff/

Hidden Folk). Indigo is an alumnus of Des Moines Roosevelt High School, where she performed in *The Crucible* (Witch) and worked as part of the set crew for *Mamma Mia!*



**Mattias Fiser II** (*Artist: Father Swan*) recently graduated from Centennial High School in Ankeny. He is delighted to be back on The Playhouse stage, previously appearing in *Disney's High*

*School Musical Jr* (Branic) and *Annie Jr* (Orphan). He likes reading, playing unified basketball, swimming, camping with Boy Scouts, and going to Adventureland.



**Kamilla Freeman** (*Artist: Fluff*) is a junior at Urbandale High School. She fell in love with theatre when she took Penguin Plus classes at The Playhouse, later performing in *Disney's High School Musical Jr*

and *Disney's Frozen Jr*. She loves to belt her favorite tunes, bust a move on the dance floor, splash around in the pool, and weave tales of her favorite villains, the Vicious 6. Kamilla's zest for life is contagious and she lives for celebrations, especially her birthday.



**Kylie Halstead** (*Mentor: Maureen/Ida*) has been a mentor for previous Penguin Project productions and received a Playhouse Volunteer of the Year award last year for her service. She is a recent graduate

of Waukee Northwest High School where she was in productions of *Mean Girls: High School Edition*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and *POE: Dreams of Madness*. Kylie likes bike riding, reading, and performing. She works in Northwest High School's Wee Care and in respite care at ChildServe.



**Jackson Hamilton** (*Mentor: Billy*) made his Playhouse debut in *Pippi Longstocking*. Since then, he has appeared in *Last Stop on Market Street*, as a Penguin Project mentor for *Disney's High School Musical*

*Jr* and *Annie Jr*, Iowa Stage Theatre's *A Christmas Carol*, Urbandale Community Theatre's *The Wizard of Oz*, and Carousel Theatre's *Disney's The Little Mermaid* (Flounder), for which he was nominated as a Jeanne Hopson Rising Star at the Cloris Awards. An eighth grader at Brody Middle School, he has a traveling puppet theatre.



**Sawyer Hess** (*Artist: Jay Bird*) is a junior at Urbandale High School where he is a member of show choir and will continue his role as Best Buddies director. He made his Playhouse debut last

year as Prince Hans in *Disney's Frozen Jr*. He plays ice hockey for the Des Moines Raptors in the Iowa High School Hockey Alliance. He loves hunting and fishing, playing video games, and hanging out with his friends.



**Paul Honold** (*Artist: Farmer VO/Production Assistant*) was named a Playhouse Volunteer of the Year for his work with The Penguin Project. He has appeared onstage in Playhouse productions of *Jesus*

*Christ Superstar*, *Ragtime*, and *Go, Dog. Go!* and

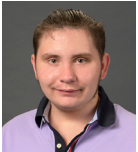
# CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM NOTES

Urbandale Community Theatre productions of *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Annie*, and *Guys and Dolls*. Paul is a fry cook at Arby's. He enjoys theatre, singing, acting, going to the movies, and following sports.



**Jake Houangvan** (*Mentor: Father Swan*) is a sophomore at Des Moines Roosevelt High School where he is very involved in the performing arts. Jake is a member of the Roosevelt dance team, color

guard, chamber orchestra (clarinet, oboe), Da Capo acapella jazz choir, and multiple other bands. He also played the role of Henry Morganthau in Roosevelt's production of *Annie*.



**Shea D. Hunt** (*Artist: Barnacles/Froglet*) began his theatrical journey in The Playhouse's Penguin Plus program, going on to play Zeke in *Disney's High School Musical Jr* and a castle staff member

in *Disney's Frozen Jr*. He has also painted some sets backstage. A junior at Ankeny High School, Shea is active in the drama club and performed in the school's production of *Mamma Mia!* He enjoys swimming and cycling and playing baseball and basketball.



**Jaren Jorgenson** (*Mentor: Drake*) is a senior at Des Moines Lincoln High School, where he helps with lighting and sound design. Previously, he was onstage at The Playhouse in *Disney's Frozen Jr*

(*Mentor: Bishop/Oaken*). He works as a Medicaid respite worker and enjoys fixing hardware and modifying software in tech in his free time.



**Keir Jorgenson** (*Artist: Ugly*) is excited to make their Playhouse debut. They have been in productions of *Descendants* (Jane) and *Shrek* (Pinocchio) at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. Keir

is a sophomore at Main Street School and enjoys digital art, animation, and indie composers.



**Liam Jorgenson** (*Mentor: Cat*) is a freshman at Lincoln High School in Des Moines. He played Horton in *Seussical KIDS* in The Playhouse's Performance Academy. He has also been seen onstage as *Mentor:*

Hans in *Disney's Frozen Jr*. In addition to his work as a Medicaid respite worker, Liam likes to play board games and video games.



**Porter Kimble** (*Mentor: Bullfrog/Pink Foot/Goose*) is a senior at Urbandale High School. He is a member of his school's show choir, runs cross-country, and plays tennis. He has appeared onstage

as Penguin Project mentor in productions of *Disney's High School Musical Jr* and *Disney's Frozen Jr*.



**Charles Malone** (*Mentor: Greylag/Froglet*) is a senior at Urbandale High School where he is involved in show choir, golf, tennis, and Best Buddies. He enjoys fashion, reading and studying literature, drinking

matcha, and caring for people. He works as a retail specialist at Abercrombie & Fitch. This is his first Penguin Project.



**Julia Neighbors** (*Mentor: Mother Swan/Penny/Bewick*) is excited to be back for her fourth Penguin Project show, having served as mentor for *Disney's Frozen Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*,

and *Annie Jr*. She recently appeared as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* and is a PIP (pre-intern program). Julia has been onstage in Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre's *Marvel Plays* (Cul) and *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Captain Slank). A freshman at Johnston Middle School, she is involved in show choir, cross country, and track.

## CAST NOTES



**Alex Noah** (*Artist: Greylag/Froglet*) is excited to be back onstage for his final year of The Penguin Project. He made his Playhouse debut as Coach Bolton in *Disney's High School Musical*

*Jr* and worked behind-the-scenes on the tech team for *Disney's Frozen Jr*. Alex practices the drums and plays baseball, and enjoys musicals, music, video games, science, and spending time with his dogs and family. He is grateful for the lasting friendships he's made at The Playhouse.



**Izzabella Olson** (*Artist: Ida*) fell in love with theatre when she began volunteering in guest services at The Playhouse. She made her Playhouse debut last year with the role of Princess Anna in *Disney's*

*Frozen Jr*. She's an avid drawer and enjoys creating graphic novels. Izzabella is a sophomore at Des Moines Lincoln High School where she sings in the choir. She also loves swimming and playing with her nephews.



**McKenna O'Meara** (*Artist: Penny*) loves going to concerts, singing, dancing, and theatre, especially Penguin Project. She is familiar to Playhouse audiences as Bulda in *Disney's Frozen Jr*, Gabriella in

*Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and Miss Hannigan in *Annie Jr*, a role for which she received a Jeanne Hopson Rising Star recognition from the Cloris Awards. She volunteers with Cups of Kindness and enjoys activities at Gigi's Playhouse. McKenna would one day love to work at The Playhouse.



**Mya Owens** (*Mentor: Fluff*) is a sophomore at Des Moines Roosevelt High School where she is involved in colorguard, theatre, track and field, and band. She has appeared previously onstage in

*Disney's Frozen Jr* as Mentor: Guard.



**Vivian Perez** (*Mentor: Ugly*) is excited to make her Playhouse debut. Vivian is a sophomore at Des Moines Roosevelt High School where she's been involved in many shows, including *Annie* (July), *Leap Day* (Stage Manager), and *Almost Maine* (Villain), her favorite. She enjoys spending her free time singing, dancing, making films, playing soccer, and acting.



**Julia Richer** (*Mentor: Penny/Mother Swan/Bewick*) is excited for her fourth Penguin Project performance, previously mentoring Bulda in *Disney's Frozen Jr*, Miss Hannigan in *Annie Jr*, and Gabriella

in *Disney's High School Musical Jr*. She is a senior at Urbandale High School where she is a member of Inspira treble choir, sings with the varsity show choir Studio 2026, volunteers with Best Buddies, and is a member of the National Honor Society. In her free time, Julia enjoys swimming and running.



**Madison Sanders** (*Mentor: Sunny*) is a senior at Johnston High School where she participates in theatre, serving on crew for *Macbeth*, *Disney's Frozen*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. She has been involved

with Best Buddies since eighth grade and is director of buddy matches. She performed in *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Mentor: Susan) and *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Mentor: Snow/Summer Choruses) at The Playhouse. Madison's hobbies include practicing ASL, crocheting, playing pickleball, and writing. She also works at ChildServe as a respite assistant.



**Sabina Shelton** (*Artist: Maureen*) has numerous Playhouse credits including *Annie Jr* (Grace Farrell), *Disney's High School Musical Jr* (Ms Darbus), and *Disney's Frozen Jr* (Elsa) with Penguin Project and *Our*

*Town*. She also performed *Singin' in the Rain Jr* with CAP Theatre, Altoona. Sabina is a homeschooled senior who enjoys singing, reading, drawing, and photography.



**Evan Siskow** (*Mentor: Barnacles/Snowy/Froglet*) is a senior at Urbandale High School. This is his first Penguin Project production.

At Urbandale High School, Evan is involved in show choir, cross country, tennis, and more. He enjoys playing golf and pickleball, swimming and biking, fashion, working out, and playing video games in his free time. He is a retail specialist at Abercrombie & Fitch.



**Robert Thacker** (*Artist: Technical Crew*) is familiar to Penguin Project audiences as the suave deejay Jack Scott in *Disney's High School Musical Jr* and Daddy Warbucks in *Annie Jr*. Robert was a radio

deejay at Des Moines Central Campus and earned his degree from Focus and Des Moines East High School this spring. He will join the 4 Plus Program at Central Campus and broadcasting II, and will start Grand View College courses in broadcasting in 2026. Robert is media specialist for A-NOD for Situation Awareness LLC and A-NOD Inc, organizations that strive to proactively support those who deal with special health concerns.



**Stephen Togba** (*Artist: Camera Crew*) loves to sing and dance, and is excited to be in his third musical. He has been in *Annie Jr* (Apple Seller/Sound Effects Man) and *Disney's High School Musical Jr*

(Jock). Stephen is a senior at West Des Moines Valley High School. He loves to take photos, watch movies, listen to music, and spend time with his family.



**Conlon Topf** (*Artist: Drake*) is a freshman at Dowling Catholic High School. This is his second Penguin Project production, previously appearing as Oaken/Bishop in *Disney's Frozen Jr*. At St. Augustin

Catholic School, he was in the casts of *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, *Disney's Frozen Jr*, and *Disney's Finding Nemo Jr*. Conlon has sung with the Iowa

Youth Chorus since kindergarten. He enjoys crafting, singing, playing Minecraft, watching movies, and playing with his dog, Mya, and cat, Mercury.



**Elizabeth Topf** (*Mentor: Swing*) is a sophomore studying biochemistry at Iowa State University. She participates in Cantamus, an ISU choir, residence hall leadership, and undergraduate research. She works

as a summer day camp leader for the YMCA. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting, weightlifting, and singing. This is her Playhouse debut, however she was involved in theatre as a youth at school and at Old Creamery Theatre.



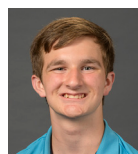
**Tiernan Topf** (*Mentor: Jay Bird/Camera Crew*) is excited to make his Playhouse debut. He has performed in *Disney's Moana Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and *Disney's Frozen Jr* at St.

Augustin School. Tiernan is a sophomore at Dowling Catholic High School where he is a class officer, a member of the choir, and participates in mock trial. He is also on the football, swimming, and track teams.



**Harry Tuttle** (*Mentor: Beaky*) is a sophomore at Des Moines Roosevelt High School. This is his first Penguin Project production, but not his first time on stage.

Harry played the role of Volstagg in *Hammered: A Thor & Loki Play* at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games, dancing, singing, and drawing.



**Eli Zimmerman** (*Artist: Turkey*) is a sophomore at Johnston High School where he was part of run crew for *Mean Girls: High School Edition* and *A Modern Shakespearean Night's Dream*.

He is also active in Scouting America. Eli has taken several Playhouse theatre classes, and appeared in

## CAST NOTES

the past three Penguin Project productions, as an orphan in *Annie Jr*, Chad in *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and Kristoff in *Disney's Frozen Jr*.



**Derek Phelps** (*Director*) received their B.A. in directing and theatre performance from Chadron State College in Nebraska. This is their second time directing a Penguin Project show, after making their

Playhouse directing debut with *Disney's Frozen Jr* last year. They were music director for The Penguin Project production *Disney's High School Musical Jr*. They began volunteering at The Playhouse in 2018, portraying Younger Brother in *Ragtime*. Since then, they have appeared in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Kinky Boots*. Derek is The Playhouse's volunteer and production coordinator and a member of the theatre's teaching staff. Derek is extremely proud to see these penguins fly.



**Sarah Jorgenson** (*Music Director*) has performed in both regional and national productions with some of her credits including *Oliver!* (Nancy), *Children of Eden* (Eve), *Dialogues de Carmelites* (Blanche),

and *The Secret Garden* (Lily). She was a seamstress and dresser for a national tour of *Les Misérables*. At The Playhouse, she met her husband, Jeremy, when they were both cast in *Master Class* and they later appeared together in *A Year with Frog and Toad*. Sarah is a teaching artist at City Voices and with Music Class for Tots. The Jorgenson family enjoys traveling and watching '90s TV shows.



**Natalie Thomas** (*Choreographer*) has choreographed shows for Simpson College, Tallgrass Theatre, St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, and Children's Fantasy Theatre in West Des Moines. On

The Playhouse stage, Natalie has performed in *Ragtime* and *A Christmas Story*, *The Musical* and choreographed Penguin Project productions of *Annie Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and *Disney's*

*Frozen Jr*. Natalie says her hobbies are singing and dancing with her kids, binge watching reality TV with her husband, and rereading the Harry Potter series for the gazillionth time.



**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. This season, he directed and designed *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* and is looking forward to directing and designing *Disney's Frozen* this December. 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 Playhouse productions of *Disney's Frozen Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, *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. Working on The Penguin Project combines her passions of supporting people with disabilities and costume design. She enjoys spending time with her husband and three kids, doing just about anything outdoors. Kyleigh, her daughter, is a mentor in this production.



**JP Ungs** (*Lighting Designer/Mentor Assistant*) is a freelance theatrical designer and graduate of Drake University where they received their B.F.A. in theatre design and technology. They

have been active in Des Moines area theatre for more than a decade, both on and off stage. JP's recent production roles include set design for *The Wizard of Oz* at Urbandale Community Theatre and *Marvel Plays* at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre, assistant director of *Storyville* for Waukee's South Middle School, properties design for *Disney's High School Musical Jr* at The Playhouse, lighting design for *Disney's Frozen Jr* at The Playhouse, costume and props design for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Des Moines Area Community College, and set design for *Silent Sky* at Drake. Their Playhouse acting credits include *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (Pig Pen) and *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* [www.jpungs.com](http://www.jpungs.com)



**Travis Edrington** (*Sound Designer/Mentor Assistant*) was the assistant sound designer for The Penguin Project production of *Disney's Frozen Jr* and sound board operator for *Disney's High School*

*Musical Jr*. He has volunteered on many Playhouse show's technical crews. Travis works as a lifeguard, swim instructor, and mermaid instructor. His interests include electronics, computers, aquatics, theatre, and teaching children.



**Nate Weber** (*Properties Designer/Program Coordinator*) facilitates education outreach at The Playhouse. With a deep passion for the performing arts and a commitment to inclusivity, Nate

focuses on creating a supportive and nurturing environment for young performers. He is dedicated to empowering individuals of all abilities through the magic of theatre. Nate's background is in education, and he has extensive experience in coordinating community programs.



**Ash Howland** (*Stage Manager*) is returning as a stage manager for Penguin Project. They have previously stage-managed Playhouse productions of *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Disney's*

*Frozen Jr*, *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and *Kinky Boots*. They took Playhouse classes as a kid and started volunteering as a high school student, dressing *Monty Python's Spamalot*. Ash has also worked as a stage manager with Iowa Stage Theatre Company. They are pursuing their associate's degree in early childhood education and currently work as a preschool teacher.



**Kim Van Haecke** (*Assistant Director/Mentor Assistant*) earned her master's degree in directing from Roosevelt University in Chicago and honed her skills directing HOPE! Troupe, Ankeny

Community Theatre, Valley High School's IHSSA team, and in her teaching position with Des Moines Home Instruction Program. She directed The Penguin Project productions *Annie Jr* and *Disney's High School Musical Jr*, and assistant directed *Disney's Frozen Jr*. She has been teaching classes at The Playhouse for more than 20 years. Kim and her husband, Joe, enjoy traveling with their family and spreading simple joy as they give train rides at the Downtown Farmer's Market



**Jake Skarin** (*Assistant Music Director/Mentor Assistant*) has past Playhouse credits including *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (LeFou), *Hairspray* (IQ), *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*, *Charlie and*

*the Chocolate Factory* (Oompa Loompa), and *Peter Pan* (Michael Darling). In the 12 years he was living outside Iowa, Jake worked at Walt Disney World as a cabana boy, as a flight attendant for Spirit Airlines, and for the last four years was the director of music for Desert Spring Church in Las Vegas, NV. Currently, Jake is a house manager and concessionaire for The Playhouse. He is thankful for the support from his family and his partner-in-crime, Keeli.

# CAST NOTES



**Jenny Bryant** (*Assistant Stage Manager/Mentor Assistant*) works as an elementary school teacher at Main Street School in Norwalk. She has volunteered on 44 shows in Greater Des Moines, 39 of them

at The Playhouse where she has been on run crew, served as light board operator, recorded sound, and run a followspot, among other activities. Jenny enjoys crocheting, reading, and playing board games.



**Ethan Saltz** (*Tech Team Coordinator/Mentor Assistant*) is no stranger to theatre. He was last seen on The Playhouse stage in *Jersey Boys* (Bob Gaudio), his favorite role. Other credits include

*Miss Nelson is Missing* (Gregory) at The Playhouse, *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Mitch Mahoney) and *Next to Normal* (Dr. Fine/ Dr. Madden) at Carousel Theatre in Indianola, and *White Christmas* (Ralph Sheldrake) at Ankeny Community Theatre. Ethan is a registered behavior technician at Stride and enjoys writing, playing video games, and spending time with his dog MJ.



**Karen Honold** (*Family Liaison*) is returning as family liaison for The Penguin Project program. She served on the backstage run crew for The Playhouse productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Go,*

*Dog. Go!* Karen is a retired Collins Aerospace training manager. She enjoys theatre and traveling in her free time.



**Katy Merriman** (*Artistic Director*) moved to Des Moines in 2013 and has worked with numerous arts organizations as a performer, director, musician, teacher, and administrator.

Her recent Playhouse directing credits include *Waitress* (director) *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (music director); *School of Rock*; *Our Town*; *Once* (music director); and *Native Gardens*. Other local performance and directing credits include *Once* (Girl) at The Playhouse and *The Glass Menagerie* (Laura), *King Lear* (Cordelia), *Our Town* (Emily), and *Fun Home* (director) with Iowa Stage Theatre Company. She has coached for Iowa High School Speech Association (IHSSA) and serves on the education committee for the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT). Katy was the festival chair for ACCT's YouthFest 2025, hosted in Des Moines in June 2025.

## PRODUCTION CREWS

Volunteer & Production Coordinator: **Derek Phelps**

Technical Directors: **Nicholas Amundson, Sam Stephen**

Dance Captains: **Kylie Halstead, Porter Kimble, Julia Richer**

Run Crew: **Mike Howland, Evelyn Jordan, Jerome Keller, Laurie Keller, Cate Miller, Lisa Wiggins**

Sound Board Operator: **Travis Edrington**

Light Board Operator: **JP Ungs**

Set Construction: **Zachery Brewer, Dave Piper, George Sparks**

Set Painting: **Kathleen Baustian, Zachery Brewer, Jamie Dahlgren, Leslie DesCamps, Katie Ferry, Harold Hinkhouse, Pam Iano, Anne Jung, Meg Marker, Shari Piper, Darlene Pullen**

Costume Crew: **Laila Collier, Susan Eisenhour, Miranda Hughes, Sophia Knight, Alilon Moore, Marshall Moore, Suzanne Stanton, Claire Ward**

Photographers: **Jonathan Garton, Steve Gibbons, Brent Isenberger**

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## Crazy for You

A George & Ira Gershwin Musical

APR. 17-MAY 3, 2026

## Noises Off!

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## The Lightning Thief

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Disney's Beauty and the Beast,  
2024-25 Season



THE PLAYHOUSE

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To donate to The Des Moines Playhouse, contact: Jordan Bles, Director of Philanthropy, 515.974.5370, [jbles@dmplayhouse.com](mailto:jbles@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. Closed captioning is available in the John Viars Theatre via GalaPro. The GalaPro app is available for free in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. For these and other needs, please call the ticket office with specific service requests.

## All-Gender Restroom

An all-gender restroom is located on the lower level across from the coatrack.

## 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.

## Changing Stations

Changing stations are located in the men's and women's restrooms on the lower level.

## 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 Signature Series performance schedule is 7:30 PM Wednesdays through Saturdays and 2:00 PM Sundays. The regular Kate Goldman Family Series performance schedule is 7:00 PM Fridays, and 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM Saturdays and Sundays. The December performance schedule is 7:00 PM Thursdays and 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 Signature Series performance, excluding the December show, will begin 30 minutes prior to curtain in the west lobby. The December show will have preshow music 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 the theatre:

- Alcohol, drugs, illegal substances, or any paraphernalia associate 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.

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