



SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 16, 2021

# ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY

**SEAN DANIELS**   
THE KASSER FAMILY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**GERI WRIGHT**   
MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

## MY 80-YEAR-OLD BOYFRIEND

CONCEIVED AND PERFORMED BY  
**CHARISSA BERTELS\***

BOOK AND LYRICS BY  
**CHRISTIAN DUHAMEL**

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
**ED BELL**

STAGE MANAGER  
**DOM RUGGIERO\***

ASST. STAGE MANAGER  
**OLSEN TORRES\*** 

MUSIC DIRECTOR  
**JOSE C. SIMBULAN**

SCENIC DESIGNER  
**NEIL PATEL**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**JEN CAPRIO**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**BRIAN J. LILIENTHAL**

SOUND DESIGNER  
**DANNY ERDBERG**

ASST. DIRECTOR/MOVEMENT COACH  
**ASHLEE WASMUND**

DIRECTED BY  
**SEAN DANIELS** 

Originally produced by Merrimack Repertory Theatre  
Sean Daniels, Artistic Director Elizabeth Kegley, Executive Director  
Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company.

*\*Denotes members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

2021/2022 SEASON SPONSORS: **I. MICHAEL AND BETH KASSER**



## CAST

ALL .....CHARISSA BERTELS\*

PIANIST..... JOSE C. SIMBULAN

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## THERE WILL BE NO INTERMISSION.

## UNDERSTUDIES

UNDERSTUDY .....CARLY NATANIA GROSSMAN 

SECOND COVER..... SOFIA ELENA GONZALEZ 



**ARIZONA ARTISTS INITIATIVE** ATC is committed to Arizona artists. From our staff that lives in Arizona to create the productions you see to the artists that help create readings and other productions Arizonans take a leading role in everything we do. In addition to everyone on the staff page, we note individual artists on shows who are from Arizona.

On this original Arizona Theatre Company production, the ATC Production Staff is responsible for scenic construction, costume construction, lighting, projections, sound, props, furniture, wigs, scene painting, and special effects.

To learn more about **MY 80-YEAR-OLD BOYFREIND**, please visit the Learning & Education page at [atc.org](http://atc.org) for a comprehensive free Play Guide. The Play Guide contains historical information, cultural context, and more.

**Cell phones and other devices that make a noise can greatly disturb your fellow audience members and the performers. PLEASE TURN THEM OFF before the performance.**

Cover: Esser Design

Arizona Theatre Company operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States; Stage Directors and Choreographers, an independent national labor union; and United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.



The Actors and Stage Managers employed in these productions are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, an independent national labor union.



The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in LORT Theatres are represented by Union Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.



## SONG CREDITS

# My 80 Year-Old Boyfriend

## *The Music*

- 1. Opening / One in a Million**
- 2. All I Need**
- 3. Wandrers Nachtlid I**
- 4. What a View**
- 5. My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend**
- 6. That Fifth Grade Feeling**
- 7. Together With You**
- 8. The Audition**
- 9. Did I Just...**
- 10. The Love Left Behind**
- 11. The Confrontation**
- 12. Places, Please**
- 13. Our Time**
- 14. Wandrers Nachtlid II**
- 15. What Counts**

At the time this went to print, the play was a work in development; song list may change.



## LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR CHAR AUGENSTEIN



### We MISSED YOU!

Approximately 18 months ago, Arizona Theatre Company went dark. As our curtain once again rises, our exhalation of welcoming your return is overwhelmingly grand! We have missed the community of our patrons and have kept you at the forefront of our minds. Our mission, to CREATE WORLD-CLASS THEATRE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALIVE TODAY - INSPIRING CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY, SPARKING EMPATHY AND JOY - BRINGING ALL ARIZONANS TOGETHER, is the heart of our organization and the guidepost. This curated season was done so with you, our most valued patrons, in mind.

Theatre rests upon invisible relationships and requires that real-time connection between performers onstage and you, as well as your interaction with other patrons. You are complicit in the performance, making the storytelling work. A punchline seems funnier, and we laugh louder, when surrounded by others, lifted by the communal merriment. A heartbreak likewise feels more painful when we experience the sobs and sniffles together. ATC offers you a diversion, an opportunity to escape into worlds whose characters are at times similar to yourself and at times different. Regardless, they will always be entertaining and energizing, sparking conversation.

We are thrilled to sit in a dark room, phone silenced and candy pre-unwrapped, to once again share a myriad of emotions only live theatre provides. From all of us at Arizona Theatre Company, we extend our most heartfelt appreciation for your continuing support and undying belief in our treasured theatre.

You are our inspiration, motivating us to achieve and exceed your expectations. Albeit said often; we can never say it enough; those of us at your ATC are eternally grateful for your generosity. We ARE because of the loyalty of every one of YOU, so please now reap your reward and ENJOY! Kindly let us know how we are doing. I would so enjoy hearing from you!

Char Augenstein  
Board Chair, Arizona Theatre Company

[boardchair@atc.org](mailto:boardchair@atc.org)



## LETTER FROM THE KASSER FAMILY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR SEAN DANIELS



If you are reading this, then congrats: it all worked out.

I remember driving to Tucson in March 2020 and thinking, “We were just getting started; I hope this isn’t the end for us.” Geri and I knew it couldn’t be, so we rolled up our sleeves, and in a slightly higher register than we normally talked, said, “We can do this, we got this.”

And we did.

Geri will talk about how we’re now the most financially secure we’ve been in a decade, but I also wanted to tell you about how we’ve changed as an artistic organization.

One of our constant internal goals is to put artists and audience at the center of what we do. And to let the world know that great work happens, and often starts, in Arizona.

To that end, this season will feature more AZ actors and designers than any previous season. It will also feature world-class artists from all over the globe that now consider Arizona Theatre Company their new home. Our digital season of last year and our in-person one this year will feature more BIPOC artists than any previous two seasons in our 54 years. On the production side, we did away with 10/12s, which was an old tech process that asked people to work past when it was safe. As you hopefully saw, we created a digital platform that reached 300k views, many of whom were experiencing us, and maybe even theatre, for the first time.

What we love about theatre is that it’s a forum for the ideas and feelings that lead a society to heal and change, to laugh, to connect, to reflect and inspire.

We recognize that plays alone can’t fix the world but can make us be better human beings: more informed, emotionally available, and ultimately, passionately committed to the world around us.

But it doesn’t mean anything if it’s not accessible to everyone. So, we’ve worked to make sure we are authentically in our communities and continuing to add more and more communities to that list.

And we want to be a place that is equitable and enjoyable for our staff to work and live. So, that’s what we work on in addition to producing six plays that we believe will spark conversation, create joy, and eventually enter the canon of the American Theatre.

We want to not only return, but to return in touch with our soul, with excitement and doable dreams for the future.

There is no reason why we can’t be a local theatre that the world pays attention to.

That we can’t be a world leader.

Welcome to the new ATC. We’re here because of you.

It all worked out, so ... let’s get started.

Sean Daniels  
The Kasser Family Artistic Director



## LETTER FROM MANAGING DIRECTOR GERI WRIGHT



Welcome back to the theatre!

It has been far too long. And if you feel like we do, THIS feels good. Really good.

We have made it to the other side of this historical milestone. As difficult as it has been, we saw the past 18 months as an opportunity. You see, we did not just want to survive, we wanted to restructure so that when we returned to the stage, we would be a more sustainable company. As a result of that work, we can now say that we are the most financially stable we have been in decades.

As wonderful as that sounds, the work continues. Budgetary disciplines remain in place as we welcome you back to the theatre. We are laser-focused on being good stewards of your donated dollars, while still producing the highest quality theatre. With your help and continued support, we will bring you another 54 seasons of live, professional theatre.

As you would imagine, getting here was half the battle. Now more than ever, we are committed to delivering world-class theatre in a safe and meaningful way. Our company, actors, and volunteers are fully vaccinated and eager to perform for you once again. We have taken additional measures to ensure we all remain healthy. Please visit our website [www.atc.org](http://www.atc.org) for more details.

We want you to feel comfortable and safe so that you can lose yourself once again in a theatrical performance. We all know the personal benefits of experiencing live theatre, but after the year and a half that we have had, the emotional benefits cannot be overlooked. It is a known fact that the experience of watching live theatre is so immersive that the audience quickly forgets about their daily stresses and feels at peace while watching the story unfold together.

We hope that for the next 90 minutes you forget the stress of this past year and feel at peace as you watch this very special production of *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend*. The emotional depth of this play reminds us to look for ways to strengthen the bonds with people in our lives. Perhaps, we all need to be reminded of that now and again.

We are so glad that you are here.

Onward!

Geri Wright  
Managing Director



## ABOUT THE PLAY

# My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend

Conceived and performed by Charissa Bertels  
By Christian Duhamel (book and lyrics) and Ed Bell (music and lyrics)

**It all started because Charissa Bertels took a chance.**

After moving to New York to pursue her dreams of Broadway, Bertels did the thing that most aspiring actors (and really all artists) do: she got a day job. “My crappy actor side job was selling juice at grocery stores. Like you do,” Bertels explained. “I was on the Upper East Side selling juice on a cold November day. Nobody wants to try this juice because it is disgusting out and I said to myself, ‘This is going to be a really long four-hour shift.’ And then, she continues, an older gentleman stopped to talk and they began talking in ways she never expected, about Shakespeare, literature, and poetry – and when he invited her to his apartment across the street, she hesitated. She didn’t know him, she was new to New York and who even went to a stranger’s house anyway? Further, she had plans from which she did not want to detour:

*I LEFT BEHIND SMALL TOWN NIGHTS  
WITH ALL THEIR STARS AND MOON BEAMS.  
I NEEDED BIG CITY LIGHTS  
TO CHASE BIG CITY DREAMS.*

*NYC!  
A CITY GRID SO VAST  
THAT FOLKS ARE ALWAYS ON THE RUN!  
FACING THE GRIND ALONE  
REMINDS ME I AM ONE ...  
JUST ONE IN A MILLION.*

*BUT WHEN YOU'RE ONE IN A MILLION ...  
THE ODDS ARE A MILLION TO ONE ...  
AND SINCE THAT'S THE CASE,  
AND SINCE NEW YORK SETS THE PACE,  
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO BE DONE.*

What happened next forms the basis of *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend*. She said “yes.” Charissa and “Milton” spent days together, talking more about the arts, the world around them, and the ways their lives were similar and the ways their lives diverged. And as her life unfolded, and her Broadway dreams became a reality (Bertels was in the original Broadway cast of *A Christmas Story* and toured the country in the first national tour of *If/Then*), she lost touch with the man with whom she had become friends – her 80-year-old boyfriend.

One of the things audiences don’t know about being an actor is the long, long days of waiting – waiting to audition, waiting to hear back, waiting for rehearsals to begin. Smart actors find ways to generate material to keep themselves active and artistically nimble, which is what Bertels did. She had kept reams of notes from her time with “Milton” and, when she had a moment to reflect, it was her friendship with him that she kept turning to.

Bertels enlisted her friend and writer Christian Duhamel (a recipient of the 2018 Kleban Award for most promising musical theater librettist and a Songwriting Artist in Residence with Pearl Studios), who took her stories and began to build a story. In turn Duhamel recruited UK native Ed Bell (an alumnus of Cambridge University, The Royal College of Music, and the prestigious BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop) to write the music.

Duhamel talked about *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend* in terms of its origins. “My passion for the show



## ABOUT THE PLAY

came about because of my friendship with Charissa, and it was friendship that was at the core of the story.” He added that he had seen how Bertels’ life had changed as a result of her friendship and he wanted to capture that. The song “My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend” distills the joy of their discovery:

*WHEN I'M TOGETHER WITH YOU  
I NEVER CAN GUESS JUST WHAT YOU'LL DO.  
'CAUSE YOU LIKE KEEPING ME ON MY TOES,  
AND BOY, HEAVEN KNOWS WHAT FUN WILL ENSUE.*

*WHEN I'M TOGETHER WITH YOU,  
WE ALWAYS KEEP TRUCKING,  
BUCKING ALL THE TRENDS,  
'CAUSE WE HAVE SOMETHING THAT'S  
STRANGE AND RARE.*

*THAT'S WHY WE'RE THE CRAZIEST PAIR,  
THE LUCKIEST PAIR,  
THE UNLIKELYST-  
FREAKIEST-  
LOVELIEST-  
CHEEKIEST-  
CRAZIEST PAIR OF FRIENDS!*

The challenge in the development of the show came from all the things it wanted to be. Bell noted that “it wasn’t just a song cycle. It wasn’t just a cabaret, it really was everything you’d get in a musical but for just one actor and one pianist.”

As the material began to coalesce – and the pages of notes grew longer – a few key elements stood out: they decided that the show wanted to feature a variety of musical styles. Bertels, an inherently funny performer, wanted both “laughs and feels.” And all three agreed that the performer had to engage with the audience in a direct way, because they felt the core of the story was about making connections and that notion wanted to extend to the structure as well.

Another component to the structure of the piece is that Bertels plays all of the roles – 10 in total

– challenging her to embody herself as a fictional character, but also “Milton,” a number of theater professionals and Milton’s former love. In inhabiting all of these roles, the audience is invited to experience a tour-de-force performance (see where and when she takes sips of water – they are all strategically planned) as well as a reflection: at any moment, we are all young, old, jaded, and innocent. Bertels brings all of these together.

In bringing a work from an idea to the polished work you see in front you, the artists involved have to remember two things: the initiating idea and the story they want to tell. For Bertels, Duhamel, and Bell, a key initiating idea was about intergenerational friendships. Think about the number of plays, television shows, or movies you see where people of mixed ages mingle – you can probably name a couple but one might argue that many feature the older person as being befuddled or inappropriate or out of touch. In the hands of this artistic team, we see a complex, three-dimensional “Milton” – one who is loved and admired by “Charissa.”

In those same examples, the younger person is usually reckless, unaware and silly. “Charissa” is none of those things; like “Milton,” she is complicated and honest – someone who is loved and admired by “Milton.”

Recognizing, really recognizing, the fact that these two people can find friendship – just by taking a chance – is the heartbeat of *My 80 Year Old Boyfriend*.

And the story they want to tell? As Arizona Theatre Company prepares, along with the rest of the theater community, to invite people back into our home, *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend* reminds us that we need connections with each other, in real life. Bertels added that she “gets to share a message that really matters to me and put it out in the world – what matters is friendship. We don’t know how much time we have with the people we care about.”





**Charissa Bertels** (Concept /Performer) is a Broadway actress and champion of new musicals. She has performed on Broadway and at Madison Square Garden in *A Christmas Story* and toured the country in the first national tour of *If/Then*, starring Idina Menzel, La

Chanze, and Anthony Rapp. As a member of the singing ensemble for New York City Center Encores' productions of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Lady Be Good*, her work can be heard on the subsequent cast recordings, featuring Megan Hilty and the legendary Tommy Tune. Charissa received rave reviews for starring in her original one-woman musical, *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend*, at Merrimack Repertory Theatre (IRNE award for Best Solo Performance), and is thrilled to reprise her role for Arizona Theatre Company. Her newest collaboration, *The Uncivil Ones*, features unheard female, non-binary, and BIPOC voices from the American Civil War and garnered the 2019 Special Mention for the Women in Arts & Media Coalition Collaboration Award. In addition to her own writing and producing projects, she is currently a professor at New York Film Academy's Professional Conservatory of Musical Theatre, an MFA candidate through the University of Idaho, and a proud member of Actors' Equity and SAG-AFTRA. Special thanks to God, Robert, my beautiful collaborators, our fantastic team, my family and friends, and my amazing husband, James.

**Jose C. Simbulan** (Music Director/Pianist) is excited and grateful to be a part of this musicalization of a real slice of New York City life. As a music director and pianist, his recent credits include productions for Actors Theatre of Louisville, Barrington Stage Company, Arena Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, National Asian Artists Project (NAAP), The Kennedy

Center, and Virginia Repertory Theatre. In 2019, he was inducted into the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) Hall of Fame in recognition of his 25 years as the pianist for the Professional Division auditions. He also plays regularly for the Unified Professional Theatre Auditions (21 years), Virginia Theatre Association, and Disney Parks and Cruise Line. He is a proud graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University.

**Sean Daniels** 🎭 (Director) See bio on page 12.

**Neil Patel** (Scenic Designer) creates bold and unique worlds for Film, Television, Commercials, Music Videos, and Live Events. Recent projects include Twenty One Pilots *Livestream Experience*, the Peabody Award-winning *Dickinson* (Apple TV+), *The Path* (HULU), *Little Boxes* (Netflix), *Dil Dhadakne Do* (Excel Entertainment), *Some Velvet Morning* (Tribeca Films), the Peabody Award-winning *In Treatment* (HBO), *Time and the Conways* (Broadway), *Father Comes Home from the Wars* (Parts 1,2 & 3) (Royal Court London), *Mughal E Azam* (NCPA Mumbai and Delhi), *Alcina* (Washington National Opera), *Norma* (LA Opera), and *Shadowland* for Pilo-bolus throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Neil was born in Bangor Gwynedd Wales, studied architecture at Yale College, scenography at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan and lives in Manhattan with his wife theater director Maria Mileaf. Neil and Maria are the proud parents of Pia Mileaf-Patel and Emlyn Mileaf-Patel.

**Jen Caprio** (Costume Designer) Broadway: *Falsettos* and *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Tours: *Falsettos*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Lion*, ...*Spelling Bee*, and the rock revues *Rockumentary* and *Kaleidoscope* for Celebrity Cruises. West End: *The Lion*. Over 200 NYC and LORT productions at theatres including the Manhattan Theater Club, Papermill Playhouse, Roundabout, Kennedy Center, Guthrie Theater, Cleveland Playhouse, Goodspeed, La Jolla Playhouse, Alley Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Dallas Theatre Center,

Barrington Stage Company (Associate Artist). TV: *Sesame Street* (seasons 47-52), *The Not-Too-Late Show with Elmo* (Seasons 1-2). 2019, 2021 Daytime Emmy Nomination, 2020 Daytime Emmy Winner for *Sesame Street*. Instagram @jencapriocostumedesign jencaprio.com

**Brian J. Lilienthal** (Lighting Designer) Previous at Arizona Theatre Company: *Cabaret*, *The Clean House*. Regional: Over 250 productions including 60 productions at Actors Theatre of Louisville (with 20 world premieres), Alley Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Capital Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cleveland Playhouse, GEVA Theatre Center, Gloucester Stage, Hartford Stage, The Huntington Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Milwaukee Rep, Pasadena Playhouse, Playmakers Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, over 30 productions at Trinity Repertory Company, among others. Mr. Lilienthal has designed operas for Long Beach Opera, Bard Summerscape, Portland Opera Repertory Theatre. He has won the Los Angeles Ovation Award for lighting design, as well as the 2016 Artistic Achievement Award from Merrimack Repertory Theatre, and has been nominated multiple times for Boston's IRNE Award. He has spent 12 summers as the resident lighting designer for the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. MFA: California Institute of the Arts. Mr. Lilienthal currently teaches lighting design at Tufts University. He lives in Somerville, MA, with his wife Emily, their daughter Eliza and dog, Babe, and is a drummer with a rockabilly/jump blues band that performs throughout New England. BrianJLilienthal.com

**Danny Erdberg** (Sound Designer) is thrilled to make his in-person Arizona debut after designing and mixing the audio-drama version of *The Heath*. His work has been heard in New York at The Public Theater, Roundabout, City Center, Atlantic and 59E59. Regional credits include Arena Stage, Geva, Milwaukee Rep, The Geffen, ACT, Merrimack, Virginia Stage, and Long Wharf, as well as productions in Korea, Japan, China, Canada, and Cuba. Recent highlights

include the world premieres of *Stonewall* (New York City Opera) and *Jerry Herman: You I Like* (92Y). Broadway associate design credits include *The Iceman Cometh* (Tony nomination), *Significant Other*, *Violet*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Heiress* and *The Nance* (Tony winner). Daniel is a professional member of IATSE, USA829, SDC, and the Lincoln Center Director's Lab. He is a graduate of Northwestern University and a former faculty member at Tisch/NYU.

**Ashlee Wasmund** (Assistant Director/Movement Coach) is honored to be joining ATC for the first time after an ill-fated plan to first do so in Spring 2020. She is the Founding Artistic Lead of Callopie Stage Company, which focuses on developing regional new work in its North Carolina community and is a lucky neighbor of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. For the past five years, she has served as the Program Director of Musical Theatre & Dance at Western Carolina University's School of Stage & Screen and enjoyed working with theaters such as New Light Theater Project in NYC (Resident Artist), Milwaukee Rep, and Merrimack Rep, and bringing works to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Prior to mountain life, Ashlee worked locally in Chicago as an actor, director, choreographer, and educator. Funding for position provided by: Western Carolina University's Office of the Provost and Office of the Chancellor as well as support from WCU's School of Stage & Screen.

**Dom Ruggiero** 🌻 (Stage Manager) is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association. Broadway PSM credits include *The Gathering* starring Hal Linden, *Borscht Belt on Broadway* starring Bruce Adler and Mal Z. Lawrence, and *Ain't That A Kick In The Head – The Music of Sammy Cahn* directed by Chet Walker. 1<sup>st</sup> National Tours include: *The Lion* with Benjamin Scheuer (directed by Sean Daniels), *The Cole Porter Songbook* starring Melba Moore, *The Irving Berlin Songbook* starring Carole Lawrence, *Greetings! Shalom Aleichem Lives* starring Judy Kaye, Bruce Adler, and Theo Bikel. Regional credits include: *Lost Laughs: the Slapstick Tragedy of Fatty Arbuckle* at Merrimack Repertory Theatre,

*Man of LaMancha, Mame, The Drowsy Chaperone, Beauty & The Beast and Always Patsy Cline* at The Wick Theatre in Boca Raton, Florida among others. Dom has stage-managed across the US, Europe, South America and Australia with *Ain't Misbehavin', Phantom, Anything Goes, Song & Dance, West Side Story* and countless other musical productions. Thanks to Sean Daniels for the opportunity to join the Arizona Theatre Company.

**Olsen Torres** 🌟 (Assistant Stage Manager) is a member of Actors Equity Association and a Tucson local. Past credits include: Production Stage Manager, *La Comedia of Errors* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival) and Assistant Stage Manager, *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles; Off the Rails; The Merry Wives of Windsor; Great Expectations; Hamlet; Much Ado about Nothing; Long Day's Journey into Night; The Great Society; The Two Gentlemen of Verona; Water by the Spoonful; and The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival).

**Christian Duhamel** (Book and Lyrics) is an internationally regarded playwright, lyricist, composer, actor, voice teacher, voice coach, and the Founder of Cobalt Phoenix. He is the recipient of the BMI Jerry Harrington Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Songwriting, the Pearl Studio Songwriting Artist Residency, and the prestigious Kleban Prize in Musical Theatre. His other works include *X-MAS: A Merry Mutant Musical, Worlds Apart, The Girl Who Turned into a Feather, Reeling, Miss Mayor, and The Uncivil Ones*. As an artist, teacher, and mentor, he is passionate about helping people discover and develop their authentic voices as they explore the dynamic intersection of intimacy, creativity, and self-growth. Christian resides in Seattle, where he is an active member of Actors Equity Association and the Dramatists Guild of America.

**Ed Bell** (Music and Lyrics) Ed Bell is a songwriter, author, music educator and entrepreneur. His creative work is mostly in theatre and film, where he co-wrote the 2018 Kleban Award-winning musical *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend* and was previously an Artist in Residence at Pearl Studio (Abominable, Over the Moon) in Shanghai, China. His songs have been performed at venues from Brasserie Zédel and the Battersea Barge in London to the Duplex in New York City and the ACT Theatre in Seattle. As music director, Ed has worked on projects at the Signature Theatre, the Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, Leeds Playhouse and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Ed created The Song Foundry, one of the Internet's most popular songwriting resource sites, and is the author of seven popular books, including the bestselling "The Art of Songwriting." Ed is originally from Yorkshire in the UK and is delighted to be visiting Arizona for the first time. edbell.com

**Carly Natania Grossman** 🌟 (Understudy) is beyond happy to finally be in a theatre again, especially with such wonderful artists doing this challenging and amazing show! Some theatrical credits include, Zaneeta (*The Music Man*) Arizona Theatre Company; Anybodys (*West Side Story*) Virginia Repertory Theatre; Dorothy (*The Wizard of Oz*) Phoenix Theatre, Eponine (*Les Misérables*), Tootles (*Peter Pan*) at Arizona Broadway Theatre. Lala (*The Last Night of Ballyhoo*), Julia (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*), Gladys (*The Pajama Game*) Arizona Repertory Theatre. Shout out to mom, dad, grandma Lillian, and sister Jamie, you rock!

**Sofia Elena Gonzalez** 🌟 (Second Cover) is thrilled to be a part of such a wonderful production. Originally from Pasadena, California, she is currently pursuing her BFA in Musical Theatre at the University of Arizona. She would like to thank her family for their abounding love and support as she pursues her passion for storytelling.



## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Sean Daniels** 🌐 is honored to be The Kasser Family Artistic Director at ATC, where he first fell in love with theatre.

An internationally known theater director, writer, and Artistic Director, Sean is known for new work and innovative community-engaged leadership. He's been a *New York Times* Critic Pick as a director and a writer.

Sean has directed at Manhattan Theatre Club (*The Lion*, Drama Desk Award & Theatre World Award, nominated for Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle), 59e59 (NYC, *I and You*, nominated for Outer Critics Circle), the Lynn Redgrave (NYC), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), the St. James (West End, London - *The Lion*, winner of Best New Musical), and at many wonderful regionals (Old Globe, ACT, Geffen, Cleveland Playhouse, Milwaukee Rep, Long Wharf, Alliance, and the Neo-Futurists in Chicago!).

In addition, Sean has been an Artistic Director at Merrimack Repertory and Dad's Garage (which he co-founded), and an Associate Artistic Director at California Shakespeare Theatre and Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Sean has been named "one of the top fifteen up & coming artists in the U.S., whose work will be transforming America's stages for decades to come" & "One Of 7 People Reshaping And Revitalizing The American Musical" by *American Theatre* magazine.

As a playwright, his work has been produced in multiple theaters throughout the country including a commercial Off-Broadway run of his sober dark comedy *The White Chip*, which was produced by Tony Award winner Tom Kirdahy. It is currently being adapted for a book and for TV. He'd love to hear from you.

[sdaniels@atc.org](mailto:sdaniels@atc.org)

twitter: @seandaniels

**Geri Wright** 🌐 returned to ATC in January 2020 as ATC Managing Director. Her love of theatre started at Radio City Music Hall in New York City on a school field trip and has grown into a passion for the arts today. Having served in leadership roles at the Heard Museum, American Red Cross, Arizona Theatre Company and most recently as CEO of Act One, Geri has been a passionate advocate for the importance that the arts play in creating healthy and prosperous communities. With more than 25 years in nonprofit management and fundraising experience, she is thrilled to be able to put those skills to use in serving our state theatre. In 2019, Geri was recognized as one of the Outstanding Women in Business by the *Phoenix Business Journal* and has been honored with an assortment of acknowledgments for her work in the charitable community. Geri and her family, along with two horses and an Australian cattle dog, reside at the base of the McDowell Mountains.



## UPCOMING ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

### MEET LOCAL TALENT SETH TUCKER AND ELENA QUACH

## *Miss Bennett, Christmas at Pemberley*



### Welcome to the Artist Spotlight with Associate Artistic Director Chanel Bragg 🌿

The past year has taught us many things. For Arizona Theatre Company, it taught us you can have a fabulous opening and a closing in a single night. For some, the pandemic taught how to make amazing banana bread. For others, it set the course for a new diet regimen. No matter how you chose to manage the challenges that were brought on in the last year, what was made apparent is all the things we will never take for granted. As the world begins to open, I find myself hugging longer, creating opportunities to wear that bright lipstick, and savoring each artistic experience with deep appreciation. The pandemic has proven that the responsibility of a communal storyteller is more vital than ever. After a year where our doors have been closed, we are delighted to return to live theatre. It is no secret how particularly difficult the pandemic has been on our artists. In efforts to stop the spread of the virus, so many of our local performance venues shut down. Creatives watched months of work dry up. Some left the industry altogether to pursue less volatile interests. One thing was clear: amidst all the chaos, the role of art in times of crisis have proven to be a steady lifeline for many. Artists have risen across the world and innovated their platforms to uphold the task of providing necessary respite from an ailing world. Today, we focus on two incredible performers who are native to Arizona, one from Tucson, the other from Phoenix both of whom are in the exciting production of *Miss Bennett, Christmas at Pemberley*.



### MEET SETH TUCKER 🌿

Currently, Seth is conducting this interview while working at Barnstormers Theatre in New Hampshire. Renowned as the oldest summer stock of 91 years in the country, he is currently performing in a reimagined telling of “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. In this new work titled “Far From Canterbury,” he is the only non-New Yorker in the project; and he is from our state of Arizona!

### Q&A:

#### SETH TUCKER (ARTHUR DEBOURGH)

- Q: You have managed to stay busy during the shutdown. How has the pandemic shifted your audition process?
- A: Well, you’re being cast and hired virtually, so it doesn’t matter if you live in New York anymore. It has really revolutionized what you can audition for. Now you don’t have worry about travel time on the subway, or wait four hours to be seen, it allows us to





audition from home while we are working to subsidize what we've lost as we haven't performed for 18 months.

**Q:** Let's talk about your life as an artist and all the different jobs that you have, what was the last thing you directed?

**A:** I directed *Shout the Musical* at Arizona Broadway Theatre. Their first musical on their mainstage back in March since the pandemic. It was a beautiful and safe experience. The last thing I performed in was *Murder for Two* at the Phoenix Theatre Co. So, I feel like I have been part of revamping the community, which has been fulfilling after everything in the last year

**Q:** You also have your own arts-based company called the "acting up" series. What prompted you to create this?

**A:** A couple of years ago in New York, I started producing and writing and making stuff from scratch. I started a web series, musicals, and created concerts, fundraisers, and benefits. When we shut down, I couldn't produce because initially it was all in person things. But we pivoted and focused on making music videos for large groups. I used this as an opportunity to grow my business from the safety of my home. Arizona theaters were reluctant to embrace the digital platform, and we were able to benefit from it. We have officially established "Acting Up" as an LLC and are open for hire focusing on both digital and in person events!

**Q:** Now our audience doesn't know, but you are quite the vocalist. What vocal part do you sing?

**A:** Baritenor, the same as John Legend.

**Q:** Did you study dance?

**A:** I took some dance classes, but I preferred music and building characters, so I really leaned more into acting.

**Q:** What is your favorite role that you have played?

**A:** My favorite role is from my favorite musical, which is *Parade* by Jason Robert Brown. It is a beautiful and heart-breaking show. I played Leo Frank, and I have done it twice now. The music is soaring, and it gives me the chance as a musical theatre actor to really delve into a meaty role.

**Q:** What is on the horizon for you?

**A:** Immediately following "Far from Canterbury" I will be starting rehearsals for *Spelling Bee* at Arizona State University, in which I will be directing and choreographing. We are excited to play with the setting, and it will be a true '90s period piece. I am excited to develop this fresh take with the ASU students. After that I am headed to Tucson!!!

**Q:** Why are you excited to be a part of our production of *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*?

**A:** Starting in October, I am going to Tucson for the first time in 20 years to work with the one theatre left in Arizona that I haven't had the chance to work at: our state theatre! AND playing a new role in the Jane Austen world. I am excited to work alongside people I have been dying to work with like Veronika Duer and Sean Daniels, and to work with others in our community at the most impressive theatre we have in Arizona.



## MEET ELENA QUACH 🌻

(Elena is preparing for a dance party with her adorable 4-year-old, Evangeline, so we keep the interview brief.) Elena expresses that she is so freaking excited, and that her students are ecstatic about her being cast. Upon telling them on the first day of school that she would be missing some of the winter session, her students excitedly exclaimed, “Miss, this is so much fun, you are like famous!” Elena shared she was happy to send other local auditioners to our most recent round of auditions, and the consensus of the local audition community is that they finally felt seen and validated as performers.

### Q & A:

#### ELENA QUACH - (LYDIA WICKAM)

**Q:** Tell us a little about your background, what got you into performing?

**A:** I Got into dance relatively late as a dancer. I started off learning Folklorico and that opened the door. I was one of the youngest members of the company at age 14 and decided I wanted to take dance to the next level. I began taking ballet classes at Ballet Tucson and instantly fell in love. Inspired by Misty Copeland, who also began her

career at 14, I felt it was doable to start late and still become a professional dancer.

**Q:** That is exciting, so how did you transition to a professional dancer?

**A:** At 18, I auditioned for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and got admitted into their year-round program! I was even able to learn the iconic choreography titled “Revelations.” I feel lucky to have trained in amazing techniques that have heightened my dance career like Horton, Dunham, and Martha Graham. These choreographers inspired me, and to learn their repertoire and technique, it was an easy decision to quit my job at Olive Garden and fly out to New York City to pursue my career in dance.

**Q:** You are also a teaching artist for a fantastic program. What program do you teach?

**A:** I am one of the teaching artists for the OMA program (Opening Minds through the Arts) and have taught for that program for the last three years. The programs send teaching artists like me into a core classroom, such as social studies, and we integrate arts into that core subject. For example, if the core classroom is social studies and world history, we can use cultural dance to help enhance the lesson plan. I have this project where students read the slave narratives from the Library of Congress, and they must choreograph one of the narratives into dance. Most of the kids are children of color who get to explore these stories through use of their bodies.

**Q:** So, when did you decide to delve into acting?

**A:** I didn’t really start acting until I had Evie. So that was four years ago. I was contacted by my cousin, another local actress, who suggested that I audition to be the mute in the *Fantasticks* with Winding Road Theatre. My daughter Evangeline was three months old. I hadn’t left the house, and I



## UPCOMING ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



was ready to move my body and got cast on the spot. I even performed the mute while en pointe! The pandemic has really helped me solidify my acting chops, and I am excited to get started with *Pemberley*.

Q: Speaking of *Pemberley*, how excited were you when you received the call to offer you the role?

A: When Sean called me and offered me the part, I broke down. I was going through a point where I wasn't sure I should continue pursuing this career and thought maybe I should take some time off. As I was thinking that in my head, that is when I received the email to film the sides for the call back.

Q: What is a secret talent that you have?

A: I am a closet improv comedian. When I was studying in New York, I would do improv sets at UBC for free beers.

Q: What is your hope for the new Arizona Theatre Company?

A: To tell the stories of the communities that support it.

Q: Why are you happy to work for our organization?

A: I grew up going to shows at ATC. I saw *Pride and Prejudice* here in elementary school. I remembered thinking, this story is so juicy so cool and is written by a woman, how awesome! I was so inspired by the play. I dressed up as Jane Austen in second grade. I feel it has come full circle playing a Jane Austen character on the ATC stage. Also, I told Sean this, but there is a little yellow building on the corner next to ATC across the street from the police department, in the cathedral. That was my grandpa's print shop. And I remember as a kid I would sneak in and try to see the load ins and load outs because they fascinated me. I always thought Arizona Theatre Company was the best thing in Tucson.

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Catch Seth and Elena in ATC's  
*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*  
November 06 - December 04

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## ABOUT ATC



Arizona Theatre Company puts our artists and audience at the heart of all we do. ATC's performances bring people together on our stages to experience essential stories about what it means to be alive today, from reimagined classics to contemporary plays, original works, and innovative musicals fostering continued conversation beyond the theatre walls.

Founded in 1966 and celebrating its 54th season, ATC is led by The Kasser Family Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Managing Director Geri Wright. ATC operates in two major cities, unlike any other LORT theatre in the country and is recognized as the official State theatre.

Each season, ATC collaborates with world-class artists to create productions and programs about what it means to be alive today, inspiring curiosity and sparking joy, bringing all Arizonans together.

ATC shares the power of theatre through a variety of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives, and community events. Including our nationally recognized ATCteen program and National Latinx Playwright Award, ATC focuses on training artists, audience, and community members about the creative power of theatre reaching far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience for all.

## ATC SUPPORTS ITS VITAL MISSION WITH THESE KEY INITIATIVES:

### ATC Mainstage

Each season ATC produces six mainstage productions, bringing together the best talent from across Arizona, the country, and the world. ATC playwrights, directors, designers, actors, and production teams represent the finest artists and technicians working today.

### Engagement in Phoenix and Tucson

ATC provides a place for communities across Arizona to gather, share, and explore the art-making process.

### New Play Development

ATC provides playwrights and theater makers, both locally and internationally, a place to develop their work. Through workshops and readings, we give artists a place to incubate and launch productions, both at ATC and beyond. ATC is also proud to support emerging voices with the annual National Latinx Playwright Award.

### Education and Outreach

ATC delivers inspiring experiences in a number of ways, both connected to our stage and beyond our walls, in schools, and across the state. Core programs of our education efforts include Summer On Stage, ATCteen, Student Matinees, and the Artist-In-Residence program.



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## ATC'S LEGACY SOCIETY

The future is made more certain  
by those who invest in it.



Veronika Duerr and Nardeep Khurmi in ATC's *Silent Sky*. Photo: Tim Fuller.

ATC's Legacy Society was established to recognize individuals who have made a planned gift to ensure the Company's vision lives on well into the future, and for countless generations of theatre lovers to come.

Whether you contribute through a bequest in a will or trust, or a beneficiary designation on your retirement account, life insurance, or other estate-planning vehicle, your legacy gift ensures that ATC continues to bring world-class theatrical productions to our stages, reaching generations for years to come.

### LEGACY SOCIETY BENEFITS:

- Recognition in the ATC program book for the entire season.
- Exclusive updates from our Artistic department throughout the season.
- Exclusive invitation to our annual Legacy Society Luncheon event.



To join the Legacy Society, or to learn more about ATC's planned giving program, please contact **Paula Taylor, Chief Development and Marketing Officer**, at [ptaylor@atc.org](mailto:ptaylor@atc.org) or **602-888-7848**.



FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 19

"A remarkable show in many ways — it is totally different from any revue you ever saw and ... it catches one of the great thinkers, activists and musicians of the 20th century as she surely was feeling in that given moment in time."

- Chicago Tribune

# NINA SIMONE: *Four Women*

By Christina Ham

Directed by Tiffany Nichole Greene

PRODUCTION SPONSOR

MARGARET E. MOONEY FOUNDATION



ATC IS PROUD TO BE PART OF THE TUCSON DESERT SONG FESTIVAL

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APRIL 09 - APRIL 30



# JUSTICE

A MUSICAL

Book by Lauren Gunderson Music by Bree Lowdermilk Lyrics by Kait Kerrigan

Directed by Melissa Crespo

**A world premiere musical journey with two of the world's most iconic women at the height of their power.**

It is 1993, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg has just joined the United States Supreme Court; the first and only other woman there, Sandra Day O'Connor, is ready to welcome her and get to work. In an intimate, epic three-person new musical built of sweeping songs, urgent conversations about equality, and truly human heroines, we come to know these two iconic justices at the height of their power. Through a third character, Regina, rising through the ranks of the law, we discover how O'Connor and Ginsburg inspire, challenge, and propel the next generation of changemakers and trailblazers in American jurisprudence. Ruth, Sandra and Regina confront each other about equal justice under the law, strategy, civil rights, husbands, kids, dreams, sorrows, and how to set a new course for our country and the world.



Arizona Actor  
**Chanel Bragg**  
(ATC's *Music Man* & *Cabaret*)



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**William C. Kirkham**  
(Award-winning Lighting Designer and Professor of Lighting Design in the School of Film, Dance & Theatre at ASU)

INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTION SPONSOR  
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## LEARNING & EDUCATION



## WE INSPIRE CREATIVITY ACROSS THE STATE

ATC delivers inspiring experiences in a number of ways, both connected to our stage and beyond our walls, in schools, and across the state.

### SOME OF OUR PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

#### **ATCteen**

Gives students ages 13-19 the opportunity to create their own projects, performances, and organize events to grow themselves as artists and people.

#### **STUDENT MATINÉE SERIES** (for elementary, middle school, high school, and college groups)

Student Matinéés allow ATC to share the live theatre experience at low or no cost to young people.

#### **SUMMER ON STAGE\***

ATC staff and teaching artists support an extraordinary summer conservatory experience, leading students through a variety of acting, voice, and movement classes and rehearsals leading to a fully produced play and musical – on the mainstage at the Temple of Music and Art in Tucson.

#### **SUMMER BACKSTAGE\***

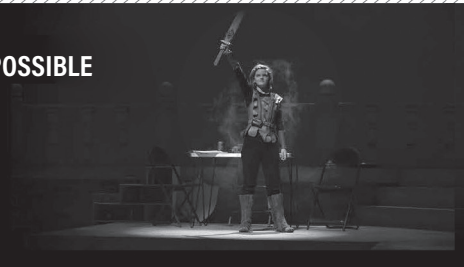
Participants explore the wonders of technical theatre – costumes, set building and painting, props, sound design, and lighting – while creating a technical theatre portfolio and learning from ATC's team of professional designers and technicians about theatrical design and management. This all leads to a fully produced play and musical – on the mainstage at the Temple of Music and Art in Tucson.

#### **DAVID IRA GOLDSTEIN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM\***

Our Learning & Education staff and teaching artists travel all over the state to bring the professional live theatre experience to Arizona communities near and far.

**\*To see how our programming has adjusted to Covid-19 please visit our website at [atc.org/atceducation](https://atc.org/atceducation)**

**YOUR SUPPORT MAKES THESE VITAL PROGRAMS POSSIBLE**  
**VISIT [ATC.ORG/ATCEDUCATION](https://atc.org/atceducation)**  
**EMAIL [EDUCATION@ATC.ORG](mailto:education@atc.org)**  
**OR CALL 520-463-7675**





## THEATER INFORMATION

### THE TEMPLE OF MUSIC AND ART

The Temple of Music and Art is a beautifully refurbished 1927 theatre, built in the Spanish Colonial style that flavors so much of our city. ATC has identified the following services and policies to ensure your comfort and enhance your experience at the theatre:

### THEATRE POLICIES

**Latecomers** - Latecomers will be seated only at an appropriate and predetermined break in action. In order not to disturb patrons who are already enjoying the performance, latecomers may be seated in alternate locations until intermission.

**Cellphones and Cameras** - As a courtesy to our patrons and the actors, the use of cameras and recording devices is not permitted within the theatre. Please restrict cellular phone use to the courtyard only.

**Children** - Children under 5 are not permitted in the theatre during performances.

**Emergency calls** - Emergency calls may be made to the House Manager's cell phone directly: 520-954-5237.

**Smoking** - Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the building. Look for designated smoking area signage. In the event of smoking onstage, a sign will be posted in the lobby.

### ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

**Assisted Listening Services** - The theatre is equipped with the Sennheiser Mobile Connect listening system for use by patrons with partial hearing loss or limited range of hearing. An Ambassador Usher or our House Manager can assist you with connecting to the system. Additionally, devices may be checked out in the Box Office to access the system. Please be prepared to leave a driver's license or other form of identification while using your headset.



- 1) Join the Wifi
- 2) Download the app
- 3) Select your audio channel or scan the QR Code

**American Sign Language** - Every production has a performance available in American Sign Language (ASL). For information about the dates of our ASL performance, please contact the Box Office.

**Vision Loss** - An in-house FM broadcast system is used to provide a running audio description of the movement and activities onstage for patrons with limited vision. Pre-show tactile tours of the backstage area and a pre-show narration about our building, the performers, and interpretive information about the play itself are available upon request. Contact the Box Office to make your reservation for the audio described performances. Large print and Braille playbills are available for all performances in the lobby of the theatre.

**Captioning** - Coordinated with the action onstage, those in open-captioned seating will be able to read the play's dialogue displayed in large green letters on an LED screen. For open-captioned performance dates, contact the Box Office.

**Accessible Seating** - is available via the Box Office for all performances. If you would like seating assistance at the theatre, please contact the House Manager at at **520-547-3981**.