

# Leading Ladies

by Ken  
Ludwig



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# Welcome Back!

**W**e hope that you, like our company, are feeling that we're emerging from what has been a particularly trying time, and you're ready to join in the celebration of our common humanity that this year's stories illuminate. Your presence is a gift for which we say thank you from the bottoms of our hearts.

## WHY A DIGITAL PROGRAM?

By offering a digital program, we hope to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce printing costs. By using less paper, we reduce our carbon footprint and give you remote access to the program from anywhere. Also, without the space limitations of print, we look forward to adding more "bonus features"—such as extra articles and photos about each show—during the season.

## COVID-19 PROTOCOL UPDATE

As our community relaxes COVID-19 prevention efforts, the risk to our work at the Commonwealth increases. Just one case of COVID-19 among our artists onstage or backstage could put a stop to rehearsals and performances. While public health guidelines relax, we may maintain stricter policies to mitigate risk and help ensure our shows perform as planned. The most up-to-date information is available on our website. Thank you for your flexibility and effort in keeping our community safe.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at the Commonwealth Theatre acknowledge that we work and gather on the ancestral lands of the Dakota Nation and other Indigenous peoples. We recognize these Nations as the original caretakers of this land and acknowledge the injustices committed against them. We strive to promote healing and inclusion through storytelling, which is fundamental to our mission.

**We are eager to share these meaningful and entertaining stories with you. Please stay safe and healthy. And thank you for coming to the Commonwealth!**



**Hal Cropp**  
Producing Artistic Director

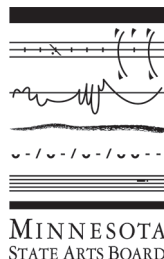


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The Commonwealth Theatre Company is a member of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group. Funding is provided in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and by private funders.

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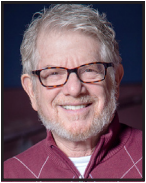
# THE COMPANY



**LIZZY ANDRETTA** is in her sixth season at the Commonweal. She appeared in *Dancing Lessons* and *A Christmas Carol* last season and previously in *The Elephant Man*, *Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Dracula: Prince of Blood*, *Boeing Boeing*, and *Sanders Family Christmas*, among others. Other Commonweal credits: *Root River Anthology*, *Headspace* and *A Driftless Christmas* as well as choreographing for several shows. Lizzy earned an M.F.A. in Acting from the East 15 Acting School in England and a B.S. from Skidmore College. Originally from New Jersey, she now lives in Lanesboro with her beloved cat, Henry.



**STELA BURDT** is grateful to celebrate her 23rd season with our Commonweal family. Past onstage work includes roles in *Souvenir*, *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Zombies from the Beyond*, *A Midnight Dreary*, *Harvey*, and *Man of La Mancha*. In addition to performing, Stela is a music director, sound designer, freelance vocalist, and the Commonweal's Patron Relations Manager. Currently, Stela is in the role of a lifetime as mom to Kieran. Love and Light, #TeamScottyForever.



**HAL CROPP** is in his 31st season, where favorite roles have been in *Come Back*, *Ghost-Writer*, *Dracula: Prince of Blood*, *Outside Mullingar*, *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, *The Drawer Boy*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Groucho*, and *Talley's Folly*. Selected directing credits include *I Love To Eat*, *Headspace Theatre*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Brand*, *Heartland Portrait*, *The Wild Duck*, *Measure For Measure*, *Peer Gynt*, *A Midnight Dreary*, *Enchanted April*, *Ghosts*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Hal holds a B.A. from Brown University, M.B.A. from Santa Clara University, and an M.F.A. from National Theater Conservatory. He was the Sally Irvine Award winner for Initiative, 2006.



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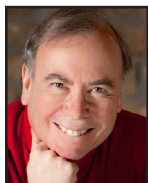


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**ELIZABETH DUNN** is in her eighth season with the Commonweal. Favorite credits include *Boeing Boeing*, *On the Verge*, *Scotland Road*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Dracula: Prince of Blood*. She has traveled in multiple tours with Prairie Fire Children's Theatre and lived in Chicago for a stint, where she studied improvisation at iO (formerly ImprovOlympic). Originally hailing from Georgia, Elizabeth is a 2010 graduate of Valdosta State University where she earned her B.F.A. in Theatre Arts.

**KELSEY HEATHCOTE** serves on the Commonweal's production team as the Technical Director and Assistant Production Manager. Since completing her apprenticeship in 2018, her work here has been seen onstage in several shows, including *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, and *Bakersfield Mist*. In 2020, Kelsey designed the set, sound, and lighting for *Fully Committed* and was one of two audio engineers for *A Drifless Christmas*. She looks forward to many new and exciting challenges as we reopen our doors this year!



**DAVID HENNESSEY** serves on the development team and has played in more than 50 shows over 23 years, including *A Christmas Carol* last season. Other favorites: *Headspace Theatre*, *Holmes and Watson*, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, *The Drawer Boy*, and *The Rainmaker*. He designed costumes for *Ice Maidens* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, oversees our audio descriptions for the visually impaired, and has led our COVID mitigation team since 2020. Other acting credits include *In Heart Theatre*, *Park Square Theatre*, *Jungle Theatre*, and *American Players Theatre*. He lives in Preston with Linda, his favorite scene partner for 49 years.



**JACLYN JUNE JOHNSON** joined the Commonweal at the start of 2020. An arts administrator, actor, director, playwright, costume designer, and teaching artist, Jaclyn has credits across the country, performing and designing with companies such as St. Croix Festival Theatre, Children's Theatre Madison, Creede Repertory, Riverside Shakespeare Festival, Riverside Theatre, Chicago's UTG Improv Theatre. Jaclyn received her B.A. from Cornell College. She wishes to thank: her family, friends, spouse, and their cats for their encouragement and love; and you for your support of the arts and specifically to the uniquely healing community of theatre.

**RIVKA KELLY** joined the Commonweal family in 2020 as the Production Stage Manager. Rivka hails from California but has spent the last decade as a traveling stage manager, mostly around the Midwest. Selected stage management experience includes shows with American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Skylight Theatre, and Two Crows Theatre. Rivka received her B.A. from the University of Vermont. She's grateful for this welcoming community and her amazing family's support.

## SEASON PASSES



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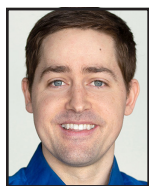
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**RACHEL KUHNLE** returned to the Commonweal in 2018, seven years after completing her acting apprenticeship in which she performed in *Metamorphoses* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She was last seen on stage as June in *Sanders Family Christmas*, and directed last year's *Dancing Lessons*. Rachel completed her M.F.A. in acting at the University of South Carolina in 2017. She loves her cats, her baby, and is grateful to her husband, Josiah, for being awesome.



**JOSIAH LAUBENSTEIN** joined the Commonweal late in 2018. He is the resident videographer and most recently appeared in *Dancing Lessons*. Before moving here, Josiah worked at Festival Theatre in St. Croix Falls, WI, as Marketing Director, and acted in nine productions over two years. Prior to that, Josiah lived in Columbia, SC, where he earned his M.F.A. in acting from the University of South Carolina. Josiah is a proud member of Glassbox Theatre Group, a co-founder of Highway Walkers Media Company, and is happily married to Rachel Kuhnle. He is besotted with their first child, Franny.



**BRANDT ROBERTS** is in his ninth season at the Commonweal. Favorite roles include Robert in *Boeing Boeing*, John Merrick in *The Elephant Man*, Mr. Coffee in *On the Verge*, Ragnar Brovik in *The Master Builder*, and Fancourt Babberley in *Charley's Aunt*. Cherished regional credits include *Measure for Measure* and *Henry IV Part I* at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Brandt's original one-person show, *The Art of the Entertainer*, has been performed in several states and was adapted into an online presentation in 2020. Roberts holds a M.F.A. in Performing Arts from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

**JODI RUSHING** is in their fourth season at the Commonweal. Their favorite credits include *An Iliad* (Wealhouse), *On The Verge*, *I Love To Eat*, and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abgd.) (Rvsd.)*. Before their tech apprenticeship with the Commonweal in 2019, they stage managed for Doniphan Dance Project in Tupelo, MS, and served as the conference manager for the 2019 ACDA South Conference. Jodi holds a B.A. in Theatre and Film from the U. of Mississippi.



**TIM SAILER** started at the Commonweal as an apprentice in 2009 and is now in his fifth season with the company. He appeared in *A Christmas Carol*, *The Rainmaker*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, and *An Enemy of the People*. Other Minnesota work includes performances at Park Square Theatre, Theatre L'Homme Dieu, and the Orchard Theater Collective. He spent five years with the American Shakespeare Center (Staunton, VA), where he played more than 50 roles in 35 plays. Other regional work: UT Shakespeare Festival, TX Shakespeare Festival, Houston Shakespeare Festival, and AR Shakespeare Theatre. Tim holds an M.F.A. from the University of Houston and is also an audiobook narrator.



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**ADRIENNE SWEENEY** is grateful to be in her 22nd season with the Commonweal, serving as the Assoc. Art. Dir. and Dir. of External Relations in addition to artistic roles. From Philadelphia, she holds an M.F.A. in Acting from the U/AZ. A commercial voice talent, she can be heard regionally on radio and TV. Favorite shows here include last season's *A Christmas Carol*, in which she had the great fortune to play Scrooge. Other favorites: *Silent Sky* (director), *Boeing Boeing*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Outside Mullingar*, and *Sylvia*. Adrienne believes that the act of sitting together in the dark sharing stories can help bring light to the world, something we all crave now more than ever. She looks forward to sharing time and space with you.



**JEREMY VAN METER** is enjoying his eleventh season in residence at the Commonweal. Favorite credits here include C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*, Anthony Reilly in *Outside Mullingar* and the title role in *Dracula: Prince of Blood* by Scott Dixon. His professional career began at The Barter Theatre in Virginia, and he has appeared regionally at Riverside Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, and Great River Shakespeare Festival. Jeremy holds an M.F.A. in Acting from the U. of Iowa and makes his home in Lanesboro with his lovely and extremely talented wife, Catherine Glynn.

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# Shakespeare

Many Shakespeare references appear in *Leading Ladies*.

Can you match which play each quote comes from?

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Now is the winter of our discontent.   | A. <i>Twelfth Night</i>        |
| 2. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow<br>Creeps in this petty pace from day to day                              | B. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>     |
| 3. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come,<br>it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. | C. <i>Hamlet</i>               |
| 4. Age cannot wither her, nor custom<br>stale her infinite variety.   | D. <i>Henry V</i>              |
| 5. O time, thou must untangle this, not I<br>It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.                              | E. <i>Richard III</i>          |
| 6. Once more unto the breach, dear<br>friends, once more!   | F. <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> |
| 7. A plague on both your houses!  | G. <i>Macbeth</i>              |

## Twelfth Night

In *Leading Ladies*, Ken Ludwig riffs on many elements from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. It includes a pair of lost siblings, unrequited love, women disguised as men (and back in Shakespeare's time, it would have been a man playing a woman who then disguises herself as a man), a deceptive love letter, and one tangled love triangle: Orsino's in love with Olivia. Olivia's in love with Cesario (who is really Viola disguised as a man) and Viola's in love with Orsino. Got it? Good!

Answer key: 1E | 2G | 3C | 4F | 5A | 6D | 7B

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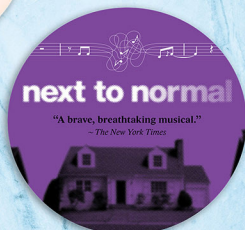
March 20, 2022



April 1-10, 2022



April 16, 2022



April 29-May 15, 2022



## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



**Ken Ludwig** has had six shows on Broadway, seven in London's West End, and many of his works have become a standard part of the American repertoire. His 28 plays and musicals have been performed in over 30 countries in more than 20 languages and are produced throughout the United States every night of the year.

*Lend Me a Tenor* won two Tony Awards and was called "one of the classic comedies of the 20th century by *The Washington Post*. *Crazy For You* was on Broadway for five years and won the Tony and Olivier Awards for Best Musical. In addition, Ken has won the Edgar Award for Best Mystery of the Year, two Laurence Olivier Awards, two Helen Hayes Awards, and the Edwin Forrest

Award for Contributions to the American Theater. His plays have starred, among others, Alec Baldwin, Carol Burnett, Tony Shaloub, Joan Collins, and Hal Holbrook.

His stage version of *Murder on the Orient Express* was written expressly at the request of the Agatha Christie Estate, and his latest play, *Dear Jack, Dear Louise*, won the 2020 Charles MacArthur Award for Best New Play of the Year and is optioned for Broadway. His book *How To Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, published by Penguin Random House, won the Falstaff Award for Best Shakespeare Book of the Year, and his essays are published in the *Yale Review*.

He is a graduate of Harvard and Cambridge and is a frequent guest speaker for groups as varied as The Oxford-Cambridge Society, The Jane Austen Society of North America, The Folger Shakespeare Library, and The Baker Street Irregulars.



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# Leading Ladies

by Ken Ludwig

Director	Jaclyn June Johnson
Rehearsal Stage Manager	Rivka Kelly
Assistant Stage Manager	Sara Hueser
Performance Stage Manager	Jodi Rushing
Scenic Designer	Justin Hooper
Lighting Designer	Paul Epton
Costume Designer	Kim Murphy
Costume Assistant	Maria Cina
Wig Stylist	Jodi Rushing
Sound Designer	Brandt Roberts
Sound Engineer	Kelsey Heathcote
Props Designers	Stela Burdt, Jeremy van Meter
Choreographer	Betti Battocletti
Fight Choreographer/Intimacy Coordinator	Jeremy van Meter

## CAST

Meg	Lizzy Andretta
Leo/"Maxine"	Tim Sailer
Jack/"Stephanie"	Josiah Laubenstein
Audrey	Grace Cummings
Duncan	John B. Nicol
Florence	Sandy Webb
Doc	David Hennessey/Hal Cropp
Frank/Butch	Tanner Sabol

## Setting

York, Pennsylvania, 1958.

Runtime is approximately 2 hours, with one 15-minute intermission.

Ken Ludwig's LEADING LADIES is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.  
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Originally Produced by The Cleveland Playhouse, Michael Bloom, Artistic Director, Dean Gladden, Managing Director, on September 7, 2004, and Alley Theatre, Gregory Boyd, Artistic Director, Terry Dwyer, Managing Director on October 15, 2004.

## Underwriter:

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PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN

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## SPECIAL THANKS

Theatre in the Round Players, Andrew Saboe, Louann Hamann, Anita Brown, St. Croix Festival Theatre, UW-River Falls Theater Department, St. Mary's University Theater Department.

## ALSO FEATURING

**Betti Battocletti** (Choreographer) has performed at the Commonweal in roles that include Christmas Present in *A Christmas Carol*, Vera in *Sanders Family Christmas*, Mary in *On the Verge*, Virginia in *The Clean House*, Rona in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and Clairee in *Steel Magnolias*. Other favorite credits include *Always...Patsy Cline*, *The World Goes Round* and *Urinetown* at The Jungle Theater in Mpls; *42nd Street*, *Prisoner of Second Avenue*, and as Cassie in *A Chorus Line* at Artistry. She is also a lyricist, playwright, choreographer and owns Bodiology Pilates in Minnetonka, MN.

**Paul Epton** (Lighting Designer) returns to Commonweal for a 7th time, having most recently lit *Come Back*, *Dancing Lessons*, *Sanders Family Christmas*, and *Silent Sky*. He started designing lights at Carleton College, spent 11 years in Detroit, Michigan, and returned to Minnesota in 1992. He's designed for the Six Points Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Jon Hassler Theater, and Paul Bunyan Playhouse. A year-round bicyclist, one of his early designs was for Spokesong. Awards: Lighting Designer, Ivey Award Honoree: *Ruined*. Lighting Designer, Ivey Award Honoree: *Psst!*. Detroit Free Press Theatre Excellence Award—Design. Detroit News Drama Critics Award—Theatre Craft.

**Justin Hooper** (Scenic Designer) holds a B.A. in Theatre from Augsburg College. He began his professional career as a stage manager for Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown, NY. He returned to Minneapolis to become a scenic artist for the Guthrie. Later, he took side-gigs as History Theater's technical director, Pioneer Place's production manager, and AV technician for AVEX. He has designed scenery and lighting for myriad Twin Cities companies and has branched into the world of interior design—his portfolio includes two restaurants, a liquor store, and a brew pub. He is currently the technical director for Concordia University's Theatre Department in St. Paul.

**Kimberly K. Murphy** (Costume Designer) is excited to join Commonweal this season as costume designer for *Leading Ladies*. Kim has been a costume designer for St. Croix Festival Theatre since 2000. She and her husband James Shoop live and work in St. Croix Falls, WI, where they cultivate their creativity and have raised two beautiful children, Gabriel and Sienna. Kim received B.S. in Apparel Design from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and A.A.S. in Fashion Design from the Fashion Institute of Technology, NYC. With both kids in college Kim is looking forward to new opportunities and cherishes the support of family and friends.



**Sandy Webb** (Florence) Since moving to Lanesboro in 2010, Sandy has acted in many Lanesboro Community Theater productions, most recently *The Dixie Swim Club*. Her favorite roles include the Bird Woman in *Mary Poppins*, and Mom in *Leaving Iowa*. Also, collaborating with local talent to stage *Over the Back Fence* was just plain joy. She loves watching and being part of a theater family that comes together to tell a story. She is delighted to join the Commonweal family for this production. Kudos to the Commonweal for challenging hearts and minds and for celebrating being human.

## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

An absolute locomotive of a show, *Leading Ladies* is all about setting up the dominos and watching them fall into hilarity. It's a blast! But at the heart of comedy is sincerity. Yes, there are vibrant, dynamic characters with important—if bizarre—objectives to achieve, but they each have their hearts full of real needs and wants. Like all of us.

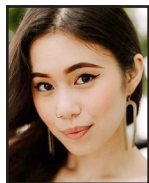
At the beginning we meet Meg, who loves theatre more than anything in the world. (I hope you can relate!) Next, we have two down-on-their-luck actors trying to make a living by performing for rural audiences. This world is also full of family bonds, caring community members, and young people falling in and out of love. The core of what makes this zany comedy so much fun? Some very relatable people who get swept up into some very silly shenanigans.

Also, Ken Ludwig has added a backdrop of Shakespearean themes: disguises, playing with gender roles, impending weddings, unrequited love, and beautiful language. He's given us a recipe for an extravagant comedic wedding cake that is as fun to make as it is to eat. Bon appétit!

—Jaclyn June Johnson

# APPRENTICE CLASS OF 2023

Happily, Commonweal has resumed our Apprenticeship Program this year. This 10-12-month, fully immersive, live-work program affords unique opportunities for young theatre professionals to study the craft & business of making live theatre. Learn more on our [website](#).



**MARIA CINA** is overflowing with gratitude for the opportunity to work with and learn from such a fantastic family of artists. She is honored to be a part of Commonweal Theatre's Apprenticeship class and hopes you enjoy the show! Maria earned her A.A. in Commercial Photography from Madison College (WI) and her Acting Certificate from The Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin, Ireland. She is currently on hiatus from studying Theatre Arts and Communication Studies at the U/MN Twin Cities, with plans to resume post-apprenticeship. Credits include Morticia Addams in *The Addams Family Musical*, Kendra in *The Gulf*, Asst.

Stage Manager for *Romeo and Juliet*, and U/S Marnie for *Lewiston/Clarkston*. When not on stage, Maria can be found sipping tea and cuddling her cat, Knives Meow, in a sunny corner of the apartment, a fantasy novel close by. She sends love, hugs, and pinky promises to all her friends and family. instagram: @mariashe\_



**GRACE CUMMINGS** has been acting and performing for almost a decade. She started in Monroe, LA, at Strauss Youth Academy for the Arts. Then she moved to Natchitoches to join Northwestern State U's Theatre & Dance program, and to participate in the LA Scholars' College. Her philosophy as an artist is simple: art is about connection. No matter if she is writing, acting, singing, or painting, she aims to use her art to connect with those around her. Her one goal onstage is to tell a story that will not only connect her with her audience, but also with herself.

Some roles include Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Prospero in *The Tempest*, and Deb in *Ordinary Days*. She was also able to debut two original roles, one written by the award-winning Del Shores, in *In Memoriam of Lena* as Julia, and one written by herself, in *Emilia* as Emilia Bassano. This Louisiana girl is excited to be joining Commonweal as an apprentice while getting to make new friendships and explore Minnesota!

**SARA HUESER** serves as the technical Apprentice for the 2023 season. Favorite credits include *The Wild Party*, *My Way*, and *The Other Place*. She has spent many seasons in Savannah, GA, and Greenville, SC, working on shows. Originally from Pennsylvania, Sara holds a bachelor's in Computer Engineering and a B.F.A. in Dramatic Writing from Savannah College of Art and Design.



**JOHN B. NICOL** is incredibly excited to be returning to the theatre scene as an acting apprentice with the Commonweal. Born and raised in community theatres around Northeastern IA, he went on to receive his B.S. in Theatre Arts from MN State Mankato. While there he had the opportunity to play some fun roles including Matt Friedman in *Talley's Folly*, and Smee in *Peter and the Starcatcher*. In regional theatres, he had fun playing Willard Hewitt in *Footloose* at the Paul Bunyan Playhouse and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Free to the People Theatre.



**TANNER SABOL** is thrilled to join the Commonweal Theatre for the first time! Growing up in Sioux Falls, SD, and graduating with a B.F.A. in musical theatre from the U. of North Dakota, he initially began acting in high school, being a part of the Oral Interpretation team all four years. Since then, he has played roles such as Felix in *The Odd Couple*, Sweeney in *Sweeney Todd*, Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps*, and was also a performer in the American College Theatre Festival's 2020 Cabaret. He hopes to find another home away from home at the CTC!



**ALEX SCHLESINGER** is ecstatic to be making their professional acting debut on the Commonweal Theatre's stage. Alex graduated from Luther College in 2021 with a B.A. in Theatre, and they are delighted to join the Commonweal's apprentice class this year. Favorite roles include Riff Raff in *The Rocky Horror Show*, Florizell in *The Winter's Tale*, and Amos Hart in *Chicago*. Alex would like to thank their mentor, professor, and good friend Jeff Dintaman for his years of support and sharing of knowledge that got Alex to where they are today.



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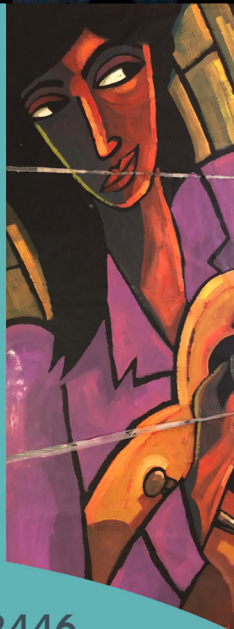
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The heart of our giving programs, the **MDC** consists of individuals and households who make a non-binding, 10-year commitment of support. For a schedule of amounts and benefits, please see any staff member or visit the "donate" page on our website: [www.commonwealththeatre.org](http://www.commonwealththeatre.org)

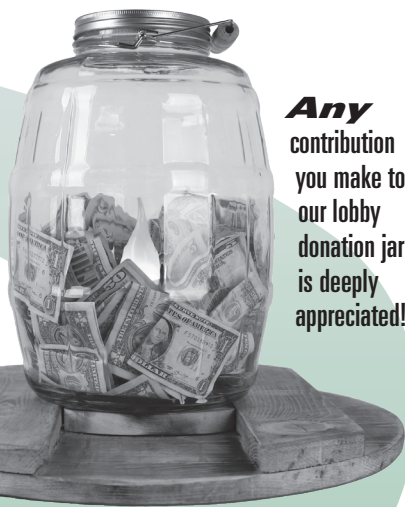
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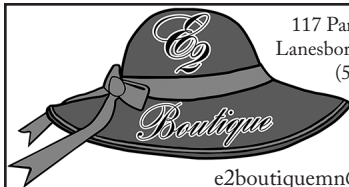
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## Screwball Comedy

"There's a pitch in baseball called a screwball, which was perfected by a pitcher named Carl Hubbell back in the 1930s. It's a pitch with a particular spin that sort of flutters and drops, goes in different directions, and behaves in very unexpected ways... Screwball comedy was unconventional, went in different directions, and behaved in unexpected ways..."

—Andrew Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films*

### Elements of Screwball:

- Plots centered around marriage and courtship
- Many plot twists in quick succession
- Characters keeping secrets
- Fast-paced dialogue
- Mistaken identity
- Physical humor

—Lauren Fraser, *Film Inquiry*



Above: Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon  
 in *Some Like It Hot* (1959)

Left: Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn  
 in *Bringing up Baby* (1938)



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