

PLAYBILL 2026-2027 ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



The Academy

For The Performing Arts A Program Of Excel Tecc

The Academy for the Performing Arts is a college preparatory program of Excel TECC, serving the 9 high schools' nine school districts in the Mayfield Consortium. Excel TECC offers college preparatory programs within the high school curriculum that keep constant pace with business and industry. The program prepares students for professional employment or continued higher education.

ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS **Mission**

To provide talented high school juniors and seniors with a joyful, challenging and inspiring training experience in the theater; an educational and performance experience that builds confidence, courage and mastery in creative self-expression preparing students for high-level college and professional opportunities.

The training students encounter at the Academy will challenge them to know themselves as creative and imaginative individuals. The discoveries and procedures essential to creativity on the stage, are equally vital to all human beings in their daily lives. The courage to create, the confidence to stand calmly before others in stressful situations, the facility to be expressive, the sense of play that makes one young at heart, the wisdom to see the big picture,

the rare and essential skill to communicate clearly, the sensitivity to find meaning in relationships and the business of life - these are all real- world benefits of the training at the Academy. At the Academy, we believe creativity in itself is an end. Because by mastering it, the student develops an expansiveness of self and a thriving confidence that can affect and change the world.

2026-2027 marks the nineteenth year of the program. During this season each student will study a wide range of performing arts courses for a half day (morning and afternoon) at the Chagrin Falls High School Performing Arts Center.

ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Goals

To provide a comprehensive pre- professional course of study in all aspects of theater, from literature, technique and history to actual performance.

To create challenging performance opportunities for students to demonstrate acquired skills in the new Performing Arts Center and drama wing. The Academy mounts 8 theatrical plays each year, including plays from many styles of the world theater - from classical, restoration, modern European theater, American theater, and Musical Theater.

To provide professional, visionary leadership by prominent performing arts educators and professionals who have strong ties to the regional theater, university system and other professional performing arts venues.

To employ professional artists/ teachers and outstanding, highly credentialed faculty.

To prepare students for post-secondary education in the performing arts and related subjects; assisting with audition, contact, interview support and professional guidance in selecting educational and career opportunities.

The Actor has three primary concerns; **Mind, Will and Sense**. If all three are properly engaged, we will develop imaginary circumstances that have been built solely from the imagination

— even in the joyous, larger-than-life Musical or the grand soulful world of Shakespeare or the naturalistic milieu of Chekhov.

We begin with sense; teaching the body to respond to imaginary circumstances that have been built solely from the imagination.

MAKE IT BELIEVABLE COURSE LIST

Theater Etiquette

Theater Practicum

Theater History

Intro to Tech

Voice/Movement

Stanislavski Fundamentals

Meisner

BFA College

BA College

College Portfolio

Improv

Prop Practicum

Photoshop

Intro to Stage Management

Advanced Stage Management

Costume Design

Film Making

Scene Study

Michael Chekhov

Audition Technique

Masks

Shakespeare

Acting Styles

Dialects

Musical Theater

Sensory/Experiencing

Acting for the Camera

Clown

Film History

Business of Theater

**BEN NEEDHAM**

PROGRAM DIRECTOR / RESIDENT DESIGNER

MFA Theater Design - University of Georgia
BA Theater Arts - Case Western Reserve University
Owner - Digital Squirrel Studios

Ben serves as the Academy's Program Director as well as for the past 19 years has been the Academy's Resident Designer, overseeing the technical theater and film aspects of the Academy. Ben holds an MFA from the University of Georgia in Theater Design and a BA from Case Western Reserve University in Theater Arts. He served as Adjunct Professor for the University of Georgia, Case Western Reserve University, Lakeland Community College, Lake Erie College, and Kent State University.

He is the Owner and Principal Designer of Digital Squirrel Studio - www.digitalsquirrel.net, a full-service animation, design, and architectural illustration studio. He has designed over 1000 theater productions over the past 30 years. His film and television projects include set designer for Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, *Kill the Irishman*, *Killing Lincoln*, *Killing Kennedy*, *Killing Reagan*, ABC's *The Kingmakers*, Meg Ryan's *Ithaca*, Amazon's Original Series *Point of Honor*, PBS's *Mercy Street*, and AMC's *Turn: Washington's Spies*. Ben was most recently a set designer on the films *The Outpost*, *Son of the South*, and the CW TV series *Valor*.

**DAN HENDROCK**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / LEAD INSTRUCTOR

MFA - Case Western Reserve University
BFA - Kent State University
M. Ed - Kent State University
Certified Career Technical Educator - State of Ohio
Member - AEA

Dan is a professional actor, director, and teaching artist. He has been professionally directing and acting in Cleveland, NYC, and Chicago for the past sixteen years. Dan has his MFA in Acting from the Cleveland Play House/Case Western Reserve University graduate acting program, his M.Ed in Career Technical Teacher Education, his BFA in Musical Theater from Kent State University, serves as the Vice President of the board of trustees for Ballet Theater of Ohio, and is a proud member of AEA.

Dan takes on some heavy lifting at the Academy; serving as the Artistic Director and Lead Instructor in Acting, Speech, Movement, History, Acting for the Camera and Dialects - along with whatever other hats he can throw into the ring! Dan also holds his teaching certificate in the Michael Chekhov Technique from the Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium. His performing credits include many television, film, and commercial appearances, regional theaters, national tours, and Off-Broadway. Dan has found his passion in sharing his expertise about the craft with the next generation.

**ABRAHAM ADAMS**

ACTING INSTRUCTOR /
BOX OFFICE MANAGER

M. Ed - Kent State University
MFA Acting- Ohio University
BFA Acting- University of Utah

Abraham is a proud actor, educator, and pet parent to four adorable cats and a dog. He has had the privilege to work at many area theaters including Karmamu House, Dobama, Ensemble, Beck Center for the Arts, and Cleveland Play House.

Abraham holds an MFA in Performance from Ohio University and BFA in Performance from the University of Utah. He is also a certified teacher in the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique.

**APRIL ROCK**

COSTUME DESIGNER

MFA - Costume Design -
Kent State University

April graduated with her Master's of Fine Arts Degree in Costume Design from Kent State University. April is the Resident Costume Designer/Shop Supervisor for both Lorain County Community College and The Academy for the Performing Arts in Chagrin Falls.

She also works as a freelance designer throughout the greater Cleveland area. Recent costume design credits include *Hadestown*, *SIX*, and *Alice in Wonderland* (The Academy for the Performing Arts); *Anastasia*, *Wait Until Dark*, and *The Music Man* (Rabbit Run Theater), and *She Kills Monsters* and *Cinderella Confidential* (LCCC Theater/Spark Theater for Youth)

**MADDY COX**

THEATER HISTORY INSTRUCTOR

BFA Acting -
Point Park University

Maddy Cox is a Cleveland and soon to be Chicago-based actor. Maddy is very excited to return to the Academy for the Performing Arts, this time as an Instructor! She graduated from Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts with her BFA in Acting.

Some theatrical credits include Pittsburgh Playhouse, Cleveland Public Theater, Starcatcher Theater, Rubber City Theater, and Cleveland Shakespeare Festival.

**JEN GALLAGHER**

GUEST ARTIST IN IMPROV

Jen is a producer and improv comedian based in Cleveland, Ohio. They serve as a showrunner for Improv Death Match and perform monthly with Mischief LLC, a house team at Imposters Theater.

You can often catch them as a guest on local shows like *Cleveland Comedy Court*, *The "Panel Show" Show*, and *What Are We Doing*. They're passionate about creating exciting, collaborative art with their friends, whether that's through podcasting, sketch comedy, or a game of Dungeons & Dragons.

**EMILY MORGAN**

MUSIC DIRECTOR/ STAGE MANAGER

Emily is delighted to return to the Academy for the Performing Arts for her Academy Music Directorial debut with *Come From Away*. An Academy alumna, she appeared in *Sweeney Todd* and *Les Misérables* before continuing her musical life with the American University Chamber Singers. More recently, she has been seen onstage at Near West Theater in *Beautiful* (Carole u/s) and *Next to Normal* (Doctor), and worked with the Academy on *SIX* and *Hadestown*.

A lifelong lover of music, languages, storytelling, and the ways they connect us, Emily can usually be found teaching, working in conservation, traveling, or learning yet another language when she isn't in a rehearsal room. She is endlessly grateful to the Academy and Chagrin Falls Schools for the community, encouragement, and creative home that have shaped her from student to artist. Welcome to the Rock!



LAST SEASON'S LITTLE WOMEN



Juniper Axelrod

Grade 11 • Mayfield High School

Juniper is thrilled to be a part of the Academy as a first-year student. Favorite roles include Charlie in Chagrin Valley Little Theater's production of *Elf the Musical*, Mary Barry and Tinker Bell in *The Lost Boy*, Ensemble in *Oedipus*, and Helen Cooper and Judy Rose in *Night of the Living Dead*. She is currently playing Deorwynn in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Outside of theater, Juniper spends most of her time hanging out with friends and playing sports. She wants to thank all her friends and family for always supporting and believing in her! Juniper is very excited to experience this new chapter in life!



Charlie Bird

Grade 11 • Chagrin Falls High School

Charlie is very enthused to be a part of the Performing Arts Academy. Some of Charlie's most memorable roles during her musical theater career have been Baloo in *The Jungle Book Jr.*, George in *Godspell*, and The Queen of Hearts in *Alice by Heart*. Outside of theater, Charlie volunteers to help with a local community theater program for Patricia Haynish, participates in the Chagrin Falls Mock Trial Team, is in the Chagrin Falls Drama Program, and sings in the choir as well as the outside select choir. Charlie would like to thank her parents and teachers for always supporting her and encouraging a path into the arts.



Laurece "Kami" Coleman

Grade 11 • Brush High School

Laurece is currently a junior at Charles F. Brush High School. His past theatrical role includes Scar in *The Lion King*. His other performing experiences include personal creative projects, performances for friends, and eventually creating content for YouTube.



Nevaeh Cummings

Grade 11 • Mayfield High School

Nevaeh is very excited to be a first-year student at the Academy for the Performing Arts. Nevaeh has gone from being backstage to being on stage. She has always had a passion to be on stage and to bring smiles to everyone who is watching her. Outside of theater, Nevaeh spends her time with The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus, as crew for her school's Limited Edition show choir, and performing in her school's treble choir. She wants to thank her family for always supporting her and lifting her up even when it was hard. Nevaeh can't wait to see what she is blessed with next!



Rebecca Dudash

Grade 11 • Aurora High School

Rebecca is thrilled to be a part of the Academy! She is president of the Aurora Choir Program, a member of the Drama Club, and a lacrosse player! Some past theater roles include Sonja Aquino in *Mean Girls*, Courtesan in *The Addams Family*, Tall Alice in *Alice in Wonderland Jr.*, and Catherine in *The Theory of Relativity*. Outside of theater, she enjoys singing in the Aurora Chamber Choir, singing in the Evergreen Ensemble, and playing lacrosse. She would like to thank her family and everyone who has supported her. Thank you all for making theater so special, and she is excited for what comes next!



Harmoni Garrett

Grade 11 • Mayfield High School

Harmoni is very excited and grateful to be a part of the Academy. *Come From Away* will be her fifth musical. She got to be a part of *The School of Rock*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Music Man*, and *Once Upon a Mattress*. Outside of theater, she is involved in show choir and sings in church. Harmoni is so grateful to play the role of Hannah in *Come From Away*. She wants to thank her parents for always pushing her because they know she is capable of great things, her extended family for supporting her, and also her directors for the incredible opportunity. She is excited to see what the future has in store.



Isaiah Gaskin

Grade 11 • Charles F. Brush High School

Isaiah is very happy to be a part of the Academy for the Performing Arts. He is currently a junior at Charles F. Brush High School, as well as a first-year student with the Performing Arts Excel TECC program at Chagrin Falls. Some of the productions he was given the opportunity to be in include *Lion King Jr.* as Mufasa, *Seussical the Musical Jr.* as the Grinch, and *Radium Girls* as Charlie Lee. Isaiah wants to thank his choir teacher/director Ms. Sturdivant, for helping him get prepared for this level of theater, and he wants to thank his family for always coming to support him in his productions.



Gayle Gold

Grade 11 • Chagrin Falls High School

Gayle has been excited for the opportunity to join the academy since they found out about it. Their absolute favorite production was *Alice By Heart* in the 2025-2026 school year. When they aren't dealing with Academy shenanigans, they can be found writing their own songs, working as president of the baking club, or hanging out with friends. They want to thank their parents for their constant support and their little sisters for their required love. Gayle is super excited to see what the rest of high school will lead to.



Fiona Houston

Grade 11 • Chagrin Falls High School

Fiona is very excited to be a part of the Academy. She is currently a junior at Chagrin Falls High School, and a first-year student at the Academy. Some of her favorite productions are *Alice by Heart* as an ensemble member and *Anne of Green Gables* as tech. Outside of theater, Fiona plays the clarinet for the Chagrin Falls Marching Band and participates in Mock Trial, Speech and Debate, as well as the Drama Club. She wants to thank her immediate family (Mom, Dad, and Grant) and close friends for always supporting and believing in her! Fiona is very excited to see where this new chapter takes her!



Lalya King

Grade 11 • Charles F. Brush High School

Lalya is new to the Academy for the Performing Arts. She currently attends Charles F. Brush High School as a junior. Her first and favorite production she has done is *Lion King Jr.* Outside theater, Lalya performs with the Brush High School Orchestra and plays for the Brush Softball Team. She wants to give a special thank you to her family for supporting her, and especially her mother for encouraging her to join the theater in the first place.



Steven Maitta

Grade 11 • Orange High School

Steven is thrilled to be a part of *Come From Away* with the Academy for the Performing Arts. He is currently a junior at Orange High School, and a first-year student at the Academy. Some previous roles Steven has played include Jack Kelly in *Newsies*, Bobby Strong in *Urinetown*, The Baker in *Into the Woods*, Glen in *Wedding Singer*, along with five sessions in Cabaret Troupe. Special thanks to his acting and vocal coaches, Jamie Koeth and Leslie Varnik. Additional thanks to his friends and family who support him through everything.



Abi Miller

Grade 11 • Aurora High School

Abi is thrilled to be joining the Academy for the Performing Arts this year. Her favorite productions she's been in include *The Odd Couple* (Female Version) as Renee, *Almost Maine* as Hope, and *Mean Girls* as Caroline Krafft/ensemble member. Outside of theater, Abi enjoys making art of all forms, listening to music, and hanging out with friends. She would like to thank her close family members (Mom, Dad, Zach, Hannah, Beka, and Max) along with her extended family for their constant support of her love of theater and other passions. Abi is looking forward to her time at this program and is so excited to see where it may lead!



Mackenzie Mosley

Grade 11 • Charles F. Brush High School

Mackenzie is a junior at Charles F. Brush High School and a first-year student at the Performing Arts Excel TECC program. Her favorite productions she was able to be a part of were *The Lion King Jr.* and *Radium Girls*. She sings in the choir at school and dances in her free time. She would like to thank her mom for letting her do this, and the rest of her family who come to her shows even when she tells them last minute.



Milo Quintin

Grade 11 • Chagrin Falls High School

Milo is thrilled for his first year with the Academy. Past roles include Drake in *Annie*, The King in *Once Upon a Mattress*, a proud member of the ensemble in *Godspell*, Matthew Cuthbert in *Anne of Green Gables*, and the Knave of Hearts in *Alice by Heart*. When not on stage, he is the mellophone section leader and band manager in marching band, a member of the school's Select Choir and Jazz Band, and he is on crew for the community education theater productions with Pat Haynish. He would like to thank his family, his past directors (Pat Haynish, Bill Gordon), his classmates, and the whole Academy community.



Kason Sams

Grade 11 • Charles F. Brush High School

Kason is looking forward to being a part of the Academy. His favorite shows are *Seussical* as Mr. Mayor, *The Lion King* as Simba, and *Murder Mystery at the Murder Mystery* as Inspector Bradshaw. Besides his experience in theater, he has also been a part of Memorial Junior High School and Brush High School's advanced choirs for 5 years. He is also a member of the Brush High School Soccer Team. He would like to thank his immediate family (Mom, Dad, and Kamiah), his extended family, and his friends for their support. Kason is ready to take on the new challenges and triumphs that will come at the Academy.



Valerie Slaughter

Grade 11 • Mayfield High School

Valerie is very excited to be a part of the Academy for the Performing Arts. She is currently a junior at Mayfield High School, as well as a first-year student with the Academy. Outside of the theater, Valerie spends time at dance class with her best friends and with the Pride of Mayfield Marching Band as she dances on the field while they play. When football season is over, she plays french horn for concert band. She wants to thank her immediate family (Mom, Dad, and Kyle) and extended family for always supporting and believing in her! Valerie is excited to see what this new chapter in her life brings her!



Steven Spearmen

Grade 11 • Mayfield High School

Steven is very excited to be a part of the Academy for the Performing Arts. He is currently a junior at Mayfield High School and a first-year student within the Performing Arts Excel TECC program at Chagrin Falls. He has no prior musical or acting experience.



Aura Turner

Grade 11 • Beachwood High School

Aura is excited to be a part of the Academy for the Performing Arts. She is currently a junior at Beachwood High School, as well as a first-year student within the Performing Arts Excel TECC program at Chagrin Falls. Some of her favorite roles include *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* as a Narrator, *Freaky Friday* as Savannah, and *Shrek* as Pinocchio. Outside of musical theater, Aura enjoys listening to music and learning songs on the ukulele. She also enjoys watching films and hanging out with friends. She wants to thank her friends and family for supporting and believing in her!





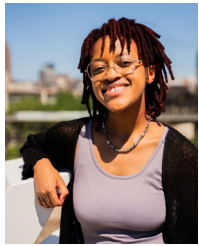
JUNIOR CLASS OF 2028



Carson Adelstein

Grade 12 • Solon High School

Carson is absolutely thrilled for her second year at the Academy! Favorite roles include Penny Pingleton in *Hairspray*, Meg in *Women*, and Fiona in *Shrek*. Her favorite theater experiences have been performing with Broadway Stars at Playhouse Square and traveling to New York City with the Stagecrafters Cabaret Troupe. When she isn't performing, Carson stays active in her school community and serves as the president of "Letters of Love," a club dedicated to providing emotional support to children in hospitals. Carson would like to thank Dan, Abe, Ben, family, friends, and her dedicated voice coach for their endless support.



Al Bickham

Grade 12 • Mayfield High School

Al is an academy senior on the technical theater track. Some favorite shows at the academy have been *Hairspray* and *Mac Beth*. In junior year, Al was on crew for all possible shows and plans to do the same senior year. At their home school, they have been the Scenic Charge/Paint Lead since sophomore year and plan to finish out their leadership role as a senior. Some of their favorite home school shows have been *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, *The Music Man*, and *Cinderella*. Al wants to thank the friends they've made, the directors at Mayfield, and their parents for the unbelievable support!



Seamus Buelow

Grade 12 • Orange High School

Seamus is pretty happy about being in the Academy for the Performing Arts. She likes her classmates and teasing Dan Hendrock a lot. For the half of the day she isn't at Chagrin, she goes to Orange High School. In the past she has played Sir Evelyn Oakley in *Anything Goes*, Leaf Conebear in *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and Carl in *Women*. She would like to thank her family for supporting her, and her friends for being there for her. After the show she intends to eat a Toblerone.



Maxamillian Canonico

Grade 12 • Chagrin Falls High School

Max is absolutely stoked to be attending the Academy for his second year. Favorite roles have been Judas/John the Baptist in *Godspell*, Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray*, and The Duchess/Dodgy in *Alice by Heart*. Outside of theater, Max performs in choir, as well as concert, jazz, and marching band. Music and theater have always been a core part of his life and that wouldn't be possible without the constant support from his family, friends, and instructors. He will always be incredibly grateful for all of them. Max can't wait to spend another year with the Academy and share his love for the program with all of you!



Preston Day

Grade 12 • Mayfield High School

Preston is a senior at Mayfield High School. He was in the ensemble for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Music Man* and *Cinderella*. Preston was a featured dancer in *Cinderella* as well as an Umpa Lumpa in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. He played the role of Brad and was in the ensemble for *Hairspray* at The Academy for the Performing Arts. Preston also played Tim in *How to Overthrow Your Student Government in 7 Easy Steps*. He would like to give a thank you to his youth pastor, friends, and family for the support throughout his time in the program.



Haley Felgar

Grade 12 • Chagrin Falls High School

Haley is in her second year at the academy. Although she has mostly been given background roles, some of her favorites include the Russian Reporter in *How to Overthrow Your Student Government* and as a featured dancer in her freshman year's spring performance of *Beauty and the Beast*. Outside of school she has been involved in many of the Cleveland Ballet's productions, such as *The Nutcracker*, and *Romeo & Juliet*. She wants to give special thanks to her friends in and outside of the Academy as well as her family for believing in her and supporting her throughout her life.



Phoebe Belle Glesius

Grade 12 • Orange High School

Phoebe loves all things theater & has been in many shows, notably Logainne in *Spelling Bee*, & assistant directing *Big Fish* at University School. Outside of theater, she enjoys practicing guitar, being president of the drama club, working at the local preschool part time, and watching horror movies. She wants to shout out everyone involved who has worked so hard to make this show amazing. A special thank you to her amazing parents and siblings, Joan Ellison, and all of the staff at the Academy for fostering her love of performance and for being the most encouraging and inspiring educators!



Sophia Glesius

Grade 12 • Orange High School

Sophia is a senior at the Academy for the Performing Arts and at Orange High School. Sophia has stage managed and assistant stage managed for *Into the Woods*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Airness*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Narnia*, and *Mac Beth*, and has been on crew for *Hairspray*, *Women*, and *How to Overthrow your Student Government*. They want to thank their teachers Katherine, Kelly, and Ben for teaching them about technical theater.



Róisín Horvath

Grade 12 • Chagrin Falls High School

Róisín is thrilled to be back at The Academy! She is a senior at Chagrin Falls High School and participates in many theater based activities. Her most treasured roles include Harold Pudding/Mad Hatter in *Alice By Heart*, Anna and Velda in *The Amish Project*, Brenda/Matron in *Hairspray*, and Jo in *Women*. Outside of theater, Rosie is a classical violinist and vocalist, training through The Cleveland Institute of Music. She would like to extend a special thank you to her parents and theater educators who have helped foster her love for the arts! Go raibh mile maith agat, grazie mille, thank you so much for supporting the arts! For Diarmaid.



Clarence Howard

Grade 12 • Charles F. Brush High School

Clarence is thrilled to be a part of the Academy for the Performing Arts. He is currently a senior at Brush High School, as well as a second-year student within the Performing Arts Excel TECC program at Chagrin Falls. His one and only production was Gilbert in *Hairspray*. Outside of the theater, Clarence spends his time taking piano lessons. He wants to thank his immediate family (Mom, Dad), and extended family for always supporting and believing in him!



Josiah Ragsdale

Grade 12 • Beachwood High School

Josiah is a senior at Beachwood High School. Some of his past roles include Assistant Stage Manager for *Brigadoon*, Assistant Stage Manager for *Hairspray*, and Professor Bhaer in *Little Women*. He has also been a part of Cleveland Public Theater's Student Theater Enrichment Program (STEP) Tech 2026 where he co-designed and made the set and props.



Charlie Speyer

Grade 12 • West Geauga High School

Charlotte's love of theater began in elementary school and has grown through choir, vocal training, and acting. She is especially grateful to her vocal coach, Mrs. Caitlin DeFranco, and her directors, Emma Figge and Samantha Weiskind, for helping her grow into the performer she is today. She was honored to be nominated for Best Actress at the Dazzle Awards for her performance as Sally Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Charlotte would like to thank her parents, Jen and Mike, her siblings, and her grandpa for always supporting her and encouraging her to follow her dreams. I love you always in all ways.



Orlee Steinberg

Grade 12 • Beachwood High School

Orlee has no theater experience outside of the Academy for the Performing Arts. Her first time acting in a play happened in the Academy's annual Junior Play Festival, a mini play put on by the junior class. Outside of the Academy, Orlee has spent the past few years playing on the Beachwood High School Girl's Volleyball Team. She would like to thank her immediate family (Mom, Dad, Jacob, and Tali), her extended family, and her friends for always believing in her and supporting her as she continues to grow as a performer. Orlee is very excited for her senior year at the Academy.



Abhinav Venkataraman

Grade 12 • Solon High School

Abhi is ready to take on new experiences at the Academy. He did 2 shows (One Act) at his home school. He played Mr. K in *Kafka* and he also played Truck Driver/ Nuclear Physicist/ Grocer in *Bitz Town* last year. At the Academy he played Beth and Bhaer in the Junior Play Festival's *Women* and he also helped the kids by assistant stage managing for *Little Women*. Abhi is planning to study business and computer engineering at college. He would like to thank his family and the Academy for helping him learn new social skills and for supporting him through all of his hard work. Abhi is super excited to grow!



Steve Vereb

Grade 12 • Aurora High School

Steve Vereb is psyched to be returning to the Academy for Performing Arts. He is planning on pursuing acting/filmmaking in college. Some of Steve's favorite roles include Kevin G in *Mean Girls*, Mr. Pinky/Fender in *Hairspray*, Glenn Cooper in *Rumors*, and Ensemble in *Legally Blonde*. While he is not performing on stage, Steve enjoys watching movies, playing his sousaphone, and engaging in shenanigans with his friends. Steve is grateful to everyone who has shown up to support the arts and, more specifically, to his family and the other academy kids. He cannot wait to see what the future has in store.



Set Design by Ben Needham



SENIOR CLASS OF 2027



Set Design by Ben Needham

Come From Away

Directed by Dan Hendrock

Come From Away tells the remarkable true story of what happened when U.S. airspace closed following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and 38 planes carrying nearly 7,000 passengers were unexpectedly diverted to the small town of Gander, Newfoundland.

As people from around the world found themselves stranded far from home, the residents of Gander and surrounding communities opened their homes, schools, and hearts to complete strangers. Filled with humor, hope, and unforgettable music, *Come From Away* is a powerful celebration of compassion, connection, and the extraordinary kindness people can show one another during even the darkest of times.

CAST LIST

CLAUDE NOEL	Seamus Buelow
ANNETTE	Mackenzie Mosley
BOB	Laurece Coleman
BEULAH DAVIS	Phoebe Glesius
CONSTABLE OZ FUDGE	Max Canonico
JANICE MOSHER	Rebecca Dudash
KEVIN TUERFF	Steven Maitta
HANNAH O'ROURKE	Harmoni Garrett
KEVIN JUNG	Josiah Ragsdale
DIANE GREY	Roísín Horvath
NICK MARSON	Steve Vereb
BONNIE HARRIS	Carson Adelstein
CAPTAIN BEVERLY BASS	Charlie Bird
ALI	Abhinav Venkataraman
DOUG HARRIS/ RABBI	Milo Quintin
DWIGHT/ DERM /MUHUMUZA	Isaiah Gaskin
MARGIE	Layla King
AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHT ATTENDANT	Abi Miller
BRENDA'S BROTHER	Preston Day
MICKY/ EDDIE/ GEORGE W. BUSH	Ricky Mehl
BRENDA/ CAPTAIN BRISTOL	Finn Houston
MARTHA/ ROBIN	Orlee Steinberg/ Rosemary Needham
DELORES/ MUHUMUZA'S WIFE	Nevaeh Cummings
GARTH/ DWIGHT/ BARBEQUE MAN	Gayle Gold
JOEY	Kason Sams
CRYSTAL	Haley Felgar
MANNY	Preston Day
TERRY/ WALMART GREETER	Valerie Slaughter
MAYORS OF LEWISPORT AND GAMBO	Kason Sams/ Preston Day

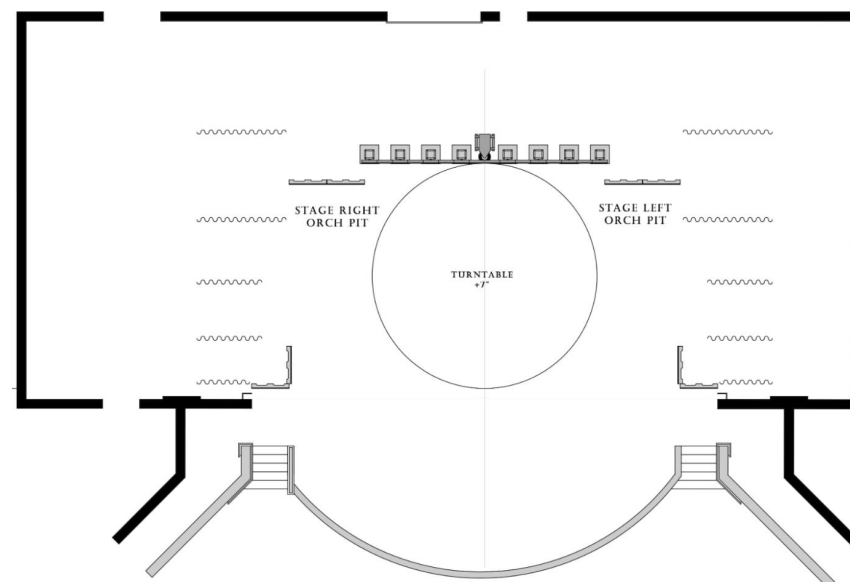


PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR/ CHOREOGRAPHER Dan Hendrock
 STAGE MANAGER/ MUSIC DIRECTOR Emily Morgan
 SCENIC/ LIGHTING/ PROJECTIONS DESIGNER Ben Needham
 COSTUME DESIGNER April Rock
 SOUND DESIGNER Parker Strong
 ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS Sophia Glesius/ Al Bickham
 TURNTABLE OPERATOR Lauren McBride
 LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR Sophia Glesius
 FOLLOW SPOT OPERATOR Al Bickham
 FOLLOW SPOT OPERATOR Matilda Hessman
 SOUND DESIGN ASSISTANT Lauren McKenna
 PROJECTIONS OPERATOR Charlie Speyer
 LIGHTING SUPERVISOR Lance Switzer
 SCENIC ARTIST Kelly Sherlock

ORCHESTRA

MUSIC DIRECTOR Emily Morgan
 ORCHESTRA PIT ASSISTANT Anna Kirsch
 KEYS 1 Sarah Dixon
 KEYS 2 Marcia Snavelly
 PERCUSSION Justin Heart
 VIOLIN Abigail Dyet
 GUITAR/ MANDOLIN Andy Dyet
 BASS Don Day
 WHISTLE Thaddeus Quintin



CONCEPTUAL GROUND PLAN BY BEN NEEDHAM



PRESET

ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS

COME FROM AWAY

Book, Music and Lyrics by
IRENE SANKOFF and DAVID HEIN

Directed by
DAN HENDROCK

OCTOBER
22ND - 25TH




ACADEMY
FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS



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A Director's Note for *Come From Away*

Twenty-five years ago this month, North American airspace shut down, and nearly 7,000 stranded travelers landed in Gander, Newfoundland — a town of 9,000. What could have been a story of fear became one of hospitality: strangers feeding strangers, strangers housing strangers, a town choosing kindness in the middle of chaos.

Our students have never lived in a world before 9/11. For them, it's history, not memory. That's exactly why this show matters now. It would be easy to let September 11th become just a date, a moment of silence. This musical refuses that — it insists the story also belongs to the people who opened their doors to strangers they might never see again.

There's something particular about handing this to high schoolers. This generation has grown up hearing the world is divided. *Come From Away* offers a different inheritance: proof that ordinary people, under pressure, chose generosity.

We don't agree on much as a country. But this show only asks one thing: that when people needed help, other people showed up. That's not political. It's human — and worth putting in the mouths of teenagers about to inherit this country.

Welcome to the rock. Thank you for coming from away to sit with us tonight.

Dan Hendrock



"28 HOURS" SET DESIGN BY BEN NEEDHAM



"ME AND THE SKY" SET DESIGN BY BEN NEEDHAM



The Importance

Directed by Abraham Adams

Sharp, witty, and unexpectedly heartfelt—THE IMPORTANCE by Sara Jean Accuardi offers a fresh, contemporary take on the timeless themes of identity, honesty, and the roles we play for others.

Inspired by the spirit of Oscar Wilde's classic comedy, this clever new work blends razor-sharp humor with genuine emotional depth as its characters navigate friendship, love, and the pressure to define themselves in a world full of expectations. Filled with sparkling dialogue and surprising twists, THE IMPORTANCE is a smart, engaging theatrical experience that proves authenticity is never as simple as it seems.



Improv Show

Directed by Jen Gallagher

One night. Two shows. Infinite laughter. Don't miss our seniors as they take the stage for IMPROV 2026, an evening of unscripted comedy under the guidance of our guest instructor Jen Gallagher.

With razor-sharp wit and fearless creativity, these performers dive headfirst into games, scenes, and spontaneous chaos that change with every audience suggestion. It's a joyful celebration of their two-year journey—and a reminder that sometimes, the best stories are the ones made up on the spot.



Junior Play Festival

Live in our Studio Theater

Directed by Dan Hendrock and Abraham Adams

The spotlight shines on our rising stars in Junior Play Festival 2027, an exciting evening of theater featuring two one-act plays performed in repertory by our entire junior class.

From heartfelt drama to side-splitting comedy, this showcase highlights the diverse talents and imaginative spirit of our next generation of artists. It's a bold and joyful celebration of collaboration, growth, and the creative voice of our young performers.



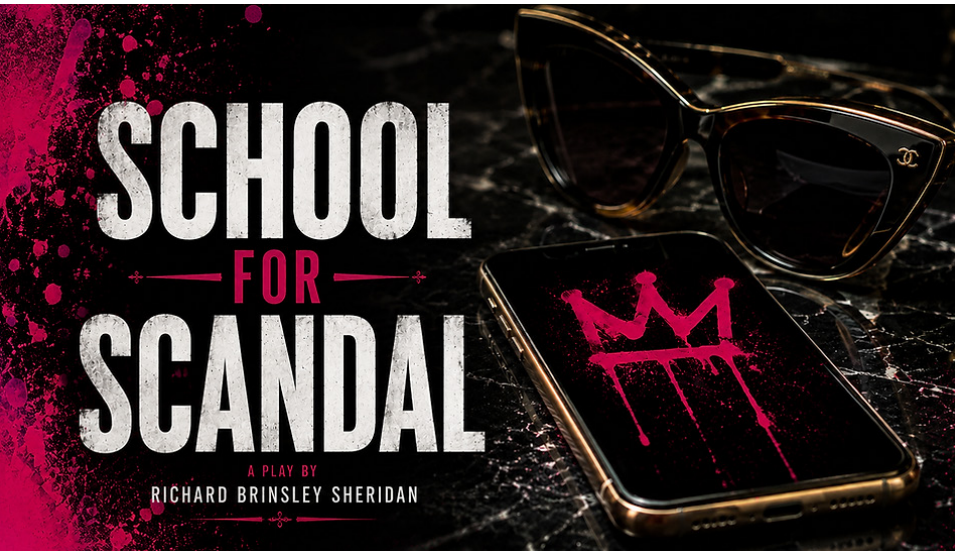
Under Pressure

Presented as part of the Junior Play Festival

Written and Directed by Ben Needham

For years, our music videos have explored British skeletons, astronauts, baseballs, zombies, and even sock puppets. Next year, things get darker.

A serial killer is on the loose... and somewhere beneath the city, a trash compactor holds the evidence.



School for Scandal

Adapted and Directed by Abraham Adams

Some stories never go out of style... they just find new ways to spread. Whispers become headlines. Secrets become entertainment. And scandal? It's always in fashion.

Next season, an unforgettable classic gets a fresh new perspective.



Lizzie in Concert

Directed by Dan Hendrock

Some stories deserve to be whispered. This one demands to be played at full volume.

One night only. A concert event. LIZZIE is coming.

Special Thanks

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Don Rauch

2026-2027 SEASON

OCTOBER 22, 24 & 25

Come From Away

DECEMBER 10-13

The Importance

DECEMBER 16

Senior Improv Show

MARCH 9 & 10

Junior Play Festival / Under Pressure

APRIL 28 & 29

School for Scandal

MAY 9

Lizzie in Concert