

# CAST



Matt  
Edmonds



Justin  
Brill



Erica  
Stephan



Casiena  
Raether



Neil  
Friedman



Glory  
Kissel



Raegan  
Smedley



Denzel  
Tsopnang



Ann  
Delaney



Allyson  
Graves



John  
Gurdian



Andrew  
MacNaughton



Matthew  
Huston



Maggie  
Malaney



Matthew  
Weidenbener



Victoria  
Newhuis



Lance  
Spencer



Morrison  
Luban



Madison  
Piner



Joshua  
Heinlein

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## AUTHOR PROFILES



**IRVING BERLIN** (*Music and Lyrics*) died at age 101 on Sept. 22, 1989, making 2019 the 30th anniversary of his passing. He left behind a catalogue that boasts more than 1000 songs, epitomized by Jerome Kern's famous maxim: "Irving Berlin has no place in American music -- he is American music." Born Israel Beilin as one of eight children, his family lived in Tolochin, Byelorussia prior to immigrating to New York in 1893. When his father died, Berlin, just turned 13, took to the streets in various odd jobs, working as a busker singing for pennies, then as a singing waiter in a Chinatown Cafe. In 1907 he published his first song, "Marie from Sunny Italy," and by 1911 he had his first major international hit "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Over the next five decades, he produced an outpouring of ballads, dance numbers, novelty tunes and love songs that defined American popular song for much of the century, including such standards as "How Deep Is the Ocean," "Blue Skies," "White Christmas," "Always," "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better," "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Cheek to Cheek," "Puttin' on the Ritz," "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody," "Heat Wave," "Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," "Easter Parade" and "Let's Face the Music and Dance." And in a class by itself is his beloved paean to his beloved country, "God Bless America," as so often belted out by singer Kate Smith. He wrote 17 complete scores for Broadway musicals and revues, and contributed material to six more as well as the

scores to dozens of beloved Hollywood movie musicals. He won a special Tony Award (1963) and the Academy Award for Best Song of the Year for "White Christmas" in 1942. He died in his sleep in his town house in New York City, a widower since his wife of 62 years, the former Ellin Mackay, had died the previous year at the age of 85. He is survived by three daughters and their families.

**DAVID IVES** (*Book*) was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play for *Venus in Fur*, which has been produced all over the country and the world, and was turned into a film by Roman Polanski. He is also well known for his evenings of one-act comedies *All in the Timing* and *Time Flies*. Other plays include *New Jerusalem: The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza*; *The Liar* (adapted from Corneille); *The School for Lies* (adapted from Molière); *The Metromaniacs* (adapted from Alexis Piron); *Is He Dead?* (adapted from Mark Twain); *Ancient History*; and *Polish Joke*. A Chicago native, he lives in New York City.

**PAUL BLAKE** (*Book*) has served as Executive Producer of the St. Louis Muny since 1990; which with 11,350 seats, makes the Muny America's largest theatre. At the Muny, where Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" began in Summer 2000, Mr. Blake has produced over 150 productions, which during the years starred such legends as Phyllis Diller, Captain Kangaroo, and the Radio City Rockettes. His musical *Roman Holiday*, with a score by Cole Porter, had its American premiere at The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in the summer of 2012.

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**MATT EDMONDS** (*Bob Wallace*) returns to TATC, where you may have seen him in *Forever Plaid*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, or *Big River*. A Chicago native, he's been performing in Chicagoland for 10 years. Most recently, he appeared in *Into the Woods* (Writers Theatre). Other recent work includes: *Murder For Two* (Marriott Lincolnshire & Milwaukee Repertory), *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago* (American Blues Theatre), *Ragtime* (Griffin Theatre), *Death of a Salesman* (Redtwist Theatre, Jeff Nomination for Best Supporting Actor - Play), *Rent* (Theo Ubique, Jeff Award for Best Musical), *James and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), *Titanic* (Griffin Theatre), and *The Last Five Years* (Metropolis Performing Arts Center). Regionally, Matt's performed in *Next To Normal* (TheatreSquared) and *Twelfth Night* (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival). He is a company member at Redtwist Theater, and is represented by Shirley Hamilton Talent.

**JUSTIN BRILL** (*Phil Davis*) is thrilled that *White Christmas* is his third show at TATC after playing Dennis in *All Shook Up* (a role he understudied and performed in the original Broadway company) and

Jimmy, also teamed with Erica Stephan, in *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. In recent years he has performed at Drury Lane (Amos in *Chicago* and Bert in *42nd Street*), at Marriott Theatre, The Fireside Theatre and Milwaukee Rep. Prior to moving to Chicago, Justin lived in NY and performed on Broadway in other shows including *Rent* and *High Fidelity* as well as at The Metropolitan Opera, National Tours (Boq in *Wicked* and Lefou in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*), the Las Vegas Strip (Monty Python's *Spamalot* and *Mamma Mia!*) as well as regional theatres around the country. Currently he is on the Musical Theatre faculty of Columbia College Chicago where he also directs the yearly new student MT Showcase in the fall.

**ERICA STEPHAN** (*Betty Haynes*) is so happy to be back at TATC where she was last seen in 2016 as Billie Bendix, opposite Justin Brill, in *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Chicago credits include *Beauty and the Beast* (Belle), *South Pacific*, *Saturday Night Fever* (Stephanie Mangano), *Crazy for You* (Irene), and *White Christmas* (Judy Haynes) all at Drury Lane Theatre; *Madagascar* and *The Little Mermaid* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; *Wonderful Town*

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at the Goodman Theatre; *Les Miserables* (Cosette) and *Tommy* at the Paramount Theatre in Aurora. Regional credits include *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Living on Love* at Peninsula Players Theatre, *Mary Poppins* and *The Little Mermaid* with Variety Children's Theatre in St. Louis as well as many summers at Timber Lake Playhouse. She is a proud graduate of the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University, member of Actors Equity, and represented by Stewart Talent. This one is for my real life Betty, my sister Becca.

**CASIENA RAETHER** (*Judy Haynes*) is very excited to return to Theatre at the Center in a role she has always dreamed of playing. She was last seen on this same stage in *A Wonderful Life – The Musical* and sneaking sailors out of her room as Fraulein Kost in *Cabaret* in 2017. Her favorite roles at a variety of regional theaters include Cassie in *A Chorus Line*, The Woman in *Sherlock Holmes and the Precarious Position*, Jackie in *Mauritius*, Ruby in *Jeeves Takes a Bow*, Gwendolyn in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Belinda in *Noises Off*, and Kitty in *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Casiena holds a BFA in Acting from UW – Stevens Point. Love to Dane and enjoy the show!

**NEIL FRIEDMAN** (*General Henry Waverly*) is happy to be back at the Theatre at the Center, where he has appeared in the past two seasons of TATC's popular holiday productions, *Miracle on 34th Street – The Musical* (2018) and *A Wonderful Life – The Musical* (2017). Chicago credits: Goodman Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Court Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Steppenwolf, and Drury Lane Theatre Regional credits include: Peninsula Players, The People's Light Theatre; The Fulton Theatre; Utah Shakespeare Festival; Capitol Repertory; The New Victory Theatre; Flat Rock Playhouse; Coconut Grove Playhouse; The Clarence Brown Theatre; Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis; Austria's Vienna English Theatre. Neil is a proud recipient of Chicago's Joseph Jefferson Award.

**GLORY KISSEL** (*Martha Watson, Tessie*) is happy to be back at Theatre at the Center! Her last stage appearance here was as Emma in *Over the River and Through the Woods* 17 years ago! The summer production, directed by Michael Weber was so popular with Chicagoland audiences, it was remounted with the same cast the following Spring for a continued run! Also in Chicago, in addition to appearing all over the Midwest, some of her favorite Windy City credits include *Annie* and *Mary Poppins* (Paramount Theatre), *Oliver!* and *Musical Comedy Murders of 1940* (Drury Lane Theatre Oak Brook) and *My Fair Lady* at Marriott Theatre Lincolnshire. She has also performed at the Goodman, Mercury, Ravinia and other Chicago theaters. Representative works are *Cabaret*, *Gypsy*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Steel Magnolias* and many others. Most of all, she is happy to be "home!"

**RAEGAN SMEDLEY** (*Susan*) is thrilled to be returning to TATC this holiday season. Last year, she was cast as the understudy for Hendrika in *Miracle on 34th Street – The Musical*. Other memorable roles for Raegan include Amanda Thripp in *Matilda* at the Wagon Wheel Center for Performing Arts, Little Nancy and U/S Randy in *A Christmas Story*, Tootie Smith in *Meet Me In St. Louis* and Molly in *Annie*, all at the Memorial Opera House. When not onstage Raegan is a 7th grader at Ben Franklin Middle School in Valparaiso.

**DENZEL TSONPANG** (*Ralph Shelldrake, U/S Bob*) hails from Batavia, IL and holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from Millikin University. He is excited to be returning to Theater at the Center with this wonderful team and cast! Previously, he appeared in other memorable TATC holiday shows like *Annie Warbucks* (2016) and *A Wonderful Life – The Musical* (2017). Some of his other favorite credits include *Ghost – The Musical* (Peninsula Players), *South Pacific* (Drury Lane Theatre), *Five Guys Named Moe* (Court Theatre), *Ragtime* (Griffin Theatre), *The Scottsboro Boys* (Porchlight Music Theatre), *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), *Velveteen Rabbit* (Marriott Theatre), *Heathers: The Musical* (Kokandy Productions) and *Northanger Abbey* (Lifeline Theatre).

**ANN DELANEY** (*Rita, U/S Betty*) is always happy to be back on the TATC stage. She was last seen here for the 2017 holiday run of *A Wonderful Life – The Musical* as well as TATC favorite productions such as *Cabaret*, *Nice Work if you Can Get It*, *Spamalot* and *Big Fish*. Other Chicagoland credits include: Phoebe D'Ysquith in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Porchlight Music Theatre), Penny Pingleton in *Hairspray* (Skylight Music Theater), Hannah in *Newsies* (Paramount Theater), Mary Lou in *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (American Blues Theater), and Grace Hatfield in *Hatfields and McCoy's* (The House Theater). Ann is represented by Gray Talent. Thank you to Jeff and her family!

**ALLYSON GRAVES** (*Rhoda, Dance Captain*) is so excited to return to TATC after being seen in *42nd Street* way back in 2012! Other Chicago credits include: *The Bridges of Madison County* (Marriott Theatre); *Chicago, Saturday Night Fever, White Christmas, Billy Elliot, Hello Dolly!, Singin' in the Rain* (Drury Lane Oakbrook); *The Producers, The Wizard of Oz, Elf, The Little Mermaid, Mamma Mia, West Side Story, Hairspray, Oklahoma, Mary Poppins* (Paramount Theatre); *The Little Mermaid, Roadshow* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); and *The Pajama Game* (Music Theatre Company). Up Next: *An American In Paris* (Drury Lane). Happy Holidays to you! For my two gingers: Keith and Keswick.

**JOHN GURDIAN** (*Ezekiel Foster, Snoring Man, U/S General Waverly*) last spent his holiday weeks at TATC in 2015 understudying *A Christmas Story*. Most recently, he was in *Newsies* at Paramount Theatre and *Footloose* at Marriott Theatre Lincolnshire.

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# WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Other Chicago credits include: *Avenue Q* at Mercury Theater; *South Pacific* at Drury Lane Oakbrook; *Billy Elliot* (as Big Davey) at Porchlight Music Theatre as well as in *Guys and Dolls* at William St Rep and *Young Frankenstein* at Metropolis Performing Arts. Regional credits include productions at Little Theatre on the Square and Cardinal Stage. Thanks to this cast and crew, TATC, my family, John K, Jessica, and Mom. IG: @jgurdian

**ANDREW MACNAUGHTON** (*Mike, U/S Phil*) made his TATC debut this fall as Max in *The Pajama Game*. Chicago credits include: *Matilda The Musical* (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Sweeney Todd* (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre). International credits include: *Into the Woods* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival/ The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). Regional credits include: *Could I Have this Dance* (Geordie Brown Productions); *Grand Hotel, Damn Yankees, Chess, Canadian Musical Theatre Project* (Theatre Sheridan); *We are Canadian, Bremen Rock City* (The Charlottetown Festival); *Back In 59* (Haliburton Highlands Festival). He is a proud graduate of both The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (MA in Musical Theatre Performance) and Sheridan College (BA in Musical Theatre Performance). Represented by Shirley Hamilton Inc.

**MATTHEW HUSTON** (*Jimmy, U/S Ezekiel*) is thrilled to return to TATC for another holiday season! TATC credits: *Miracle on 34th Street*. Recent Chicago credits: *All That He Was* and *Yank!* (Jeff-nomination) with Pride Films and Plays, *Anything Goes* and *Gypsy* with Music Theater Works, and his self-produced cabaret *It's Been a Year*. Matt is a proud graduate of UW-Madison. Love and thanks to Linda, Bill, Richard, and everyone at TATC! Instagram: @mmhuston

**MAGGIE MALANEY** (*Mrs. Snoring Man, U/S Martha Watson*) was thrilled to make her TATC debut this fall in *The Pajama Game*. She was previously seen in Chicago in *A Chorus Line* (Porchlight Music Theatre). Other regional credits include *Guys and Dolls* (Fulton Theatre), *Grease* (Maine State Music Theatre), *White Christmas* (Fox Theatre, Detroit), and *A Little Night Music* (The Michigan Opera Theatre). Proud graduate of Penn State's musical theatre program. All the love to her family and friends!

**MATTHEW WEIDENBENER** (*Train Conductor, U/S Sheldrake*) is thrilled to make his TATC debut with this holiday classic! Recent credits include Mike Costa in Porchlight Music Theatre's *A Chorus Line* as well as *Grease* and *Man of La Mancha* with STAGES St. Louis and in the role of Barfée in *The 25th Annual Putman County Spelling Bee* at Indiana Summer Theatre. Aside from performing, Matthew has a strong passion for youth arts education and believes in the power of Theatre for Young Audiences. He is a proud graduate from Indiana

University. As always, love and gratitude to my entire family! Enjoy!

**VICTORIA NEUWHUIS** (*Ensemble, U/S Judy*) is thrilled to be making her TATC debut. For the past two years, she has appeared in the national tour of *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella* (Dance Captain, u/s Ella, swing). Outside of Chicago, she's been seen along the east coast in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Goodspeed Musicals); *42nd Street* and *Show Boat* (Reagle Music Theatre); *A Chorus Line* (Priscilla Beach Theatre), and *West Side Story* (Opera North). Love to her dear friends, family, and especially her hubby! Follow Victoria's adventures at [victorianewhuis.com](http://victorianewhuis.com) and on Instagram @toriaeliza.

**LANCE SPENCER** (*Ensemble*) is excited to be making his TATC debut. His credits include *Annie* (Fireside Theatre), *Mamma Mia!* (Drury Lane Oak Brook), *A Chorus Line* (Metropolis), *Chess* (Porchlight Music Theatre Revisits), *Barney the Elf* (Other Theatre) and *Naked Boys Singing* (Eclectic Theatre). He would like to thank his family and friends for always pushing him to be the best version of himself. Instagram: @lance.b.spenc

**MADISON PINER** (*U/S Rita, Rhoda, Female Ensemble*) is ecstatic to be making her Theatre at the Center debut! Madison is originally from Austin, TX, and is a proud alumna of Oklahoma City University, where she received a bachelor's degree in dance performance. Go Stars! Chicago credits include *Something Rotten, Footloose, Holiday Inn* and *Oklahoma!* all at Marriott Theatre and *Cabaret* at Paramount Theatre. Endless gratitude to the folks at TATC and to her core crew of friends, family and teachers for their guidance, love and support. Special shout out to Logan for being the best there is!

**MORRISON LUBAN** (*U/S Susan*) is thrilled to be working at Theatre at the Center. She loves to sing, dance, play the piano and trumpet. She also has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. She studies acting with Dennis LaValle and can be seen in TV advertising campaigns including a Method soap commercial with her sister, tap dancing for Luna and watching a space launch for Cox Communications. Morrison thanks her Big Mouth Talent team as well as her family for all their love and support.

**JOSHUA HEINLEIN** (*U/S Male Ensemble*) is glad to step on Theatre at the Center's stage for the first time. Most recently, he was seen as Judas in *Godspell* (Pont2Productions). Other notable roles include Tick in *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert* (JPAC) Horton in *Seussical* (Windy City Music Theater), Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet* (Blackbird Dance Theater), Hal in *Proof* (Independent), and as Phoebe De Martin in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Jedlicka Performing Arts Center). He thanks God and his beautiful wife, Berenice, for the life he has been able to have and the support they have given.