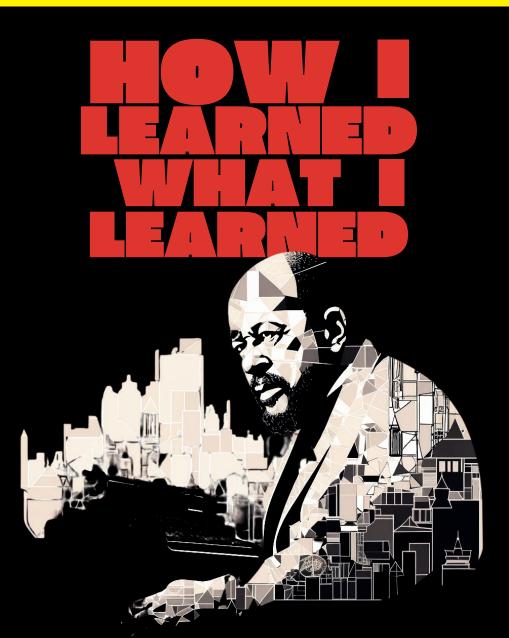
# PLAYBILL





### BROADWAY PLAYHOUSE

**BROADWAY IN CHICAGO** 

A Nederlander presentation

Lou Raizin, President Eileen LaCario, Vice President



**Chicago Premiere** 

### HOW I LEARNED WHAT I LEARNED

By August Wilson Directed by Ken-Matt Martin Featuring Harry Lennix

April 20 – May 5, 2024

### CAST

Harry Lennix <sup>^</sup>	August Wilson
Allen Gilmore^*	August Wilson Understudy

<sup>^</sup> Member of Actor's Equity Association (AEA), the union of professional actors and stage managers \* Member of the Congo Square Theatre Ensemble

### SPECIAL THANKS FROM CONGO SQUARE

n behalf of Congo Square Theatre Ensemble, Board and staff we would like to give special thanks to the Constanza Romero, Derrick Sanders, Dale Mott and Edgewood Entertainment, Charlique Rolle, Harry Lennix, Goodman Theatre, Timeline Theater, Lookingglass Theater, WTTW, The Silverman Group, Women Unite!, Steppenwolf Theater, Broadway in Chicago, League of Chicago Theaters, DCASE, Gwen Perry Davis and MCA, August Wilson New Voices, The Reva & David Logan Foundation, The Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Chicago's Cultural Treasures Fund, The Walder Foundation, Driehaus, Crown Family Philanthropies, Polk Bros. Foundation, The Field Foundation, The Robert + Toni Bader Foundation, The Illinois Arts Council Agency, The American Rescue Plan, Kate Lipuma, Anita Gill, Afable Consulting and all funders, partners and community organizations for supporting the production of *HOW I LEARNED WHAT I LEARNED*. We appreciate you.

Ericka Ratcliff
Artistic Director



Scan to view Digital Program.



PLEASE NOTE: The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without a flash, during a performance is strictly prohibited.



HARRY LENNIX (August Wilson) is a distinguished film, television stage actor and producer. For the past 9 seasons, he has starred as Harold Cooper, on NBC's "The Blacklist." Moviegoers know Lennix as General

Calvin Swanwick (a.ka. Martian Manhunter) from The Justice League, Man of Steel and Batman V. Superman: Dawn of Justice, Commander Lock in The Matrix: Reloaded and The Matrix: Revolutions, and Joe Adams in the Oscar winning Ray. He made his screen debut as Dresser in the fan favorite movie. The Five Heartbeats. Lennix also recurs on the Showtime series "Billions." Lennix made his Broadway debut in Pulitzer Prize winning playwright August Wilson's Tony nominated Radio Golf. For the stage, he directed LeKethia Dalcoe's drama A Small Oak Tree Runs Red, which went on to win the Audelco Award for best production in 2018, as well as Robert Townsend's The Five Heartbeats, which received three NAACP Theater Award nominations. Other directing credits include The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams for Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater Company. As an actor for the stage he starred in August Wilson's King Hedley II at the Mark Taper Forum. In 2001 he played Iachimo in Cymbeline for Theatre for a New Audience at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the first American company invited to perform in Stratford Upon Avon. In July 2014, Lennix created Exponent Media Group, a movie production company he founded with longtime Chicago associate Steve Harris. He is married to Djena Graves Lennix, a businesswoman.



ALLEN GILMORE (August Wilson Understudy) played Papa Shakespeare in The African Company Presents Richard III and Bynum in Joe Turner's Come and Gone, both with Congo Square. He's been a proud ensemble

member of Congo Square Theater Company since 2010. A veteran of the classical stage, he has played great roles across North America, on Broadway, and across Europe including Othello and Iago in *Othello*, Cyrano in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Sherlock Holmes in *Baskerville*, Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, The Player in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. Hamm in Endgame, Jaques in As You Like It, Brutus in Julius Caesar, Aaron the Moor in Titus Andronicus, and Malvolio in Twelftyh Night, among many others. He has originated leading roles in The African Company Ppresents Richard III (as James Hewlett), *Objects in the Mirror* (as John Workolo). *Man* in the Ring (as Emile Griffith), Argonautika (as King Pelias), Tales of Washington Irving (as Ichabod Crane), and *Malvolio* (as Malvolio). Allen is a 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow, a 2015 3Arts Prize recipient, a 2019 Nicholas Ruddall Prize recipient in addition to numerous awards and award nominations. He has taught, lectured, and directed at universities across the country including UC San Diego, the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, Ohio University, and Wright College in Chicago. A veteran of the US Army Infantry, Allen is originally from Houston, Texas.



**KEN-MATT MARTIN** (*Director*) has established himself as a preeminent theater director, cultural worker, and collaborator who has worked with some of industry's most formidable artists. He began his life in the

performing arts as a child actor after booking an appearance on Nickelodeon's landmark series "All That." As an actor, Martin has appeared in dozens of regional productions across the country. Notable directing credits include productions of August Wilson's Fences and The Piano Lesson (Pyramid Theatre Company), Jonathan Larson's Tick, Tick ... Boom! (Brown/Trinity Rep), A Son, Come Home, and Brotherhood (Williamstown Theatre Festival), Tiny Beautiful Things (Baltimore Center Stage), Hello, Dolly! (Arkansas Repertory Theatre), and the forthcoming musical Long Way Down, which will play engagements at Olney Theatre Center and New York's Apollo Theatre. In addition, Ken-Matt created the 20/50 New Play Festival, the Ignite Chicago Festival, Goodman Theatre's Live @ FiveShow, and was the co-founder of the Pyramid Theatre Company. A highly sought after thought leader, he has served key positions at Baltimore Center Stage, Victory Gardens Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. M.F.A., Brown University/ Trinity Repertory Company. Instagram: @kennmattm



AUGUST WILSON (*Playwright*). Born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August Wilson (1945-2005) authored the American Century Cycle of 10 plays, including *Gem of the Ocean*,

Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, Fences, Two Trains Running, Jitney, King Hedley II, and Radio Golf. These works explore the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade by decade, over the course of the 20th century. Goodman Theatre was the first in the country to have produced every play in Wilson's cycle. In 2003, Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show How I Learned What I Learned. Wilson's work garnered many awards, including Pulitzer Prizes for Fences (1987) and The Piano Lesson (1990); a Tony Award for Fences: Great Britain's Olivier Award for Jitney; as well as seven New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Fences, Joe Turner's Come and Gone. The Piano Lesson, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, and Jitney. Additionally, the cast recording of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* received a 1985 Grammy Award and Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of The Pliano Lesson. On October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 West 52nd Street the August Wilson Theatre.



SYDNEY LYNNE THOMAS (Scenic Designer) is a Chicagobased scenic designer and civic artist, specializing in the craft of world-building experiences. Sharing her work cross-country, she has created stage sets, immersive experiences, full

scale installations, and digital spaces. Her recently recognized productions include *Twelfth Night* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* (Baltimore Center Stage), and *Tambo & Bones* (Refracted Theater Co.) She has won a 2020 3Arts Award in Theatre and 2022 BTAA Award for Best Scenic Design. She is a graduate of Northwestern University, studying theatrical design/production.~To those who got me here, thank you.~SL



WILLOW JAMES (Sound Designer) is a Chicago-based artist, educator, arts leader and DJ who centers his work around exploring Black identity, new works, and activism. He currently serves as the Civic

Engagement Director at Definition Theatre (where is also an ensemble member). He is also a Court Theatre teaching artist, Resident Sound Designer at Artemisia Theatre, and represented by Dream Team Talent Agency. Congo Square: Welcome to Matteson, How Blood Go, "The Clinic" (Seasons 1 & 2). Chicago: The Penelopiad (Goodman Theatre); Antigone (Court Theatre); Twelfth Night (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), Chlorine Sky (Steppenwolf Theatre), The Band's Visit Alaiyo (Writer's Theatre). (Definition Theatre), Regional: TheatreSquared, American Players Theatre, NAATC, Alleyway Theatre, and Phoenix Theatre Indianapolis. worksbywillow.com



**JASON LYNCH** (*Lighting Designer*) is a Chicago-based lighting designer for live performance and makes his Congo Square Theatre Company debut with this production. Additional Chicago credits include work

with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, Definition Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Shattered Globe Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, TimeLine Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, among others. Regional credits include Alley Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, City Theatre Company, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center Theatre Company, George Street Playhouse, Geva Theatre Center, Goodspeed Musicals, Huntington Theatre Company, Indiana Huntington Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Old Globe, and Trinity Repertory Company. Jason was also the recipient of the 2022 Equity Jeff Award for his work on Choir Boy at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and the 2019 Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award, which recognizes emerging theatrical designers within the Chicago area. He is represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE and The Gersh Agency. www.jasondlynch.com, @jasonlynch. design on Instagram



**RASEAN DAVONTÉ** JOHNSON (*Projections Designer*) is excited to be working with Congo Square Theatre. A Chicago-based video artist and theatrical designer, Rasean has worked

locally with institutions such as Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre. Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Company, Chicago Opera Theatre, Writers Theatre, Court Theatre, Timeline Theatre, Teatro Vista, and Manual Cinema. Regional credits include projects with The Public Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, ArtsEmerson, Dallas Theatre Center, Long Wharf Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, McCarter Theatre Center, Olney Theatre Center, Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Studio Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, Berkshire Theatre Group, Alliance Theatre, and internationally with the The Edinburgh Fringe Festival (Scotland), Ningbo Song and Dance Theatre (China), and B-Floor Theatre (Thailand). He is the Director of Design for TAPS at the University of Chicago. MFA: Yale School of Drama. raseandavontejohnson.com

**ANDRES FIZ** (Associate Projections Designer) is excited to be working with Congo Square Theatre Company for the first time. Their projection design credits include Wipeout (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble), *The Mole Hill Stories*, and *Las Wavys* (DePaul University). Their associate projection design credits include *Notes From the Field* (Time Line Theatre), *The Life and Deaths of Alan Turing* (Chicago Opera Theater), *Cinderella* (Drury Lane Theatre), *King Charles III* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), and *The Wizard of Oz* (Music Theatre Wichita, content animator). Andres is pursuing a BFA in Projection Design from The Theatre School at DePaul University, and will be graduating this Spring.



**REUBEN ECHOLES** (*Costume Designer*) is an accomplished playwright, director, choreographer, illustrator, costume and wig designer. He has had the pleasure of working with many theater companies

across the country and in the Chicagoland area such as ETA, Black Ensemble, Mmpact, Congo Square, Refuge, Porchlight Music Theater, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Skylight Milwaukee, Writers Theater, Theo Ubique, Invictus, The

Goodman Theater, Phoenix Theater Company and Studio One Dance Theater, just to name a few. His most recent projects include wig Design for *Dreamgirls* at Paramount Aurora and North Carolina Theatre Company as well as Costume Design for *You Can't Fake the Funk* which was featured at The National Black Theater Festival and earned Rueben a Joseph Jefferson award for best costume design in a Large Theater. Rueben has also designed costumes for 4 Episodes for WTTW's Chicago Stories docu-series, two of which ("Ida B. Wells" and "The History of Gospel") have won Emmys for best production. Rueben would like to Thank Christ his Savior for Everything!



LONNAE (LUH-NAE) HICKMAN (Props Designer) returns to Congo Square, where she previously designed for How Blood Go. She's a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University with a double major in Theatre

and History. She's honored to also have received a 2022 Non-Equity Jeff Award in Puppet Design for her work on Refuge with Theo Ubique.



NYGEL D. ROBINSON (*Music Consultant*) is a singer, actor, writer, and multiinstrumentalist based in Chicago, IL. Select musician theatre credits include Larry in the workshop and Lincoln center concert version of

*Beau: The Musical*, Jesus in *Godspell* (St. Michael's Playhouse), and Actor/Musician in *The All Night Strut* (Milwaukee Rep). Nygel is also the co writer of the new musical concept album *Mexodus* along side Brian Quijada.



**ROXANNA CONNER** (Assistant Director/Dramaturg) is thrilled to return to Congo Square where she served as Education Director for four years, developing the CORE and CAST in-school and afterschool residency programs.

Her credits on Congo Square productions include Assistant Director for *The Nativity Tribute* and Co-Costume Designer for *Jitney*. Chicago credits include producer of *Cullud* Wattah, In Every Generation, Queen of the Night, Ignite Chicago, Voices of Tomorrow, and the Regional Emmy nominated Where Did We Sit on the Bus? at Victory Gardens. Regional credits include work with Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Mixed Blood Theatre, CLIMB Theatre, Crossroads Theatre, and New Freedom Theatre. Roxanna is the Director of the School of Theatre and Dance at Northern Illinois University.



ARIEL BELLER (Production Manager) is a Definition Ensemble Member. Chicago Credits include Alaiyo (Definition Theatre), Marie Antionette and the Magical Negros (The Story Theatre), White (Definition Theatre)

*Ethiopianamerica* (Definition Theatre). Other Credits: *Movement Live!* — NYU Abu Dhabi Tour (Summer 2022) and Lincoln Center Tour (2023). Incredibly thankful to my family for their support and Congo Square Theatre for the opportunity to create amazing art with them!



JULIE JACHYM (Production Stage Manager) is a Stage Manager and Production Manager based in Chicago. Julie is thrilled to be working with Congo Square. Julie has previously worked with Steppenwolf Theatre, Teatro

Vista, Definition Theatre, Writers Theatre, Filament Theatre, Steep Theatre, American Blues Theater, The Goodman Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, and Sideshow Theater Company. They received their BA in Theatre at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In her spare time, Julie likes taking care of her plants, reading books, and hanging out with her cat, Marinara.



ANDY CAHOON (*Technical Director*) is exceptionally excited to make his Congo Square debut with this production of Welcome to Matteson. He recently moved to Chicago in July of 2022

from Phoenix, Arizona, bringing ten years of professional work as a Technical Director,

Prop Designer, Master Carpenter, Electrician, and Actor. Technical Credits include: Steppenwolf, Steep Theater, Shattered Globe Theater, Red Theater, and The Plagiarists (Chicago). The Phoenix Theater Company, Stray Cat Theater, Southwest Shakespeare Company, Blk Box Phx, Flagstaff Shakespeare Festival, and The Herberger Theater Center (Phoenix). He would like to thank the Dads and his wife Mary for their ongoing love and support. La vita è bella.



**KIERAN O'CONNER** (*Lead Electrician*) is super excited to be returning to Congo Square where he previously served as Lead Electrician on Welcome To Matteson. He graduated from Illinois Wesleyan

University in May of 2021 with a BFA in Acting. Whether its carpentry, electrics, or acting, Kieran always likes finding a new and exciting way to be a part of the theatre world.

He is excited to share this wonderful production with the theatre community.



**ERICKA RATCLIFF** (Artistic Director) works to amplify the mission of Congo Square by celebrating the complexities of Black life and culture on stage. She is a member of The Chicago Women In Philanthropy,

Women's Leadership Mentoring Program (WLMP), the 2023 Points of Light Conference Host Committee, and artEquity's BIPOC Leadership Circle. Ericka is a nominee for Broadway World Chicago's 2022 Regional Awards for "Best Direction of a Play" for her work on *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* and was recently featured in NewCity Magazine for her accomplished work in theater. She is an artistic associate with Lookingglass Theater and was a recipient of the Chicago 3Arts *Make A Wave Award* in 2017. She hopes to collaborate with you soon!

### **ABOUT CONGO SQUARE THEATRE**



Congo Square Theatre Company is a Chicago-based ensemble dedicated to producing transformative work rooted in the African diaspora. We are a haven for artists of color seeking to challenge and redefine the theatrical canon by creating stories that reflect the complexities of Black cultures.

Congo Square is one of Chicago's leading Black theater companies and one of two Equity theaters in Chicago dedicated to Black work. We are set apart by the audiences we represent and serve; our work promotes equity and inclusion by providing a distinctive perspective of the African American experience. Our work is critical in the effort to address the lack of diversity of Black and other BIPOC artistic professionals.

Congo Square is committed to the development and support of artists of color, which is reflected in our selected works, our production teams, our organizational leadership, and our Board of Directors. With a predominately Black staff and Ensemble, our company and our work authentically reflects the communities in the stories we tell: we are deeply committed to ensuring that Black stories are clearly and unapologetically heard through authentic Black lenses, that Black art continues to be created with excellence and deeply embedded into the cultural landscape, and that Black communities are given space to heal and find freedom and unity through our work.

Through our work, we strive to disrupt systems of racism that permeate communities by providing a space where Black art and artists are celebrated and showcased. Congo Square is a home for Black artists to grow their career, perform, direct, design, and create. Our work promotes equity and inclusion by providing a distinctive perspective of the African American experience across the Chicago theater landscape.

#### **Organizational History**

In 1999, five graduate students set out to electrify the Chicago arts community with new voices representing the richness and force of the Black Diaspora. We continue with championing the cause of Black voices, artists, and works through the production of definitive and transformative works. To date, Congo Square Theatre remains a premier professional Chicago-based Equity theater created by, for, and with Black Artists and our organization has been recognized for its award-winning productions. Our award-winning productions have been covered in media outlets including Chicago Reader, Chicago Sun-Times, Crains Chicago Business, Newcity, WBEZ, PBS, and more. We are

committed to developing artists of color and amplifying their voices through theater; our community engagement and education work is an important part of this commitment.

As we navigate the future of theater and envision the next 25 years of our work, we are firmly committed to creating an organization that is financially sustainable in its ability to produce works that facilitate healing and enlightenment for the community, to develop and hire strong Black administrators and staff, and intentionally invest in the next generation of Black artists through the rich history and experience of the Congo Square Theatre and its Ensemble.

We continue to play an active role in the development of Black artists through our programming, which includes in-school and afterschool residencies within Chicago Public Schools for students with limited exposure to the arts and monthly workshops for college students and professionals through our Industry Training Institute (CITI).

We also regularly commission new plays and mentor playwrights through our August Wilson New Play Initiative. Since establishing this program, we have helped to produce works such as Stick Fly by Lydia Diamond that was performed on Broadway and is currently being developed for HBO and Brothers of the Dust by Darren Canady–which won The American Theatre Critics Association's Elizabeth Osborn New Play Award in 2012. Additional projects include Deep Azure by Chadwick Boseman, Twisted Melodies by Ensemble Member Kelvin Roston, and A Small Oak Tree Runs Red by Lekethia Dalcoe (directed by Harry J. Lennix).



#### **Celebration of Healing**

Our Celebration of Healing initiative collaborates with our annual productions to provide audiences with a curated space geared toward individual and community healing. We seek to offer the community practical tools for their healing journey while destigmatizing the impacts of trauma on our mental, physical, and emotional well-being as we move towards a more holistic society. Each Celebration of Healing focuses on various strategic priorities identified by the City of Chicago and how the arts is an integral part of activating and facilitating key conversations. This year,

our Celebration of Healing will uplift Black Chicago artists in a curated gallery space in the lobby of Broadway Playhouse. Each featured work centers The Life and Legacy of August Wilson. All artwork on display in the lobby will be for sale throughout the run of the show.

#### **Community Engagement and Education**

Cultivating Creativity, Fostering Growth: Transformative Theater Education

Congo Square's Community Engagement and Education is dedicated to bringing high-quality arts education to the vibrant city of Chicago and our global community. Our unwavering commitment to uplifting, listening to, and advocating for the next generation of Black and Brown voices is at our core. With a passion for creativity, collaboration, and inclusivity, we strive to empower students with the tools they need to succeed in and out of the classroom through our education partnerships, community partnerships, Congo Industry Training Institute (CITI) Courses, Internships, and more!

### CONGO SQUARE'S HOMECOMING BENEFIT

Mark your calendars for a night where art, culture, and community converge at our annual Homecoming Benefit on June 21, 2024. Together, we will celebrate Congo Square Theatre's 25th Anniversary season and the power of Black storytelling.

#### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Community Connections**

Enjoy the company of esteemed guests, including influential artists, community leaders, and passionate supporters of Congo Square who share a commitment to the vibrancy of our community.

#### **Celebrate Honorees**

During our awards portion of the evening, we recognize and honor individuals that have demonstrated exceptional commitment and excellence in promoting and preserving Black theater. Join us in celebrating their contributions to the growth and recognition of Black arts and culture.

#### The 2024 Honorees are:

Artistic Excellence Award: Ernest Perry Lifetime Legacy Award: Amina J. Dickerson Emerging Artist Award: Sydney Lynne Thomas Community Champion Award: Public Narrative

#### Auction & Raffle

Participate in an exclusive auction and raffle, where you can win unique items and experiences while contributing to the growth of Congo Square Theatre. Your support directly impacts our mission to amplify Black voices in the arts.

For more information visit: congosquaretheatre.org/homecoming-2024

We look forward to celebrating with you on June 21, 2024!



Scan to donate to Congo Square Theatre, and join our list of supporters!

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### HOW I LEARNED WHAT I LEARNED PRODUCTION TEAM

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Villow James Jason Lynch	Lighting Designer
Rasean Davonté Johnson	
Andres Fiz	
Reuben Echoles	Costumes Designer
Lonnae Hickman	Props Designer
Nygel Robinson	Music Consultant
Roxanna Conner	
Ariel Beller	Production Manager
Julie Jachym^	
Andy Cahoon	Technical Director
Kieran O'Conner	Lead Electrician

^ Member of Actor's Equity Association (AEA), the union of professional actors and stage managers

\* Member of the Congo Square Theatre Ensemble



Backstage Employees are represented by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (or I.A.T.S.E.).

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**NO SMOKING** Smoking of any kind, including the use of E-cigarettes, is not permitted in any area of the theatre. Patrons who wish to smoke may do so outside the building. By Chicago Ordinance smoking is prohibited within 15 ft. of any entrance, including that of any neighboring establishment.

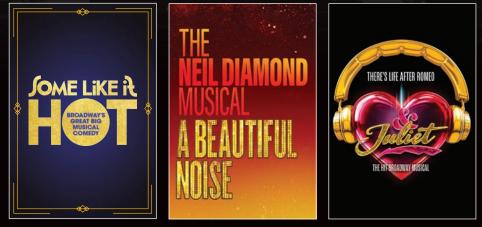
LOST AND FOUND Call (312) 977-1700. We regret we are not responsible for lost or stolen items. Please be prompt in inquiring about your lost and found items as they are only held for 30 days from the date found.

**REFRESHMENTS** No outside food or beverage is allowed in the venue.



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