
WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY

MARIA MANUELA GOYANES Artistic Director, **TED DELONG** Interim Managing Director
in Association with **FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY**

And

THE PUBLIC THEATER

OSKAR EUSTIS Artistic Director, **PATRICK WILLINGHAM** Executive Director

Present

WHERE WE BELONG

By **MADLINE SAYET**
Directed by **MEI ANN TEO**

Featuring **MADLINE SAYET**
With Standby **EMILY PREIS**

Production Design **HAO BAI**
Costume Design **ASA BENALLY**
Composer and Sound Design **ERIK SCHILKE**
Dramaturg **VERA STARBARD**
Casting **JUDY BOWMAN, CSA**
Production Stage Manager **GRACE CHARIYA**
Executive Producers **BROADWAY & BEYOND THEATRICALS**
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Company Manager for The Public **HEATHER FICHTHORN**
Tour Technical Director/Lighting Supervisor **MEGAN J COFFEL**
Tour Production Manager **COLIN K. BILLS**
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and Artistic Planning
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Managing Director
JEREMY ADAMS

Directors of Casting
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JORDAN THALER

Production Executive
RUTH E. STERNBERG

The tour of **WHERE WE BELONG** received a developmental production at **BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE**
(Stephanie Ybarra, Artistic Director) in October 2021.

Lead support for The Public provided by **THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION** and **FORD FOUNDATION**.
THE LUESTHER T. MERTZ LEGACY TRUST provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

**WOOLLY MAMMOTH
PUBLIC + THEATRE**



Madeline Sayet



Emily Preis

Performer MADELINE SAYET

Standby Performer EMILY PREIS

WHERE WE BELONG WILL BE PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION.



The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, is strictly prohibited. Please turn off all electronic devices such as cellular phones, beepers and watches. The use of cell phones in the theatre is prohibited by New York City law.

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A NOTE



FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

New York City is and has been a hotbed of Native Theater since Spiderwoman Theater and the Native American Theatre Ensemble (NATE) revolutionized the downtown theater scene in the 1970s. You just need to know where to look.

Here in Manahatta, on Lenape land, just off the Broad Way (a Lenape Trading Trail), while redface and erasure have stained the mainstream Off-Broadway and Broadway stages, there has always been and always will be a resistance of Native artists here—speaking powerful truths onstage.

So, I am not standing up here alone tonight. In addition to every ancestor called into this play (Gladys Tantaquidgeon, Mahomet Weyonomon, Samson Occom, Jeets Bodernashor), I am standing on the shoulders of the generations of Native Theater artists who have broken down barriers and pushed for this moment, artists like my late mentor, William S. Yellow Robe Jr., who have fought much harder than me for our representation. I'm standing here because of every Native Theater and Native Theater Artist I've had the honor of working with over the course of my career. If, after tonight, you want more Native Theater, you can find it at Spiderwoman Theater, Safe Harbors Indigenous Collective, The Eagle Project, Leaf Arrow Theater, Amerinda Inc., First Nations Theater Guild, and more.

In Mohegan culture, we have a symbol, the Trail of Life, that depicts the ups and downs of life, and the people you meet along the way. This symbol is embedded in much of the design of *WHERE WE BELONG* because I embrace this trail as a journey, each night, as I learn different things about myself, my ancestors, and the world around me. My hope is rather than try and remember everything, you will dig into the questions that come up for me, and how they may relate to your own lives. This was never meant to be a play. I wrote it to figure out the lines drawn between people and to piece myself back together. This journey continues and keeps evolving, as the world continues to move—like the river, the sky, the earth—holding stories that came before and those of this moment, which is ever changing.

This is only one Mohegan story, only my story, and only a part of my story: a small and finite thing in the spectrum of our world. Today we are on Lenape land, and the Lenape have their own struggles, history, language, and creativity that I hope you leave wanting to learn more about.

Kutápatôtamawush to the incredible team of artists, producers, crew, staff, and family who have made sharing this story with you possible—something I could never have imagined as a kid. And for every Indigenous person in the audience, know that your story is powerful and has as much right or more to be told on this stage.

MADLINE SAYET
PLAYWRIGHT

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WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

MADLINE SAYET she/her (*Playwright, Performer*) is a Mohegan theatre maker who believes the stories we pass down inform our collective possible futures. She was a *Forbes* 30 Under 30 in Hollywood & Entertainment, TED Fellow, NCAIED Native American 40 Under 40 and a recipient of The White House Champion of Change Award from President Obama. As a writer, plays include *Where We Belong*, *Up and Down the River*, *Antigone* or *And Still She Must Rise Up*, *Daughters of Leda*, *The Neverland*, *The Fish* (in development). As performer, recently: Young Super Indian in Arigon Starr's *The Adventures of Super Indian* (Native Voices at the Autry), Christmas Future in *Tlingit Christmas Carol* (Perseverance Theatre). Recent directing: *Tlingit Christmas Carol*, *Whale Song* (Perseverance Theatre); *The Neverland*, *Poppea* (Krannert Center); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (South Dakota Shakespeare); *Henry IV* (CT Repertory Theatre); *As You Like It* (Delaware Shakespeare); *The Winter's Tale* (Amerinda/HERE); *The Magic Flute* (Glimmerglass). She is an assistant professor at ASU with the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance studies (ACMRS). *Where We Belong* is published by Bloomsbury. madelinesayet.com

EMILY PREIS she/her (*Standby Performer*) is a proud citizen of the Osage Nation and a New York City-based maker, performer and organizer. Since receiving her BFA from NYU Tisch's Experimental Theatre Wing, she has collaborated with her advisor, Mauricio Salgado, to turn her thesis, *Performance as an Act for Tribal Sovereignty*, into a theatre studies course at NYU. She was one of the finalists for Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program's inaugural Misty Upham Award for Young Native Actors. Credits include

Lovely Dark & Deep (Broadway Podcast Network), *Fairly Traceable* (American Bar Association), *Tree Tales* (Prospect Theater), *Your Good Friend Jay Silverheels* (YIPAP), *Bingo Hall* (AICH), *When Farah Cries* (Borderlight International Theater Festival).

MEI ANN TEO they/she (*Director*) is a queer immigrant from Singapore making theatre and film as a director/devisor/dramaturg. Teo's work has been in international festivals including Belgium's Festival de Liege, Edinburgh International Fringe, Beijing International Festival and Singapore Theatre Festival. They helmed *Dim Sum Warriors the Musical* for national China 25 city tour. They have directed and/or developed new work at OSF, Theatreworks Hartford, Playwrights Realm, Goodman Theatre, The Public, Berkeley Rep, Crowded Fire, History Theatre, Page 73, Musical Theatre Factory and the National Black Theatre. Recent work includes Jillian Walker's *SkINFoLK: An American Show* (Bushwick Starr); Madeline Sayet's *Where We Belong* (Shakespeare's Globe, Woolly Mammoth, BCS, PTC); Amy Berryman's *Walden* (Theatreworks Hartford); and Stefano Massini's *7 Minutes at Waterwell*. Awards: League of Professional Theatre Women's Josephine Abady Award, inaugural recipient of the Lily Fan Director Lilly Award. Teo is the associate artistic director and director of New Work at Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

HAO BAI she/her (*Production Design*) is a multidisciplinary designer in lighting, sound, video projection and world-building. Bai's work has been seen at Asia Culture Center, WuZhen Festival, Woolly Mammoth, TheaterWorks Hartford, Harvard, Stanford, Jone Hall, The Public, NYU Skirball/

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WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Tisch, Bushwick Starr, La MaMa, JACK, The Flea, HERE, New Stage Theatre, 59E59 and A.R.T./New York Theatres, etc. Recent: *Final Boarding Call*, *Nocturne in 1200s*, *Waterboy and the Mighty World*, *Electronic City*, *Walden*, *7 Minutes at Waterwell*, *Ardan*, and *the grass grows*, *Lazarus*. Haobaidesign.com

ASA BENALLY he/him (*Costume Design*). Citizen of the Navajo and Cherokee Nations. *The Rez*, *Sisters, 1939* (Stratford Festival); *Whale Song*, *Devilfish* (Perseverance Theater); *Seven Minutes* (Waterwell); *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (Gingold Group); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Keen Company); *Somewhere Over the Border* (Syracuse Stage); *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* (George Street Playhouse); *Skeleton Crew* (Westport Country Playhouse); *Father Comes Home...* (Juilliard); *Measure for Measure* (The Public); *The Winter's Tale* (HERE/Amerinda); *Cymbeline* (Yale Rep). MFA Yale School of Drama. BFA Parsons School of Design. Asabenally.com. Instagram: @Asa_Benally_Design

ERIK SCHILKE he/him (*Composer and Sound Design*) is an ambient electronic artist and music producer. His work draws from the narrative patterns in the natural world around us to both engage with the soundscape of our existence and escape from it at the same time. His debut album, *Synthesis*, was recently released on the German label Hymen Records. He has previously scored film projects for acclaimed directors including Fernando Lazzari and Madeline Sayet. Erikschilke.com. Instagram: @erikschilkemusic

MEGAN J COFFEL they/them (*Tour Technical Director/Lighting Supervisor*) is a graduate of the University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign: MFA in lighting design and technology. There, they were a head electrician (*The Marriage of Figaro*, *Cabaret*, *Crazy for You*), lighting designer (*Fun Home*, *Hit the Wall*, *Adventures of Little Sharpshoes*) and explored classes in scenic technology. They have worked previously at Utah Festival Opera and Theatre Company, the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center and Strayer-Wood Theatre.

GRACE CHARIYA she/her (*Production Stage Manager*) has been with *Where We Belong* since 2021. Most recently for New York Stage and Film's summer 2022 season and in the executive office at Baltimore Stage. Highlights: *Fires in the Mirror*, *A Play for the Living...*, *The Garden*, *The Glorious World...* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Sanctuary City*, *Annie Salem: An American Tale*, *Goddess*, *The Notebook* (NYS&F); *us/we* (Krannert Center for the Performing Arts). BFA, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

THE PUBLIC THEATER continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theatres, The Public has long operated on the principles that theatre is an essential cultural force and that leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Forum, Under

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WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

the Radar, Public Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *Hair* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American theatre and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 184 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 58 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antony Awards and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. Publictheater.org

BROADWAY & BEYOND THEATRICALS is a theatrical producer and booking agency led by founders Victoria Lang, Ryan Bogner and Tracey McFarland. Broadway: *The Kite Runner*, *Paradise Square*. Upcoming: *The Cottage*, *Judgment Day*. Tours as agent: *The Kite Runner*, *Paradise Square*, *The Cher Show*, *Legally Blonde*, *Million Dollar Quartet Christmas*, *Madagascar*, *An American in Paris* and more. Bbtheatricals.com

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY is the world's largest Shakespeare collection, the ultimate resource for exploring Shakespeare and his world. The Folger welcomes millions of visitors online and in person. It provides unparalleled access to a huge array of resources, from original sources to modern interpretations. With the Folger, you can experience the power of performance, the wonder of exhibitions and the excitement of path-breaking research. The Folger offers the opportunity to see and even work with early modern sources, driving discovery and transforming education for students of all ages. The award-winning Folger Theatre in our nation's capital bridges the arts and humanities through transformational performances and programming that speak inclusively to the human experience. Now under the leadership of Artistic Director Karen Ann Daniels, Folger Theatre continues its legacy through exciting interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare and expands the classical canon through cultivating today's artists and commissioning new work that is in dialogue with the concerns and issues of our time. Folger Theatre thrives both on its historical stage and in the community, engaging audiences wherever they happen to be. During a multiyear

building renovation, join the Folger online and on the road. Learn more at folger.edu.

WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY creates badass theatre that highlights the stunning, challenging and tremendous complexity of our world. For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while daring to take risks, innovate and push beyond perceived boundaries. Located in Washington, D.C., and co-led by Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes and Interim Managing Director Ted DeLong, Woolly serves an essential research and development role within the American theatre. Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theatres worldwide and have had lasting impacts on the field. These include the world premiere productions of Danai Gurira's *Eclipsed* in 2009 that went on to be the first Broadway play with a cast and creative team of all Black women; Bruce Norris' Pulitzer-Prize Winner *Clybourne Park* in 2010; and Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns: a post-electric play* in 2012. Woolly Mammoth acknowledges that the theatre stands upon occupied, unceded territory: the ancestral homeland of the Nacotchtank whose descendants belong to the Piscataway peoples. Furthermore, the foundation and most of the original buildings in Washington, D.C., were funded by the sale of enslaved people of African descent and built by their hands.

Information in "Who's Who in the Cast" is provided by the production. Where opinions are expressed, they are those of the players, not necessarily those of PLAYBILL Magazine.

STAFF FOR WHERE WE BELONG

Assistant Director	Daniel Leeman Smith
Dialect Coach	Liz Hayes
Movement Consultant	Jen Olivares
LuEsther Sound System Design.....	Charles Coes
Assistant LuEsther Sound System Design....	Noah Phillips
Makeup Consultant	Dawn Newsome
Associate Company Manager.....	Andreas Huang
Assistant Production Manager.....	Autumn J. Mitchell
Production Audio.....	Christopher J. Schultz
Sub Production Audio	Melissa Valencia
A1.....	Kwamina Biney
Sub A1	Taylor Riordan
A2.....	Emilia Wojciechowski
Sub A2	Angela Baughman
Audio Crew	Alejandro Suquisupa,
Joseph Codella, Kaitlyn Trusty, Andrew Hienz,	Camille Denholm, Ken Goodwin
Wardrobe Supervisor	Amy R Brown

Wardrobe Sub Jules DeSchryver
 Head Electrician..... Shawn Salick
 Prep Head Electrician Jennie Rodriguez
 Assistant Head Electrician Shane Crowley
 Light Board Programmer Warren Cherry
 Light Board Operator Archer Swietek
 Electricians..... Adam Gabel, Adina Valerio, Darcy Burke,
 Liz Schweitzer, Erin Bulman, Jason Kelly,
 Jennifer Davison, Jesus Santiago, Jimmy Dewhurst,
 Joe Scardino, Joey Messana, Lauren Smith,
 Lem Goldstein, Liv Grasso, Martin Bolger, Natalie Shipley,
 Parker Damm, Remy LeeIike, Rhylike Capito
 Prop Runner..... Callie Harris
 Sub Prop/Carp Runner Benjamin Parrish
 Prop Artisan..... Mary Flynn
 Scenery Special ProjectsMeb Griffin
 Lead Carpenter..... Justin Tristan
 Scenery Construction & Load-In Crew..... Brandon Brumm,
 Courtney Kupferschmidt, Josh Coates, Krystalee Diaz,
 Rory Schall, Emily Lin, Howard Moncada,
 Nick Fleming, Amanda Grad
 Deck Carpenter..... Howard Moncada
 Assistant Logistics Technicians Samantha Pierce,
 Michael Houston

CREDITS

Sound equipment provided by Masque Sound.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Gin Hammond, JB Burkland,
 Michael Walling, Global Voices Theatre, Daniella
 Topol, Madeleine Hutchins, Kenny Ramos, Erin Tripp,
 Tara Moses, Delanna Studi, Unity of Nations, Melissa
 Tantaquidgeon Zobel, Laley Lippard, Jeff Liu, Megan
 McGeary, Alithea Phillips.

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 Daniel Sullivan, Shaina Taub
 Director of Voice Andrew Wade
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Casting Assistant Elizabeth Hay

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Arysbells Figueredo
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Nate Shelton
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Associate Director of
New Work Development.....Jack Phillips Moore
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Ntozake Shange Social Justice Playwright in
Residence..... Erika Dickerson-Despenza
Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY)
Resident Artists.....Ryan J. Haddad, Ife Olujobi
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Jessica Owens, Nathaniel Whitehead
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Ying Ying Li, Julian Mesri, Aridy Nox, Elise C. Went

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Jake Cheriff, Reya Harris, Don Fierro, Kenien Spann
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Jeanne Anne Carter, Tyler Learned, Cat Cusick
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Production Managers Cristina Ayón-Viesca,
Michael Best, Keaton Morris-Stan, Lico Whitfield
Associate Production Manager Kendall Allen
Assistant Production Managers Courtney Banks,
Jessica Nekritz, Autumn Mitchell
Temporary Assistant
Production Manager Rebecca Schafer
Brooklyn College Fellow,
Production Management.....Thalia Lopez
Production Logistics Coordinator..... Samuel Arencibia
Lead Logistics Technician Robert Vesce
Logistics Technician Martin Rios
Assistant Logistics Technicians..... Samantha Pierce,
Micheal Houston

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Manager of Designer Relations Maxwell Friedman
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Fiona Malone, Carrie Zollinger
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Costume Shop Administrator Declan McDermott
Brooklyn College Fellow, Costumes Michael Nelson
Draper Marie Stair
First HandAudrey Palmmeier
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Associate Audio Supervisor Malachy Kronberg
Assistant Audio Supervisor..... Kortney Barber
Seasonal Assistant Audio Supervisor Ollie Ward
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Lighting Supervisor Alex Brandt
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Juan Lara Valentini , Susannah Baron
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Call Center Staff Jonathan Cook, Bethany Fustos,
Yating Sun

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Eric Glover, Burton Strachan, Rafael Tinoco-Jimenez,
Robert Vazquez
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HandypersonAdonis Garcia, Guillermo Mota Mota,
Oscar Reynoso
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A NOTE

FROM OSKAR EUSTIS

Dear Friends,

Over the past two and a half years, we've had many conversations at The Public about the unique role the works of William Shakespeare play in our institution. Founded as, and still legally named, the New York Shakespeare Festival, for the first 13 years of our existence, Shakespeare was the primary author we produced.

That changed in 1967, when we acquired the old Astor Library. Joe Papp re-opened this building to house the work of contemporary playwrights. He understood that our job was not simply to deliver the canon, in the form of Shakespeare's plays, to a new audience, but rather to offer up our stages to new authors who could become part of the canon. But Shakespeare has remained central to our identity and mission.

After George Floyd's murder, the demands for racial equity and justice sparked a need to re-examine many of our practices, and the centrality of Shakespeare to our mission was challenged, problematized, and debated, sometimes furiously, by our staff and artists. It's a debate that still goes on today, as it should: **a theater that aspires to social justice must continually interrogate our own practices.**

In this context, Madeline Sayet's extraordinary play, WHERE WE BELONG, is a production that simply had to happen at The Public. It is a brilliant examination of Madeline's Mohegan heritage placed directly in the path of Shakespeare's cultural centrality. It is funny, moving, incredibly smart, and deeply thought-provoking. **It's a wonderfully personal story that touches on everything that matters to us humans.** We are so grateful to Madeline, and to her marvelous director, Mei Ann Teo, for sharing their work with us.

I'm also grateful to Maria Manuela Goyanes, our former Director of Producing and Artistic Planning, who now runs Woolly Mammoth in D.C., for producing this tour. All of us at The Public are so proud of her brilliant leadership, both of her theater and of our field.

In 2010, The Public's, and my own, long-term engagement with Native American theater artists was seriously disrupted by thoughtless and damaging choices on my part. I deeply regret that breach, and apologize sincerely for those mistakes. I hope that this production is just the first step in the long process of restoring our relations. WHERE WE BELONG is both a spur to such connections, and a wonderful example of how our art form can be expanded by such connections.



OSKAR EUSTIS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, THE PUBLIC THEATER

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Thank You, Five: Backstage at *Kinky Boots*

Playbill gets ready with the Off-Broadway revival cast of the Cyndi Lauper-Harvey Fierstein hit

By Heather Gershonowitz

Go backstage at Stage 42 for a behind-the-scenes look, from pre-show to places, at the Off-Broadway revival of *Kinky Boots*, the Tony-winning musical by Cyndi Lauper and Harvey Fierstein. Callum Francis leads the cast as Lola, following stints in the West End, Broadway, and Australian productions, with Christian Douglas as Charlie Price, Danielle Hope as Lauren, and Brianna Stoute as Nicola.



1. Christian Douglas and Callum Francis prepare.
2. Brianna Stoute applies a red lip before heading to the stage.
3. Danielle Hope checks out her finished look.
4. All smiles from Ian Gallagher Fitzgerald.
5. The cast of *Kinky Boots* puts their hands in on the count of "Shoes, shoes, shoes!"

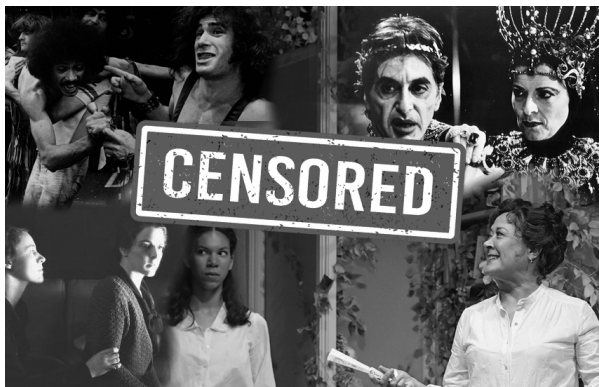
PHOTOS BY HEATHER GERSHONOWITZ

7 Plays and Musicals That Were Too Obscene for the Stage

A look at some of the plays and musicals that were deemed too inappropriate for public consumption.

By Leah Putnam

What do George Bernard Shaw, Mae West, and the writers of *Hair* all have in common? They wrote works that came with jail fines. Check out these shows which have led to actors in jail, new censorship laws, Supreme Court cases, and more.



Mrs. Warren's Profession

by George Bernard Shaw

The anti-obscenity Comstock Laws led to the interruption of a New York production of Shaw's play about a remorseless brothel owner. The 1893 play was staged at the Garrick Theatre October 23, 1905, and played a singular performance before police arrested the cast and crew.

Salome

by Oscar Wilde, later adapted by Richard Strauss

Wilde's 1891 one-act was banned from the London stage for its depiction of biblical characters until 1931. Richard Strauss composed an opera based on *Salome* that premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1907, only to be denounced four days later by the Met's directors and banned by the opera house.

***Sex and The Drag* by Mae West**

These two plays by the 1920s screen siren landed West in jail. Though both opened to commercial success, New York County District Attorney Joab H. Banton ordered the arrests of both casts and shut the plays down due to obscenity. West spent 10 days in jail,

and supposedly said of the experience, "A few days in the pen 'n' a \$500 fine ain't too bad a deal."

Hair

with book by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, and music by Galt MacDermot

Despite its 1969 Tony-nominated success on Broadway, the show (which famously included full-frontal nudity) found less acceptance across the country. In 1970, a proposed Boston production was at the center of a censorship dispute, which ultimately landed at the Supreme Court, whose ruling allowed the production to proceed.

Spring Awakening

by Frank Wedekind

Now known to audiences through the 2006 Broadway musical adaptation, the original play by Wedekind was banned in his home country of Germany for years and did not premiere until 1906. It was later staged in 1917 New York, and despite claims about the show being pornographic, it was ultimately allowed to proceed with specific conditions under an injunction by a New York court.

How *1776* Honors Performer Brooke Simpson's Indigenous Heritage

The member of Haliwa-Saponi tribe talks about playing an American Founding Father

By Talaura Harms

Native American performer Brooke Simpson brings her family with her on stage every night in the current Broadway revival of *1776*. She wears Indigenous medallions that have been in her family for over 30 years. “For me to be wearing it on a Broadway stage just feels so enriching and full circle in a

The Courier (played by Salome B. Smith) gives Simpson her Indigenous medallions to wear. Simpson places them around her neck, shakes hands with John Adams, and the show begins. “I’m portraying this Founding Father, but I’m also representing myself and a history of people that already had a nation

here before we ever needed to create one,” says Simpson.

The Roundabout Theatre Company and American Repertory Theater co-production of *1776* features a cast composed entirely of female, transgender, and non-binary performers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The production’s framing sees each of these actors take the stage in the show’s opening dressed in black pants and modern shoes—some with jewelry and tops that give a subtle nod to their personal identities—before they each don the 18th-century overcoats and shoes that transform them into the Continental Congress of the Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards musical.

With all the care and attention taken to honor the company’s



HEATHER GEERSHOWITZ

beautiful way, for me to stand there and put a light on my tribe and my people,” she says.

Simpson is a member of the Haliwa-Saponi tribe, and special care is taken before the show even begins to honor that. In the pre-show voiceover, Simpson introduces herself and acknowledges the land on which the theatre now stands: the isle of Manahatta belonging to the Lenape people. Following the opening monologue from John Adams (played by Kristolyn Lloyd), the curtain opens revealing the company and Simpson steps forward.

backgrounds and identities, Simpson does admit that it wasn’t always easy to deal with the complicated narrative of the founding of the United States. “It was something to wrestle with, thinking about my ancestors and what they had gone through, and then stepping into these shoes,” she says. “As an artist, I never just want to be a peace-keeper. I want to be a peacemaker—and making peace and understanding, and bringing clarity and bringing unity, especially at a time such as this in our country. It requires some discomfort.”