A Swell in the Ground

WRITTEN BY
Janine Nabers

DIRECTED BY ENSEMBLE MEMBER
Chika Ike

SCENIC DESIGNER
Eleanor Kahn

LIGHTING DESIGNER
** Eric Watkins

COSTUME DESIGNER
Rachel Lambert

PROJECTIONS DESIGNER
Smooch Medina

ORIGINAL MUSIC & SOUND DESIGNER
** Christopher Kriz

FIGHT & INTIMACY CHOREOGRAPHER, SAFD
Gaby Labotka

PROPERTIES DESIGNER
Ellie Terrell

STAGE MANAGER
* Corinne James

MASTER ELECTRICIAN
David Trudeau

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
David Preis

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Sarah Luse

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers
** Member of United Scenic Artists • Local USA 829 • IATSE

October 13 – December 10, 2017

The Gift Theatre Company
4802 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60630
(773) 283-7071 | www.thegifttheatre.org
“Come Closer.”

The Gift Theatre Company’s 2017 season is made possible, in part, by generous contributions from The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC), Greg and Anne Taubeneck, The Alphawood Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, an Anonymous Donor and The SaintsSM.
Olivia .................................................................................................................................Sydney Charles
Charles ..........................................................................................................................Andrew Muwonge
Abigail ............................................................................................................................+Darci Nalepa
Nate .................................................................................................................................Keith Neagle

+Indicates Gift Ensemble Member

Understudies do not substitute for listed players unless an announcement is made at the time of the performance.

TIME
This play spans the course of 17 years. The story begins during the fall of 2001 and ends during the summer of 2018.

PLACE
Quiet rooms and tucked away places in and around the city/state of New York. In Act II, one scene takes place in Detroit.

The play runs approximately 1 hour 45 minutes. The play is performed without intermission.

As a courtesy to the actors and fellow audience members, please turn off your cell phone!
Please do not text during the performance.

The use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.

“Acting is a particularly thankless art. It dies with the actor. Nothing survives him but the reviews, which do not usually do him justice anyway, whether he is good or bad.

So the only source of satisfaction left to him is the audience’s reactions... The actor, in this special process of discipline and self-sacrifice, self-penetration and molding, is not afraid to go beyond all normally acceptable limits...

The actor makes a total gift of himself.” - Jerzy Grotowski, Towards A Poor Theatre
“Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling in the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then ‘tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses’ heads
Were toward eternity.”

-- Emily Dickinson, The Chariot

To our beloved friend &
fellow ensemble member...
Sheldon Patinkin

WE MISS YOU...

THE GIFT GALA 2017
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2017 at THE COPERNICUS CENTER
PRODUCTION SPONSORS & EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS!

A Swell in the Ground is made possible with the support, enthusiasm and more than generous contributions of the following individuals and organizations:

Greg & Anne Taubeneck

Jason Merel
For contributing his time, energy, expertise and carpentry skills to help build and take you to a swell in the ground.

Gregory Fenner
For his contributions to the early rehearsal process.

John Tovar, SAFD and Intimacy Directors International

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FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT, SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Scott Chaloff
Carolyn Cantor
Darrell and Jen Nabers
The Juilliard School
and Sam Shepard

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As an Individual Production Sponsor, you are given complete access to the entire Gift process. From first rehearsal to closing night, you become a part of the production.

Without the support of patrons like Greg and Anne our shows would not be possible. We thank Greg and Anne and all our production sponsors supporting live theater in Jefferson Park.

"At The Gift you're up close, really close, with some of the best actors in Chicago. Or anywhere. The plays are always smart and provocative and you talk about them for a long time afterward. The Gift is actually a gift to Chicago. We are thrilled to support them!"

GREG AND ANNE TAUBENECK
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A Swell in the Ground
PRODUCTION, ARTISTIC, & ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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Associate Artistic Director .................................................. Paul D’Addario
Administrative Director ........................................................ John Gawlik
Audience Services / House Manager .................................. Rita Thornton
Technical Director ............................................................. David Preis
Production Manager .......................................................... Sarah Luse
Casting Director ................................................................. Paul Koob
Publicist ........................................................................... Emjoy Gavino
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THE GIFT ENSEMBLE


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giftED. ENSEMBLE

Jacopo De Marinis, Owen O’Malley, Declan Schliesmann and Symone Rodriguez

giftED. ALUMNI

Corbett Baratta, Francesca Plantz and Pat Weber

THE GIFT’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laura Gale (Chair), Paul Botts, Lori Dimun, Bryan Dowling, Shanna Karamaniolas, George Karzas, Sharon Martwick, Naveed Moosa, Darcy Nalepa, William Patrick Nedved, Jeff Perry, Kat Rothstein, Michael Patrick Thornton, Rita Thornton, and Shannon Wallace
Sydney Charles (Olivia) is thrilled to originate the role of Olivia and finally work with The Gift Theatre. This award-winning actress hails from Chicago, IL. Selected theatre credits include: Lottery Day (Goodman Theatre); The Fly Honey Show, Spamilton Chicago (Royal George Theatre); Dorothy in The Wiz at (Kokandy Productions); Zora in the world premiere of Prowess (Jackalope Theatre); the title role in Dessa Rose (Bailiwick Chicago); and The Color Purple (Mercury Theater). Sydney can soon be seen in episodes of The Haven web series. She is also an artistic associate with Firebrand Theater, the newly formed feminist musical theater company. Sydney is grateful to God for every opportunity given and to every person who supports her journey. Represented by Stewart Talent.

Andrew Muwonge (Charles) is honored to be making his Gift Theatre debut. Other Chicago credits include: Letters Home (Griffin Theatre); Don’t Go Gentle (Haven Theatre); Othello: The Remix u/s (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); City of Conversation u/s (Northlight Theatre); The Last Cadillac (American Demigods); Peacebook (Collaboration Theatre); Freedom Code (Greatworks Theatre); and United Flight 232-Staged Reading (The House Theatre of Chicago). Regional credits include: unsSilent Night and Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 (Next Act Theatre Milwaukee); and Freedom High (UpRooted Theatre Milwaukee). Andrew received a BFA in Theatre-Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and is represented by Stewart Talent. This performance is dedicated to Jim Butchart.

Darci Nalepa (Abigail) is thrilled to be a part of A Swell in the Ground. As a proud ensemble member of The Gift, she has appeared on stage here in A Life Extra Ordinary, Good for Otto, Othello, Thinner Than Water, and Dirty. Other Chicago credits include: Queen (Victory Gardens Theater); Kill Floor (American Theatre Company); Yankee Tavern (American Blues Theater); Northanger Abbey (Remy Bumppo); The Drunken City (Steppenwolf Theatre – Next Up); Flare Path, Company (Griffin Theatre); Love and Money (Steep Theatre). Darci appeared in Stephen Cone’s Independent Feature Film, Henry Gamble’s Birthday Party. Television credits include Patriot, Shameless, Chicago Fire and The Onion. Darci is a proud member of Actor’s Equity and SAG/AFTRA. She is represented by Gray Talent. “Love and gratitude to my family and friends.”

Keith Neagle (Nate) is a proud, grateful ensemble member with The Gift. Gift credits include Richard III, Ten, Othello, and Night and Her Stars. Other Chicago credits include Betrayal (Raven); You Can’t Take It With You and The Mousetrap (Northlight); The Birds (Griffin); Travesties (Remy Bumppo); Seminar (Haven); Orange Flower Water (Interrobang); Sweet Bird of Youth (Artistic Home); The Pigeons (Walkabout); Harry & the Thief, Breaks & Bikes, Girl You Know It’s True, punkplay, Fracture/Mechanics, Arrangements and Lipstick Traces (Pavement Group). Keith is a graduate of the School at Steppenwolf and Texas A & M University. Thanks to Mike for the kick in the pants, as well as Chika, Janine and all the lovely people who brought this story to life. This one is for Cyd and Maverick. Love you.

Sherman Edwards (Charles – Understudy) was named 2012’s ‘Best Stand Up Comic in Chicago’ by the Chicago Reader and has been lucky enough to perform at the TBS Just for Laughs Festival in Chicago, The Del Close Marathon in New York, The Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland and a few other notable places which has given him his cool, comfortable, laid-back style. Born and raised in Virginia but currently residing in Chicago, he can be found doing stand-up, plays, improv, eating brunch with Brittany and can be seen on HBO GO’s Single Long and FOX’s Empire. He really likes cheese and hopes you do too. It’s okay if you don’t though. More for him.

Kristen Johnson (Abigail – Understudy) is thrilled to be returning to The Gift Theatre. She most recently appeared as Marsha in Eclipse Theatre’s Our Lady of 121st Street. Other Chicago credits include Richard III (The Gift Theatre); The Long Christmas Ride Home (Strawdog Theatre); Traces (Jackalope Theatre & Feast Productions); The
The Gift Theatre Company

Queen (Pegasus Players); Get Lucky (Second City & Chicago Dramatists); Devour (20% Theatre Company); Independent People (Lookingglass Theatre and Carleton College); numerous staged readings at American Theatre Company, TUTA, Teatro Vista, Mary-Archie, and Collaboration among others. Kristen graduated from Carleton College, B.A.D.A., N.T.I., and The School at Steppenwolf. She is represented by Shirley Hamilton Talent.

Janine Nabers (Playwright) is a graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellowship at Juilliard and winner of the 2014 Yale Drama Series Prize for her play Serial Black Face, which had its world premiere earlier this year at the Actor’s Express Theatre Company in Atlanta. Her play Annie Bosh is Missing premiered in August 2013 at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, while her play Welcome to Jesus is currently having its world premiere at the American Theater Company in Chicago. Other works include Incident at Vichy (Redtwist Theatre); Red Velvet (Raven Theatre); and Fugue for Particle Accelerator (20% Theatre Company). Jeremy is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University and represented by Big Mouth Talent.

Janine is a current member of the Echo Theater’s Playwriting Group and CTG Writers Group in LA, and is an alumna of the Primary Stages writers group, Ars Nova Play Group, Soho Rep Lab, and the MCC playwrights Coalition (all in NYC). On TV Janine has written for the shows UnReal (Lifetime), Girlfriends’ Guide to Divorce (Bravo) and the upcoming Dietland (AMC) and Watchmen (HBO). MFA: The New School for Drama.

Keesha Joyce Merritt (Olivia – Understudy) was born and raised in Chicago, IL to a man who loves to draw and a woman who loves to dance. Though her parents didn’t pursue careers in the Arts, Keesha has. With God, the support of her family, and friends, she’s been able to model, act in commercials, and appear on stage in Chicago, IL. She says, “It’s such a blessing to be able to do something I love with so many different, talented artists, all the while impacting viewers with something they can feel. I’m grateful. God Bless you all.”

Chika Ike (Director) is a Gift Theatre ensemble member, where she has previously served as the assistant director for The Royal Society of Antarctica and as a director for TEN. She has also had the opportunity to work with many Chicago theatre companies, including Victory Gardens, American Blues Theatre Company, Eclipse Theatre, and Prologue Theatre Company. Most recently, she directed a reading of Tori Sampson’s This Land Was Made for Victory Garden’s Ignition Festival of New Plays. Her upcoming directing projects include Lloyd Suh’s Franklinland for Jackalope Theatre Company and Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea by Nathan Alan Davis for First Floor Theatre Company. She is a former SDCF Gielgud Fellow, a Victory Gardens Directing Initiative, and a Berkeley Repertory Theatre Bret C. Harte Directing Fellow.

Eleanor Kahn (Scenic Designer) is a freelance designer in Chicago. She most recently designed Open Season, inaugurating the pilot season of 4802, The Gift’s artists-in-residency program. Other scenic work includes: Machinal (Greenhouse Theatre); Her Majesty’s Will (Lifeline Theatre); Into the Empty Sky (Trap Door); What of the Night (Stage Left and Cor Theatre); Bobbie Clearly (Steeple Theatre); Hairy Ape, The Mother, The Jungle and Waiting for Lefty (Oracle Productions); Deer and the Lovers and World Builders (First Floor Theatre); The Way She Spoke (Greenhouse Solo Celebration); The Van Gogh Cafe, Fog Island, Monster in the Hall, and Lifeboat (Filament Theatre). She also works extensively with The House Theatre as a props designer. Eleanor received her MFA in Scenic Design from Boston University. Her full resume and portfolio can be seen at www.eleanorkahn.com

Eric Watkins (Lighting Designer) This marks Eric’s debut with The Gift; do enjoy! Recent Chicago designs include Machinal (Greenhouse Theatre); Punk (The New Colony); Sylvester (Lifeline Theatre); 42 Stories and Psmith, Journalist (City Lit); Porcelain (Jenn nomination for best lighting) and Tea (Prologue Theatre); Deer and the Lovers (First Floor Theatre); Fishey (Dandelion Theatre); Any Other Name, [title of show], Art, and Gypsy (William Street Rep); Fallen (Mozawa); and The Property (Lyric Unlimited). Recent designs outside Chicagoland include: Show Boat (The Dallas Opera); Cenerentola and The Marriage of Figaro.
Rachel Lambert (Costume Designer) is thrilled to be working with The Gift Theatre for the first time. Her other Chicago design credits include The King of Hell’s Palace (Goodman Theatre- New Stages); Twist Your Dickens (The Second City); Mothers and Sons (Northlight Theatre); Puff: Believe It Or Not, Henry IV, The Life of Galileo, and Travesties and Northanger Abbey (Jeff nominations- Remy Bumppo Theatre); Silent Sky, The Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline, Merchant of Venice, and Romeo & Juliet (Jeff nomination- First Folio Theatre); The Merry Widow, Die Fledermaus, Magic Flute, Gianni Schicchi (DePaul School of Music); Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train, A Perfect Ganesh, Intimate Apparel (Jeff nomination), After the Fall (Eclipse Theatre); Time Stands Still (Buffalo Theatre Ensemble); Next to Normal (BoHo Theatre); Rose (The Greenhouse Theatre); My Name Is Annie King (Underscore Theatre); The Drowning Girls (Signal Ensemble); and American Myth (American Blues Theatre). Regionally she has designed for Peninsula Players and the Texas Shakespeare Festival.

Christopher Kriz (Original Music & Sound Designer, USA 829) is a composer and sound designer based in Chicago. Previous Gift Theatre credits: The Grapes Of Wrath (Jeff Award), Pilgrims, A Life Extra Ordinary, Good For Otto, and many others. Some upcoming and recent Chicago credits: Red Velvet (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); The Magic Play, Carlyle (Goodman Theatre); Constellations, Monster (Steppenwolf Theatre); Roz and Ray, Hand To God, The House That Will Not Stand (Victory Gardens); Gem Of The Ocean (Court Theatre); Silent Sky, Captain Blood, Man-Beast (First Folio Theatre); Paradise Blue, Sunset Baby (Timeline Theatre); Born Yesterday, Pygmalion, The Life Of Galileo (Remy Bumppo Theatre); The Columnist (American Blues Theatre); Significant Other, Bright Half Life, The Temperamentals (About Face Theatre); A Funny Thing Happened..., The Source (Route 66 Theatre), The Heavens Are Hung In Black, For Peter Pan On Her 70th Birthday (Shattered Globe Theatre). Recent regional credits: Roz and Ray (Seattle Repertory Theatre), Sticky Traps (Kansas City Repertory Theatre) and many summer seasons at Peninsula Players. Kriz has been honored with 14 Jeff Nominations and 3 Jeff Awards. Recently, Lifeline Theatre produced Kriz’s new musical, Soon I Will Be Invincible. Kriz is a proud member of United Scenic Artists 829. To hear more of his work, please visit www.christopherkriz.com.

Smooch Medina (Projections Designer) is thrilled to be back at The Gift Theatre with A Swell in the Ground. Smooch Medina is a Chicago area designer whose other show credits include Projection design for Silent Sky (First Folio), Saturn Returns (Neo-Futurists), A Life Extra Ordinary and Pilgrims (The Gift Theatre) Estrella Cruz: The Junkyard queen (Halcyon Theatre), The White Road - Jeff Nominated (Irish Theatre of Chicago), Tightwire (Chicago Tap Theatre), A Life Extra Ordinary (The Gift Theater) and lighting design for A Little World of Our Own (Irish Theatre of Chicago), Nutcracker (Legere Ballet Company), The Feast (Red Theatre Company). Smooch holds a BA in Lighting Design from Columbia College Chicago and you can see his other work by visiting Smoochdesign.com

Ellie Terrell (Properties Designer) is a Chicago-based designer, object and installation builder, painter, and teaching artist. Her recent work includes productions with Albany Park Theater Project, Black Ensemble Theater, Chicago Children’s Theatre, Collaboration Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre, The House Theatre, Halcyon Theatre, NightBlue Theater, Pegasus Theatre Chicago, and Redmoon. In addition to her work with theater companies around Chicago, Ellie teaches a 3D Art & Sculpture class for After School Matters at the Lutz Family Center. Ellie holds a BA in Literary and Cultural Studies from the College of William and Mary.

Gaby Labotka (Intimacy and Fight Choreographer) is an actor, director, storyteller, choreographer, and more living and working in the city of Chicago. This is her first production with The Gift Theatre! Recent Choreography credits include Hamlet (Reperatory Theatre of St. Louis); Night in Alachua County (WildClaw Theatre); Survivor Story: A Workshop (Transcendent Ensemble Theatre); Romeo and Juliet (Teatro Vista, 2017); Subterfuge (part of Nothing Special... at The Chicago Improv Comedy Natural Gas)

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The Gift Theatre Company

Productions’ FIGHT NIGHT); and Battleaxe Betty (ATC CORE Series). Next up, she will be Assistant Director/Fight Choreographer for ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas (Emerald City Theatre); Violence Designer for The Good Fight (Babes with Blades); and Fight Choreographer for A Story Told in Seven Fights (The Neo-Futurists). Gaby is an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors and is often a Teaching Assistant for stage combat classes at MACE and The Actors’ Gymnasium. Check out more: https://www.facebook.com/GabyLabotka.Theatre/ Keep Smiling!

David Trudeau (Master Electrician) is excited to be working with such talented folks at The Gift. He is an actor, designer, and technician originally from Denver. He has had the honor of working with a wealth of extraordinary people at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Babes With Blades, Chicago Fringe Festival, and E.D.G.E. Enjoy the show!

Corinne James (Stage Manager) is thrilled to work with The Gift Theatre again to stage manage A Swell in the Ground. A proud member of the Actors’ Equity Union, Cori has stage managed a number of Chicago productions, most recently Unseen, Grapes of Wrath, Good for Otto, The Royal Society of Antarctica (Gift Theatre); The Bachelors (Cole Theatre); The Downpour (Route 66 Theatre). Cori spent four years working as the assistant stage manager at Northlight Theatre, and has also previously worked for Ravinia Theatre Festival. Cori thanks her family, friends, and her husband Rob for their love and support.

David Preis (Technical Director) has contributed his woodworking, general handyman, and all around technical expertise to The Gift since 2002, becoming Technical Director in 2006. He has worked as a luthier for over 35 years – making cellos and basses for Englehardt-Link based in Elk Grove Village. David studied theatre and design at Illinois Wesleyan and has worked as the sound engineer for “The Night Crawlers,” a Chicago area blues band. Throughout the years, he has designed, built, and/or coordinated lighting, set, and sound for a number of Chicago area productions including critically acclaimed productions of Tango and Josephine, The Mouse Singer both at Chicago Actors Ensemble, Brick/Walls Open Spaces for Shakti Dance Company, Crying Woolf at Zebra Crossing Theatre, and Light Up the Sky at Gurnee Theatre Company.

Sarah Luse (Production Manager) is excited to be back at The Gift. This is her second season as production manager for The Gift. Other production management credits include The Dead Prince, Half-Brothers Mendelssohn, Funeral Wedding, and The Spirit Play (Strange Tree Group); Women at War (Rivendell); A Doll’s House, Fifth of July, Escape From Happiness, The Crucible, and The Grapes of Wrath (Infamous Commonwealth). Sarah is also a stage manager and some favorite Gift credits include Pilgrims, A Life Extra Ordinary, Richard III, Thinner Than Water, Wt, The Ruby Sunrise, TEN, and The Lonesome West. Some other Chicago credits include Bad Jews, Thom Pain (based on nothing), and Completeness (Theater Wit); The Temperamentals (About Face Theatre); and Bonhoeffer’s Cost (Provision). Regionally, Sarah was an ASM for Michigan Shakespeare Festival’s 2014 season.
Emjoy Gavino (Casting Director) Chicago acting credits include Court, Northlight, Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, Remy Bumppo, Paramount, Broadway Playhouse, Lookingglass, The Neo-Futurists, The Goodman and Second City Theatricals. Regional credits: Repertory Actors Theatre, Village Theatre and 5th Avenue Theater. Film/TV: Chicago Med, Empire, Chicago Fire, Mob Doctor, Boss, and Freudian Slip. Emjoy is a company member and teaching artist with Barrel of Monkeys, an ensemble member of Remy Bumppo and is the founder and producer of The Chicago Inclusion Project. She has been a consultant for casting several projects in the Chicago area since 2012.

Michael Patrick Thornton (Artistic Director) is the co-founder and artistic director of The Gift Theatre. Michael recently directed The Gift’s world premiere of Pilgrims by Claire Kiechel and David Rabe’s Good For Otto (Jeff Award nomination for Best Director). Other directing credits at The Gift, to name a few, include War of the Worlds; Oh, The Humanity (and other exclamations); Prairie View; Night & Her Stars; Stop/Kiss; White People; Three Sisters; Long Day’s Journey Into Night; and Hurlyburly. Elsewhere: Of Mice and Men and assistant director August: Osage County (Steppenwolf); IS N UR B1UDS7REEM… and LA 8AM (Collaboraction); Picasso At The Lapin Agile (Noble Fool). As an actor, Michael was recently seen as King Richard in The Gift’s Richard III at Steppenwolf. Also at The Gift: Othello and The Good Thief (Jeff Award for Solo Performance). Elsewhere: Title and Deed (Lookingglass); Colossal (Olney Theatre); Our Town (Actors Theatre of Louisville); Middletown and The Elephant Man (Steppenwolf). Michael will return to Steppenwolf in the fall to appear in The Crucible. Michael is a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf, The Second City Conservatory, and The Second City Directing Program, trained at IO Improv and Annoyance Theatre, and has taught at Second City, School at Steppenwolf, Northwestern University, Acting Studio Chicago, Black Box, and Columbia College. He improvises with Natural Gas (The Gift), Susan Messing in Messing With A Friend / Thornton & Messing and in his two-person improv show You & Me seen at Second City, The Den, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. As a writer, his play The Princess And The Bear was performed at Western Michigan University and published in Third Coast Press and The Packington Review. His play Lie With Me received a workshop through ATC’s CORE residency. Michael is a staff writer for “The Paper Machete” and is writing a novel series called A Low Hum. TV/Film: Elementary, Private Practice, The Chicago Code, The Jamz, Ron Howard’s The Dilemma and the indie film The View From Tall. Awards/distinctions: Tree of Life Award: Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago; Chicago Finalist: National Shakespeare Contest (Mitzi-Newhouse Theatre; Lincoln Center); 3Arts Artist Award; Northlight Theatre’s Jack Springer Award for Outstanding Performance; The Tim Meier & Helen Coburn Meier Foundation Achievement Award; The Second City Foundation’s Jim Zulevic Chicago Arts Award, and induction into The University of Iowa and St. Patrick High School Halls of Fame. He lives blissfully in the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Chicago with his wife, performance artist Lindsey Barlag Thornton.
The Gift Theatre is tremendously appreciative of all the support we need and receive. We humbly thank the benefactors below for their generous gifts. This list reflects gifts made from January 1, 2014 thru September 24, 2017. A special thanks goes out to our 2018 Season Subscribers – both new and renewing - we couldn’t do it without you!

Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in our program is correct. If you have a question or wish to revise your listing in any way, please call 773-283-7071.

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The Gift Ensemble
Last November, The Gift lost one of our most passionate and passionately generous supporters. Carol Cyganowski was and will always be an angel to all of us at The Gift. As a subscriber, Carol was at every production and it was a joy to hear her refreshingly wry, wonderful, spot-on critiques. And as a Production Sponsor, Carol got to be in the room with one of her theatrical heroes, David Rabe, as The Gift rehearsed and premiered his new play Good for Otto, a production that quite literally could not happen without the generosity of the Cyganowskis.

The best way we at The Gift can honor Carol’s memory is to continue to seek out great, daring writing for the American Theatre and to present it with only the highest of aesthetic values. This memorial fund will allow us to do precisely that for next season and the seasons to come.

We’ll miss you, Carol.

Thank you for giving us a kick in the pants when we needed it.
Thank you for believing in us.
Thank you for your tremendous gift.

If you would like to send a check please make it out to The Gift Theatre and send it to:

The Gift Theatre
ATTN: The Carol Klimick Cyganowski Gift Legacy Fund
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NOTE: All donors will receive an e-mail with the Gift Theater’s Tax ID for your records. Please call the box office at 773-283-7071 for detailed instructions on how to make your gift to The Gift possible. Thank you!
The community of a backwoods Southern town grapples with the murder of a Black man who is found hanging in a tree. As events unfold, the hanging mystifies the people of the community, forcing them to confront their complicity in this man’s horrific demise. Osei-Kuffour’s darkly comical, heartbreaking play, which recently made the prestigious 2017 Kilroy’s List, uses absurdity to explore racism, sexuality, and the parts of American history we would all like to forget.

After the death of his dad, a young black man named Hamlet returns home to grieve and seek revenge. Fighting against the injustice of his father’s murder and the powers that want him out of the picture, Hamlet quickly loses power and sanity. Directed by guest artist Monty Cole, The Gift’s retelling of Shakespeare’s great tragedy will crack open the mind of one of western drama’s most fascinating and entertaining characters.

Put the whimsical humor of the Keystone Cops and Bugs Bunny into a particle collider with the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard and George Berkeley and you’re getting close to the style of this existential absurdist comedy from David Rabe. When a young man’s negotiation for a date goes very wrong, we are transported through kaleidoscopic worlds of possibilities, identities, and loves.
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