proudly presents
the CHICAGO premiere

Kentucky

WRITTEN BY
LEAH NANAKO WINKLER

DIRECTED BY GIFT ENSEMBLE MEMBER
CHIKA IKE

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Kenya Ann Hall

COSTUME DESIGNER
Rachel M. Sypniewski

PROPERTIES DESIGNER
Tessa Keller

SCENIC DESIGNER
Ryan Emens

SOUND DESIGNER
Aaron Stephenson

MUSIC DIRECTOR
Emilie Modaff

LIGHTING DESIGNER
** Rachel Levy

MASTER ELECTRICIAN
Lena Aubrey

CHOREOGRAPHER
Jessica Vann

VIOLENCE/INTIMACY DIRECTOR
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October 17 – November 16, 2019
Performed at Theatre Wit
1229 W. Belmont in Chicago

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

“Come Closer.”

FEATURING (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Bridesmaid 2 / Laura.............................................................................................................. Maryam Abdi
James..................................................................................................................................*+ Paul D’Addario
Da’Ran .............................................................................................................................Ian Voltaire Deanes
Hiro ...........................................................................................................................................* Emjoy Gavino
Masako ......................................................................................................................................Helen Joo Lee
Adam / Sylvie ..................................................................................................................+ Martel Manning
Ernest ...................................................................................................................................Michael E. Martin
Nicole / Grandma...................................................................................................................Emilie Modaff
Bridesmaid 1 / Larry........................................................................................................................Ana Silva
Sophie................................................................................................................................ + Hannah Toriumi
Amy ................................................................................................................................................Jessica Vann

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of professional actors and stage managers

+Indicates Gift Ensemble Member

UNDERSTUDIES

Ernest / James.....................................................................................................................Graham Carlson
Masako / Amy...................................................................................................................Kim Fukawa
Da’Ran / Adam / Sylvie ...............................................................................................Tamarus Harvell
Hiro / Laura / Bridesmaid 2 ..........................................................................................Gabrielle Maalihan
Nicole / Grandma / Bridesmaid 1............................................................................. Wil Ann Whedbee
Sophie....................................................................................................................................Harmony Zhang
Understudy Nicole / Grandma / Bridesmaid 1 / Larry ..............................................Wil Ann Whedbee

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

SHOW INFORMATION

The play runs approximately 2 hours & 15 minutes.
The play is performed with one 15-minute intermission.

Kentucky received its world premiere on April 20, 2016 in a co-production presented by
the Ensemble Studio Theatre (William Carden, Artistic Director; Paul A. Slee, Executive
Director) / Radio Drama Network, (Melina Brown, President) and Page 73 Productions
(Michael Walkup, Producing Artistic Director; Jennifer Lagundino, Managing Director; Liz
Jones and Asher Richelli, Founding Directors).

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 cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited.
Kentucky is made possible with the support, enthusiasm and more than generous contributions of the following individuals and organizations:

To Theatre Wit’s Management and Staff:
Thank you for making The Gift feel at home.

Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium (CCAC)
and the Michael and Mona Heath Fund for the equipment needed
for Access Performances

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT - Melissa Bach and David Onderdonk

VINTAGE SPIRITS MIXOLOGIST - Kris Peterson

PHOTOGRAPHY - Michael Courier

PUBLIC RELATIONS - David Rosenberg

GRAPHIC DESIGN - Paul Koob
Welcome to a Gift experience!

What does that mean? Well, we believe that Theatre is, at its best, a sacred conversation between actor and audience, revealing the joy and pain of being human. We also believe that a theatrical experience is and always should be thrillingly present, irreplaceable by virtue of its nowness. At no other time in history or future will this exact arrangement of people gather together to experience this story—how cool and mysterious and beautiful is that?

In that spirit, we invite you to join us in celebrating this shared experience. While talking and conversation is disrespectful to everyone, we absolutely encourage you to allow yourselves and your fellow audience neighbors to react however you feel. Live expression is what makes Theatre what it is and You, our audience, play a leading role in every performance. (You’re the reason we’re here.) We are so excited to live this story out in real time with you. The fact that we will react differently makes the telling more alive and our experience more human.

Finally, that’s a cool ring tone you got. But out of respect for us all, turn off your phone. And then, after you turn it back on during intermission, turn it off again. Your phone ringing during this performance will result in a 1 million dollar donation to The Gift. If your ringtone is that maddening “By The Seaside” song, it’s 2 million.

Thank you for being here. For real.

With one big collective Gift hand stretched out, we welcome you, with love, to ….
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THE GIFT ENSEMBLE


giftED. ALUMNI

Jacopo De Marinis, Owen O’Malley, Declan Schliesmann and Symone Rodriguez
Corbett Baratta, Francesca Plantz and Pat Weber

THE GIFT’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laura Gale (Chair), Paul Botts, Lori Dimun, Bryan Dowling, Cathy Dunlap, Danielle Gallet, Shanna Karamaniolas, Naveed Moosa, Darci Nalepa, William Patrick Nedved, Jeff Perry, Kat Rothstein, Ashley Silva, and Michael Patrick Thornton
**Maryam Abdi** (Bridesmaid 2 / Laura) is honored to work with such a talented cast and crew on her first project with The Gift Theatre! Abdi has worked and lived abroad in Paris, Avignon, Mysore, Warsaw, Tehran, and Cameroon, Africa, where she practiced “Theatre for Development” as a Fulbright Scholar. Recent credits include: Firebrand Theatre, Barker/Ensemble in The Queen of the Mist (Jeff Award-Nominated); Pioneer Theatre (UT), Alais in Lion in Winter; Trap Door Theatre, Jane Fonda in Childhood Beauty, Into the Empty Sky (Jeff Award-Nominated), and Monsieur d’Eon is a Woman (Jeff Award-Nominated); Windy City Performs, Wicked Witch in the Wizard of Oz; Red Tape Theatre, Nanna in Round Heads and Pointed Heads (Jeff Award-Nominated). Abdi is also an ensemble member with Red Tape Theatre and an associate ensemble member with Trap Door Theatre. Abdi is an alumna of the University of Evansville. She is proudly represented by DDO Artist’s Agency.

**Paul D’Addario** (James) is an ensemble member and an Associate Artistic Director at The Gift. With The Gift he has appeared in over twenty shows including Hang Man, The Grapes of Wrath, Good For Otto, The Royal Society of Antarctica, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and Hurlyburly. At Steppenwolf he was seen in The Ironbound and Of Mice and Men. Television credits include Chicago Fire, Chicago PD and The Red Line. He is a graduate of the The School at Steppenwolf 2001.

**Ian Voltaire Deanes** (Da’Ran) is so grateful and thrilled to be a part of Kentucky and work with The Gift again! Ian was born and raised on Chicago’s south side, moved to the north side and fell in love with improv and found his calling in theatre. His journey has taken him to seek training and experience all across Chicago, eventually becoming a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf in 2017. Ian would deeply like to thank his family, his brother Dom, Alex, and NWaC. He especially wants to thank The Gift, MPT, Chika, Emjoy, the cast and crew for being so awesome and amazing. And thank you to everyone who is in attendance, Thank You!

**Emjoy Gavino** (Hiro & The Gift’s Casting Director / Associate Artistic Director)

Chicago credits include Steppenwolf Theatre, Court Theater, About Face Theatre, The Hypocrites, The Second City, House Theatre, Northlight, Remy Bumppo, Victory Gardens, Paramount, Broadway Playhouse, Lookingglass, The Neo-Futurists, and The Goodman Theatre. Regional credits: ReAct, Book-It Repertory, ACT, 5th Avenue Theatre, Village Theatre, The Getty Villa and Studio Theatre. Television: The Exorcist, Mob Doctor, Empire (Fox); Chicago Fire and Chicago Med (NBC). Emjoy is represented by Stewart Talent. She is a 3Arts Make a Wave grantee and the founder/executive director of The Chicago Inclusion Project. Special thanks to Chad, The Wolfpack, The Gift and the incredible artists whose work on this show continues to inspire. Also, Mariano’s.
**Helen Joo Lee**  
(Masako) is thrilled to be making her Gift Theatre debut! She was last seen in *The Fly Honey Show* (The Inconvenience); *In The Canyon* (Jackalope Theatre); *You For Me For You* (Sideshow Theatre); and as a permanent replacement in *Fantastic Super Great Nation Numero Uno* (The Second City e.t.c.’s 41st Revue). Television and film credits include: *The Chi, Empire, Chicago Med, Teacher and Canal Street*. She is a proud artistic associate of Sideshow Theatre and member of the all-Asian comedy group Stir Friday Night. Thank you to everyone at Stewart Talent! Follow her at helenjoolee on Instagram.

**Martel Manning**  
(Adam / Sylvie) is thrilled to work on this production. Previous credits with The Gift include *Cosmologies, Hamlet and Hang Man* among others. Chicago Credits: *Fallen Angels and Pirandello’s Henry V* (Remy Bumppo); *Cymbeline* (Strawdog Theatre Company); *Her Majesty’s Will and Miss Buncle’s Book* (Lifeline Theatre). Regional credits include *Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet’s Journey) (Oregon Shakespeare Festival – School Visit Program); *Still Dance the Stars* (New Light Theatre Project co-production with Chicago Dramatists); and Michigan Shakespeare Festival’s 2019 season. Martel received his MFA from the University of Houston and is also an ensemble member of both Lifeline Theatre and The Gift.

**Michael E. Martin**  
(Ernest) is overjoyed to be making his debut at The Gift. Regional: Actor 9 in the Jeff-Award winning world premiere of *United Flight 232* (The House Theatre of Chicago); Chief/Herald swing/Ensemble in *Jonah and James the Less/John understudy in Jesus* (Sight & Sound Theatres); Kerchak in *Tarzan and Neville Craven in The Secret Garden* (Thingamajig Theatre Company); Eddie in *Sister Act*, Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd*, Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*, Donkey in *Shrek*, and Ronald McCowan in *Hands on a Hardbody* (Rocky Mountain Repertory). TV: *Chicago Fire*. St. Louis native with an MM in Music Theatre from Oklahoma City University and a BM in Music Education from Murray State University. Represented by Paonessa Talent Agency. All glory and honor to God!  
www.michaelemartin.com, IG: @memartinsings

**Emilie Modaff**  
(Nicole / Grandma & Kentucky’s Music Director) (they/them) is a Chicago-based multidisciplinary artist. They are honored to be working at The Gift Theatre for the first time and to be working with the illustrious Chika Ike again. Previous projects include: *Pussy Riot* (Red Tape Theatre); *In The Blood* (Red Tape Theatre); *In The Canyon* (Jackalope Theatre); *Les Innocents* ((re)discover theatre); *Little Flower of East Orange* (Eclipse Theatre); *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical* (Emerald City Theatre); *Big Love* (Strawdog Theatre) and more. They are represented by Shirley Hamilton. Thank you, Mom, Dad, Andy, Peter + Selena.
BIOGRAPHIES cont.

Ana Silva (Bridesmaid 1 / Larry) is a native of Portland, OR (the cool Portland), a graduate of AMDA LA/NY, and is thrilled to be making her Gift Theatre debut! An ALTA Award winner for Outstanding Improviser in Chicago, Ana was previously seen in The Second City’s She the People and was a recipient of the 2018 NBC Universal/The Second City’s Bob Curry Fellowship. Select Credits Include: XY: The Musical Staged Reading (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); In the Heights (Casa 0101/ Teatro Nuevos Horizontes); and the web series Diagnosis: Boring. You can see Ana improvise around Chicago with her teams: Matt Damon Improv (2017 Best Improv Team CWFF), Baby Wants Candy, and Improvised Jane Austen. A huge thank you to Chika, Emjoy, and The Gift Team for taking a chance on a silly brown girl from Comedy Land! Follow Ana on Instagram and Twitter, @theAnaSilvaShow, or check out www.theanasilva.com. Proudly represented by Gray Talent Group.

Hannah Toriumi (Sophie) is extremely grateful to be playing Sophie, a Jesus-loving young woman who Hannah would probably be besties with if Sophie were in fact a real person…. and they met at, let’s say, a bible study or something…in suburban Kentucky. Hannah is a proud Gift ensemble member and has been in such Gift shows as: Cosmologies, Hamlet, Richard III, and a couple of TEN festivals. Other Chicago credits include: The Firebirds Take the Field (Rivendell Theatre), The Pavilion (Open...
Door Theatre), The Making of a Modern Folk Hero (TOTC), Hundred Flowers Project (Silk Road Rising), The Father (Rendition Theatre). Film and television credits include NBC’s Chicago PD, and the web series #WhoKilledHeather?. Hannah is represented by Gray Talent Group and is a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf. Much love and thanks to MPT and all the Gifties who make this magic possible.

Jessica Vann (Amy & Kentucky’s Choreographer) is excited to be making her Gift Theatre debut! Other Chicago works includes 1776 and Billy Elliot The Musical (Porchlight); Homos, or Everyone in America (Pride Films and Plays); Disaster: The Musical (Chicago Theatre Workshop); Story of a Story (The Untold Story), (Underscore Theatre Company); HAIR: The American Rock Musical and Ragtime (Big Noise Theatre). Other than performing, she is an entrepreneur, blogger, youth advocate, and a member of The Chicago Inclusion Project. Love you Mom, Dad, broham, and Granny, you all are my rock! www.jessvanncreates.com

Graham Carlson (Understudy Ernest / James) is a graduate of and instructor for Black Box Acting’s STUDIO and ACADEMY training programs. He has toured as an improver and educator in Catharsis Productions’ Sex Signals. Some favorite recent credits include Grace, or The Art of Climbing (Brown Paper Box Co.); How to Live on Earth (Chimera Ensemble); Clybourne Park (Open Door Theatre); She Kills Monsters (Cuckoo’s Theatre Project); and Five Mile Lake (u.s. Shattered Globe). He is represented by BMG Models & Talent.
Kim Fukawa (Understudy Masako / Amy) is excited to be working with The Gift for the very first time. Recent credits include Othello (Babes With Blades Theatre Company); 1776 (Porchlight Music Theatre); Neverwhere (Lifeline Theatre); and United Flight 232 (House Theatre). Kim is an Artistic Affiliate with Babes With Blades Theatre Company.

Tamarus Harvell (Understudy Da’Ran / Adam / Sylvie) is happy to be working with The Gift Theatre again where he appeared in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest. He was last seen in a production of Choir Boy (Raven Theatre). He has worked with several theatre companies in Chicago including Black Ensemble Theatre, Artemisia Theatre, and MPAACT Theatre. He has also starred in several short films that have been selected for the Chicago’s Black Harvest Film Festival. He would like to thank his fiancé and parents for their love and support. He is currently represented by Big Mouth Talent, Inc.

Kim Fukawa
Blades Theatre Company; 1776 (Porchlight Music Theatre); Neverwhere (Lifeline Theatre); and United Flight 232 (House Theatre). Kim is an Artistic Affiliate with Babes With Blades Theatre Company.

Gabrielle Maalihan (Understudy Hiro / Laura / Bridesmaid 2) was born and raised in the city of San Francisco, California. She came to Chicago to further pursue acting and just recently graduated with a B.F.A. in Acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University. Recent credits include Jeff and the Dead Girl, She Kills Monsters, Occupy Gambier, Desert Stories for Lost Girls, Blown Youth, Call of the Wild, Night of the Iguana and Blood Wedding. She is so grateful to be working with The Gift Theatre in her first professional theatre production! As a first generation Filipino American, Gabrielle is proud of her roots and strives to find opportunities to represent her community. Gabrielle is also proudly represented by Gray Talent Group.

Wil Ann Whedbee (Understudy Nicole / Grandma / Bridesmaid 1 / Larry) (they/them and he/him) is born and raised in Chicago’s NW side not too far from The Gift. Wil is a graduate of The Chicago High School for the Arts, IO Theater, The ACADEMY at Black Box Acting and Steppenwolf West. When they’re not

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For details, go to www.thegifttheatre.org or call 773.283.7071
acting, Wil can be found performing their solo musical material as Campfire Wil, and his debut album will be dropping Summer of 2020. Wil was last seen at Steppenwolf Theatre’s Lookout Series in The Trans Voices Cabaret directed by Laura Alcalá Baker and musical director Doug Peck. Wil is so thrilled to be working with the outstanding humans here at The Gift again after performing in the 2019 production of TEN and wants to give a shout out to Emjoy and Michael for believing in them and making them feel so welcomed. Thank you!

Harmony Zhang (Understudy Sophie) is a recent MFA graduate of The Theatre School and is thrilled to be working with The Gift Theatre for the first time. She earned her BA from Duke University, where she appeared in An Experiment with an Air Pump (Ellen), Enron, and BOB: A Life in Five Acts. During her time at The Theatre School, she appeared in Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play (Maria/Lisa Simpson), The House of Bernarda Alba (Angustias), The Cat in the Hat (The Fish), and The Wong Kids in the Secret of the Space Chupacabra, Go! (Violet). Her regional credits include the world premiere of Hershel & The Hanukkah Goblins at Strawdog Theatre Company. Originally from Tucson, Arizona, Harmony loves making Chicago her new home, working with children and making theatrical appearances across town. She is currently represented by Lily’s Talent.

www.harmonyzhang.com

Leah Nanako Winkler (Playwright) is an award-winning playwright from Kamakura, Japan and Lexington, Kentucky. Her plays include God Said This (Winner: 2018 Yale Drama Series, World Premiere: Humana Festival, Off Broadway Premiere Primary Stages/Cherry Lane); Kentucky (2015 Kilroys List, World Premiere: Ensemble Studio Theatre in co-production with Page 73 and the Radio Drama Network, West Coast Premiere: East West Players); Two Mile Hollow (2017 Kilroys List, simultaneous World Premiere with Artists At Play in LA and Mixed Blood/ Theater Mu in Minneapolis, First Floor Theater in Chicago and Ferocious Lotus in San Francisco); Death For Sydney Black (terranova Collective, 2014 Kilroys Honorable Mention); Diversity Awareness Picnic (Clubbed Thumb/Playwrights Horizons Superlab, 2014 Kilroys Honorable Mention); Linus and Murray (EST/ Marathon 2017); Hot Asian Doctor Husband (upcoming at Theater Mu/Mixed Blood in August 2019); and Nevada-Tan (an Audible commission coming soon). She started out self-producing experimental comedies with her now defunct theater company Everywhere Theatre Group from 2006-2012 at places like the New Ohio Theatre, The Brick Theatre, Dixon Place, the Ontological Hysteric Theater/Incubator Arts Project, The Prelude Festival and random boats and bars. Leah’s collections of short plays, Nagoriyuki & Other Short Plays and The Lowest Form Of Writing are performed widely in the US, France and Asia. She has served on the faculty of New Group’s Urban Arts Initiative, ESPA at Primary Stages and the Writer’s Foundry at St. Joseph’s College, as well as teaching as a guest artist at schools around the country. She is currently a labbie at Ma Yi and a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre. She was a 2017 Ucross fellow with the Sundance Institute. She's working on commissions from WP Theater, EST/SLOAN and Yale Rep. Leah was awarded the first-ever Mark O’Donnell Prize from The Actors Fund and Playwrights Horizons. She is also currently one of the inaugural recipients of a commission from Audible’s Emerging
Playwrights Fund and was named the 2017-2019 Jerome New York Fellow at the Lark. She is a writer on A24’s *Ramy* on Hulu and formerly, Michael Moore’s TV Nation. She holds an MFA from Brooklyn College. – Extracted from www.leahnanako.com

**Chika Ike (Director)** is an ensemble member of The Gift Theatre, where she also serves as the director of the 4802 New Play Development Residency. Recent projects include *A Swell in the Ground, Franklinland, In the Blood, No Child, Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea, and Don’t Smoke in Bed*. She has also worked with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Victory Gardens, About Face Theatre Company, Chicago Inclusion Initiative, Chicago Dramatists, Prologue Theatre Company, and Eclipse Theatre Company. Fellowships include the Drama League New York Directing Fellowship (currently), SDCF Gielgud Directing Fellowship, the Bret C. Harte Directing Fellowship, and the VG Directors Initiative. www.chikavike.com

**Kenya Ann Hall (Assistant Director)** is an actress, writer, director and dramaturg based in Chicago, raised in Oakland, CA. She has directed for Black Lives Black Words, El Bear Theatre and Womxn Collective. Her recent acting credits include *The Ridiculous Darkness* (Sideshow); *The Revolutionists* (Strawdog, u/s); *Mother of the Dark Water* (MPAACT, Tour, u/s); *Mr. Moral’s Stories…* (El Bear); *Cornerstone* (Nothing Without A Company); *Electra Garrigó* (Right Brain Project); and *Mary Shelley Sees the Future* (Runaways Lab Theater). Her writing has been featured at Mudlark Theater Company, Victory Gardens as part of the Each & Her Performance showcase, the inaugural Ain’t I a Woman Festival, the 2015
Northwestern Senior Writing Showcase, and received honorable mention for the Dr. Floyd Gaffney Playwriting Award. Her dramaturgy credits include Saint Joan (Poetic Forum Collective); The Good Fight and The Lady Demands Satisfaction (Babes with Blades). She is a graduate of Northwestern University and is represented by BMG Talent.

**Ryan Emens (Scenic Designer)** is thrilled to make his debut working with The Gift Theatre this season. Previous work includes Life on Paper and Dutch Masters (Jeff Award Non-Equity Winner 2019) (Jackalope Theatre Company); Native Son (Yale Repertory Theatre); Othello and Three Sisters (Yale School of Drama); The Guide to Being Single (Underscore Theatre); Welcome to America (Prologue Theatre); Rotpeter (Mercy Street Theatre); Coraline (Black Button Eyes Productions); Emperor of the Moon and Lotto Fever (St. Sebastian Players). He is an MFA Scenic Design graduate from Yale School of Drama.

**Rachel Levy (Lighting Designer)** is excited to be working with The Gift for the first time! Her credits include: Tiny Beautiful Things (Victory Gardens); Art On The Mart (The Merchandise Mart Facade); A Shayna Maidel, Disappearing Number (Timeline Theatre); We’re Going To Be Okay, Welcome To Jesus, T., Picnic, Kill Floor (American Theatre Company); Million Dollar Quartet (Great Lakes Center for the Arts); The Secretaries (About Face Theatre); 3C, Accidentally, Like A Martyr (A Red Orchid Theatre); Moonshot, American Revolution (Theater Unsplicable); House of Blues New Orleans (Resident Lighting Designer, NOLA); Wallenda Tightrope Live (Lighting Director); and SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE Seasons 7-10 (Lighting Director, LA). Rachel has also received two Primetime Emmy Award Certificates for Best Lighting for a Variety, Music, or Comedy Show (SYTYCD 2011, 2012), a National IES Award (Merchandise Mart Facade), and an Equity Jeff Nomination for Welcome to Jesus.

**Lena Aubrey (Master Electrician)** is a recent graduate of Columbia College Chicago. She freelances around Chicago doing electrics and lighting design work. Recent shows include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead at Columbia College and The Storefront Project at The Museum of Contemporary Art.

**Rachel M. Sypniewski (Costume Designer)** is grateful to be designing with The Gift again, previously designing Unseen. Other companies she has worked with include Goodman, Black Button Eyes, Jackalope, The New Colony, Broken Nose, Emerald City, Lifeline, Haven, 16th Street Theater, Griffin, CityLit, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, Strawdog, The Factory, Red Tape, Promethean, Redtwist, and Trap Door. She also has designed with Wheaton College, North Central College, St. Patrick’s High School, Indiana University Northwest, and the Chicago Academy for the Arts. Rachel is an Artistic Associate with 16th Street Theater, The Factory, Trap Door and Griffin. She is a six-time nominee of the Non-Equity Jeff Award in Costume Design, receiving one. More info at www.rachelsyp.com

**Aaron Stephenson (Sound Designer)** is thrilled to work with The Gift again after designing the 4802 production Open Season and Richard III in the Steppenwolf Garage. His work has been featured in productions by Jackalope, Underscore, The Hypocrites, Strawdog, Red Tape, Trap Door, and others. He is the Audio Technician at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. Infinite thanks to Dr. Mann for her love and patience.
**Tessa Keller (Properties Designer)** is a senior at DePaul University majoring in Theatre Technology. This is Tessa’s debut props design. Previous educational credits include Technical Director for *Falling, Go Dog. Go!,* and *Orestia.* Tessa is also the Technical Director for The Rover (February 2020) at DePaul. Tessa hopes to continue with props design in the future.

**Gaby Labotka (Intimacy and Fight Director)** is thrilled for her fourth collaboration with The Gift and her fifth with Chika Ike! She is an actor, director, choreographer, and more living in Chicago and working both locally and nationally. She is a Certified Intimacy Director with Intimacy Directors International, an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors, and a proud member of the Alliance of Latinx Theatre Artists (ALTA). Gaby is a fierce advocate for respect, empathy, representation, inclusion, and safety in the theatre. The Gift credits include *Wolf Play* (Ash Understudy), *Hamlet* (Fight Director) and *A Swell in the Ground* (Intimacy and Fight Director). Selected recent choreography credits include *A Doll's House* (Intimacy, Fight, and Movement Director, Writers' Theatre); *Bernhardt/Hamlet* (Intimacy Consultant, Goodman); *Oslo* (Fight and Intimacy Director, TimeLine); *X* (Fight and Intimacy Director, Sideshow Theatre); *Kiss* (Intimacy Director, Haven Chicago); *Desire in a Tinier House* (Intimacy and Fight Director); *Indecent* (Associate Intimacy Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *La Ruta* (Fight Director, Steppenwolf); *In the Blood* (Fight and Intimacy Director, Red Tape Theatre); *Through the Elevated Line* (Fight and Intimacy Director; Silk Road Rising); *A Story Told in Seven Fights* (Fight Director, The Neo-Futurists, ALTA Award: Outstanding Fight Choreography); and *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* (Intimacy Director, First Floor Theater, ALTA Nomination: Outstanding Intimacy Design). Training: IDI, SAFD, RAD, Pig Iron, Actors’ Gymnasium, and Illinois State University. For more please follow @theatre_warrior on Twitter and Instagram, follow her Facebook Page, and check out www.gabylabotka.com.

**Dwight Sora (Dialect Coach)** thanks The Gift for the opportunity to help bring verisimilitude to Kentucky’s Japanese characters. A native of River Forest, Dwight holds a B.A. from the Department of East Asian Languages & Civilizations at University of Chicago and studied at Waseda University in Tokyo. As an actor, Dwight has appeared in *After the Quake* (u/s, Steppenwolf Theatre); *12 Angry Men* (Raven Theatre); *The Three Musketeers* (Lifeline Theatre); and *Cymbeline* (Strawdog Theatre). He holds a third degree black belt in the Japanese martial art of aikido, and has provided fight choreography for *Pacific Overtures* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *Wild Boar* (Silk Road Rising); and *Company* (Mercury Theatre). Last year he served as assistant director on the regional premiere of Vietgone (Writers Theatre).

**Alex Oparka (Stage Manager)** is delighted to be working with The Gift Theatre for the first time! Chicago credits include: *In The Blood* (Red Tape Theatre); *No Child* (Definition Theatre Company); *Moon Man Walk* (Rehearsal Stage Manager – Definition Theatre Company); *Barbecue* (Assistant Stage Manager - Strawdog Theatre Company). Forever thankful to my family for all the love and support throughout the years.

**Tori Thompson (Assistant Stage Manager)** is originally from Arizona but finds herself in the beautiful Midwest pursuing technical theatre. She is honored to be the Assistant Stage Manager for The Gift’s production of *Kentucky.* Tori is glad to have worked so closely with amazing people and is excited for her next adventure.
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 nearly 40 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, and Light Up the Sky at Gurnee Theatre Company.

Sarah Luse (Production Manager) has been the production manager at The Gift for the last four seasons. Along with production managing she is a stage manager in the city. A few favorite Gift credits include The Lonesome West, Thinner Than Water, Wt, TEN, Bethany, Richard III, Pilgrims and Doubt. Other favorite Chicago stage management credits include Completeness, Thom Pain (based on nothing), Bad Jews, and The Antelope Party (Theater Wit); Bonhoeffer’s Cost and Redeemed: The Fall and Rise of Chuck Colson (Provision Theater); and The Temperamentals (About Face Theatre). Regionally Sarah has worked as part of the stage management team with the Michigan Shakespeare Festival for their 2014, 2018, and 2019 seasons. Currently she is stage managing Sherlock’s Last Case at First Folio Theatre.

Michael Patrick Thornton (Co-Founder, Artistic Director: The Gift) recently appeared in The Gift’s acclaimed, controversial, non-Jeff-Recommended production of Doubt at Steppenwolf; in Nassim (Barrow St./ New York City Center); in Steppenwolf’s The Crucible; as King Richard in The Gift’s Richard III at Steppenwolf; in Gift ensemble member Will Eno’s Title and Deed (Lookingglass) directed by Gift ensemble member Marti Lyons; the premiere of Gift ensemble member Andrew Hinderaker’s Colossal; as well as Othello at The Gift (Iago) directed by longtime pal/collaborator Jonathan Berry. Michael appeared in Actors Theatre of Louisville’s Our Town and Will Eno’s Middletown at Steppenwolf, both directed by theatre wizard Les Waters. Michael played the title role in Steppenwolf’s The Elephant Man, directed Steppenwolf’s Of Mice and Men, and was a very grateful assistant director for Steppenwolf’s August: Osage County. Awards: Best Actor: 2017 Midwest International Film Festival (The View From Tall); 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; The Joseph Jefferson Award for Solo Performance; and induction into The University of Iowa and St. Patrick High School Halls of Fame. TV/Film: Away, Madam Secretary, Magnum P.I., Counterpart, The Red Line, Elementary, The Exorcist, The Chicago Code, Jeri’s Grill, The Jamz, Private Practice, The View from Tall, The Dilemma. Michael is the creator of the critically acclaimed improv show YOU & ME, which recently played in Dublin, Ireland.
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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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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 have happened 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 this season and seasons to come.

We miss you, Carol.

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

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