

# ELF

THE MUSICAL



SYRACUSE  
**stage**  
EDUCATION

STUDY GUIDE

# Study Guide Contents

- 3.) Production Credits
- 4.) Introduction
- 5.) Letter from Community Engagement and Education
- 6.) Meet the Director
- 7.) Synopsis
- 8.) Characters
- 9.) Book & Songs
- 10.) Musical Adaptation
- 11.) Santa & Elves
- 13.) Elf on the Shelf
- 14.) Holiday Movie Classics
- 15.) Questions for Discussion
- 18.) Elements of Drama
- 19.) Elements of Design
- 20.) Sources and Resources

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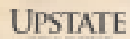
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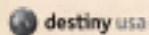
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PRODUCTION OF

# ELF THE MUSICAL

BOOK BY

Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin

MUSIC BY

Matthew Sklar

LYRICS BY

Chad Beguelin

DIRECTED BY

Donna Drake

MUSIC DIRECTION BY

Brian Cimmet

CHOREOGRAPHED BY

Brian J. Marcum

BASED UPON THE NEW LINE CINEMA FILM WRITTEN BY

David Derenbaum

SCENIC DESIGNER    COSTUME DESIGNER    LIGHTING DESIGNER    SOUND DESIGNER

Czerton Lim

Jessica Ford

Martin E. Vreeland

Jacqueline R Herter

PROJECTION DESIGNER

Katherine Freer

STAGE MANAGER

Laura Jane Collins\*

CASTING

Harriet Bass Casting

*Originally produced by Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures in association with Unique Features. The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. Elf The Musical is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI, New York, NY. Tel: (212) 541-4684. Fax: (212) 397-4684. [www.MTIshows.com](http://www.MTIshows.com)*

*\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

November 23, 2018 - January 6, 2019

# Welcome!



As you take your students on the exciting journey into the world of live theatre, we hope that you'll take a moment to help prepare them to make the most of their experience. Unlike movies or television, live theatre offers the thrill of unpredictability.

With the actors present on stage, the audience response becomes an integral part of the performance and the overall experience: the more involved and attentive the audience, the better the show. Please remind your students that they play an important part in the success of the performance.

## A FEW REMINDERS...

### audience etiquette

#### BE PROMPT

Give your students plenty of time to arrive, find their seats, and get situated. Have them visit the restrooms before the show begins.

#### RESPECT OTHERS

Please remind your students that their behavior and responses affect the quality of the performance and the enjoyment of the production for the entire audience. Live theatre means the actors and the audience are in the same room, and just as the audience can see and hear the performers, the performers can see and hear the audience. Please ask your students to avoid disturbing those around them. Please no talking or unnecessary or disruptive movement during the performance. Also, please remind students that cell phones should be switched off completely. No texting or tweeting, please. When students give their full attention to the action on the stage, they will be rewarded with the best performance possible.

#### GOOD NOISE, BAD NOISE

Instead of instructing students to remain totally silent, please discuss the difference between appropriate responses (laughter, applause, participation when requested) and inappropriate noise (talking, cell phones, etc).

#### STAY WITH US

Please do not leave or allow students to leave during the performance except in absolute emergencies. Again, reminding them to use the restrooms before the performance will help eliminate unnecessary disruption.



Dear Educator,

The best way of learning, is learning while you're having fun.

When you hear something you can forget it, but when you see something it stays with you forever. Live theatre provides the opportunity for us to connect with more than just our own story, to find ourselves in other peoples lives, and grow beyond our own boundaries.

We're the only species on the planet who make stories. It is the stories that we leave behind that define us. Giving students the power to watch stories and create their own is part of our lasting impact on the world.

We invite you and your students to engage with the stories we tell as a starting point for you and them to create their own.

Sincerely,

Joann Yarrow & Kate Laissle  
Community Engagement and Education

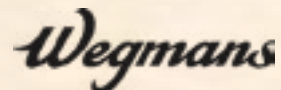
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## 2018/2019 EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH SPONSORS

Syracuse Stage is committed to providing students with rich theatre experiences that explore and examine what it is to be human. Research shows that children who participate in or are exposed to the arts show higher academic achievement, stronger self-esteem, and improved ability to plan and work toward a future goal.

Many students in our community have their first taste of live theatre through Syracuse Stage's outreach programs. Last season more than 15,500 students from across New York State attended or participated in the Bank of America Children's Tour, the Young Playwrights Festival, Backstory, Young Adult Council, and/or our Student Matinee Program.

We gratefully acknowledge the corporations and foundations who support our commitment to in-depth arts education for our community.



J.M. McDonald  
Foundation



# MEET THE DIRECTOR



Donna Drake

**Broadway:** Original production of *A Chorus Line*, *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Woman of the Year*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *5678-Dance*, *It's So Nice to Be Civilized*, and the original production of *The 1940s Radio Hour*. She directed four Broadway concerts of *Nothing Like a Dame* for BC/EFA. She is co-writer and director for the acclaimed singing string quartet, *Well-Strung*, having debuted at London's West End, Leicester Square, New York City, and currently on National Tour. Awards: an Emmy nomination, four Drama Desk nominations, a Mac Award nomination, a Theatre World Award, and an Off-Broadway Alliance nomination.

Drake choreographed Catherine Zeta-Jones for the American Film Institute (AFI) Awards, 2009, and the AFI Awards, 2011, honoring Morgan Freeman and starring Betty White. She directed a new children's show *Addy & Uno*, currently running Off-Broadway, and John Tartaglia's *ImaginOcean* for Off-Broadway, national, and international tours. **TV:** Drake choreographed *Julie's Greenroom*, starring Julie Andrews; *Monica's Mixing Bowl*; Disney's *Johnny & the Sprites*; ABC TV's *Dear Alex & Annie*, *One life to Live*, and *The Edge of Night* (contract roles). **Regional:** *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Mickey Rooney and Eartha Kitt; *Romance in the Dark*, starring Jennifer Holliday; *Nothing Like a Dame*, BC/EFA 2004-06; *All the World's a Stage* at Carnegie Hall. **Additional:** *A Chorus Line*, National Tour, *AIDA*, *Cats*, *Chicago*, *Godspell*, *Hairspray*, *Sister Act*, *Rent*, *Tommy*, *Damn Yankees*, *NEWSicle*, *Annie*, *Love Always*, *Patsy Cline*, *Smokey Joe's Café*, *Sweet Charity*, *Honk!*, *Lucky Guy*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Anything Goes*, and *Chess*. National tour and documentary film for *Varla Jean Merman*, *Christmas with the Crawford*s, *The Wiz*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Buddy Holly Story*, *The Medium*, and *John Tartaglia at 54 Below*, NYC. Miss Drake is currently teaching acting at Pace University in New York City. Visit [DonnaDrakedirector.com](http://DonnaDrakedirector.com) for more.

# SYNOPSIS

Orphaned baby Buddy crawls into Santa's sack on Christmas Eve and is accidentally brought back to the North Pole where Santa and the elves decide to raise him there as an elf. He grows up clearly much bigger than the rest of the elves and without their toy making skills. When the relentlessly cheerful Buddy learns that he is indeed human he goes to New York City in search of his father, Walter Hobbs. Walter doesn't know that he is Buddy's father.

When Buddy arrives at Walter's office in full elf regalia, claiming to be his son, Walter has him removed. Even as a DNA test confirms he is Walter's son, Buddy is dismayed to learn that Walter is on Santa's Naughty List. His newly found stepmother, Emily, and little half-brother, Michael, don't even believe in Santa! Buddy sets out to help his family and all of New York City experience the joy of Christmas again.





# MAJOR CHARACTERS



**Buddy**- Raised as an elf at the North Pole, he is really a human. He is optimistic, relentlessly cheerful and determined to spread Christmas cheer to gloomy New York City.

**Walter Hobbs**- Buddy's real father, he's a children's book editor, who has lost the Yuletide spirit. He's a bitter workaholic who neglects his family.

**Emily Hobbs**- Walter's kind wife who accepts buddy into their home.

**Michael Hobbs**- Walter and Emily's young son. Although he doesn't believe in Santa Claus, he likes Buddy and wants his family to be whole.

**Jovie**- Working as an elf at Macy's department store, she is cynical. She's been hurt too many times. She is charmed by Buddy's sweet disposition and dedication to Christmas.

**Mr. Greenway**- Walter Hobbs' boss, an ill-tempered tyrant.

**Santa Claus**- St. Nick himself! He also narrates the show.

**Deb**- Walter's secretary. She's loyal to her boss, but charmed by Buddy.

**Charlie & Shawanda**- Buddy's elf friends at the North Pole. They accidentally spill the beans that Buddy is really not one of them.

**Charlotte Dennon**- A television reporter for NY1, she reports on the supposed UFO in Central Park!



# BOOK & SONGS

## Book

Thomas Meehan (co-writer) was the three-time Tony Award winning book-writer for *Annie*, *The Producers*, *Hairspray*, and *Young Frankenstein*. Other Broadway credits include *Cry-Baby* and *Rocky, the Musical*. With Mel Brooks, he co-authored the films *Spaceballs* and the film version of the musical *The Producers*. Thomas Meehan died in 2017 at the age of 88.

Bob Martin (co-writer) won a Tony Award for *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Among his television scripts are the Canadian *Slings and Arrows*, *Michael: Tuesdays and Thursdays*, and *Michael: Everyday*. For HBO he penned *Sensitive Skin I & II*. For NBC, he adapted *Elf* the movie for the special *Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas*. Bob Martin wrote the book for *The Prom* which premiered in November 2018.



## Songs

Matthew Sklar (music) aside from *Elf The Musical*, Matthew Sklar composed the music for Broadway's *The Wedding Singer*, for which he was nominated for a Tony Award and a Drama Desk Award. He also wrote songs for musicals *The Rhythm Club*, *Judas and Me*, and *Wicked City*, all of which he wrote with lyricist Chad Beguelin. In 2015, he was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Music Direction for the stop-action animated *Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas* starring Jim Parsons. For television, he has composed original songs and music for *Sesame Street* and *Wonder Pets!*, and the NBC Broadcast of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. His awards include the ASCAP Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award, the Gilman/Gonzales-Falla Theatre Award, and the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award. *The Prom*, his current musical with Chad Beguelin opened on Broadway on November 15, 2018.

Chad Beguelin (lyrics) is a four-time Tony Award nominee. For Disney's *Aladdin* he was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Book and Best Original Score, and for the Drama Desk Award for Best Book and Outstanding Lyrics. With Matthew Sklar, he wrote lyrics for *Judas & Me* (NYMF Award for Excellence in Lyric Writing), *Wicked City* Edward Kleban Award for Outstanding Lyric Writing, the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award, Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award, the Gilman/Gonzales-Falla Theatre Award). His non-musical play *Harbor* was first produced in New York in 2013. *The Prom*, his current musical with Matthew Sklar, opened on Broadway on November 15, 2018.

# MUSICAL ADAPTATION

*Elf The Musical* is based on the popular 2003 film directed by Jon Favreau starring Will Ferrell, James Caan, Zooey Deschanel, and Bob Newhart. In the inevitable adaptation process from screen to stage, several things were changed. In the musical, Santa narrates instead of Papa Elf, Buddy's surrogate father who doesn't even appear in the stage version. The musical is set in the recent past rather than 30 years ago, so Santa uses an iPad for his Christmas lists and Buddy finds work at Macy's rather than Gimbel's, a department store which no longer exists. The musical also adds the subplot about Michael and Emily not believing in Santa. Walter doesn't have as steep a path to redemption as in the film, where he's portrayed as greedy and intentionally neglectful of his family.





# SANTA & THE ELVES

The creatures we know as elves find their roots in Norse mythology as beings known as álfar, who are associated with the gods of Valhalla and live in an invisible world beside us. By the middle ages, elves appear as a dark force. In the Old English epic *Beowulf*, elves are described as an evil race descended from Cain. The next written references to elves appear in church texts around 1500 C.E. In medieval Europe, they were seen as mischievous and sometimes malevolent creatures. Elves were blamed for illnesses. They caused nightmares by sitting on a sleeping person's head. They could help a woman through a difficult childbirth, but they could also steal a newborn and substitute a changeling. Elves could be appeased by leaving a bowl of porridge for them on the doorstep.





# SANTA & THE ELVES



Grimm's fairy tale, "The Shoemaker and the Elves," shows the little creatures as benign and secret helpers, but the association of elves with Christmas appears to have started in the U.S. In 1823, Clement Moore's iconic "A Visit From St. Nicholas" ("The Night Before Christmas"), St. Nick himself is called "a right jolly old elf." The relationship must have taken hold in oral tradition because Christmas elves appear in an unpublished Louisa May Alcott story written in 1856. The next year, *Harper's Weekly* magazine offered the poem "The Wonders of Santa Claus," in which St. Nick, "Keeps a great many elves at work / All working with all their might / To make a million of pretty things." The elves had worked their way into Yuletide tradition. Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* cover from December 2, 1922, shows tiny industrious elves busily at work while the exhausted Big Man naps. The green and red costume with pointed hats, shoes, and ears were now standard issue.

# ELF ON THE SHELF

The Elf on the Shelf, a thoroughly manufactured Christmas tradition, first appeared in the children's book *Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition* by Carol Aebersold and her daughter Chada Bell in 2005. The book tells how the red clad elf doll is sent by Santa to watch over children and make sure they're not on the naughty list. At night the elf returns to the North Pole to report to Santa, then appears in a different spot in the home and sits in a different position working on a new activity.

The smirking long-limbed and big-eyed elf dolls are a now a Christmas fixture.

<https://www.elfontheshelf.com/>



Check out the magical teachers' resource center for everything Elf on The Shelf! Bring the spirit of Elf to your classroom with wonderful guides, interactive games, and classroom activities for your students!

<https://www.elfontheshelf.com/teacher-resource-center>



# HOLIDAY MOVIE CLASSICS

*It's a Wonderful Life* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upnZeHhDMZE&t=91s>

*A Christmas Story* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfjEZ88NHBw>

*Elf* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW9wRNqQ\\_P8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW9wRNqQ_P8)

*A Christmas Carol* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ3lr3urgDU>

*Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_HPIjgcJrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_HPIjgcJrA)

*Miracle on 34th Street* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo5OmGDjZEQ>

*Home Alone* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEDaVHmw7r4>

*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBTTipJX-h4>

*The Santa Clause* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx8FX7etF\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx8FX7etF_8)

*Polar Express* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQhRqtt-Fpo>

Food for thought:  
What are some of  
your favorite holiday  
films and why? What  
is it about the  
movies that helps  
you get into the  
holiday spirit?

Enjoy a fun trip down memory lane and view some fun trailers of all your favorite holiday film classics!





# Questions FOR Discussion

- What does the show, *Elf The Musical*, say about family relationships and values? In your eyes what makes a family whole or complete?
- What is one holiday or Christmas tradition you look forward to every year? Is there a tradition when you grow up and possibly have a family of your own that you would like to create and eventually pass on/hand down?
- What is your favorite food during the holidays and what dessert do you look forward to every year?
- If you receive holiday stockings, what does a Christmas Morning stocking look like to you? Is it filled with practical gifts, gift cards, candy? What's something you've always wanted in your stocking?



# Questions FOR Discussion

## Activities for older students

1) For a very long time, winter has been the time for holidays that celebrate community and shared belief. Research and share who celebrates (or celebrated) the following winter holidays and how they are (or were) celebrated:

Saturnalia (an ancient Roman holiday)

Winter Solstice

Christmas

Hanukkah

Kwanzaa

Las Posadas

Yule

St. Nicholas Day

2) The origins of Santa Claus can be found in European traditions, but many of the traditional characters associated with the season are very different from our chubby guy in a red suit. How are the following holiday figures like or unlike Santa Claus?

Father Christmas (England)

The Yule Lads (Iceland)

Père Noël (France)

La Befana (Italy)

Sinterklaas (The Netherlands)

De Kerstman (The Netherlands)

Krampus (Germany and Central Europe)

3) In *Elf The Musical*, Buddy leaves the North Pole and goes to New York City. Write a letter back to Santa describing one of the following events:

Buddy sees New York City for the first time

Buddy meets his father

Buddy meets Jovie

Buddy's experience as a Christmas elf at Macy's



# Questions FOR Discussion

Questions for discussion and writing prompts:

- 1) Imagine that a grown man dressed as one of Santa's elves suddenly enters your world, and it looks like he's not going away. How would you react? What would be your thoughts as he sat in class next to you or claimed to be part of your family? If you worked with him in your after-school job, how would you interact with him? If you work alongside him in a store or fast food restaurant, how would you explain him to customers?
- 2) When characters in a play or story change or grow, they are called dynamic. When they change others, they are catalysts. Which characters in *Elf The Musical* are dynamic? Which ones are catalysts? Are there any who don't change and don't change others?
- 3) When Buddy finds out that he's not an elf, he has to find a place where he belongs. Are other characters looking for a way to belong? What are the different ways that we belong to groups?
- 4) Many of our holidays have religious significance, but underneath our religious beliefs there are many commonalities. What are some of the characteristics that holidays share?
- 5) Buddy changes the people around him. How do we affect others? How does our attitude affect those around us?



# elements of drama

## PLOT

What is the story line? What happened before the play started? What do the characters want? What do they do to achieve their goals? What do they stand to gain/lose?

## THEME

What ideas are wrestled with in the play? What questions does the play pose? Does it present an opinion?

## CHARACTER

Who are the people in the story? What are their relationships? Why do they do what they do? How does age/status/etc. affect them?

## LANGUAGE

What do the characters say? How do they say it? When do they say it?

## MUSIC

How do music and sound help to tell the story?

## SPECTACLE

How do the elements come together to create the whole performance?

*Other Elements: Conflict/Resolution, Action, Improvisation, Non-verbal communication, Staging, Humor, Realism and other styles, Metaphor, Language, Tone, Pattern & Repetition, Emotion, Point of view.*

Any piece of theatre comprises multiple art forms. As you explore this production with your students, examine the use of:

WRITING  
VISUAL ART/DESIGN  
MUSIC/SOUND  
DANCE/MOVEMENT

## INQUIRY

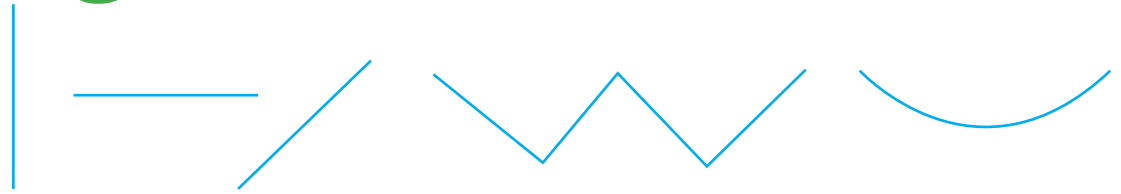
How are each of these art forms used in this production? Why are they used? How do they help to tell the story?

## ACTIVITY

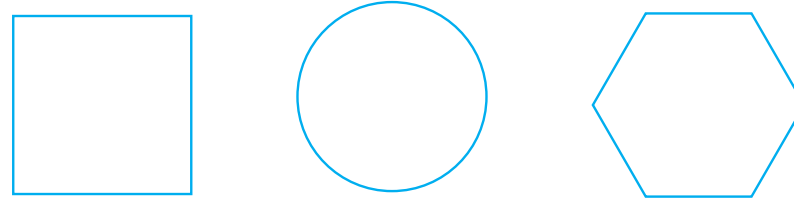
At its core, drama is about characters working toward goals and overcoming obstacles. Ask students to use their bodies and voices to create characters who are: very old, very young, very strong, very weak, very tired, very energetic, very cold, very warm. Have their characters interact with others. Give them an objective to fulfill despite environmental obstacles. Later, recap by asking how these obstacles affected their characters and the pursuit of their objectives.

# elements of design

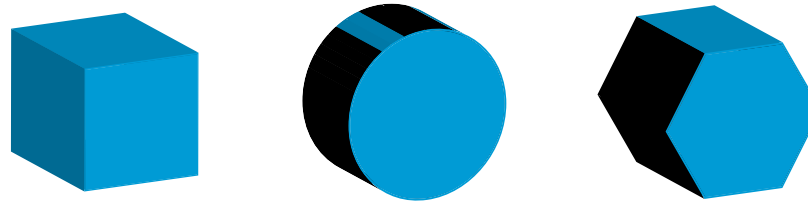
**LINE** can have length, width, texture, direction, and curve. There are five basic varieties: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, and zig-zag.



**SHAPE** is two-dimensional and encloses space. It can be geometric (e.g. squares and circles), man-made, or free-form.



**FORM** is three-dimensional. It encloses space and fills space. It can be geometric (e.g. cubes and cylinders), man-made, or free-form.



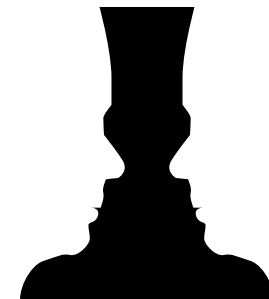
**COLOR** has three basic properties: **HUE** is the name of the color (e.g. red, blue, green), **INTENSITY** is the strength of the color (bright or dull), **VALUE** is the range of lightness to darkness.



**TEXTURE** refers to the “feel” of an object’s surface. It can be smooth, rough, soft, etc. Textures may be **ACTUAL** (able to be felt) or **IMPLIED** (suggested visually through the artist’s technique).



**SPACE** is defined and determined by shapes and forms. Positive space is enclosed by shapes and forms, while negative space exists around them.



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# A SEASON BURSTING

with dynamic stories & vibrant characters

## NOISES OFF

SEPTEMBER 12 - 30

By Michael Frayn

Directed by Robert Hupp

The funniest farce ever written . . . a festival of delirium.

## POSSESSING HARRIET

OCTOBER 17 - NOVEMBER 4

By Kyle Bass

Directed by Tazewell Thompson

Commissioned by The Onondaga

Historical Association

Presented by Nancy and Bill Byrne

A world premiere inspired by the true story of Harriet Powell who escaped slavery while visiting Syracuse in 1839.

## ELF THE MUSICAL

NOVEMBER 23 - JANUARY 6

Book by Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin

Music by Matthew Sklar | Lyrics by Chad Beguelin | Directed by Donna Drake

Choreography by Brian J. Marcum | Musical

Direction by Brian Cimmet | Based on the

New Line Cinema film by David Berenbaum

Co-produced with the Syracuse University

Department of Drama

Great songs, great fun, and tons of holiday cheer.

## NATIVE GARDENS

FEBRUARY 13 - MARCH 3

By Karen Zacarias

Directed by Melissa Crespo

Co-produced with Geva Theatre Center & Portland Center Stage

A spot-on new comedy skewers walls, border disputes and more from adjoining backyards in Georgetown, Washington, D.C.

## PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

MARCH 20 - APRIL 7

By Kate Hamill

Directed by Jason O'Connell

Jane Austen's classic gets a bright and lively makeover for the 21st century.

## THE HUMANS

APRIL 24 - MAY 12

By Stephen Karam

Directed by Mark Cuddy

Co-produced with Geva Theatre Center

The 2016 Tony Award winner for Best Play.

315.443.3275  
SyracuseStage.org

## THE LAST FIVE YEARS

MAY 29 - JUNE 16

Written and Composed by

Jason Robert Brown

Directed by Jason Alexander

Musical Direction by Brian Cimmet

A musical of love gained and love lost.

## COLD READ FESTIVAL

MARCH 7 - 10

Curated by Kyle Bass

Featuring Playwright-In-Residence

Larissa FastHorse

18  
SYRACUSE  
stage  
19

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