

MEDIA RELEASE

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Syracuse Stage Announces 2024/2025 Season

Refreshing takes on timeless classics, two critically acclaimed plays and a world premiere psychological drama anchor a spectacular season of live theater



Syracuse, New York — Glass slippers, world champions, missing love letters, and many, many Mai Tais add up to a remarkable 24/25 season at Syracuse Stage, featuring a beloved Broadway musical, comedic dramas and unexpected twists on familiar favorites.

The six-show subscription season – including the Julie Lutz Cold Read Festival of New American Plays, and a full schedule of educational, family and community related programming – will run Aug. 2, 2024 - June 29, 2025. Subscription packages are on sale now at www.syracusestage.org or at the Box Office, 315-443-3275.

“We strive to create singular theatrical experiences that delight and entertain Central New York audiences,” said Syracuse Stage artistic director Robert Hupp. “Our 51st season illustrates the breadth and scope of all that theatre aspires to be: From world premieres and musical classics to the familiar and the adventurous, we create our productions right here at our home on Genesee and Irving.”

Subscription season at a glance:

“**Dial M for Murder**” (Oct. 16 – Nov. 3, 2024), “**Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella**” (Nov. 22, 2024 - Jan. 5, 2025), “**Primary Trust**” (Jan. 22 – Feb. 9, 2025), “**King James**” (Feb. 26 – March 16, 2025), “**Sense and Sensibility**” (Apr. 23 – May 11, 2025) and “**The National Pastime**” (Jun. 11 – 29, 2025).

Opening the season is “**Dial M for Murder**,” directed by Robert Hupp (“The Play that Goes Wrong,” “Agatha Christie’s Murder on the Orient Express”). This crisp new adaptation from Jeffrey Hatcher smartly updates the intricately plotted Frederick Knott original, made famous by the 1954 film by the legendary Alfred Hitchcock. Spinetingling suspense from a classic of the genre.

“This memorable movie thriller adapts beautifully to the stage,” said Hupp. “Audiences have really enjoyed our forays into this genre of storytelling, and I’m thrilled to get the new season underway with a taut, edge-of-your-seat whodunit.”

In November, Syracuse Stage will once again offer families a marvelous holiday treat with an invitation for audiences to dream up their own fairytale as they enjoy “**Rodgers & Hammerstein’s Cinderella**.” Returning director Melissa Rain Anderson (“A Christmas Carol,” “Disney’s The Little Mermaid”) brings to life this “enchanted” edition of the enduring musical. Co-produced with the Syracuse University Department of Drama, the musical incorporates additional songs from the celebrated 1997 television film starring Brandy and Whitney Houston.

In the new year, associate artistic director Melissa Crespo leads “**Primary Trust**” by Eboni Booth. Set in the fictional town of Cranberry, New York, “just 40 miles east of Rochester,” this delicate drama charts one man’s journey to put his past (and his love of 2-for-1 Mai Tais) behind him. Crespo, who staged the NYTimes Critic’s Pick production of “El Otro Oz” – a bilingual “Wizard of Oz” sendup – at the Atlantic Theatre this past winter, directs again at Syracuse Stage after helming the 50th Anniversary season productions of “Once” and “What the Constitution Means to Me,” and the East Coast premiere of “Espejos: Clean” from 2022/2023 season.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about Eboni Booth’s beautiful play after I saw the off-Broadway world premiere at Roundabout Theatre Company in 2023,” said Crespo. “And I thought it was especially perfect for Syracuse Stage since it’s set not too far from us. After seeing ‘Primary Trust,’ I am certain audiences will leave the theatre and run to call their friends and family just to say: I love you.”

“**King James**,” Pulitzer Prize nominated playwright Rajiv Joseph’s savvy investigation of male friendship, comes to Syracuse Stage in the spring courtesy of a co-production with Indiana Repertory Theatre. Following two die-hard Cleveland Cavaliers fans living in the shadow of superstar LeBron James’ career, the play will be directed by Jamil Jude, and is sure to resonate with Syracuse audiences as a love letter to basketball and the community building power of hometown teams.

Next is actor and playwright Kate Hamill’s whimsical, witty adaptation of Jane Austen’s “**Sense and Sensibility**,” directed by Jason O’Connell. Both director and writer are no stranger to Syracuse Stage: O’Connell recently led the company’s “Agatha Christie’s Murder on the Orient Express” as Hercule Poirot and was seen in “Amadeus” (2020) and “Eureka Day” (2021); Hamill’s adaptation of “Pride and Prejudice” played the Archbold Theatre in 2019 (directed by O’Connell); and both actors,

who were wed in 2020, starred together in productions of “Talley’s Folley” (2021) and “The Play the Goes Wrong” (2022).

Closing out the season in June is “**The National Pastime**,” a Julie Lutz Cold Read World Premiere about the collision of baseball and espionage. Written by Rogelio Martinez and directed by Johanna McKeon, this psychological drama continues the company’s commitment to developing new work, joining recent Syracuse Stage premieres “Tender Rain” and “Salt City Blues” by resident playwright Kyle Bass.

The production will also support the **Julie Lutz Cold Read Festival of New American Plays**, with events and readings held throughout the run of “The National Pastime” curated by Melissa Crespo. Christine Quintana, writer of “Espejos: Clean,” will return to Syracuse Stage as the Cold Read Festival Playwright in Residence.

Hupp added: “Live theatre is the opportunity we all need to gather with family and friends for remarkable, unforgettable evenings. We invite everyone to make Syracuse Stage a part of your life in the coming year.”

Syracuse Stage is also proud to present “**Citizen James, or the Young Man Without a Country**,” a powerful and illuminating production from resident playwright Kyle Bass that was originally incubated as part of the company’s Backstory educational program. A one-man show about a not-yet-famous James Baldwin, “Citizen James” follows the Paris-bound author and activist as he is seeking refuge from the racist violence of America in the 1940s, well on his way to becoming a towering influence in the Civil Rights movement.

Directed by Joann Yarrow and produced in partnership with 100 Black Men of Syracuse, the show, which was presented last fall as part of Carrie Mae Weems’ “Shades of Brown” conference at Brown University, will premiere as a one-night only event on August 2, to coincide with Baldwin’s 100th birthday—coincidentally, it’s also the birthday of actor James Alton, who portrays Baldwin in the play.

“Kyle Bass’ text is a brilliant homage to the genius of James Baldwin, his conflicts and struggles as an artist, and how they reflect our own contemporary times,” said Yarrow, who also serves as director of community engagement. “It is uncompromising, inspiring and a celebration of 100 years of creative activism and social change.”

In addition, Stage will offer a strong line-up of educational and community outreach programs, the return of Sensory Friendly/Relaxed performances for all six subscription shows, and an array of accessibility offerings throughout the season.

“We’re thrilled to be able to offer a Sensory Friendly/Relaxed performance for each of our subscription shows this year,” said Kate Laissle, director of education. “These performances are part of other long-standing accessibility options like ASL interpretation, Audio Description, Open Captioning, and Assisted Listening Devices, and help further our mission to make theatre accessible to all.”

In the fall, the Children’s Tour resumes performances live in elementary schools with “**Pandora’s Suitcase**” by Sarah Bierstock. Directed by Christine Albright-Tufts in association with the Syracuse University Department of Drama, this delightful story explores how both kids and adults can handle

anxiety by learning how to ask others for help and encourages young people to be confident in the people they are becoming.

Laissle added: "Our education programs offer engaging, high quality artistic experiences for our youngest audience members. Research shows that people who are introduced to the performing arts before the age of eight are more likely to grow up believing that theatre is 'for them,' so we're happy to offer performances for theatre-lovers as young as 18-months."

Returning, too, is Theatre for the Very Young, a local touring production for children five and under, with "**House for Mouse**," conceived and directed by Laissle.

SHOW DETAILS

"Dial M for Murder"

Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher

From the original by Frederick Knott

Directed by Robert Hupp

Oct. 16 – Nov. 3, 2024

A new take on the twisty Hitchcock thriller.

Margot and Tony live a seemingly charmed, married life in 1950's London. But not all is as it appears: Margot, desperate to return to idyllic domesticity, has ended a lengthy affair with a dashing American lover, even as she's being blackmailed by a mysterious stranger who threatens to expose her indiscretion. But Tony already knows, and he's planned his own plot of deadly deceit. Adapted from the Frederick Knott original made famous by Alfred Hitchcock's film, Jeffrey Hatcher's stylish adaptation keeps the twists coming until the very end.

"Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella"

Music by Richard Rodgers

Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

Adapted for the stage by Tom Briggs from the Teleplay by Robert L. Freedman

Directed by Melissa Rain Anderson

Music Direction by Brian Cimmet

Choreographed by Jessica Chen

Co-Produced with the Syracuse University Department of Drama

Nov. 22, 2024 – Jan. 5, 2025

The classic musical brings "impossible" dreams to life.

The wondrous musical from Rodgers and Hammerstein proves that dreams do come true – if only we dare to wish – with the beloved songs "In My Own Little Corner," "The Prince is Giving a Ball," and "Impossible/It's Possible." Based on the 1957 television film starring Julie Andrews, this enchanted production of the enduring fairytale updates the classic story for modern audiences while retaining the original charm and magic and features additional music from the celebrated 1997 version starring Brandy and Whitney Houston.

"Primary Trust"

By Eboni Booth
Directed by Melissa Crespo
Jan. 22 – Feb. 9, 2025

Old friends embrace new beginnings in Upstate NY-set drama.

In Cranberry, New York, 40 miles east of Rochester, 38-year-old Kenneth finds comfort in routine. He's worked at the same bookstore for 20 years and has a standing date with his best friend Bert for happy hour Mai Tais. When the bookstore suddenly closes, Kenneth's small-town existence is upended, forcing him to confront deeply buried traumas. A story of friendship, grief, and the heroism of everyday life, Eboni Booth's "Primary Trust" reminds us that we can't fully embrace our future until we let go of our past.

"King James"

By Rajiv Joseph
Directed by Jamil Jude
Co-Produced with Indiana Repertory Theatre
Feb. 26 – March 16, 2025

Basketball makes and breaks the friendship of two die-hard fans.

Cleveland, 2003. Basketball wunderkind LeBron James has just been signed to the Cavaliers, and two die-hard fans strike up an unlikely friendship—with high hopes for their new superstar player. As LeBron's career takes him to the height of fame, pulls him away from Cleveland, and brings him triumphantly back to the city, Matt and Shawn's lives play out off-court with all the drama of a championship season: full of slam dunks, huge upsets, and the unshakable bond of those who share a love of the game.

"Sense and Sensibility"

By Kate Hamill
Based on the novel by Jane Austen
Directed by Jason O'Connell
Apr. 25 – May 11, 2025

Love triumphs over tradition in this playful adaptation.

The world of the Dashwood sisters, Jane Austen's destitute but determined heroines, comes playfully to life in Kate Hamill's warm and inventive adaptation. Romance, heartbreak, twists of fate and never-ending gossip follow Elinor and Marianne, the eldest Dashwood daughters, as they navigate 18th century English society in search of stability after the death of their father. Filled with memorable characters, delicious wit, and timeless comedy, this whirlwind "Sense and Sensibility" is a joyous celebration of one of literature's most treasured stories.

"The National Pastime"

Written by Rogelio Martinez
Directed by Johanna McKeon
A Julie Lutz Cold Read World Premiere
Jun. 11 – 29, 2025

Baseball and espionage collide in this world premiere psychological drama.

Cuba, 2016. A mysterious illness rips through the American embassy in Havana. America, 2017. The Houston Astros are stealing signs, praying for a miracle on the field, and go on to win the World Series. With tensions heightened from the lead-up and aftermath of an election year, the two nations play a dangerous game in the shadows, with their shared national pastimes – baseball and espionage – as their weapons of choice.

SPECIAL EVENTS

“Citizen James, or the Young Man Without a Country”

By Kyle Bass

Directed by Joann Yarrow

Produced in partnership with 100 Black Men of Syracuse

ONE NIGHT ONLY

Aug 2, 2024

Young James is an unknown aspiring “Negro” writer whose first novel has yet to be published. He awaits his flight, having just left his family with the news of his decision to flee America for refuge in Paris. He speaks no French. He has a one-way ticket and \$40 in his pocket. Witness James Baldwin as he decides he must do something to save himself from the violent reality of racist America in 1948, a decision that sets him on the path to becoming a brilliant, powerful, and prophetic voice of the Civil Rights era and beyond. More than a one-man show, “Citizen James” is a bridge that connects the past to our now.

Julie Lutz Cold Read Festival of New American Plays

Curated by Melissa Crespo

Featured Playwright in Residence Christine Quintana

Concurrent with “The National Pastime”

In association with the world premiere of “The National Pastime” – which was developed through Cold Read ‘22 – the Julie Lutz Cold Read Festival of New American Plays will feature readings and events that celebrate the playwriting process at Syracuse Stage. Christine Quintana, writer of “Espejos: Clean” from the 2022/2023 season, will return to Syracuse Stage as the Cold Read Festival Playwright in Residence. Events to be announced.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

“Pandora’s Suitcase”

By Sarah Bierstock

Directed by Christine Albright-Tufts

In association with the Syracuse University Department of Drama

Touring Sep. 24 – Dec. 5, 2024

Pandora is Seriously Curious and Seriously Worried about a lot of things. She loves Environmental Science and asks a lot of questions in her pursuit of learning all she can. When the kids at school call her Teacher’s Pet one too many times, she decides to try out life at Dad’s house, and enrolls at Smarty Pants Academy. Before she leaves she just has this one, Exceptionally Important Scientific

Experiment she must complete. It involves a large suitcase she lugs around with her. What could be inside and why does she need to drag it to the river? Pandora's delightful story explores how both kids and adults can handle anxiety by learning how to ask others for help while encouraging them to be confident in themselves.

“House for Mouse”

Devised and directed by Kate Laissle
Local Touring Production
Spring 2025

Our mice have a problem. They don't quite know what a house looks like but they sure know they'd like to build one. Can our audience friends help them figure out how to make a great house for everyone? Featuring boxes, parachutes, building things, things falling over, and the opportunity for our youngest audience members to help make our mouse's goals a success. Specifically created for audiences ages 18-months to 5-years-old.

About Syracuse Stage:

Founded in 1974 and celebrating its 50th Anniversary Season, Syracuse Stage is the non-profit, professional theatre company in residence at Syracuse University. It is nationally recognized for creating stimulating theatrical work that engages Central New York audiences and significantly contributes to the artistic life of Syracuse University, where it is a vital partner in achieving the educational mission of the University's Department of Drama. Stage's mission is to tell stories that engage, entertain, and inspire people to see life beyond their own experience. Each season, 70,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays, and bold interpretations of classics and musicals, featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves more than 15,000 students from 14 counties. Nationally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre; The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country; the Professional Non-Profit Theatre Coalition (PNTC), independent venues, promoters, and festivals representing every state, Washington, D.C., and Guam. Regionally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), Center State CEO, the University Hill Corporation, and the East Genesee Regent Association.

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