



Everybody's Talking About  
**Jamie**

APRIL 17 - MAY 03, 2026



**NEAR WEST THEATRE PRESENTS**

*Everybody's Talking About*  
**Jamie**

**"SO GO AND FIND YOUR DANCE, GO AND FIND YOUR VOICE."**

**APRIL 17 - MAY 03, 2026**

**PERFORMANCES: APRIL 17, 18, 24, 25, 26 & MAY 01, 02, 03**  
**SPRING TEEN AND ADULT MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION**  
**RUNTIME: 2 HOURS & 40 MINUTES, 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION**

**BOOKS & LYRICS BY TOM MACRAE**  
**MUSIC BY DAN GILLESPIE SELLS**  
**FROM AN IDEA BY JONATHAN BUTTERELL**

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE WAS FIRST PRODUCED BY SHEFFIELD THEATRES AT THE CRUCIBLE THEATRE ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2017 AND WAS INSPIRED BY THE BBC 3 DOCUMENTARY JAMIE: DRAG QUEEN AT 16 PRODUCED BY FIRECRACKER FILMS AND DIRECTED BY JENNY POPPLEWELL. THE SHOW TRANSFERRED TO THE APOLLO THEATRE IN LONDON'S WEST END, PRODUCED BY NICA BURNS AND CO-PRODUCERS IAN OSBORNE, PAULA MARIE BLACK, TERESA AND CRAIG BEECH, ON 6TH NOVEMBER 2017.

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE IS PRESENTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH CONCORD THEATRICALS. [WWW.CONCORDTHEATRICALS.COM](http://WWW.CONCORDTHEATRICALS.COM)

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# Pose!



Near West Theatre's  
Annual Benefit  
Saturday, May 16, 2026

# THE TEAM

**DAVID TURNER**  
DIRECTOR

**OLIVIA TASSONE**  
MUSICAL DIRECTOR

**KRISTY CRUZ & KIRK LYDELL**  
CO-CHOREOGRAPHERS

**WHITNEY MILLER**  
STAGE MANAGER

**ANZEL RICHKOWSKI**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER

**LAURA CARLSON-TARANTOWSKI**  
SCENIC DESIGNER

**MAURITA RIDDLE**  
PROPS DESIGNER

**VANESSA COOK**  
COSTUME DESIGNER

**PERREN HEDDERSON**  
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

**JAMES ROMEO**  
SOUND DESIGNER

**EMILY HEHNEN**  
ASST. TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

**MICHAEL STEIN**  
PRODUCTIONS & RENTALS MANAGER

**LUKE LANNING**  
ASST. STAGE MANAGER

**CHRISTINA CIOFANI**  
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

**DR. LADY J**  
DRAG HISTORIAN

**KATE LEAGUE WESTON**  
DRAMA THERAPIST

**CHRISTINA EASTER**  
A2-SOUND TECHNICIAN

**JEN HITMAR-SHANKLAND**  
SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST

**EMMA & NOAH SUMPTER**  
WARDROBE SUPERVISORS

**TRINIDAD SNIDER**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Ohio Arts  
COUNCIL



  
cuyahoga  
arts & culture  
strengthening community

# THE TEAM

## **MUSICIANS**

CONDUCTOR/KEYBOARD 1 ..... OLIVIA TASSONE  
TENOR SAXOPHONE ..... KELLER SHEA (BOBBY BELAIRS 4/25, 5/3)  
TRUMPET ..... WILLIAM LÉGARÉ (BODHI DAUTEL 5/3)  
GUITAR/KEYBOARD 2 ..... MICHAEL SIMILE  
BASS ..... JASON STEBELTON  
DRUMS ..... NOAH VON LEHMEN  
TROMBONE ..... BRAD SPECK (CLAUDIA CANGEMI 4/17, 4/18)

## **CREW**

BACKSTAGE..... GREG AFANADOR, NATE HAYTAS  
& WARREN KING  
SPOT OPERATORS..... RED BOOSE & SAM JOHNSON

## **PUBLICITY**

PRODUCTION ART DESIGNER..... NOAH HRBEK

# SPECIAL THANKS

TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR HELPING US PUT THIS SHOW TOGETHER

CAMERON MICHALAK  
SARA FADLALLA  
DAMIEN HAMPTON  
DR. LADY J

# THE CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

BEX.....	KATIE UNGER
BECCA.....	BLESSING GEE
SAYID.....	BRIAN CURRIE
DEAN.....	RAFAEL ALARCON
PRITI.....	PRIYA BANKS
CY.....	DOUGLAS CRAWFORD
FATIMAH.....	UNITY CULVER
LEVI.....	TYLER THOMPSON
MICKEY.....	COLIN VANCE SNIDER
VICKI.....	MADDIE JONES
MISS HEDGE.....	TASHA SIMPSON
JAMIE.....	ALLAN HUGHES
RAY.....	SYDNEY WARREN
MARGARET.....	RACHEL DROTAR
HUGO.....	JOEL FENSTERMAKER
JAMIE'S DAD.....	CHRISTOPHER WALKER
LAIKA VIRGIN.....	KELLEN WILLIAMS
TRAY SOPHISTICAY.....	CHRIS SGARLATA
SANDRA BOLLOCK.....	DANIEL PELISSIER
ADULT ENSEMBLE.....	AMANDA DROSTE & JT TAN
TEEN ENSEMBLE.....	MAGGIE CHAPMAN, JAILYN SHERELL (SWING), ZACH LITTLEJOHN, KATHRYN O'SULLIVAN, & MIKEY SZABO
PIT SINGERS.....	KATIE BLUME, KATIE GOODIN, MADELYN HAYES, AVA SOMICH & VIKTOR SWAN

# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

I first discovered Everybody's Talking About Jamie during the pandemic and became a little obsessed—in the best way. I watched clips, listened to the album more times than I can count, and kept digging deeper into the story behind the musical. When I learned it was inspired by a true story—and that the real-life “Jamie” had a documentary—my connection to it only grew. (It's currently on Amazon Prime if you'd like to learn more.)

So when Trinidad first approached me and asked, “What do you know about Everybody's Talking About Jamie?” I couldn't help but smile and blurt out, “I would love to be in that show!” She paused and said, “What if you directed it?” In that moment, my world changed.

This is my Cleveland directorial debut, and I'm grateful it's happening at Near West Theatre—a place I've loved working with since I moved to Cleveland in 2007. Getting to tell Jamie's story has been an honor, and it has affected and healed me in ways I didn't realize I needed. Every queer person has a coming-out story, and every queer person has a story about how their family responded—everything from fully accepting to truly catastrophic. My hope is that audiences will see pieces of themselves throughout this show: in the joy, in the fear, in the humor, and in the courage it takes to keep becoming who you are.

One thing I wanted to reinforce in this production is community. The queer community is full of colorful, resilient people who—at our best—want what is best for each other, and the Cleveland queer community is no exception. Throughout rehearsal, our cast has had honest conversations about queer culture and drag culture, always aiming to come from a place of respect and authenticity. I also invited guests from our community to share their lived experiences—the ugly and the joyous—so that this story could be held with care. I couldn't be more proud of this cast and production team for the heart, bravery, and generosity they've brought into this room.

Thank you for being here and for supporting live theatre at Near West. I hope you'll let Jamie's story remind you of the power of chosen family, the importance of showing up for one another, and the freedom that comes from being unapologetically yourself.

David Turner  
Director, Everybody's Talking About Jamie

# SCENES & MUSICAL NUMBERS

## ACT I

### SCENE 1: MAYFIELD SCHOOL CLASSROOM

AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT ..... JAMIE, MISS HEDGE & TEENS

AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT TAG ..... JAMIE

### SCENE 2: JAMIE'S HOUSE

THE WALL IN MY HEAD ..... JAMIE

### SCENE 3: MAYFIELD SCHOOL CLASSROOM

SPOTLIGHT ..... PRITTI & TEEN GIRLS

SPOTLIGHT (REPRISE) (STAR OF THE SHOW) ..... JAMIE & PRITTI

### SCENE 4: VIKTOR'S SECRET

THE LEGEND OF LOCO CHANELLE ..... HUGO & THE LEGS ELEVEN GIRLS

THE LEGEND OF LOCO CHANELLE (REPRISE) ..... HUGO

### SCENE 5: STREET CORNER BENCH

IF I MET MYSELF AGAIN ..... MARGARET

### SCENE 6: JAMIE'S HOUSE

### SCENE 7: MAYFIELD SCHOOL CORRIDOR WITH TOILET

WORK OF ART ..... MISS HEDGE, JAMIE, DEAN & TEENS

### SCENE 8: OUTSIDE LEGS ELEVEN

### SCENE 9: LEGS ELEVEN

OVER THE TOP ..... HUGO & THE LEGS ELEVEN GIRLS

OUT OF THE DARKNESS ..... ENSEMBLE

# SCENES & MUSICAL NUMBERS CONT'D

## ACT II

### SCENE 1: MAYFIELD SCHOOL CLASSROOM

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE..... TEENS

### SCENE 2: JAMIE'S HOUSE

LIMITED EDITION PROM NIGHT SPECIAL..... JAMIE, RAY & MARGARET

### SCENE 3: MAYFIELD SCHOOL, MISS HEDGE'S OFFICE

### SCENE 4: PRITTI'S BEDROOM

IT MEANS BEAUTIFUL..... PRITTI

IT MEANS BEAUTIFUL (REPRISE) ..... PRITTI

### SCENE 5: JAMIE'S DAD'S HOUSE

UGLY IN THIS UGLY WORLD .....JAMIE

### SCENE 6: JAMIE'S HOUSE

HE'S MY BOY ..... MARGARET

### SCENE 7: BUS STATION

AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT (BUS STATION REPRISE) .....JAMIE

### SCENE 8: JAMIE'S HOUSE, OUTSIDE

### SCENE 9: JAMIE'S HOUSE

MY MAN, YOUR BOY..... JAMIE & MARGARET

### SCENE 10: MAYFIELD SCHOOL EXTERIOR

THE PROM SONG ..... TEENS

### SCENE 11:

FINALE .....COMPANY

OUT OF THE DARKNESS (A PLACE WHERE WE BELONG).....COMPANY



# OUR 2026-2027 SEASON FINDING LIGHT IN THE CHANGE



## RAGTIME

JULY 17  
-  
AUG. 2




## Annie

NOV. 20  
-  
DEC. 6



## HONK!

FEB. 12  
-  
FEB. 28



A FUNNY THING  
HAPPENED  
ON THE WAY TO  
the Forum

APR. 16  
-  
MAY 2

# GET TO KNOW THE CAST

**Rafael Alarcon** (*Dean Paxton*) (He/Him) is very excited to perform on Near West Theatre's stage for his second show here. His most recent credits include: *Hairspray* (Ensemble) at Near West Theatre, *Curtains* (Bobby Pepper), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey II), *The Music Man* (Oliver Hix/Ensemble), and *Clue* (Mr. Green) at Lutheran High School West. When he isn't on stage, he's watching the Cleveland sports teams lose meaningful games. He hopes that you all enjoy the show, even if his character can be nasty at times.

**Priya Banks** (*Pritti Pasha*) (She/Her) is incredibly excited to be making her debut at Near West Theatre! She is a sophomore at Baldwin Wallace University studying for a B.F.A. in Acting, with minors in Music and Spanish. When she's not on stage, she enjoys being with her friends, reading, and playing the flute! Priya would like to thank her family and friends for supporting her in her theatre journey. She hopes you enjoy the show as much as she's enjoyed working on it!

**Katie Blume** (*Pit Singer*) (She/Her) is happy to be returning to Near West Theatre with this amazing cast! Her previous Near West Theatre credits include: *Tommy* (Mrs. Simpson), *Head Over Heels* (Pit Singer) and *Hairspray* (Ensemble, Prudy Pingleton u/s). She would like to thank Matt, Mya and Maxwell for holding down the fort while she's at rehearsal!

**Maggie Chapman** (*Teen Student/Miss Hedge U/S, Bex U/S*) (She/Her) can't believe it's been over a year since she's performed. Her last show was *Scrooge!* (Mary) at Near West Theatre, and she is so thrilled to be back. Her other Near West Theatre credits include the West Clinton *Historic Haunts* (Velma West), *BKLYN* (City Weed), and *The Wizard of Oz* (u/s Almira Gulch/Wicked Witch). Recent credits also include *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Wife/Butler) and *Murder Medium Rare* (Carmen Joseph) at Fairview Park Fine Arts & Theatre Association. Maggie is so grateful to be a part of this incredible production, and she sends a huge thank you to everyone involved in making these performances possible.

**Douglas Crawford** (Cy) (He/Him) is extremely stoked to perform for his first time at Near West Theatre. His most recent credits include *Little Shop of Horrors* (Seymour) at Pleasant Hill Theatrical Guild, *Miracle on 34th Street* (Fred) at Pleasant Hill Theatrical Guild, *Hello Dolly* (Horace) at Pleasant Hill HS, and *Drowsy Chaperone* (Man In Chair) at Pleasant Hill HS. In his free time, Douglas enjoys playing the saxophone and cooking. Douglas would like to thank his family, friends, and Near West Theatre for this amazing opportunity!



*Hearts Wide Open*



**A CONCERT CELEBRATION ROOTED IN STORIES & REFLECTION**

**A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY RESIDENCY BETWEEN  
NEAR WEST THEATRE AND MAY DUGAN CENTER'S  
SENIORS ON THE MOVE! PROGRAM**

**NEAR WEST THEATRE PERFORMANCE**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 24 | 2 PM**

**[CLICK HERE FOR TICKETS](#)**



# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Unity Culver** (*Fatimah*) (She/Her) is a freshman at Cleveland State University, and graduated in June from John Hay Architecture and Design. She is so excited to be working on her first ever Near West Theatre show. Her previous works include *Chicago* (Ensemble), *The Lion King* (Ensemble), *The Grinch That Stole Christmas* (Cindy Lou). When Unity isn't on stage she enjoys dancing in majorette dance form, singing, and listening to music. Unity would like to thank her mom, extended family, and close friends for all their support and hopes everyone enjoys the show tonight!

**Brian Currie** (*Sayid*) (He/Him) is an aspiring performer from Cleveland, Ohio, currently studying at Tri-C. He is excited to return to a Near West Theatre production, bringing his love for musical theater and dance. Notable credits include CMSD All-City musicals: *Urinetown* (Tiny Tom), *In the Heights* (Graffiti Pete), and *Dreamgirls* at Playhouse Square. He has also performed in *We Call You George* (George) at Cleveland Public Theatre, *The Wiz* (Scarecrow), *Hadestown: Teen Edition* (Ensemble), *Bring It On* (Cameron), and *Legally Blonde* (Kyle). Brian thanks his castmates, family, and friends for their constant love and support.

**Amanda Droste** (*Adult Ensemble*) (She/Her) is so excited to return to Near West Theatre! Her most recent credits include: *The Prom* (Mrs. Green) at Near West Theatre, *Ragtime* (Ensemble) at Cassidy Theatre, *Peter Pan* (Mrs. Darling), and *The Wizard of Oz* (Music Director) at Muncie Civic Theatre. When Amanda is not on stage she enjoys walking her dogs, embroidering, reading, and spending time with her family. Amanda would like to thank her family for their unending support!

**Rachel Drotar** (*Margaret New*) (She/Her) is celebrating 26 years with Near West Theatre, her favorite role being a flower seller in *My Fair Lady*. Her most recent credits include *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea* (Dolan/Hans) at Tri-C Metro, *Surviving's Not A Noun* (Charlotte) at Borderlight Fridge Festival, Meredith Wilson's *The Music Man* (Alma Hix) at Near West Theatre, Jeff Glover's *Comma* (Chrissy) at Blank Canvas Theatre, and as part of the *Test Flight Series* at Cleveland Public Theatre. Rachel would like to thank Duane for being the model of love no matter what, this beautiful cast for their endless enthusiasm, the chickens for taking me as I am, and Christina for being perfect.

**Joel Ferstermaker** (*Hugo/Loco Chanelle*) (He/Him) is thrilled to be back on stage at Near West Theatre. Prior experiences at Near West include *Beauty and the Beast* (Magic Rug), *Tommy* (Mr. Simpson/Ensemble), and *Once on this Island* (Ensemble). He wishes to thank Rita for keeping the dogs sane while he was at rehearsal and Brendan for keeping Rita sane similarly. Hope you all enjoy the show!

# REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

AGES: 13-19



# RAGTIME

**AUDITIONS**  
**APRIL 27 - 29 | 7 - 10 PM**

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Blessing Gee** (*Becca, Pritti U/S, Dance Captain*) (She/Her) is over the moon to be a part of this cast and to be a part of telling this beautiful story. She has been performing since she was 13, and enjoys and appreciates more and more every show she does. She wants to thank her fellow castmates and the production team of her dreams for all the hard work and fun they've had along the way! And a special thank you to her mom for the passion and dedication she has for the things she loves! Enjoy the show and remember LOVE ALWAYS WINS<3

**Katie Goodin** (*Pit Singer*) (She/Her) is so thrilled to return to her home away from home here at Near West Theatre. She wants to thank her husband Blake for his love and support, and for his unwavering encouragement.

**Madelyn Hayes** (*Pit Singer/Margaret New U/S*) is so pumped to be working with this wonderful group of humans! She is a Cleveland native, singer, actor and musician. She has studied jazz and vocal improvisation with Amanda Powell and Sheila Jordan, and continues her vocal journey under the tutelage of Timothy Moon. You may have seen her at Ohio Shakespeare Festival as Regan (*King Lear*), The Fairy Godmother (*Cinderella*), Glinda (*The Wizard of Oz*), Magenta (*Rocky Horror Picture Show*). Mopsa in '*Head Over Heels*' at Near West Theatre. Or in '*Everything's Okay and Other Helpful Lies*' as Blazer at Cleveland Public Theatre. Madelyn would like to thank her Mom and friends who have been so supportive though everything. Enjoy and Huzzah!

**Allan Hughes** (*Jamie New*) (He/Him) is beyond ecstatic to make his debut with Near West Theatre as Jamie New in *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*. This role holds a special place in his heart, and stepping into Jamie's heels proves that dreams do come true. He is deeply grateful for the support of his chosen family and friends with special thanks to Eric for his patient love, and to his Gran for embracing her grandson for who he truly is. He dedicates this performance to anyone daring to be unapologetically themselves. Recent credits: *The Prom* (Kevin), *Crazy for You* (Custus), *Hairspray* (Fender). Go find your dance. Go find your voice. Mwah!

**Maddie Jones** (*Vicki*) (She/Her) is thrilled to be making her Near West Theatre debut. Originally from Louisville, KY, she is a BFA Acting Major with a Dance Minor at Baldwin Wallace University. Her previous credits include: *A Funny Thing Happened...* (Ensemble) at BW, *All Shook Up* (Natalie/Ensemble) at Clarksville Little Theater, *Addams Family* (Wednesday), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Chiffon/Dance Captain/Choreographer) all in high school. When not in theater, you can see her dancing with Urban Dance Association and/or singing in Cosmos A Capella at BW. Maddie wants to thank her family, mentors, and her best friend for all of their support. She wants to thank God for putting her where she is today. 1 Peter 5:7



# RAGTIME

**CALLING ALL TEEN MUSICIANS**  
JOIN OUR SUMMER TEEN ORCHESTRA PROGRAM FOR  
"RAGTIME"  
AT NEAR WEST THEATRE

**ARE YOU BETWEEN AGES 13—19 AND PLAY THE:**

**BASS | TUBA | KEYS | PERCUSSION | TROMBONE | TRUMPET | VIOLIN |  
GUITAR | CLARINET/FLUTE/PICOLLO/SOPRANO SAXOPHON**

**WE WANT YOU IN OUR PIT!**

**SHOW DATES: JULY 17 - AUGUST 2**  
MUST BE AVAILABLE AT LEAST 1-2 DAYS A WEEK FOR  
REHEARSALS STARTING LATE MAY.

**THIS IS A PAID OPPORTUNITY THROUGH OUR SOAR! PROGRAM.**

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**



**CLICK TO FOLLOW US**



**@NEARWESTTHEATRE**

# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Zach Littlejohn** (*Teen Ensemble*) (He/They) is so excited to be doing their first show at Near West Theatre! His recent credit include *Something Rotten* (Ensemble) at Solon high school. When Zach is not on stage, he enjoys dancing, drag, sewing and learning to play the guitar. Zach would like to thank all his friends and family for the support. Enjoy the show!

**Kathryn O'Sullivan** (*Teen Ensemble*) (She/Her) is excited to be back on the Near West Theatre stage - this time talkin' about Jamie! Most recently she had the opportunity to costume the children's winter production of *Seussical!* However, for 5 years now she has had the lovely pleasure of both performing and volunteering in productions and events alike at NWT. Among them are performances of *Cinderella*, *The Music Man* (Ethel Tofflemire), *The Prom*, and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Betty/Ensemble). This story is so important, now more than ever; and none of her time spent putting it on its feet would be possible without the love and support of her friends and family. Enjoy the show!

**Daniel Pelissier** (*Sandra Bollock*) (They/Them) is excited to make their Ohio debut at Near West after 14 years in Southwest Florida. Their journey spans stage, indie film, tourism, and a niche in drag. As Lady Laquelle, Daniel has built a following with raunchy song parodies and conceptual music videos. Favorite credits include *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Child Catcher), *Goat Song Revel* (Dionysus), and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Frank N. Furter). Known for a flair for camp and the macabre, they continue developing performances that blend humor, horror, and theatrical spectacle.

**Chris Sgarlata** (*Tray Sophisticay*) (He/Him) is so happy to be in another show at Near West Theatre. He was last on stage here in the fabulous production of *Hairspray* as Wilbur Turnblad. Other favorite shows include *Little Shop of Horrors* (NWT 2005), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (NWT 1991), *West Side Story*, *Children of Eden*, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* and *Cabaret* (Kalliope Stages 2005). *Cabaret* was his first performance in drag and where he met his amazing husband, Bradley Speck, who encouraged him to come back to musical theatre. Thank you so much for all your love and support.

# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Jailyn Sherell Harris** (*Teen Ensemble Swing*) (She/Her) is a native of Cleveland, Ohio and a graduate of Bowling Green State University, where she received her BAC in theatre, with a minor in dance. As a performer, she has had the opportunity to perform in film, festivals, arenas, and in theaters across Northeast Ohio and beyond with credits from Dobama Theatre, Ohio Shakespeare Festival, Ensemble Theatre, Karamu House, Lakeland Civic Theatre, the Players Guild Theatre, and the A.R.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She enjoys working on and developing new works and had the opportunity to perform in the world premiere of *Heartbreakers In Hell* by Joey Contreras and Benjamin Halstead (Rubber City Theatre). Directing credits include a staged reading of the new musical *Wishful Thinking* by Jamie Maletz and a virtual production of *Ragtime* with M.A.D. Factory Theatre. Jailyn has a strong dance background and extensive experience in Jazz, Hip Hop and Musical Theatre. She is an Associate Member of MadJax Dance Company. Jailyn has choreographed for theaters and organizations across the northeast Ohio area and beyond, including the Sitar Arts Center in Washington, DC.

**Tasha Simpson** (*Miss Hedge*) (She/Her) is thrilled to be back on the Near West Theatre stage, where it all began with *Hair*. Favorite credits include *Velveteen*, *A New Musical* (Ty/Poppy) at Playhouse Square and *Fun Home* (Alison) at Cain Park. When not on stage, she's a Cleveland-based content creator, autism advocate, food stylist, and full-time whimsy-seeker. Eternal thank-yous to Krystal & Jean for being the best examples of heart-led community, and to Near West Theatre for the reminder of what human-centered connection and storytelling feels like. All the love to the love of her life, Danny.

**Colin Vance Snider** (*Mickey*) (he/him) is so excited to be returning to Near West Theatre for the 7TH time! He's a sophomore music theatre student at Baldwin Wallace. His most recent credits include: *Hadestown* (Orpheus) and *Next to Normal* (Gabe u/s) at Near West Theatre, as well as *Much Ado About Nothing* (Balthasar) at Baldwin Wallace University and *Footloose* (Travis) at Willoughby Fine Arts. Offstage, he enjoys playing the guitar, collecting Pokemon, doing obnoxious impressions, and playing with his dog. Colin would like to thank his family and friends for their unwavering support of his dreams, and the cast and crew of this production for their diligent work on this production!

**Ava Somich** (*Pit Singer*) (She/Her) is so happy to be in her second Near West Theatre production. Over the past ten years, Ava has been performing and assisting with productions at UpStage Players (10), Silhouette Productions (2), & Cassidy Theatre (2). She is a senior in high school & a part-time college student. Ava would like to thank the amazing production staff, cast, & crew of Near West Theatre's ETAJ for their unending support. Ava would also like to thank her beautiful parents and amazing siblings for always supporting her dreams & for helping her make them a reality.

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# celebrating the arts that bring us together.

Whether on the page, on the screen, on the stage, or anywhere else, art brings life to life. KeyBank is grateful for the passion and creativity that inspire and enrich all our lives, and we're proud to support the arts across our communities. Thank you, Near West Theatre and all those involved in Everybody's Talking About Jamie, for making a difference.



# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Viktor Swan** (*Pit Singer*) Previous credits include *Twelfth Night* (Orsino), *Ripcord* (Scotty), *Kinky Boots* (Angel 2/Dance Captain), *42nd Street* (Bert Barry), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Mercutio). When not onstage, Viktor can usually be found on the production side of shows either directing, designing, or running crew. They would like to thank their Husband Everett, his brother Tom, and last but not least their Grandma for starting their love for theatre. Enjoy the show!

**Mikey Szabo** (*Teen Ensemble*) (He/She) is thrilled to be returning to the Near West Theatre stage! She couldn't be happier to be back working with this wonderful community after some time away. His previous Near West Theatre credits include *Legally Blonde* (Ensemble), *Bring It On* (Ensemble/Stunter), and *All Shook Up* (Ensemble). He can't wait for everyone to see and experience this very important, timely, and joyful show!!!

**JT Tan** (*Adult Ensemble*) (He/Him) is thrilled to represent on stage how understanding & acceptance builds connection & community. A recent specialist in Near West Theatre directorial debuts, he previously launched the NWT directorial careers of Mike Obertacz in *Scrooge* (Bob Cratchit), Jailyn Harris in *Hairspray* (Teacher/Production Assistant/Bum), and now David Turner, who has been an absolute joy. After serendipitously meeting in a rainbow 15 years ago, JT was re-discovered by his daughter, Esther, whose persistent encouragement persuaded him to break his 25 year hiatus in musical theater. In addition to Esther, he owes all he is to his wife, Sarah, and sons, Jackson & Teddy, and Viewers Like You.

**Tyler Thompson** (*Levi*) (He/Him) is a sophomore BFA Acting major and has been acting since the age of eight years old. He has been in numerous stage plays and musicals which were very diverse in culture. Ever since he has remembered his lines his mind has never strayed from acting. Taking it more serious with every single script that has come his way. His passion is a driving force that reflects in his commitments to every role and his enthusiasm will make the ink come to life. In his pursuit of acting he has met and built many relationships encouraging him to keep going. Tyler is thrilled to be back on the Near West theatre stage after 10 years.

**Katie Unger** (*Bex*) (She/Her) is thrilled to be joining Near West Theatre after a 9-year hiatus from the stage. Her past credits include; *Bye Bye Birdie* (Mae Peterson), *Steel Magnolias* (Shelby), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Beatrice), *Seussical* (Gertrude), and *Dracula* (Lucy) at theaters in her home state, WV. Outside of the theatre, Katie works as an event planner for the National MS Society, loves watching horror movies, volunteering in the community, and spending time with friends. Katie would like to thank her family, partner, and friends for their support. Enjoy the show and keep it groovy!

# GET TO KNOW THE CAST CONT'D

**Christopher Walker** (*Jamie's Dad*) has been acting and singing for the past 10 years. Moving here from New Jersey a few years ago, he is new to the Ohio theater scene. He's recently been featured in several independent films but is very excited to return to the stage. This is his first show with Near West Theatre and he is thankful for the talented cast, crew and community that have made *Everybody's Talking About Jamie's* production possible!

**Sydney Noelle Warren** (*Ray*) (She/Her) is excited to be back at home at Near West Theatre! She is a graduate of Baldwin Wallace University. She has a thorough background in music, film, and theater. Sydney has had various roles in Cleveland/Akron. Some roles include Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors* at Near West Theatre, Cinderella in *Rogers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* at Near West Theatre, Betty Jean in *The Marvelous Wonderettes* at Clague Playhouse, and Gussie Carnegie at French Creek Theatre. Sydney is beyond thrilled to work on this important show. The world needs more heroes like Jamie to tell more important stories. Super grateful to be in a cast with so much love and support. Enjoy!

**Kellen Williams** (*Laika Virgin*) (He/Him) is ecstatic to be back on the Near West Theatre stage. He started out on the stage of the Chagrin Falls Academy for the Performing Arts. There, he participated in the following shows: *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Titania/Hippolyta), *Rent* (Angel), *The Wild Party* (Black), and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Mitch). He uses different forms of art as an outlet to express himself like doing drag, sewing costumes, dancing, producing and songwriting. Kellen would like to thank his mother for always supporting him and his dreams, as well as Near West Theatre for welcoming him and allowing him to share the stage alongside many talented artists!





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# GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTIC TEAM

**Christina Ciofani** (*Production Assistant/Dialect Coach*) (she/her) is so thrilled to be a part of the team that's bringing this amazing show to life! Although this is her first time behind the scenes, you might have seen her on the Near West stage in *Hairspray* (Tracy Turnblad), *The Prom* (Emma Nolan), and *Head Over Heels* (Pamela). It has been a dream to work with such an amazing production team, cast, and crew, and she hopes you enjoy the show!

**Laura Carlson-Tarantowski** (*Scenic Designer*) (She/Her) is the resident Scenic Designer and Lecturer at Oberlin College. Recent work at Oberlin includes *L'Orfeo*, *Ancestra*, *Pipeline*, *Stonewallin'*, *Or*, and *The Moors*. Recent designs in the Cleveland area include *Breakfast at the Bookstore* for Karamu House, *Little Women* and *Make Believe* for Dobama Theatre, *Erma Bombeck: at Wits End* for The Cleveland Playhouse, and *Rent* at Cain Park. She holds an MFA in Scene Design from the University of Wisconsin- Madison.

**Vanessa Cook** (*Costume Designer*) (She/Her) BW Conservatory (BM) and Regent University (MA) alum, Mrs. Cook is the owner of Cook Theatre Designs, LLC, a freelance design firm that serves Ohio theatre programs. She served as TD, designer and adjunct professor at Heidelberg University and is former costume/set designer for Heidelberg's Community Music School. In addition to Near West Theatre, Mrs. Cook currently works with several Cleveland based theater companies. Most recently; Oberlin College, Spark Theatre 4 Youth, Dobama, Cleveland Opera Theatre, The Brecksville Theatre and Hathaway Brown Theatre Institute. She also assists with local and regional high school productions teaching the next generation about technical theatre. She has decades of experience and specializes in costume and prop creation. Mrs. Cook is the co-founder of the Norwalk Arts Center (NAC) and serves as advisor to the NAC Teen Association. She is in her fifth year of directing NAC's yearly teen musical. In addition, she designs prop/set and costume for NAC's Junior Theatre.

**Kristy Cruz** (*Co-Choreographer*) (She/Her) is overjoyed to be returning to Near West Theatre, where she most recently choreographed *Hairspray*, *Head Over Heels*, *The Prom*, and directed *Bring It On! The Musical* and *Legally Blonde: The Musical*. She has had the privilege of being involved in countless NWT shows both onstage and off and as a recent addition to the Board, over the last 21 years. Since 2004, 'Krispy' has proudly served as the Choreographer for the Solon High School Drama Club, where students have earned six Dazzle Award nominations recognizing their work for Best Choreography Execution. An active member of the Cleveland theatre community both onstage and off, her direction, choreography, and performances have been seen on stages all across Cleveland and beyond. She sends endless gratitude to the cast for all of their hard work, to Trinidad for always believing in her, and to her friends and family (especially Mom and Summer) for their constant support. Enjoy the show! TPOG

# ARTISTIC TEAM CONT'D

**Christina Easter** (*Sound Technician - A2*)

**Perren Hedderson** (*Technical Director*) (He/Him) has been with Near West Theatre for many years, starting as a young teen acting and helping construct the sets. He is now the Technical Director and a freelance Projection Designer. He has also worked in film here in Cleveland and for a few years in New Mexico. Credits include *We Will Rock You* (projections) at Blank Canvas Theatre, *Chess* (projection design) at Near West Theatre, and a side music project called Triage. He's a Dad now too with two kids. Love to Sarah, Kellen, Asa, and Sab!

**Emily Hennen** (*Assistant Technical Director*) (She/Her) graduated from Ohio University with a BFA in Production Design and Technology in 2016 and has been with Near West full time since 2018. Occasionally, she also works as a sound and video technician for Near West events and performances, and she is thrilled to continue working with such a talented and creative team.

**Jenny Hitmar-Shankland** (*Scenic Charge*) has been painting for Near West Theatre since 2002. She is currently on staff as a Scenic for the Cleveland Play House. She has taught scenic painting at Baldwin Wallace University and regularly paints their mainstage shows. She loves how close the north-east Ohio theater community is and also has painted for CMA's Parade the Circle, Cleveland Opera Theater, Blank Canvas, Ballet Theater of Ohio, Carousel Dinner Theater, Sign Stage, Chagrin Arts Academy, and more. She is excited to have recently painted the drop for the newly launched touring show "What do you do with a Problem" for Inlet Dance company. She is proud to have painted the Lobby mural for NWT, and grateful for the continual trust from an organization that allows her to throw large amounts of liquid around its beautiful stage. Love to her husband and two children who are growing up here.

**Dr. Lady J** (*Drag Historian*)

**Luke Lanning** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) (He/Him) is a 2nd-year Stage Management student at Baldwin Wallace University. Luke is excited to be working on his first production at Near West Theater. His previous credits include: *SpongeBob the Musical*, *Waitress* at The Beck Center; [title of show], *Dido* and *Aeneas* at Playhouse Square; *Gross Indecency*, *Boy Gets Girl* at Baldwin Wallace; *Escape to Margaritaville*, and *Footloose* at The Fine Arts Association. Luke would like to thank his family for their constant support.



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# ARTISTIC TEAM CONT'D

**Kirk Lydell (Co-Coreographer)** (He/Him) is honored to be back at Near West Theatre, a place that has become a true home. He choreographs for the championship show choir Solon Music in Motion and has choreographed *Godspell*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *Little Women*. Performance credits include the *First National Tour of A Bronx Tale*, the Japanese tour of *Rent*, and regional productions nationwide. He also directed *Next to Normal* here at Near West Theatre. He hopes that whatever darkness you may be facing, this show helps you find light—because There Will Be Light.

**Whitney Miller (Stage Manager)** (She/Her) is a Cleveland-based, freelance Stage Manager and the Lakewood Civic Manager. She is thrilled to be back at Near West for this incredible show. Whitney attended Case Western Reserve University for Chemical Engineering and Film Studies where she spent most of her time with the CWRU Footlighters. Some of her favorite past credits include *Evil Dead the Musical* (Stage Manager), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Stage Manager), *The Last Five Years* (Lighting Designer), and the *Dazzle Awards* (Assistant Stage Manager). She's happiest in the theatre, writing, or taking photos with Shiny Penny Studios. You're all very talented!

**Anzel Richkowski (Lighting Designer)**

**Maurita Riddle (Props Master)** is thrilled to help bring the bold, glittering world of *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* to life. A passionate supporter of the arts, she has worked and volunteered with several Cleveland theaters over the past few years, including Near West Theatre, where her love for storytelling and community-driven art continues to grow. She would like to extend her heartfelt thanks to David for the opportunity, Joel for keeping her sane throughout the process, and the incredible cast and crew for being so welcoming. Thank you for supporting live theater— we're so glad you're here and hope you enjoy every fabulous moment of the show.

**James Romeo (Sound Designer/A1)** (He/Him) is a Cleveland based Sound Designer, Technician, and recent graduate of Cleveland State University with a BA in Theatre Arts with a technical focus and excited to be back at Near West Theatre designing another show. Recent design credits include, *Next to Normal* (NWT), *Hadestown Teen Edition* (NWT), *Urinetown* (CSU), and *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* (CSU). He recently joined the Faculty of Cleveland Play House as their Associate Sound and Projections Supervisor. He thanks his instructors throughout the years that have brought him to the place he is at today.

# ARTISTIC TEAM CONT'D

**Trinidad Snider** (*Artistic Director*) (She/Her) started her Near West Theatre (NWT) journey at the age of 15 back in 1989. Since then, she has had the honor and privilege to be both onstage and behind the scenes in various theaters in the Cleveland area and beyond for the past 36 years. She is slated to direct the upcoming summer teen production of Ragtime! She is also a proud member of the Dobama Theatre board. She is honored to work beside the staff and board of NWT and recently celebrated her 6th year as Artistic Director! She would travel to the underworld and back for her family and friends, especially Michael, Kirstin, Colin, Dylan, Michaela, Clark, and Ollie. She wants to remind us that we all have a voice and how we use that voice matters more now than ever. TPOG, always. For George and Kevin. *"A democracy cannot thrive where power remains unchecked, and justice is reserved for a select few. Ignoring these cries and failing to respond to this movement is simply not an option - for peace cannot exist where justice is not served."* - John Lewis

**Mike Stein** (*Productions & Rentals Manager*) is in his seventh year at Near West Theatre (NWT) as PM/ RM. His 40+ year career in theatre has taken him across the U.S. from Maine to California but mostly in Ohio as the Stage Manager/Production Manager/Lighting Designer at the Carousel Dinner Theatre in Akron, OH. Prior to returning to Near West Theatre in 2016, he was the Production Manager at the Palace Theater in Wisconsin Dells, WI. Michael was thrilled to return to Lighting Design for *The Last Five Years* in our Black Box Theatre! His past lighting designs at NWT include *Les Miserable School Edition*, *The Web of Anansi*, *1776*, *Carnival*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Once on this Island 2009*, *Secret Garden 2010*, *The Wiz 2010*, *Rent 2010*, *Willy Wonka 2011*, *A Christmas Story the Musical*, *Move On!*, *Urinetown* and many of the yearly Benefit performances. He was also the Co-Lighting Designer for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Mary Poppins*. As always, he thanks and sends love to his wife Carlie.

**Emma Sumpter** (*Co-Wardrobe Supervisor*)

**Noah Sumpter** (*Co-Wardrobe Supervisor*)

## ARTISTIC TEAM CONT'D

**Olivia (Livvie) Tassone** (*Music Director*) (They/She) is ecstatic to be back at Near West Theatre to share this uplifting story about queer joy! Olivia holds a BA in Music from Ashland University and a MM in Piano from Kent State University. They are a collaborative pianist at Baldwin Wallace University and maintain an active schedule of freelance work. Recently, they have music directed *Anne of Green Gables* at The Fine Arts Association and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Willoughby South High School. Some of their favorite credits as a Music Director include *Hadestown: Teen Edition* at Near West Theatre, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Rocky Horror Show* at Salem Community Theatre, and *Young Frankenstein* at Chagrin Valley Little Theatre. While not working, Olivia enjoys spending time with their husband, Gabe, and three cats; Gracie, Felix J. Mendelssohn, and Dillon Pickles. They also enjoy classic cinema and practicing doing make-up and nails on themselves and their friends. Thank you Gabe for always being there and endlessly encouraging them.

**David Turner** (*Director*) is thrilled to be making his directorial debut at a theater he loves, with a show that means so much to him. He first appeared on the Near West Theatre stage in 2007 in *Beauty and the Beast* and was most recently seen as Corny Collins in *Hairspray* this past fall. Many thanks to Trinidad for this incredible opportunity, and to his wonderful production team—Olivia, Kristy, Kirk, Whitney, and Christina—whose support has meant the world to him. Much love to his husband, Jason. TPOG!

**Kate League Weston** (*Drama Therapist*) (She/Her) is a teacher, drama therapist, glitter enthusiast and avid collector of stories. When not on stage, she and her wife spend their days drinking copious amounts of coffee and playing all supporting roles to their precocious three-year-old, Maisie.

# ARTISTIC TEAM CONT'D



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