



HERSHEL AND THE HANUKKAH GOBLINS ARTIST BIOS

December 2019

Eric Kimmel (Author) is the author of over 130 books for children, including *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* and the classic Hanukkah tale, *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*. He is a five-time winner of the National Jewish Book Award and the Sydney Taylor Award for Lifetime Achievement. Dr. Kimmel and his wife Doris live in Portland, Oregon.

Michael Dailey (Book/Adaptation) has appeared as an actor in 24 mainstage productions with the company since joining Strawdog in 1997. Writing credits include three radio plays presented as part of *Radio Theatre 7*, co-writer on the late night series *The Adventures of Picklebot and Lawfer* and script editor for Strawdog's productions of *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*, *Julius Caesar* and *Measure for Measure*.

Jacob Combs (Music and Lyrics) is a writer, director and composer based in Los Angeles. In addition to last year's premiere production of *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, his previous musical theater projects include *Palin! The Musical* (music and lyrics), *Unraveling* (book, music and lyrics), *Falling Apart*, *Coming Together* (music and lyrics) and *Legends & Lore* (book). He is currently writing the book, music and lyrics for the musical *Selling Out*, which was workshopped at Chicago's Strawdog Theatre in June 2018. Jacob's first short film as writer/director, *Without*, premiered earlier this year, and is currently on the festival circuit, having played at over 15 U.S. and international festivals so far. His short screenplay *Messrs.* is being produced through the AfterWORK program at Pixar Animation Studios, where Jacob works in the creative development department.

Lauren Katz (Director) is a freelance director, dramaturg and teaching artist. Recent directing projects include: *This is a Chair* (Haven Theatre), *Women of 4G* (Babes with Blades Theatre Company), *Toni and Marcus: From Village Life to Urban Stress* (Illinois Holocaust Museum), and *Subjective is Beauty* (Prop Thtr). As an assistant director and dramaturg in Chicago, Lauren has worked with various companies including: About Face Theatre, Firebrand Theatre Company, Writers Theatre, and Windy City Playhouse. Lauren served as the 2016/2017 Artistic Apprentice at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and as a fellow in the 2018/2019 Directors Inclusion Initiative at Victory Gardens Theatre. As a teaching artist, Lauren works with Lookingglass Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, and Mudlark Theater.



Yair Farkas (Music Director) is a composer and singer from the suburbs of Chicago. He is a graduate of Binghamton University's music program where he studied classical voice, musicology, and composition. He has written for professional music ensembles including *Contemporaneous* and the Grammy-award winning artists of *Modern Medieval*.

Sarah Bacinich (Sara)

Sarah is a recent grad excited to work with such an incredible team! Recent credits include Zoe/Vega in *Footholds (The Impostors)*; She in *Sparks (NoMads Art Co.)*; Horatio in *12 Ophelias (The Martin)*; and Red in *Wind For A Sail (Collaboration)*. Sarah's passions outside of theater include her cat Finnegan, Cher, and all the magical ways you can cook an egg.

Brianna Joy Ford (Tina)

Brianna is thrilled to be making her Strawdog debut! Brianna moved to Chicago after receiving her BFA in Acting from Ithaca College in NY. Favorite theatre credits include: *Our Town (Emily)* with Artistry Theatre, *Peter and the Starcatcher (Molly)* with EDGE of Orion, *My Children! My Africa! (Isabel)* with Civic Ensemble, *Helvetica (Past Helvetica)* with Death and Pretzels, *Urinetown (Little Sally)* with Cider Mill Playhouse, *The Beautiful People (Agnes)* with Edge of the Wood, *Romeo and Juliet (Friar/Prince)* with Shakespeare All-Stars, *The Edge of Our Bodies (Bernadette)* with The Danby Players. Brianna is represented by Lily's Talent. Much love to the cast, crew and Jelani for their endless support!

Cohen Kraus (Sammy)

Cohen is an actor, writer, director, and educator. As a new actor to Chicago, They stand for the many voices missing or underrepresented within our business. Cohen wants their art to reach ALL audiences, and to speak for those who cannot do so themselves. Chicago credits include: *Violet Surprise (Otherworld Theatre)*, *Sparks Festival (NoMads Art Collective)*, *Valiant Theater Festival (February 2020)*. Cohen has toured their own solo show in NYC and North Carolina and Dayton Ohio as well as performed in the Cincinnati fringe festival.

Jack Morsovillo (Hershel)

Jack Morsovillo is blessed to be a part of this hilarious, wonderful show. He gleefully returns to Chelm after understudying the inaugural production last season. Jack was last seen in *The Merchant of Venice* with Invictus Theatre, for which he was also the composer. Chicago credits include *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story (Metropolis PAC)*, *Love's, Labour's, Lost (Invictus Theatre)*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona (Midsommer Flight)*. Jack would like to thank the fearless, funny, and incredible team at Strawdog Theatre Company, the incredible artists who put this show together, and always his family for their fierce support. Jack is proudly represented by BMG Talent.



Josh Pennington (Max)

Josh Pennington is a Chicago based actor and is over the moon to be working this holiday with Strawdog Theatre. Recent Chicago Credits: *Press Cuttings* (Artemisia Theatre), *The Tempest* (Midsommer Flight), *Twelfth Night* (Stone Soup Shakespeare), *The Wood* (Imposters Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Theatre Evolve), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (E.D.G.E Theatre).

Leo Zhu (Al)

Leo Zhu is a Chicago-based actor and a graduate of The ACADEMY at Black Box Acting. He has appeared in various productions, including *Lucy and Charlie's Honeymoon* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Our Perspective: Asian American Play Readings); *A Cold One with the Boys* (The Second City); *Swan Soong* (staged reading); *Othello* and *Ubu Roi* (Northwestern University); and *Forces of Destiny* (indie film). Leo holds a BA Minor in Theatre from Northwestern University. He is grateful for all the love and support from his family and friends, and is so excited for his debut at Strawdog Theatre Company!

Caroline Kidwell (U/S Hershel/Max)

Caroline Kidwell is thrilled to be working with Strawdog for the first time! Her previous credits include *Language of Angels* (Three Crows), *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Three Brothers), *These Violent Delights: A Romeo and Juliet Cabaret* (Kite and Key), and school tours with Erasing the Distance. Caroline is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago and is represented by Chicago Talent Network. She can be seen next in *Krugozor!* with Theatre Evolve at The Athenaeum Theatre. Many thanks to the rest of the team and her always supportive family.

Jessamyn Fitzpatrick (U/S Al/Tina)

Jessamyn Fitzpatrick is Chicago born actor and educator. A graduate of Reed College in Portland, OR, Jessamyn has performed with various Chicago companies including Jackalope, Broken Nose Theatre, Raven Theatre, Mudlark and Walkabout. She is a company member with For Youth Inquiry for the Illinois Caucus of Adolescent Health - which offers participatory theatre and workshops surrounding reproductive justice. With FYI Jessamyn conceived, co-wrote and produced *FIRST, a play about virginity* in 2017 and more recently co-wrote *This Boat Called my Body*, in 2018 a play about abortion access in Illinois. Jessamyn is a proud teaching artist with TimeLine and Raven Theatre and an educator with Catharsis Productions – with whom she performs *Sex Signals*; an interactive show about gender, sexual violence and consent education. Jessamyn is also a poet, pleasure activist and theatre-maker interested in the creative potential of vulnerability, storytelling and feminist questioning. Much love and light to all your brave, warrior hearts.



Narciso Lobo (U/S Sara/Sammy)

Victory Gardens: *The Romance of Magno Rubio, A Big Blue Nail*. Sideshow Theatre: *No More Sad Things*. Chicago Children's Theatre: *Go, Dog, Go!* Cor Theatre: *The Good Person of Szechwan*.

Amy Sheahan (Assistant Director) is a queer director, film editor, photographer, and teaching artist originally from Arlington, Virginia. They moved to Chicago after graduating from Kenyon College with a passion for working in theatre as a sanctuary for youth expression and empowerment. While they follow one career-path in finding new collaborations throughout the city in theatre, music, and film, they also specialize in advocating for peer-based mental health support on college campuses. They are currently the Interim Education Manager at About Face Theatre, where they have worked since 2017.

Kendra Williams (Stage Manager) is returning to theater after a 20 year hiatus! She grew up loving the stage, and practically lived in the theater department at Downers Grove North, where she stage managed over 9 plays. She studied Theater at UIC and at the Oxford School of Drama. A “Jane of all trades”, when not calling cues, Kendra loves teaching Zumba and also has a business doing henna full time in the summer for 19 years.

Anika Jones (Assistant Stage Manager), originally from Dallas, TX, moved to Chicago in 2015 for school. While there, she developed a love for theater and has worked on multiple productions such as *Women of 4G* as Production Manager with *Babes with Blades* and is currently assistant production manager of *Always...Patsy Cline* with Firebrand Theater. After school, she remained in Chicago to continue working in the theatre community. Now she works in and around the city, on various production management teams.

Evan Frank (Scenic and Props Designer)

After graduating from Columbia College Chicago Evan Frank has been lucky enough to design the sets for *A Little Night Music* for BoHo, *The Other Cinderella* at Black Ensemble, *Casa Valentina* and *A Man of No Importance* for Pride Films and Plays, as well as the Chicago premieres of *May the Road Rise Up* for Factory Theater, *Plainclothes* for Broken Nose Theatre and *Hands on a Hardbody* for Refuge Theatre Project. Upcoming projects include *Thirst* with Strawdog and *Noises Off* with Metropolis. Efrankdesign.com



Ben Carne (Lighting Designer) is a freelance lighting designer originally from New Hampshire. Ben's recent professional credits include *Proxy* at Underscore Theatre and *Mad Beat Hip and Gone* with Promethean Theatre Ensemble. Ben's work has also been seen at Jackalope Theatre, Trap Door, and Silk Road Rising, Prop Thtr, Pride Films and Plays, and Underscore Theatre. Ben is thrilled to be working with Strawdog for the first time. He is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago where he received a BFA in theatre design. A portfolio of his work can be found at: bcarnedesign.com.

Elle Erickson (Costume Designer)

Elle Erickson is a recent graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Favorite credits include *CARDBOARD PIANO* at TimeLine Theatre, *EURYDICE* and *IN THE HEIGHTS* at Jedlicka, *HERLAND* at Redtwist Theatre, and *THE WOMEN OF 4G* with Babes with Blades. She would like to thank Strawdog for the opportunity, and her parents for their love and support.

Hannah Foerschler (Sound Designer)

Hannah Foerschler (Sound Designer) is thrilled to be working on *Hershel* as her first show with Strawdog! Hannah holds a BA in Music from Kenyon College, and she apprenticed with The Purple Rose Theatre Company for their 2015-2016 season. This past August, Hannah graduated from the MA in Sound Arts & Industries program at Northwestern University. Recent sound credits include: *Laura and the Sea* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble); *Women of 4G* (Babes With Blades); *Seagulls* (Steppenwolf LookOut & The Sound); *3:35PM and Candide!* (Mudlark Theatre); *Unwell: a Midwestern Gothic Mystery* (Hartlife NFP); *The Death of Gaia Divine* (Momentary Theatre); *Spirits to Enforce* (The Passage Theatre).

Evan Sposato (Technical Director)