

BABES WITH BLADES THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

THE MARK

WORLD PREMIERE BY JILLIAN LEFF, DIRECTED BY RICHARD COSTES

MEET THE MOMENT



BABES WITH BLADES THEATRE COMPANY

is a proud member of



BWBTC'S 2025 PROGRAMMING IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED IN PART BY

The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation

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proudly presents

THE MARK

By Jillian Leff*

Director	Richard Costes
Fight Director	Hazel Monson*
Scenic Designer	Amy C. Gilman
Lighting Designer	Laura J. Wiley*
Costume Designer	Kasey Wolfgang
Props Design	Ab Rieve
Sound Design	Hannah Foerschler
Intimacy Director	Becca Schwartz
Stage Manager	Grace Elizabeth Mealey
Technical Director	Line Bower*
Production Manager	Rose Hamill
Assistant Director	Eileen Tull
Assistant Fight Choreographer	Carly Belle Cason
Assistant Stage Manager	Dylan Hirt
Production Assistant	Payton Shearn*

** Denotes BWBTC Ensemble Member*

Special thanks to Idle Muse Theatre Company and Mahal Childress.

This production uses realistic staged violence in the telling of the story.

There will be one ten minute intermission.

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO RECORDING OF ANY KIND
IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED**

CAST

The Commander	Amy J. Johnson
Cain	Maureen Yasko*
Raina	MJ Handsome
Maxwell	Nicky Jasper
Jonas	Tamarus Harvell
Jack	Whit Baxter Bates
Peters	Fin Coe
Ensemble & Others.....	Matt Chester, Jennifer L. Mickelson*, Jennifer Mohr*, Izis Mollinedo*, and Shane Richlen
Understudies.....	Matt Chester (Peters & Jonas US), Marck Kiselevach (Jack & Ens US), Madeline Meyer (Ens US) Jennifer L. Mickelson* (Commander US), Jennifer Mohr* (Raina US), Izis Mollinedo* (Maxwell US), and Shane Richlen (Cain US)

WHO'S WHO



WHIT BAXTER BATES (he/they; Jack) is a nonbinary creator with a passion for physical storytelling and acting on camera. Whit's background in aerial dance, martial arts, and circus inspires him to dig into the physical elements of his character and bring reality to fantasy. He's enjoyed working with companies like Factory Theatre, Impostors Theatre Co, Idle Muse and now BWBTC. Enjoy the show!



MATT CHESTER (he/him; Ensemble, US Peters & Jonas) is an actor and theatre maker known for his versatility and compelling stage presence. With a passion for both classical and contemporary works, Matt has performed in productions throughout Chicago. Notable performances include Paul in *Lane Call: A Night of Closing*, Theseus/Hades in *Party at the Pantheon*, Jeremiah in *Within a Shadow*, Theseus/Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. When he's not on stage, Matt

enjoys visiting new places both local and far, enjoying company with friends and family and continues to find inspiration in everyday life and experiences to bring to depth and understanding to project and characters.



FIN COE (he/him; Peters) is a Chicago theatre artist originally from the Bay Area. A graduate of Case Western Reserve University, he has also studied at the iO, the Second City, and writing programs throughout the city. Fin has performed with Jackalope Theatre, Silk Road Rising, the New Coordinates, and Halcyon Theatre, among others. Fin is honored to be making his BWBTC debut.



MJ HANDSOME (she/they; Raina) is incredibly excited to make their BWBTC debut! She is a graduate of The University of Michigan, where she began her journey with stage combat and fight directing and obtained a BFA in Acting. In their free time, you can find them at home cosplaying an interior designer or outside exploring all that Chicago has to offer.



TAMARUS HARVELL (he/him; Jonas) is happy to be working with BWBTC for the first time. He is currently a member of MPAACT Theatre Company where he was last seen in their production of *The Book of Me*. He is a Jeff Award Nominee for best performer for Lifeline Theatre's production of *Native Son* where he played Bigger Thomas. He has worked with several theatre companies in Chicago such as Raven Theatre, The Gift Theatre, and Black Ensemble Theatre. He has also been a part of several short films that have been selected for the Chicago Black Harvest Film Festival. He is currently represented by Big Mouth Talent. He would like to thank his wife and parents for the love and support.



NICKY JASPER (she/they; Maxwell) is very excited to step back on stage in her first full-length production with BWBTC, though she has been a part of two previous Fighting Words Festivals! When not acting, Nicky is a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors: they teach stage combat at Columbia College Chicago, offer combat classes privately through Open Gate Movement Arts, and work as a fight choreographer both in Chicago and regionally. Recent credits include work on *The Who's Tommy* (Goodman Theatre), *Hamlet* (Starling Shakespeare Company), and *Shining In Misery* (world premier, Capital City Theatre). Nicky is also the Coordinator of the National Stage Combat Workshop.



AMY J. JOHNSON (she/her, The Commander) is thrilled to be making her BWBTC debut! Amy has been a Chicago area actress for over 20 years. She was honored with a Jeff Award for Best Actress in a Non-Equity Play in 2017 for her work on *Falling* by Deanna Jent (Interrobang Theatre Project). Other past Chicago theatre credits include: *Oxy*, *Ohio* (the side project), *My Other Full Time Job* (Erasing the Distance), *Mercury Fur* (Ex-Pats Theatre Co.), as well as one-woman performances for Historical Perspectives for Children. Her work can be seen in several indie films & TV (Chicago Fire, Empire, and Final Witness). She is an audiobook narrator with a home studio and over 60 published titles. Amy received her MFA from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.



MARCK KISELEVACH (he/him; US Jack & Ensemble) is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of *The Mark!* Coming to Chicago by way of Michigan, Marck holds a BFA in Acting from Wayne State University. Regional credits include: Detroit Repertory's *Transfers*, Shakespeare in Detroit's *The Tempest*, The Ringwald's *The Inheritance*, and Shawnee Summer Theatre's *I and You*. Chicago credits include: Fulproof Productions' *Everything You Need to Know About Abortion in One Hour or Less*, and Forest Theatre Company's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Thank you to everyone on the BWBTC team for being on this journey, and thank you for coming out and joining us!

ig: @vistadelmarck



MADELINE MEYER (she/her; US Ensemble) is so excited to be making her BWBTC debut! She is an actor, fight & intimacy coordinator, and DePaul University graduate with a BFA in Acting and a double major in Political Science. Madeline has performed live and on screen in *Sero-Tone It Down!* (Second City), *Distrikt of Lake Michigan* (Stage Left Theatre), *If It Ain't Broke... We'll Break It!* (Second City), *Dante 360* (Athenaeum Theatre), *Tank*, *The Last Caucus*, *Thrust*, and with improv & sketch group Polite Society. She is so grateful for the team of *The Mark*, and BWBTC. Follow along @mgmactor!



JENNIFER L. MICKELSON (she/her; Ensemble & US The Commander) is an actor, intimacy designer, and occasional playwright (including *The Last Daughter of Oedipus* and *Patchwork Drifter* for BWBTC). Jen was most recently seen onstage in *A Shadow Bright and Burning* at Black Button Eyes Productions; other favorite credits include BWBTC's *Richard III* and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* with Promethean Theatre Ensemble. She has designed intimacy for BWBTC, Idle Muse Theatre Company, Promethean, The Factory Theater, Broken Nose Theatre, and Citadel Theatre. She has an equally theatrical spouse (love you), a corporate day job, a B.A. from Illinois State University, and three orchids that are inexplicably still alive.



IZIS MOLLINEDO (they/them/she; Ensemble & US Maxwell) is a Latine & Queer artist who is excited to be back on stage with BWBTC. They have been a company member since 2017. This will be their fifth production with Babes and last seen as Lysander in the company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Izis has previously worked with Pegasus Theatre, Strawdog Theatre Company, The Unrehearsed Shakespeare Company, The Hypocrites, and Signal Ensemble Theatre. They are an actor, singer, and musician, as well as a graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Izis likes to spend time immersed in music, crafting, and being a geek. Afterall, joy & creating are forms of resistance.



JENNIFER MOHR (Ensemble & US Raina) is so excited to be joining BWBTC on stage again. Previously she was a part of the cast of *The Lady Demands Satisfaction* and has designed costumes for several other Babes shows. Jennifer works as a teaching artist and has had the privilege of performing with various theatres in Chicago including Chicago Shakespeare, First Folio, Birch House Immersive, Artemisia, Idle Muse, and Midsommer Flight. She is a proud ensemble member at Idle Muse Theatre Company, as well as with Laughingstock Theatre, performing Commedia del'Arte around Chicago! Jennifer is also an enthusiastic artistic affiliate of BWBTC. So many thanks to her friends and family for their constant support.



SHANE RICHLIN (he/him; Ensemble & US Cain) is an actor, fight choreographer, teaching artist, and director. He is beyond grateful to be on stage with BWBTC again, having previously been seen in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Previously he has also been seen on stage with Eclectic Full Contact Theatre, Idle Muse, Strawdog, Haven, First Folio, and in several seasons with the touring children's theatre company: GreatWorks. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin - Parkside where he performed in such shows as *Macbeth*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Angels in America*, *Don Juan*, and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Shane is represented by Lily's Talent Agency.



MAUREEN YASKO (she/her; Cain) is a Chicago-based fight director, intimacy director, actor, musician, and teaching artist whose work has appeared on stages across the country. An Artistic Affiliate of BWBTC, Maureen recently played S in *The S Paradox* and Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Other BWBTC acting credits: *Promise of a Rose Garden*, *Julius Caesar*, *Bo Thomas...*, *L'Imbecile*, and *Titus Andronicus*. BWBTC fight/intimacy credits: *Plaid as Hell*, *Richard III*, *Women of 4G*, and *Witch Slap!* Maureen serves as Resident Intimacy Director & Associate Fight Director of Midsommer Flight, where she's also appeared onstage as Lady Macbeth, Malvolio, and others. Maureen is a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors, an adjunct professor at Columbia College, a Certified Yoga Instructor, and holds a BA in Theatre, music minor from Georgia Southern - Armstrong. Love to Smitty and Dee.

PRODUCTION TEAM

LINE BOWER (they/them; Technical Director) is a Chicago-based technical director, carpenter, and scenic painter. They received their BA in Theatre Technology & Design with a minor in Stage Combat from Columbia College Chicago. They've been a regular carpenter at Northlight Theatre since 2022 and a BWBTC ensemble member since 2023. Favorite TD credits include: *Port of Entry* (Albany Park Theatre Project), *Jane: Abortion and the Underground* (Idle Muse), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (BWBTC), and the Jeff award-winning production *That Must Be the Entrance to Heaven* (Visión Latino). You can catch them at carpentry overhire calls throughout the city, or carrying loose pieces of lumber on the CTA. Inquiries: linebowerTD@gmail.com

CARLY BELLE "CB" CASON (they/she; Assistant Fight Choreographer) is an actor, dancer, and fight choreographer living in Chicago, with roots deep in the heart of Texas. CB has degrees in Theatre and Dance from TX A&M University Corpus Christi, she is an Advanced Actor Combatant with the SAFD, and a founding member of Counterfeit Combat. This is their first production with BWBTC and they are excited to be here! Other choreography credits include: *And They Were Shipmates*, *Origin of Liberty Belle* (Counterfeit Combat), *6 Men Dressed as Joseph Stalin* (A Red Orchid Theatre), *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Haven), *This is Only a Test* (Broken Nose Theatre), and *Leap of Fate* (Nonsense Productions).

RICHARD COSTES (he/him; Director) is an actor, director, and accessibility consultant and is thrilled to be working with BWBTC again! Richard previously directed *Richard III* for BWBTC and has also directed productions of *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *King Stag*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, and *Footfalls*, and *Other Plays by Samuel Beckett*, among others. A graduate of Kent State University (B.A. in Theatre), Richard serves on the 3Arts Artist Council, in addition to being a member of DisabilityLead, and sits on the board of the National Theatre of the Deaf.

HANNAH FOERSCHLER (she/her, Sound Designer) is a Chicago-based sound designer, engineer, and musician. She holds an MA in Sound Arts & Industries from Northwestern University and a BA in Music from Kenyon College, and she apprenticed at the Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, MI. Hannah is currently the Audio Manager for Theater & Performance Studies at University of Chicago and a proud member of the Theatrical Sound

Designers & Composers Association. Selected sound design credits: *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Plaid As Hell*, *Women of 4G* (BWBTC); *Arcadia* (University of Chicago); *The Kelly Girls* (Factory Theater, Jeff nomination); *Man of the People* (Stage Left Theatre); *Slow Food* (Third Avenue PlayWorks); *The Tasters*, *Laura And The Sea* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble)

AMY C. GILMAN (she/her; Scenic Designer) is a Chicago-based set and exhibit designer. This is Amy's first production with BWBTC. She has previously done set design for *Sweet Charity* (Blank Theatre), *Bookworms* (Kerfuffle), *Gather* (Filament), *Luna* (Filament), *Catch the Fish* (Poor Theatre), *Boy in Black* (Chicago Fusion Theatre), and many others. She has worked as an assistant designer for the Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakes, Steppenwolf, Drury Lane, Paramount Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse. Amy also designs museum exhibits. Her work can be seen at Magic Discovery Center, Children's Museum of Richmond, Toledo Main Library, Edventure Children's Museum, and others. The exhibit *Selling Kroehler* can be seen at Naper Settlement through December 2025, and she created the current window display for West Town Chamber of Commerce. She has a BFA in Scene Design from DePaul University.

ROSE HAMILL (she/her; Production Manager) is a freelance stage and production manager who has worked with many Chicago storefront theatres including The Factory Theater, Redtwist Theater, and Firebrand Theatre. She served as the Managing Director of Broken Nose Theatre for just over 4 years, where her production credits include *At The Table*, *Bechdel Fests 6-9*, *Labyrinth*, and *After the Blast* among others. Rose is a long time BWBTC collaborator, and this past year joined the Board of Directors as Secretary. Rose holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Technical Theatre from Columbia College Chicago, with a minor in Arts Administration; as well as a Certificate of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Management from Northwestern University. She is currently pursuing her Project Management Professional certification through the Project Management Institute.

DYLAN HIRT (she/they; Assistant Stage Manager) is incredibly excited to be working with BWBTC! Dylan is a graduate of Columbia College in Chicago, where she received her BA in Theatre (Stage Management). In their free time, they are sewing enthusiast and love to go thrifting around the city. She wants to thank a BWBTC for this opportunity and hopes you enjoy the show!

JILLIAN LEFF (she/her; Playwright) is a Chicago based playwright, actor, and stage combat nerd. Her plays *Missed Opportunities*, *Small World* (co-written with Joe Lino), *(Non)Fiction*, and *The S Paradox* have had productions in Chicago and Los Angeles, with *Small World* receiving a Jeff Award Nomination for New Work. Additionally, *The S Paradox* is a winner of BWBTC's Joining Sword and Pen Competition/Margaret W. Martin Award. She is a BWBTC Company Member, where she's super grateful to have worked as all her hyphenates - actor (*Richard III*, *Women of 4G*, *The Good Fight*), playwright (*The S Paradox*), and fight choreographer (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). She has a BFA in Acting from Ball State University and is an Advanced Actor Combatant with The Society of American Fight Directors. Find her on the internet @jilleleff. All the love and thanks to Theresa for their support.

GRACE ELIZABETH MEALEY (she/her, Stage Manager) is thrilled to make her dream-come-true BWBTC debut! CHICAGO: *Girls & Boys*, *The House Without A Christmas Tree*, Jeff-nominated production (Griffin Theatre Company). *The Storm of the Century*, *New Work Festival 2025 (Tales of the Ten; Sugar, Spice, & Everyone's Vice; The Lesbian Pirate Show)*, *Alone at Last!* (Laughing Stock Theatre). *Sentinels* (CPA Theatricals). Grace Elizabeth graduated from Loyola University Chicago, where she received her B.A. in Theatre and Art History and a minor in Shakespeare Studies, and was a founding member of the Women in Theatre ensemble. Gratitude and humility always.

HAZEL MONSON (she/her; Fight Choreographer) has worked as an actor, writer, director, front of house professional, combat instructor, and administrator for such organizations as Babes With Blades Theatre Company, Factory Theater, The Neo-Futurists, The House Theatre, Raven Theatre, The Artistic Home, Steppenwolf Theatre, Mercy Street Theatre Company, Next Theatre, Pride Films & Plays, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, The League of Chicago Theatres, Lookingglass, R & C Collective, Laughing Stock, and Spartan Theatre Company in addition to having worked as a staff writer for the podcast *PleasureTown*. When she is not onstage she enjoys baking, horror movies, digging for double underhooks, pretending she knows how to play DND, hooking off the jab, and being a loving mother of two (cats.)

AB RIEVE (they/them, Props Designer) is excited to make their BWBTC debut. Recent props design credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Legally Blonde* (Music Theater Works), *6 Men Dressed Like Joseph Stalin* (A Red Orchid Theatre), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Shattered Globe Theatre), and *Tell Me On A*

Sunday (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre). Other recent credits include *Time is a Color and the Color is Blue* (co-scenic designer, Avalanche Theatre), *Guys and Dolls* (wardrobe, Music Theater Works), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (run crew, Music Theater Works). Originally from Maryland, Ab graduated from Columbia College Chicago in 2023 with a double major in Illustration and Theater Design and Technology. They currently focus on props design but can also be found doing stitching, carpentry, and run crew throughout Chicagoland.

BECCA SCHWARTZ (any pronouns; Intimacy Director) is excited to be making their debut with BWBTC! Becca is an intimacy director, fight director, stunt performer and actor in Chicago. Selected theatrical intimacy credits include *Spring Awakening* (point2point productions), *7 Minutes to Live* (Unexpected Theatre), *Edgar & Marie* (NY Theatre Festival), *This Bitter Earth* (Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre). Becca has a BA in Theatre from Northwestern University. Visit beccajschwartz.com or follow on IG @becjac8 for more info and updates.

PAYTON SHEARN (she/they, Production Assistant) is a stage manager and arts administrator based in Chicago. She is so excited to return for her fourth show with BWBTC, and her first as a company member. Previous Chicago credits include: *Spring Awakening* (point2point Productions), *Romeo and Juliet* (Midsommer Flight), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Young People's Theater of Chicago), *Passing Strange* (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre), *Dory Fantasmagory* (Young People's Theater of Chicago), *When The Sun Melts Away* (Token Theatre), *Me...Jane* (Wirtz Center). Payton is a proud graduate of Northwestern University, where they studied Theater Management and Gender & Sexuality Studies. She loves making theater for young audiences, theater that explores the intersection of art and activism, and theater that combines the two. As always, all the love and thanks to their family, chosen and otherwise.

EILEEN TULL (she/her; Assistant Director) is a Chicago-based theatre-maker, poet, educator, and one-woman-show person. Her work has been seen all over Chicago in bookstores, art galleries, bars, non-traditional spaces, and sometimes in theaters. Directing credits include *The Ostrich* (Terror Cottas), *Funny, Like An Abortion* (Fat Theatre Project/Chicago Danztheatre Ensemble), *Household Spirits* (Theater Wit), *STEPS* (Improv Playhouse), *The Final Seance of Madame LaFey* (Three Brothers Theatre), *Give Me My Flowers* (Stage Left Theatre), and dozens of productions with the Chicago Park District including *SpongeBob Squarepants: The Musical*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *Cheerleaders VS. Aliens*, *Jason and the Argo-NOTS*, *Big Smoke*, *Fantastic*

Mr. Fox, *The Witches*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *A Wrinkle in Time* with children, and *No Exit* and *Happy Days* with adults. Eileen is the producer of both The Alice Gerstenberg Play Festival with the park district and The Gloria Bond Clunie New Playwrights Festival with Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre. She has performed throughout the country, from San Francisco to New York City, including in the SF Fringe, New Seeds Festival, United Solo, the Cincy Fringe, the Minnesota Fringe Festival, the Dallas Solo Festival, Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center, Elgin Fringe, and the Inverse Performance Art Festival at The Momentary, with an upcoming performance at San Francisco's Marsh Theater. She is a drama instructor with the Chicago Park District, where she has taught creative classes to folks of all ages for almost 10 years. Eileen founded Fat Theatre Project in 2024 where she teaches, produces, writes, and directs. She is a graduate of Loyola University of Chicago and is currently working towards an MFA in Directing & Playwriting at Randolph College. www.eileentull.com

LAURA J. WILEY (she/her; Lighting Designer) is a lighting and video designer working primarily with theater and dance. She is the resident projection and lighting designer for Idle Muse Theatre Company, with whom she has worked with since 2011. Wiley often incorporates live video into projection designs along with abstract images and textures, using technology as scenic piece, moving light and as an individual element. She holds a Bachelors in Science concentrating on theatrical lighting and projection design from Southern Oregon University.

KASEY WOLFGANG (she/her; Costume Designer) is new to the area and this production will be her BWBTC debut!. Her recent Chicago design work includes *Incognito* with Tin Drum Theater. Previously she was based out of the DMV area where she designed *Peter and The Starcatcher* at Firehouse Theatre, *Something Rotten!* at Dogwood Dell and *Snow Maiden* at Syntetic Theater. She also assisted on the world premiere musical *Senior Class* at Olney Theatre and the Helen Hayes Award Winning production of *The Nance* at 1st Stage.

**BWBTC IS ONE OF LESS THAN 15% OF
CHICAGO THEATRE COMPANIES**

**dedicated to representing marginalized voices
through storytelling**

(and the only one that uses stage combat as a consistent storytelling tool.)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Babes With Blades Theatre Company produces theatre in venues located on the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. Many other tribes such as the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac, and Fox also called this area home. This region that we now commonly refer to as “The Chicagoland Area”, has long been a center for Indigenous people to gather, trade, and maintain kinship ties. Today, one of the largest urban Native American communities in the United States resides in Chicago. Members of this community continue to contribute to the life of this city and to celebrate their heritage, practice traditions, and care for the land and waterways. If you are originally from outside of Chicago, you can discover who's traditional homelands you inhabited by going to [Whose.Land](#).

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LEAVES A MARK!***



BADES^{WITH} BLADES
THEATRE COMPANY

BABES WITH BLADES

THEATRE COMPANY

ENSEMBLE

Kristen Alesia	Line Bower
Alison Dornheggen	Kim Fukawa
Carrie Hardin	Kelsey Kovacevich
Jillian Leff	Morgan Manasa
Jennifer L. Mickelson	Jennifer Mohr
Izis Mollinedo	Hazel Monson
Lauren Paige	Hayley Rice
Patty Roache	Thomas Russell
Megan Schemmel	Payton Shearn
Laura J. Wiley	Kathrynne Wolf
Maureen Yasko	Ashley Yates

BOARD

Lata Balagangadharan	Jess Chamblee Eisenberg
Rose Hamill	Kelsey Kovacevich
Catherine Mallers	James Piche
Hayley Rice	

Want to support BWBTC?

Consider joining the board!

Email business@babeswithblades.org



Babes With Blades Theatre Company uses stage combat to tell stories that elevate the voices of underrepresented communities and dismantle the patriarchy. Through performance, script development, training and outreach, our ensemble creates theatre that explores the wide range of the human experience, and cultivates broader perspectives in the arts community and in society as a whole.

BabesWithBlades.org