

BADES WITH BLADES THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

KING LEAR

A woman's face is visible through a torn, brown paper mask that covers the rest of her head. The mask is decorated with faint, illegible text, possibly from an old manuscript. The woman has light blue eyes and reddish-brown hair. The background is dark and textured.

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY ALISON DORNHEGGEN

**BWBTC'S 2026 PROGRAMMING IS
GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED IN PART BY:
THE GAYLORD AND DOROTHY DONNELLEY FOUNDATION**

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THE CITY OF CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
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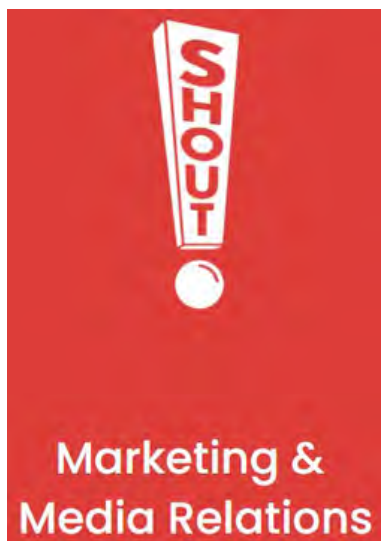
PAUL M. ANGELL
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CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF
DCASE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS & SPECIAL EVENTS

THIS PRODUCTION IS SUPPORTED BY THE SHARED SPACES PROGRAM, A JOINT EFFORT BY THE PAUL M. ANGELL FAMILY FOUNDATION, THE RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION, AND THEATER WIT TO MAKE MORE AFFORDABLE SPACE FOR THEATRICAL PRODUCERS.

BWBTC IS GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF PROGRAMS LIKE THIS SO WE CAN PRESENT THEATER THAT LEAVES A MARK TO A WIDER AUDIANCE.

BABES WITH BLADES THEATRE CO. PROUDLY WORKS WITH SHOUT MARKETING AND MEDIA RELATIONS.



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BABES WITH BLADES

THEATRE COMPANY

PROUDLY PRESENTS

KING LEAR

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTOR	ALISON DORNHEGGEN*
FIGHT DIRECTOR	JESS PENNACHIO
SCENIC DESIGNER	MORGAN LASZLO
LIGHTING DESIGNER	LAURA J. WILEY*
COSTUME DESIGNER	JESSIE GOWENS
PROPS DESIGNER	ELENA LINDEMAN
SOUND DESIGNER	HANNAH FOERSCHLER
INTIMACY DIRECTOR	TRISTIN HALL
STAGE MANAGER	GRACE ELIZABETH MEALEY
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	LINE BOWER*
PRODUCTION MANAGER	ROSE HAMILL
TEXT COACH	HAYLEY RICE*
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	ARIELLE LEVERETT
ASSISTANT FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER	RYAN LIDDELL
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	ADRI ANDREOLAS
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	PAYTON SHEARN*

* DENOTES BWBTC ENSEMBLE MEMBER

CAST

LYNNE BAKER	KING LEAR
KIM BOLER	GONERIL
SARAH CUSHMAN	UNDERSTUDY: GONERIL/ALBANY/ENSEMBLE
DANI DE LA ROSA	ENSEMBLE; U/S (EDMUND & CORNWALL)
KIM FUKAWA*	OSWALD/DUKE OF BURGUNDY (U/S EDGAR)
CARRIE HARDIN*	UNDERSTUDY: KING LEAR
SOPHIA LANZA-WEIL	UNDERSTUDY: GLOUCESTER/ENSEMBLE
JILLIAN LEFF*	DUKE OF CORNWALL / ENSEMBLE
MORGAN MANASA*	EARL OF GLOUCESTER
STEPHANIE MATTOS	EDGAR/FRANCE
MADELINE MEYER	ENSEMBLE; U/S (OSWALD & KENT)
JENNIFER L. MICKELSON*	DUKE OF ALBANY / ENSEMBLE
JENNIFER MOHR*	CORDELIA / FOOL
MEGAN PARLETT	UNDERSTUDY: REGAN/ENSEMBLE
THOMAS RUSSELL*	EDMUND
RACHEL SLEEK-BAÑUELOS	REGAN
KATHRYNNE WOLF*	EARL OF KENT
BRITTANI YAWN	ENSEMBLE; U/S (CORDELIA/FOOL)

THIS PRODUCTION USES REALISTIC STAGED VIOLENCE IN THE TELLING OF THE STORY.

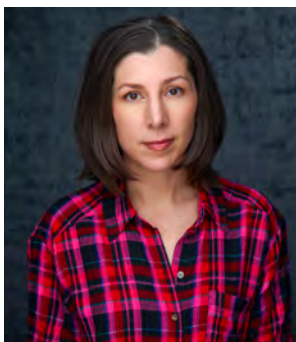
THERE WILL BE ONE TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION.

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

WHO'S WHO



Lynne Baker (she/her; King Lear) is thrilled to be working with BWBTC again after appearing in *The Invisible Scarlet O'Neil* (2017). Chicago Theater credits include *Hedda Gabler* (Artistic Home); *Beyond Therapy* (Eclipse, Jeff nom-supporting actor); *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *On the Greenbelt* (Strawdog); *The Crowd You're in With* (Aston Rep); *Nice Girl* (Raven); *Othello* (Invictus); *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Reutan Collective). Lynne has also had the pleasure of working with Facility, Bramble, Haven, Citadel, and Piven, among others. TV: *Chicago Fire*. Film: *The Cyber Waltz* (Feature, in post); *Happily Never After* (Feature, Lifetime Movie Network), *Double Major* (Best Feature, Windy City Film Festival 2018). Lynne is represented by Big Mouth Talent. She dedicates this performance to the memory of the inimitable Lavina Jadhvani--an incredible talent, life force, and friend.



Kim Boler (she/her; Goneril) I had only been in Chicago for a week in 2008 when I remember hearing the most magical words in theater..." Babes. With. Blades." A company of bad ass women fighters. That concept sung to me, full throated as if they had been calling me my whole life: "Fight with us." They seemed to know I was introduced to stage combat in 1999 when I first heard the echoes of a bullwhip shattering the peaceful mountains of West Virginia. I moved backstage to find the Fight Master crackin the s**t outta of a 12-foot bullwhip. All it took was once, my little babies, and I. Was. Hooked. I proceeded to get certified in three weapons. I loved every second but never found the opportunities to practice these skills. The Barbarian in me lay dormant...until Chicago. And now, FINALLY, I have the opportunity to work with legends that are...the Babes. I am not the same person I was 20 years ago. Life and Death have played havoc with me...but the Barbarian still lives in me and is still fighting. I deeply appreciate the Babes for letting me be a part of their magic. This performance is dedicated to my Mom. She shaped and nurtured the fighting spirit that lives in me and I miss her every day.



Sarah Cushman (she/her; U/S Ensemble, Goneril and Albany) is incredibly excited to make her BWBTC debut! Previous Chicago credits include work with Instrumental Theatre Company (*The Seagull* (Masha), *Mixtapes Vol. 1 and 2*). She has additionally worked with the St. Petersburg Renaissance Faire as part of their professional company (*Romeo and Juliet* (Mercutio), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Beatrice)). Sarah is a graduate of Furman University where she received her BA in Theatre Arts and George Washington University where she received her MFA in Classical Acting. She'd love to thank her husband for all of his support.



Dani De La Rosa (she/they; Ensemble; U/S Edmund & Cornwall) is incredibly thrilled to make their BWBTC and professional Chicago theatre debut! Dani is a recent graduate of Columbia College Chicago, where she received her BA in Acting with a minor in Stage Combat. Previous credits include *We Make Monsters* at CCC, *On the Verge* (or The Geography of Yearning), *No Exit*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Oakton College. In their free time they enjoy gaming, gardening, seeing live music, and playing with their pets. She send much love and gratitude to her family, friends, and partner.



Kim Fukawa (she/her; Oswald/Duke of Burgundy; U/S Edgar) is excited to be back onstage with the BWBTC where she has worked with extensively in many capacities. She was last seen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2024, and *Richard III* before that. She's on quite the Shakespeare streak, but no complaints here. Kim is represented by Big Mouth Talent.



Carrie Hardin (she/her; U/S King Lear) is pleased to be returning to BWBTC, having most recently been seen as the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Other acting credits include work with Remy Bumpo, TUTA, CityLit, and the dearly departed Prologue Theatre. Many thanks to all involved and to her family for putting up with her near-constant quiet mumbling in different voices.



Sophia Lanza-Weil (she/they; U/S Gloucester) is thrilled to be making her BWBTC debut! A recent transplant from the Bay Area, past favorite credits include *Stop Kiss* (Sara), *Side by Side with Sondheim*, *Cabaret* (Frenchie), and original puppetry shows *Show of Competence* (Columbia College Chicago) and *The Desert of Forgetting* (Arthaus Berlin). Sophia has an MFA in Acting and Contemporary Theatre Making from Columbia College Chicago. Love to partner Des.



Jillian Leff (she/her; Duke of Cornwall/Ensemble) is Chicago based actor, playwright, and stage combat nerd who is excited to be back on stage for BWBTC after previously appearing in *Richard III* (Buckingham), *Women of 4G* (Pierce), and *The Good Fight* (Cicely). A BWBTC Ensemble Member and Literary Manager, she also wrote *The S Paradox* and *The Mark*, and was the Fight Director for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Elsewhere in the city, she's worked as an actor with companies such as Strawdog Theatre, Idle Muse Theatre Company, Stage Left Theatre, Factory Theater, Midsommer Flight, and Runaways Lab Theatre. 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.



Morgan Manasa (she/her; Earl of Gloucester) a graduate of the Chicago College of Performing Arts and Theatre Conservatory at Roosevelt University, has been a theatremaker in Chicago for the past 25 years. She is a company member at BWBTC where she was last seen directing their Joining Sword & Pen winner, *The S Paradox*. Previous Chicago credits include work with BWBTC, First Folio, Fat Theatre Project, Focal Point Theatre Co., Idle Muse Theatre Co., AstonRep Theatre Co., Rascal Children's Theatre, Knife & Fork, Strangeloop, and Point of Contention. Morgan has also appeared in the webseries *2 Red Heads & Like What You Like* and directed for Focal Point Theatre Co., Idle Muse and First Folio Theatre. www.morganmanasa.com



Stephanie Mattos (she/her; Edgar/King of France) is an actor, fight director, and combatant in Chicago and a member of the Society of American Fight Directors. Credits include *As You Like It* (Midsommer Flight), *Andy Warhol Presents...The Cocaine Play* (Fight Director, Jackalope Theatre), *Modern Gentleman* (About Face Theatre), *Black Cypress Bayou* (Fight Director, Definition Theatre), *OAK* (Suga and Fight Director), *The Prodigal Daughter*, *A Lie Of The Mind* (Fight Director) and *Gorgeous* (Fight Director) at Raven Theater; *Notes From The Field* (TimeLine Theatre Co.), *The Duchess Of Malfi* (Assistant Fight Director, Babes with Blades Theatre Co.), *Last Night and The Night Before* (Steppenwolf), and *Marys Seacole* (Griffin). Regional credits include *Reentry* (Montana Repertory Theatre). Television: *The Chi*. Commercial: *Salesforce*. Stephanie is represented by Big Mouth Talent and is an Ensemble Member of Midsommer Flight. Instagram: @asmattering. Visit stephaniemattos.com.



Madeline Meyer (she/her; Ensemble; U/S Kent & Oswald) is an actor, intimacy & violence choreographer, and DePaul University graduate with a BFA in Acting and certification in the Intimacy Professionals for Theatre and Cinema program. Madeline is also an Advanced Actor Combatant with the SAFD, and an ensemble member of Sub Rosa Theatre Collective. Recent stage credits include *In Pursuit Of* (Sub Rosa), *The Mark* (BWBTC), *Distrikt of Lake Michigun* (Stage Left Theatre), *Dante 360* (Athenaeum Theatre), *Sero-Tone It Down!* (Second City), and *If It Ain't Broke... We'll Break It!* (Second City). Recent screen credits include independent shorts *Tank* and *The Last Caucus*, and web series *Thrust*. Madeline is so grateful to be working with BWBTC on this production. Follow along @mgmactor!

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

CHARLES COYL, CAT DAVIS, JIMMY HEISEL, MICHAEL JOSEPH,
SKY VIOLA, THE FACTORY THEATER, & THEATER WIT



Jennifer L. Mickelson (she/her; Duke of Albany) 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 BWBTC's *The Mark*; other favorite credits include *A Shadow Bright and Burning* at Black Button Eyes Productions, 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.



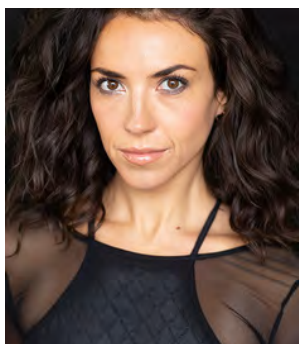
Jennifer Mohr (she/her; Cordelia/Fool) is so excited to be joining Babes on stage again. Previously she was a part of the cast of *The Mark* and *The Lady Demands Satisfaction* and has designed costumes for several other Babes shows. Jennifer is also a teaching artist and has performed with various theatres 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 Babes with Blades Theatre Company. So many thanks to her friends and family for their constant support (as with any Shakespeare play that I somehow find my way into, my thanks is to Lavina, who taught me so much - my side is your side, always)



Megan Parlett (she/her; U/S Regan/Ensemble) is incredibly excited to make her BWBTC and Chicago theatre debut! Previous credits include Helen (*All's Well That Ends Well*), Graziana (*Anima*), and Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*). Megan is a recent graduate from Mary Baldwin University's Shakespeare & Performance MLitt/MFA program and spent her summer Assistant Directing at the American Shakespeare Center. In her free time, she can be found reading on the couch with her cats or up in the air learning aerial silks. Special thanks to her Romeo.



Thomas Russell (he/they, Edmund; Fight Captain) is a born-and-raised Chicagoan fight choreographer, actor, and stunt performer - and they're **delighted** to be in another BWBTC production! Other acting credits include *As You Like It* (Midsommer Flight), *Gladiator Fight Night: Arcade Anarchy* (Point Theatre Project), *Kairos* (Red Theater), *The S Paradox* (BWBTC), *The Wonder* (Eclectic Full Contact Theatre), and the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire (2022-'25). He's choreographed violence with BWBTC, Midsommer Flight, The Gift Theater, TimeLine Theatre Company, and local colleges and high schools. He's also an Artistic Affiliate with BWBTC and an ensemble member of the Point Theatre Project. Enjoy the show!



Rachel Sleek-Bañuelos (she/her; Regan; Fight Captain) is thrilled to return to Babes With Blades Theatre Company for her second production, following her debut as Anne/Andy in *Yo Ho*. She now trades pirate ships for royal courts in *King Lear*—though apparently, treachery, power struggles, and questionable family dynamics remain very much in her wheelhouse. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), where she earned her BFA in Dramatic Performance, Rachel's other theatrical credits include *Blood Wedding*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Shakespeare* productions with Cincinnati Outdoor Shakespeare. Her screen credits include *Law & Order: SVU*, *Buying Her*, *Find Me*, and numerous independent films and shorts. When she's not onstage, Rachel works as a dialect and voiceover coach, helping actors find their voices and occasionally giving them entirely new ones.

GET ALL YOUR BWBTC AND KING LEAR GEAR HERE





Kathrynne Wolf (she/her; Earl of Kent) is glad to be back! A Chicago storefront (and BWBTC) veteran, she understudied both Pussy Sludge and Endgame at Facility Theatre last year, and in 'the before times' she worked with companies such as Jackalope, Strawdog, Stage Left, Remy Bumpo, First Folio, Lookingglass, Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, About Face, Defiant, Chicago Dramatists, and Mary Arrchie, among others. She's a charter member of BWBTC and their de facto resident archivist. She sometimes speaks into a can for money (commercials, video games, one audio book, and one pinball machine!), and on camera she can be seen in various indie film projects and web series (if you can find them). She has also been known to write, produce, direct, and record things, when necessary. She mostly avoids social media, but some info about Kat's history and projects can be found at katwolf.net



Brittani Yawn (she/her; Ensemble; U/S Cordelia/Fool) is happy to be back with BWBTC! She is a performer and writer based in Chicago. Originally from Cleveland, OH, Brittani is an alum of Miami University. Chicago credits include Promethean Theatre, The Second City, The Plagiarists, Artemisia Theater, Hell in a Handbag, The Annoyance, iO, among others. Brittani is represented by Grossman & Jack Talent.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Adri Andreolas (she/her; Assistant Stage Manager) is a scenic designer, painter, and stage manager. She recently graduated from The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) with a BA in Theater Design, Production, and Technology with a minor in education. She has scenic designed for summertime (an interlude) (UIC), and Macbeth (UIC), and is a studio assistant for set designer Collette Pollard. Adri has painted for two theater seasons with Impostor's Theater Company ('25-'26), Confederates (Redtwist), and ChiARTS' summer season. She stage managed Odessa (Subtext Studio TC), Exit Strategy (UIC), and assisted stage management for Andy Warhol Presents: The Cocaine Play (Jackalope TC), Not About Nightingales, Urinetown, and Blues for an Alabama Sky (UIC), Helena and Hermia, and Footholds V6, (Impostor's Theater Company), and Big Time Toppers (Theater L'Acadie).

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), A Midsummer Night's Dream (BWBTC), That Must Be the Entrance to Heaven (Visión Latino), Jane: Abortion and the Underground (Idle Muse). You can catch them at carpentry overhire calls throughout the city, or carrying loose pieces of lumber on the CTA. Inquiries: linebowerTD@gmail.com

Alison Dornheggen (she/her, Director) has been working in the Chicagoland area as a director, actor, fight choreographer and administrator for over 20 years. She received her degree in directing and acting from Columbia College Chicago and has been lucky to work with companies such as Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Idle Muse Theater, Mercury Theater, A Red Orchid Theatre, Remy Bumpo, Oak Park Festival Theatre, and The Factory Theater among others. She earned her MA in Arts Management, serving as the Theatre Graduate Fellow at American University in Washington DC and was privileged to work with the Washington Stage Guild, Ford's Theater, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and award winning composer Peter Lerman. Alison is also part of the Theater department faculty at the Chicago Academy for the Arts and has been a proud ensemble member of BWBTC since 2003. She wishes a huge thank you to the BWBTC ensemble, love to JPH and of course D&G.

Hannah Foerschler (she/her; Sound Designer) is a Chicago-based sound designer and musician. She holds an MA in Sound Arts & Industries from Northwestern University and a BA in Music from Kenyon College, and she apprenticed with the Purple Rose Theatre Company during their 2015-2016 season. Hannah is currently the Audio Manager for Theater & Performance Studies at the University of Chicago and a proud member of the Theatrical Sound Designers & Composers Association. Selected sound design credits: The Mark, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Plaid As Hell, Women of 4G (BWBTC); The Kelly Girls (The Factory Theater, Jeff nomination); Man of the People (Stage Left Theatre); 13th Annual Living Newspaper Festival (Jackalope Theatre Company); Slow Food (Third Avenue PlayWorks, Sturgeon Bay, WI); The Tasters, Laura And The Sea (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble).

Jessie Gowens (she/her; Costume Designer) is a Chicago Costume Designer who is incredibly excited to make their BWBTC debut! Most recently she worked on Angels in America Part 1 and Part 2 with Invictus Theatre, Becky Nurse of Salem, the Midwest premiere, with Shattered Globe Theatre. Most notable was her work on The Crucible with Invictus Theatre, where her costume design was Non Equity Jeff Nominated. Other design work includes A Winter's Tale, Network, and Three Sisters (Invictus Theatre), A View From the Bridge (Shattered Globe Theatre), Leaf, Skunk and Badger, and Extra Yarn (Lifeline Theatre). Ms. Gowens holds a BFA in Costume Design and Tech from Northern Arizona University and has been the Wardrobe Supervisor at DePaul University for six years.

Tristin Hall (they/them; Intimacy Director) is thrilled to be joining BWBTC for the first time! Tristin is Chicago born and raised actor, Intimacy and Fight Choreographer trained with IDC, SAFD, and BASSC and graduate of Columbia College Chicago. They have choreographed at Northlight, Steep, Strawdog, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Writers, Bramble Theater, Jackalope, Theater Evolve, and Citadel to name a few. Tristin is a proud founding member of Point Theatre Project and of Gladiator Fight Night! If you want to see them fight, check out their work at pointtheatreproject.com. All the love to their family for their constant support!

Rose Hamill (she/her; Production Manager) has been a stage and production manager in Chicago for 10 years and has worked with many storefront companies including The Factory Theater, Redtwist Theater, and Firebrand Theatre among others. 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 currently serves as President of BWBTC's Board of Directors.

Rose holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Technical Theatre from Columbia College Chicago, with a minor in Arts Administration; as well as a Project Management Professional certification through the Project Management Institute and a Certificate of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Management from Northwestern University. She is a full time Executive Assistant and the owner/operator of [RBH Weddings LLC](#).

Morgan Laszlo (they/them; Scenic Designer) is a Chicago based scenic designer and painter. This is their debut show with BWBTC. Other credits included: Scenic Design- Tartuffe (The Conspirator's), Birds of North America (A Red Orchid Theatre), Young People's Company 2025 and 2026 (Piven Theatre Workshop). Scenic Charge- The Targeted, Veal (A Red Orchid Theatre), Urinetown, TLDR: Thelma Louise Dyke Remix, Diana, Tell me on a Sunday (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre), Matilda Jr, Tuck Everlasting (Actors Training Center), Gold Leaf Ragtime Blues (American Blues Theater), Rooted (Bramble Theatre Company).

Arielle Leverett (she/her; Assistant Director). Babes With Blades Theatre Co.: the Good Fight. CHICAGO: Twelfth Night (Chicago Shakespeare Theater) the Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); From the Mississippi Delta (Lifeline Theatre); After the Blast (Broken Nose Theatre); Henry V (First Folio Theatre); Southern Gothic (Windy City Playhouse); WHITE (Definition Theatre); Ragtime (Griffin Theatre); Richard III (Muse of Fire Theatre Company). REGIONAL: Romeo and Juliet, Emma (Door Shakespeare); Dreamgirls, a Christmas Carol (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); Romeo and Juliet, Winter's Tale, Two Gentlemen of Verona (Kentucky Shakespeare Festival); Sound of Music (Parallel 45). EDUCATION: MFA in Acting, Western Illinois University; BA in Theatre, Grand Valley State University.

Ryan Liddell (he/him; Assistant Fight Director) This is Ryan's first time working with Babes With Blades, and he is privileged to work with great people and friends. He has previously choreographed violence for Redtwist, Husky Moon Theatre Co, and ECCT, as well as various short and student films. As an actor and circus artist, he has most recently been seen on stage in Pagliacci at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and The Play that Goes Wrong at Metropolis. More at RyanJLiddell.com

Elena Lindeman (they/she; Properties Designer) is super excited to be making their debut in professional theatrical design with BWBTC! Her recent credits include a collaboration between Los Angeles Theatre Initiative with the Edinburgh Fringe, the Hangar Theatre, the Kitchen Theatre Company, and numerous productions with Ithaca College, of which she is a recent alum. Outside of theatre, Elena enjoys painting, reading, and hiking.

Grace Elizabeth Mealey (she/her; Stage Manager) is a professional stage manager based in Chicago. PREVIOUSLY: yo ho., The Mark (BWBTC). Scaramouche (City Lit Theater Company). Girls & Boys, The House Without A Christmas Tree (Griffin Theatre Company). The Storm of the Century, New Work Festival 2025, 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. Love to Jen Mohr as a constant collaborator on nearly all of the above!

Jess Pennachio (she/her; Fight Director) Jessica has a B.A in Performance from UNCC and completed the Actor's Gymnasium Professional Circus Training Program focusing in partner acrobatics and juggling. She is a trained stunt performer and an Advanced Actor Combatant. She has assisted stage combat classes throughout Chicago and across the country. She has worked with BWBTC, The Factory Theater, Collaboracion, Rough House, Chicago Danztheatre Ensemble, and the Carolina Renaissance Festival. She is a fight choreographer for stage and screen, a makeup artist, and loves to learn and fight with friends!

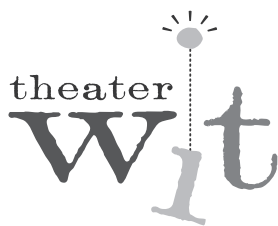
Hayley Rice (she/her; Text Coach) is a Chicago-area director and text coach whose work has been seen at First Folio Theatre (The Winter's Tale, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Man-Beast, Henry V, Jigsaw Bride), Babes With Blades Theatre Company (Henry V, The Duchess of Malfi), & Focal Point Theatre Company, among others. As an actor, she's worked with Midsommer Flight, BWBTC, The Factory Theater, Prologue Theatre, AstonRep, and Circle Theatre. Hayley is the Artistic Director of Babes With Blades Theatre Company. You can learn more at HayleyRice.com.

Payton Shearn (she/they; Production Assistant) is an arts administrator based in Chicago. She is so excited to be working with BWBTC once again! Payton is a graduate of Northwestern University, where she studied Theater Management and Gender & Sexuality Studies. She is also a proud BWBTC ensemble member. They love 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 Line, #shearnsquad, and their chosen family.

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 and is also a proud Artistic Affiliate of BWBTC.

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As an institution, Theater Wit seeks to be the hub of the Chicago neighborhood theater scene. In our three spaces, we bring together Chicago's best storefront theater companies. Here you will find a smorgasbord of excellent productions, see the work of a parade of talented artists, and mingle with audiences from all over Chicago.

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Part of the Chicago Scene

Theater is part of the Chicago experience. Each year, over 200 theaters present thousands of shows to Chicago's loyal and enthusiastic theater-going audience. Chicago's theater community is recognized around the world for its talent, its innovation and its power to entertain and enlighten. If Tony awards were sports championships, our artists would beat out the combined efforts of Michael Jordan, Bobby Hull, Jim McMahon, Jermaine Dye, and the entire Chicago Cubs roster going back 100 years. This stage is a Chicago stage, contributing to the vibrant artistic life of our city and the economic development of our neighborhood. Very few cities on the planet offer the theatrical richness and diversity of Chicago. But you get to share in it. Because you are here.



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No initiation or startup fee, but members must agree to a three-month minimum.

Twice a year, bring a friend for free.

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E-NEWS

Stay up to date on all the happenings at Theater Wit. Sign up for our e-newsletter. Get the latest info on show openings and schedules; eavesdrop on production gossip and artistic plans; see behind-the-scenes photos.

- Get a free piece of chocolate when you fill out a mailing list insert and give to any bartender, usher or house manager.
- Sign up online at theaterwit.org/join
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Facebook: facebook.com/theaterwit

DONATE

Theater Wit is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your tax-deductible donation supports Theater Wit and supports this building in its role as an artistic home for Chicago's best storefront theaters.

- Donate online at theaterwit.org/donate
- Make an instant donation at the box office, the bar, or with our house manager.
- Donate your time and talents! Theater Wit welcomes volunteers for office work, community outreach, building improvements and special events.

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 [NATIVE-
LAND.CA](https://native-land.ca)

ALSO, AS YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS PART OF YOUR INTERNET EXPERIENCE AND PROMOTION AS AN ARTIST, (AS WE WILL DISCUSS SHORTLY), PLEASE JOIN US IN TAKING A MOMENT TO CONSIDER THE LEGACY OF COLONIZATION EMBEDDED WITHIN TECHNOLOGIES, STRUCTURES, AND WAYS OF THINKING WE USE EVERY DAY. WE ARE USING EQUIPMENT AND HIGH-SPEED INTERNET NOT AVAILABLE IN MANY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. EVEN THE TECHNOLOGIES THAT ARE CENTRAL TO MUCH OF THE ART WE MAKE LEAVE SIGNIFICANT CARBON FOOTPRINTS, CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGING CLIMATES THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORLDWIDE. PLEASE JOIN BWBTC IN ACKNOWLEDGING ALL OF THIS AS WELL AS OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE GOOD OF THIS TIME, AND FOR EACH OF US TO CONSIDER OUR ROLES IN RECONCILIATION, DECOLONIZATION, AND ALLYSHIP.

**BABES WITH BLADES THEATRE COMPANY IS ONE OF
A VERY FEW CHICAGO THEATRE COMPANIES
DEDICATED TO REPRESENTING MARGINALIZED
VOICES THROUGH STORYTELLING.**

***WE ARE THE ONLY ONE THAT USES STAGE COMBAT
AS A STORYTELLING TOOL.***

**CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION HERE
TO SUPPORT
*THEATER THAT LEAVE A MARK!***





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**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.**

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