A MESSAGE FROM THE artistic director

Thank you for joining us for Trayf by Lindsay Joelle! We are excited to continue our 35th anniversary season with the New England premiere of this contemporary coming-of-age comedy and welcome director Celine Rosenthal to New Rep! Celine and the cast of Trayf embark on the journey of young Chasidic men grappling with their friendship, identities, and assimilation.

As New Rep’s 35th season is my first as Artistic Director, we intend to fully incorporate our season’s theme of TRANSITION as we commence upon a new chapter. We hope that this season’s plays will make you laugh, reflect, empathize with others, and spark conversation about the vital ideas of our time. During the holidays we will continue with our seasonal tradition of a large-scale musical and invite you to join us for Oliver!, the classic story that follows the life of a courageous orphan and a band of misfit children, bringing light to the importance of friendship and caring for one another when the world is set against you from the very beginning. I am thrilled to be directing this beloved musical, and plan to bring new theatricality to this classic show with an exciting look and a fresh perspective.

Thank you again for visiting us today, and please do share your experience with friends and family. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you again soon as we transition into a new chapter of art-making and advocacy. Feel free to reach out to me at michaeljbobbitt@newrep.org and share your thoughts.

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Artistic Director
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TRAYF

BY LINDSAY JOELLE
DIRECTED BY CELINE ROSENTHAL

SCENIC DESIGNER
GRACE LAUBACHER*

COSTUME DESIGNER
BECCA JEWETT

LIGHTING DESIGNER
MARCELLA BARBEAU

SOUND DESIGNER
AUBREY DUBE

STAGE MANAGER
JENNA WORDEN*

cast

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

KIMBERLY GAUGHAN Leah
NILE SCOTT HAWVER* Jonathan
DAVID PICARIELLO Shmuel
BEN SWIMMER* Zalmy

There will be no intermission.

TRAYF was originally produced by Theater J, a program of the Edlavitch DC JCC. Adam Immenwahr, Artistic Director; Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg, Managing Director.

Developed and presented, by Penguin Rep Theatre (Joe Brancato, Artistic Director & Andrew M. Horn, Executive Director) from May 19, 2017, to June 11, 2017, in Stony Point, NY.

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TRAYF
ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

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TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
Joe Fanning

MASTER ELECTRICIAN
Katie Hoolsema Lamm

PROPS MANAGER
Sam Martin

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Do you remember your childhood best friend? The games you played, the music you liked, what you dreamed you'd do together when you grew up? This play is a love-letter to that first sacred-unbreakable-all-consuming friendship. And did I mention our heroes are also Hasidic Jews?

When I first read Lindsay’s script I was enchanted by the vulnerability and pure enthusiasm emanating from her characters. I didn’t know a lot about Hasidim, Chabad or the Lubavitch movement at the time, and I held some assumptions about how homogenous and rigid the community might be. Through this play I’ve had my eyes opened to a beautiful world I might not have otherwise explored, and I’ve gained a greater appreciation for my own Jewish roots and the way that theatre can help us flex our empathy muscles.

Despite their outward difference from secular teenagers, our main characters, Zalmy and Shmuel, grapple with the same questions of identity that any adolescent faces when stepping out into the world. And in 1991 no less, before smartphones and social media and all of that chazerai. As the boys redefine their friendship they ultimately start to define themselves, and with that there are things you gain and things you unfortunately lose. All part of the bitter-sweet magic of growing up.

So I invite you to join us on the Mitzvah Tank. I hope this play will make you laugh, challenge your assumptions, and warm your heart. And maybe when you get home, you’ll call your childhood best-friend to say hello and argue over whether the superior way to listen to your favorite music is on the original album or on a mix tape.

L’Chaim!
The most important thing I can do as a writer is put work into the world that exercises our collective empathy muscles. I hope the audience’s experience will ultimately mirror my own: an expectation of difference evolving into an undeniable recognition of similarity.

- Lindsay Joelle, Playwright

HASIDIC JUDAISM

Hasidism began in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe as a spiritual survival movement within Orthodox Judaism. Drawing on the Jewish mystical tradition, its followers sought a direct, joyful experience of God through prayer, song, dance, and story. Hasidim, whose primary language is Yiddish, are organized into independent sects, or courts, typically named for their towns of origin, for example, Bobov, Lubavitch, Satmar. Each sect is headed by its own dynastic Rebbe (Rabbi), a revered spiritual and communal leader. All sects live in insular communities, but Chabad-Lubavitch also dispatch emissaries across the globe to provide the opportunity for unaffiliated Jews to embrace their religious heritage.

INSPIRATION FOR TRAYF

Trayf grew out of playwright Lindsay Joelle’s friendship with a former Chabad-Lubavitcher from Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York. For years her friend shared stories of how he covertly “dipped his toe into the secular world”—renting from a video store, skating at a roller disco, trying on blue jeans—until, in his twenties, he fully embarked on a secular life. For Joelle, Trayf (commonly translated from Yiddish as non-kosher or forbidden) is “a tribute to my friend, a testament to his bravery.”

THE PLAYWRIGHT IN CROWN HEIGHTS

Joelle first experienced a Hasidic community when her friend brought her to Crown Heights to share a Shabbos (Sabbath) meal with his family, to whom he remains connected. Through generous interactions with rabbis and other members of the community, male and female, Joelle learned about the Hasidic way of life. She also discovered a surprising diversity, including the existence of “Chabad Hipsters.” Joelle was struck by the central role of music in Hasidism, a “conduit to connect to something larger than ourselves,” and by a unique concept of love:

I was particularly moved by the Chabad belief that love is an action. That the world is in disrepair, and not by divine intervention, but through dedicated, systematic, and determined acts of love toward ourselves and each other can we hope to elevate it.

AMERICA THE “TRAYF-LAND”

The Holocaust had a devastating effect on Hasidim, as their distinctive clothing and customs made them easy targets for the Nazis. Survivors rebuilt their shattered communities outside of Eastern Europe, primarily in Israel and New York. But many other Jewish immigrants assimilated in America—“the trayf-land,” as some of the pious called it. In 1974, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), the charismatic Lubavitch leader known worldwide as “the Rebbe,” announced a campaign to offset this loss of Jewish
identity. In support of the campaign, yeshiva students drove Hertz trucks into midtown Manhattan in search of Jews willing to fulfill a mitzvah, one of God’s commandments (a good deed). When a New York Times reporter inquired about the trucks, the Rebbe told his spokesperson to say, “these are our tanks against assimilation.”

HUNGERING FOR THE TRADITION
When a Chabad-Lubavitcher from a Mitzvah Tank (always a male) approaches a stranger on a city street, he typically says, “Excuse me, are you Jewish?” Given that Jews are a minority population, the answer is mostly a straightforward “No,” but there are also conflicted responses: “No, I’m sorry, but I like Kaballah”; “I wish I were”; “No I’m not ... Yes I am.” When the answer is “Yes,” Jewish men are invited to strap on tefillin (leather prayer boxes containing biblical texts), and Jewish women are offered Sabbath candles. Drawn to the earnestness and sincerity of the Chabadniks, or motivated by a search for meaning in their lives, many Jews agree to perform these rituals. Often they experience an unfamiliar but welcome spiritual connection. As one San Francisco participant explained, “Many of us really hunger for the tradition our parents rejected. It’s very comforting.”

DREADING THE MUSIC
While many passersby find the colorfully decorated Mitzvah Tanks charming, others find them maddening: “The sound of Hasidic music blasting from tinny speakers can inspire dread in the hearts of some Jews,” wrote Forward correspondent Emily Bobrow. At times, Chabadniks must endure hostility or ridicule from Jews and non-Jews alike, with comments such as “You’re in my way” or “Get a real job.” Identifying Jews on the street is a fraught endeavor. Some Jews may take offense at the intrusive inquiry or object to the exclusion of women from key rituals. Jews of color may feel insulted if they’re ignored, as happened to Taj Harper Benaim, an Afro-Caribe Jew, when she inquired about the free boxes of matzoh at a Mitzvah Tank. “Being snubbed like that hurts,” she said.

THE DIVINE SPARK WITHIN
Mitzvah Tanks play a much greater outreach role than transporting Chabad-Lubavitchers to city street corners. The RVs serve as mobile synagogues around the world, offering religious services, study sessions, and preparation for the Jewish holidays. Reaching out to isolated Jews, Chabadniks help to create a sense of community. They have brought Sukkot to Siberia, Passover to Katmandu, and Hanukah to the Australian Outback. They have prayed, sung, and danced with Jews in Montreal, São Paulo, Paris, London, and Tel Aviv. “It’s very impressive. They are there to provide for us,” said one grateful participant in southern Utah. “The soul of Judaism is what they bring to you,” said another. What accounts for Chabad-Lubavitchers’ wildly successful efforts to strengthen Jewish identity in such far-flung places? New York Times writer Ray Schultz provides a possible answer: “One of the basic tenets of the Lubavitch Movement is that every Jew carries a spark of religion within ... and that all it takes is a certain amount of stoking to turn it into a fullscale blaze.”

PRODUCTION HISTORY
Trayf had its world premiere in 2018 at Theater J in Washington, DC.
KIMBERLY GAUGHAN (Leah) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Regional acting credits include Judith in Equivocation at Actors’ Shakespeare Project; Mary Warren in The Crucible at Theatre South Carolina; and Sophie in Flight at the Center for Performance Experiment. Other credits include upcoming direction of King John at Praxis Stage, and serving as the Assistant Director for Romeo & Juliet at Commonwealth Shakespeare Company Stage2. Gaughan holds an MFA in Acting from University of South Carolina, and a BA in Theatre from University of Notre Dame. Gaughan teaches at Massasoit Community College, and is a company member of Theatre Nohgaku, an international performance ensemble dedicated to Noh. Originally from Scituate, MA, she currently resides in Somerville, MA.

DAVID PICARIELLO (Shmuel) returns to New Repertory Theatre after performing in New Rep’s Classic Repertory Company’s 2018-2019 season as Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Old Major/Benjamin in Animal Farm; and Drew (u/s) in Straight White Men. Regional credits include Little Shop of Horrors at Firehouse Center for the Arts; A Midsummer Night’s Dream Elliot Norton nominee Best Fringe Production at Apollinaire Theater Company; and The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee at Theatre Company of Saugus. Picariello holds a BFA in Theatre Performance from Salem State University with a minor in Film Studies and Dramatic Literature. Originally from Saugus, MA, he currently resides in Wakefield, MA.

NILE SCOTT HAWVER* (Jonathan) returns to New Repertory Theatre after most recently being seen in Man of La Mancha. Regional credits include Carl Perkins in Million Dollar Quartet at Greater Boston Stage Company; Guy in Once, Monty in Violet, and Will in Mothers and Sons at SpeakEasy Stage; Preacher/Office/Others in Breath and Imagination at Lyric Stage Company of Boston; Ensemble in The Irish and How They Got That Way at Greater Boston Stage Company; Kent in Edward II at Actors’ Shakespeare Project; Ensemble in Etherdome at Huntington Theatre Company; and Sebastian in Twelfth Night at Commonwealth Shakespeare Company. Hawver holds an MFA in Acting from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as a BFA in Acting from University of Rhode Island. He teaches at Watertown Children’s Theatre. Originally from Coventry, RI, he currently resides in New York City.

BEN SWIMMER* (Zalmy) makes his New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Regional credits include Bobby in the Honey Trap at Boston Playwrights Theatre; Swing in Camelot at Goodspeed Opera House; and Jacob in Morning by Simon Stephens at Ab Ovo Company. Swimmer holds a BFA in Acting from Boston University (Beowulf in Beowulf: A Thousand Years of Baggage, Jeff in Lobby Hero, George Gibbs in Our Town). Originally from Madison, CT, he currently resides in New York City.

CELINE ROSENTHAL (Director) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Rosenthal is the Associate Artistic Director at Asolo Repertory Theatre, a Tony Nominated Producer (Leap of Faith, Seminar), and a New Georges Jammer. She is the recipient of Directing Fellowships at Manhattan Theatre Club and Asolo Repertory Theatre, as well as an SDCF Observership. Her work has been seen at the Tristan Bates Theatre in London, NYMF, New York City Center, 54 Below, 59E59,
Abingdon Theatre and in the Broadway’s Future Songbook Series at Lincoln Center. Recent directing credits include Drowning in Cairo (National Queer Theater), A Doll’s House (Studio Theatre), Chicago (Children’s Theatre Company), Motherf***r with the Hat (FSU/Asolo Conservatory), and The Tempest (Asolo Rep on Tour). Originally from Queens, NY, she spent her childhood in Rhode Island and currently resides in Sarasota & Brooklyn.

GRACE LAUBACHER* (Scenic Designer) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Regional credits include La Bohème at Santa Fe Opera; Four Woke Baes in Edinburgh Fringe; Dido and Aeneas at Juilliard/Opera Royal, Versailles; Enemies, A Love Story at Kentucky Opera; and Guards at the Taj at Central Square Theater. Laubacher holds an MA in Performance Design from Central Saint Martins in London, as well as a BA in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard. Originally from Cambridge, MA, she currently resides in New York, NY.

BECCA JEWETT (Costume Designer) returns to New Repertory Theatre after working on We Will Not Be Silent, Heartland, Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act, Lonely Planet, Thurgood, and Blackberry Winter. Regional credits include Last Night at Bowl-Mor Lanes at Greater Boston Stage Company; Julius Caesar at Actors’ Shakespeare Project; Taste of Honey at Boston Center for American Performance; and working as the Assistant Dyer/Painter at Santa Fe Opera. Jewett is a Costume Shop Supervisor at Salem State University and holds a Masters in Costume Design from Boston University. Originally from Cambridge, MA, she now resides in Arlington, MA.

MARCELLA BARBEAU (Lighting Designer) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Regional credits include Native Gardens, The Lifespan of a Fact, and Barefoot in the Park at Gloucester Stage Company; and Dolores Claiborne, Pelleas et Melisande, and Cabaret at Boston University’s Opera Institute. She has worked as an assistant designer at the English National Opera, National Theatre Munich, and National Theatre Mannheim. Barbeau holds an MFA in Lighting Design from Boston University. Born in Tongling, China and raised in St. Louis, MO, she currently resides in New York City.

AUBREY DUBE (Sound Designer) returns to New Rep after most recently working on Good. Other credits include Vinegar Tom, Monster, Serious Money, Pentecost (PTP/NYC); Big Love, The Imaginary Invalid, In the Next Room, and Man of La Mancha (Middlebury College); A Taste of Honey (Boston Center for American Performance); Delirium, Daddy Issues, and The Hothouse (Boston University); Winter People (Boston Playwrights Theatre) and Vietgone (Boston Center for the Arts/Company One Theater). Aubrey holds an MFA in Sound Design from Boston University. Originally from Botswana, he now lives in Watertown.

JENNA WORDEN* (Production Stage Manager) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut with this production of Trayf. Regional credits include Ben Butler, Barefoot in the Park, The Agitators, and To Kill a Mockingbird at Gloucester Stage Company; Birdy, Universe Rushing Apart, Death and the Maiden, A Christmas Celtic Sojourn with WGBH and Our American Hamlet at Commonwealth Shakespeare Company. Worden holds a BA in Theatre Studies and BSED History from Northern Arizona University. Originally from Phoenix, AZ, she currently resides in Malden, MA.

LEE NISHRI-HOWITT (Voice & Accent Coach) is thrilled to work with New Rep on this exciting new season. Lee has coached at the American Repertory Theater, Hunting Theatre Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Wheelock
Family Theater, and others; and has taught at Harvard University, The Moscow Art Theatre School's American Studio, and the Ludwig Solski School of Dramatic Arts in Poland. Lee is a graduate of the Masters program for voice and speech at the American Repertory Theater at Harvard. Originally from Israel, he now resides in Boston. LNHvoice.com


www.Lindsayjoelle.com

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— Through the passion and electricity of live theater performed to the highest standards of excellence, New Rep seeks to spark community conversations on crucial contemporary issues.

— Our work expands and challenges the human spirit of both artists and audiences. We present world premieres, contemporary plays and classic works in several intimate settings. Our productions are designed to be accessible to all. We are committed to education and enrichment for learners of all ages, with a special dedication to the creation of innovative in-school programming and outreach to underserved audiences. We embrace theater as the basis for enduring connections with our community and as a springboard for meaningful civic engagement.

— New Rep is an active advocate for the arts and a major voice in the national dialogue defining the role of theater in our culture.

New Repertory Theatre is the award-winning, professional theatre company in residence at the Mosesian Center for the Arts in Watertown, MA. For over 30 years, New Rep has been a leader of self-produced theatre in greater Boston, producing contemporary and classic dramas, comedies, and musicals in both the 340-seat mainstage theater and the 90-seat BlackBox Theater. Annually, New Rep has served over 40,000 patrons, including 2,000 season subscribers. In addition to its season of productions, New Rep produces Next Voices, a program dedicated to developing new plays by our Next Voices Playwriting Fellows. Under its Lifelong Enrichment Arts Programs (LEAP), New Rep also produces its Classic Repertory Company, Page to Stage, Insider Experiences, and Spotlight Symposium Series.

New Repertory Theatre, Inc. is a not-for-profit theatre company operating under a New England Area Theatres (NEAT) contract with Actors’ Equity Association and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. New Repertory Theatre is a member of Theatre Communications Group, a national service organization for non-profit professional theaters; StageSource, the Alliance of Theatre Artists and Producers; ArtsBoston; the Producer’s Association of New England Area Theatres (NEAT); New England Theatre Conference; VSA Arts-Massachusetts, a service and support organization promoting accessibility; Theatre Arts Marketing Alliance (TAMA); Boston Arts Marketing Alliance (BAMA); National New Play Network (NNPN); and Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities.
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| Daniel MacLean Wagner |
| Robert A Kelly |

Barbara Epstein & Scott Hebert
Harold and Susan Farkas
Glenda and Bob Fishman
Harold and Carol Forbes
Ernestine Gianelly
Donald Goldstein
Marcy Crary Fan Club
Carolyn Hebsgaard
Doreen Hogle
Edgar A. Knudson & Louis P.Mula
Martin & Phyllis J Kornguth
Allen & Jeanne Krieger
Leonard & Ruthann Laster
Jillian Levine
Wendy Liebow & Scott Burson
Julianne Lindsay & Richard O’Connor
Thomas Melone
Danielle Murstein & Benjamin Wolozin
Leslie Nelken
Robert & Pamela Norton
Reggie Pearse
Ellen Perrin
David & Donna Podolsky
Barbara Poplack
Ulrike & Peter Rettig
Sharon Rich & Nancy Reed
Patricia Robinson & Henry Finch
Serge and Tanya Savard
Lisa & Stephen Shapiro
Diane Shufro
Emily Smith-Sturr and Ted Sturr
Herman & Joan Suit
Paula Thier
Judith A. Thomson
Evelyn and Joel Umlas
Curt & Rachel Van Emon
Richard Walker
Barbara Wands
Michael Wood
GOD RESPECTS ME
WHEN I WORK,
BUT HE LOVES ME WHEN I SING!
- Rabindranath Tagore

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Babes-in-arms are not permitted in the theater during performances. New Rep encourages the introduction of young audiences to the theatre. Children under 14 years of age are required to have a parent or guardian present with them in the theater during the performance. Some shows may contain strong language and/or mature themes; patrons may request additional information when purchasing tickets.

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