The Dunsmore Room at Crooners Supper Club

Presents

The 2026 NMTE New Works Cabaret!

With new music by:

Brenda Varda, Kevin Bowen, Janet Preus, Maureen Kane Berg,
Tom Berg, Charles Betz, Rick Rhobajt Widen, Mariénne Kreitlow,
Bob Derus, Mike Nilles, & Keith Benson

& featuring special guest artists:

Nicole A. Korbisch, Josh Zapata-Palmer, Therese Kulas, Nick Miller,
Elisheva Scheuer, Michael Burton, Joyce Lyons, Kiran Arquin,
Martha Fischer, Andrew Schufman, Maya Panowitz,
Joe & Mark McCullough, Jen Burleigh-Bentz, and Jake Endres

& thanks to John Steitz, sound design; Krishna Mishra, booking manager;
Jay Fuchs, marketing assistant; and Zach Thayer, technical director.

Got It Made

By Maureen Kane Berg and Tom Berg
Brenda Varda (Accompanist)
Josh Zapata-Palmer (Freddy) and Therese Kulas (Chloe)
Cappuccino and Tiramisu

Got It Made is a send up of office politics, true crime, and modern romance. Freddy and Chloe are the modern romance. In this frothy number, they meet in a cafe, while waiting for their mutual friend Molly.

Let's Be Each Other's Problem

Later in the show, Freddy and Chloe must decide whether to commit to a perfectly shallow kind of love.

Foshay!

By Kevin and Lynn Bowen; Original Concept by Tim Colby
Nick Miller (Wilbur Foshay) and Elisheva Scheuer (Leota Foshay)
Name In Lights

It's 1917, and Wilbur Foshay (of Foshay Tower fame) has just started a new business - The W. B. Foshay Company, without telling his wife, Leota. In this song, he unveils his dream, and starts to bring her along on that journey.

Time Is A Gift

While serving a prison sentence in Leavenworth, Wilbur has learned hard truths about all the time he's lost and the ramifications of his actions. This will be the first time this song will be sung as a duet between Wilbur and his wife Leota, as Wilbur seeks redemption.

Anzhelina & Karina

By Keith Benson
Eric Heltemes (Prerecorded Orchestrations)
Michael Burton (Mario)
My Dearest Friends

In 1920, Mario bombed Wall Street to strike a symbolic blow against American financial power. More specifically, he sought retaliation for the recent arrests of his close associates, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, whose prosecution had sparked widespread outrage within radical anarchist networks. Mario's story is a subplot in the musical Anzhelina & Karina.

100 Pounds of Dynamite
100 Pounds of Dynamite, Reprise

The Small, Small Time

By Brenda Varda (Accompanist)
Andrew Schufman (Harry Cowles) and Maya Panowitz (Estelle Watson)
What A Splendid Story From Your Dreams

It's 1917. There's a new war and a new virus–and movies threaten countless little theatres in LA. Harry Cowles, the defiant owner of The Princess Theatre, has just been overwhelmed by a surprise audition from Estelle Watson - a singer with an amazingly sordid past and a desperate need to be back on the stage.

AGASSIZ!

By Bob Derus (Jonny)
Joyce Lyons (Emily)
One Blue World

Agassiz is a fictitious town and college in Northern Minnesota and the setting for most of the story. Agassiz is also the name of a huge ancient lake near the northern border of Minnesota and into Canada. The lake dried up, and is a metaphor for a warming earth. An important theme of this show is to recognize and take care of the earth. The protagonist in the story, Jonny, writes *One Blue World* after hearing an astronaut explain what a life-changing event it is to see the whole earth from space.

Rap't in Water
Jonny wrote this song as a presentation in his Earth Studies class in his first semester. The assignment was to write a report about a unique aspect of nature from the class reading materials. His presentation covers two anomalies of water that seem to be uniquely designed to protect life.

Excelsius
By Mariénne Kreitlow (Accompanist)
Michael Burton (Nestor) and
Nicole A. Korbisch (Ieda)
Nestor's Vigil
The Excelsius is in trouble. The once majestic building that houses a struggling music store is in decay, reflecting the unfulfilled dreams and broken promises of her inhabitants. Nestor is its hypersensitive spiritual guardian. "I hear voices in the wings of beetles. Watching from their eyes I see too much."
Goodbye, Rio
Excelsius employee Ieda is an untrained musician who lives and breathes music. She used to be the dresser for Andras, who manages The Excelsius, in his former life as a ballet artist. In the bleakness of Minnesota's winter, she struggles to integrate her past. "The splendour of the place I used to know, giving birth to mountains rising up in vertigo. The pulsing of the ocean where Emanjá fed our dreams. Underneath the outstretched arms of Christ, millions of us blest and crucified, and reborn again in the streets of Rio."

Socks & Shoes & Coats
By Rick Rhobajt Widen
Martha Fischer (Accompanist)
Kiran Arquin (Partner) and Maya Pantanowitz (Spouse)
Late Coming Back
Spouse and their toddler, Child Junior, are late coming back from their appointment, and so Partner sings of his resulting anxiety …
All My Love & My Good Intentions
New parents Spouse and Partner sing of the boundless hopes and dreams they have for their new baby.

It's Just the Rest of My Life!
By Mike Nilles, with a brass arrangement by Bill Kelm
Joe McCullough (Mr. Hatch/Friend 2) and Mark McCullough (Alec/Friend 1)
So What!
High school student, Alec, with his small gang of under-achievers, and their counselor, Mr. Hatch, have a confrontation about the students' angst-ridden apathy towards the value of furthering their education.
Hanging Over Me
Friend 1 cries out to Friend 2 about being overwhelmed by all the worries, uncertainties and insecurities about who they are, where they belong and prospects for the future. The best friend attempts to console the other with a pledge of sticking together no matter what.

Five Minutes On The Low Road
By Charlie Betz, original concept, composer/librettist
Additional music & lyrics and dramaturgy by Josiah Thomas-Turner
Brenda Varda (Accompanist)
Jen Burleigh-Bentz (Tanya) and Jake Endres (Uncle)
Our protagonist Tanya has lived a hyper competitive corporate life - driving her colleagues and her family relentlessly.
Earth Was The Dream
A car crash lands Tanya in the emergency room, and it's a near thing - she flatlines, goes to the "other side" for five minutes. She finds herself in a realm of great beauty and realizes that Earth was the dream. But who is this guy singing? Is it an uncle she never knew existed?
This Side Of Tomorrow
After realigning her life and values, Tanya reflects on her journey and reaffirms her commitment to the here and now - this side of tomorrow.

Snip, Snap, Snute: The Real Story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff
By Janet Preus, Margi Preus, and Dieter Frank.
Brenda Varda (Accompanist)
Michael Burton (Troll Ma)
Troll Ma's Confessional
The Troll Ma, "the Mountain Queen," has always feared the return of her heart - a terrible thing for a troll. But when our two young and very brave heroines do find it and return it to her, she instantly becomes nice and feels compelled to confess her many transgressions, committed over her life of, oh, a few hundred years.

Artist Bios:

Kiran Arquin is a Twin Cities based performer, writer, and recently a producer, "striving to master my craft at every chance I get. Getting the chance to bring fresh new ideas to life is what keeps me working." A graduate of Macalester College, Theatre and Dance, he has recently been seen in "Murder on the Links" as Phillipe at Theatre in the Round; "Academonic" as Demon/writer/producer at Mixed Blood; and "The Fabulous Lipitiones" as Bob at Sidekick Theatre.

Keith Benson is a musical theater writer living in Eden Prairie. He has a passion for craftsmanship and spent over thirty years developing technologies and approaches in the craft of professional portraiture. His inventions in this field have been employed to produce tens of millions of portraits each year. More recently, he has come to embrace the craft of musical theater development.

Maureen Kane Berg and Tom Berg wrote *Got It Made*, a full-length musical, and *(Almost) Got It Made*, its one-act version, which have been performed in theaters from Georgia to an American high school in Japan. Maureen's other writing credits include musical revues for Chicago comedy troupe The Public Offenders and the book, lyrics, and music (with Michael Salmanson and Tom Berg) for *A House Divided*, a musical about the Lincoln presidency. www.maureenkaneberg.com

Charles T. Betz is a Minneapolis-based composer and librettist and originator of *Five Minutes on the Low Road*. Training in brass, guitar, theory, jazz arranging at U of MN and U of North Texas. Core program 2022-23 at New Musicals, Incorporated and 2024 Nautilus Music-Theater's Composer-Librettist Studio, Previous: *IQ: The Musical.* Choral works performed by Crescendo Chorus. Member, New Musical Theater Exchange, Minnesota Association of Songwriters, Playwrights' Center. www.5minlowroad.com

Kevin Bowen is a playwright and songwriter living in Eagan, Minnesota. He's a member of the Playwright's Center and the New Musical Theatre Exchange. His plays and musicals have been produced and staged throughout Minnesota. For information about his completed plays or new works: tctheater@gmail.com

Jen Burleigh-Bentz (she/her) Broadway: Mamma Mia. National Tours: Cheers: Live on Stage, Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story, Miracle on 34th St. Regional: Guthrie, Chanhassen, History Theatre, Artistry, Duluth Playhouse, Broadway on the St Croix, Minnetonka Civic, Mixed Blood, Casting Spell Prod., Cardinal Theatricals, Jon Hassler, Lake Pepin Players, etc. Other: National Concert Tour Yesterday and Once More - Songs by the Carpenters; Recordings: I Do - Anderson-Petty, You Are Home. John Trones. Training: UWEC. Upcoming: Beyond the Rainbow - History Theatre, Jen BB 'N Friends Cabaret at MetroNome Brewery every 2nd Sun, Numerous new works, Raw Stages, Rough Cuts.

Bob Derus has been a part of three musicals. Forty-six years ago, his band Insex partnered with a U of M theater student to create *The Legend of Sub Human Gar* about a pro wrestler who accidentally beats the champ and becomes an overnight sensation. It sold out two weeks at the Southern Theater! Next, he and his sister wrote *Rock, Shock, and Awe*–an anti-Iraq war musical they presented at the 2008 Fringe. He is currently working on *Agassiz!* His goal is to finish it before he dies.

Jake Endres lives in St. Paul, MN and freelances as a singer, actor, writer, composer, and music director. He has appeared with many regional organizations, including The Minnesota Orchestra, The Flying Foot Forum/Guthrie Theater, the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (as a regular creative partner), The Children's Theatre Company, History Theatre, Nautilus Music-Theater, Northern Sky Theater, Schubert Club, Gremlin Theatre, and many more. Since 2020, Jake has produced an eclectic series of backyard concerts called Smoke House Stage. More information: www.jakeendres.com

Martha Fischer (Pianist, Medicians) recently retired (2025) as Professor of Piano and Collaborative Piano at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. A native of Plymouth, Michigan, Fischer holds degrees in piano from Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory of Music.

Nicole A. Korbisch - Blessed to have performed all around the country, Nicole is excited to be back in the Midwest and performing new works by brilliant writers. Some favorite roles have included Patsy Cline *(Always, Patsy Cline),* Cathy *(The Last Five Years),* Woman 2 *(Songs for a New World)*. Catch Nicole throughout the year workshopping new works, on the improv stage with The Peabody Players, and teaching theatre to your kiddos throughout the metro. Stay tuned for a new work-in-the-works from the minds of N. Korbisch & M. Kreitlow!

Mariénne Kreitlow - Lyricist, Composer, Poet, Performance Artist, Playwright. Musicals include Excelsius, "Yours, Throgno," Trouble in Grimmland, Tesla's Mistress, Earl Tracy. She believes art can foster self-empowerment while being thoroughly entertaining. Her mission statement? "juxtaposition = confusion = recalibration = delight = new reality" www.marienne.com www.teslasmistress.com

Therese Kulas is a St. Paul based soprano and a former student of Maria Williams and Katherine Henjum, She equally enjoys opera and musical theater and is

celebrated for her lyrical expression. Credits include a Scottish take on The Mikado (Pretty Jean/Pitti Sing), Fiddler on the Roof (Hodel), Hairspray (Penny), and Into the Woods (Cinderella).

Nick Miller is a Twin Cities based actor and musician. He has recently appeared in the concert production of "Foshay!" at the Hennepin History Museum. He is also a regular performer with Mixed Precipitation's Pickup Truck Opera, Combustible Company, and St. Croix Festival Theatre and has recently performed in the chorus of the Minnesota Opera.

Mike Nilles is a songwriter and producer/engineer currently working on It's Just the Rest of My Life!, a rock-musical for high school audiences about the pressures of choosing a post-secondary path. He previously led Twin Cities bands including Smart Alex—whose single "Chitter Chat" became a collector's item—and Swing Set, winner of Mpls/St. Paul magazine's 1990 Best Pop/Rock Band Album. His song "Blackout" has appeared in Stranger Things and other Netflix productions. As a solo artist, Mike has earned songwriting awards and composed commissioned works for the Joe Mauer family, 3M, and Out On a Limb Dance Theater.

Maya Pantanowitz is a rising senior within the UMN BFA Actor Training Program in association with the Guthrie Theater, and recently returned from studying in London with the Royal Shakespeare Company. You may have seen her in Brick By Brick Players: Twelfth Night, Classical Actor's Ensemble: All's Well That Ends Well, or singing in the Dowling Studio for the Daniel Pollack-Pezner Guthrie Event. @maya.pantz (IG)

Janet Preus is a playwright, songwriter/lyricist and writer/editor, based at her cabin on a lake in northern Minnesota. She spent much of her life teaching theater and directing, while directing and singing with a vocal jazz group, which she founded. She reviewed Twin Cities theater for www.howwastheshow.com for several years, pre-pandemic. Most recently, produced and directed the regional premiere of "Water from Snow" (co-composers Robert Elhai and Fred Steele.) www.janetpreuswriter.com.

Rick. Rhobajt Widen is a writer of several musicals and plays which have been workshopped or produced at Festival 56, The Minnesota Fringe Festival, New Musicals Inc., The Playwrights' Center, Nautilus Music Theatre Composer Librettist Studio, Highlands Elementary School, Theatre Resources Unlimited, Renegade Theatre Company, and at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He has also written numerous video scripts and articles on songwriting and music theory for PBS.org, Soundfly.com, and Tonaltrends.com, and has recorded many albums of music and played guitar and banjo on many records with various groups. www.rhobajt.com

Elisheva Scheuer (she/her) is an actress, singer, composer, and musician, she has worked regionally with the Playwright's Center, Gray Mallard Theater Co., History Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and First Stage. She recently premiered her one-woman verbatim theatre piece, Forever Young, and is in the process of developing her next solo show. Elisheva is a proud graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program.

Andrew Schufman is a singer, photographer, and full-time father based in Minneapolis. He holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from Emerson College and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from NYU. Earlier this fall he mounted his first solo cabaret show, *Better Late*, at the Phoenix Theater and was recently featured in Marzipanik's Resistance Cabaret. www.fieldandtown.com

Brenda Varda is a writer/composer, director, and musical director for theater and new media, collaborating on bringing new, unusual stories to life. Past productions include: *Wench Upon the Stage*, *Fables du Theatre*, *Liquid*, *Stolen Focus*, *Alice Thru the Wormhole*, *A Wasted Evening with Tom Lehrer* - and her solo shows, This is My Garbage and Nine Dresses. including Sacred Fools, The Met, and Unknown Theatre – & works received awards (Ovations, Hollywood Fringe, LATA), and grants from several organizations. Next up? Metaland: a 21st C. Vaudeville.

Josh Zapata-Palmer has worked in film, television, and theater as a creator since he was a dorky teenage adventurer in small-town Minnesota. He does a lot: acting, directing, producing, writing, music, & more (even clowning!) Today, he lives in Minneapolis with his super-duper Ladyfriend where he enjoys hiking, playing the ukulele, watching movies, and wildly gesturing too much with his hands.



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