

THE PREMIERE PLAYHOUSE
PRESENTS

The
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Premieres

Local theatre by local artists.



Comfortably Single by Leigh Spencer

Hearing by Richard W. Swanson

Feb 15 - 18, 2024

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February 15 - 18, 2024



Presents

THE PREMIERE PREMIERES

Comfortably Single

by Leigh Spencer

Hearing

by Richard W. Swanson

Director (Comfortably Single)

Kevin Wintering

Director (Hearing)

Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons

Scenic Designer (Comfortably Single)

Jill Clark

Scenic Designer (Hearing)

Alexondrea Thong Vanh

Costume, Hair & Makeup Designer

Brittney Lewis

Stage Manager

Erika Waxdahl

Sound Designer

Malia Lukomski

Properties Artisan

Jake Cox

Lighting Designer

Nicholas Zoia

WARNINGS

Please be aware that this production contains the use of adult humor/themes and moving lights.

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Elizabeth "Libby" Benson,
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Managing Artistic Director's Note



Welcome to The Premiere Playhouse's second annual production of *The Premiere Premieres*! The unique performance you are about to witness is the culmination of a year-long three-phase process that led us to finding the right plays for this production: *Comfortably Single* by Leigh Spencer (Act 1) and *Hearing* by Richard W. Swanson (Act 2). These plays, and playwrights, will make you listen, watch, learn, feel, and think. Get ready for an astonishing rollercoaster of emotions!

I would like to give you some background on how we found these groundbreaking plays: Through a submission process (Phase 1), TPP sought out new, original, one-act plays from talent residing in or around Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Five semi-finalist submissions were selected to receive a concert reading in front of adjudicators, all of which are local university professors or theatre professionals (Phase 2). Each of the playwrights received helpful feedback for further development of their plays and ultimately two finalists were selected, which are the pieces you are about to see (Phase 3). Throughout our rehearsals the playwrights, directors, production team, and actors underwent a communal, collaborative development process that allowed the plays to breathe and expand as they came to life on stage.

This production is brought to the historic Orpheum stage through the generous support of our season sponsor, First Premier Bank + Premier Bank Card and the South Dakota Arts Council as well as our *Premiere Premieres* 2024 Pocket Sponsors, at time of print: Vicky and Devin Heesch, Oliver Mayes, Bob Nelson, and Sumner Bookkeeping. Our micro-sponsorship program for this annual new play production provides an accessible way to give back to your local arts community by donating directly to a show at a sponsorship level appropriate to the business/individual's budget. This program continues to grow – for which we are grateful – and I encourage you to consider making a donation today to support the sustainability of this important, educational program at The Premiere Playhouse.

A special thank you goes to current Vice President of TPP's Board of Directors, Kevin Cole and past board member, Joe Obermueller for initiating this program, working with me to further develop it, and giving me the tools to succeed in taking it on. I would also like to extend a huge thank you to our esteemed adjudicators for this season's festival of new plays: Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons, Debbi Jones and Luke Tatge – all of whom have extensive experience with new play development and provided our playwrights with helpful insight for the growth of their plays.

New play development has given me some of my favorite experiences as a director and producer, and it was a primary focus of my graduate studies. New plays have an ever-evolving potential to grow, bring new perspectives to their immediate communities, and give theatre artists an opportunity to truly collaborate with one another. I am honored to be shepherding this program's growth today and in the coming years. Thank you for supporting The Premiere Playhouse and the thought-provoking work of our local community's artists!

Enjoy the shows!

Oliver Mayes
Managing Artistic Director

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Director's Notes



When working on *Comfortably Single*, I found myself drowning in laughter at some of the littlest moments, some of the subtlest lines or facial expressions. I noticed my heart strings being tugged at the gentlest of connections, and butterflies in my stomach at the most intimate of moments. But not in the way that you would think. *Comfy* is about connections. Connecting to the person next to you in a deeper way than you could have ever imagined. Connecting to yourself and uncovering that version of you that you always knew existed but could never quite find. Connections aren't always easy to make. And sometimes we make them with people we never would have imagined. But whether it's getting coffee, a drink at the bar, a meal, or having a late night conversation, the simplest of moments can turn into the most meaningful of relationships, even if they don't turn out how you originally thought. I hope that this play makes you laugh. It is a comedy after all. But I also hope that this play gives you the space to see yourself, and maybe even see those around you for the first time.

Kevin Wintering

Stage Director, Comfortably Single

Richard and I have told stories together for many years at Augustana and throughout the region, and our creative partnership has been one of the greatest joys of my artistic life. It has been an honor telling the story of *Hearing* together as part of *The Premiere Premieres!*

Richard's autobiographical play, *Hearing*, explores "hearing as an act of attention and connection. What we hear changes us." Not only does this message appear vividly throughout the play, but Richard's words also invite *all of us* to listen to, connect with, and be transformed by stories and tensions that may at first seem distant, but that echo all too clearly into our own time.

If you want to see more of Richard's work, please join us at Augustana February 29–March 3 for *This Is My Body*. Another play inspired by events in Richard's life and family tree, it tells a kaleidoscopic story of four generations of women who survive in a world that is never gentle and never without love—and fear. Audiences of *Hearing* may be especially interested to know that it tells the origin story of the Mother and Father characters you'll see today. Learn more at augie.edu/arts/theatre, and thank you for supporting new theatre!

Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons

Stage Director, Hearing



Act 1

Comfortably Single by Leigh Spencer



Comfortably Single is a fresh take on the age-old genre, the “rom-com” that will keep you guessing and laughing until the final curtain!

Act 2



Hearing by Richard W. Swanson



The play Hearing is about a Hearing. Specifically, a Personal Hearing before a Draft Board in the last years of the war in Vietnam along with learning to hear each other more.



Cast (Comfortably Single)

Mark Stroud Jim McLain

Aaron Jake Cox

Scott Matt Breems

**Kevin, Wine Event
Coordinator** Mike Richards

**Daniel, Lodge Event
Coordinator** Jamie Bowden

Jamie, Flirt, Brunch Server David Boe

Cassie Ewing Audrey Simmons

Diana Morgan Holien

Rose Melissa Prostrollo

**Isabella, Jessica,
Bartender** Hope Humphrey

**Sam, Boss, Event Center
Coordinator** Kale Hellman

Cast (Hearing)



| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Chas | Caleb Ritchie |
| Father, Father in Hue | Erin Sharp |
| Mother, Mother in Hue | Nancy Tapken |
| Robin, Translator | Betty Kay |
| Alvin Olson | Dave Bakke |
| John Mauer, Victory Havens | Matt Breems |
| Bob Johnson | Paul Pierce |
| Lila Johnson | Allegra Sekely |

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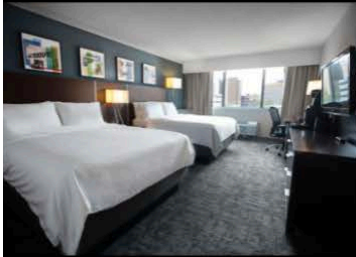
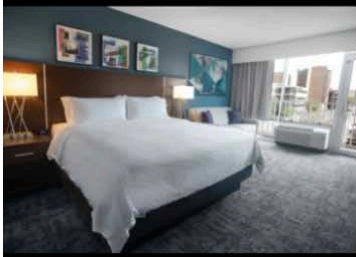
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Production Team

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
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| Production Manager | Alex Newcomb Weiland |
| Director (Comfortably Single) | Kevin Wintering |
| Director (Hearing) | Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons |
| Costume, Hair, & Makeup Designer, Costume Shop Manager | Brittney Lewis |
| Assistant Stage Manager | Elizabeth Wintering |
| Stage Manager | Erika Waxdahl |
| Properties Artisan | Jake Cox |
| Scenic Designer & Charge Scenic Artist | Alexondrea Thong Vanh |
| Scenic Designer & Technical Director | Jill Clark |
| Sound Designer & Projections Coordinator | Malia Lukomski |
| Lighting Designer | Nicholas Zoia |
| Carpenter & Scene Shop Supervisor | Pierce Humke |



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Unnecessary Farce
March 1, 2, 3 & 8, 9, 10 - 2024

Gilligan's Island (The Musical)
May 10, 11, 12 & 17, 18, 19 - 2024

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SCAN ME





Meet The Cast (Comfortably Single)



Audrey Simmons / *Cassie Ewing*

Audrey had a meet-cute with TPP last year at an audition workshop and has been head over heels ever since! Audrey's whirlwind romance with TPP involves past productions of *Grease* and *The Little Mermaid*. When not at the theater, Audrey likes Piña Colodas and getting caught in the rain. Audrey experienced love at first sight when reading through *The Premiere Premieres* plays and hopes the audience will fall just as hard for these shows!



David Boe / *Jamie, Flirt, Brunch Server*

David was born on the icy South Dakota Tundra. He was raised by wolves who shared and passed along their love of theater to David. He has since been involved in many productions such as *The Theater at Night* (Ethan) *Peter and The Star Catcher* (Mrs. Bumbrake) with SECT/ TPP. He has also been involved in several productions at the Olde Towne Dinner Theatre such as *Godspell* (Dave) and most recently *The Fox on The Fairway* (Dickie). He hopes that you love these shows as much as he loves theatre. David also has been told he makes a mean breakfast.



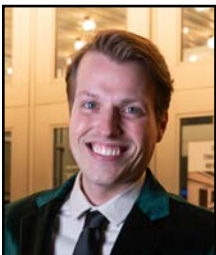
Hope Humphrey / *Isabella, Jessica, Bartender*

Hope (she/her) is so excited to be back on stage with TPP for *Comfortably Single*! She grew up performing in her hometown of Jefferson, TX, but took a break from theater for the last 6 years to pursue her career in Genetic Counseling. She was thankful get back on stage after moving to South Dakota last year with TPP's *The Little Mermaid*! Hope is excited to share this beautiful production with her newfound community.



Jake Cox / *Aaron*

A father, entrepreneur, actor, and guy who makes stuff, Jacob "Jake" Cox is thrilled to play Aaron in *Comfortably Single* and to act as Props Artisan for both *Comfortably Single* and *Hearing*. If you enjoy Jake's acting, imagine how much you'd enjoy having him officiate your wedding! Book him at SiouxFallsWeddingOfficiant.com He also wrote a vampire novel his mom said was "surprisingly good," *Mr. Smith Isn't Afraid of the Dark*, available at tinyurl.com/MrSmithNovel Hi, Mom!



Jamie Bowden / *Daniel, Lodge Event Coordinator*

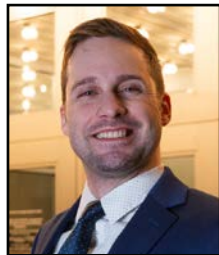
Jamie is excited to make his return to the stage in the uniquely original take on the rom-com genre, *Comfortably Single*! You may recognize Jamie from his work with TPP in *The Little Mermaid* and *A Christmas Carol*. With an interest in theater/film, in his free time, Jamie enjoys screenwriting and developing new stage/screen ideas. He hopes to continue his theater journey with The Premiere Playhouse in future productions!

Meet The Cast (Comfortably Single)



Jim McLain / *Mark Stroud*

Jim McLain, named after the cowboy of John Wayne fame, and the nephew of Die Hard hero John McLain, and ancestor of Oklahoman Curly McLain, is thrilled to be back on the Orpheum Stage. Jim was last seen in *The Little Mermaid* and *A Christmas Carol*, and he has been in a handful of musicals in Pierre. His hobbies include swimming, kayaking, writing, and playing board games. Hoping one day to really “Make Em Laugh,” Jim is loving his time with TPP!



Kale Hellman / *Sam, Boss, Event Center Coordinator*

Kale is excited to help bring *Comfortably Single* to life with such an amazing cast. Kale was last on stage as an ensemble member in *Cinderella*, and they are so excited to work with TPP again. They would like to thank their friends, family, and wonderful boyfriend for their endless support and love. Enjoy the shows!



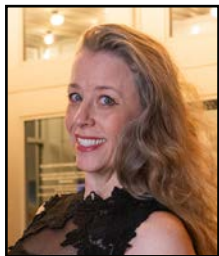
Matt Breems / *Scott*

Matt is delighted to be ending his acting hiatus with the Premiere Playhouse. He is honored to have roles in *Hearing* and *Comfortably Single*, as he feels a connection to both these thought-provoking productions. His acting aspirations include having his performance heralded as ‘Wildly sufficient’ and ‘Brilliantly Okay’. Thanks to his daughter Ava for the loving nudge back into the theater!



Melissa Prostrollo / *Rose*

Melissa is excited to make her premiere appearance with The Premiere Playhouse in *The Premiere Premieres!* Her inner theater geek was revived last year, after a long absence from the stage, when she appeared in *Twelve Night Before* at Mighty Corson Art Players. She’s delighted to help premiere her friend Leigh’s play along with her charming boyfriend Mike! Thanks for supporting live & local theater!



Mike Richards / *Kevin, Wine Event Coordinator*


Raised by a pack of hyenas on the plains of the Serengeti, Mike endured until that fateful day when he adventured overseas by hand-made raft to the land of opportunity. There, he realized that if plays could be written by locals, he too could write an entirely fictitious bio of himself. In all seriousness, Mike is happy to help bring “*Comfy*” to life and share the stage with his beautiful girlfriend, Melissa. Thanks for coming!





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www.thepremiereplayhouse.com/education



Meet The Cast (Comfortably Single)



Morgan Holien / *Diana*

With the past few years behind the curtain, Morgan is excited to once again be acting and to be making her TPP debut! Having been “comfortably single” most of her life, Morgan is thankful for the opportunity to continue her vocation with such a wonderful cast, crew, and story. When she’s not at the theatre, you can find Morgan catching up on her “to-watch list” and spending time with her family, friends, and boyfriend(!).

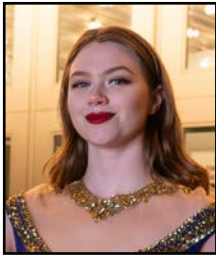


Meet The Cast (Hearing)



Allegra Sekely / *Lila Johnson*

Allegra Sekely is jumping for joy to be in her first non-musical production. You might have seen her in other recent TPP productions such as *The Little Mermaid* and *Cinderella*, or even doing lights for *A Christmas Carol*. She can’t wait to wow you in this amazing piece, *Hearing*. Have your tissues ready and enjoy the show!



Betty Kay / *Robin, Translator*

Betty takes her first steps into The Premiere Playhouse stage with *Hearing*. After stepping into the Sioux Falls theater community last year, Betty is grateful for the brilliance of director Jayna, playwright Richard, and TPP for taking a chance on her. She thanks her family and her friends for their love and support, and cannot wait to share this story with all of you. Thank you for being here.



Caleb Ritchie / *Chas*

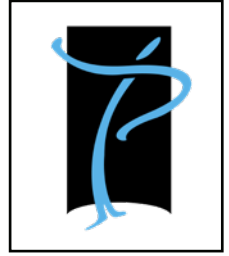
Brand new to Sioux Falls, Caleb Ritchie is making his Main Stage debut with TPP. As a lifelong actor, writer and creative, he is beyond honored to tell this story with this wonderful group of people. He was born a Texan but is looking forward to the first of many stories with this community. He would like to thank you all for your support of the local arts!

Meet The Cast (Hearing)



Dave Bakke / *Alvin Olson*

Dave is excited to play Alvin in The Premiere Playhouse's production of *Hearing*.



Erin Sharp / *Father, Father in Hue*

Erin Edward Sharp returns to the Orpheum stage for the 7th time in *Hearing*, his 32nd show. Erin is excited for the opportunity to work on this powerful script, and hopes his acting gives the script the justice it deserves. He drives for UPS and lives in Tea with his wife, Emily. She is the main reason he knows any of his lines! Special thanks to Richard, Jayna, and this stellar cast!



Matt Breems / *John Mauer, Victory Havens*

Matt is delighted to be ending his acting hiatus with the Premiere Playhouse. He is honored to have roles in *Hearing* and *Comfortably Single*, as he feels a connection to both these thought-provoking productions. His acting aspirations include having his performance heralded as 'Wildly sufficient' and 'Brilliantly Okay'. Thanks to his daughter Ava for the loving nudge back into the theater!



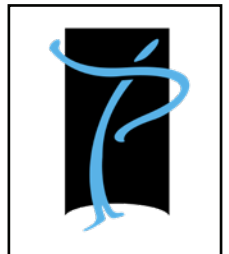
Nancy Tapken / *Mother, Mother in Hue*

Nancy is excited to be supporting the development of new work. Most recent shows include *They Promised Her the Moon* at MCAP, last year's Premiere Premieres and *Lombardi* at TPP/SECT. She is a co-founder of Broad Cast Theatre and co-authored their original play *Broadly Speaking... and Other B.S.*



Paul Pierce / *Bob Johnson*

Paul is on top of the world!! Enjoying getting back on stage after a couple of decades off. I have to keep busy otherwise I'll get into trouble. It's a great day when I wake up and I'm breathing and don't see roots of the grass. Enjoy the shows.



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SOUNDS OF SILENCE TRIBUTE

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024

The Sounds of Silence Tribute journeys back in time to the 1970s Greenwich Folk Village Scene, to a timeless era of music when lyrics and melody meant something more. Award winning musicians Steven Delopoulos and Johnny Phillips are known for their unique sound, energetic live shows, and introspective lyrics underscored by their remarkable musicianship. Their concert features the music of Simon & Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, John Denver, Cat Stevens, Don McLean, and more.



BENNIE & THE JETS

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2024

Bennie & the Jets is the premier Elton John tribute. Led by Greg Ransom on piano and vocals, this group has performed around the world for a variety of audiences. In honor of his 2022 farewell tour, this concert offers audiences the opportunity to relive Elton John's iconic catalog of music, including "Candle in the Wind," "Can You Feel the Love Tonight," and "Rocket Man."



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Production Team

Alex Newcomb Weiland / *Production Manager*

Alex (She/Her) works as the Production Specialist & Education Coordinator at The Premiere Playhouse. She graduated from The University of South Dakota with a BFA in Musical Theatre/Dance Minor. Alex has worked with companies such as Bare Bodkins, Good Night Theatre Collective and The Black Hills Playhouse. She directed *Footloose* in Season 18 & *Cinderella* in Season 20 at The Premiere Playhouse as well as *Stop Kiss* with Monstrous Little Theatre Company. She wants to thank her partner, Nathan, her friends, family, TPP staff, production team & cast for their continued love & support. This is truly a community of giving! Enjoy the show!

Alexondrea Thong Vanh / *Scenic Designer, Charge Scenic Artist*

is thrilled to join the magic of this all around local production! Alex graduated from American Musical Dramatic Academy New York and University of South Dakota (Bachelor of Fine Arts Theatre/Acting). She is a local theatre/commercial actor, singer, and Scenic Artist for both The Premiere Playhouse and Good Night Theatre Collective. All the love and laughs to Andy, Reveo, and Richard.

www.alexondreadi.com @alexondreadi

Brittney Lewis / *Costume, Hair & Makeup Designer, Costume Shop Manager*

Brittney graduated from the University of South Dakota in May 2022 with a degree in Costume Design and Construction. Her most recent credits are directing the world premiere of *The Theater at Night* and costume designing *The Little Mermaid*, *Grease* and The Penguin Project's *Seussical Jr.*

Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons / *Director (Hearing)*

Jayna is a director, dramaturg, and theatre educator who teaches at Augustana University. She loves telling stories on stage—especially with her dear friend and collaborator, Richard. Working together with Richard, the wonderful cast, and gifted TPP team on *Hearing* has been a joy and an honor. You can see Jayna and Richard's next collaboration, *This Is My Body*, at Augustana February 29–March 3. Thanks for supporting local theatre!

Jill Clark / *Scenic Designer, Technical Director*

Jill is a Scenic Designer/Artist working professionally for close to ten years. She has worked with companies such as The South Dakota Shakespeare Festival, Vermillion Community Theater, The LAMB Theater, and excited to collaborate with The Premiere Playhouse once again. You may recognize her work with TPP from Cabaret, Young Frankenstein, Cinderella, and most recently, The Little Mermaid. She is honored to be involved with bringing new works to the stage with such talented local artists.

Kevin Wintering / *Director (Comfortably Single)*

You've seen Kevin on and off stage for over a year now in SF. Tonight you'll see him in the audience alongside you as he makes his Directorial Debut post undergrad. Kevin loves creating stories and pushing actors to go beyond what they thought their best was. May this play mean as much to you as it does to him. And may all your dreams be within reach and fulfilling!

Leigh Spencer / *Playwright (Comfortably Single)*

Leigh is so excited to see her first play come to life on stage! She has been involved with TPP for several seasons, most recently as the choreographer for *The Little Mermaid*. Leigh is the Education Director for the Great Plains Zoo and spends much of her free time outside, looking for birds. Thank you to Sean and Lyn for cheerleading this play from the start, and all my friends who helped along the way!

Malia Lukomski / *Sound Designer*

Malia is a sound designer and audio producer working in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. They have undergraduate degrees in Theatre and Media Studies from Augustana University and earned their Graduate Certificate in Radio Production from the SALT Institute for Documentary Studies. You may have heard their designs in *Stop Kiss*, *Cabaret*, *39 Steps*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *The Little Mermaid*. You can find their work at malialukomski.com

Production Team



Oliver Mayes / Producer & Casting Director

Oliver is a theatre & media artist whose work has been showcased in several states throughout the U.S. including Arkansas, California, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, South Dakota, and Virginia. With a background in acting, directing, producing, movement choreography, writing, and teaching, his credits span various mediums and genres. He is the recipient of several honors, including the Kennedy Center's 2020 Stage Directors & Choreographers Society Fellowship. Oliver is a scholarship alumnus of the Kennedy Center Directing Intensive and an associate member of the Stage Directors & Choreographers Society, the national union for professional stage directors and choreographers. He holds an MFA in Theatre Directing from University of South Dakota and a BFA in Music Theatre from AMDA College of the Performing Arts.


Pierce Humke / Carpenter, Scene Shop Supervisor

Pierce is pumped for round two (second season) with TPP and is super excited to be building both theatrical sets and community relationships. Most of his time is spent behind the curtains of a production to ensure a spectacular delivery. "There is truly something for everyone in this organization, and I will love to help you realize that. I encourage you to get involved, even just to observe or ask questions. You're invited!"

Richard W. Swanson / Playwright (Hearing)

Richard is a storyteller. He writes them; he tells them; and he studies them. He has written a play about the creation of the world and a play about his sister who died from ALS. Today's play, *Hearing*, has been in the works for perhaps fifty years. Richard Swanson is sometimes a REALLY SLOW storyteller. Oh well. His next play, *This Is My Body*, opens at Augustana at the end of the month.

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