



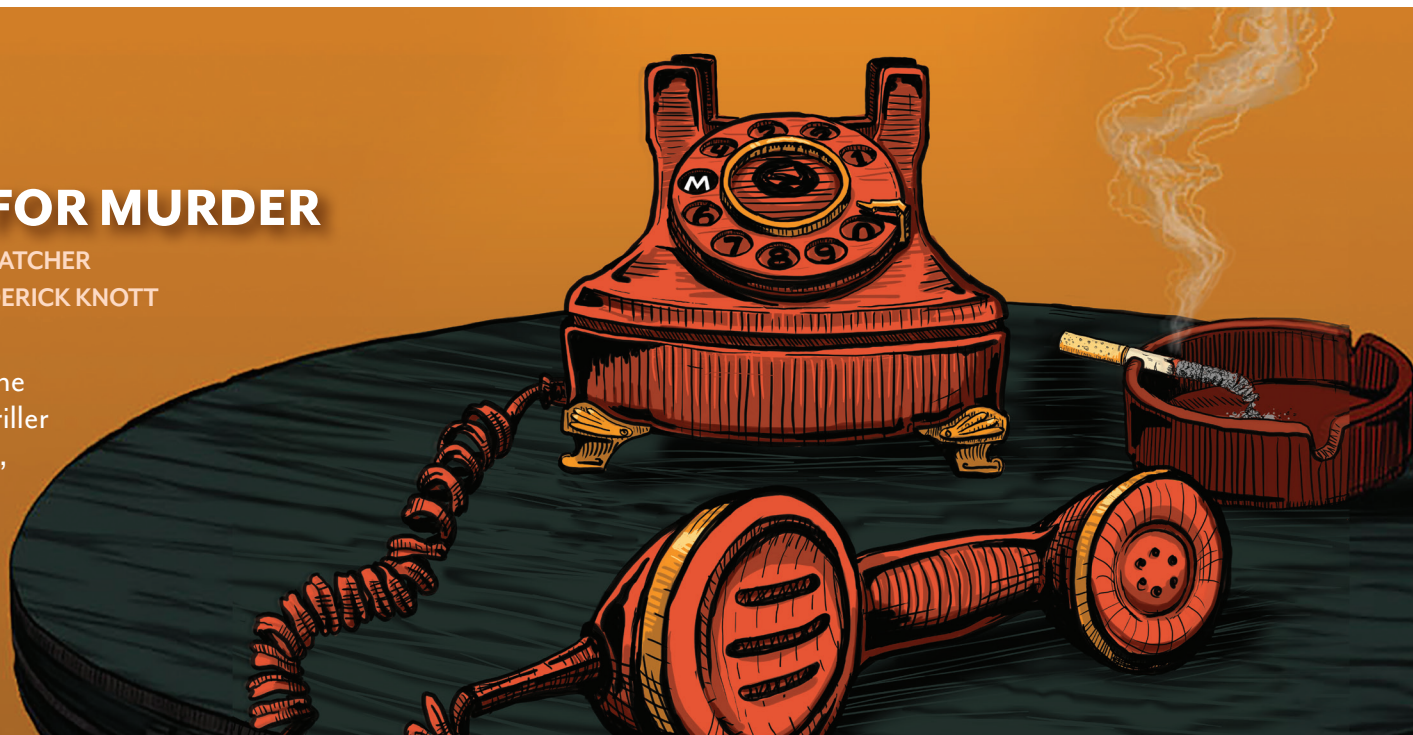
AUG. – SEPT. 2024

PROLOGUE

DIAL M FOR MURDER

Adapted by **JEFFREY HATCHER**
From the original by **FREDERICK KNOTT**

A new take on the plot-twisting thriller about suspicion, deception and murder.



THIS IS YOUR PLAYHOUSE.



MR. PARENT

By **MELINDA LOPEZ**
with **MAURICE EMMANUEL PARENT**
Conceived with **MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN**

A deeply felt, hilarious solo performance about an actor-turned-urban public school teacher.

ALSO INSIDE: THE PLAYHOUSE GOES OFF THE HILL and A SNEAK PEEK AT RUTKA

SCENE BY SCENE

VOLUME 53, ISSUE 1

- 2 **A LEGACY OF INNOVATION**
Supporting new work through estate planning.
- 3 **TOMÁS AND THE LIBRARY LADY**
Join us “off the hill” for a beloved children’s story.
- 4 **DIAL M FOR MURDER**
A new take on the plot-twisting thriller.
- 6 **MR. PARENT**
A deeply felt, hilarious solo performance.
- 8 **RUTKA**
From page to stage: a sneak peek at the upcoming world premiere.

Season marketing illustrations by Kenton Brett.

ABOUT PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE is the pre-show publication of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. It is published as a service to Playhouse season ticket holders, donors and others.

Editor: Kathy Neus

Graphic Designer: Sean Martin

Contributing Writers: Russell Florence Jr.,
Victoria Forbes, Tatiana Godfrey,
Bradley Michalakakis, Lynn Smith

Permission to reprint any portion of PROLOGUE is granted upon request and with proper attribution.

Please send all inquiries, submissions and suggestions to:

PROLOGUE • Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park
962 Mt. Adams Circle • Cincinnati, OH 45202
Telephone: 513-345-2242 | Fax: 513-345-2254
Email: administration@cincyplay.com

Website: www.cincyplay.com

Box Office: 513-421-3888

Toll Free OH/KY/IN: 800-582-3208

Patrons who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind or speech disabled dial 711 to connect to our Box Office via Ohio Relay services.

2024-25 Moe and Jack’s Place – The Rouse Theatre
Season presented by



2024-25 Rosenthal Shelterhouse Theatre Season presented by

THE VONTZ FAMILY

Rouse Theatre Season Design Sponsor:



Seasonal support provided by



A LEGACY OF INNOVATION

By Lynn Smith, CFRE



Barbara and Kim McCracken

Adventure, creativity and innovation define the creation of new theatrical works, and this resonates deeply with Barbara and Kim McCracken. Their long-time connections to Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park began in the 1960s by attending plays in the Rosenthal Shelterhouse Theatre. In addition, participation in the Playhouse’s behind-the-scenes Play Team program deepened this connection, as Kim and Barbara observed first-hand the entertaining but surprisingly complex process that brings a new play to life. After 60 years of play-going, they aim to leave a legacy of innovation by including the support of new works at the Playhouse in their estate plans.

For Barbara and Kim, the arts have been part of their lives since their early years. Kim attended the Santa Fe Opera as a boy, a memory that still ignites his passion for the arts. Similarly, Barbara’s travels from her small town in Maryland to nearby cities to experience live theatre instilled in her a deep appreciation for the art form. These early experiences have shaped their lifelong commitment to the arts and their desire to support its evolution.

The McCrackens admire the Playhouse’s dedication to developing new plays, appreciating the courage and investment it takes to innovate, even if it means the risk of failure. Kim, a chemical engineer, sees a reflection of his own life’s work in this process — trying something new, enduring frustrations, and ultimately creating something that improves lives.

Including the Playhouse in their estate plan helps ensure the continuation of plays that touch all aspects of life. The McCracken’s wish is to inspire their children to love the arts and give back. “As we often hear about classical music, all plays were once new,” Barbara said. “We hope new works at the Playhouse will be available for generations to entertain, teach, draw people together, and make people think outside their views.”

Kim and Barbara’s gift is about more than supporting new plays — it’s about fostering human connection through the arts and moving the art form forward. Their legacy will ensure that the Playhouse continues to be a place of adventure, creativity and innovation for years to come.

For information on the many types of planned gifts that can benefit you and the Playhouse, call Lynn Smith, CFRE at **513-977-2067** or email lynn.smith@cincyplay.com.

OFF THE HILL TOURING PLAY

TOMÁS AND THE LIBRARY LADY

Adapted by JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ
Based on the book by PAT MORA

SEPT. 12 – NOV. 16, 2024

LOVE IN EVERY PAGE: CELEBRATING THE STORY OF TOMÁS RIVERA

By Victoria Forbes



The Playhouse opens its first Off the Hill touring production of the 2024-25 season with a celebration of storytelling and cultural heritage. Based on the beloved children's book by Pat Mora, *Tomás and the Library Lady* depicts the true story of how Tomás Rivera, Mexican American author and educator, discovered the magic of reading and imagination as a child, inspiring his lifelong mission of education and advocacy. This touching tour-de-force, directed by Playhouse Education Director Ariana Moses, is performed by two versatile actors and features live music, a transformative set and bilingual dialogue — easily understood by English and Spanish speakers alike.

The young son of migrant farm workers, Tomás Rivera, moved with his family from their home in Texas to the corn fields of Iowa in the summer of 1945. It was there that Tomás met the librarian that introduced him to the wonderful world of books, changing his life forever. Tomás' love of reading encouraged him to overcome his childhood poverty through academic achievements. He was the first in his family to attend college, was the first recipient of the prestigious Quinto Sol Literary Award in 1971 for his acclaimed ...y no se lo tragó la tierra (... *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*), and went on to serve as the first Mexican American Chancellor in the University of California system until his death in 1984. Today, his legacy lives on through the Tomás Rivera Library at the University of California, Riverside. In 1961 Rivera said, "Love is necessary in the classroom... A degree of love brings security to a child and makes him feel worthwhile."

"[The quote from Tomás Rivera] really hit me in the heart and guided me as I started thinking about this story," Moses said. "The idea that 'love is necessary in the classroom,' and how we see this amazing teacher who isn't even assigned as a teacher... and how sharing a love of words and stories is love."

Bringing Tomás' story to the stage requires imaginative technical design and a touch of magic. Moses continued, "In theatre for young audiences, you often see this idea of the 'Suddenly' — a transformation where one thing suddenly becomes a new thing. We're using the 'Suddenly' to take

what we have and create something new." Inspired by a motif of real and metaphorical journeys throughout the play, Moses wanted "everything to come out of a suitcase." An array of different locations and characters, including an eight-foot tall "Nightmare Teacher" puppet, spring to life out of the suitcase and craft the world of the play in a uniquely theatrical fashion, conceptualized by Scenic Designer Kenton Brett.

A language consultant will also work alongside the cast to ensure the bilingual dialogue used in the play is clear and accessible for all audiences. Moses explained, "José Cruz González is very smart about the text of this play in that people who speak Spanish or English can understand it. Because of how it is written, we have lines in Spanish, and then somebody saying what has just been said [in English], sometimes in narration and other times in conversation, so it always remains very clear."

Katie Baskerville, the production's Artistic Producer, added, "Bringing this play to our community is really fantastic for folks who are going to see their own lived experience onstage, or for folks who maybe don't know about this lived experience and will get to learn a little bit more through the shared connection of loving stories and loving books."

Tomás and the Library Lady will tour the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area Sept. 12 through Nov. 16 and is recommended for ages 5 and up. Visit cincyplay.com for more information on dates and locations.

OFF THE HILL IS MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM

THE ROBERT AND ADELE SCHIFF FAMILY FOUNDATION
L&L NIPPERT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
THE CHARLES H. DATER FOUNDATION

DIAL M FOR MURDER

Adapted by JEFFREY HATCHER

From the original by FREDERICK KNOTT

Directed by TATIANA PANDIANI

Moe and Jack's Place — The Rouse Theatre

AUG. 17 – SEPT. 15, 2024

A HISTORY OF MURDER

By Bradley Michalakakis



It's a familiar formula: in the wake of its success, a great work of theatre is adapted for the screen. Plays like *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and *The Odd Couple* are overshadowed by their more famous counterparts on film, which have nearly supplanted the live version in the minds of a modern audience. In most cases, the film version arises only after a successful run of the live show. This is not the case with *Dial M for Murder*, which has a much more complicated relationship between stage and screen.

Though Frederick Knott initially wrote *Dial M for Murder* as a stage play, he struggled to find a theatrical producer in London. It wasn't until a friend suggested that he pitch it to the BBC that *Dial M* was put before the British public — namely, the audience of the very popular television program *BBC Sunday Night Theatre*. This televised version of the play was such a hit that several managers immediately sought the stage rights. This resulted in the first onstage production in 1952, less than a year after the initial televised broadcast. Coincidentally, this was the same year that Alfred Hitchcock scrapped an unfinished thriller called *The Bramble Bush*, leaving him in need of a new story about a murder.

Hitchcock's blockbuster adaptation of *Dial M for Murder* premiered in 1954 to wild acclaim. He stayed true to Knott's text but infused the piece with a visual sensibility that reflected film noir, thriller and horror impulses of the period: low angles, chiaroscuro lighting (a technique to achieve high contrast) and tight closeups that increased the sense of anxiety and neurosis. This film adaptation quickly became the definitive version of the story, and the first thing most people think of when they hear the phrase "Dial M for Murder."

Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park's production of Frederick Knott's masterwork — a co-production with Alley Theatre in Houston — pays homage to the play's history, in which stage and screen are inextricably linked. Scenic design by Marcelo Martínez García attempts to replicate Hitchcock's disorienting angles, by placing a lush mid-century apartment just askew of the proscenium. The design also features a bold filmic gesture that dominates the space: the word "murder," in block letters, floating above the stage like a title card.

Director Tatiana Pandiani offered this reflection on the set design process: "We ended up with this giant red murder sign that was the final product of a lot of investigation of letters on London buildings. Neon lights on London buildings. Corners, traditional corners in London that have neon lights and neon letters. We went through a lot of variations of this. There's a version where we had the letters vertical instead of horizontal, one where house left it said DIAL M and house right it said FOR MURDER. There were a lot of variations."

The filmic effect is further highlighted by Yuki Link's meticulous lighting, which recreates noir visuals by placing lighting instruments at low angles and allowing stark beams to stream horizontally through windows, doorways, and any other available aperture.

"Yuki and I did talk a lot about Hitchcock's lighting in all of his films," said Pandiani on developing the lighting design. "That was something we pulled from the aesthetic. Really leaning into that. A lot of times theatrical lighting is like, 'Turn on all the lights so everyone can see!' And actually, with this process, this design is not that at all. There's a lot of intentional shadow; there's a lot of shadowy areas and actors that move through the light into the shadow. There is a lot of what's called high contrast lighting. That's an aesthetic choice that of course is a very Hitchcock thing that we pulled from. *Dial M* the film, but also his entire body of work."

The result is a sleek production, replete with visual gestures usually reserved for the silver screen. This updated look is complemented by an updated text from playwright Jeffrey Hatcher, who has imbued Knott's genius storytelling with a modern feel. Hatcher's new adaptation centers and highlights the female characters, subverting expectations of the 1950s period while still staying true to the iconic play (and film) that is *Dial M for Murder*.

Bradley Michalakakis is Head Dramaturg at the Alley Theatre, Houston

PRODUCTION SPONSOR



HONORARY PRODUCER

THE LEMMERMAN FAMILY

ARTIST SPONSORS



MEDIA SPONSORS



RUNNING TIME

An accurate running time will be posted on our website on Aug. 16.

CONTENT ADVISORY

Dial M for Murder is recommended for ages 13 and up. This new adaptation of the iconic thriller contains depictions of violence and murder (it's right there in the title), discussion of a past extramarital affair and domestic violence, a kiss between two women, and edge-of-your seat suspense.

STAGING A MURDER

By Tatiana Godfrey



Tatiana Pandiani, director of the Playhouse's co-production of *Dial M for Murder* with Alley Theatre in Houston, gave us an interview while working on a new play in New York City. The conversation with Pandiani has been condensed and edited for readability.

What excites you about *Dial M for Murder*?

I think that from a directorial point of view, a thriller requires the building of tension and the very specific playing out of information. When we went through the process in Houston, a lot of the exciting work I got to do was to figure out what do we show the audience at which point. What's too much; what's too little; what do we want to reveal? A lot of what makes the show, "the show" are the things that the characters leave on set. As Tony is plotting this murder, how much access do we give the audience, how much of him do we give to the audience? It's [in] the staging and acting. It's highly detailed directing and that's what I like to do.

Can you talk about the design process and what it was like working with the design team?

The design team for this project is a design team that I've worked with many times before. Also, at times, in the same configuration, so it's a super well-oiled machine. When I read the play early on before we had contracted a team, I knew that the play was a remake of a remake. It has the risk of becoming boxy or a thing where we already know it before we get there. Sort of a chestnut feel. So, I was already thinking about ways we could keep the mid-century feeling but also make it feel new and make it feel modern.

I wanted the audience to be aesthetically and visually surprised as well. And not just be like, "This is an apartment in London. I've seen a million plays that take place in an apartment in London." I was trying to go for something that awakens the eye of the audience. So, I brought in designers that I knew would understand that. And would understand how to do period, but also outside of period. How to work in that kind of period-adjacent mode and make decisions about what remains in period and what can sway away.

This is a co-production. It was at the Alley Theatre in Houston and is moving to Cincinnati. What do you anticipate is going to need to change for this production to come into a new theatre?

There are some staging things that are going to be different because the two stages are different, the houses are different.

And then of course the big, big change is going to be new cast members. The process when we get to Cincinnati will be that three actors who

are traveling with the show will be meeting a new actor playing Lesgate and a new actor playing Inspector Hubbard. So, actually that's the big change. How do we keep the original intention of the staging and the design and all of that with two folks who are joining us who will be playing a little bit of catch up. And also bringing in some of their energy to breathe in some fresh breath into the show.

How do you approach casting for this project since there are so many ideas and expectations in audiences' heads before the play even starts?

Immediately off the page, I knew the actor that I need to cast for Margot Wendice needs to be a traditional ingenue. It's something that with a more modern, with a more contemporary and more feminist lens, it's a little hard to watch Margot and not judge her. So, it really has to be embedded in the period. And trying to understand what are ways that this woman, living at this time, is in fact advocating for herself.

Maxine is the character that in the original is Max. And it's been written to be a female writer, which of course is a super exciting update. For her, I had a lot of also mid-century references. But much more like a Katharine Hepburn. Witty, fast. Not giving a shit. Chain smoking. She had to be really sharp. So, for that character I was like, "It has to be really in contrast to Margot. These are two very, very different types of women." And I wanted there to be a lot of contrast there.

For me, I feel like this Jeffrey Hatcher adaptation is really clear on who these people are. I actually think it's a better [script] adaptation than the other one. Or at least at a character level. I understand these five very distinct people.

SPECIAL EVENTS

DEEP DIVE FILM SCREENING OF *DIAL M FOR MURDER*

As part of the 70th Year Anniversary of the landmark films of 1954, the Esquire, Mariemont and Kenwood theatres will present Alfred Hitchcock's classic *Dial M for Murder* at the same time as the Playhouse stages a fresh new stage adaptation of Frederick Knott's play that was the source of the film.

The film will be introduced by Hitchcock Scholar and Film Professor Joe Horine and followed by a Q&A with him and a member of the Playhouse's artistic team to discuss the stage-to-film-to-stage adaptation.

- Esquire Theatre: Monday, Aug. 19 at 7:30 p.m.
- Mariemont Theatre: Wednesday, Aug. 21 at 7:30 p.m.
- Kenwood Theatre: Monday, August 26 at 7:30 p.m.

Adult tickets are \$10.25 or \$12 depending on location. For tickets, visit the movie theatre website for the screening you'd like to attend.

PLAYHOUSE PRIDE

Join us for an evening of suspense with a twist to celebrate PRIDE at *Dial M for Murder*!

Friday, September 6

- 6 p.m. | Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres prior to the 7:30 p.m. performance of *Dial M for Murder*
- Post-show champagne toast

\$50 per person for the pre- and post-show events. Tickets and parking to the performance are not included in the cost of the pre-show and post-show activities and must be purchased separately. Exclusive benefits available for a \$250 host donation. Visit cincyplay.com to join us for PRIDE night!

MR. PARENT

By MELINDA LOPEZ with MAURICE EMMANUEL PARENT
Conceived with and directed by MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN

Rosenthal Shelterhouse Theatre
SEPT. 7 – OCT. 6, 2024

**EDUCATE. ENGAGE.
INSPIRE.** By Russell Florence Jr.



Actor/playwright Maurice Emmanuel Parent's former career as a teacher in an urban public school system provides the colorful, thought-provoking foundation for his aptly titled one-person show, *Mr. Parent*.

Co-written by Melinda Lopez and conceived with and directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian, the play is based on Parent's enlightening experiences juggling teaching duties while attempting to make ends meet as a struggling actor. Through comedy and poignancy, the piece addresses the startling inequities within today's education system and the ultimate courage it took to pursue his true path.

"The reason I was incessantly telling my story to Melinda and Megan while crafting the play was that I was processing my grief at having left the school," said Parent. "I had a mix of emotions. I felt free but I also felt exceedingly guilty. I still feel guilty. I am forever changed by my six years in the public schools. I know people who have been there for 30, and I couldn't make it past six. A part of me still feels like I abandoned the students. But I had to in order to survive and be myself."

The genesis of *Mr. Parent* can be traced back to 2018 when Parent portrayed foreman Reggie in Dominique Morisseau's workplace dramedy *Skeleton Crew* at Boston's Huntington Theatre Company. Sandberg-Zakian directed the production and recalls being fascinated by Parent's stories.

"He was really funny," Sandberg-Zakian said. "On every rehearsal break he was like holding court with the other actors. There would be hilarity coming from that corner [of the room], and I would go over and hear him tell a story about kids. The stories were entertaining, engaging and funny. As I started listening to them, I realized he had something to work out. His experience was unmetabolized. It was both funny and painful."

Parent, whose diverse acting credits include *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Angels in America*, *Man of La Mancha* and *King Lear*, was initially unsure about telling his story. However, the collaborative appeal of working with Lopez and Sandberg-Zakian proved difficult to resist.

"I told Megan I wasn't a one-man show kind of actor, and I also wasn't a writer," Parent said. "But I felt that if these two smart women I know so well thought there was a play in [my stories], well, maybe there was. Megan was really instrumental in the structure of the play to make sure points were made."

After a few developmental readings, *Mr. Parent* had its world premiere in 2022 courtesy of Lyric Theatre Company of Boston. Don Aucoin of *The Boston Globe* praised the "deep-from-the-heart" show for its perspectives on two worlds colliding — teacher by day, actor by night — and the strength of Parent's emotional portrayal.

"Maurice is a brilliant performer," Sandberg-Zakian said. "He has such an amazing warmth about him as a person and an onstage presence. From a directing standpoint, the only thing I really had to do was just to encourage him to be himself. To be as much of himself as he could. As an actor, it's not always a straightforward thing because they're constantly being other people, other characters. The Maurice that is vulnerable, conflicted and angry is just as compelling onstage as the Maurice that's funny and charming."

Sandberg-Zakian said there are logistical challenges to staging a one-person show, but she feels her duties guiding *Mr. Parent* are bolstered by building trust and maintaining self-care.

"Often if you're directing a play with multiple characters or is technically complex, a [production] can kind of run itself in which the actors are working off of each other," she explained. "But with a one-person show, the director is the first audience and the first and only scene partner, which, for me, was a beautiful and intimate part of the experience. It can also be a tiring part of the experience, so when working on a one-person show, I always try to take care of myself so I can be that engaged audience coming with fresh eyes and ears."

She also hopes audiences view *Mr. Parent* as a launching pad for discussion that will inspire fundamental change within public education.

"I hope people come out of the play really deeply respecting the passion, dedication and brilliance of public school teachers, and feeling committed to the project of public education, the idea that it is worth investing in and worth trying to fix and trying to save," Sandberg-Zakian said. "When you look at the numbers, the inequity in public schooling, you feel such despair. But at the end of the day, our job is not to despair but to think about how we can improve something and make it a thing that serves all parents, teachers and communities. There is no option to give up on public education."

PRODUCTION SPONSOR **DIGI AND MIKE SCHUELER**

DESIGN SPONSOR **MARK AND ROSEMARY SCHLACHTER**

ARTIST SPONSOR **HOMWOOD SUITES**
by Hilton
CINCINNATI MIDTOWN
513-975-1800

MEDIA SPONSOR **100.3**
WUPN

RUNNING TIME An accurate running time will be posted on our website on Sept. 6.

CONTENT ADVISORY *Mr. Parent* is recommended for older teenage and adult audiences. This one-man show details the beauty and struggles of teaching at a public school while relaying stories about sexual identity, racism, profiling and inequitable systems that include descriptions of violence and strong adult language.

HEAD OF THE CLASS

By Russell Florence Jr.

Balancing the art of teaching and the necessity to perform proved to be eye-opening and life-affirming for playwright/actor Maurice Emmanuel Parent, star and co-author of *Mr. Parent*. The 44-year-old native of Prince George's County, Maryland, shares reflections on his play, including an authentic desire to find his passion and how he juggles the complexities of being *Mr. Parent*.

How was your experience growing up in school?

I was a shy, goody-goody, overweight, queer, awkward nerd. Theatre was my outlet at an early age, around fourth grade. My parents sacrificed a lot and worked very hard to send me to a private Catholic school in our neighborhood. Growing up, I liked school, especially math, but I was shy, bullied and teased, especially at my public high school. In high school I couldn't hide the gay anymore. Theatre gave me community, an outlet and a voice to learn more about myself.

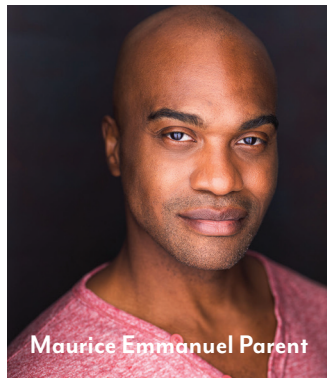
What did your teaching experiences reveal about today's youth?

Kids are wonderful even if they're being bad or acting out. The reason I created *Mr. Parent* was to add to the multiple messages out there about kids. Kids are such sponges so if they can absorb or soak up hearing me tell them they are smart, capable and have every right to everything in this world just like everybody else, that will help them when they hear other messages telling them they are not smart, not capable and don't deserve a space in this world.

What did your teaching experiences reveal about yourself?

I'm a leader of a non-profit theatre company I co-founded that's based in Boston. I am the leader I am today because of my time teaching. Also, in the play and at the time the play was written, being a father and having kids of my own was very much top of mind. I'm not sure that's really in the cards now, but I'm still in touch with a lot of my former students — we meet regularly,

and they ask for advice — and that has taught me I can still be a resource for young people.



Maurice Emmanuel Parent

So, you definitely realized you evolved through your teaching?

I learned how to embrace myself fully. I know to have a life in which I don't have to hide, shrink or compartmentalize myself is a gift. As Black queer people, I think we're often called to do that in our community. The title of the play is called *Mr. Parent* because I created *Mr. Parent* based off the parts of me that I wanted people to share and see and what I

thought would serve kids. And after years of being only part of myself, I learned I can't live like that. I can't function or be my best self if I'm doing that. *Mr. Parent* is about education, but it's also about finding your passion and not being able to let go of it. For me it was performing, making art.

What changed in the development of *Mr. Parent*?

A colleague of mine in Boston who had been teaching for decades told me the play was missing *Mr. Parent* teaching the systemic racism that was making the school system so challenging. So, in the middle of the play, *Mr. Parent* teaches the

audience that it is a state problem. Schools that primarily educate kids of color are not set up for success in many ways. These same systems are in other major cities in America. There are so many systems that try to set Black and Brown people up for failure. And the education system, which is under-funded and under-resourced, is one of the biggest. And it's not that people aren't doing their best within the systems, but the disparity between funding makes you look at the reality.

Does performing *Mr. Parent* rise to the same level of personal joy you've experienced appearing in other plays?

It does. My preference is to be in plays with other people but knowing *Mr. Parent* requires something different from me than what a traditional play does, I have to rest more and really focus. It's a mix of acting and telling my story. Ultimately, it's me honoring the kids I taught. It's a joy on so many levels.

What do you hope people take away from experiencing *Mr. Parent*?

I hope people think about their neighborhood schools or the schools in their state and the way their state funds its schools. I also hope they find ways to support their schools such as becoming a volunteer or advocating for more funding.



Maurice Emmanuel Parent in Boston Playwright's Theatre Production of *Mr. Parent*. Photo by Scornavacca Photography

SPECIAL EVENT

HUES COMMUNITY NIGHT

Friday, September 20, 7:30 p.m.

Join Black influencers, leaders and community members for Hues Community Night at *Mr. Parent*. This celebration of theatre, excellence and cultural richness includes drink specials and an Art Talk with members of the artistic team after the show. The evening recognizes No Excuses College Tours & Programs for their service to the community.

PLAY IN THE PARK
CINCINNATI
HOUSE



MC & TOM BRENNAN,
LINDA & GARY GREENBERG and THE LEMMERMAN FAMILY present

RUTKA: A NEW MUSICAL

Based on the diary of **RUTKA LASKIER**, as published in *Rutka's Notebook: A Voice from the Holocaust*

Music and Lyrics by **JOCELYN MACKENZIE**
and **JEREMY LLOYD-STYLES**

Book by **NEENA BEBER**

Directed by **WENDY C. GOLDBERG**

Moe and Jack's Place — The Rouse Theatre

OCT. 13 – NOV. 10, 2024

Sponsored by **JEWISH FOUNDATION OF CINCINNATI**

FROM PAGE TO STAGE

By **Tatiana Godfrey**

Get ready to be captivated by a name you won't soon forget. After *Dial M for Murder*, Moe and Jack's Place – The Rouse Theatre will house the world premiere production of the musical *Rutka*. The story follows Rutka, a teenager whose diary entries paint a picture of normalcy — friendships, gossip, crushes, the excitement-dread of a new haircut. But beneath the surface of these teenage trials lies a harsh reality. It's 1943, and Rutka is trapped within the confines of the Jewish Ghetto in war-torn Poland.

In life, Rutka Laskier chronicled these experiences in her diary, which is the source for this musical adaptation that is launching at the Playhouse on its path to Broadway. A talented young cast brings Rutka's story to life, accompanied by a raw and emotional indie-rock score. Our production is helmed by Director Wendy C. Goldberg, who has been part of the script development process for some time. In January 2023, Goldberg directed selections from the musical at Lincoln Center's New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. "*Rutka* helps reclaim voices that were taken far too soon, and to introduce new generations to these stories in a way that feels entirely relevant and current to them. With shocking incidents of antisemitism, hatred and division on the rise, it is crucial



to have a project like this to enact meaningful change for future generations," Goldberg said.

Since then, the script has been reshaped and workshopped with writers, producers, actors and musicians. Playhouse Associate Artistic Director Joanie Schultz has stepped in as dramaturg, having a direct hand in the craftsmanship and creation of the piece. In early July, Schultz attended casting sessions and another workshop of the musical. In a workshop, actors and musicians bring the script and music alive for the creative stakeholders in the room. They try new ideas, read new pages, ask important character questions, and help bring the script to its new version, the "rehearsal draft."

Rehearsals begin September 10. And while the script might still change a little during the rehearsal process, the story of the indomitable spirit of youth continues to shine through. *Rutka* is a testament to the enduring power of hope, resilience and the unwavering will to resist. This musical serves as a potent reminder that even the smallest voice can ignite a spark of change.