



SEASON 19 TITLES

My Mother and the Michigan/Ohio War - running 9/17/26 to 10/4/26 Written by Paul Stroili

From the creator of A Jukebox for the Algonquin comes a hilarious new comedy about family, football, and the “Toledo Strip.” When a bizarre accident leaves Izzy a widow, she enlists her Wolverine daughter and Buckeye son to fulfil her late husband’s dream: a full-scale reenactment of the Michigan-Ohio War. Historical becomes hysterical in this award-winning battle of wits. Directed by Paul Stroili.

Come From Away – running 11/5/26 to 11/22/26 - Music, Book and Lyrics by Irene Sankoff & David Hein

Come From Away is back! This thrilling and heartfelt musical was such a huge hit in the fall of 2025 and now it makes a triumphant return. Based on the true story of the time when the isolated community of Gander, Newfoundland, played host to the world. What started as an average day in a small town turned into an international sleepover, when 38 planes, carrying thousands of people from around the globe, were diverted to Gander’s airstrip on September 11, 2001. Undaunted by culture clashes and language barriers, the people of Gander cheered the stranded travelers with music, an open bar and the recognition that we’re all part of a global family. Directed by Kathy Mulay.

Accomplice - running 1/28/27 to 2/7/27 - Written by Rupert Holmes

Winner of the Mystery Writers of America’s coveted Edgar Award (the “Oscar” of crime and suspense) and written by Tony Award winner Rupert Holmes, *Accomplice* has thrilled audiences on Broadway, across the United States and around the world. The New York Times called it “a deliciously witty cocktail of a whodunit with a maniacally seamless plot where skullduggery emerges the winner.” This theatrical roller coaster will trigger screams of laughter even as audiences vow to keep its secrets hush-hush.

Lost in Yonkers – running 3/18/27 to 3/28/27 - Written by Neil Simon

By America’s great comic playwright, this Pulitzer Prize winning memory play is set in Yonkers, NY in 1942. Bella is thirty-five years old, intellectually-disabled, and living at home with her mother, stern Grandma Kurnitz. As the play opens, ne’er-do-well son Eddie deposits his two young sons on the old lady’s doorstep. He is financially strapped and taking to the road as a salesman. The boys are left to contend with Grandma, with Bella and her secret romance, and with Louie, her brother, a small-time hoodlum in a strange new world called Yonkers.

Kimberly Akimbo – running 5/20/27 to 6/6/27 - Book and Lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire & Music by Jeanine Tesori

Embark on a Great Adventure! *Kimberly Akimbo* is the most Tony Award-winning show of the 2022-2023 season (including Best Book, Score and Musical!) This book and lyrics for this unique musical are by David Lindsay-Abaire (*Rabbit Hole*, *Shrek the Musical*) and the score by Jeanine Tesori (*Shrek the Musical*, *Violet*). *Kimberly* is about to turn 16 and recently moved with her family to a new town in suburban New Jersey. In this “howlingly funny heartbreaker of a show” (*The New Yorker*), Kim is forced to navigate family dysfunction, a rare genetic condition, her first crush...and possible felony charges. Ever the optimist, she is determined to find happiness against all odds and embark on a great adventure.

Waitress – running 7/15/27 to 8/1/27 - Music and Lyrics by Sara Bareilles & Book by Jessie Nelson.

Set against the backdrop of a small-town diner, *Waitress* follows the journey of Jenna, a talented pie-maker and waitress who finds herself unhappily married and pregnant. A baking contest in a nearby county and a satisfying encounter with someone new presents a tempting recipe for a chance at a fresh start. With help from her spunky co-workers, Jenna finds the courage to take a long-abandoned dream off the shelf and start fresh. Based on the film and featuring a soul-stirring score by Grammy-Award winning artist Sara Bareilles, *Waitress* is a celebration of resilience, self-discovery, and the family we choose. It serves up a generous helping of toe-tapping tunes and unforgettable moments, proving that even in the face of challenges there’s a chance to bake your own recipe for happiness.

Program Ad Submission Guidelines

- Preferred File Format - .pdf, .ai, .eps, .tif
- Acceptable File Format - .psd, .jpg, .jpeg
- Image resolution should be 300 DPI or greater

Finished program size is 5.5"W x 8.5"H.

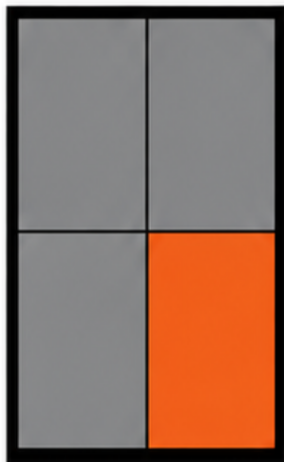
In order to maintain a small gap between ads, please submit your ad in the proper dimensions as listed below.

The dimensions provided are maximum dimensions.

If your ad is supplied in a size other than specified dimensions, your ad will be adjusted to best fit the space which may result in a scaling down of your artwork.

QUARTER PAGE

2.4687"W x 3.9062"H



HALF PAGE

5"W x 3.9062"H



FULL PAGE

5"W x 7.875"H



Please send all advertisements and questions to
jaycee@farmersalleytheatre.com



SPONSOR BENEFITS

Season Sponsor - \$25000

- Sponsor recognition in print advertising for the season.
- Pre-show verbal recognition at all performances during the season.
- Full page ad in program for the entirety of the season.
- Prominent display of sponsor's name/logo in lobby throughout the season.
- Prominent display on Farmers Alley's website.

Producer - \$6000

- Sponsor recognition in print advertising for production.
- Pre-show verbal recognition at all performances.
- Full page ad in program for the run of the production (Corporate Sponsor).
- Prominent display of sponsor's name/logo in lobby during the run of the show.
- Logo displayed on Farmers Alley's website.
- A personalized code for 6 tickets to sponsored production. Approx. retail value of \$300.

Director - \$3000

- Sponsor recognition in print advertising for production.
- Pre-show verbal recognition at all performances.
- Half page ad in program for the run of the production (Corporate Sponsor).
- Prominent display of sponsor's name/logo in lobby during the run of the show.
- Logo displayed on Farmers Alley's website.
- A personalized code for 4 tickets to sponsored production. Approx. retail value of \$200.

Principal - \$1500

- Sponsor recognition in print advertising for production.
- Pre-show verbal recognition at all performances.
- Quarter page ad in program for the run of the production (Corporate Sponsor).
- Prominent display of sponsor's name/logo in lobby during the run of the show
- Logo displayed on Farmers Alley's website.
- A personalized code for 2 tickets to sponsored production. Approx. retail value of \$100.

Adopt a Director or Actor - \$2500

Sponsorship will cover compensation, travel and housing costs for the actor or director.

- 2 tickets in prime seating location (as available). Approx. retail value of \$100.
- Meet the artist compliments of Farmers Alley Theatre (Lunch, coffee etc)
- Invitation to the opening night celebration.
- Invitation to the preview performance (as available)



Sponsorship Form

Contact Name:

Contact Phone Number:

Contact Email:

Production(s):

Level of Sponsorship (circle one)

- Season Sponsor: \$25,000
- Producer Sponsor: \$6,000
- Director Sponsor: \$3,000
- Principal Sponsor: \$1,500
- Adopt a Director or Actor: \$2,500

Business Name:

Business Logo and level-specific program advertisement required 60 days before opening night.

Full payment enclosed.

Call me for my credit card information.

Please bill me __ annually __ semi-annually __ quarterly beginning on

____/____/____. Checks should be made payable and mailed to **FARMERS ALLEY**

THEATRE.

Farmers Alley Theatre
221 Farmers Alley
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE _____ DATE ____/____/____

Farmers Alley Theatre
221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo, MI 49007 | 269-343-2727 | www.farmersalleytheatre.com



Review: 'Come From Away' is a Love Letter to

Humanity in Crisis

Imagine a world in which 7,000 refugees from all over the globe appear on North American shores in a single day and instead of being turned away or treated like criminals for simply being displaced, they are welcomed with open arms, given food, clothing, and shelter.

This world is not so far away. It happened in Gander, Newfoundland on September 11, 2001, and the 2017 Tony Award-winning musical *Come From Away*, currently in production at Farmers Alley Theatre in Kalamazoo under Kathy Mulay's thoughtful direction, tells the extraordinary true story with beauty, grace, and more humor than one might expect.

Though this heartwarming show works in larger spaces, and many may have encountered it through the 2021 AppleTV+ capture of the Broadway show, successfully staging it in the 100-seat black box space at Farmers Alley is quite a feat.

But this production team nails it. Scenic Designer Lee Buckholz summons the original Broadway design with makeshift trees framing either side of the rounded thrust stage but also uses turntables to allow for greater movement and wooden slats as the backdrop through which Lighting Designer Lanny Potts makes magic and heightens the story's swath of emotion with colored light peeking through the slats and different colors projected onto them—as well as making use of spotlights and patterns, such as that of a chainlink fence in a scene in which the fearful “plane people” are being bussed and feel like prisoners.

Their work, with the addition of terrific, often funny props from Savannah Draper, allows the cast of 12 to each play several different roles, at least one islander and one plane person, and do so very much in so many different places—a plane, a coffee shop, a bus, a bar, a cliff, to name a few—just using a few tables and a dozen chairs, with every movement efficiently choreographed by Denene Mulay to make the finite space of the stage expand exponentially.

At times the present is juxtaposed with the past as they shift in time and space through memory and song with moving standout numbers such as “Me and the Sky” from Lottie Mae Prenevost and the goosebump-inducing heartbeat and frame of the show, “Welcome to the Rock”.

The score, with orchestrations by August Eriksmoen and arrangements by Ian Eisendrath, is shot through with a strong Celtic influence played by an excellent live orchestra music directed by Brendan Vincent.

The subtext of the Irish diaspora and its cultural traditions is present here (warm hospitality, rhythmic language, music and dance), as is the subtle fact that refugees are warmly welcomed with the implicit belief that if the roles were reversed, they would extend the same care.

The fine ensemble cast vividly embodies each character, including the town mayor (Curt Denham), a local police officer (Steve Brubaker), rookie reporter (Brooklyn Moore),

head of the Gander Legion (Janine Chesak-Black), SPCA manager (Shannon Hill), a pilot (Lottie Mae Prenevost), a New Yorker hardened by systemic racism but softened by the genuine kindness of the Newfoundlanders (Christian Andrews), a mother of a NYC firefighter (Melrose Johnson, who reprises the role from the Saugatuck Center for the Arts production), an anxiety-ridden gay couple (Brandon Ruiter and Christopher C. Minor), an Egyptian master chef (through whom anti-Muslim bigotry is explored, also played by Christopher C. Minor), an awkward Brit (Michael Morrison) and Texan divorcee (Denene Mulay) who find solace in each other's company.

Witnessing how this tense situation pressurizes each one of them to change over the course of five days, and then 10 years later, is a magnificent unfolding and a reminder of who we are, where we've been, how far we've come from away, how much we've lost, and how we could and should do better now.

We rely on stories to connect us, to share human experiences that may or may not be our own, and to teach us, again and again, what it means to be human. But rare and perhaps most lasting are the stories like this one that remind us of what we all too often forget: that above all, humans are kind, generous beyond measure, fundamentally driven by love, and when called, particularly in a crisis, are capable of compassion and gladly carrying each other.

Come From Away takes us on a roller coaster of emotion that appropriately makes us feel so much so deeply as only a live performance in such an intimate space can. It's a love letter to humanity in crisis, and it invites us to rise to the love and care we witness on stage—a reflection of how we might be at our best in the worst of times.



Surviving and Thriving: At 17, Farmers Alley Theatre looks back and forward

It was in the midst of a national recession in 2008 that Jeremy and Denene Mulay Koch and brothers Rob and Adam Weiner launched Farmers Alley Theatre in downtown Kalamazoo. Producing seven shows in their first season on a budget of \$200,000, they somehow ended up in the black. This year the nonprofit theater will again produce seven shows — though the budget is a lot bigger — beginning with the musical

Come From Away, opening Sept. 25.

The theater's leadership team has been riding high since the close of the theater's successful 2024–25 season.

"We're still on cloud nine," says Executive Director Rob Weiner after wrapping up an extended run of *Beautiful: The Carole King Story*. "We've been riding the momentum since *Jersey Boys* at the beginning of the year."

From the beginning, the foursome's goal was to create a professional theater that paid its actors and crew. It's one of only a dozen Equity theaters in Michigan, and it's the only year-round one in the Kalamazoo area.

"It was important to us to honor and respect all the artists and crew and to differentiate ourselves from other theaters," says Managing Artistic Director Jeremy Koch, adding that their choices of what to stage also set them apart. "We make a point to do some shows that are less well known or maybe a little edgy. We like to expose audiences to new things, and I think our audience trusts us enough to know (that) if we are producing it, it's worth seeing."

The origin story

The fertile ground for the theater was seeded by two theater moms. Both Rob and Adam's mother, Laurel Scheidt (formerly Weiner), and Denene's mother, Kathy Mulay, taught and directed shows for local high schools and community theaters. A former Farmers Alley board member and now its production manager, Mulay recently retired from a 30-year career as an educator. She directed last season's *Jersey Boys* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Story* and will direct *Come From Away*, *Misery* and *Dear Evan Hansen* this season.

"One of the reasons that I personally wanted this theater," Mulay says, "was to provide a stage where homegrown talent that we've raised and taught could come back and perform after they joined the union, which requires members only perform at Equity theaters. We've had many of them grace our stage, in addition to professionals from around the country, and the talented people we have right here."

Denene Mulay Koch grew up performing locally before attending the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, where she met New Jersey native and fellow theater kid Jeremy Koch. They dated — even performed together in a national tour of *West Side Story* as Tony and Maria — and eventually married and started a family in New Jersey. Mulay recalls that as new grandparents, she and her husband hoped to nudge them to Michigan.

"We were on the phone with them, and my husband said, 'Hey, the house across the street is for sale. Can I help buy it for my grandson?' I added, 'Come to Kalamazoo. We'll open a theater!'"

The timing was right for the young family, says Jeremy Koch.

"We were shook up a bit after 9/11, questioning whether we wanted to stay," he says. "We had our first child in 2003 and were feeling like things just didn't feel right in the (New York metropolitan) area anymore. Denene had always wanted to move back, and I finally gave in. We moved back in 2004."

Denene has performed throughout the years while raising son Jason and daughter Carly. Carly is a freshman in musical theater at the University of Michigan, the same program Jason graduated from this year. Denene followed her mother into education, teaching in a program her mother created for Education for the Arts, a program of the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), and also teaching private voice lessons.

The Weiner boys trailed their mom around before they got the performing bug themselves. Rob went to Interlochen Arts Camp during summers, and his first big role was in the Kalamazoo Civic's production of *Lost in Yonkers* as a teen in 1994. He studied performance at the University of Michigan, while Adam has an arts management degree from Carnegie Mellon University. It was in 2007, during the Kalamazoo Civic's production of *Ragtime*, that the idea to open a theater took root, sprouting quickly.

"It happened much quicker than we thought," recalls Rob. "Somehow, we built a business plan and a board and found a space. I really don't know how we did it, truthfully. We were finding our own way, doing a lot of learning. You know, every time you fail to meet a challenge is an opportunity to learn. Obviously, we did enough things right that we're still here."

"It's hard enough to run a theater, much less start one from scratch," says Jeremy Koch. "Luckily, we had an incredible team."

Team changes in recent years happened when Adam Weiner, the original executive director, left in 2022 to open the Kalamazoo LEGO shop Bricks & Minifigs. Mulay stepped down from the board, retired from her teaching career, and became production manager, while Rob became executive director.

Talking about the theater's early days, Mulay says. "I think the guys initially thought, 'We'll do some little plays in this little black-box theater.' Josh Weiner (CEO of Kalamazoo's Meyer C. Weiner Co. and proud papa of Adam and Rob) became the president of the board, and I was vice president. We called it a mom-and-pop organization."

Josh Weiner became the theater's landlord when the team checked out the raw ground-floor space in his downtown Kalamazoo Commons. And he is very proud of what the theater has become.

"It has proved itself to be a gem in our community," he says. "Attendance is unbelievable, as is the quality of the product, and the reliability in that whatever Farmers Alley Theater puts on is going to be worthwhile. All of those things show measurable success."

Among the shows produced by Farmers Alley and those who starred in them include, clockwise from top left, Nat Zegree in Million Dollar Quartet, Barbara Marineau and Dirk Lumbard in Cabaret, Dwandra Lampkin and Von Washington Jr. in Clybourne Park, Michelle Duffy and Jeremy Koch in Bright Star, and Jeremy Koch and Mike Scheidt in A Few Good Men. (Courtesy photos).

One of his hopes today is a wish for a larger future venue. "A 200- to 250-seat venue someday — that would be ideal."

Helping to design the theater in its infancy was Kalamazoo College theater professor Lanny Potts.

"You can't do theater without passion, a plan and property. For Farmers Alley, all three aligned," he says.

Potts, who is artistic director of Kalamazoo College's Festival Playhouse and a longtime past board member of Farmers Alley, tells of another instance of local theater "foremothers."

"Kalamazoo College's theater program was founded in the early 1960s by Professor Nelda K. Balch, who was the first-ever Community Medal of Arts winner (an award from the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo). Dorothy Upjohn Dalton, after seeing a show in our outdated Bowen Hall theater, told Nelda, 'We're going to build you a theater, honey,'" recalls Potts.

As some may know, Dalton was part of the founding of the Kalamazoo Civic Players in 1929, and they moved into what was then the new Civic Auditorium in 1931. The Festival Playhouse's theater opened in 1964 and was named for Balch in 1981. Theater students at the college were able to work with professional Equity performers until it grew too expensive to sustain, Potts says. He adds that he was tickled to invite Farmers Alley in 2024 to use the 300-seat Nelda K. Balch Playhouse, which is typically dark during the summer, to stage *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *School of Rock*.

"It was in part to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the playhouse," Potts says, "and it was great to once again have students work alongside professionals. The arts are robust in Kalamazoo because of philanthropic founding families who continue to invest in the arts here."

This summer Kalamazoo College and Farmers Alley collaborated again, to present *Beautiful: The Carole King Story*.

"Partnering with 'K' has given us an even wider audience, and growing our audience is a big deal for us.

There are still people who don't know who we are, what we do, why we're different," says Rob Weiner. "It was a win-win situation, where our patrons got to know their beautiful space and their students got to work with professionals. That's what the artistic community is all about."

A previous collaboration with Western Michigan University helped the Farmers Alley team continue to produce shows when Farmers Alley, the street, was torn up for two years, from 2016–18. Thanks in part to then-board member D. Terry Williams, former head of WMU's theater department, Farmers Alley was able to perform at WMU's Little Theatre, on East Campus.

Funding challenges

Casting about for a new stage when patrons can't get to yours is just one way the Farmers Alley crew has pivoted in the face of challenges. Another challenge came with the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic. Director of Fund Development Heather Jach Turner remembers March 13, 2020, very well.

"It was opening night for *Lost in Yonkers*," but the theater had to shut down, she recalls, noting that the company was able to perform a preview the evening before. "Everyone had already been paid, and we had to reach out to refund all the purchased tickets. So many people said, 'Just keep it.' I don't know where else you find that kind of generosity."

Shuttered for a year and half, the theater would not have made it without the support of donors and other funders, Jach Turner says. "There were a lot of theaters that did not," she says, adding that Farmers Alley was supported by a "Shuttered Venues" grant of \$100,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Today, although Farmers Alley doesn't receive direct federal funding, the theater is feeling trickle-down effects from governmental shifts. It would normally receive funds from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council this fall, but the state hadn't yet finished its budget as of early August. Other funding sources are feeling the pinch or focusing on higher priorities.

"We saw the same thing during Covid, in how our philanthropic foundation partners are working to respond to huge community needs in human services — as they should — but that means the arts get sidelined a bit," says Jach Turner. "Businesses don't have the marketing dollars to do as many sponsorships. We have wonderful partnerships with corporate sponsors, but it's the individuals who are rising to the occasion. We really couldn't do what we do without them."

Jeremy Koch adds, "We're grateful that a lot of the funding in Kalamazoo is more private, with foundations like the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the Gilmore Foundation, or the Tyler-Little Family Foundation, which has been our season sponsor for the past two years. That private funding is crucial in the midst of an administration that is cutting funding nationally to the arts."

Jach Turner does note that there's been a positive trend in arts fundraising that focuses on belonging instead of urgent need. "Instead of saying we're in dire straits, we're saying, 'Be a part of something really positive and important.' I really like that shift. If you're always approaching donors in crisis, then you're going to have burnout real quick."

Jach Turner joined Farmers Alley in 2017 as its full-time director of fund development, bringing deep experience raising money for area nonprofits, including at Kalamazoo College and Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers.

"I had never experienced an organization like this," she says of her first days with Farmers Alley. "There was already such a deep connection with so many donors because of the relationships they had before they started the theater. We've been building on that ever since."

When Jach Turner began her work at Farmers Alley, the theater's annual budget was about \$700,000. It's now more than \$1 million.

"At that time, we probably brought in \$70,000 in individual gifts, and now it's \$160,000," says Jach Turner, noting that last season saw the highest level ever of individual giving. "We've been blown away by the individuals who have been supporting us. This has been our best year yet in terms of individual giving."

Rob Weiner adds, “We are beyond grateful for our audience members. They are the most important part of what we do.”

Mulay is particularly proud of the theater’s professionalism. “What I love to hear is our patrons saying, ‘I don’t care what show you’re doing, I know I can expect it to be professional and of good quality.’ That doesn’t mean they’re going to like every show, but we are proud to have raised the level of professionalism,” she says.

Besides filling the house and the coffers, the primary challenge for the leadership team is one that has been there all along. “The main challenge is that we always want to raise the bar,” says Jeremy Koch. “We want to maintain that level of high-quality professional theater. And the more you raise that bar, the more you have to work to reach it.”

Rob Weiner adds, “We don’t ever want to put a cap on what it could be for us. We are always considering the next step up.”

The here and now

It’s no surprise that the leadership team has a hard time choosing a favorite show on the Season 18 schedule, but there are several they’re looking forward to.

“We’re particularly excited about our season opener, *Come From Away*,” says Rob Weiner. “Ever since I first saw it, I knew the show would be an amazing fit. It’s all about community rallying around people going through a traumatic event. We felt the same thing during the pandemic, closing our doors for 18 months, but being sustained by the community, which has shown such enthusiasm for the work we do.”

Jeremy Koch says the show “has a real family feel to it, in the way that strangers can choose to treat you like family. That’s something that we always try to do here.”

Koch also names some other shows the theater is looking forward to staging: “Certainly we’re excited about our closer, *Dear Evan Hansen*, which is fairly new, but also *Into the Woods* because we haven’t done a Stephen Sondheim book musical. We’ll be collaborating again with the Gilmore Piano Festival with a wonderful, funny, touching, and somewhat heartbreaking play called *Goodnight, Oscar*, about piano virtuoso Oscar Levant.”

In interviews with the Farmers Alley team, it’s evident that once theater people get the “theater bug,” it often grows into a passion that doesn’t go away. “It’s what gets me up in the morning,” Mulay says. “I have a goal every day. I love theater. It feeds my soul.”

It’s also about more than putting yourself in front of a spotlight. “Some people may not understand the power that theater has to affect a society, to teach and demonstrate empathy, to talk about the human experience,” says Jach Turner. “An audience walks away with emotions and thoughts about what they just saw — things you related to or didn’t. It’s impactful and it’s powerful.”