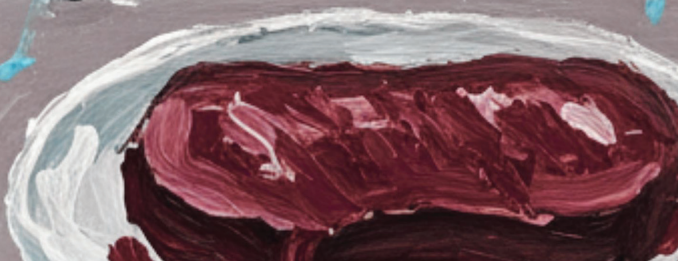




Alleyway
Theatre

THINGS WITH FRIENDS





JUNE 5-27

HIS GIRL WATSON

BY KEVIN CIRONE

**A MAZUMDAR AWARD WINNING NEW PLAY
WATSON & HOLMES ARE ON THE CASE
IN 1940s BOSTON**

ALLEYWAY THEATRE

Chris J Handley, Executive Artistic Director

presents

THINGS WITH FRIENDS

by **KRISTOFFER DIAZ**

Featuring
SARAH FRENCH
SUNNY FRIFFITH
STAN KLIMECKO*
SMIRNA MERCEDES
DAVID C. MITCHELL
SHANNTINA MOORE

Scenic Design
TANIA BARRENECHEA

Lighting & Sound Design
EMMA SCHIMMINGER

Costume Design
SAMANTHA MILLER

Properties Design
QUINCEY MIRACLE

Technical Direction
EMMA SCHIMMINGER

Stage Managed by
KIMBERLY NEISS

**DIRECTED BY
CHRIS J HANDLEY**

Season 46. Our 184th Production.
April 3-25, 2026
April 8, Opening Night

The world premiere of THINGS WITH FRIENDS was produced by American Blues Theater, Gwendolyn Whiteside, Executive Artistic Director. THINGS WITH FRIENDS was developed with the support of The Playwrights Center.

*Stan Klimecko, a Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers, is appearing under a special agreement with Actors' Equity Association.

Support the Arts

When you donate now, you'll join your neighbors to support tomorrow's American theatre, being created at Alleyway Theatre today! You help us not only sustain but also expand our impact, bringing innovative and engaging theatre to Buffalo and beyond.

WHY GIVE?

Alleyway is part of 1% of theatres nationwide dedicated exclusively to producing new works. Our mission relies on generous giving by individuals like you. When you give, you join our community of early adopters and, amplifying each other's impact, assist us in leveraging critical support from corporations, foundations, and government organizations.

HELP TRANSFORM AMERICAN THEATRE

Join a passionate group committed to supporting the development of bold, visceral new theatre. By underwriting shared theatrical experiences worth getting off the couch to see, you help us drive innovation and develop groundbreaking works that embrace fearlessness, theatricality, humanity, and authenticity.

INTRODUCE NEW AUDIENCES TO FUTURE CLASSICS

Share the excitement of our innovative productions. Invite your friends and family to experience tomorrow's American theatre today with VIP guest passes.

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Help us continue our mission by providing the necessary funds to support educational programming, staff, and capital improvements.

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Your dollar goes further than just Alleyway. Full professional productions bring a playwright's dream to life and position their plays with the potential for future licensing opportunities from small towns to Broadway. Each year we explore over 1,500 scripts. This careful curation process ensures a diverse and captivating season for our audiences.

SUPPLEMENT AND AMPLIFY YOUR SEASON SUBSCRIPTION

Enhance your theatre-going experience with a donation at any level. Although a season subscription is the best way to experience the full range of new works we offer, your generous donation at any level complements your subscription by directly supporting the creation of these bold productions.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the following organizations and individuals whose contributions make the promise of original and innovative theatre a reality in Western New York.

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 Margaret & Bob Zak

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 Joseph Bielecki
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TROUPER
 Jeana Anastasi
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 Karin Bowersock

Liam Burke
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Ash and Oakley

Alleyway is a member of the National New Play Network, Theatre Communications Group, Theatre District Association of WNY, and the Theatre Alliance of Buffalo. We regularly employ artists belonging to Actors' Equity Association, United Scenic Artists 829, and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

1 CURTAIN UP ALLEY
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ALLEYWAY.COM

Production photography by
Brett Deneve

WHAT WE DO

Alleyway Theatre is a professional theatre company and collaborative incubator for bold, visceral new theatre. Education & development programs foster the talents of emergent artists from Western New York and beyond ... embracing fearlessness, theatricality, humanity, and authenticity. Founded in 1980, the company currently occupies the 1941 former Greyhound Bus Terminal in Buffalo's historic Theatre District. **You may not know... Alleyway is part of 1% of theatres across the country focused primarily on the development and production of new plays and musicals.**

NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

Alleyway's foremost audience served are playwrights. Our Alleyworks series continues to grow, focusing on the development of new plays and the artists who create them. The program encourages playwrights, both local and national, with artistic and financial support as they create daring new theatre through collaborative and one-to-one partnerships. Most readings, workshops, and productions are open to the public.

EDUCATION

Alleyway Education offers year-round professional training for adults and teens in devising and development, playwriting and performance, bringing a community of emerging artists together in our spaces.

PRODUCTION

Now in year 46, Alleyway's programming consists of six major productions each season, with additional performances in our smaller cabaret space. We present works by local and national, emerging and established playwrights. Our work was recognized in 2022 on National Public Radio's Morning Edition, as one of only six theatres profiled nationwide. We partner regularly with theatres across the country, bringing new ideas to WNY and conversely, sharing the theatre created right here in Erie County with the rest of the country. Alleyway's Mazumdar New Play Award and National New Play Network Rolling World Premieres launch the Theatre and Erie County onto the national scene. Tony Nominee Alex Brightman's THE LIFE AND SLIMES OF MARC SUMMERS was developed here in September 2023, and opened a commercial run off-Broadway in February 2024. Terry Guest received the David Goldman Fund for New American Plays Award in 2022 for his THE MAGNOLIA BALLET, a NNPW RWP.

THE COMPANY



Sarah French



Sunny Griffith



Stan Klimecko*



Smirna Mercedes



David C. Mitchell



Shanntina Moore

- KKD Smirna Mercedes
- Adele Sarah French
- Burt David C. Mitchell
- Chabby Stan Klimecko*
- Vy Shanntina Moore
- Joony Sunny Griffith

An apartment in New York City.
One location.
One scene.
No intermission.

THINGS WITH FRIENDS runs approximately 105 minutes

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production and distributing recordings or streams in any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited, a violation of the author(s)'s rights, and actionable under United States Copyright Law.

A RUPTURE OF REALISM

Alleyway Artistic Instigator Dan Lendzian recently spoke with Pulitzer finalist and Tony Award nominee Kristoffer Diaz. You can hear the full interview on our website or at BuffaloRising.com

An interview with Kristoffer Diaz on pro wrestling and Superstorm Sandy

BY DANIEL F. LENDZIAN

Is there a story from your youth that relates to what you do now?

Yeah, I mean, you know, I didn't start in the theater really. I was an athlete. I was a baseball player. And I loved—professional wrestling was my favorite thing. And I sort of discovered that there's a lot of connections between theater and what I loved about wrestling. But I always was sort of telling—was interested in telling stories, was interested in writing in some capacity. I think it was more in the high school era where I started doing theater just because I had time between baseball season and basketball season and I started messing around with that and acted for a little bit and moved towards the writing side once I got into college. So it was present in my life quite a bit. But as I got a little bit older and moved into New York City and started seeing stuff—I was seeing 180 shows a year—and got sucked into it that way. I got addicted and sort of haven't looked back.

Is there a show that you can remember from those 180 that you saw that you were like, "Oh that's one that really kind of pushed me to want to start writing and creating stories myself?"

Yeah, there were a lot. There were, you know, I fell for sort of musicals

first. And I loved—it's always a surprise to people. My favorite music of all time is CRAZY FOR YOU, which is the George Gershwin musical. It's all singing and dancing, and Susan Stroman was the choreographer, and I loved that. But also right around that same time, I saw RENT at New York Theatre Workshop. I saw a show by John Leguizamo called SPIC-O-RAMA, which blew my mind. It was the first time I had seen people who felt like my family on stage in a lot of ways. And then I saw this show called TOO MUCH LIGHT MAKES THE BABY GO BLIND by a group called the Neo-Futurists—who were originally out of Chicago, and now based in New York—and it was a wild, highly theatrical: 30 plays in 60 minutes and craziness. And I saw it 18 times my freshman year of college because it changed every week. And so a lot of different theatrical styles are sort of pulled together to draw me into this.

THINGS WITH FRIENDS is so in-



herently theatrical, and it seems like there's a theatricality that maybe inspired you and some earlier work, and a theatricality in your work now. Why is theatricality so important?

Man, it's such a fun question. I mean,

and you know, it ties to [my Pulitzer finalist play] THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY in a lot of ways. I will say that early Chicago production that then became a New York production and an LA production was such a great fun time in our lives. The show still gets done quite a bit, and it's fun to see how people tackle it. And it is built around a theatricality.

What I was saying about, professional wrestling—it's all about theatricality, and it's all about an unreal approach to storytelling. Same as musical theater, you know, it's not realism. It's a rupture of realism. And, you know as much as we are trying in musical theater to see two characters interact and have a conversation that looks like real life, the moment that they turn to us and they start singing, it's fake, intentionally. It's heightened. And I was drawn to that from early on.

Not to say that there aren't room for plays where people are on the couch talking to each other, which is what THINGS WITH FRIENDS is in a lot of ways... but ways that we celebrate the live event, ways that we make clear that we get a different set of permissions when we're aware that the audience is there and that we don't hide an awareness of the audience. And we don't

continued...

expect the audience to pretend that they are not there in a space with people who are acting something else out. So we try to play with realism, heightened senses of realism, theatrical devices, awareness of the audience. And, you know, to me, that's what theater does that other art forms really can't do. We celebrate the fact that what you're watching is being performed in front of you by real people and they can hear you and they can see you and you can see them and you can impact what they do.

I'm so interested to know what the playwriting generation process is like for you. What does it start with?

You know, it's different. It's different every time. A lot of times it's trying to identify a burning question or idea or theme or problem that I can't quite wrap my head around in other ways. I think it's Merce Cunningham who says, "if I could tell you what the dance was about, I wouldn't have to dance it." And I think that the pursuit of art is to figure out. It's not just about, "I want to make this clearly stated idea or argument that I formulated before I sat down to develop the process."

For THINGS WITH FRIENDS, I was living in Brooklyn during what would later be called Superstorm Sandy. And I had a maybe six-month-old son, and he and his three other friends who lived in our apartment building, I remember them very clearly looking out the window, their faces sort of pressed up against the glass with this torrential rain coming. And I was struck by, yes, this rain was real bad. We live on an island that was going to be cut off from the rest of the world by this rain. And we had trouble in the ensuing weeks where we couldn't get gas and all those kinds of issues. And yet, my focus in those moments had to be entertaining, helping to entertain

these three little kids, and feeding them and dealing with the immediate concerns.

So that sense of how does life continue to go on in the face of impending doom or change in some way was the issue that I wanted to sort of wrap my head around. And then it took a lot of different forms to get where it ultimately ended up being, but started with a really particular experience.

What should audiences know about this play?

It's such a weird play – intentionally. We did the first production of it in Chicago, and people were really excited about it. It's been very well received. [The audience had] a lot of the sense of, 'I'm still not entirely sure what's happening, but it's making me think about that.' And that's what we really wanted to get to. The play begins in an uptown Manhattan apartment, and only later reveals that the George Washington Bridge has collapsed into the Hudson River. The story is continually challenges expectations. This is one of those plays that is asking you to lean in a little bit, to give it some thought, to go wild with your theories... your conspiracy theories about what's happening here. And have some fun. And hopefully just when you think you have a handle on what's going on here, we're going to take it away from you.

THERE'S MORE! Listen to the rest of this interview on WNY Soundstage from Buffalo Rising where ever you get your podcasts.

Daniel F. Lenzian was commissioned to adapt A CHRISTMAS CAROL for the Alleyway last December, and recently directed THE FOLKS AT HOME and BLACK BEAR ISLAND. He appeared onstage in THE COTTAGE and can be seen this May in PURE GLITTER. He is head of performance at SUNY Fredonia.

WHO'S WHO

KRISTOFFER DIAZ is a playwright, librettist, screenwriter, and educator. His play THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. His musical HELL'S KITCHEN was nominated for 13 Tony awards, recently concluded a nearly two-year run on Broadway, and is in the midst of its first national tour.

Other full-length titles include WELCOME TO ARROYO'S, REGGIE HOOPS, HERCULES, and THE UNFORTUNATES. His work has been produced, commissioned, and developed at The Public Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen Playhouse, ACT, Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among many others.

Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and OBIE Awards; and the Future Aesthetics Artist Regrant, among others.

As a screenwriter, Kristoffer has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX, written for the first season of Netflix's GLOW, and adapted the musical Rent for FOX.

Kristoffer teaches playwriting and theater history at New York University. He is an alumnus of New Dramatists and a member of its Board of Directors, and the current secretary of the Dramatists Guild Council.

THE ACTING COMPANY

SARAH FRENCH is delighted to be making her Buffalo theatre debut with this incredible team. She has performed extensively in Los Angeles and Central Florida, with favorite roles including STOP KISS (Sara), THREE DAYS OF RAIN (Nan/Lina – Critic's Pick), and CLYBOURNE PARK (Betsy/Lindsay). In Los Angeles, she appeared in COMPLETE FEMALE STAGE BEAUTY (Nell Gwynn), THE FOREIGNER (Catherine Simms), LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST (Jacquenetta), and I'M JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY (original cast). Sarah co-wrote and performed in BUBBLE GUM PARTY (Orlando Int'l Fringe Festival Patron's Pick winner) and was a writer-performer with the award-winning sketch troupe Monster Party Comedy. Her television credits include three seasons as Young Sally Rayburn—the flashback of Sissy Spacek's character—on the Emmy-winning series BLOODLINE, as

well as appearances on HBO's RAP SH!T and the Lifetime movie THE SECRETS SHE KEEPS. She has also been featured in national campaigns for Home Depot, Hertz, HSN, and Spectrum. Huge thanks to Nate, Anna, and Rene for taking such great care of Luca and Matteo so she could do a play

SUNNY GRIFFITH (she/her) is absolutely ecstatic to be making her professional debut at Alleyway Theatre in THINGS WITH FRIENDS. She is currently a Junior studying to get her BFA in Musical Theatre at SUNY Fredonia. Some previous credits include RUTHLESS! (Judy U/S), THE SOUND OF MUSIC (Louisa von Trapp), and LORD OF THE FLIES (Simon) all at SUNY Fredonia. Many thanks to her family and friends, and much love to those who have supported her thus far in her artistic journey. @thesunnygriffith

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STAN KLIMECKO* is thrilled to be making his Alleyway debut and working with this dynamic team of artists. He has appeared in Lead and Featured roles in Film, Television and on the boards in New York, Los Angeles and across the country. An Artie winner and many time nominee, he has been seen on various Western New York Stages including: The Irish Classical, Torn Space, Studio Arena, The Kavinoky, The Road Less Traveled, The Lancaster Opera House, The Jewish Rep and The Kenan Center. He is also very active in the Region's growing film Community and recently completed filming key supporting roles in the features CUTMAN starring William Fichtner and LITTLE AUDREY starring Aidan Quinn and Emily VanCamp (both directed by Michael Mailer and to be released in 2026). Check out more at: www.stanklimactor.com

SMIRNA MERCEDES is über excited to be back at Alleyway where she performed in several BUFFALO QUICKIES. A retired registered nurse and a proud disabled Army veteran, she now has plenty of time to immerse herself in her true passion of performing. She was last seen at Irish Classical in 2025 in THE LOVED ONES. Among her favorite roles: BOTANICA, the musical HELL HOLE HONEYS, REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES, LA GRINGA, LA LUZ DE UN CIGARILLO, Abuela Claudia in the musical IN THE HEIGHTS. She also loves to sew! Etsy.com/shop/minniesthings

DAVID C. MITCHELL last appeared at Alleyway in their 2024 production of DEATH OF A STREETCAR NAMED VIRGINIA WOLF (Willie Loman). A company member of the acting ensemble at Roadless Traveled Productions since 2014, David was recently seen in their production of EXIT STRATEGY (Arnold). Other recent roles have included playing Senator Joe McCarthy in CONSCIENCE last fall at the Jewish Repertory Theatre and Lord Stanley in RICHARD III last summer for Shakespeare in Delaware Park. A three-time Artie Award nominee, Mr. Mitchell has performed in nearly 300 stage productions in his thirty-year professional acting career. When he is not performing on local stages, David is a college reading instructor and an avid folk art painter.

SHANNINA MOORE is excited to per-

form on Alleyway Theatre's stage again! Recent performances with Alleyway were in THE FOLKS AT HOME in 2023 and as Helen Mirren in HELEN MIRREN TAKES A DAY OFF by Alex Lin for the 2021 outdoor Buffalo Quickies. Shanntina was awarded the 2020 Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Play Artie Award for Kavinoky Theatre's production of Aaron Sorkin's adaptation of Harper Lee's TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD and Buffalo Spree's 2020 Best Female Actor in a Play for Ujima's production of Dominique Morisseau's PIPELINE.

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

CHRIS J HANDLEY has served as Executive Artistic Director at Alleyway Theatre since 2020. Onstage in THE COTTAGE, PHILOSOPHUS, NAVIGATORS, UNHOLY TRINITY, and REEFER MADNESS. As director: THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD, KRAGTAR!, THE OREGON TRAIL. BUFFALO: 6 Artie Award nominations and 1 win. Musically, Shakespeare in Delaware Park, Jewish Rep, Lancaster Opera House. OFF-BWAY: Creative Consultant on LIFE AND SLIMES. FILM/TV: *Empire*, *Celebrity Ghost Stories*. Chris spent 4 years singing 40s tunes on the American Queen Steamboat wearing more sequins than he cares to remember, has an Acting MFA from Indiana University Bloomington, and has been on faculty at SUNY Fredonia for 7 years where he teaches Acting and Directing. Chris is a past President of the Theatre District Association, once had salad with Cloris Leachman, and has always wanted to be a circus ringmaster.

TANIA BARRENECHEA Off Broadway/ New York: MacHayden Theatre: GODSPELL, The Alleyway Theatre: The Folks at Home. Regionally: Northern Stage: Amelie: The Musical, Saugatuck Center for the Arts Theatre: Million Dollar Quartet, Breckenridge Backstage Theatre: Inventing Van Gogh, Duluth Playhouse: Frozen: The Disney Musical, The Light in the Piazza, Stages-Houston: Panto Alicia in Wonderland, A Case for the Existence of God, New Native Theatre: A Christmas in Ochopee. Windgate Center for the Fine and Performing Arts: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime, Head Over Heels. Playhouse Theatre at Penn State University: A Little Night Music, A Year

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with Frog and Toad, To Kill a Mockingbird. Tania is a Peruvian architect and Scenic Designer, lives in Poughkeepsie, NY where she is also a professor at Vassar College

EMMA SCHIMMINGER is an Artie Award winning theatrical designer and technician, specializing in lighting design and production/stage management. She is a Buffalo native who moved back to the area after spending a decade working in New York City. While there, she worked as a freelance lighting designer and at several private secondary schools in Manhattan as a designer, stage manager, technical director and faculty member. Emma also took time to travel to London in order to achieve her Master's degree. Upon returning to Buffalo, she became Shakespeare in Delaware Park's Resident Lighting Designer and has designed lighting for several other local theatre companies. Most recently, she was the Production Manager at UB's Center for the Arts. Artvoice Artie award winner for Outstanding Lighting Design 2014, 2004 . BA: State University of New York at Buffalo; MA: Royal Central School of Speech And Drama, University of London.

QUINCEY MIRACLE is a visual artist working in multimedia sculpture, immersive installation, and performative action. Their work combines sculptural methods such as body casting with techniques borrowed from costume design, game development, and home construction. With a Jack-of-all-Trades approach, they create physical manifestations of complex emotional states, memories, and interactions. Quincey received their BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in sculpture from Central Washington University and their MFA in Sculpture and Extended Media from the University at Buffalo.

KIMBERLY NEISS ALLEYWAY: As Production Stage Manager: THE COTTAGE, MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD, BLACK BEAR ISLAND, WIPEOUT, THE NATURAL HORSE, THE LIFE & SLIMES OF MARC SUMMERS, KRAGTAR! THE AMERICAN MONSTER MUSICAL, THE ALEPH COMPLEX, BURST, THE OREGON TRAIL, BERSERKER. BUFFALO: Shea's 710's ONCE ON THIS ISLAND (Assistant Stage Manager). REGIONAL: N/A OFF-BWAY: THE LIFE & SLIMES OF MARC SUMMERS Production Stage Manager), MAMA I'M A BIG GIRL NOW (Production Stage Manager). FILM/TV: *Puppy Bowl XXI and XXII* (Assistant Stage Manager). Originally from Missouri and coming from Dal-

las, Texas, Kimberly has lived in Buffalo for almost 5 years now. She has had the privilege of working with Alleyway Theatre since 2021 where she has spent much of her time thinking "I can't believe I get paid to do this". She holds a bachelor's degree in Multimedia Production/Journalism from Drury University and has never once used it. In her free time, Kimberly can be found at her husband's baseball games, going to the farmers market, and watching *Wheel of Fortune* at 7:30pm, Monday-Saturday.

Assistant Stage Manager
AMARYA SHARPE

Technical Assistants
JHARREL BERNARDO
HOLDEN STEVENSON
KY VERHOF

Scenic Painters
JHARREL BERNARDO
RONNIE SWANN

Front of House Manager
HOLDEN STEVENSON

Front of House Staff
KATE BOSWELL
AMANDA FUNICIELLO
JACK HUNTER
JULIA MISKINES
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KY VERHOEF
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Stage Management and Technical Staff
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MARTY GARTZ
K GORNY
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BY KEVIN CIRONE

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