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***Full Casting Announced!***  
**Underscore Theatre Company Announces 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual  
CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL**  
**June 30 – July 19, 2015 at The Den Theatre**  
***Featuring 13 World Premiere Musicals by Chicago Artists***

**CHICAGO** (June 2, 2015) – **Underscore Theatre Company** is pleased to announce the line-up and full casting for its second annual **CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL**, featuring an unprecedented **13 world-premiere musicals** by local artists. Created to showcase Chicago's burgeoning field of musical theatre creators, this year's festival will include ten full-length musicals and three one-acts. The **CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL** will be presented **June 30 – July 19, 2015** at **The Den Theatre**, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Tickets are currently available at [www.cmtf.org](http://www.cmtf.org). The press opening is Tuesday, June 30 at 6 pm (*How To Run For Mayor*), 7:30 pm (*Fanatical*) and 9:30 pm (*American Smoothie*). Press are welcome to attend all additional musicals upon request.

From a new spin on the Chicago Mayoral race – to a Chekhov-inspired rock musical – to a fantastical journey back in time to a 1980s prom – the **CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL** offers something for everyone. Productions are chosen from two categories: **mentored submissions**, in which writers and composers submit completed works of musical theatre to be produced by Underscore Theatre – and **independent submissions**, in which producers submit “production-ready” works of musical theatre to be produced independently by the submitters. After receiving 45 submissions, the festival's team has selected two mentored musicals and eleven independent musicals to be performed at the festival.

"Chicago has a vibrant, growing community of musical theatre creators who need an artistic home, and we aim to give them one," comments Festival Director and Underscore Theatre Company Artistic Director **Alex Higgin-Houser**. "Sources of support often go to larger institutions, and with the exception of the well-connected, there are few avenues in Chicago to produce a new musical. Which makes sense – musicals are risky, and more expensive than putting on a play. But by creating the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival, Underscore is providing a platform for emerging composer/lyricist teams to have their work supported, explored and most importantly – performed!" adds Higgin-Houser.

**The Full CHICAGO MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL Line-Up Includes:**

**MENTORED PRODUCTIONS**

Full-length:

***American Smoothie***

Book and Lyrics by **Nick Jester**, Music by **David von Kampen**  
Directed by Emma Couling, Music Direction by **David Kornfeld**  
Featuring **Brian Elliot**, **Katy Fattaleh**, **Michael Palmenderi**, **Cami Rene Philgreen**, **Katie Sherman** and **Jonathan Wilson**.

Brian is an IT technician at the corporate headquarters of American Smoothie Inc. He pines after the cute accountant, stews in jealousy over his too-good coworkers and prays to the spirit of John

Grisham for salvation. Part thriller, part romance, and all hilarious, *American Smoothie* is a world premiere chock-full of bombs, bird fetishes and nutritious whole-fruit flavor.

One-Act:

***Recurring John***

Music and Lyrics by **Kevin Wong**

Directed by **David Lipschutz**, Music Direction by **Zack Wright**

Featuring **Alisha Fabbi**, **Sadie Rose Glaspey**, **Allison Kochanski**, **Judi Riley**, **Ty Rood**, **Nick Shoda** and **Brenda Turner**.

How well can you come to know a person you never meet? A mother sings a lullaby to her child. A teacher imparts 'wordly wisdom' upon a student. A man recounts his emotional journey on his wedding day. These and more seemingly disparate lives are bound together by a common thread of recurrence; they have all been touched and impacted in some way by the same person. This contemporary and unique conceptual take on the song cycle aims to explore the impact of one life through presenting seven chronological vignettes of individuals affected by a man named John, who never appears to the audience.

**INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS**

Full-Length:

***Dirty Girl***

Presented by **New American Folk Theatre**

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Anthony Whitaker**

Directed and Choreographed by **Jamal Howard**, Musical Direction by **Ellen Morris**

Featuring **Carrie Campana\***, **Kelly Combs**, **Grant Drager\***, **Sarah Gise**, **Eliza Helm**, **Kirk Jackson\***, **Coco Kasperowicz**, **Chante Keller**, **Brittany Langmeyer**, **Brenna Palfi**, **Shyrah Perkins**, **Hannah Redmond** and **Hilary Sigale**. \*Denotes New American Folk Theatre Company Member

***Dirty Girl*** is a musical comedy one-act following a girl who wishes she could go to the prom. Her fairy god-cousin-through-marriage appears and answers her wish with the 1980s prom of her dreams. At the prom, she faces off with the popular jock, the nerd and the cheerleaders, quickly learning that the real world can be even better than fairytales.

***Fanatical***

Presented by **American Demigods**

Book by **Reina Hardy**, Music and Lyrics by **Matt Board**

Directed by **Kate Staiger**, Musical Direction by **Ellen Morris**

Featuring **Jeff Bouthiette**, **Michael Carten**, **Kat Evans**, **Stephen Garrett**, **Sarah Inendino**, **Rory Leahy**, **Charlotte Ostro** and **Annie Passanisi**.

This sci-fi convention is a geek's paradise – costumes, robots and the chance to meet Scott Furnish, creator of spies-in-space TV show *Angel 8*. But this gathering of devoted *Angel 8* fans has been infiltrated by a real-life spy: a reporter for anti-nerd lads' mag "Pump." Even worse, when Scott Furnish finally arrives, he has terrible news. *Angel 8* has been cancelled! With their inspiration off the air, the con-goers must band together to restore faith to their devastated hero, and to themselves. Along the way, they will prove that no power in the universe can keep a story from its fans.

***Marble, GA***

Presented by **Duplicity Ensemble**

Conceived and Composed by **Pamela Maurer** (aka Baby Money)

Devised by **Duplicity Ensemble** and the Marble, GA cast

Directed by **Nathan Wonder**, Choreographed by **Annaleah Tubbin**

Featuring **Emily Draffen**, **Annemarie Friedo**, **Meg Palermo**, **Lizzie Schwarzrock**, **Kyle Whalen** and **Kegan Witzki**.

Lucy's last living relative has passed away, and she is summoned from Chicago to the rural Georgia town of Marble, home of the mythic Georgia guidestones. An orphan, Lucy had clung to fantastical stories of fame and fortune, hoping to discover she was meant to be among them – but when she arrives in Marble, the mystery of the guidestones teaches her more about her family and herself than she ever imagined.

### ***Nine Lives***

Book by **Michael Gibson** and **Dewayne Perkins**, Music and Lyrics by **Michael Gibson**

Directed by **Tyler Christie**, Music Direction by **Michael E. Gibson**

Featuring **Jared Grant, Ashley J. Hicks, Allie Jae, Cassie Nelson, Nicole Nola, Daven Taba, Joy Valdez-Pappas, David Stobbe** and **Jocelyn Villa** with additional vocals by **Eric Bonner, Ulises Rincon** and **Axel Sandoval**.

Felix is a young man who possesses an amazing ability, passed down to him from generations past: he has nine lives. Felix can awaken from death as if it never happened. Drama, comedy, fantasy and mystery collide as Felix's gift forces him to choose for himself whether he lives or dies.

### ***One Thousand Words***

Book and Lyrics by **Michael Braud**, Music by **Curran Latas**

Directed by **Lavina Jadhvani**

Featuring **Michael Achenbach, Bill Chamberlain, Megan Gill, Joe Hornberger, Mark Labella, Eddie Ledford, Juwan Lockett, Aaron Mason, Rylee Rawcliffe, Justin Stevens, Jessup Stokes, Trevor Straub, Shaina Summerville** and **Alaina Wis**.

Richard Hanks knows that writing a thousand words about two men who were in love in the 1940s will help promote himself at the Forward Magazine, but what he doesn't realize is how much hearing the story of the men will change his perspective on equality. The audience follows Richard's journey, and in doing so, gets a glimpse at a love story that must struggle against a quickly changing, unacceptable culture.

### ***Passing By***

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Patrick Thompson**

Directed by **Patrick Thompson**

Featuring **Doug Clemons, Harper Navin, Sally Staats** and **Ben Usatinsky**.

***Passing By*** is about firsts. Your first kiss, your first dance, your first best friend, your first true love. This is a story about two young people who grew up in a small town and experienced many of their "firsts" with each other. They go through their first 18 years of life without ever leaving their hometown so when it finally comes time to grow up and make decisions about the rest of their lives, they quickly find out what they will get to experience together or on their own.

### ***Plath/Hughes***

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Robert Eric Shoemaker**

Orchestration by **Abigail Pershing** and **Nikolai Maximay**

Directed by **Robert Eric Shoemaker**

Featuring **Justin Krivda** and **Alexandra Merrit Mathews**

***Plath/Hughes*** explores the truth behind the turbulent marriage of two of the past century's most renowned and celebrated poets, Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. Following the fateful meeting of Sylvia and Ted and traveling the timeline through childbirth, mental illness and both poets' deaths, ***Plath/Hughes*** is a breathless original piece that defies traditional musical theatre structure and conceits. Winner of the 2014 Olga and Paul Menn Foundation Prize for Best Play.

### ***prOne***

Book and Lyrics by **Alex Higgin-Houser, David Kornfeld, Brendan Siegfried** and **Laura Stratford**

Music by **David Kornfeld**

Directed by **Jon Martinez**

Featuring **Bobby Arnold, Kristi Parker Barnhart, Leo Bennett, Sarah Hoch, Nick Kern, Leah Tirado** and **Anna Wilharm** with **Jordan Arrasmith, Julia Beck, Raymond Goodall, Savannah Hoover, Hayleigh Hutchinson, Joseph Kuchey, Ann Libera, Isaac Loomer, Dalton Rhodes** and **Travis Austin Wright**.

*prOne* follows Jessica Harrison, a young woman struggling to find her place in the film industry, and her family as the country discovers her secret: that she is the unnamed, possibly exploited young woman in an adult “casting couch” video at the heart of a highly-publicized legal battle. As Jessie struggles to decide how to testify, her brother and his ridiculous college roommate quest to clear her name and her parents try to come to grips with the idea of their little girl in porn. *prOne* is equal parts raucous, poignant and provocative, exploring the intersecting worlds of internet pornography, the justice system and the American family as an aspiring actress is dragged into the public spotlight.

### ***Seagulls***

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Beth Hyland**

Directed by **Rebecca Willingham**, Musical Direction and Additional Music by **Patrick Budde**

Featuring **Anna Basile, Ella Pennington, Will Sonheim** and **Sammy Zeisel**.

*Seagulls* is an indie-rock musical loosely based on Anton Chekov's *The Seagull*. This contemporary retelling of the classic tragicomedy follows four friends and bandmates at a small college as they struggle to achieve artistic greatness without losing themselves – or each other.

### One-Act:

#### ***How to Run for Mayor***

Book by **Gilbert Tanner**, Music and Lyrics by **Aaron Aptaker**

Directed by **Aaron Aptaker**

Featuring **Paola Sanchez Abreu, Trent Eisfeller, Mike Foster, Brian Healy, Steve Lords, Grace Palmer, Molly Parchment, Ryan Semmelmayr** and **Rachael Smith**.

Kim needs a job. Unfortunately, she just graduated college, which means she isn't really qualified for anything. So... she decides to run for mayor of Chicago. After her campaign goes viral, Kim winds up as the leading opponent to Rahm Emanuel. *How to Run for Mayor* is an irreverent and hilarious take on elections in the 21st century.

#### ***Slide (part 1)***

Book by **Kalena Victoria Chevalier**, Music and Lyrics by **Steve Clark** and **Ed Plough**

Directed by **Rachel Staelens**

Featuring **Amelia Bethel, Jorge Bolanos, Conor Clark, Joe Lugosch, Aaron Mann, Siobhan McKissic, Shawn Morgenlander, Rachel Pallante** and **Ben Schlofelt**.

Loosely inspired by Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, *Slide* follows an immigrant family's arrival in an amazing new land of opportunity and beauty. But that beauty comes at a terrible price. As the inner workings of its mysterious factory are revealed, the family discovers that it is their very lives greasing the wheels. Broken and alone, one of them begins an impossible journey to make peace with the machine.

### **FESTIVAL DETAILS:**

**Dates:** Tuesday, June 30 – Sunday, July 19, 2015

**Press Opening:** The press opening is Tuesday, June 30 at 6 pm (*How To Run For Mayor*), 7:30 pm (*Fanatical*) and 9:30 pm (*American Smoothie*). Press are welcome to attend all additional musicals upon request.

**Schedule:** Tuesdays, Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays from 6 pm – 10 pm; Saturdays and Sundays from 12 pm – 9:30 pm. The full schedule of performances is available at [www.cmtf.org](http://www.cmtf.org).

**Tickets:** \$15 for one-acts; \$20 full-length productions; all-festival pass are available at a discounted rate. Tickets are currently available at [www.cmtf.org](http://www.cmtf.org).

### **About Underscore Theatre Company**

Founded in 2011, Underscore Theatre Company is a team of producing artists dedicated to exploring stories of power and resonance through a musical lens; fostering the development of new musicals; and bolstering Chicago's role as a national leader in musical theatre. Since its creation, Underscore has produced 14 world-premiere musicals in Chicago. Underscore is proud to be Chicago's home for new musicals.

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