

Portland Center Stage at

THE ARMORY
PRESENTS

THE MAGIC PLAY

By Andrew Hinderaker

Directed by Halena Kays

with Magic Created by

Brett Schneider

On the U.S. Bank Main Stage
Artistic Director | Chris Coleman

Portland Center Stage at

THE ARMORY

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Actors Theatre of Louisville and Syracuse Stage

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By Andrew Hinderaker

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Brett Schneider

Scenic Designer

Lizzie Bracken

Costume Designer

Alison Siple

Lighting Designer

Jesse Belsky

Sound Designer/
Original Music

Matthew M. Nielson

Media Designer

Philip Allgeier

Aerial Consultant

Sylvia Hernandez-

DiStasi

Production Assistant

Danny Rosales

Stage Manager

Kelsey Daye Lutz

Flying Effects provided by ZFX, Inc.

CAST LIST: *THE MAGIC PLAY*

The Magician.....Brett Schneider

The Diver.....Sean Parris

Another Magician.....Jack Bronis

Brett Schneider is a professional magician. No actors or stooges are used as volunteers in this show. The video feed of The Magician's table is an unaltered live feed.

The Magic Play was produced in a developmental production at Goodman Theatre's 2014 New Stages Festival and received the first production in its rolling world premiere at Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Illinois on November 1, 2016, Robert Falls, Artistic Director, Roche Schulfer, Executive Director.

Performed with one intermission

The photo, video or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the scenic designer if you share the image.

The Actors and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

If you could see any magic trick in the world performed before your eyes, what would it be?

Pull a rabbit out of a hat?
Saw your neighbor in half?
Lose five pounds?
Pay off your mortgage?
Get rid of Oregon's kicker?

In Andrew Hinderaker's new piece, *The Magic Play*, the fantasies and longings we hold close provide the raw ingredients for a fascinating production. With master illusionist Brett Schneider at the center of the play's action, the writer and performer excavate the distance between what we believe, what we long for, and what our eyes tell us is true.

Using magic as a means of delving into the emotional scars of the central character's past, the line between truth and illusion begins to melt away.

“Yes, I have tricks in my pocket.
I have things up my sleeve.
But I am the opposite of a stage magician.
He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth.
I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”
- Tennessee Williams

-Chris Coleman

FEATURE: A MAGICAL COLLABORATION

The Magic Play is the result of a multi-year collaboration between playwright Andrew Hinderaker and magician and actor Brett Schneider. The interviews below were conducted in 2016, while the play was having its rolling world premiere at Goodman Theatre and Olney Theatre Center.

Andrew Hinderaker: Playwright

What sparked the idea for *The Magic Play*?

I have been a fan of magic for a very, very long time. I had an uncle who was both a professional set designer and an amateur magician. And he taught me my very first magic trick when I was a little kid. On a larger level, I just like what magic can do as a form of theater. For me, the essence of theater is its impermanence. The idea that we are in this space together for a limited amount of time. I think magic in some ways captures the essence of that so beautifully, and it is really about the profound beauty in the theatricality of a moment.

That idea of a moment that wakes us up or shifts our perception or teaches us we've been looking at exactly the right thing, but somehow we still missed something, is such an extraordinary experience as an audience member — to sort of supercharge us to be more present, to be more awake. I think that is the essence of theater at its best. I've been to magic shows where people are gasping out loud, screaming profanities inadvertently, or where they've just burst into tears. And I can't help but ask: why doesn't the theater feel like that more often?

That was the initial inspiration and I pretty quickly thereafter started working with Brett Schneider — we came together in early 2013 — and started talking about this piece. Initially, I reached out to Brett just to talk about magic and why he does it, and by really the end of the first meeting I thought, “I’ve got to try to write the role for this person.”

What did you discover during the development process?

I was interested in telling a piece about a theater artist that was broken in some way. And when I got into the world of magic I think one of the things that struck me was this sort of intrinsic metaphor of someone who can never be fully present for all of these miraculous experiences they were providing for somebody else.

Being a playwright is not totally unlike being a magician: you are crafting an experience, you are manipulating an audience. And one of the things that interests me is how do I loosen that grip a little bit as a playwright. How do I become more of a generous theater artist, both toward the collaborative team that I work with and the audience that we’re fortunate enough to engage with? What does that mean to give up a little control? And I think that’s a big part of what we’re exploring in this play.

What will you take with you to your future work?

A lot. For me, [magic] sort of raises the bar for what you demand from a piece of theater. One of the things that’s so rewarding about this play that I’ll continue to take into future work is that this can only happen in the theater. More and more, I’m interested in writing theatrical events rather than plays, and this has been a huge inspiration for continuing to lean into that.

Interview by Emily Sorensen, Dramaturg, Olney Theatre Center

Brett Schneider: Performer and Magic Creator

When did you first become interested in magic?

I received a magic kit as a gift as a child, but was too young to understand it, so it sat on a shelf until I was probably 11 or 12 years old. Once I was able to teach myself, I pulled it down and was hooked. A lot of kids go through a magic phase but then lose interest. I stuck with it because, in addition to my magic kit, I found a local magic shop in San Francisco called Misdirections that just blew my mind and opened up a whole new world of possibilities. I had some friends who were interested in magic, but I mostly learned the old school way through books and then started performing on my own part time as a teenager.

Is that when you decided to incorporate elements of traditional theater into your shows?

As a teenager I started really getting into theater separately. I was lucky to have a great high school drama teacher who taught a lot of improv and ensemble-driven theater that inspired me to embrace the storytelling aspect of theater. As I was performing more as a teenager, theater helped my magic and vice versa. I didn't really think of combining the two until I was at Northwestern University. I had a writing partner who was into performance art and we started picking apart magic as a craft and why it's valuable and what we found interesting about it. In my mind, magic is a subcategory of theater. I don't see them as separate anymore. Theater is an umbrella term that covers so many different things. If you're an illusionist or a mind reader, you're a theater artist. Your magic and craft is simply the medium you choose.

Due to the audience participation in *The Magic Play*, each performance is different. Do you enjoy that as a performer?

It's incredible. I can't say enough about how much of a gift this project has been for me over the last few years. It's pushed me in so many ways as a magician, an actor, an illusion designer, a storyteller and has really helped me hone my craft. Andrew Hinderaker wrote this piece in such a manner that the performances literally can't happen the same way twice and the show will always be different depending on the audience that night. That's really exciting and really satisfies Andrew's desire to take real risks in the theater.

Do you believe magicians should ever reveal the secrets behind their tricks?

It's a case by case situation. If I'm working as a consultant on a theater piece and collaborating with other artists, I'm eager to teach the production team how and why something works and how to do it best. During the production process for this show, I met with all of the incredible designers. When I taught them something, they would add their own ideas and completely improve it. I have no qualms about sharing secrets with those who are ready to learn because that's how I learned. For those who are willing to work hard, the answers are there. There's a saying: "The door to magic may be closed, but it isn't locked."

Interview by Michael Mellini, OnStage Editor, Goodman Theatre

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Jack Bronis

Another Magician

Jack Bronis is thrilled to be making his debut at The Armory. Jack also played the role of Another Magician in Actors Theatre of Louisville's production of *The Magic Play*. He was a founding member of The Noble Fool Theater, with whom he performed in *The Underpants*, *Roasting Chestnuts*, *The Baritones* and *Flanagan's Wake*. Films include *The Last Rites of Joe May*, *Chicago Overcoat*, *Best if Used By* and *For a Good Time*. Television roles include *Chicago Fire*, *Early Edition*, *The Playboy Club* and *Unsolved Mysteries*. Jack is a longtime faculty member of The Second City Training Center and Acting Studio Chicago. He is the original director and a co-creator of *Flanagan's Wake*, and wrote the book and lyrics for *Vikings! A Musical in Two Act*.

Sean Parris

The Diver

Sean Parris is excited to make his debut at The Armory. He was born in Los Angeles and raised in Miami and Georgia by his amazing mom. He currently lives in Chicago, where his credits include *The Magic Play* (Goodman Theatre); *Space Age*, a two-man show created with his real-life intimate partner Ricardo Gamboa (Free Street Theater); *Blues for An Alabama Sky* (Court Theatre); *Compass*, *Animal Farm* and *The Drunken City* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *The Whipping Man* (Northlight Theatre); and *A Girl With Sun in Her Eyes* (Pine Box Theater). Television credits: *Sickos* (Cap Gun Collective); *Chicago P.D.* (NBC); *The Chi* (Showtime); and *Brujos* (OpenTV's original web series). Sean received his

M.F.A. from DePaul University Theatre School and is a graduate of The Academy of Black Box Acting. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.

Brett Schneider

The Magician/Magic Creator

Regional: *The Magic Play* at The Goodman Theatre, Olney Theatre Center and Actors Theatre of Louisville; *The Glass Menagerie* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; and *Peter and the Wolf* at Lookingglass Theatre Company. Off-Broadway: *The Magic Play* (workshop) at Roundabout Theatre Company. Television: *Rise* (NBC); *Chicago Fire* (NBC); *Chicago P.D.* (NBC); *Chicago MED* (NBC); *Vinyl* (HBO); and *Sirens* (USA). Other theater credits include *The Great God Pan* at Next Theatre; *The Life and Sort of Death of Eric Argyle* at Steep Theatre; *Homecoming 1972* at Chicago Dramatists; *Rose and the Rime* at The House Theatre. Schneider is a graduate of Northwestern University and The School at Steppenwolf. He is also a professional magician, illusion designer and a member of the Magic Castle in Los Angeles.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Andrew Hinderaker

Playwright

Andrew Hinderaker is an ensemble member of The Gift Theatre in Chicago, where his play *Suicide, Incorporated* premiered before subsequent productions in New York and throughout the world. Additional plays include *I Am Going To Change The World, Dirty, Kingsville* and *Colossal*, which received the 2015

Helen Hayes Award for Best New Play. Hinderaker is thrilled to be working at The Armory and presenting *The Magic Play*, an almost five-year collaboration with actor/magician Brett Schneider and director Halena Kays. Hinderaker holds an M.F.A. in playwriting from The University of Texas at Austin and also works as a television writer, where recent credits include *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime), *Pure Genius* (CBS) and *The Path* (Hulu). He was recently nominated for another Helen Hayes for *The Magic Play* (Olney Theatre Center), as well as a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Individual Episode of a Television Series.

Halena Kays

Director

Halena Kays is thrilled to be working at The Armory for the first time. Regional theater: *The Magic Play* at Goodman Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville and Olney Theatre Center; *Lord of the Flies* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; *Feast* (part of a collaborative directing effort) for The Albany Park Theatre Project at Goodman Theatre. Chicago credits: *Pop Waits*, *Burning Bluebeard*, *44 Plays for 44 Presidents*, *Daredevils*, *Daredevils Hamlet* and *Fake Lake* at The Neo-Futurists (artistic associate); and *Endgame*, *Ivywild* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at The Hypocrites. Kays is the former artistic director of The Hypocrites and co-founder and former artistic director of Barrel of Monkeys. She has been nominated for a Jefferson Citation for Best Supporting Actress and Best Direction and is a recipient of the 3Arts Award. She is the professor of directing at Middle Tennessee State University.

Lizzie Bracken

Scenic Designer

Lizzie is delighted to be designing at The Armory for the first time. Regional theater: *The Magic Play* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Olney Theatre Center and Goodman Theatre; *Lord of the Flies*, *The Book Thief*, *Blacktop Sky* and *See What I Wanna See* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. Chicago credits: *Burning Bluebeard* with The Ruffians; *Endgame*, *Ivywild* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* with The Hypocrites; *PopWaits* and *44 plays for 44 Presidents* with The Neo-Futurists. Lizzie received her M.F.A. from The University of Texas at Austin and B.Arch. from University of Notre Dame. Lizzie was an assistant professor at North Central College for several years and, prior to her career in theater, was an architect with Fairfax & Sammons Architects in New York.

Alison Siple

Costume Designer

Recent projects include *Lost Laughs* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre), *You Got Older* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *Angels in America*, *Airness* and *The 39 Steps* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Earthquakes in London* and *Motortown* (Steep Theatre); *The Yeomen of the Guard* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Our Town* (Almeida Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, The Broad Stage, Barrow Street Theatre, The Hypocrites); and *All Our Tragic*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado*, and *H.M.S. Pinafore* (The Hypocrites). She is a graduate of Northwestern University, a community member of The Hypocrites, an artistic associate with Lookingglass Theatre Company and an associate company member of Steep Theatre. alisonsiple.com

Jesse Belsky

Lighting Designer

Jesse Belsky is delighted to be working at The Armory. Regional credits include *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Arena Stage); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Ford's Theatre); *Lydia and Rough Crossing* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Handbagged* and *The Book Of Will* (Round House Theatre); *The Mystery of Love & Sex* (Signature Theatre); *Sense & Sensibility* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Folger Theatre); *The Year of Magical Thinking* (PlayMakers Repertory Company); *The Magic Play* (Olney Theatre Center); *The Effect, Three Sisters, No Sisters* and *ANIMAL* (Studio Theatre); and *Everything is Illuminated* (Theater J). New York City designs include *The Body Politic* (59E59 Theaters); *Lysistrata* and *Women of Troy* (La MaMa Annex); and *My Trip Down the Pink Carpet* (starring Leslie Jordan). Mr. Belsky holds a B.A. from Duke University, an M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama and has taught lighting design at Connecticut College and UNC Greensboro. jessebelsky.com

Matthew M. Nielson

Sound Designer/Original Music

Off-Broadway: The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, 59E59 Theaters and Lincoln Center. Regional: Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Delaware Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, The Kennedy Center, The Smithsonian, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Barrington Stage Company, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Signature Theatre, Studio Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Olney Theatre Center, Round House Theatre and Theater Alliance. Film and

television: *The Hero Effect*, *Death in Time*, *Elbow Grease*, *Blue*, *Epix Drive-In*, *From Hell to Here*, *The Good Ways of Things* and *The Long Road*. Nielson is a founding member of the audio theater company The Audible Group and creator of the audio web series *Troublesome Gap*. He has won several Helen Hayes Awards and various film festival awards for his work in theater, film and television. He is currently running Sound Lab Studios, a recording studio and post-production house. curiousmusic.com

Philip Allgeier
Media Designer

Philip Allgeier has performed multiple media-related duties for television and live events across the country. Philip has been the media technologist for Actors Theatre of Louisville since 2008, where he has designed media for more than 50 productions, including many world premieres for the Humana Festival of New American Plays, such as Lucas Hnath's *The Christians*, Charles L. Mee's *The Glory of the World* and Will Eno's *Gnit*. Additional credits at Actors Theatre of Louisville: *The Mountaintop*, *At the Vanishing Point*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Last Five Years*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Angels in America* (part one and two), *The Hour of Feeling* and *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*. Philip has also designed media for productions at Playwrights Horizons, Mark Taper Forum, Brooklyn Academy of Music and others. Mr. Allgeier is a graduate of Western Kentucky University.

Jim Steinmeyer
Magic Consultant

Jim Steinmeyer has been called the “celebrated invisible man, designer and creative brain behind many of the great stage magicians of the last quarter-century” by *The New York Times*. Mr.

Steinmeyer's illusions have been featured by Doug Henning, Siegfried and Roy, David Copperfield, Ricky Jay and many others. He created special illusions for the Broadway productions of *Beauty and the Beast*, *Into the Woods*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Mary Poppins* and *Aladdin*. He is also the author of best-selling books on the history and practice of magic, including *Hiding the Elephant*, *The Glorious Deception* and *The Last Greatest Magician in the World*.

Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi

Aerial Consultant

Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi has been creating her unique brand of circus-inspired choreography since leaving her career as a circus acrobat in the early 1990s. She is a co-founder and the current artistic director of The Actors Gymnasium outside of Chicago, where she serves as master teacher, choreographer and director of The Professional Circus Training Program. Sylvia has been an artistic associate of the Tony Award-winning Lookingglass Theatre Company since 1999. She has worked on more than 15 productions with the company, winning three of her four Joseph Jefferson Awards with them. She also won the 3Arts Award for Design (2014) and the Award of Honor for Outstanding Contributions by The Illinois Theatre Association.

Kelsey Daye Lutz

Stage Manager

The Armory credits include stage manager for *Twist Your Dickens* (2017), *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*, *Hold These Truths*, *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* (2016 and 2017), *Each and Every Thing*, *Forever*, *The Santaland Diaries*, *The Lion*, *The People's Republic of Portland* (2015), *Vanya and Sonia and*

Masha and Spike, The Typographer's Dream, The Last Five Years and *A Small Fire*. Kelsey Daye is a graduate of University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She would like to thank her pups for all their unconditional love and Shamus for being wonderful.

Danny Rosales

Production Assistant

Danny is excited to return to The Armory after making his debut as production assistant for *Every Brilliant Thing*. Born and raised in Oregon, he is a recent graduate of Portland State University with a degree in theater arts. During his time at PSU, he stage managed many shows. His favorites include *The Importance of Being Earnest, Eurydice* and *Sons of the Prophet*. When he's not busy working on shows, you can usually find him either playing the piano or eating ice cream. Silliness aside, Danny is grateful to be working on this fantastic show with such amazing people. Lastly, he would like to thank his friends and family for all their love and support.

ZFX, Inc.

Flying Effects

Founded in 1994, ZFX, Inc. is the complete service provider for flying effects. They don't just handle the rigging or flying harnesses. They're not just skilled at automation, choreography and flying design. ZFX, Inc. covers every aspect of flying possibilities. From high schools to Broadway, churches to special events, ZFX, Inc. zealously pursues its goal of worldwide domination of the performer flying industry (galactic domination coming soon). Their infectious enthusiasm comes at no additional charge. They don't wake up and put their pants on one leg at a time like the others do. They wrap themselves in kilts and stride boldly out into the world.

SPONSOR STATEMENTS

Jess Dishman

The Magic Play is a dramatic view of humanity. It offers a look at life through the lens of a magic show, a show within a show. It does what theater does best: it reveals a brief glimpse behind our masks. Enjoy this production from Portland Center Stage at The Armory.

Paul and Tasca Gulick

We are excited to help bring *The Magic Play* to The Armory because, after all, who doesn't want a little more magic in their lives? A little mystery, a little thrill, a little challenge to try and figure out: *How did he do that?* Why are we drawn to things our senses and logic can't explain? Perhaps it's our way to connect to moments in our past, those magical memories that linger far past the amazing and unexpected events themselves. Or perhaps we cling to the very idea that there are forces at play that we can never understand. Magic is at the heart of what Portland Center Stage at The Armory does every day. Through the magic of theater, they bring us moments of surprise, they challenge us to better understand the world that surrounds us, and they transport us to times and places both familiar and unknown. We are extremely proud to be longtime supporters of this company and sponsors of this production. We hope you enjoy it!

Marcy and Richard Schwartz

We are delighted to sponsor *The Magic Play*. Not only are we lovers of card trick mastery, but we think Portland Center Stage at The Armory has exemplified the magic of theater for over 30 years. Enjoy the show!

LEAD CORPORATE CHAMPION

Umpqua Bank

Actors take chances. Sometimes they work. Sometimes they don't. But none of these actors would be on stage tonight without taking chances. It's part of growth, and we're all made to grow. That's why we're such a proud supporter of Portland Center Stage. Let this performance inspire you to take the chances that power your own growth.