



Book by John Fenn

Music and Lyrics by Drew Jansen

Directed by Ron Peluso

Musical Direction by David Lohman

Choreography by Tiniá Moulder

Nov 19-Dec 18, 2022

history theatre

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RAW STAGES NEW WORKS FESTIVAL

Jan 18-22
4 STAGED READINGS
OF WORKS IN PROGRESS

Jan 18, 7:30pm

THE KIM LOO SISTERS

A musical by Jessica Huang
Music by Jacinth Greywoode
Directed by Lily Tung Crystal. Musical direction by Jason Hansen
In collaboration with Theater Mu

Jan 19, 7:30pm

THE BOY WONDER: STASSEN MUSICAL

Book, music and lyrics by Keith Hovis
Directed by Laura Leffler. Musical direction by Amanda Weiss

Jan 21, 2pm

THE BETTY CROCKER MUSICAL

Book and lyrics by Cristina Luzarraga
Music and lyrics by Denise Prosek
Musical direction by Sonja Thompson

Jan 22, 2pm

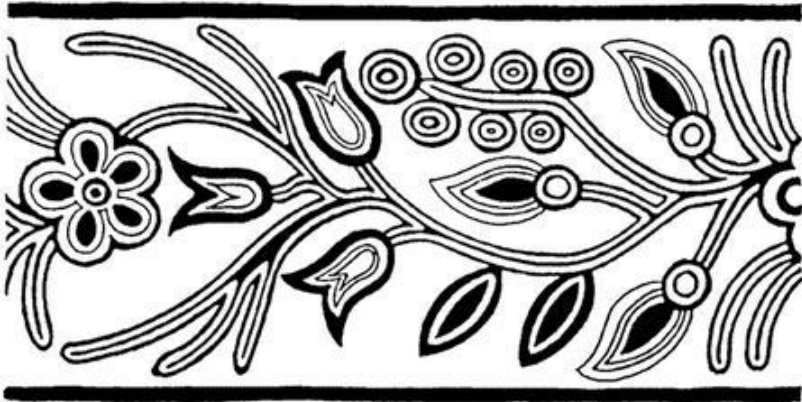
THE JAMES MEREDITH PROJECT

by Harrison David Rivers
Directed by JuCoby Johnson
All readings subject to change.

\$30 ALL ACCESS PASS
(\$15 PREMIUM SUBSCRIBERS)

\$15 SINGLE READING

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Land Acknowledgment

History Theatre sits on the ancestral, traditional and contemporary land of the Dakota people, for whom the land holds historical, spiritual, and political significance. We recognize and honor the Dakota people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land itself, and all the sovereign Native nations in Minnesota and beyond. We recognize that this acknowledgement itself is not enough, and only serves as a first step towards decolonization.



FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

It was back in 1988 when I first directed a show at, what was then, The Great American History Theatre! I had just finished my first summer stock season in Albert Lea and an actor from that season begged me to come and see her in a new play at GAHT. It was the first show that HT would do in our current home, having spent the early years in the Landmark Theatre in downtown St. Paul. This new home, formerly the Chimera Theatre, had just been given a facelift and the play was an Irish drama titled *Entertaining Strangers*.

At intermission, I bumped into a staff member who knew me from my graduate work at the U of M, and he told me, “We’ve lost our director for *A Servants’ Christmas*, and would you like to meet Lynn (Artistic Director, Lynn Lohr) after the show to talk about directing?”

“Well, yeah!”

After the show, I chatted with Lynn in the lobby, and she hired me right then there! The show turned out to be great fun! The cast was already set in place, as were the designers - and all I had to do was show up and not mess up! Tinia Moulder, tonight’s choreographer, was cast as Monica “The Second Girl.” She had just finished doing *The Glass Menagerie* for me in Albert Lea. This past summer, I found out that she had recommended me for this directing job!!!
THANK YOU, TINIA!

Eight years later in the spring of ‘95, I would become HT’s Artistic Director and I’ve be in this job for the last 27 years...and loving it.

John Fenn’s play *A Servants’ Christmas* had been staged 16 times at History Theatre since its premiere in 1980 and produced nearly 50 times nationwide. In the early 2000s, I asked John if he’d be interested in creating a musical version of the play with composer Drew Jansen, who had recently created HT’s *The Gangster Musical* with David Hawley. John ‘leaped’ at the idea and in 2004, we premiered a new holiday musical by the same name.

A story of love, loss and acceptance.

In a time when antisemitism is on the rise, *SERVANTS’* reminds us to look beyond

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR *continued*, page 6



FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

I'm so glad you're sharing your holiday season with us!

A Servants' Christmas is not only a moving story of love, acceptance and understanding, but this production serves as a reunion for many of the wonderful cast and crew members who have worked with Artistic Director Ron Peluso over the past two decades. Thinking about Ron's approaching retirement, it's hard to capture his true legacy at the Theatre. While developing and producing "real stories about real people" is baked into the mission of History Theatre, Peluso's personal commitment to theatre as a vehicle for social justice, peace, and representation has had a tremendous impact on audiences and artists over his term as artistic director. There are impressive statistics for sure with over 95 new plays and musicals have been commissioned and produced under Ron's leadership. This is a remarkable number in any state's theater landscape! (To learn more about Ron's legacy as Artistic Director of History Theatre, please turn to page 13).

On a personal note, it's been a wonderful 12-year professional partnership working with Ron as we've seen the theatre steadily grow, allowing for increased opportunities to share captivating and important stories told by some of the state's most accomplished theater artists!

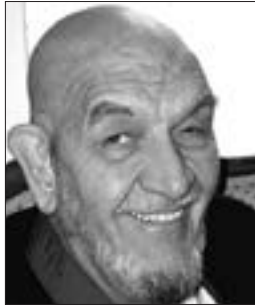
To honor Ron's 27 years of leadership and help ensure the future health of theatre, please consider a donation to the newly established Ron Peluso Artistic Futures Fund. This legacy fund shines a light on Ron's commitment to theater artists and is an ongoing investment in professional

MANAGING DIRECTOR *continued, page 6*

Honor Ron's 27 years of leadership.
To support the Ron Peluso Artistic Futures Fund, visit <https://bit.ly/ronfund22> or call Doug Tiede at 651-292-4327.

Thank you for your support!





FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

A scant 19 years ago, Ron Peluso, with his characteristic genius, had the idea of creating a musical of A SERVANTS' CHRISTMAS. We had meetings with Drew Jansen who agreed to come on board, writing music and lyrics. I think Drew first began with the song "Stereopticon", during which entered a new character, but any more of this and I will have to issue a spoiler alert!

So, on we went, creating under Ron's gentle, but masterful hand, two productions and now the third of A SERVANTS' CHRISTMAS - A Holiday Musical. And what fun it has been!

Thanks so much Ron, for helping Drew and I so much, and certainly Drew for giving us such a beautiful score.

John Fenn

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, *from page 4*

our differences to accept one another for who we are. It's an entertaining and healing tonic for the holiday season.

A special thanks to Janet Hall, who stage managed the original play in 1980 and who has come out of retirement to SM this musical. Also, a 'thanks' to Jan Puffer and the many, many theater artists who worked to shape this beautiful piece since its beginning so long ago!

Have a wonderful holiday season!

Ron

MANAGING DIRECTOR, *from page 5*

opportunities for individual theater artists. These funds will support playwright commissions, as well as the salaries of actors, musicians, designers, directors, choreographers, and other production staff for the mainstage shows going forward.

Any gift, small or large, will help us reach our goal is to raise \$50,000 by December 31! Thank you for joining us at today's performance and all my best to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season.

See you in the New Year!

Karen Mueller



FROM THE COMPOSER

I am mightily grateful to Ron Peluso for inviting me to take what was already a beautifully burnished jewel and adorn it with song. That you chose this particular show as part of your final season at History Theatre is a supreme compliment.

To the cast and crew: I love that this show at History Theatre has so much... uh...history! Each and every one of you honors me with your performance.

I'd be remiss were I to omit acknowledging my dear husband Jimmy. 35 years of supporting and encouraging each other helps things like "A Servants' Christmas" happen.

But above all else, I want each of you reading these words to know how magical it was to create this show with the sweetest, most whimsical and free-spirited soul to have ever trod the sod.

John Fenn, you brilliant, magnificent, big-eared exuberant!

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And thank you, dear audience, for supporting live theater.

Drew Jansen

SPECIAL THANKS

Scene design by Rick Polenek is based on a design concept by Erik Paulson, who designed the original musical version of *A Servants' Christmas*.



FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Many years ago, as a young actor, I was cast in John Fenn's *A Servants' Christmas*, first as the teenager Anne and then a few years later as Monica, the "second girl." Each character gave me a completely different window into the story being told. And now, oh so many years later, this beautiful play has evolved into a musical and is even more deeply realized by the addition of Drew Jansen's lovely score and lyrics. With this production, I get to explore the piece as choreographer.

A Servants' Christmas is certainly not a big "dance" show, but there is a lot of movement in the storytelling and it's a fun challenge to figure out just what is needed. Collaborating with Ron Peluso, Music Director David Lohman, and this truly talented cast has been a joy. Knowing that everything I do will be further enhanced by the work of our incredible team of designers, stage management and crew is pretty darn inspiring.

As I sit in the rehearsal room for *A Servants' Christmas*, I can't help but remember it was in this very room when I first met Ron. Fresh out of college, I took a musical theatre class he was teaching. (I still remember things I learned in that class.) Our paths crossed again a few years later when he cast me in a summer stock production in Albert Lea, and soon after that, he came on board at History Theatre to direct the 1988 production of *A Servants' Christmas*, the year I played Monica. Since then, we have come together many times in this same rehearsal room. There have been numerous auditions, workshops of new plays, rehearsals with me as an actor, and in more recent years, the chance to collaborate with Ron as his choreographer. I am grateful for each and every one of these opportunities as they have all shaped me into the artist I am today. But it is *A Servants' Christmas* that is truly a "full circle" moment for me.

I congratulate Ron on all his years as Artistic Director. I stand in awe of his skills in finding ways to bring together artists to create new works. I admire his keen ear and perspective when shaping a play from the ground up. I love hearing his ideas for staging a scene or song. I have learned so much watching him patiently and gently guide actors in the rehearsal process. What an honor to be here once again with Ron to tell the story of *A Servants' Christmas*.

Tinia Moulder



Book by John Fenn
 Music & Lyrics by Drew Jansen
 Directed by Ron Peluso
 Musical Direction by David Lohman
 Choreography by Tinia Moulder

TIME/PLACE

A home on Summit Avenue, St. Paul. December 1899.

THE CAST

Frieda the Cook..... Cathleen Fuller*
Eric the Butler Gary Briggles*
Mr. Warner Eric Morris*
Monica the 2nd Girl Serena Brook*
Angelina Warner Erin Capello Kopp
Miss Pettingill Jen Burleigh-Bentz*
Anne Warner Nicola Wahl
Richmond Warner Sullivan Cooper
The Visitor..... Norah Long*
Understudies..... Anika Bradshaw, Ford Bradshaw,
 Jen Burleigh-Bentz*, Julia Ennen, William Gilness*, Jen Maren*, Norah Long*

THE MUSICIANS

Music Director/Piano David Lohman
Clarinet..... Zeld Younger



National
 New Play
 Network



The SDC is a member of the
 MUSIC THEATRE PLAYERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
 SOCIETY, a national international labor union.

* denotes a Member of Actors' Equity Association
 ‡ denotes a Member of the Stage Directors and
 Choreographers Society, Inc.
 • denotes a Member of American Federation of
 Musicians Local #3073



Song List

ACT I

Overture	The Musicians
Double Up!	Eric, Frieda
Do I Dare Dream?	Monica
Stereopticon	Warner, Angelina
Prayer	Miss Pettingill
Better Than My Best	Richmond
It Simply Isn't Done	Miss Pettingill
Prayer (reprise).....	Warner, Miss Pettingill, Children
Better Than My Best	Eric, Frieda, Warner, Miss Pettingill, Children
Velvet Chair	Richmond, Angelina
Stereopticon (reprise)	Angelina
Monica's Wish	Monica

THERE WILL BE ONE 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION

ACT II

Entr'acte	The Musicians
'Twill Soon Be Christmas Day.....	Anne, Richmond, Frieda, Eric, Angelina
Double Up! (Reprise)	Eric, Frieda, Monica
Monica's Song	Monica
'Twill Soon Be Christmas Day (Reprise)	Anne, Richmond, Frieda, Eric
'Twill Soon Be Christmas Day (in German)	Frieda
I Know My Lines	Monica, Lillian
Where Did You Get That Hat?	Eric, Lillian
The Miracle of Light	Lillian
Chanukah Prayer (Traditional)	Monica
Finale	Angelina, Monica

Words and music for "Where Did You Get That Hat?" by James Rolmaz

German lyrics for "Twill Soon Be Christmas Day" by Lisel Mueller

ARTISTIC/PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Ron Peluso*†
Musical Director	David Lohman
Choreographer	Tinia Moulder*
Stage Manager	Janet Hall*
Assistant Stage Manager	Deirdre McQuillin
Assistant Director & Dramaturg	Jacob Hellman
COVID Safety Manager	Peter Simmons
Scenic Designer	Rick Polenek
Lighting Designer	Chris Johnson
Sound Designer	C Andrew Mayer
Costume Designer	E. Amy Hill
Properties Designer	Kirby Moore
Costume Assistant	Ingrid Maas
Artistic Director	Ron Peluso*†
Producing and Directing Associate	Richard D. Thompson
New Works Associate	Laura Leffler
Production Manager	Lee Johnson*
Technical Director	Gunther Gullickson
Master Electrician/ Sound Engineer	Nick Walberg
Light Board Programmer	Nick Fetting
Stage Electricians	Kurt Jung, Parker Love, Sasha Blinnikoa, Mike Lee
Master Carpenter	Zachary Morgan
Lead Carpenter	Brian Hesser
Scenic Artists	Dee Skogen, Erika Soukup
Open Captioner	Laura Wiebers
ASL Interpreter	Linda Gill, Nella Titus
Audio Describer	Connie Fullmer



* denotes a Member of Actors' Equity Association
 † denotes a Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Inc.
 • denotes a Member of American Federation of Musicians Local #3073



The *power* of a History Theatre moment

Ron's vision of telling real stories about real people

THE PATH TO LEADERSHIP

Ron Peluso had directed for Chimera Theatre in the Crawford Livingston Theatre in downtown Saint Paul's Science Museum before the Great American History Theatre moved into the space in 1988. In fact, his production of *Candide* was one of the final shows in Chimera's history. Newly appointed as the Artistic Director of Minnesota Festival Theatre, he made a point of seeing actors in shows around town. So when he came to see an actor perform in a History Theatre show that fall, he was in familiar territory. He knew the space intimately, but he had never met History Theatre founders Lynn Lohr and Lance Belville. At intermission, then History Theatre Business Manager Tom Berger asked him to stick around after the show to meet

Lynn and Lance. They had lost their director for their upcoming production of *A Servants' Christmas*, and they needed a replacement.

By the time the audience had cleared out of the lobby, Peluso had the job, his first official History Theatre show. Shortly after this successful first production, Lohr called Ron one Friday night to see if he would be interested in directing an upcoming production of *Mesabi Red*. And it was upcoming—fast. Rehearsals started the following Monday, and it didn't yet have a second act. Belville's script was literally half-baked. But this story of the Iron Range strike of 1916 intrigued Peluso, and (as he would do many times over his long career at History Theatre) he put his faith in the collaborative team, which included songwriters



"I've had the great joy and honor of deciding what plays get done, whose history gets acknowledged, and whose lives get honored in a very special way. It's been a great privilege."

- Ron Peluso

THE BROTHERHOOD



But from the beginning, **Ron trusted his writers and artists to deliver the goods, and they did.** He invested in local writers and local actors, which he still does to this day, and set his compass toward stories that mattered to the many communities that call Minnesota home.

Charlie Maguire and Jim Miller. The show went on to be the biggest hit in the theatre's history and was Ron's "first miracle." It would be several years before Ron took over as HT's Artistic Director, but directing *Mesabi Red* was a seminal experience for him as he experienced the power of a "History Theatre moment" during the run of that show. As Ron tells it, he was watching a performance from the house when a character in the play—a union striker—was killed off. A buzz of energy and recognition rippled down the row in front of him. Audience members whispered to each other, heads nodding, hands clasped. They had known this man; this was their story. Ron got chills. At that moment, he understood the power of telling real stories about real people, and his artistic vision for the future of History Theatre was born.

In 1988 when Peluso met Lohr and Belville, he had just taken over as Artistic Director of Minnesota Festival Theatre, a summer stock theatre in Albert Lea, MN. For eight years Ron did it all at MFT, right down to mopping the floors, while freelancing and directing opera around the county in the theatre's off-season. When Lynn and Lance retired from History Theatre in 1995, once again Ron came in to pinch hit as History Theatre's Interim AD. He was in final interviews for the official position when two

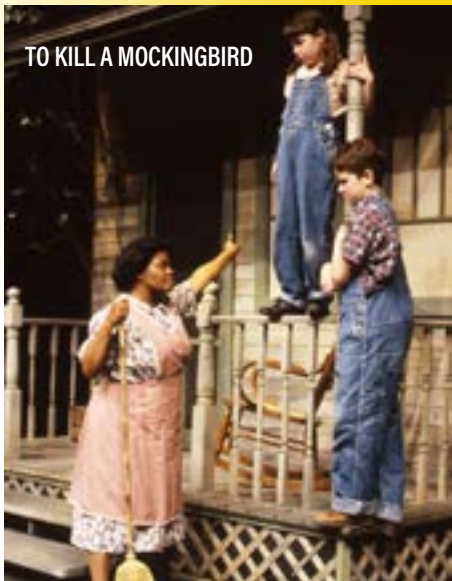
comedians known as *The D'Unbelievables* arrived from Ireland to perform a comedy show. When they arrived on the day of their first preview, Ron quickly helped them throw up some lights, and they went straight into a preview performance with no rehearsal. But with their thick Irish brogue, no one could understand a word. The audience walked out so fast that Ron wanted to put speed bumps in the aisles. The next morning, Ron broke the news that they had to rework it or he'd have to cancel the run, and they explained why they had been so indecipherable: they had performed the entire show in Gaelic. Belville had led them to believe that the large Irish population in St. Paul would hang on to every (Gaelic) word. Ron righted the ship, rehearsed them on stage, and when the English version opened the next night, it was hailed as "the best new play of the year." It turned out to be a huge hit and Ron's next miracle. He got the job.

THE EARLY YEARS

For his first season, he commissioned Syl Jones to write *The Brotherhood*, a story about Pullman porters, Beth Gilleland to write *Civil Ceremony*, a story of women who disguised themselves as men and joined the Union army during the Civil War, and *Inner City Opera*, a musical by J.D. Steele

Read the full story, view photos and more, visit <https://bit.ly/ronlegacy22>

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD



He instituted an education program with a yearly production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* that drew 15,000 students a year and helped bring the theatre out of debt, one \$5 ticket at a time.

These early days required big swings, and Peluso leaned into taking artistic risks.

based on stories collected from young people in the community. He instituted an education program with a yearly production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* that drew 15,000 students a year and helped bring the theatre out of debt, one \$5 ticket at a time. These early days required big swings, and Peluso leaned into taking artistic risks. He recalls the final scene of *The Brotherhood* (directed by the current Producing/Directing Associate Richard D. Thompson) being handed to the actors on opening night with little time to rehearse. But from the beginning, Ron trusted his writers and artists to deliver the goods, and they did. He invested in local writers and local actors, which he still does to this day, and set his compass toward stories that mattered to the many communities that call Minnesota home. He had always admired how Don Stoltz addressed the audience in a curtain speech every night at the Old Log Theatre, and he made a commitment to do the same. From the stage, he told audiences night after night that this was their theatre, telling their history, and that his door was open if someone wanted to share something they felt should make it to the stage.

OPEN DOORS, OPEN HEARTS

The very next Monday after one such curtain speech in his first season as AD, Ron got a knock on his door. It was three women from The Arc holding boxes of photos and information about life at the Faribault

State Hospital, where Minnesotans with intellectual disabilities, mental illness, and young pregnant teens were institutionalized, many of whom died. They brought out photos of children hiding in corners and a picture of a gravestone marked only by the number "415", asking, "What is the story behind this number and what does it represent?" Playwright Bob Beverage took on the project, and History Theatre collaborated with Jeanne Calvit, Artistic Director of Interact Theater to create *Let Heaven and Nature Sing*, a story of people who lived in the state hospital, performed by a cast that included both HT and Interact performers. Following the production, Peluso and the late Rick Cardenas, Co-Director of Advocating Change Together successfully lobbied for the "Remembering with Dignity" project, legislation that funded an initiative to locate and provide markers with names for the estimated 13,000 patients who died while living in state institutions and were buried in anonymous, numbered graves. This early experience cemented Ron's commitment to not only learning from our history but using that new understanding of our shared history to shape the future for Minnesotans beyond the walls of the theatre.

DEVELOPING STORIES, DEVELOPING A LEGACY

These core values, which took root in Ron's early days, grew into a solid foundation that has anchored Ron's stewardship of History Theatre over his twenty-

LET HEAVEN AND NATURE SING



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seven-year tenure as Artistic Director. Drawn to stories of immigration, labor, and social justice, he found no shortage of subjects from influential Minnesotans such as labor and peace activists Mary Pat Laffey (*Stewardess* by Kira Obolensky, 2019), Nellie Stone Johnson (*Nellie* by Kim Hines, 2012), and the McDonald sisters (*Sisters of Peace* by Doris Baizley, 2019), politicians such as Hubert Humphrey (*Favorite Son: The Humphrey Perspectives* by Jeffrey Hatcher, David Hawley, Kim Hines, and John Olive, 1995) and Paul Wellstone (*Wellstone!* by Mark Rosenwinkel with music by Larry Long, 2007), artists such as Bobby Vee (*Teen Idol: The Bobby Vee Story* by Bob Beverage, musical arrangements by George Mauer) and Tyrone Guthrie (*Tyrone & Ralph* by Jeffrey Hatcher, 2008), and pioneers such as Susan Kimberly (*Superman Becomes Lois Lane* by Susan Kimberly, 2020). He has commissioned work that captures the unique stories of Minnesotans across a wide spectrum of experiences, such as the first Chinese woman to immigrate to Minnesota (*100 Men's Wife* by Jeany Park, 2006), and a young Somali man's journey to find himself in America (*A Crack in the Sky* by Harrison David Rivers and Ahmed

Ismail Yusuf, 2017), stories of events that changed the course of a community, such as the destruction of Rondo by the construction of I-94 (*The Highwaymen* by Josh Wilder, 2017) and the raging fire of 1910 that devastated the town of Hinkley (*FireBall* by Roger Nieboer in collaboration with Joe Chvala and Peter Ostroushko, 2005), and stories that changed the world, like the Betty Pack WWII spy musical (*Dirty Business* by Laurie Flanigan Hegge with music by Robert Elhai, 2019). And then there's the monster hit, which Ron directed, based on the infamous murders at Duluth's Glensheen mansion, Jeff Hatcher and Chan Poling's musical *Glensheen* (2015), named the "The Play of the Decade" by the *Star Tribune* as the calendar turned into 2020. The list of titles in the HT canon of new work goes on and on.

While the national theatre community collectively lamented the inequities of the field regarding the number of plays being produced by women and writers of color, Ron continued going about the business of commissioning work from traditionally underrepresented writers, which he had done since the beginning. As the list of commissions grew, so did the new work development process. In 2003,

SISTERS OF PEACE

Teen Idol

The BOBBY VEE Story

SWEET LAND

the musical

SUPERMAN BECOMES LOIS LANE



Glensheen

The Highwaymen



The amount of new work he has commissioned over his 27-year tenure is stunning: 96 new plays and musicals, with 103 commissions to date from emerging to award-winning, nationally-known playwrights and composers, with a focus on local writers.

Ron initiated the Raw Stages Festival, a workshop/reading series of works-in-progress which takes place every January. Authors headed for production receive additional support with a Next Stage workshop. And every year, new projects enter the pipeline, many of which come through that same open door that brought Ron *Let Heaven and Nature Sing*. Ron's commitment to work- and artists-in-progress was never so evident as in the rescheduling of work put on hold due to the pandemic.

Peluso's impact on the ecosystem of new work development in the Twin Cities and beyond cannot be underestimated, and yet, in this realm, Ron has largely flown under the radar. He has quietly and steadily nurtured playwrights over whole careers, shepherding their work to the stage while encouraging a search for humanity, heart, and joy inside stories that sometimes ache with discomfort and trouble. His respect for artists is evident in his long-standing relationships with artists across the spectrum who come back to History Theatre to work time and time again. His deft hand as a director is visible on the History Theatre's stage, which was designed by Ralph Rapson prior to his Guthrie Theatre design. And Peluso is an actors' director, empowering his artists to make bold

choices, nurturing young artists, and encouraging collaboration while personally shaping the work on the HT's intimate thrust.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As Lance Belville tossed the keys to Ron Peluso in 1995, he quipped, "Good luck, I've used up all the good stories." 100-plus new plays later, Ron feels History Theatre has barely scratched the surface, and can't wait to see what stories his successor commissions. "I've had the great joy and honor of deciding what plays get done, whose history gets acknowledged, and whose lives get honored in a very special way," Peluso says. "It's been a great privilege. I grew up a Baby Boomer, and my perspective on history was through the eyes of working-class people, Vietnam, the civil rights era... like our founders' perspective, labor, immigration and social justice were at the heart of it all, and so History Theatre was a great fit for me. Whoever takes over will have a different perspective on history. A new generation will come forward to tell their stories, and I think that's important."

And that sums up Ron Peluso. Even as he plans his exit, he's leaving the door open for the next generation. We will miss you, Ron.

The Cast



GARY BRIGGLE* (he/him)

Eric the Butler

Gary has had a distinguished career as a singer-actor/director for over 45 years. He made his History Theatre debut in *Baby Case* and has also appeared in *Lord Gordon Gordon*, *Dirty Business* and every iteration of the cult hit *Glensheen*. "Heartfelt thanks, Ron, and Congratulations!" Gary recently served as interim artistic director of Skylark Opera Theatre and directed SCVO's *Figaro for Kids* and *The Pirates of Penzance* for GSVLOC. Upcoming: *Another G&S*, *The Sorcerer*, in March.



SERENA BROOK* (she/her)

Monica the 2nd Girl

History Theatre debut! Off-Broadway: *Dear Edwina*, National Tour: *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Serena spent three years acting and announcing on the national radio programs, *Live from Here* and *A Prairie Home Companion*. Guthrie Theater: *A Christmas Carol* (Kitty/Daisy Fezziwig); Chanhassen Dinner Theatres: *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tzeitel), *Grease*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Sister Act*, *Disney's Mary Poppins*. Other: Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Theatre Elision, New London Barn Playhouse, 24-Hour Plays, Shadowland Theatre, Cape Rep Theatre. Serena's voice can also be heard on regional and national commercials. www.serenabrook.com



JEN BURLEIGH-BENTZ* (she/her)

Miss Pettingill

Jen is once again happier than a clam to be back at History Theatre for the holidays! History Theatre: *Christmas of Swing* (Laverne Andrews), *Hormel Girls*, *Working Boys Band*, *Sisters of Swing*, *Beyond the Rainbow* and upcoming

next spring in *The Defeat of Jesse James*. Jen has felt blessed to be a part of the History Theatre family, and gives great kudos (and her bio) to Ron Peluso for being the Heart and the Head of the Household of History Theatre for the past 27 years. Ron, we will miss you greatly, but audiences and actors will be reaping the benefit of your work for many years to come. Thank you. Thank you, THANK you. jenburleighbentz.com



SULLIVAN COOPER (they/them)

Richmond Warner

Sully is so excited to make their debut at History Theatre! A 7th grader at Anthony Middle School, Sully was recently in the school production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Sully loves to sing in the choir and shows their Tibetan

Terriers in dog shows. They are grateful for the never-ending love and support from family and friends.



CATHEEN FULLER* (she/her)

Freida the Cook

Cathleen has been a professional actor in the Twin Cities since 1976. She has performed major roles at The Jungle Theater, Park Square Theatre, History Theatre, Pillsbury House Theater, Children's Theater Company, Theatre Exchange, The Old Log, Chanhassen

Dinner Theaters, The Minnesota Opera in addition to working outside of the Twin Cities area at Florida Stage Company and Riverside Theater in Vero Beach. Other credits: understudying major roles at The Guthrie Theater. Favorite roles include playing Anne Hathaway in Shakespeare's *Will*, Ann Landers in *The Lady With All the Answers*, Gertrude in *Hamlet*, and the Hannah Pitt track in *Angels in American Parts I and II*.



ERIN CAPELLO KOPP (she/her)

Angelina Warner

Erin is honored to be returning to History Theatre and to *A Servants' Christmas*, two decades later. Other History Theatre credits *The Christmas Schooner* (2001, 2002). She is a Twin Cities-based actor and singer who has worked at Stages Theater, The Minnesota Opera, Chanhassen Dinner Theater, Gilbert and Sullivan Very Light Opera Company, Cardinal Theatricals and Theater Latte Da and other local concerts and venues. She would like to thank her husband Shaun and their three children for their support and love.



NORAH LONG* (she/her)

The Visitor

Norah is a History Theatre veteran and has amassed a long roster of leading roles locally and regionally with companies including the Guthrie, Ordway, Chanhassen, Jungle, Illusion, Latte Da, Old Log, Nautilus, Children's, Penumbra, Ten Thousand Things,

Jeune Lune, Tiger Lion, Yellowtree, Skylark Opera, AOT, Prime, Paper Mill, Arvada Center, ArtsGarage, Riverside, and Florida Stage Theaters. As a concert soloist, Norah's credits span the U.S., Europe, Asia, and Latin America, including world premieres with MN Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Cuba's National Symphony. Norah is an Adjunct Professor at North Central University's College of Fine Arts. www.norahlong.com



ERIC MORRIS* (he/him)

Mr. Warner

Eric is thrilled to return to History Theatre and to be honoring the incredible legacy of Ron Peluso with this production. Past History Theatre credits include *Runestone: A Rock Musical!*, *Teen Idol: The Bobby Vee Story*,

Lord Gordon Gordon, and *Tales Along the Minnesota Trail and Buddy! The Buddy Holly Story*. Select Twin Cities credits: *Guys & Dolls* (Guthrie Theater), *The Bridges of Madison County* (Artistry Theater), and *Assassins* (Theatre Latte Da). Regional collaborators: The Barn Theatre *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Adam Pontipee), Dayton Opera, Beef & Boards, Gallery Players, and the Heritage Theatre Festival. As a director, his favorites include productions *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Ghost*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, and *SpongeBob SquarePants: The Broadway Musical*. Eric has a BFA in Musical Theatre from Ithaca College.



NICOLA WAHL (she/her)

Anne Warner

Nicola is delighted to return to History Theatre! Her previous credits include *Beyond The Rainbow* (History Theatre), *Annie* (Children's Theatre Company), *Matilda* (Children's Theatre Company), *Bye Bye Birdie* (Lundstrum Performing

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Arts), *Chicago* (Stagedoor Manor), *Almost Maine* (Stagedoor Manor). She has also performed with Youth Performance Company and Shakespearean Youth Theatre. Nicola has trained with Children's Theatre Company: Theater Arts Training and Broadway Artists Alliance. She is in the musical theater track at Saint Paul Conservatory For Performing Artists.

Understudies



JULIA ENNEN (she/her)

Julia is thrilled to be back at History Theatre this season! She is a Twin Cities-based actor and voice teacher. NYC: *Ciao Bambino*; History Theatre: *Christmas of Swing*; Lakeshore Players Theatre: *Singin' in the Rain*; Stages Theatre Company: *Tuck Everlasting*

(TYA); OBMT: *Spelling Bee*; Chameleon Theatre Circle: *Side Show*, *Catch Me If You Can*; NYU: *The King and I*; University of Minnesota: *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She holds a BA in Music from the University of Minnesota and an MM in Music Theatre and Adv. Certificate in Vocal Pedagogy from New York University. Endless thanks to Ron, my family, and dear friends for their unwavering love. For Ted. www.juliaennen.com.



WILLIAM GILNESS* (he/him)

Bill is happy to be back at History Theatre. He has previously been seen in *The Christmas Schooner* (Capt. Peter Stossel, 2001, 2010), *Dirty Business* (William Stephenson) and *A Servants' Christmas* (Mr. Warner, 2008). Bill has also appeared at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, Ordway Center, Children's

Theater Company, Theater Latté Da, Nautilus Music Theater, Artistry, Mixed Blood, Theater Mu, Park Square, and Minnesota Opera. Favorite roles include: Javert (*Les Miserables*), The Phantom (*Phantom*), and El Gallo (*The Fantasticks*). Training: St. John's University, MacPhail Center for Music, Michael Howard Studios (NYC), Guthrie, and the Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute.



JEN MAREN* (she/her)

Representative theater credits include History Theatre (*Glensheen*, *Lord Gordon Gordon*, *Solo Show: Live From New York, He's a Prom Date!*); Guthrie Theater (*The Sunshine Boys*); Penumbra Theatre (*The Wedding Band*); Mixed Blood (*Love Person*); Old Log Theater (*Dixie Swim Club*, *Leaving Iowa*); Illusion Theater (*My Antonia*); Park Square Theatre (*Rock-n-Roll*, *Panic*, *33 Variations*); Children's Theater Company (*Jackie and Me*); NorShor Theatre (*Don't Dress for Dinner*). Other credits: Founding member of Theatre Unmasked; Looney Lutheran company member; Science Live Theater member; Audible Audiobook narrator. Training: St. Olaf College B.A. Theater Arts; British American Drama Academy, Oxford, England. www.jenmaren.com

**Jen would like to thank Ron Peluso for his constant support and championship over her career. He has helped her create an active and varied career in theater. He has given much to History Theatre. She wishes him well in retirement and offers profuse thanks! **

The Musicians



DAVID LOHMAN (he/him)

Music Director/Piano

David is delighted to continue his long relationship with History Theatre. In recent years, he served as music director and arranger for *Beyond the Rainbow* and *Christmas of Swing*, music director for *Glensheen*, and played Tom in *Coco's Diary*. He spent 3½ years as associate conductor of the national tour of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Shows at the Ordway include *West Side Story*, *White Christmas*, and *Anything Goes*. He was arranger, pianist, and singer for *Yesterday Once More: Music of the Carpenters*, a pops concert performed with orchestras around the country, including Dallas, St. Louis, and Minnesota. A published hymn writer, he serves as music director of St. Luke Presbyterian in Minnetonka. DavidLohmanMusic.com



ZELDA YOUNGER (she/her)

Clarinet

Zelda is a woodwinds player based in Minneapolis. She specializes in playing clarinets, saxophones, flutes, oboe/English Horn, and bassoon. Her experience includes extensive musical theater work, chamber music,

improvisation, and involvement with several bands of various styles. She is currently a touring member of the Invincible Czars, an Austin-based band focused on composing and performing original live music to accompany silent horror films.

The Creative Team

JOHN FENN* (he/him)

Playwright

This is the 50th production of *A Servants' Christmas*. There have been over 800 performances spanning four states. Now I realize more than ever the joy of working in a collaborative art. I delight in new lines, bits of business etc. that have enriched the play and musical version as suggestions from all the artists and audiences. As I watch the show, often the source artist who bought some line change, bit of business flashes through my mind. I wish to thank all who have so enriched *A Servants' Christmas*.

DREW JANSEN (he/him)

Composer, Lyricist

Drew is in the midst of a multi-faceted career as a composer/lyricist, pianist, vocalist, voice-over artist, comedy writer and actor. In addition to penning the scores for History Theatre's *A Servants' Christmas* and *Capital Crimes*, Jansen

PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES, PAGERS & DIGITAL NOISEMAKERS.

NO CAMERAS OR RECORDING DEVICES are permitted in the theatre.

created music and lyrics for audience favorites *How To Talk Minnesotan: The Musical* and *Church Basement Ladies*. Following a 26 year hiatus, he re-joined the creative team of the Peabody Award-winning "Mystery Science Theater 3000" for its newest season streaming at Gizmoplex.com. He's voiced countless commercial and industrial endeavors, and is busier than ever these days as an on-camera commercial actor and host. He enjoys touring as music director/pianist/vocalist with *Close To You: The Music Of The Carpenters*, in February, he portrayed Fredrik in *A Little Night Music* at Argenta Community Theater, and more recently appeared as Boolie in ACT's *Driving Miss Daisy*. Drew and his husband, legendary Twin Cities entertainer Jimmy Martin, now reside in Drew's hometown, Little Rock, Arkansas. They no longer own a snowblower.

RON PELUSO*‡ (he/him)

Artistic Director/Director

Ron's longstanding commitment to bringing a variety stories to the History Theatre stage have included labor activists Mary Pat Laffey (*Stewardess!*, 2019), Nellie Stone Johnson (*Nellie*, 2012), and peace activists the McDonald sisters (*Sisters of Peace*, 2019), politicians such as Hubert Humphrey (*Favorite Son*, 1995) and Paul Wellstone (*Wellstone!*, 2007), pioneers such as Susan Kimberly (*Superman Becomes Lois Lane*, 2020), and artists such as Gordon Parks (*PARKS*, 2022), Bobby Vee (*Teen Idol: The Bobby Vee Story*, 2016) and Tyrone Guthrie (*Tyrone & Ralph*, 2008). He has commissioned work that captures and shares personal and unique stories of Minnesotans, such as the first Chinese woman to immigrate to Minnesota (*100 Men's Wife*, 2006), a young Somali man's journey to find himself in America (*A Crack in the Sky*, 2017), or that of a young woman's life negotiating between her Indian Muslim heritage and her American Christian surroundings (*American as Curry Pie*, 2011). There've been stories of events that changed the course of a community, such as the destruction of Rondo by the construction of I-94 (*The Highwaymen*, 2017), a legacy of redlining (*Not for Sale*, 2022) and the raging fire of 1894 that devastated the town of Hinckley (*FireBall*, 2005), and of communities of the invisible among us (*Let Heaven and Nature Sing*, 1996, a collaboration with Interact Theatre).

JACOB HELLMAN (he/him)

Assistant Director/Dramaturg

Jacob is a dramaturg, theatre researcher/scholar, translator, professor, and occasional playwright and actor originally from Baltimore, Maryland. He has been a dramaturg since 2010 for productions in Wisconsin, Texas, Maryland, and Israel. Favorite projects include *13 (CST, Jerusalem, Israel)*; *Young Frankenstein* (Island ETC, Galveston, TX); and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Baytown Little Theatre, Baytown, TX). He also translated and directed the English-language world premiere of Hillel Mittelpunkt's *Gorodish* in Madison, WI, in 2019. Currently, he teaches in the Department of English, Philosophy, and Communication Studies at UW-Stout in Menomonie, WI, as well as in the Department of English at Augsburg University in Minneapolis.

TINIA MOULDER* (she/her)

Choreographer

Tinia is a professional actor, singer, dancer, choreographer and director. She is delighted to be on board, alongside Ron Peluso and this wonderful team, discovering the movement for *A Servant's Christmas*. Choreography credits: History Theatre (*Glensheen*, *Dirty Business*, *20 Days to Find A Wife*) Concordia University, Anoka Ramsey Community College, and numerous area schools. Her extensive acting credits include: Chanhassen Theatres, The Guthrie, History Theatre (*Sweet Land*, *Hormel Girls*, *Let Heaven and Nature Sing*, *The*

Gangster Musical), Ordway Center, Old Log, Mixed Blood, and Six Points Theater. She is also a teaching artist who loves working with students and holds a BFA in Musical Theater from Point Park University.

JANET HALL* (she/her)

Stage Manager

Janet is thrilled to be stage managing *A Servant's Christmas*. Her first stage managing job was the world premiere production of *A Servant's Christmas* (the play) in the late '70s at the Landmark Center. In addition to being History Theatre production manager for 17 years, she also worked at Actors Theatre and Chanhassen Dinner Theatres.

DEIRDRE MCQUILLIN (they/them)

Assistant Stage Manager

Deirdre has been involved with History Theatre since the 2015-2016 season and is thrilled to be joining the team of *A Servant's Christmas*. They have taken on a variety of roles including spotlight operator and scenic carpenter, and most notably, their repeat role as assistant stage manager for *Glensheen* (appearing as the maid). They attended the now defunct McNally Smith College of Music for vocal performance and songwriting, and recently earned a diploma in cabinetmaking from St. Paul College. When they aren't working backstage at History Theatre they can be found working as a stage hand for music venues or a scenic carpenter for theatre venues in and around the twin cities. They continue to pursue music and woodworking in addition to their myriad of professional occupations.

LEE JOHNSON* (he/him)

Production Manager

History Theatre: *Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story*, *Parks*. The Duluth Playhouse: *Annie*. Artistry Theater: Over 20 productions including *The Bridges of Madison County*, *A New Brain*, *Victor/Victoria*, *She Loves Me*, *Legally Blonde*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Lyric Opera of the North: *Hansel & Gretel*. Other Twin Cities credits: Theater Latte Da, Park Square Theater, Mu Performing Arts, Flying Foot Forum, EMK, Twin Cities Horror Festival, MN Fringe Festival, and others. He was the Production Stage Manager with Artistry Theatre from 2017-20. B.A. in Theatre Arts, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

RICK POLENEK (he/him)

Scenic Designer

Rick returns to History Theatre having previously designed *Glensheen*, *Not For Sale*, *Not in Our Neighborhood*, *The Great Society*, *Dance 'Til You Drop*, *All the Way*, *Teen Idol*, *The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz*, *Working Boys Band*, *Watermelon Hill*, *God Girl*, *This Side of Paradise* and *Coco's Diary*. Rick has been active in the Twin Cities' theatre and design communities for over 50 years as a scenic and props designer, exhibition designer, commercial art director and college theatre faculty. His design portfolio includes Ordway Center, Park Square Theatre, Artistry, Theater Latte Da, Six Points Theater, Stage North, Yellow Tree Theatre, Sesame Street Live! and Normandale College Theatre.

KIRBY MOORE (he/him)

Properties Designer

Kirby's professional career spans 40 years of stage, film, and commercial production in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Prior design work at History Theatre includes *Teen Idol*, *Buddy Holly Story*, *Coco's*

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Diary, Courting Harry, Lombardi and Christmas of Swing. He's grateful to Circa 21' Dinner Playhouse, in Rock Island Ill., and to The Children's Theatre Company for their design internship programs which gave him his start in the professional arts.

CHRIS JOHNSON (she/her)

Lighting Designer

Chris has worked as a professional scenery and lighting designer for over 40 years in both Europe and the United States. She started her collaboration with History Theatre with *Down to Earth* in 1983. She has designed numerous shows since then including *Beyond the Rainbow, Mesabi Red, Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story*, and *Lombardi*. As always, she is honored to be working here at History Theatre and wishes to thank the entire staff for their support.

C ANDREW MAYER (he/him)

Sound Designer

C Andrew has designed sound and/or projections for over 75 shows at History Theatre. Previously he designed *Not For Sale, Not In Our Neighborhood, Beyond The Rainbow, Gloria: A Life, Dirty Business, Teen Idol: The Bobby Vee Story, All the Way, Watermelon Hill, Glensheen, Hiding in the Open, Tyrone and Ralph, A Piece of the Rope*, and *Hmong!* among others. He has worked with many fine theatres in the Twin Cities including the Minnesota Opera, the Guthrie, the Jungle, Pillsbury House, Park Square, and Mixed Blood, and elsewhere, including Opera Philadelphia, Arkansas Rep, Everyman Theatre in Baltimore and ACT in San Francisco. He won an Audelco Award for his design for *Pure Confidence* at 59E59 in NYC, and was a 2008-09 McKnight Theatre Artist Fellow.

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In the summer he serves as Producing Director of the Acadia Repertory Theatre on Mount Desert Island, Maine.

E. AMY HILL (she/her)

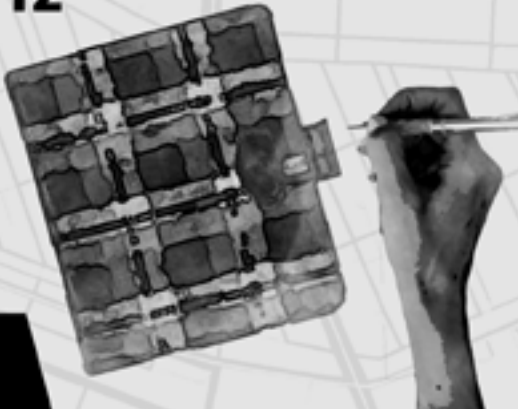
Costume Designer

Amy is delighted to be returning for her 10th season with History Theatre, having designed *Glensheen, Dirty Business, Beyond The Rainbow, All The Way, The Great Society, Watermelon Hill, Radio Man, Baby Case, Capitol Crimes, Tales Along the Minnesota Trail*. Her work has also been seen with Walking Shadow Theatre Company, Artistry, Sabes JCC, Britta Peterson, Dance. Amy is presently resident Costume Designer for Concerto Dance By Jolene Konkel. She wishes to express her heartfelt gratitude to Ron Peluso for enabling her to collaborate with him and countless artists in poignant storytelling.

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FROM THE EDUCATION MANAGER

Welcome to another gorgeous holiday season at History Theatre!

We're so happy you took the time to include us in your celebrations and observances. As the days grow shorter and colder, there is no better way to stay warm than to connect with each other through our cherished stories.

By sending our gifted Teaching Artists to organizations in the Twin Cities that are interested in sharing a piece of their history, the Education Department works to maintain that link throughout the year. We are going back to three separate groups this winter, each of which holds a special place in our hearts.

At Minnesota Independence College and Community, which assists students and those who are neurodivergent or on the autism spectrum, we are doing a residency. We have assembled a group of students and community members interested in theater and personal storytelling for the sixth year in a row to mentor them as they bring their stories to life. That incredible group will come together on our stage in December to present their work to a specially invited audience of friends and family, maybe disclosing aspects of themselves for the first time.

Our continuous collaboration with Vail Place, a group that assists persons with a mental health diagnosis, is also a part of this season. Since 2014, we have had the privilege of collaborating with this community to tell their story honestly to a wider audience. This courageous ensemble demonstrates the similarities and differences among us through songs, sceneries, humor, visual arts, and personal essays. Really important work.

Finally, we've just finished a Cabaret for Seniors session at Episcopal Homes. We put up a program of songs and monologues that have a direct connection to the lives of these endearing performers thanks to the hard work of our Teaching Artist team. We are very grateful for the chance to collaborate with them and support them as they bring their musical visions to life.

Please email the Education Department at pdecordova@historytheatre.com to learn more about what we do.

We are always excited to share the news about our work.

Enjoy the show!
Paul de Cordova



Vail Place

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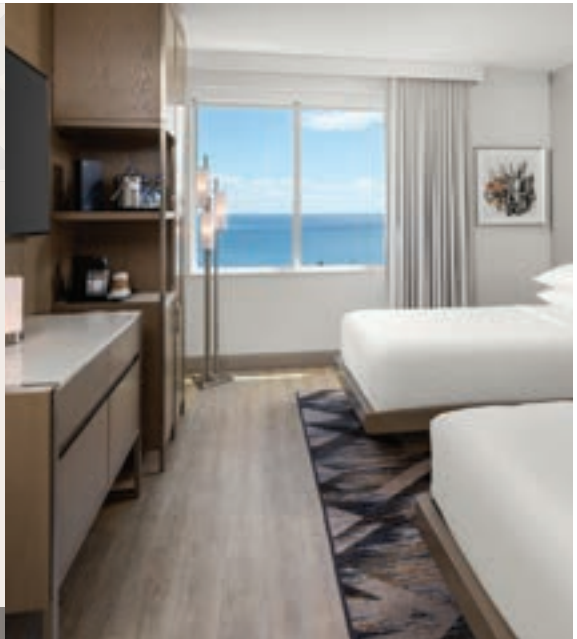
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