



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
Thursday, April 15, 2010

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*Syracuse University Department of Drama presents*

### ***I Love You Because*** **A Modern Day Musical Love Story**

Music by Joshua Salzman  
Book and lyrics by Ryan Cunningham  
Directed by Marie Kemp  
Musical Direction by Nathan Hurwitz  
Choreographed by David Lowenstein

**ARTHUR STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE**

**Opens: April 30 Closes: May 15**

(Syracuse, NY)—*I Love You Because*, Syracuse University Department of Drama's final production of the season, will open at Syracuse Stage's Arthur Storch Theatre on April 30 and run until May 15. A contemporary look at love and dating set in the Big Apple, the musical features a cast of six SU Drama students and is directed by Marie Kemp, an Assistant Professor in SU's Department of Drama.

Written by Joshua Salzman and Ryan Cunningham, *I Love You Because*, the pair's thesis musical in New York University's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, went on to open off-Broadway in 2006 to wide critical acclaim and earned its writers a Drama Desk nomination. It has since been produced in over 20 regional theatres in the US and abroad.

"I first listened to the show because one of our graduates, Colin Hanlon, starred in the original off-Broadway cast," Kemp said. Hanlon, who graduated from SU with a BFA in Musical Theatre in 2000 and was directed by Kemp as Billy Bigelow in SU Drama's production of *Carousel*, played the leading role of Austin in the 2006 premiere of *I Love You Because*.

"It is a very smartly written piece," Kemp continued. "It has surprises in both the music and script, which I really enjoy." Visually, Kemp wanted the play to resemble the romantic greeting cards Austin writes, so "the New York City skyline is highly emphasized."

"Stylistically, the show is a cross between 'Friends' and 'Cheers,'" Kemp said. "It has a contemporary sitcom style, but has heart, sincerity, and truth."

In addition to Kemp's direction, the play features musical direction by Nathan Hurwitz and choreography by David Lowenstein.

A modern retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with the genders reversed, *The New York Times* called *I Love You Because* "infectiously entertaining" and "filled with wit and zest."

## SYNOPSIS

Austin (Matthew Hazen McGuire), a greeting card writer, is distraught after finding his girlfriend in bed with another man, but his brother Jeff (Christian Leadley) is intent on forcing him back into the perplexing New York dating scene. Marcy (Angela Travins) has also recently gone through a bad break-up, and after taking advice from her good friend Diana (Hannah Corneau) she searches for the perfect rebound—a man who is wrong for her in every way. Jeff and Diana set up a double date via the online Jewish dating site J-Date (although none are Jewish), and the pairs explore the ins and outs, including the 'rules,' of dating and relationships in a current, urban setting. These four eventually learn to love not in spite of their differences, but because of them.

## CREATORS

Joshua Salzman (music) and Ryan Cunningham (book and lyrics) met at the NYU Tisch Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. Their thesis musical, *I Love You Because*, went on to be professionally produced off-Broadway, earned a Drama Desk nomination for the team, spawned a cast album on PS Classics, and garnered a licensing deal with Theatrical Rights Worldwide, resulting in productions both nationally and internationally.

They continue their collaboration with many projects; *Queen Esther*, a family musical comedy based on the story of Purim, commissioned by the Kaufman Center; *Next Thing You Know*, a new musical currently in development with director John Simpkins; and as contributing songwriters on the Disney Channel's *Johnny and the Sprites*. Their song "Just Not Now" from *I Love You Because* was featured on Lauren Kennedy's new solo album "Here and Now."

**Ryan Cunningham** (*Book and Lyrics*) A native of Needham, MA, Ryan holds a B.A. in Theatre and Graphic Design from the University of Notre Dame and an M.F.A. from NYU's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. At Notre Dame he wrote the book to *Chance At Love* with Composer/Lyricist Tommy Curtin, which toured nationally in the summer of 2001. With Composer Joshua Salzman he wrote the book and lyrics for the off-Broadway musical *I Love You Because*, for which he received a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Lyrics. Ryan is a junior copy writer at Serino Coyne, writing for such shows as *Spring Awakening*, *Legally Blonde*, *Spamalot*, *Grease* and many others. His copywriting has appeared in The New York Times, all major suburban papers in the New York area, tri-state area radio and television as well as outdoor campaigns in Times Square and the rest of Manhattan. Ryan is a contributing songwriter for the Disney Channel's *Johnny and the Sprites*, starring John Tartaglia, and his song "Just Not Now" is currently featured on Lauren Kennedy's solo album *Here and Now*. Ryan is a member of The Dramatists Guild and the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop.

**Joshua Salzman** (*Music*) recently received the ASCAP Foundation Frederick Loewe Award for musical theatre composition. His musical *Beowulf*, written with lyricist Ariel S. Winter, debuted as a concert reading in April 2001 on Princeton University's Stage. *I Love You Because*, written with Ryan Cunningham, was his graduate thesis musical at NYU. Joshua holds an MFA from Tisch's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program and music degrees in composition and music education from Muhlenberg and Moravian Colleges. He has served in the music departments of *Wicked* and *All Shook Up* as a music department production assistant, and is currently on faculty at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy as a musical director/pianist. Joshua is a composer in BMI's Musical Theatre Workshop.

## DIRECTION

**Marie Kemp** (*Director*) has been a professor in the Department of Drama since 1991 teaching classes in Musical Theatre and Acting. She is especially interested in new plays and has spearheaded the New Works program which workshops new plays and musicals with Drama Department students. Marie has performed and directed regionally and locally for over 20 years.

**Nathan Hurwitz** (*Musical Director & Synthesizer Programming*) joined the SU Drama Department faculty after a lengthy career as a conductor/arranger. With a BFA from NYU, an MA from Northwestern University and his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Hurwitz has studied acting with Stella Adler, directing with Jack Garfein, and conducting/orchestration with Lehman Engel. Broadway credits include: *Blood Brothers*, *Dream* and *Phantom of the Opera*. International productions include: *Phantom*, *West Side Story* and *The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, and national tours include: *Blood Brothers*, *Company*, *The Who's Tommy* and *Annie*. Regional work includes: The Williamstown Theatre Festival, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre and The Pittsburgh Public Theatre. For the SU Drama Department Nathan has musical directed: *Urinetown*, *Little Women*, *My One and Only*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Steel Pier* and *Oklahoma!* and has directed and musical directed *Lucky Stiff* and *The World Goes Round*. For Syracuse Stage Nathan has musical directed *A Christmas Carol* and *Menopause: The Musical* and appeared as the Rabbi in *Fiddler On The Roof*.

**David Lowenstein** (*Choreographer*) is happy to be back working at his alma mater. Most recently David directed last fall's production of *Oklahoma!* for the Drama Department. Other Drama Department credits include the choreography for *Lucky Stiff* and directing/choreographing the senior showcases for 2007, 2008, and 2009 with Steve Cross. David is Artist in Residence at Cazenovia College where he directed *Seussical*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Grease*, *The Laramie Project*, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*, and *The Sound of Music*. He is the co-creator/choreographer of *Shout!*, *The Mod Musical*, which ran in London, off-Broadway and currently plays on the Norwegian Cruise Lines and in regional theatres across the country. Off-Broadway, David's choreography has been featured in the Drama Desk award-winning *Howard Crabtree's Whoop-Dee-Doo!*, *On A Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *Anything Cole*, and *Sing for Your Supper*. Regionally David staged *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* at the Gateway Playhouse, *The Merchant of Venice* at Syracuse Stage, as well as numerous productions in summer stock. On television he staged Vanessa Williams' "Christmas Special" for ABC. As a performer he has been part of 7 original Broadway casts and several off-Broadway, national touring,

and regional productions. He has taught audition technique and theater dance for CAP 21/NYU and Le Moyne College. He graduated cum laude with a bachelor of fine arts degree in musical theater from Syracuse University.

## CAST

**Hannah Corneau** (*Diana*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Clifton Park, NY. **Gregory Dasonville** (*NYC Man*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from West Hartford, CT. **Christian Leadley** (*Jeff*) is a junior Musical Theater major from Rochester, NY. **Matthew Hazen McGuire** (*Austin*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Miami, FL. **Mia Michelle McClain** (*NYC Woman*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from New Orleans, LA. **Eric Meyers** (*Austin u/s, Male Swing*) is a sophomore Musical Theatre Major from Dayton, OH. **Dawn Rother** (*Female Swing, Dance Captain*) is a sophomore Musical Theatre major from Allentown, PA. **Sarah O'Connor** (*Marcy u/s*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Wayne, NJ. **Angela Travins** (*Marcy*) is a junior Musical Theatre major from San Francisco, CA.

## PRODUCTION

**Julia Correia** (*Set Designer*) is a senior scenic designer from Harrison, NJ. **Evan Gannon** (*Lighting Designer*) is a senior Lighting Design major from Northport, NY. **Mary Olin Geiger** (*Costume Designer*) is a junior Design/Tech major from Orlando, FL. **David Huber** (*Sound Designer*) is the Assistant Audio Engineer at Syracuse Stage.

**Daria Maidenbaum** (*Stage Manager*) is a senior Stage Management major with a concentration in Technical Direction from Merrick, NY.

**Brooke Feldman** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is a junior Stage Management major from Leonia, NJ. **Elizabeth Gleason** (*Assistant Lighting Designer*) is a sophomore Design major from Jordan, NY. **Danielle Hodgins** (*Assistant Set Designer*) is a junior transfer Design Tech major from Syracuse, NY. **Kate McCombs** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is a freshman Stage Management major from Simsbury, CT. **Devon Ritchie** (*Assistant Lighting Designer*) is a junior Theater Design and Technology major from Lynnfield, MA. **Ryan Shaules** (*Assistant Set Designer*) is a sophomore Set Design major from Homewood, IL. **Molly Weeden** (*Assistant Costume Designer*) is a freshman Design/Technical Theater major from Valley Falls, NY.

## TICKETS

Tickets for the Syracuse University Department of Drama's production of *I Love You Because* are \$18 for adults and \$16 for students and seniors. \$7 rush tickets are available at the door, one hour before curtain. Wednesday, May 5 is "Pay What You Can Night" for valid SU ID holders. For tickets and more information, contact the Department of Drama box office at 315-443-3275 or visit <http://vpa.syr.edu/drama>.

## VPA AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The SU Department of Drama is housed within the School of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA). VPA is committed to the education of cultural leaders who will engage and

inspire audiences through performance, visual art, design, scholarship and commentary. It provides the tools for self-discovery and risk-taking in an environment that thrives on critical thought and action.

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**Performances: April 30 - May 5**

April 30 - 8 p.m.  
May 1 - 8 p.m.  
May 2 - 2 p.m.  
May 5 - 8 p.m.  
May 6 - 8 p.m.  
May 7 - 8 p.m.  
May 8 - 2 p.m.  
May 8 - 8 p.m.  
May 9 - 2 p.m.  
May 12 - 8 p.m.  
May 13 - 8 p.m.  
May 14 - 8 p.m.  
May 15 - 8 p.m.

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