



THEATER MUSICALLY

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Thomasina Petrus, Ivory Doublette, & Lamar Jefferson (right) in *FIVE POINTS*, photo by Dan Norman; Steven Epp and Suzanne Warmanen (right) from the Zach Theatre production of *IMMORTAL LONGINGS*, photo by Kirk Tuck

**THEATER LATTÉ DA ANNOUNCES *NEXT UP*; THE ADVENTUROUS MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY SHIFTING FOCUS TO NEW WORK DEVELOPMENT UNTIL AUDIENCES AND ARTISTS CAN SAFELY GATHER**

The *NEXT UP* laboratory will include Terrence McNally's last play *IMMORTAL LONGINGS* and an exciting lineup of projects by playwright Harrison David Rivers, composer Ted Shen, musicians Kate Kilbane and Dan Moses of The Kilbanes, Jessie Austrian and Noah Brody of Fiasco Theater, Mexican playwright Joserra Zúñiga, scenic designer Kate Sutton-Johnson, local writer-performers Bradley Greenwald and Steven Epp, actress Sally Wingert, and hip hop theater artists The Q Brothers.

*(Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN)* In lieu of a season announcement, Theater Latté Da announces **NEXT UP**, an intensive laboratory investing in the future of new musical theater. New work has always been a part of the company's DNA. Over the past eight years the company has further prioritized the support of new musicals and plays with music through its NEXT program: including commissions, workshops, the NEXT Festival, and of course world premieres. It will spend the coming months supporting playwrights, composers and lyricists.

"Like my colleagues, I've been trying to determine a path forward until we can safely gather in theaters again," says Artistic Director Peter Rothstein. "For most of my life, the theater is where I have found meaning, support, and personal growth. Not having it at this most challenging time is brutal. While we may not be able to bring audiences into our theaters, we can certainly support our playwrights, our composers and our lyricists. The current reality will drastically reshape our thinking, our behavior and our relationships with each other and the planet. It will also reshape the stories we tell. We need our creative voices to help navigate, articulate and find meaning inside this new world."

Throughout its 23-year history, Theater Latté Da has produced 78 Mainstage productions, including 12 world premieres, and 13 area premieres. In 2015, the company launched NEXT 20/20, a commitment to develop 20 new musicals or plays with music over a five-year period culminating in 2020. Latté Da actually achieved that goal in 2019. The NEXT UP laboratory will be led by Artistic Director Peter Rothstein and Associate Artistic Director Elissa Adams. Rothstein's history of developing new musicals includes STEERAGE SONG, C., and the Drama Desk Award-winning ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914. Producer of the NEXT Festival and Associate Artistic Director Elissa Adams has an impressive 25-year history in new play development, with her work at the Children's Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Sundance and the Playwrights Center.

"I have faith that we will all come together, not online, not via Facebook or Snapchat, but in the same room at the same time to experience the power of communal storytelling. But in the meantime, Theater Latté Da will build those stories." Rothstein continues, "We believe we can safely implement processes to support the development of new work, in person when possible and virtually when not. We will be able to employ actors, musicians, stage managers, directors, music directors and choreographers in this process. The work of these artists came to a complete stop in mid-March, this will be a way to help support them and keep them practicing their craft. We will also look for every opportunity to safely

include audiences in this process and find creative ways of sharing the bold creativity happening in this seemingly quiet time.”

Theater Latté Da had several musicals, operas and plays with music already in development, but will add a robust list of projects throughout this time.

[Terrence McNally](#)'s last play was **IMMORTAL LONGINGS** about ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev and his love affair with dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. Peter Rothstein had been collaborating with Mr. McNally on the play for a year and a half before his death, and will continue to develop the play under directives set forth by Mr. McNally. Rothstein states, “It is a play about a passionate man confronting his mortality, about an artist grappling with legacy when his craft is temporal, about a gay man choosing love when the world was advising him against it.” Twin Cities-based choreographer Kelli Foster-Warder has and will continue to create dance for the play. On March 24, 2020, Mr. McNally died of complications from COVID-19.

Twin Cities based playwright [Harrison David Rivers](#) is exploring a new piece about the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 alongside the 1927 premiere of the Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein and Edna Ferber's musical, **SHOWBOAT**. SHOWBOAT is widely considered the first great American Musical, and featured the popular song “Old Man River”. The song was made famous by African American baritone, Paul Robeson, who initially declined to perform in the show. His refusal caused the show's creators to rethink their representation of African American characters and led to significant rewrites.

Mexico City-based playwright **Joserra Zúñiga**, along with Peter Rothstein and Twin-Cities-based designer, [Kate Sutton-Johnson](#), are collaborating on a musical and visual theatricalization of the life and work of Mexican artist **Frida Kahlo**. Due to a traffic accident as a teenager, Frida was permanently impaired and spent much of her life constrained to her family home and often restricted to her bed. Her art was in direct response to her distanced reality. This project marks the company's first international collaboration.

Twin Cities-based writer-performers [Bradley Greenwald](#) and [Steven Epp](#) are working on an English language adaptation of Giacomo Puccini's comic opera, [GIANNI SCHICCHI](#). GIANNI SCHICCHI is a one-act opera, the third and final part of Puccini's *Il Trittico*, based on an incident mentioned in Dante's *DIVINE*

COMEDY. The original Italian libretto by Giovacchino Forzano is a farce about greed and hypocrisy set in Florence in 1299. Greenwald and Epp are resetting the opera in modern day Miami.

[Peter Rothstein](#) and actress **Sally Wingert** will be working on **IN PAPER BOATS**, a play about Frances Cabrini, Patron Saint of Immigrants. Born two months premature in Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, Italy, in 1850, Cabrini tried to join a religious order at age 20, but was told she was too frail. She subsequently formed her own religious community and relocated to the United States in order to minister to the rapidly growing number of Italian immigrants. She crossed the Atlantic 23 times, and went on to found 67 hospitals, schools and orphanages.

Award-winning and internationally acclaimed theater artists, the [Q Brothers](#) generate original work fusing hip hop and theater, adapting classic stories to a wholly original, entertaining and fast-paced style of comedic performance that has been energizing audiences for over two decades. They will continue work on their latest project, **ROME SWEET ROME**, an ad “rap” tation of Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, which examines a city under the rule of a capricious, narcissistic leader and the attempts of its citizens and other power brokers to bring about his fall.

In **BROADBEND, ARKANSAS**, an African-American family grapples with decades of inequality, violence, and suppression in the South. In musical solos, Benny, an orderly at a nursing home, struggles to care for his own family as the fight for equality grips the nation in the midst of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Thirty years later, his daughter, Ruby, struggles to understand an incident of police brutality against Ben, her 15-year-old son. This powerful musical by [Ellen Fitzhugh](#), **Harrison David Rivers** and [Ted Shen](#), spans nearly half a century and three generations. Rivers and Shen will create a third solo piece giving voice to Ben.

Singer/songwriters **Kate Kilbane** and **Dan Moses**, who together form the musical duo, [The Kilbanes](#), and actor/directors [Jessie Austrian](#) and [Noah Brody](#), Co-artistic Directors of New York-based Fiasco Theater come together for the first time to create a new musical. The four artists are the recipients of Theater Latté Da’s [NEXT Generation Commission](#), funded in part by the NEA.

Join Theater Latté Da on May 18th at 7:00PM for a live virtual launch event on Facebook and YouTube. Peter Rothstein and Elissa Adams will share further details about NEXT Up, in a live Q&A session. Visit [Latteda.org](http://Latteda.org) for more details.

**Peter Rothstein** has directed 79 mainstage productions for Theater Latté Da, including 11 world premieres. Other collaborations include the Guthrie Theater, the Children's Theatre Company, Minnesota Opera, Ten Thousand Things, Minnesota Orchestra, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Seattle's 5th Avenue Theater, the Zach Theatre, Boston Lyric Opera, and Asolo Repertory Theatre. He is the creator of ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 which won the 2019 New York Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience. Peter was named the 2015 Artist of the Year by the *Star Tribune*, Theater Artist of the Year by Lavender, and Best Director by *City Pages*. He has received nine Ivey Awards and has been awarded grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group, the Minnesota State Arts Board and the McKnight Foundation. He holds a B.A. in Music and Theater from St. John's University and a Master of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Wisconsin.

**Elissa Adams** is Associate Artistic Director at Theater Latté Da, and the Producer of Theater Latté Da's NEXT Festival. Formerly, she was Director of New Play Development at Children's Theatre Company, where she commissioned and premiered more than 45 new plays and musicals. Prior positions include Lab Director at The Playwrights' Center and Literary Manager/Dramaturg at La Jolla Playhouse. She is a frequent artistic advisor/dramaturg at the Sundance Theatre Lab and holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from UC San Diego.

**Theater Latté Da** is an award-winning Twin Cities musical theater company that combines music and story to illuminate the breadth and depth of the human experience. The company seeks to create new connections between story, music, artist, and audience by exploring and expanding the art of musical theater. [www.latteda.org](http://www.latteda.org)

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