



DEPARTMENT
OF THEATRE



THIS EVENT IS FUNDED BY THE ARTS+ INITIATIVE

STREET SCENES

WITH TEXT BY LANGSTON HUGHES
& MUSIC BY KURT WEILL

DIRECTED BY EVE MUSON & KATIE HILEMAN
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY ANDREW HANN

UMBC BLACK BOX THEATRE
DECEMBER 5 - 7, 2025



NEW PLAYS NEW WAYS

UMBC DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Street Scenes

With texts by Langston Hughes and his contemporaries*
Music by Kurt Weill and others

Directed by Eve Muson and Katie Hileman
Musical Direction by Andrew Hann
Movement Direction by Sierra Young

Lighting Designer
Adam Mendelson

Sound Designer
Kaydin Hamby

Costume Designer
Becca Janney

Scenic Designer
Tyler Brust

Assistant Director
Grace Marsh

Stage Manager
Kayla Laucks

This production will have no intermission.
The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

***Street Scenes** brings together moments and text from several landmark 20th-century playwrights, woven together with text shaped through contemporary AI tools. The hope is that these elements speak to one another—old and new, familiar and unexpected—as the performance unfolds. Thank you for being here and sharing the experience with us. Additional text by Eve Muson and Camila Hidalgo.

Content Disclosure: This play contains small acts of aggression, brief acts of intimacy (kissing both romantic and aggressive).

UMBC Theatre events are open for full participation by all individuals regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or any other protected category under applicable federal law, state law, and the University's [nondiscrimination policy](#).



Cast

Drina Kaplan Brynn Krasney

Sam Kaplan Lucas Sanchez

Sidney Kaplan Alden Lester

Willie Kaplan Sylvia-Novella Underwood

Doris Grossman Alissa Suser

Mrs. Fiorentino Camila Hidalgo

Jo Kiarra Matos

Jeffrey Ingram Anthony Negrón

Kay Jadyn Fleming

Harry Easter Wesley Mauder

Jim Jackson Christian Price-Burnett

Mamie Jackson Jamia Tutt

Ensemble/Understudy Sofia Hunter

Understudy Cameron Denny

TIME: 1930s; Summer

PLACE: Tenement Building in a working-class New York City Neighborhood

Support UMBC Theatre!



Did you know that all ticket sales and donations go directly to scholarships for our students?

Use the QR code or [click here](#) to make a donation today!

**Be sure to designate "Theatre Department" when you make your donation.*

Song, Poem, and Scene Selections

Street Scenes came into being as a companion piece for our Fall 2025 Proscenium Theatre production of Shakespeare In Harlem. We hope it will be a vibrant production that showcases the unique talents of the cast, weaving together a patchwork of scenes from mid-20th-century American theatre that resonate with Langston Hughes' powerful theme of "the dream deferred."

Song Selections:

1. "Ain't it Awful the Heat?" Lyrics: Langston Hughes and Elmer Rice; Music: Kurt Weill
2. "The Capitalist Blues" Lyrics and Music: Leyla McCalla
3. "Wouldn't You Like to Be On Broadway?" Lyrics: Langston Hughes and Elmer Rice; Music: Kurt Weill
4. "What Good Would the Moon Be?" Lyrics: Langston Hughes; Music: Kurt Weill
5. "Moon Faced, Starry Eyed" Lyrics: Langston Hughes; Music: Kurt Weill
6. "I Wished on the Moon" Lyrics: Dorothy Parker; Music: Ralph Rainger
7. "Children's Game" Lyrics: Langston Hughes and Elmer Rice; Music: Kurt Weill
8. "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" Lyrics and Music: Cole Porter
9. "It Will Have to Do Until the Real Thing Comes Along" Lyrics and Music: Mann Holiner, Alberta Nichols, Saul Chaplin, L.E. Freeman and Sammy Cahn
10. "Lonely House" Lyrics: Langston Hughes; Music: Kurt Weill
11. "Ain't it Awful the Heat?" (Reprise) Lyrics: Langston Hughes; Music: Kurt Weill

Poem Selections:

1. "Port Town" (1926) by Langston Hughes
2. "Harlem Night Song" (1926) by Langston Hughes
3. "Our Land (Poem for a Decorative Panel)" (1923) by Langston Hughes
4. "Poem (We Have Tomorrow)" (1926) by Langston Hughes

The Plays and Authors:

Street Scene (Elmer Rice, play and screenplay) - Dead End (Sidney Kingsley, play) - Dead End (Lillian Helman, screenplay) - Waiting for Lefty (Clifford Odets) – The American Clock (Arthur Miller) – All My Sons (Arthur Miller) – It Should Happen To You (Garson Kanin) – The Dick Van Dyke Show (Carl Reiner) – A Taste of Honey (Shelagh Delaney) – Sarita (María Irene Fornés) – Episode: A Domestic Comedy (Eulalie Spence) – Uncle Vanya (Anton Chekhov)

For more information about the adaptation process, please see the Director's Note at the end of this playbill.

Spring 2026 at UMBC Theatre...



The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Adapted by Jacqueline E. Lawton

Directed by Joseph W. Ritsch

UMBC Proscenium Theatre

April 2 – 12, 2026

About the Show:

Life in modern day Baltimore has been a bit boring for Dorothy and her little dog Toto. Until one day, a cyclone swoops in and takes them “over the rainbow” to the wonderful and magical land of Oz. With the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion, Dorothy sets off on the adventure of a lifetime down the yellow brick road to the Emerald City. These new friends brave witches, flying monkeys, and a Haunted Forest all to meet the Wizard of Oz, who promises to make their dreams come true.



User Agreement

By Ben Holbrook

Directed by Sean DiGiorgio ('26)

UMBC Black Box Theatre

May 1 – 3, 2026

Tickets Available Here! (TBA)

About the Show:

Set in the near future, Sy and Theo attempt to navigate their bond in a world enhanced by the wonders of artificial intelligence and the occasional talking octopus. Their budding romance is tested by an increasingly complex society driven by technology and capital, asking us to wonder if two simple souls can truly connect.

Tickets Available Soon!

UMBC Theatre's 2025 - 2026 Season is partially subsidized by the [UMBC Arts+ Initiative](#).

All ticket sales go towards UMBC Theatre Student Scholarships.

Production Faculty & Staff

**Production Manager &
Technical Director**
Greggory Schraven

Assistant Technical Director
Evan McDougall

Lead Carpenter, Props & Scenic Artist
Tyler Brust

Production Stage Manager
Grace Shepperd

Costume Shop Supervisor
Eric Abele

Assistant Costume Shop Manager
Margaret Caster

Student Production Staff

Assistant Lighting Designer Aidan
Henderson

Student Dramaturgs Joey Hoffman, Sean
DiGiorgio, Aidan Henderson, Kiarra Matos,
Abby Hunter, Virgil Robinson

Props Master Ann Davies

Production Assistants Jada Abbott, Elsie
Coulson

Assistant Stage Manager Cameron
Denny

Light Board Operator Emily Burgess

Sound Board Operator Gale Daniel

Deck Crew Nico Forno D'Adamo

Wardrobe Crew Katelyn Jaszowski,
Timothy Clark

Head Electrician Miles Abramson

Stitchers Timothy Clark, Roya Zafar

Electricians Students of THTR 262

Carpenters Students of THTR 100 and
THTR 339 Scenery, Ann Davies, Adam
Harper, Abigail Adams, Ash Cox-Pinckney,
Malaak McDonald, Nex Duncan, Timothy
Clark, Virgil Robinson, Will Brown-Taylor

Biographies



Eve Muson (Adapter & Co-Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Department Chair at University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her professional directing credits include *Inexcusable Fantasies* (Strand Theater, Prague Festival Fringe, FringeNYC), *Speech & Debate* and *Las Meninas* (RepStage), *Venus*, *Big River*, and *Peter Pan* (Olney Theatre Center,) and many productions at Boston Playwrights Theatre, American Stage Festival, and Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She is the principal director for GRRL Parts, UMBC's festival of new plays by women: for this annual project, Eve has directed premieres by Sheila Callaghan, Tanya Saracho, Lucy Thurber, Ellen

McLaughlin & Timberlake Wertenbaker. She serves as a director in new play development at WordBRIDGE Playwrights Laboratory. She has directed dozens of university productions including *Las Meninas*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Arcadia*, *Slavs!*, *Metamorphoses*, *Two Shakespearean Actors*, and many new plays and devised works. She has been twice cited for Outstanding Direction by the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival for her work on *Un Tango En La Noche* (Boston University) and *Las Meninas* (UMBC). She teaches courses in acting, dramatic literature, and devised theatre. Her particular research interests include collaborative playmaking, and the development and production of new works.



Katie Hileman (Co-Director) (she/her) is a DIY theatre maker working out of Baltimore, MD who is passionate about making and producing new plays. She is the Artistic Director and co-founder of Interrobang Productions where she has produced over a dozen new works for the stage, including runs at Cannonball Festival (Philadelphia Fringe Festival), Charm City Fringe Festival (Best of Fringe 2014), Charm City Nights on the Fringe, and NYC Fringe. Beyond Interrobang, Katie has worked as a theatre maker for many local and regional companies and universities including The Acme Corporation, The Strand, McDaniel College, UMBC, JHU Barnstormers,

Rapid Lemon Productions, Tres Brujas Productions, and more. Katie holds a BFA in Acting from University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and an MFA in Theatre Arts from Towson University. She is a collective member of Submersive Productions, and was a 2024 Finalist for Baltimore's Baker Artist Award.



Tyler Brust (Scenic Designer) (He/Him) is a scenic designer and technical director based out of Western Maryland. He received his BA in Theatre Design and Production from UMBC (2022). Currently, he works for the UMBC Department of Theatre as part time staff, serving as a lead carpenter and scenic charge artist. Past credits include: *Shakespeare in Harlem* (Lead Carpenter / Scenic Artist; UMBC); *The America Play* (Scenic Designer / Technical Director, Perisphere Theater); *Tiny Lights* (Scenic Designer, Theater Jr); *shOUT* (Co-Scenic Designer, UMBC); and *Katalepsis* (Technical Director,

Submersive Productions); His portfolio can be found at: tylerbrust.com.



Cameron Denny (Assistant Stage Manager; Understudy) (he/him) is an Acting BFA and transfer student at UMBC. Previously at UMBC, he performed in *John Proctor is the Villain* (Lee) and was an ensemble member in *Green Theatre Revolution*. He also performed in various shows at UMD's Shakespeare Club (the Maryland Shakespeare Players), including *Romeo and Juliet* (Capulet), *Twelfth Night* (Fabian), *King Lear* (King of France/Doctor), and more. He'd like to thank the cast for their hard work in bringing this show to life!



Jadyn Fleming (Kay) (she/her) is a junior BFA Acting and BA Media and Communications Major with a Music Minor from Frederick, Maryland. Jadyn is thankful for this opportunity to navigate and work on this project as Kay in the ensemble. This will be her second show in the theatre department, past shows including *in the darkest forest* (Olivia/Ensemble with UMBC), and *Legally Blonde* (Elle Woods u/s with UMBC MTC). Jadyn would like to thank her family and friends for their eternal support and the UMBC theatre department for this incredible learning opportunity. Instagram: [@Jadyn_flem05](https://www.instagram.com/Jadyn_flem05)



Kaydin Hamby (Sound Designer) holds a BA in Theatre Design and Production from UMBC ('19). UMBC sound design credits include *Shakespeare in Harlem*, *Stupid F*cking Bird*, *Stories Told Small*, *She Kills Monsters*, *Small Mouth Sounds*, *Everybody*, *Gwyneth*, *Anon(ymous)*, and *Far Away*. Kaydin is an ensemble member at the Maryland Ensemble Theatre in Frederick MD, where sound design credits include: *Jane Anger*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Three Swingin' Little Pigs*, *Head Over Heels*, *Angels in America Parts 1 & 2*, *Revolutionists*, *Meteor Shower*, *The Tempest*, *Admissions*, *Christmas Carol*, and *Circle Mirror Transformation*. Kaydin is the musical

director of MET Comedy Night's Off Key: An Improvised Musical and is a Frederick-based singer/songwriter/musician. Listen and learn more at KaydinHamby.com.



Andrew Hann (Music Director) (he/him) is a voice coach, gender affirming voice specialist, singer, pianist, and yoga practitioner based in Baltimore, Maryland. As a performer, Andrew has demonstrated his versatility by appearing on stage as a vocalist, harpsichordist, and music director. Favorite roles include Arnalta in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Orphée in *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers*, Pane in *La Calisto*, and Jimmy Smith in the 2014 premiere of Frances Pollock's social justice opera *Stinney*. Previous UMBC productions include *Stupid F*cking Bird*, *Down with Love*, *ShOUT* and *You Can See Me In The Dark*.



Aidan Henderson (Assistant Lighting Designer) (they/them) is a Theater Design and Production Major, with a concentration in Lighting. At UMBC, they've been Assistant Stage Manager for *John Proctor is the Villain*, Light Board Operator/Programmer for *in the darkest forest*, and worked in electrics for *in the darkest forest*, *John Proctor is the Villain*, *Down with Love*, and *Stupid F*cking Bird*. At AACC, their design credits include Lighting Designer for *Little Shop of Horrors* and a staged reading of *Hurricane Diane*, and Assistant Lighting Designer for *12 Angry Jurors*. Aidan would like to thank their friends, family, and all the other hardworking people who made this show a reality. They also encourage everyone to check out the wonderful lobby dramaturgy that their class worked hard to create.



Camila Hidalgo (Mrs. Fiorentino) (she/her) is a Linehan Artist Scholar Acting BFA with a minor in Arts Entrepreneurship. After spending all last spring at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom as a DCP Cast Member, she was overjoyed to find she was cast in her first UMBC department production—its first musical, at that. She is incredibly grateful for the cast and crew and all her loved ones for both supporting and strengthening her passion for theatre. Previous shows include costume crew for last winter's *Down With Love*, as well as several cabaret solos at Silhouette Stages and featured roles in MTC showcases. ig: [@jade.rubina](https://www.instagram.com/jade.rubina)



Sofia Hunter (Ensemble; Understudy) (she/her) is a senior Psychology Major and an Acting Minor from Montgomery County, MD. This is her last show with UMBC, and she is very excited for everyone to see the amazing work that has gone into *Street Scenes*. She would like to thank her family and friends for their constant love, support and encouragement, the cast and crew for being so kind and welcoming throughout the process, and the Theatre Department for the opportunity to be part of such an amazing show. Instagram: [@sofiahunter.acting](https://www.instagram.com/sofiahunter.acting)



Becca Janney (Costume Designer) (thon/they) Professional design credits include: Barrington Stage (*Next to Normal*), Shenandoah Summer Musical Theatre (*Little Women*), Chesapeake Shakespeare Company (*Merry Wives*), Gala Theatre (*Boleros*, *The Return of Eva Peron: Momia en el Closet*), Imagination Stage (*Cinderella*, *A Salsa Fairytale*), Creede Repertory Theatre (*Cinderella*), WaterTower Theatre (*Everything is Wonderful*, *Godspell*) and Stage West Theatre (*Ada and the Engine*). Educational design credits include: UMBC (*Stupid F*cking Bird*, *Down With Love*) American University (*Damn Things Will Kill Ya*), Maryland Opera Studio (*Don Giovanni*), University of Maryland (*A Bicycle Country*), Baylor Theatre (*Peter and the Starcatcher*). They got their MFA in costume design at the University of Maryland. Website: beccajanney.com



Brynn Krasney (Drina Kaplan) (she/her) is a BFA Acting Major. In spring of 2024, she performed in UMBC's *Green Theatre Revolution*. Prior to that, she has been seen on stage as Fabian in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Corrinna Stroller in *The House of Blue Leaves*. She would like to thank her amazing family, friends, mentors, and instructors for helping her to get as far as she has - she is eternally grateful for the love, support, and push to be better from each of you.



Kayla Laucks (Stage Manager) (she/her) is a Sophomore Linehan Artist Scholar and Theatre Design and Production Major from Fleetwood, Pennsylvania. Most recently Kayla was a Production Intern at American Dance Festival for their 2025 Season. Previous Stage Management credits include: *I'll Follow Tomorrow* (UMBC), *The Nutcracker* (Berks Ballet Theatre), *In Nature's Studio* (Reading Theatre Project), *Something Rotten* (RACC), *Young Frankenstein* (RACC). She would like to thank her family and friends for their continuous love and support as well as the UMBC Theatre Department for this incredible opportunity.



Alden Lester (Sidney Kaplan) (He/Him) is a Senior transfer student majoring in BFA Acting. Born in Virginia Beach, VA, and is a military brat (Navy). He is excited to perform in his third play at UMBC. Past roles: Father Dodd in *I'll Follow Tomorrow* (UMBC), Ensemble in *John Proctor is the Villain* (UMBC), Touchstone in *As You Like It* (HCC), Wayne in *Puffs or Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic* (HCC), Ensemble/Actor Combatant in *We Could Be Heroes* (HCC), Freddy/Owl in *Miss Electricity* (HCC). He would like to thank his parents and family for their loving support, as well as his teachers throughout the years; without all of them, he wouldn't be here today.



Grace Marsh (Assistant Director) (She/Her) is a junior Linehan Artist Scholar and BFA Acting major with a minor in Arts Entrepreneurship. This is Grace's first directing experience at UMBC, but you may have seen her in the past productions; *John Proctor is the Villain* (Shelby Holcomb), *Stupid F*cking Bird* (Mash U/S) and *Green Theatre Revolution* (Ensemble). Previous directing credits; *The Brother Grimm Spectaculathon* (Catonsville High School), *4 AM* (Catonsville High School). When Grace takes off her many UMBC Theatre hats you can find her playing *Stardew Valley* on her phone.



Kiarra Matos (Jo) (she/they) is a senior transfer student from Dayton, OH, pursuing a BFA in Acting at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She will graduate this December. This production marks her third show at UMBC. Previous UMBC credits include *Green Theatre Revolution* (Sonia & Savvy the Developer) and her Proscenium Theatre debut in *John Proctor is the Villain* (Bailey Gallagher). Favorite roles at Sinclair Theatre include *SLUT* (Danielle), *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (Lucy Van Pelt), and *The Cold Equations* (Ashling Hanley). Kiarra is excited for the next chapter of her artistic journey and would like to thank her parents, brothers, family, and the UMBC production team for their endless support and dedication.



Wesley Mauder (Harry Easter) (He/Him) is a Senior BFA student. This will be his sixth and final time on the UMBC stage. He is forever grateful for every student and faculty member he has met in the past 4 years. But most of all, to Lucas Sanchez, for being there from the very start.



Adam Mendelson (Lighting Designer) (he/him) teaches Lighting and Sound Design at the University of Maryland Baltimore County where he helped prepare the new theatre spaces for the opening of the state-of-the-art Performing Arts and Humanities Building in August of 2012. He previously taught design at the University of Wyoming, the University of Texas-Arlington, Stephens College (Columbia, MO), and Lawrence Academy (Groton, Massachusetts). His design work has been seen across the country and as far afield as Edinburgh, Scotland. He designs lights and sound for our Theatre department productions and he teaches lighting design students in sophisticated professional level technology and supervises Theatre design majors.



Anthony Negrón (Jeffrey Ingram) (He/Him) is a Sophomore BFA student! This is his first ever UMBC official production but he has been a part of many MTC productions to other various performing groups like the UMBC Mama's Boys all male acapella group. Anthony is thankful for all the training the BFA program has given him and the family that supported him every step of the way and is super excited to showcase everything he has learned into an amazing UMBC theatrical debut!



Christian Price-Burnett (Jim Jackson) (he/him) is a Senior BFA Acting Major from Pikesville, Maryland. His favorite roles include Mason from *John Proctor is The Villain* and ensemble for *Slime!* His past roles at UMBC include various roles in *sHOUT!*, ensemble in *Slime*, Con and Dev's understudy in *Stupid F*cking Bird* and most recently various roles in *Down With Love*. Christian would like to thank his chorus and music directors, Mr. Fatuzzo and Mrs. McLoughlin, his twin, Christopher, his dad and mom and most importantly his theatre department! Instagram: [@wrlld.of.tian](#) Facebook: [Christian Price-Burnett](#)



Jamia Tutt (Mamie Jackson) (she/her) is a Senior BFA Acting major with a certificate in Korean MLL from Randallstown, Baltimore County, Maryland. Her favorite past roles were Nina from *Stupid F*cking Bird*, and being Assistant Stage Manager for the play *Dracula*. "I would like to thank the production team and cast members for their hard work, and supporting each other and me, during this journey!" Instagram: [@miaa.acting](#) Facebook: [@Jamia.Tutt.3](#)



Lucas Sanchez (Sam Kaplan) (He/Him) is a senior BFA Acting major hailing from Frederick, MD. This is Lucas's seventh and final production at UMBC. You may have seen him as Mr. Smith in *John Proctor is the Villain*, 2025, or as some water in *Slime*, 2024. Lucas would like to thank all of the amazing faculty here in the theatre department for guiding his way, and his friends and family for supporting him on his acting journey!



Alissa Suser (Doris Grossman) is a Senior Acting BFA. Previously at UMBC Alissa has been a part of *Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy*, *Really* as Drusilla/Miller/Merchant and as Lavinia in *in the darkest forest*. You may have seen Alissa outside UMBC in Vagabond Players production of *Into The Woods* as Little Red. Alissa is thrilled to be back on the stage after spending most of her summer studying physical theater at Dell Arte International!



Sylvia-Novella Underwood (Willie Kaplan) (she/her) is a junior Acting BFA Major and incoming transfer student from Howard Community College. This is her first production at UMBC. Her previous roles at HCC include the Sea Captain in *Twelfth Night*, Cecily (U/S) in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Constance (U/S) in *Ride The Cyclone*, Loud Stone (U/S) in *Eurydice*, and as a Chorus Member in *Medea*. Sylvia would like to thank her family, friends, professors, and fellow cast and crew for making this possible.

Dive Deeper into the World of Street Scenes

Created by the students of the Dramaturgy Seminar

[Art from the Era](#)

[The Melting Pot](#)

[The Real Story of Real Estate in NYC](#)

[Behind-the-Scenes: Set and Costume Design](#)

[Behind-the-Scenes: The Actors' Playlist](#)

Street Scenes – Experiments in Dramaturgy

From Eve Muson, co-director

Street Scenes came into being as a companion piece for our Fall 2025 Proscenium Theatre production of *Shakespeare In Harlem*. I wanted to craft a vibrant production that showcases the unique talents of the cast, weaving together a patchwork of scenes from mid-20th-century American theatre that resonate with Langston Hughes' powerful theme of "the dream deferred."

Taking advantage of the gritty acting style developed by the Group Theatre, playwrights like Clifford Odets, Elmer Rice, Sidney Kingsley wrote plays about working-class New Yorkers grappling with the promises and failures of the American Dream.

Immigrants, mostly from Europe, and African Americans relocating as part of the Great Migration are drawn to New York, where the streets are said to be paved with gold.. But they, and their children, soon find themselves grappling with obstacles to opportunity. Race, religious affiliation, lack of education, country of origin, sexual orientation, language, class, and the absence of connections often prevent our characters from the "chance to get to first base." ¹ Crammed into tenement

¹ Clifford Odets, *Awake and Sing*.

neighborhoods, these characters embody the tension between their personal desires and the harsh social responsibilities that bind them.

These tensions and pressures make for scenes full of muscular language, conflict, and intense emotionality that sometimes erupt into physical violence or passionate embrace. In Odets' *Waiting for Lefty*, a broken-hearted taxi driver says to his girlfriend:

“...Christ, baby! I get like thunder in my chest when we're together. If we went off together I could maybe look the world straight in the face, spit in its eye like a man should do...”²

To avoid the pitfalls of melodrama and “corniness,” the contemporary actor must play these scenes with utter sincerity, full commitment, specificity, and speed. These characters have a lot to live for, and a lot to lose – every word and action matters.

Musical Director Andrew Hann and I began our search for Langston Hughes-adjacent material by looking at the Kurt Weill musical adaptation of Rice's *Street Scene*, for which Hughes wrote the lyrics. *Street Scene*, the play and musical became our keystone. Many of the songs are from this musical, and many of the scenes about the Kaplan family are adapted from the play.

In contemporary music, we were delighted to discover Leyla McCalla's 2013 album *Vari-Colored Songs: A Tribute to Langston Hughes*, where she sets a group of Hughes poems to her American folk and blues sound. You'll hear some of these songs, too.

Adaptation? Curation? Using AI as a creative collaborator?

In our previous anthology shows in the BlackBox – *You Can See Me in the Dark*, *Down With Love*, *Green Theatre Revolution* – we've strung together scenes, songs, compositions, poems and monologues, usually along the lines of a chosen theme. With *Street Scenes*, I wanted to weave the disparate bits of source material into an episodic narrative structure, where each story line has a beginning, middle and end, and all characters have somewhat of a narrative journey.

But this is not a playwriting project – this is a project with the goal of creating juicy scenes for our actors out of this material. Nor is it a simple cut-and-paste assemblage, either. To meet my own challenge of creating 1) the best scenes 2) an episodic narrative and 3) character arcs, I felt I had to be much more intrusive (ahem) on the source material.

I found myself wanting to mix and match dialogue from two or more different plays, combining three characters into one, or split one character into two, or insert the climactic moment in one scene into the exposition of another. Sometimes I got stuck – or didn't know how to bridge a gap or make a smooth transition. I needed a heftier pair of knitting needles to bring together all the threads....

(Enter chatGPT.)

² Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty*

The only way I had used chatGPT before was to summarize long boring memos or notes from meetings. I'd never thought of using it to generate text or do anything theatre-related. But it seemed like a fun idea to try. So, when I got stuck, or needed perspective, had a bad transition, or needed to come up with something faster, I would feed it super-specific prompts. Here's a little bit of the process:

For example, to make our character of Sam Kaplan, the male romantic lead, I drew on attributes of three characters: Sam from *Street Scene*, Gimpty from *Dead End* (play,) and Dave from *Dead End* (the movie.) (With a pinch of *All My Sons*, *Waiting For Lefty*, and thrown in.) Sam dreams of being an architect and building new housing for the working class. However, he's in love with Kay and willing to give up that dream to start a life with her. However, his overprotective sister Drina has worked so hard to support his education that she can't let him throw it all away for love. So, I started with these prompts:

Make a character description melding Sam (*Street Scene*, play, film, opera) and Dave (*Dead End*, play).
Meld Sam/Dave with Gimpty from *Dead End* (play).
Make him an architect with dreams of tearing down the slums.
Add that he's in love with Kay.

At that point, I had a new character description for my new character, Sam Kaplan.

"Sam Kaplan (Lucas Sanchez), [Drina's] brother, is a college student who hopes to become an architect.. (The City College of New York was founded to provide children of immigrants and the poor access to free higher education.) He's consumed by the dream of tearing down the slums and building humane, light-filled housing for working people. He quietly harbors a deep, unspoken devotion to Kay, a girl from the same neighborhood. He would be willing to set aside his educational and career goals to start a family with Kay. Sam is based on Sam (*Street Scene*), Gimpty (*Dead End*, play), Dave (*Dead End*, film), Florence (*Waiting for Lefty*), and a smidgen of Chris (*All My Sons*.)

At the same time, to make my character Kay, I melded Rose (*Street Scene*,) Kay (*Dead End*, film & play,) and Sid (*Waiting For Lefty*.)

To make my character Drina, I melded Drina (*Dead End*, film and play) with Shirley (*Street Scene*,) a tiny bit of Edna (*Waiting for Lefty*.)

I wanted to model the dialogue of my first scene between Sam and Drina on that of Dave/Drina (*Dead End*, film), but making them siblings rather than potential romantic partners. I input dialogue from the *Dead End* scene along with my new character descriptions and the prompt:

"Write a scene in the style of Clifford Odets with 2 characters: an older sister and younger brother"

And I kept adjusting from there:

"In the style of Rice"

"Make Sam even more believing in his dream of tearing down the slum and building something clean and new for the people to live in."

“make Drina more worried about Ma...”

“Drina believes that it's the community of people in the neighborhood who can mutually support one another. In this scene, make her put her faith in the people, that it's only the people who can raise themselves up, because no one else is doing it for them.”

After about 12 prompts to get the proper tone, melding of characters, voice...etc., I had some dialogue that captured the essence of the characters I was after as well as the rhythm and pace of the original authors. At that point I did yet another draft in my own voice.

The success of this kind of writing, if it is successful at all, relies completely on the idiosyncratic input from the human author (me,) and the specificity and nuance of the prompts. I think I did pretty well with this – I don't think I could have devised all the inputs without a lifetime of immersion in dramatic literature and American theatre history – and without a deep understanding of play construction and theatrical storytelling.

The cast held me to a rigorous line of questioning – what is a work partially written by a large-language model? What is the future of playwriting, of art-making? In a world where human actors might be replaced by AI-made actors, what kind of careers can we expect? Or, instead of the nightmare of such a future, how can large-language models help us to create new art – art we cannot even imagine yet?

As part of our investigation, we studied the Harvard Law Review's article called, “Artificial Intelligence and the Creative Double Bind,” published in April 2025. The article traces the history of copyright laws, how they are challenged by use of LLMs in original work, and how Writers Guild of America settled recent strike:

Ultimately, writers were able to negotiate contract provisions that both allowed AI in the writers' room and guaranteed that AI technology would not be used to dilute their resulting credit and compensation. Further, the writers were able to stipulate that their works would not be used to train LLMs without their consent, rendering their output distinct from the journalist-written works underpinning [the Times dispute.] Rather than allowing IP owners to reap greater profits with less creator involvement, solidarity allowed writers to negotiate for both protection and a piece of the revenue stream.

Studios did not have the option of entirely replacing writers because the rights need to vest in a human author to qualify for copyright protection. With this foothold for writers, solidarity grows ever more important — if no writers are willing to work in a world where AI is allowed to dominate the writing process, then studios will need to employ writers to write and copyright their scripts. As evidenced by the WGA writers' success in ensuring protections for writers, solidarity is a critical tool for communities of creators to control what protections they receive when the law does not adequately speak on the topic. Through their collective commitment to the norm of solidarity, writers can now use AI for creative purposes without fearing that they will be replaced or cut out of growing revenue streams.” (Harvard Law Review. Vol. 138 No. 6 April 2025. “Artificial Intelligence and the Creative Double Bind.”)

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Special Thanks To Interim Dean John Stolle-McAllister, Director of Arts and Culture Tom Moore, Kiirstn Pagan, Laura Schraven and Commonvision, Cael Mulcahy, the CAHSS Operations, and Lynn Cazabon.

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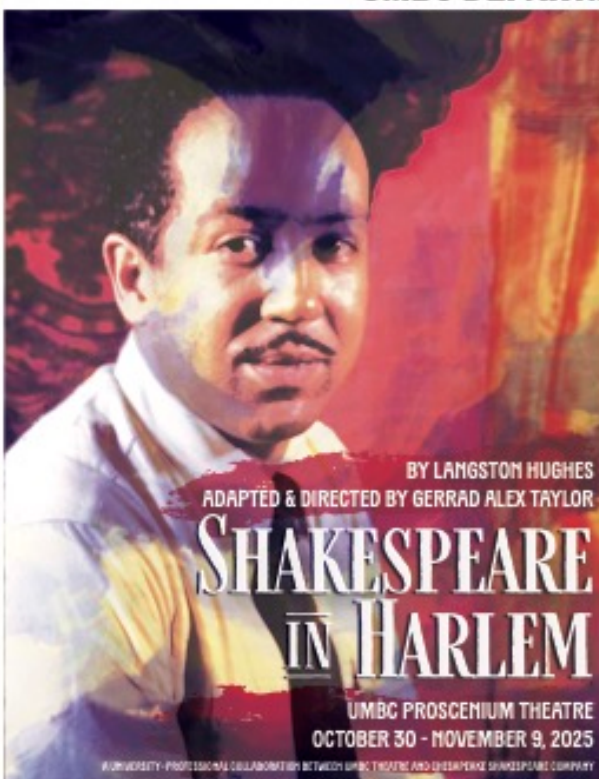
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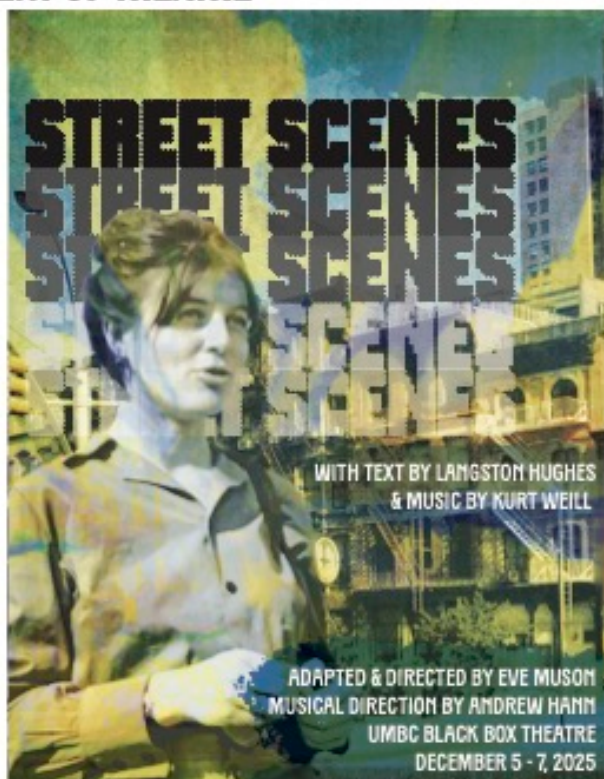


BY LANGSTON HUGHES
ADAPTED & DIRECTED BY GERRAD ALEX TAYLOR

SHAKESPEARE IN HARLEM

UMBC PROSCENIUM THEATRE
OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 9, 2025

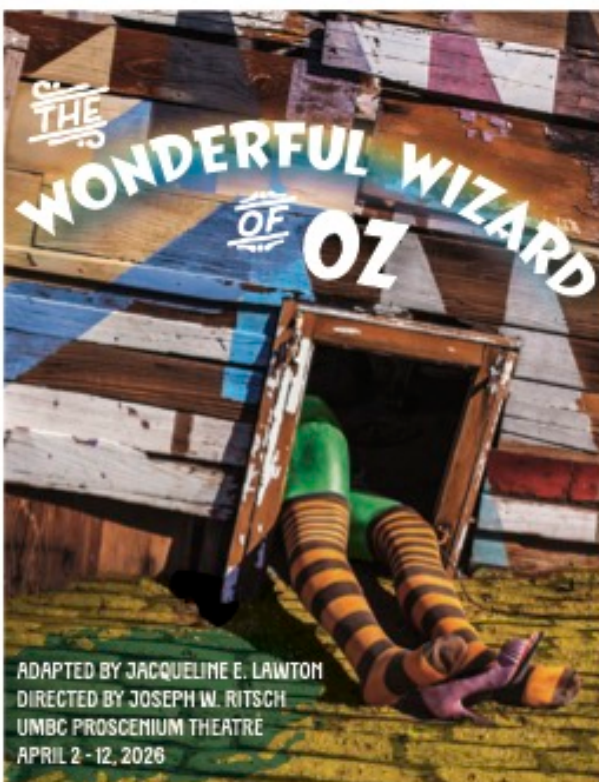
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STREET SCENES STREET SCENES STREET SCENES STREET SCENES STREET SCENES

WITH TEXT BY LANGSTON HUGHES
& MUSIC BY KURT WEILL

ADAPTED & DIRECTED BY EVE MUSON
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY ANDREW HAMM
UMBC BLACK BOX THEATRE
DECEMBER 5 - 7, 2025



THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ

ADAPTED BY JACQUELINE E. LAWTON
DIRECTED BY JOSEPH W. RITSCH
UMBC PROSCENIUM THEATRE
APRIL 2 - 12, 2026



USER AGREEMENT

BY BEN HOLBROOK
DIRECTED BY SEAM DIGIORGIO
UMBC BLACK BOX THEATRE
MAY 1-3, 2026



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