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CAST LIST

BRANDON STAUFFER

AS



THURSTON WHEELIS
ELMER WATKINS
BERTHA BUMILLER
R.R. SNAVELY
AUNT PEARL BURRAS
SHERIFF GIVENS
IKE THOMPSON
INITA GOODWIN
LEONARD CHILDERS
JOE BOB LIPSEY

DAN TATE

AS

ARLES STRUVIE
DIDI SNAVELY
PETEY FISK
JODY BUMILLER
CHARLENE BUMILLER
STANLEY BUMILLER
VERA CARP
DIXIE DEBERRY
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OPENING THE CAN ON TUNA

THE TUNA PLAYS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A LOVE LETTER TO TEXAS WRITTEN WITH A POISONED PEN. IN THE 1980S, JASTON WILLIAMS, JOE SEARS, AND ED HOWARD WROTE THESE PLAYS IN REACTION TO THE RISE OF THE MORAL MAJORITY, A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1979 BY JERRY FALWELL, SR., ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY. THE TUNA PLAYS ARE FIERCE AND FUNNY SATIRES OF LIFE IN TEXAS AND ALL AROUND THIS COUNTRY. THEY ARE BRUTAL, AND SADLY, THE TARGETS THAT ARE MOCKED IN THESE PLAYS HAVE ONLY GOTTEN A STRONGER FOOTHOLD IN BOTH TEXAS BEINGS AND THE UNITED STATES. THEY FEATURE FLAWED, SOMETIMES TRULY HORRIBLE, FUNNY HUMAN DOING THE BEST THEY CAN AND SOMETIMES STILL MISSING THE BIGGER PICTURE.

SATIRE IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN OUR SOCIETY WHERE WE CAN SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER AND LAUGH. FROM MARK TWAIN TO SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, WE DELIGHT IN POKING FUN AT THE POWERFUL AND UNCOMFORTABLE FORCES IN OUR LIVES. A TUNA CHRISTMAS LIVES IN THIS LONG TRADITION, LAMPOONING THE LIVES OF THE SO-CALLED MORAL MAJORITY, BUT LEAVING US TO QUESTION: WAS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN 1989, OR JUST LAST WEEK? THESE CHARACTERS ARE UNHINGED, BUT WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I KNOW THEM? SHOULD WE LET THIS KEEP ON HAPPENING? IN THIS SHOW, WE RETURN TO TUNA, THE FICTIONAL THIRD-SMALLEST TOWN IN TEXAS, ON CHRISTMAS EVE. RADIO HOSTS THURSTON WHEELIS AND ARLES STRUVIE GIVE US THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE ANNUAL LAWN DISPLAY COMPETITION, WHICH HAS BEEN CONTINUALLY SABOTAGED BY THE MYSTERIOUS CHRISTMAS PHANTOM. AS WE HOP AROUND TOWN VISITING A VARIETY OF CHARACTERS GETTING READY FOR THE HOLIDAY, WE SEE THAT, LIKE THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES, CHRISTMAS IS NOT PERFECT. BERTHA CAN'T SEEM TO GET HER TEENAGE CHILDREN (AND CHEATING HUSBAND, FOR THAT MATTER) TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE; DIDI'S USED WEAPON SHOP IS ALARMINGLY BUSY FOR THIS TIME OF YEAR; JOE BOB'S COMMUNITY THEATER PRODUCTION OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL MIGHT BE DOOMED; AND THE TASTEE KREME FORGOT TO THAW THE HAMBURGER MEAT BEFORE THE LUNCH RUSH. FOR TUNA, THIS IS SHAPING UP TO BE A DOOZY OF A HOLIDAY.

DAN TATE AS DIDI



ON PITCH PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS:

A TUNA CHRISTMAS

Written by:

Faston Williams, Ed Howard, and Joe Sears

Direction

Heather Jackson

Original Costume Design

Stacey Haslam

Light Design

Dan Tate

Sound Design

Josh Rice

Set Painter

Carole Taylor

Costume Run Crew

Teresa Howell, Caitlin Olsen, Elinor Blankenship

OPPA! STAFF

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Brandon Stauffer

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Amanda Larsen

Production Manager

Kennedy Miller

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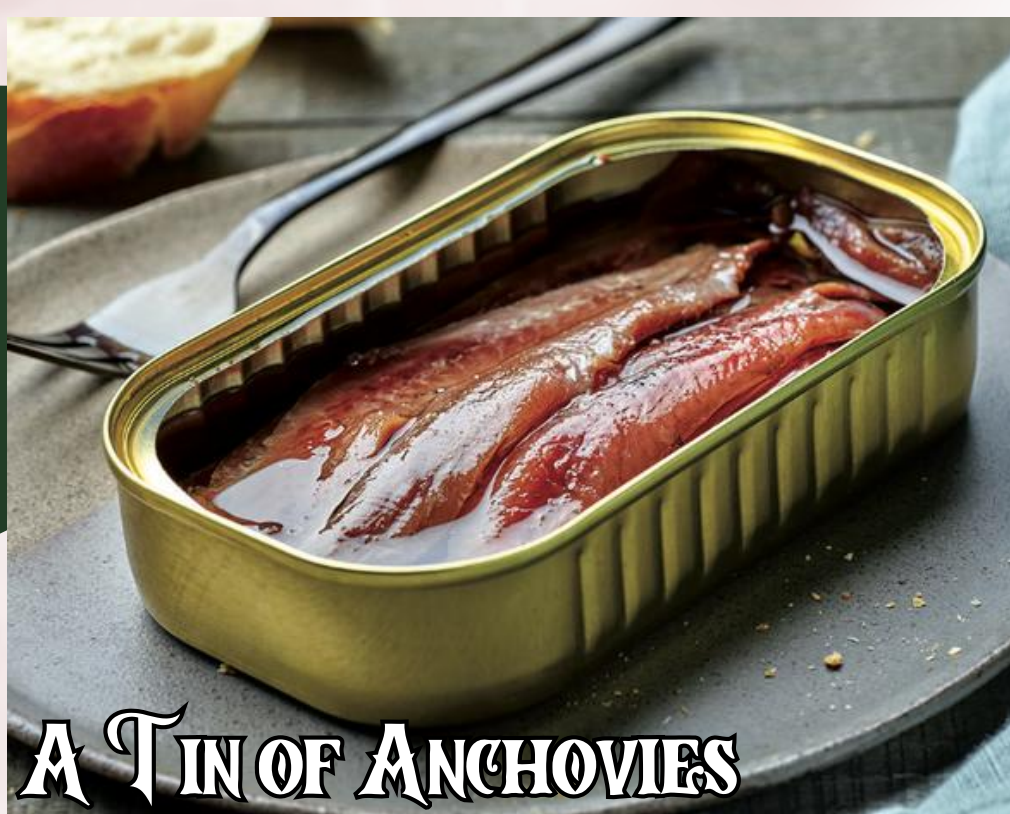
TALKIN' TUNA

WITHIN THE COMEDY OF A TUNA CHRISTMAS, YOU MAY HEAR A TURN OF PHRASE THAT MAKES YOUR EARS PERK UP, MAKES YOU LEAN OVER TO THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU, AND ASK "WHAT ON EARTH DOES THAT MEAN?!" THE TOWNSPEOPLE OF TUNA, TEXAS HAVE THEIR OWN WAY OF COMMUNICATING. CHECK OUT THIS CHEAT- SHEET OF TUNA SLANG SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND JUST WHAT THE LOCALS ARE YAPPIN' ABOUT.

A DOOZIE: SOMETHING THAT IS EXTRAORDINARY OR OUTSTANDING. OF ITS KIND.

BARK UP THE WRONG FOREST: A VARIATION ON "BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE," TO ATTEMPT OR PURSUE A FUTILE COURSE OF ACTION, OFTEN BY MAKING SOME KIND OF SUGGESTION OR REQUEST.

BETTER HAIR ON ANCHOVIES: ANCHOVIES ARE OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS HAIRY, BUT IN REALITY THE LITTLE HAIRS ARE ACTUALLY FISH BONES THAT ARE COMPLETELY SAFE TO EAT.



A TIN OF ANCHOVIES

BOXED MY EARS: TO HIT ONE ON THE HEAD, ESPECIALLY ON OR AROUND ONE'S EARS, USUALLY USED AS A THREAT.

CUSSIN A BLUE STREAK: TO SWEAR RAPIDLY IN A CONSTANT, UNENDING STREAM OF CURSE WORDS.

DOIN' DIDDLY: A THING OF LITTLE OR NO VALUE; DOING NOTHING.

DP & DIET DP: DR. PEPPER SODA, MADE UP OF 23 FLAVORS: COLA, CHERRY, LICORICE, AMARETTO, ALMOND, VANILLA, BLACKBERRY, APRICOT, CARAMEL, PEPPER, ANISE, SARSAPARILLA, GINGER, MOLASSES, LEMON, PLUM, ORANGE, NUTMEG, CARDAMON, ALL SPICE, CORIANDER JUNIPER, BIRCH, AND PRICKLY ASH.

FIGHTING LIKE CATS IN A BAG: AGGRESSIVE FIGHTING BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T NEED A REASON TO ARGUE OR SQUABBLE.

GET THE HELL OUT OF DODGE: IDIOM; YOU'RE TELLING EVERYONE THAT YOU NEED TO GATHER YOUR THINGS AND LEAVE THE AREA RIGHT NOW; CAN REFER TO OTHER PEOPLE, YOURSELF, OR THE PEOPLE YOU ARE WITH. TYPICALLY USED IN A LIGHTEARTED MANNER, BUT THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN YOU CAN USE IT AS A STERN WARNING TO OTHERS.

LOOKS LIKE DEATH CHEWING ON A CRACKER: TO LOOK EXTREMELY ILL, EXHAUSTED, WORN OUT, OR CLOSE TO DEATH.

NOT A NOTCH ON HIS GUN: REFERS TO FICTIONAL COWBOYS AND CHARACTERS WHO WOULD CARVE A NOTCH ON THEIR WEAPON FOR EVERY VICTIM THEY'VE SHOT, SO IN THIS CASE, THEY HAVEN'T USED IT.



OLD WOODEN GUN

"NOT THE MARRYING KIND": A PHRASE USED TO INSINUATE THAT A SINGLE MAN IS GAY.



DR. PEPPER... ON A FARM

SCREAMED BLUE MURDER: A GREAT, LOUD OUTCRY.

SIT A SPELL: IDIOMATIC PHRASE MEANING TO TELL A STORY OR CATCH UP WITH SOMEONE.

SPLIT THE SHEETS: TO GET DIVORCED; TO DIVIDE UP ASSETS IN A DIVORCE.

THEY CAN TRACK A FLEA OVER CONCRETE: TO BE ASTUTE, HAVE AN INCREDIBLY KEEN EYE, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARDS TO HUNTING OR TRACKING.

TOM CATTING: SLANG; FOR A MAN TO PURSUE WOMEN IN ORDER TO MAKE SEXUAL CONQUESTS.

TO TAKE A POWDER: TO MAKE A QUICK DEPARTURE, LEAVE IN A HURRY.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

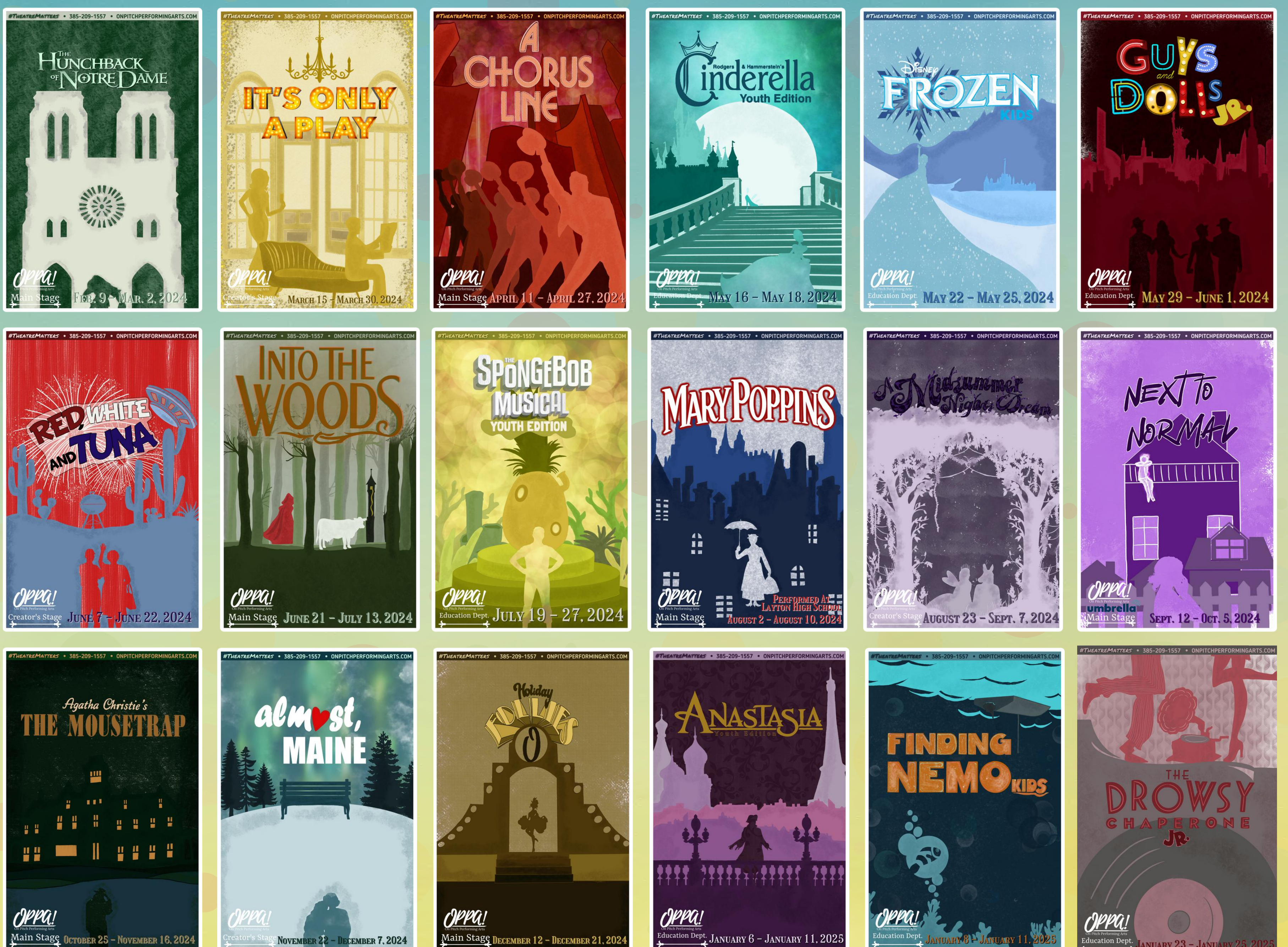
Throughout my time in theatre, I have found that certain elements draw me to being involved in a show. Sometimes it's a story I'm dying to tell. Sometimes it's a dream role. And sometimes it's simply a passion project and an absolute blast. A Tuna Christmas has been a celebration of theatre and art from the very beginning and in every moment of the process.

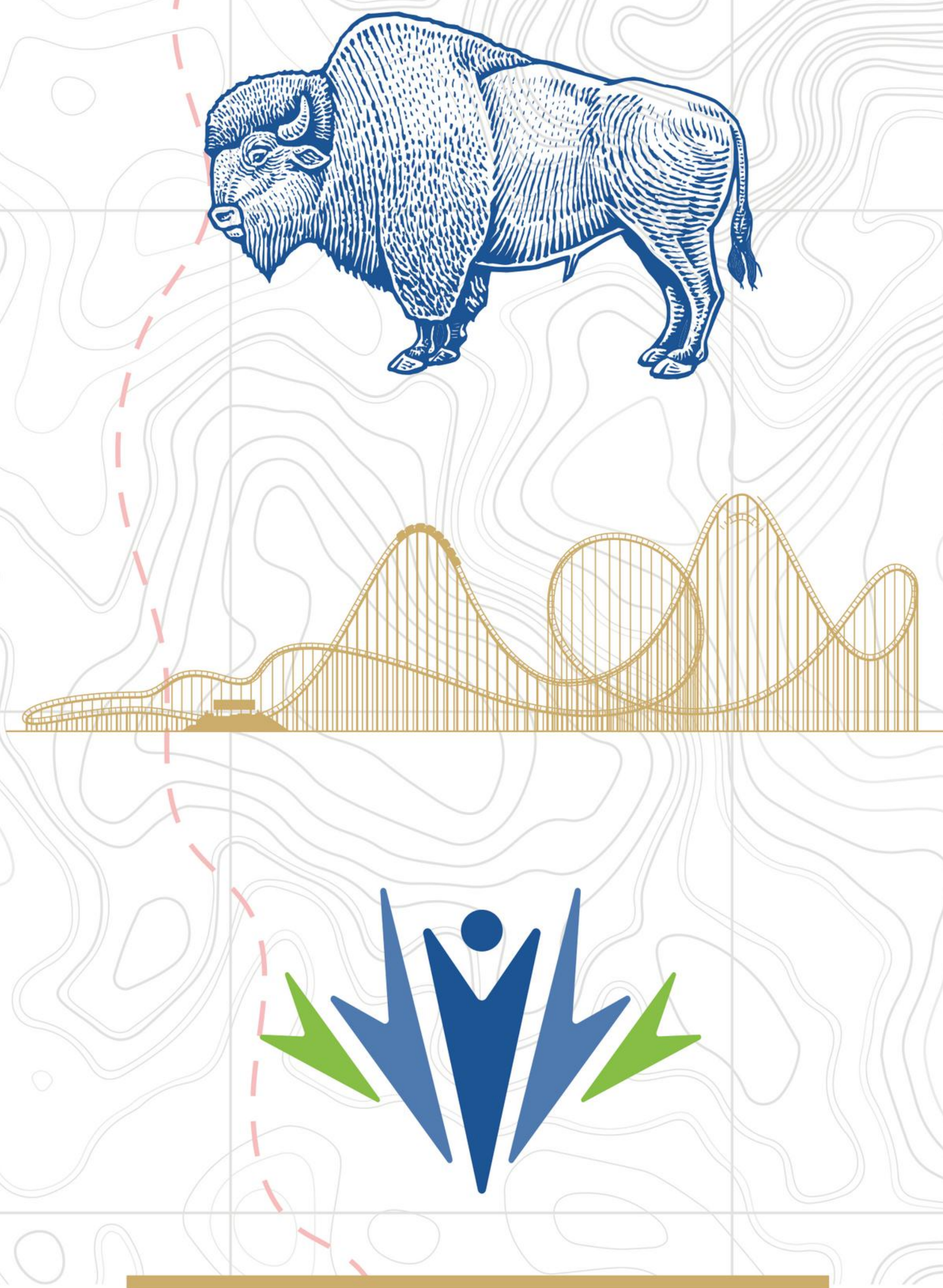
I've been honored with the title of "director" for this show, but honestly, it has been a team effort and collaborative success in every aspect. Most directors could only dream of working with two actors and people as creative, hardworking, and kindhearted as Dan and Brandon. They've made this an unforgettable experience for me. I want to thank them both for their patience, their dedication, and the many, many hours they spent both in and outside rehearsal to make this show a success.

I want to thank my family for supporting my passion and sacrificing hours with me so I could focus on the show. I love you! Thank you to On Pitch Performing Arts for the opportunity to bring this show to the stage. And finally, thanks to all of you for attending. Happy Holidays, Y'all!

Heather Ann Jackson

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SATIRE OUT OF THE CAN

AS LONG AS POLITICS HAS EXISTED, SO HAS ITS MOCKERY. GOING BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO 400 BCE, WHEN PLAYWRIGHT AND "FATHER OF COMEDY" ARISTOPHANES WROTE ABOUT RELIGION AND VARIOUS POLITICAL FIGURES IN ATHENS, ARTISTS AND WRITERS HAVE USED THEIR MEDIUMS TO HUMOROUSLY COMMENT ON THE STATE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT AND TOPICAL AFFAIRS. SATIRE USES HUMOR AND EXAGGERATION TO COMMENT ON AND RIDICULE CURRENT EVENTS OR PUBLIC FIGURES, OFTEN POINTING OUT HYPOCRISY, STUPIDITY, OR LOGICAL FALLACIES. OVER HUMAN HISTORY, THE MAKING, DISTRIBUTION, AND RECEPTION OF SATIRICAL WORKS HAVE REFLECTED THE STATE OF THE WORLD AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUBLIC.

IN AMERICA, SATIRE CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE EARLY 1700S, WHEN THE COLONIES WERE SEEKING INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN. AT THIS TIME, MOST SATIRE TOOK THE FORM OF POLITICAL CARTOONS, WHICH COULD BE ENJOYED BY BOTH THE UPPER CLASS AND THE LARGER MAJORITY OF ILLITERATE WORKING-CLASS AMERICANS. THESE CARTOONS PERMEATED AMERICAN AND EVEN BRITISH CULTURE, THEIR WIDE CIRCULATION PLANTING THEM NOT ONLY IN NEWSPAPERS, BUT ON FLYERS AND EVEN CHINAWARE, PROVIDING REVOLUTIONISTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBTLY SHOW THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO DINNER GUESTS. THE CIRCULATION OF POLITICAL OPINION AS ENTERTAINMENT BROUGHT ATTENTION TO THE STATE OF THE GOVERNMENT, EVENTUALLY RALLYING THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO WIN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. THE CARTOONS NOT ONLY IMPACTED THE MAJORITY OPINION ON GREAT BRITAIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COLONIES, BUT INFLUENCED AMERICAN POLITICS INTO THE PRESENT DAY; CARTOONIST THOMAS NAST POPULARIZED THE DONKEY AND ELEPHANT ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES THANKS TO HIS CARTOONS IN HARPER'S WEEKLY. WITH COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF SATIRE ENTERING MAINSTREAM CULTURE THROUGHOUT HISTORY, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL HUMOR STICKS WITH US. BUT HOW DO WE GAUGE IF SATIRE IS GOING TOO FAR?

TO AN EXTENT, SATIRE IS INHERENTLY INCENDIARY, AS IT SEEKS TO EXPLORE OFTEN DIVISIVE TOPICS & PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF ACCEPTABILITY IN ORDER TO MAKE A STATEMENT IN AN ATTENTION- GRABBING AND ENTERTAINING WAY. "ROBUST SATIRE IS OFTEN A SIGN OF CRISIS AND THE ABILITY TO SHARE AND CONSUME IT IS A SIGN OF A FREE SOCIETY," SAYS SOPHIA MCCLENNEN, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT PENN STATE. "WE SEE SATIRE EMERGE WHEN POLITICAL DISCOURSE IS IN CRISIS AND WHEN IT BECOMES IMPORTANT TO USE SATIRICAL COMEDY TO PUT POLITICAL PRESSURE ON MISINFORMATION, FOLLY, AND THE ABUSE OF POWER." THAT BEING SAID, THE PUBLIC RECEPTION TO SATIRICAL WORKS HAS VARIED WILDLY OVER TIME, DEPENDING ON THE LARGER CONTEXT OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD.

SATIRE PLAYS AN INTERESTING ROLE IN OUR CULTURE TODAY; WITH INCREASING CONVERSATIONS AROUND SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY AND WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO TELL WHICH STORIES (OR MAKE WHICH JOKES) AND POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS COMING TO A FEVER PITCH, THE FINE LINE BETWEEN EFFECTIVE SATIRE AND SATIRE THAT GOES TOO FAR IS GETTING THINNER AND HARDER TO ANTICIPATE.

SATIRE STAPLES OF MODERN AMERICAN CULTURE HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING TO STAY RELEVANT IN TODAY'S ENTERTAINMENT LANDSCAPE. LATE-NIGHT TELEVISION, MARKED BY ITS TOPICAL POLITICAL HUMOR, HAS BEEN SEEING LOWER AND LOWER RATINGS. THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF REASONS FOR THIS: THE GENRE'S FORMAT-INCOMPATIBILITY WITH STREAMING SERVICES, AN OVERSATURATION OF SIMILAR SHOWS COMMENTING ON THE SAME ISSUES, A HEIGHTENED FIXATION ON POLITICS RATHER THAN HUMAN INTEREST. ONE NOTABLE REASON FOR THE GENRE'S DECLINE THAT IS DISCUSSED LESS, HOWEVER, IS THE WRITER AND AUDIENCE'S ABILITY TO EVOLVE SATIRE TO WORK IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE.

SATIRE IS A POWERFUL FORM OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY, BUT ITS EFFICACY HEAVILY RELIES ON SATIRE WRITERS AND ARTISTS' ABILITIES TO ANTICIPATE HOW CURRENT EVENTS WILL INFORM THE AUDIENCE RECEPTION. SOME SATIRES OF THE PAST, LIKE A TUNA CHRISTMAS, PROVIDE COMMENTARY FOR ISSUES STILL RELEVANT TODAY, EVEN IF THE WAY WE'VE COME TO TALK ABOUT THOSE ISSUES HAS SHIFTED. THE QUESTION REMAINS THEN: CAN WE ADAPT SATIRICAL FORMATS OF THE PAST TO REFLECT TODAY'S CLIMATE, OR CAN SATIRE ONLY BELONG IN THE PRESENT?

BRANDON STAUFFER AS PEARL





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Anonymous

Thank You is never enough.

TUNA. A HISTORY

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR A PLAY TO GET TO BROADWAY? YOU MIGHT THINK OF MILLIONAIRE PRODUCERS OR AN ELABORATE PRODUCTION THAT'S YEARS IN THE MAKING. HOWEVER, FOR JOE SEARS AND JASTON WILLIAMS, TWO OF THE AUTHORS AND THE ORIGINAL PERFORMERS OF A TUNA CHRISTMAS, THE JOURNEY TO BEING A 1980S THEATRICAL SENSATION LOOKS A LITTLE DIFFERENT. THROUGH A FRIENDSHIP, A DINNER PARTY, AND A SWIMMING POOL, THESE TWO TEXANS WENT FROM COMMUNITY THEATER TO PERFORMING ON 42ND STREET IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!

CO-CREATORS JOE SEARS AND JASTON WILLIAMS BECAME FRIENDS WHILE WORKING FOR A THEATER COMPANY IN SAN ANTONIO, TX. AFTER MOVING TO AUSTIN IN 1980 IN HOPES OF STARTING UP THEIR OWN PROFESSIONAL THEATER COMPANY, THE STRUGGLING DUO HAD BEEN ASKED TO PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT FOR A FRIEND'S DINNER PARTY. THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE LATER WROTE OF THAT AUSPICIOUS EVENING THAT, "BEING LIBERALS WITH A TASTE FOR SATIRE, THEY OPTED TO USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SMITE THE RIGHT. DRAWING ON THEIR MUTUAL HISTORIES IN LITTLE WESTERN TOWNS, THEY DELIVERED DISPATCHES FROM A REACTIONARY RADIO STATION." THESE RADIO STATION SKETCHES WERE A HUGE HIT AT THE PARTY, INSPIRING SEARS AND WILLIAMS TO DEVELOP IT INTO A FULL-LENGTH PLAY.

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1981, SEARS AND WILLIAMS SPENT THEIR DAYS SWIMMING AT THE BARTON SPRINGS POOL IN AUSTIN, HOPPING OUT OF THE WATER EVERY THIRTY MINUTES TO IMPROVISE NEW SKETCHES ON A TAPE RECORDER. WILLIAMS TALKED TO THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE ABOUT THEIR WRITING PROCESS, REMINISCING THAT "NOBODY FEELS LIKE THEY'RE WORKING ANY MORE THAN ANYBODY ELSE. WE JUST DO IT. COLLABORATIONS ARE A CRAZY THING, BUT THEY SURE ARE FUN WHEN EVERYBODY'S LAUGHING." WITH THE HELP OF THE SHOW'S DIRECTOR, ED HOWARD, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE WRITING AND FINANCING, THEY HAD A SHOW BY THE END OF SUMMER: GREATER TUNA. HOWARD WAS A FRIEND IN THE COMMUNITY THEATER WHO PUT HIS ENTIRE LIFE SAVINGS (\$10,000) INTO THE PRODUCTION BECAUSE HE DEEPLY BELIEVED IT COULD BE A SUCCESS.



PHOTOS: JOE SEARS & JASTON WILLIAMS



WHEN THEY PERFORMED AFTER LABOR DAY, THE PLAY MADE SUCH A HUGE SPLASH IN AUSTIN THAT IT IMMEDIATELY GOT A SECOND, EXTENDED RUN. THAT WINTER, A CRITIC FROM VARIETY SAW GREATER TUNA AND GAVE IT A RAVE REVIEW, HELPING IT LAUNCH FROM A DINING ROOM IN TEXAS TO OFF-BROADWAY FOR A LENGTHY RUN, ALL WITHIN ONE WILD YEAR!

TOGETHER, SEARS AND WILLIAMS WENT ON TO WRITE AND STAR IN THREE MORE PLAYS, ALL DIRECTED BY HOWARD AND FOCUSED ON THE FICTIONAL SMALL TOWN, INCLUDING A TUNA CHRISTMAS; RED, WHITE AND TUNA; AND TUNA DOES VEGAS. AN HBO SPECIAL OF GREATER TUNA AIRED ON TV, AND THE DUO EVEN PERFORMED A TUNA CHRISTMAS AT THE WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESIDENT GEORGE HW BUSH TO RING IN THE HOLIDAYS. IN 1995, A TUNA CHRISTMAS WAS ON BROADWAY, SCORING SEARS A TONY AWARD NOMINATION FOR BEST PERFORMANCE BY A LEADING ACTOR IN A PLAY. SEARS AND WILLIAMS ALSO CONSISTENTLY TOURED THE NATION WITH THE TUNA SERIES WITH HOWARD'S SUPPORT, FROM 1981 UP UNTIL SEARS'S RETIREMENT FROM THE TROUPE IN 2012, ESTABLISHING A LEGACY OF OVER 30 YEARS.

WHILE SEARS AND WILLIAMS HAVE RETIRED FROM TUNA, TX, THEY ARE STILL ACTIVE IN THE THEATER SCENE BACK IN AUSTIN. THROUGH DIRECTING AND DOING SOLO SHOWS, BOTH MEN HAVE CONTINUED TO PURSUE THEIR LOVE OF THEATER AND KEEP GIVING BACK TO THE CITY THAT GAVE THEM THEIR SUCCESS. ROBERT FAIRES, REPORTER FOR THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE NOTED, "SEARS AND WILLIAMS REINFORCE THE SENSE OF COMMITMENT THESE MEN HAVE TO THIS CITY AND THE ARTISTS WHO LIVE AND WORK HERE. THEY HAVE A TICKET THAT COULD TAKE THEM ALMOST ANYWHERE, ALLOW THEM TO DO ALMOST ANYTHING, BUT WHAT THEY CHOOSE TO DO AGAIN AND AGAIN IS RETURN TO AUSTIN AND MAKE ART WITH PEOPLE THEY KNOW AND TRUST." WHILE TUNA MAY HAVE SEEN THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF NEW YORK, IT'S CLEAR THE AUTHORS NEVER FORGOT THEIR EARLY DAYS OF ACTING FOR FRIENDS DURING A PARTY IN TEXAS.