



New Unicorn production opens soon

Last night, last call, last drop...

I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard

By Halley Feiffer

Directed by Jeff Church



The Unicorn Theatre

In *I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard*, Ella is an up-and-coming actress who wants nothing more than to make her famous playwright father proud. Over the course of the evening, things begin to unravel when they read the reviews of her Off-Broadway debut. This probing and darkly funny play sheds new light on the struggle to overcome a parent's legacy, starring two of Kansas City's favorites Theodore Swetz (*Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*) and Dina Thomas (*Bad Jews*). Warning: This production includes smoking, snorting and swearing, so don't miss it!

Critics have praised Halley Feiffer's provocative new play: "Spectacular tension and real danger!" – Joe McGovern (*Entertainment Weekly*) and "A tense thriller with a strong emotional line between the two characters... one of the best plays I've seen this season!" – Rex Reed (*New York Observer*). In *Time Out NY*, Adam Feldman hailed the play as a "viciously funny" examination of "artistic arsonists stranded by their bridge-burning fire of ambition... Feiffer takes a tough look at the forces that can bring us to our knees."

Directed by Jeff Church, the play features **Dina Thomas** as Ella and **Theodore Swetz** as David.

I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard is on Unicorn Theatre's Jerome Stage located at **3828 Main Street, Kansas City, MO 64111**. The show runs **April 19th – May 14th, 2017**. Previews are **April 19th, 20th and 21st**. Opening Night is **April 22nd**. Featured Friday pre-show events are scheduled for **April 28th and May 5th**. Talk back performances, where patrons are encouraged to stay after the show and discuss the play with the actors and director, are scheduled for **April 25th, 30th and May 7th**.

Performances run Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. If you are unable to afford a ticket, you may Pay What U Can at performances on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, because we believe art is for everyone.

Tickets are now on sale. Call **816-531-PLAY (7529) EXT. 10**, go online at **www.UnicornTheatre.org** or buy in person at the box office located at 3828 Main St., Kansas City, MO 64111. Special discounts are available for seniors (65+), students, and patrons under age 30.

About the Director, Cast and Creative Team:

Jeff Church (DIRECTOR) has enjoyed directing here at the Unicorn: *Cock*, *Next Fall*, *bare*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The*

Laramie Project, Love! Valour! Compassion!, The Lisbon Traviata, and directed Ron Megee in *Sister Mary Ignatius...*, *Santaland Diaries* and co-wrote *A Very Joan Crawford Christmas*. Locally, he has directed for Kansas City Rep (*The Drawer Boy*), Actors & Artists Against AIDS (*Pride & Joy, Auntie Mame'd*) and at Quality Hill Playhouse (*Me and Jezebel*). By day, Jeff is Producing Artistic Director of The Coterie, where he has lead the theatre to a national reputation over the past 25 years. Jeff has been an NEA site reporter and a board member of TCG/Theatre Communications Group. He was inducted into The College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Jeff started a children's theatre back in his home town in Colorado at age 15, which he operated summers through his years at Colorado College and also while he was Playwright-in-Residence for youth and family programs at the Kennedy Center.

Dina Thomas (ELLA) is thrilled to be back in Kansas City at the Unicorn for her fifth time! Since graduating UMKC, Dina's credits include: New York: Off-Broadway: *Tribes, Clever Little Lies*; Regional: Shakespeare Theatre Company and The Old Globe: World Premiere of David Ives' *The Metromaniacs*; Contemporary American Theater Festival: *Everything You Touch*; La Jolla Playhouse: *Tribes*; Barrington Stage: *10x10* (2014 & 2017), *See How They Run*; Unicorn Theatre: *Bad Jews, Distracted, Miss Witherspoon, Hungry*; Berkshire Playwrights Lab: *Release Point*; Other: Staged readings for Red Bull Theater, Project Y, The Lark and National New Play Network. Education: MFA from University of Missouri-Kansas City. This one is for Ted, who started it all, and 14 years later, has never stopped believing.

Theodore Swetz (DAVID) has worked as a principal actor throughout the country. KC audiences have seen him as the Tiger – *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, Donny – *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Unicorn); Friar Lawrence – *Romeo and Juliet*, Max – *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, Argan – *The Imaginary Invalid* (KC Rep); Ben Franklin – *Ben Franklin's*

Apprentice (Coterie). Directing credits include – *Tribes*, *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play, *Mojo*, *Sideman*, *Rabbit Hole* (Unicorn); *The Comedy of Errors* (KC Rep); *Ferdinand the Bull* (Coterie); *Tally's Folly*, *Inspecting Carol* (KCAT); *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Othello*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *As You Like It* (Riverside Shakespeare); and *The Way of the World*, *The Learned Ladies*, *The Liar*, *King Stag*, *The Comedy of Asses*, *Twelfth Night*, *Killer Joe*, *Tartuffe*, *Room Service* and *O Beautiful* (UMKC Theatre). Ted began his career with the NY Shakespeare Festival, at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park and Lincoln Center. He later went on to be an original member of the Tony Nominated, American Players Theatre, Spring Green, WI (a classical repertory company) where he acted, taught, directed and served as associate artistic director. He received his training from legendary teachers Stella Adler, Morris Carnovsky and Phoebe Brand, all original members of the historic Group Theater. Next projects include acting the title role of *King Lear* co-produced with UMKC Theatre and KCAT. He would like to thank his long time collaborator, Cynthia Levin for creating this opportunity and for the special artistic treat of pairing Dina Thomas and himself together to share in this dynamic project. He extends his heartfelt thanks to Jeff Church for his friendship and artistic guidance. Ted serves as The Patricia McIlrath Endowed Professor of Theatre Arts and heads the MFA Actor training at UMKC.

The creative team for *I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard* is **Tanya Brown** (stage manager), **Sarah White** (scenic designer), **Art Kent**(lighting designer), **David Kiehl** (sound designer), **Ian R. Crawford** (costume designer), **Bret Engle** (properties designer), **Gregory Chafin** (technical director), **Amanda Jane Shank** (dramaturg), **Rita Sobbing** (production assistant) and **Elizabeth McManus** (sound board operator).

About the Playwright:

Halley Feiffer (PLAYWRIGHT) is a New York-based writer and actress. Her full-length plays include *I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard* (World Premiere Atlantic Theater Company – January 2015, dir. Trip Cullman), *How to Make Friends and Then Kill Them* (World Premiere Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre – 2014, dir. Kip Fagan), *Sidney and Laura*, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center*. She is currently a writer on the Starz series *The One Percent*. Her plays have been produced, commissioned and developed by Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, Labyrinth Theater Company, The O'Neill, The Orchard Project, Berkshire Theatre Group, Naked Angels, Cape Cod Theatre Project, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Keen Company, Partial Comfort Productions and the Amoralists. She is currently working on a stage adaptation of *The Boy Kings*, Kate Losse's memoir about working at Facebook during its rising year. Halley is an alumna of terraNOVA's Groundbreakers Playwrights' Group, a former resident writer for Blue Man Group, former Playwright in Residence at Stella Adler Studio and a winner of the Young Playwrights Competition and the Lotos Foundation Prize. She is currently under commission by Manhattan Theatre Club/The Sloan Foundation, Jen Hoguet Productions and Playwrights Horizons. Her work is published by Dramatists Play Service, Overlook Press, Vintage Books, Applause Books, and Smith & Kraus. Halley co-wrote and starred in the 2013 film *He's Way More Famous Than You*, and co-created and stars in the web series *What's Your Emergency* for Stage17.tv (both directed by Michael Urie). As an actress, she has appeared in Jon Robin Baitz' *The Substance of Fire* (Second Stage), Ethan Coen's *Women or Nothoring* (Atlantic, dir. David Cromer), Kenneth Lonergan's *Medieval Play* (Signature, dir. Kenneth Lonergan), the Broadway revival of John Guare's *The House of Blue Leaves* (dir. David Cromer), Kim Rosenstock's *Tigers Be Still* (Roundabout; Drama League Nom., dir. Sam Gold), HBO's *Bored to Death* and *Mildred Pierce*, and the films *The Squid and the Whale*, *Margot at the Wedding*, and *Gentlemen Broncos*. She holds a BA from Wesleyan University.

About Unicorn Theatre

Founded in 1974, Unicorn Theatre enhances Kansas City by developing and producing professional, provocative new plays. We create opportunities for the advancement of emerging and established actors, directors, playwrights, designers, technicians and administrative staff. Unicorn Theatre is under the artistic and executive leadership of Producing Artistic Director Cynthia Levin, who joined the company in 1979. From a newly expanded home in the Midtown neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri, the Unicorn houses two stages—The Levin Stage (formerly The Main Stage) and The Jerome Stage (added in 2008). A fully professional not-for-profit theatre, the theatre operates under agreement with Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. The Unicorn is a founding member of the National New Play Network, an alliance of not-for-profit professional theatres that champions the development, production and continued life of new plays for the American theatre; and is a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national service organization for the not-for-profit professional theatre. Financial assistance for this theatre has been provided by The National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; corporate and foundation gifts; and the generous individuals throughout the community we serve.

Unicorn Theatre / 3828 Main Street / Kansas City, MO 64111