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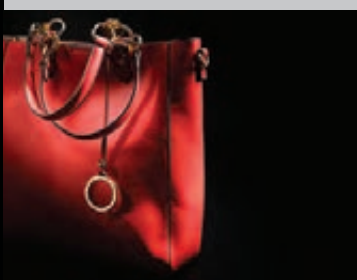
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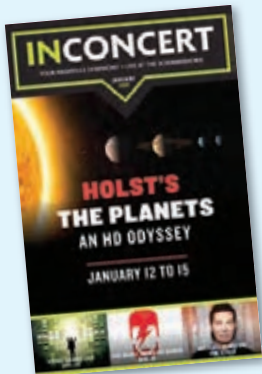
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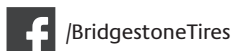
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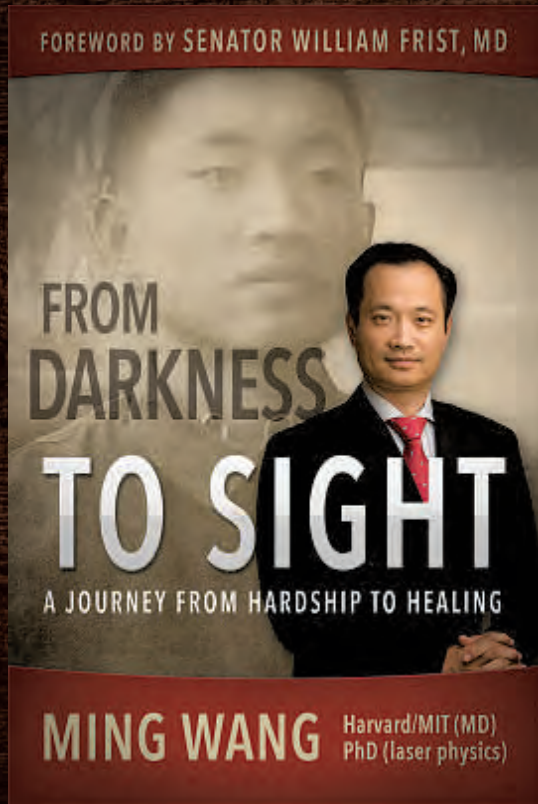


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# *From Darkness to Sight*



chronicles the remarkable life journey of Dr. Ming Wang, a world-renowned laser eye surgeon, philanthropist and Kiwanis Nashvillian of the Year.

As a teenager, Ming fought valiantly to escape one of history's darkest eras – China's Cultural Revolution – during which millions of innocent youth were deported to remote areas to face a life sentence of poverty and hard labor. Through his own tenacity and his parents' tireless efforts to provide a chance of freedom for their son, Ming eventually made his way to America with \$50 in his pocket and an American dream in his heart, where against all odds he would earn a PhD in laser physics and graduate magna cum laude with the highest honors from Harvard Medical School

and MIT. He embraced the Christian faith and tackled one of the most important questions of our time – Are faith and science friends or foes? – which led to his invention of a breakthrough biotechnology to restore sight.

To date, Dr. Wang has performed over 55,000 eye procedures and has treated patients from nearly every state in the U.S. and from over 55 countries worldwide.

He is considered the “doctor's doctor,” as he has operated on over 4,000 physicians. Dr. Wang has published 8 textbooks, holds several U.S. patents and performed the world's first laser artificial cornea implantation. He is currently the only surgeon in the state who performs 3D LASIK (age 18+), 3D Laser Kamra (age 45+), 3D Forever Young Lens Surgery (age 50+), and 3D Laser Cataract Surgery (age 60+). He established a non-profit foundation which provides sight restoration surgeries for indigent patients who otherwise would never have the opportunity to receive them free-of-charge.

This is a story of one man's inspirational journey, of turning fear, poverty, persecution and prejudice into healing and love for others. It demonstrates how focus, determination, humility and profound faith can inspire a life that, in turn, impacts that of countless others.

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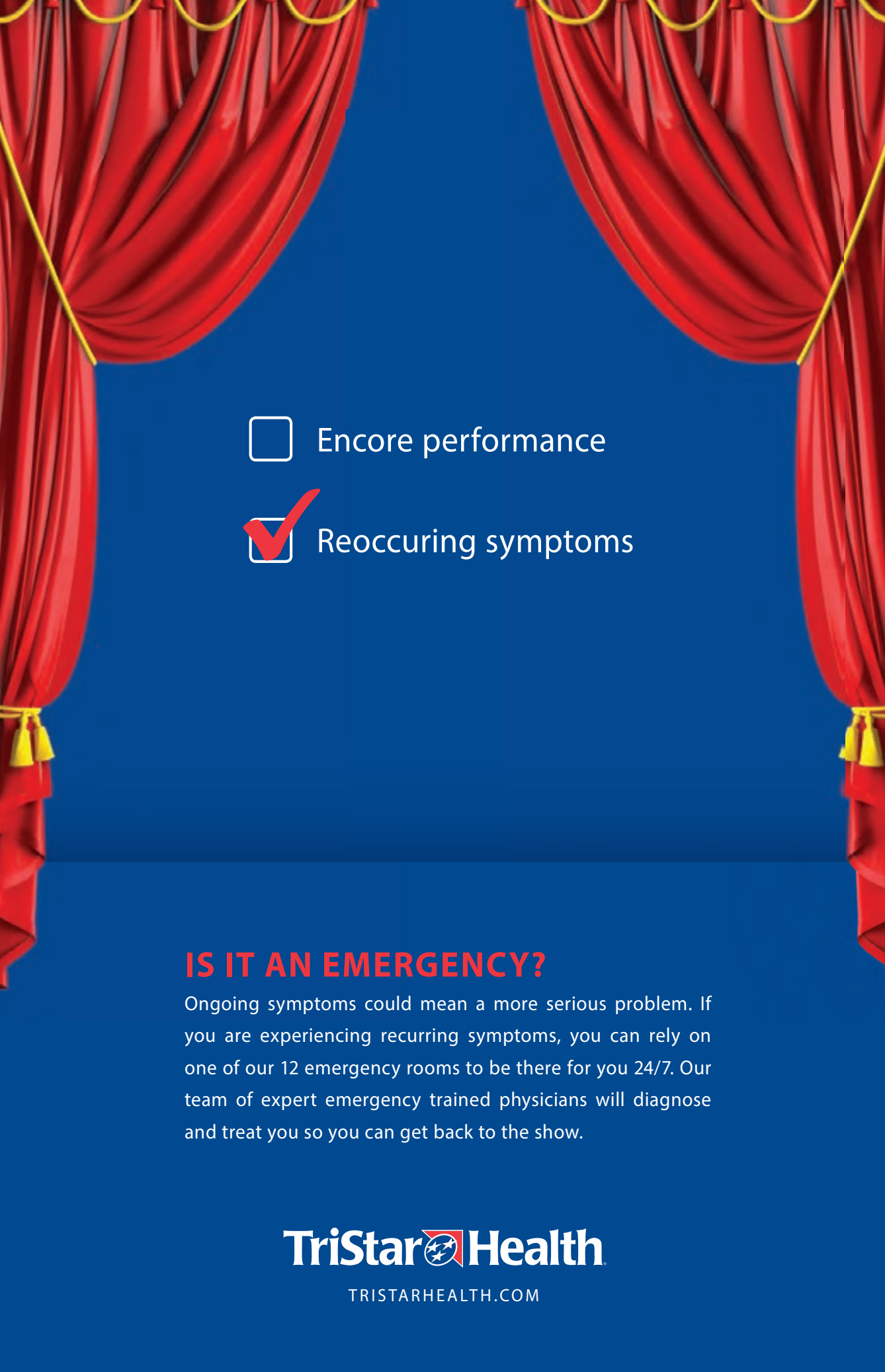
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# Riverdance 20

Starring

**PRINCIPAL DANCERS:**

Maggie Darlington, Gianna Petracic, Natasia Petracic  
Bobby Hodges, Jason O'Neill, Will Bryant

The Riverdance Irish dance troupe, musicians and singers  
and featured International soloists.

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Orchestrations by  
NICK INGMAN and BILL WHELAN

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**BILL WHELAN**

**PRODUCER**  
**MOYA DOHERTY**

**DIRECTOR**  
**JOHN McCOLGAN**

# CAST

## **The Riverdance Irish Dance Troupe**

### **Principals:**

Maggie Darlington, Gianna Petravic, Natasia Petravic  
Bobby Hodges, Jason O'Neill, Will Bryant

### **Troupe:**

Megan Baffa, Ellen Bonner, Will Bryant, Orlagh Carty, Darren Casey, Courtney D'Angelo, Michael Gardiner, Kieran Hardiman, Mitchell Hodges, Kelsey Latham, Miriam Lee, Mia Leonelli, Jennifer Murray, Patrick O'Mahony, Louise O'Sullivan, Jack Quinn, Lauren Smyth, Peter Wilson

## **The Riverdance Band**

**Mark Alfred** Drums / Percussion / Bodhrán, Musical Director **Ceilidh Briscoe** Fiddle  
**Tara Howley** Uilleann Pipes / Low Whistle / Tin Whistle, **Emma Frampton** Saxophone

## **The Riverdance Singers and Drummers**

Members of the Company

## **The Riverdance Baritone Soloist**

JL Williams

## **The Riverdance Flamenco Soloists**

Marta Ortiz Deusto

## **The Riverdance Russian Ensemble**

Rifat Gabdulkhakov, Katrina Meske, Ana Turcan, Eugeniu Turcan, Anna Vedenina, Anatolii Zavitov

## **The Riverdance Tappers**

Tyler Knowlin  
JL Williams

## **Poetry Narrated by**

John Kavanagh

ORINGAL PRINCIPAL IRISH DANCE CHOREOGRAPHY – MICHAEL FLATLEY

ORIGINAL CHOREOGRAPHY BY MAVIS ASCOTT, JEAN BUTLER, JOHN CAREY, BRENDAN DE GALLAI, COLIN DUNNE,  
CAROL LEAVY JOYCE, EILEEN MARTIN, PAULA NIC CIONNATH, MARIA PAGES, TARIK WINSTON

At certain performances, alternative principal performers will dance the principal roles. Cast and content may be subject to change without prior notice.



# THE SHOW

## ACT ONE

Reel Around the Sun .....The Riverdance Male Irish Dance Principal & Troupe

The Heart’s Cry..... The Riverdance Singers

The Countess Cathleen .....The Riverdance Female Irish Dance Principal,  
Troupe and Russian Folk Dancers

Caoineadh Chú Chulainn (Lament)..... The Riverdance Irish Piper

Thunderstorm.....The Riverdance Male Irish Dance Principal & Troupe

Firedance ..... Flamenco Soloist and the Riverdance Male Irish Dance Troupe

Shivna.....The Russian Folk Dancers and the Riverdance Singers

Slip into Spring – The Harvest..... The Riverdance Musicians

Riverdance..... The Riverdance Irish Dance Principals & Troupe, Singers and Drummers

## ACT TWO

American Wake ..... The Irish Dance Troupe and Riverdance Singers

Heal their Hearts – Freedom.....The Baritone Soloist

Trading Taps ..... The Riverdance Male Irish Dance Principal  
& Male Troupe and the American Tappers

Macedonian Morning /The Russian Dervish ..... The Riverdance Musicians & The Russian Folk Dance Troupe

Andalucía ..... The Flamenco Soloist

Anna Livia .....The Riverdance Female Irish Dance Principal & Troupe

Slow Air & Tunes ..... The Riverdance Musicians

Heartland..... The Riverdance Irish Dance Principals & Troupe

Finale .....The Company



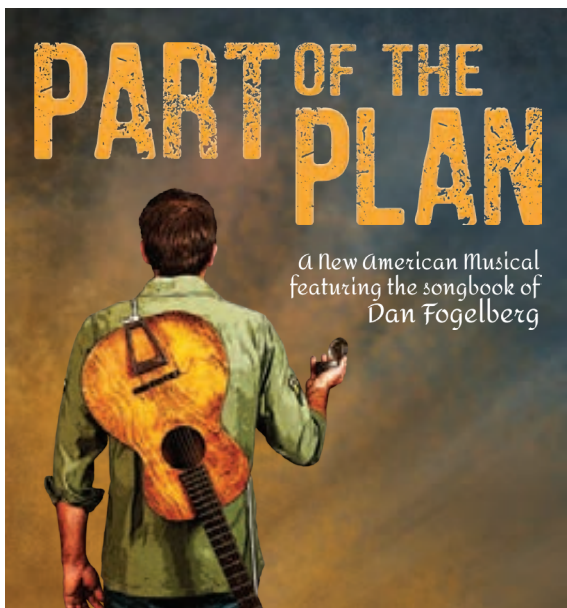
# TPAC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Ever on.

Taken from the title of a song by the late singer-songwriter Dan Fogelberg, these two little words serve as the rallying cry for two talented women, Kate

Atkinson and Karen Harris, who have worked since 2010 to create **Part of the Plan**, a new musical featuring Dan's beautiful music.

Now, their rallying cry has become ours. As a co-producer of their work, we're taking the next step in our commitment to supporting new works, and will present the world premiere of a developmental production of **Part of the Plan** on our Broadway season, September 8-24.



Helmed by Tony Award-nominated director and choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett, and with musical arrangements by Grammy Award winners Victor Vanacore (Ray Charles) and Laurence Juber (Wings),

the musical features a mix of talented performers from New York, Los Angeles, and Nashville.

Following three turbulent decades in the lives of an adopted boy and the teenaged girl of privilege who was forced to give him up, **Part of the Plan** explores themes of love, loss, renewal, and how everything in life happens for a reason.

Sharing this poignant story with our Broadway community truly complements our next season, which includes other contemporary works like the extraordinary 2015 Tony Award-winning **Fun Home**, the gorgeously seductive **An American in Paris**, the ground-breaking and irresistible **Waitress**, and the long-awaited continuation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's ultimate love story, **Love Never Dies**.

In addition, we'll present beloved classics like the Lincoln Center Theater production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's **The King and I**, the Roundabout Theatre Company's Tony Award-winning production of John Kander, Fred Ebb and Joe Masteroff's **Cabaret**, and the anticipated return of **Wicked**, which plays four weeks at TPAC including one week as part of our season package.

For Broadway specials, we're bringing back the Tony, Grammy, and Olivier Award-winning musical, **Jersey Boys**, and Cameron Mackintosh's production of the Tony Award-winning phenomenon, **Les Misérables**, which last played Nashville in 2011.

We're excited by the challenge each year to present a diverse season filled with the best of Broadway while finding new ways to launch and support quality art from Nashville's creative community.

And we look forward to taking that creative journey with you.

Ever on,

**Kathleen W. O'Brien**

TPAC President and Chief Executive Officer

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**For more information, visit [TPAC.org/Broadway](http://TPAC.org/Broadway).**





# CAST & BAND

**THE RIVERDANCE IRISH DANCE TROUPE** The *Riverdance* Irish Dance Troupe are world-class Irish dancers. They hail mostly from Ireland, but also from Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia. Between them the dancers can boast of hundreds of championships won in Ireland and abroad. Most started dancing at three or four years of age at local dance schools and progressed to world championship level before being chosen to perform in *Riverdance*. The dancers would have known and competed against each other at various competitions, including the World Championships. *Riverdance* has given them the opportunity to perform together for the first time in a non-competitive way. The grace and eloquence of their soft-shoe dance and the power and precision of their hard-shoe routines clearly display the endless hours of practice and their dedication to the art of Irish Dance.

## THE RIVERDANCE PRINCIPAL DANCERS FEMALE LEAD DANCERS

**MAGGIE DARLINGTON** Maggie began dancing with the Claddagh School of Irish Dance in California. She won four North American Championships, two All-Ireland Championships and in 2007 won the World Irish Dancing Championships. In 2010 Maggie performed the lead role in Busch Gardens' production *Celtic Fyre* and originated the lead female role in *Battle of the Dance*. She joined the cast of *Riverdance* in 2011.

**GIANNA PETRACIC** Born in Australia, Gianna attended the Halloran School of Dance. She trained in Irish Dance, Ballet, Contemporary and Musical Theatre, obtaining several Championship titles in Irish Dance. She also studied part-time at the Australian Ballet School. Gianna joined the original cast of the international show *Heartbeat of Home* in 2013. Soon after she joined the cast of Prodigig's show *Footstorm*. Her *Riverdance* journey began in 2014 on a UK tour, and she has since travelled the world with the show. In her spare time she enjoys photography and film editing. Gianna is delighted to be performing the female lead role in *Riverdance* on this tour.

**NATASIA PETRACIC** Australian born, Natasia began dancing at the age of 3. She trained in all styles with a strong focus on Classical Ballet and Irish Dance. Throughout her dancing career Natasia obtained 7 National Irish dance titles whilst training as a Ballerina with the Australian Ballet School. This all led her to be chosen as an original cast member in the debut world tour of *Heartbeat of Home*

(2013). Since then she has continued on to perform as a lead with *Heartbeat of Home* (2015) as well as leading Prodigig's show *Footstorm* in China (2014). After joining *Riverdance* in 2014, Natasia is proud to now be performing the leading role in the show that inspired her to pursue Irish dance.

## MALE LEAD DANCERS

**BOBBY HODGES** Bobby was six when he started dancing in his hometown of Bristol. After an illustrious career as a competitive Irish dancer, winning ten world titles, he joined the cast of *Lord of the Dance*. After just six weeks in the show, he was cast as the principal lead. In 2012 he joined the cast of Prodigig to help create their debut show *Footstorm*. Bobby went on to be cast as a lead dancer in *Heartbeat of Home* which has toured internationally and is now thrilled to be performing lead in *Riverdance*, the show that inspired him to pursue dance.

**JASON O'NEILL** Jason started dancing at the age of five alongside his six sisters. Under the tuition of the Armstrong school in Belfast he developed a deep-rooted passion for rhythm. Jason has been a lead dancer with Prodigig's *Footstorm* and with *Heartbeat of Home* and is truly honoured to attain the lead role in three shows. As an avid traveller he has now performed in 200 cities worldwide. Jason is delighted to join *Riverdance* again for its remarkable 20th anniversary.

**WILL BRYANT** Born in Sydney, Australia, Will trained with the Halloran Dance School in various styles from the age of four. Will performed lead roles in musical productions and made regular appearances on TV. At University he studied a Bachelor of Music and is an accomplished guitarist. An ambitious athlete, Will is studying personal training on and off tour. Following an impressive competitive Irish dance career, placing top 3 internationally and winning state and national titles, he went on to perform with *Celtic Illusion* and *Heartbeat of Home*. In 2014 he joined *Riverdance*, touring over ten different countries, and is thrilled to be joining the lead team.

## THE RIVERDANCE BAND

**MARK ALFRED** (*Drums / Percussion / Bodhrán / Musical Director*) A native of Monaghan, Mark began playing drums at the age of four. He studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin and then the Performing Arts College. He is now one of Europe's most sought after, and highly regarded drummers and is constantly in demand from a host

of leading stellar international music acts. His very individualistic and energetic style has seen him play with many international acts including Lionel Richie, Simply Red, Katie Melua, Josh Groban, The Corrs, The Divine Comedy, Lemar, Gary Moore, Mary Coughlan, Ronan Keating, Westlife, Girls Aloud, Donnie Osmond, and the late Christy Hennessy. Mark Alfred uses and proudly endorses: Pearl Drums, Zildjian Cymbals, Evans Drumheads, Vater Drumsticks, Protection Racket Cases.

**CEILIDH BRISCOE** (*Fiddle*) Ceilidh Briscoe has been playing the violin for 16 years. She is currently in the middle of the third year of her Bachelor's Degree in Violin Performance at the University of Ottawa. In 2013, she performed as the first violinist in a Conservatory formed quartet that took first place at the National Music Festival of Canada. In the summer of 2014, she took part in the two week program, Summer Music on the Shannon in Limerick and Ennis, Ireland, where she taught, and performed as a part of the orchestra, and as a soloist. Ceilidh has also performed as a soloist with the Master Series Conservatory Orchestra, the Sooke Philharmonic, and the Victoria Chamber Orchestra. With regard to orchestral playing, Ceilidh currently holds a substitute position with the Victoria Symphony Orchestra, and a fulltime position with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra. Complementing her classical playing, Ceilidh is a five time North American Fiddle Champion, an All-Ireland Fiddle Champion, and has studied the Sligo style of Irish playing extensively via the internet and in person, with Brian Conway of New York City.

**EMMA FRAMPTON** (*Saxophone*) Since graduating from Leeds College of Music with a BA (Hons) in Jazz, Emma has relocated to London and over 8 years has established herself as a much in demand session musician. Emma has toured throughout the World for Hedkandi, & Fierce Angel, as well as performing with Olly Murs, John Newman, Busted, Mr Hudson, The Ting Tings, and Patrick Wolf to name a few. Emma is looking forward to being part of the *Riverdance* Shannon Company, and very much looking forward to Touring North America and Canada this Spring.

**TARA HOWLEY** (*Uilleann Pipes / Low Whistle / Tin Whistle / Concertina*) Tara Howley is a 21 year old award-winning multi-instrumentalist, singer and dancer from Kilfenora Co. Clare. She is a two-time senior All-Ireland champion on the uilleann pipes. Starting both classical and traditional music at the age of four, Tara has numerous All-Ireland titles in solo competitions and with bands and groups in various instruments such as concertina, fiddle, drums, mouth-organ, piano, whistle and uilleann pipes. In 2014 Tara toured Britain and Ireland with the group *Macalla na hEireann* and *The Echoes of*

*Erin*. She produced and launched her debut solo album in April 2015 and is currently studying Irish music and dance in the Irish World Academy at the University of Limerick.

**THE RIVERDANCE RUSSIAN ENSEMBLE** The *Riverdance* Russian Ensemble combines elegance and grace with verve, dynamism and joyous physicality. The company's dancers come from a diverse mix of cultural backgrounds. What they have in common is a dedication to dance and many years of training and performance in pursuit of perfection in their chosen art. Working as individual performers, they have come together for *Riverdance*, where they will share their individual talents and fuse the many elements that have gone into the development of their own unique style of dance.

### THE RIVERDANCE FLAMENCO SOLOIST

**MARTA ORTIZ DEUSTO** Marta Ortiz began to dance at four and quickly developed her talent through many disciplines, earning her degree in Spanish Dance at age 21, and a Certificate in Flamenco at 24. Having studied with such greats as Rubén Olmo in Centro Andaluz de Danza, and in the prestigious center of flamenco Amor de Dios in Madrid for two years, Marta's second year in that school saw her work with more famous masters; Carmela Greco, Lola Greco, Alfonso Losa and Pedro Córdoba amongst others. During her time in Madrid, she performed as a cast-member of "The Trick" across the most prestigious Flamenco theatres (or Tablaos) of the capital. As creator and choreographer of the Cádiz company "Carnaval en Danza", Ortiz has produced three shows that fuse the musical styles of Andalusia, Cádiz carnival and traditional flamenco. As well as touring with *Riverdance*, Marta spent a large part of 2016 dancing and teaching in Japan.

### THE RIVERDANCE TAPPERS

**JL WILLIAMS** (*Baritone / Tapper*) JL Williams is celebrating 15 years of showbusiness performing on Broadway, television, film and theatre in over 20 countries around the world. Selected credits: Original Broadway cast of "FELA!" Japan and USA tour of "42nd Street" in the role of Andy Lee, World tours of Magic of the Dance, Los Angeles Music Center Spotlight Award Alumni, Alumni of Broadway's "Shuffle Along", and CBS's "The Gregory Hines Show" Follow on Instagram @jltapsoul or [www.tapsoulpro.com](http://www.tapsoulpro.com)

**TYLER KNOWLIN** Tyler Knowlin is a professional tap dancer from Connecticut. He attended The Hartford Academy for the Arts, where he was introduced to rhythm tap and given the opportunity to train with masters such as Jimmy

Slyde and Gregory Hines. At 14, Tyler performed at New York City's first annual tap festival, Tap City. Tyler's east coast performances include *Jacob's Pillow*, *The Bushnell*, *Charter Oak Cultural Center*, *Playhouse on Park*, *The Duke Theater*, and *Lincoln Center*. In 2007, Tyler moved to San Francisco. He taught for City Dance Studios and ODC Dance. In 2013, Tyler taught and performed in Brazil. Tyler was most recently a featured performer in Hillary Marie's original show *Soul Walk*. Tyler would like to thank everyone who has supported him on this amazing journey.

**BILL WHELAN** (*Composer*) As a composer, Bill Whelan has written extensively for theatre, dance, film and the concert stage. His film work includes *Dancing at Lughnasa* starring Meryl Streep, *Some Mother's Son* featuring Helen Mirren and Liam Neeson. Music for television includes *The Seven Ages*, a history of the Irish State. He was appointed composer to the W.B. Yeats International Theatre Festival at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1989, writing original music for 15 Yeats plays. His adaptation of *HMS Pinafore* received a Laurence Olivier Award nomination. *The Seville Suite*, Whelan's first large-scale orchestral work, was commissioned for Ireland's National Day at Expo '92 and was performed at Maestranza in Seville. *The Spirit of Mayo* followed in 1993 and *The Connemara Suite*, a trilogy of pieces written for chamber orchestra, premiered in Carnegie Hall in March 2005. Bill Whelan's Symphonic Suite from *Riverdance* received its first performance in 2013. Bill's production and arranging credits include U2, Van Morrison, Kate Bush, Richard Harris, Planxty, The Dubliners and many traditional world musicians and performers. He was honoured with the 1997 Grammy Award for 'Best Musical Show Album' for the lyrics and music of *Riverdance*. The album is a certified Platinum record in the US, Ireland and Australia. Bill is a member of the boards of Berklee College of Music in Boston, University of Limerick, Crash Ensemble and Music Generation, the newly established music education body for Ireland. He has completed a co-teaching course with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Paul Muldoon at Princeton University and was recently appointed Adjunct Professor to Trinity College Dublin's School of Drama, Film and Music. Bill Whelan is a Fellow of the Royal College of Music and is the recipient of many international awards including the Spirit of Ireland Award in New York.

**MOYA DOHERTY** (*Producer*) Moya Doherty's career includes theatre, radio and television journalism and an award-winning track record in television production, both in Ireland and the UK. Moya was the Commissioning Producer and originator of *Riverdance* for the Eurovision Song Contest of 1994; she is a founding Director of Tyrone Productions,

Ireland's leading independent television production company, whose many credits include *Beckett on Film* and the Opening Ceremony of the Special Olympics World Summer Games (held in Dublin in June 2003), and drama credits including *Ros na Rún*, now in its 18th season, for TG4 and *Quirke*, a major co-production with the BBC, starring Gabriel Byrne. Moya is Chair of RTÉ, Ireland's national public broadcasting service. She is a writer and broadcaster and has co-presented a number of radio arts documentaries on George Bernard Shaw, John McCormack and Paddy Kavanagh, amongst others. She is a founding Director of Today FM radio station. She has sat on a number of arts-related boards, including Chair of the Dublin International Theatre Festival for seven years, The Ark Children's Theatre in Dublin, Business to Arts and the Board of the Abbey Theatre. She is the Producer of the new music and dance stage spectacular *Heartbeat of Home* which had its world premiere in Dublin in October 2013 and has played in Beijing and Shanghai and North America as part of its global tour. Awards and honours include: Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year, Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year, and honorary doctorates from the University of Ulster and the National University of Ireland in recognition of her success and her ongoing commitment to the arts in Ireland.

**JOHN MCCOLGAN** (*Director*) John McColgan's career as a multi-award-winning producer and director began in the mid-seventies at RTÉ Television where he went on to become Head of Entertainment. While in RTÉ he produced and directed a wide range of programming from light entertainment to drama to documentary. He was awarded a Jacob's Television Award in 1980 for '*the consistently high quality of his entertainment programming*'. He was also Head of Weekend Entertainment at TVAM - ITV's breakfast television service. He played a key role in the evolution of *Riverdance* from the original seven minute dance number and went on to direct the full stage-show spectacular. John has been closely involved with the Abbey Theatre - he was on the Board of the theatre for five years, served as Chairman of the Abbey Centenary Committee and directed a critically-acclaimed production of Dion Boucicault's 19th century melodrama *The Shaughraun*. In May 2011 he produced a major theatrical event marking the historic State visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland. John is the director of the new music and dance stage spectacular *Heartbeat of Home* which had its world premiere in Dublin in October 2013 and has played to universal acclaim in Beijing and Shanghai and North America, as part of its global tour. John has received many awards during his career, including an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the National University of Ireland, in recognition of his services to the arts and entertainment industry.



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## STAFF LISTING

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Directors . . . . . Moya Doherty,  
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### **Riverdance Dublin Production Office**

Associate Director  
and Brand Manager . . . . . Padraic Moyles  
General Manager . . . . . Sean O'Brien  
Marketing Manager . . . . . Mary O'Donnell  
Head of Production . . . . . Rachel Murray  
Costume Shop Supervisor . . . . . Monica Ennis  
Social Media Manager . . . . . Laura Griffin  
Accountant . . . . . Dominick Tighe  
Production Office Assistant . . . . . Alan Bradley

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### **Original Design Credits**

Lighting Design Rupert Murray  
Costumes for *Riverdance* Eurovision Margaret Crosse  
Costumes for *Riverdance* – The Show Jen Kelly  
Projection Animation Benjamin Percy

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### **Poetry and Music**

*Riverdance* Poetry Theo Dorgan  
Spoken by John Kavanagh  
Music orchestrations by Nick Ingram  
and Bill Whelan  
*Riverdance* soundtrack recorded and mixed by  
Andrew Boland and Willie Mannion

---

### **NORTH AMERICAN TOUR STAFF**

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John McColgan, Rob McDougall,  
Sean Breithaupt & Yvette Monahan

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RTÉ Commercial Enterprises Limited  
Paul McGuinness - Principle Management, Liam  
Miller, Maurice Cassidy, Tommy Higgins  
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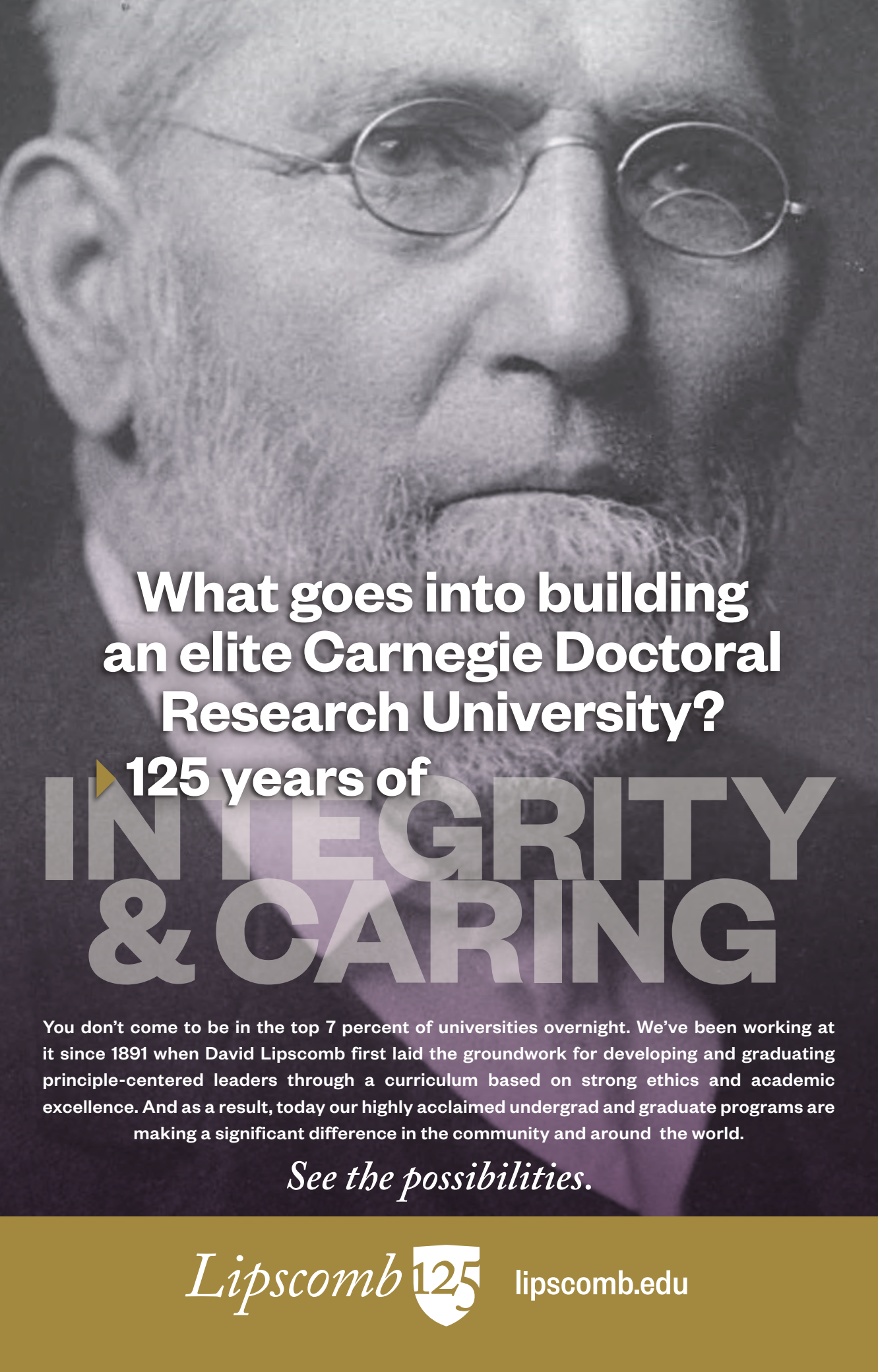
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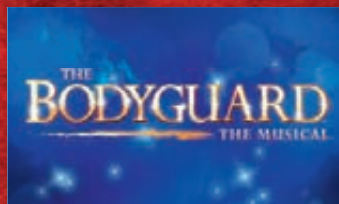
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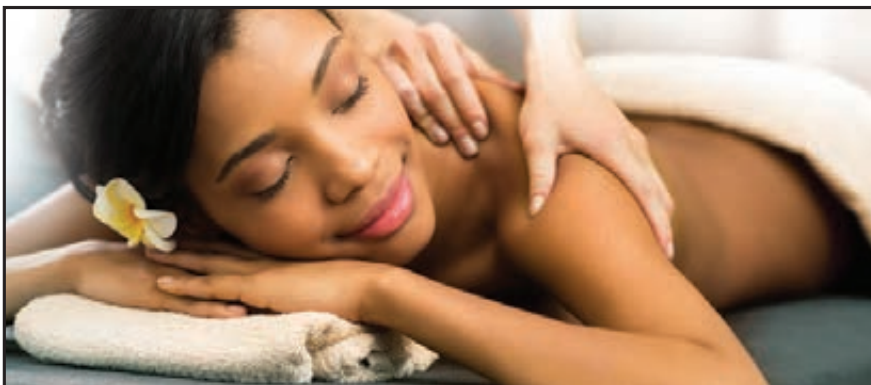
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Now, the Tony and Grammy Award-winning Broadway hit about the early life and career of the legendary and groundbreaking singer/songwriter Carole King, makes its Nashville premiere at TPAC's Andrew Jackson Hall May 23-28, 2017.

*Beautiful – The Carole King Musical* tells the inspiring true story of King's remarkable rise to stardom, from being part of a hit songwriting team with her husband Gerry Goffin, to her relationship with fellow writers and best friends Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann, to becoming one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history. Along the way, she made more than beautiful music, she wrote the soundtrack to a generation.

Featuring a stunning array of beloved songs written by Gerry Goffin/Carole King and Barry Mann/Cynthia Weil, including "I Feel The Earth Move", "One Fine Day", "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman", "You've Got A Friend" and the title song, *Beautiful* has a book by Tony Award-nominee and Academy Award-nominated writer Douglas McGrath, direction by Marc Bruni, choreography by Josh Prince, and took home two 2014 Tony Awards and a 2015 Grammy Award.

**Tickets for *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical* are on sale now at [TPAC.org](http://TPAC.org), by phone at 615-782-4040 and at the TPAC Box Office. For groups of 10 or more, call 615-782-4060.**



Julia Knitel ("Carole King") in a scene from *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical*. Photo: Joan Marcus.

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## How taking a risk and jumping out of his comfort zone led the NFL legend to making plays off the football field

Eddie George says his work in theatre, including a Broadway debut with the long-running musical *Chicago*, was inspired by the words of another great athlete.

“Muhammad Ali said, ‘He who is not willing to risk will accomplish nothing at all.’ And I was willing to take a risk,” said George at a recent TPAC event recognizing his work as a TPAC Board Member and arts education advocate. “I was willing to jump out of my comfort zone and into the world of acting.”

“At the end of my football career in 2004, I had to make a transition to real life, and there was a lot of fear, a lot of doubt, and a lot of anxiety about what was next for me. I’d had a successful career, but there wasn’t another platform that compared to football where I could express myself,” said George.

Ultimately, the Heisman Trophy winner and former Tennessee Titan was able to make the transition through what he calls his “three ‘E’s: Education, Entrepreneurship, and Entertainment.”

“People always ask me how I got into acting. Did you do it when you were in high school? I didn’t. I didn’t do

any of that. Actually, I was exposed to it by my mother,” said George. “My mother was a flight attendant, she was a model, and she worked her butt off at Ford Motor Company in Philadelphia. But she took me all around the world and exposed me to everything.”

And, she forced him to take ballet lessons and attend drama classes at the Freedom Theatre when he was seven years old.

“I didn’t want to wear leotards on a Saturday. I wanted to play football and basketball,” he said. “But little did I know that it would come into full circle.”

After football, George worked hard to filter the fear, the anxiety, and the doubt through the characters he portrayed and his writing. What started as training for a second career as a sports analyst sparked his past experiences with the arts and ignited a new passion for acting.

“That was all therapeutic for me, and that was my lifeline to what I’m doing now. The arts give you so much,” said George.

George made his acting debut in Amun Ra Theatre’s production of *God’s Trombones* and later played the



Eddie George as Billy Flynn in *Chicago*.



Eddie George performs with students in a performance of Doktor Kaboom’s *Live Wire: The Electricity Tour*.



Eddie George and Tamiko Robinson Steele in Nashville Rep’s *A Raisin in the Sun*. Photo by Michael Scott Evans.

title roles in Nashville Shakespeare Festival's *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*. He appeared in Nashville Repertory Theatre's *The Whipping Man*, and in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which played this spring.

After his Broadway debut as Billy Flynn in *Chicago* in early 2016, the touring production asked George to reprise his role at stops around the country, including in Tucson, Los Angeles, and other cities nationwide.

"Theatre has opened up so many opportunities for me just by taking that risk, that chance of jumping out into the unknown and being comfortable in the uncomfortable, eliminating the box and immersing myself," said George. "That's what the arts can do. It allows kids to think well beyond their wildest imagination."

George continues to volunteer his time to visiting children in area schools served by TPAC Education, witnessing first-hand how children are responding to the performing arts, learning to trust themselves, and growing through the creative process.

TPAC administers one of the most comprehensive, curriculum-based arts-in-education programs in the United States, offering a variety of learning opportunities for children and adults. Bringing students to TPAC for performances, providing teachers with resources, and sending artists to schools, TPAC Education has served more than 1.8 million students from pre-school to high school, teachers, and adults over the past three decades.

**To find out more, visit [TPAC.org/Education](http://TPAC.org/Education).**

In December 2015, NFL legend and former Tennessee Titan Eddie George signed on to serve as a spokesman and advocate for the expansive education program of the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. A member of TPAC's Board of Directors, George raises public awareness of the need for arts education and its positive impact on the well-being of children.

When his advocacy role was announced, he told the press:

"I would say for kids,

*'Don't think outside the box.  
Eliminate the box.'*

And then you will learn to be comfortable in the uncomfortable and you will find your authentic voice through that."

His challenge to eliminate the box and open ourselves to the power of the performing arts inspired the theme for our 2015-16 Annual Report to the Community, which you can read online at [TPAC.org/AnnualReport](http://TPAC.org/AnnualReport)

— Eddie George



Eddie George coaching elementary school students with their performance. Photo by Mimosa Arts.



Eddie George rehearsing with elementary school students. Photo by Mimosa Arts.



Eddie George received the TPAC Applause Award in 2014, and he is pictured here with Brenda Corbin and TPAC Board Chairman Ron Corbin.





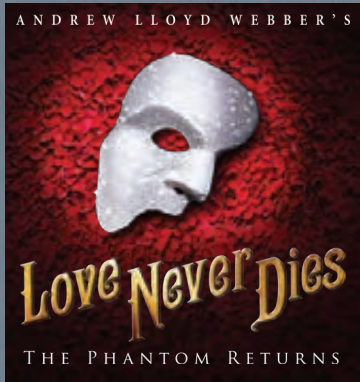
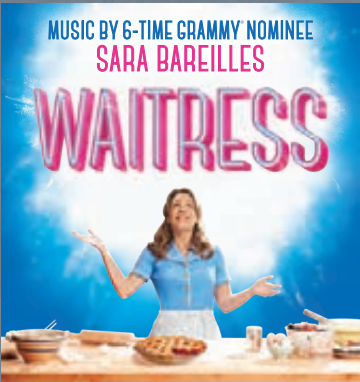
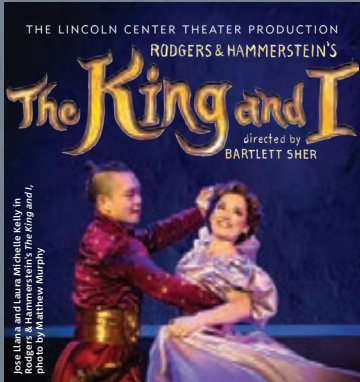
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**Some shows contain mature content.** Event, date, time, guest artists, and repertoire are subject to change. TPAC.org is the official online source for buying tickets to TPAC events. \*Upgrade costs may apply, based on availability.

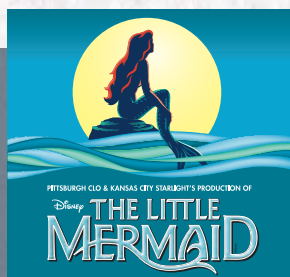
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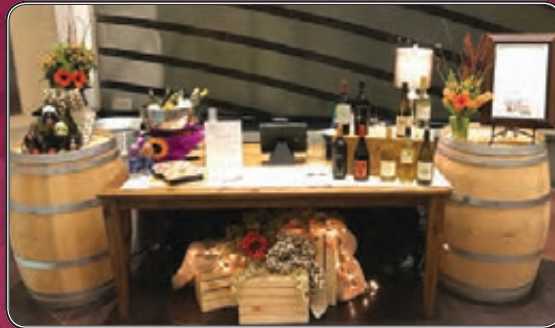
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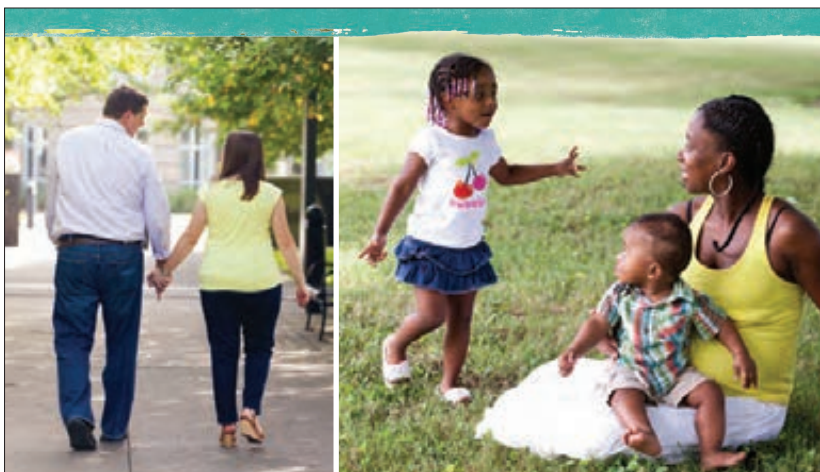
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A promotional poster for 'The Bobby Bones Show'. The background is a solid red color with a faint, stylized silhouette of a city skyline, including a prominent skyscraper on the left. In the center, a man (Bobby Bones) and a woman are standing. The man is wearing a dark blue bomber jacket over a dark shirt and glasses, smiling. The woman is wearing a black sleeveless top and black pants, also smiling. In the top right corner, the text 'THE BIG 98.8' is written in a large, white, distressed font. The number '8' is replaced by a white acoustic guitar. In the bottom left corner, there is a black rounded rectangle containing the text 'THE BOBBY BONES SHOW' in white and blue. Below this, the text 'MORNINGS 5-10AM' is written in a large, white, bold font.

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