

# CITADEL THEATRE



WRITTEN BY **TOM DUDZICK** DIRECTED BY **SCOTT SHALLENBARGER**

NOVEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 14, 2025

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*A live professional theatre located in Lake Forest, IL*

PRESENTS

# *Miracle on South Division Street*

WRITTEN BY **Tom Dudzick**

Set in 2010, *Miracle on South Division Street* finds the Nowak family, amidst the urban rubble of Buffalo's East Side, performing their unique

Christmas ritual of gathering at the shabby old homestead to commemorate the family "miracle." According to legend, on Christmas

Eve in 1942 the Blessed Mother herself appeared to Grandpa in the family barbershop. Now Clara, the family matriarch, happily tends the family heirloom, a twenty-foot memorial shrine to the Virgin Mary which adjoins the house. As the play develops, daughter Ruth divulges

her plan to finally "go public" with the miracle by creating a one-woman Christmas Show about the sacred event. During the course of the meeting, the entire family's faith is shaken to the very core when a deathbed confession causes the family legend to unravel. The results are heartfelt and hilarious.

NOVEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 14, 2025 | CITADEL THEATRE

DIRECTED BY **Scott Shallenbarger**

# Cast

Naomi Hershman.....	Clara
Lorelei Sturm.....	Beverly
Mindy Shore.....	Ruth
Robert Wood Frank.....	Jimmy
Sheri Warren.....	U/S Clara
Jen Ruffner.....	U/S Beverly
Jamie Hendler.....	U/S Ruth
Philip J. Macaluso.....	U/S Jimmy

# Production Crew

Scott Shallenbarger.....	Director
Mathew Kier.....	Stage Manager
Ellen Phelps/Scott Phelps.....	Production Managers
Bob Knuth.....	Scenic Designer
Danielle Reinhardt.....	Costume Designer
Joel Zishuk.....	Lighting Designer
Maya Reter.....	Sound Designer
Ellen Markus.....	Properties Designer
Mitchell Pollitt.....	Technical Director
Alex Trinh.....	Stage Crew
Caitlin Trudeau.....	House and Operations Director

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## A Note From Our Director,

Welcome to the season of light!

At this time of year, diverse cultures around the world celebrate light to symbolize the triumph of radiance over darkness; hope over despair; and, for some, the arrival of miracles. Speaking of miracles, you will soon meet the Nowak family of Buffalo, New York where legend has it that in 1943 on Christmas Eve, the Virgin Mary appeared to the family patriarch (a barber) and gave him a message to spread world peace. The barber built a 17-foot-tall statue of the Blessed Mother, and the shrine still stands outside the family home on South Division Street. The Nowak family—for generations—has built their identity on this miracle, ensuring the legend continue to offer hope, faith, and peace to those in need.

And I wonder: Is this the only miracle on South Division Street? Is the word “miracle” limited to holy sightings? Living right now in a world that often feels divided, I wonder: Is it a miracle when we choose to be curious about what we don’t understand (versus disparaging the unfamiliar?) Is it a miracle when someone opens their heart and offers unconditional acceptance? Perhaps it is a miracle when we offer our light to someone walking in their darkness. Throughout my life, I have deeply benefitted from those who gave freely of themselves in my time of need; and because of their encouragement (and selflessness,) I was able to walk out of the shadow of hardship and imagine a new tomorrow. Which felt like a miracle.

As the poet Rumi reminds, *“If everything around seems dark, look again: You may be the light.”*

After all,

‘Tis the season!

Scott Shallenbarger  
Director







**Naomi Hershman**  
Clara



**Lorelei Sturm**  
Beverly



**Mindy Shore**  
Ruth



**Robert Wood Frank**  
Jimmy



**Sheri Warren**  
U/S Clara



**Jen Ruffner**  
U/S Beverly



**Jamie Hendler**  
U/S Ruth



**Philip J. Macaluso**  
U/S Jimmy

### **Naomi Hershman (Clara)**

Seen on suburban stages across the North Shore for over 26 years, Naomi's most favored roles include Old Woman in *Les Misérables*, Rosie in *The Wedding Singer*, Aunt Eller in *Oklahoma*, Mabel in *Pajama Game*, and Yente in *Fiddler on the Roof*. A long time fan of Citadel Theatre, she is beyond thrilled to bring this role to life, one that resonated deeply with her from the very first read, especially as the daughter of a Rabbi. Naomi is profoundly grateful to the incredible production team and her fellow performers. Heartfelt thanks to "family" and friends for their love and unending support. Here's to love, laughter, and the beautiful chaos of life on (and off) the stage!

### **Lorelei Sturm (Beverly)**

Lorelei is thrilled to be making her Citadel Theatre debut in *Miracle on South Division Street*. Recent stage credits include Karin in *the Church Basement Ladies - The Last Potluck Supper* at Fireside Theatre in Ft. Atkinson, WI and Chelsea in *On Golden Pond* at Little Theatre on the Square in Sullivan, IL. She holds a Master's Degree in Acting from Wayne State University. Lorelei is also a Registered Dietitian and certified yoga instructor. You can find her on YouTube as Nutrition with Lorelei and Namasturm Yoga.

### **Mindy Shore (Ruth)**

Mindy is elated to return to the Citadel Theatre after trekking through the woods this summer as the traveler in *The Queens Museum*. Other acting credits include *Kairos* (Gina u/s) & *Vinegar Tom* (Margery) with Red Theater, where she is also an ensemble member, *This One Will Grow* (Glass Apple), *Reap The Grove* (Artemisia), *Tutus* (Haven), *Bechdel Fest* (Broken Nose), and *Hitting Guac Bottom* (Second City Training Center). In addition, Mindy is an ensemble member with A Short Leap Theatre, where she made her associate directorial debut this year with *The Subtle, Sublime Transformation of Benny V*. She is a proud graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she earned her BFA. She has also trained at Second City, Improv Olympic, and ComedySportz Chicago. Love to Ben, Hoda & the cats. She dedicates this and every performance to her mother. [mindyshore.com](http://mindyshore.com) for more.

### **Robert Wood Frank (Jimmy)**

Robert Wood Frank (He/Him/His) is thrilled to be in his first show at Citadel Theatre. Robert is a classically trained actor and a graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program. He's a recent Chicago transplant, and excited for what the future holds.

### **Sheri Warren (Clara Understudy)**

Sheri Warren is delighted by the opportunity to work with Citadel Theatre for the first time! Favorite previous roles include Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* (Theatre 121), Annie Wilkes in *Misery* (Janesville Little Theater), the Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods* (Townsquare Players and Lakeside Players) and the Killer Queen in *We Will Rock You* (Haylofters Theater). Sheri lives in Lake in the Hills with her wife, far too many cats and her beagle Virginia Woof. She thanks the production staff and cast for welcoming a first-timer and her family for all of their loving support!

### **Jen Ruffner (Beverly Understudy)**

Jen Ruffner is excited to be part of her first show at Citadel and will be back again to understudy for *Admissions*. Jen's most recent role was Kate in *Dancing at Lughnasa* at Devonshire Playhouse in Skokie. Other favorite roles include Sister James in *Doubt* (Cleveland Play House), Dawn in *Lobby Hero* (Beck Center), and Wendy in *WAIT!* (Cleveland Public Theatre). Jen has a BFA in Theater Arts/Performance from Hofstra University. She loves supporting young theatre artists and has worked with students at Niles North High School, Thin Ice Ensemble Theatre, and alongside acting/college audition coach Lynn Baber. Jen is the group sales manager for Music Theater Works, and a real estate broker with @properties. She is thankful to her friend Jen Russell for encouraging her to audition, and grateful to her husband Joe and their daughters Bella & Sofia for their love and support!

### **Jamie Hendler (Ruth Understudy)**

Jamie Hendler is thrilled to make her Citadel Theatre debut in *Miracle on South Division Street* and to return to working with director Scott “Shall” Shallenbarger. Jamie has trained at the Piven Theatre Workshop, National High School Institute at Northwestern University (f.k.a. Cherubs), The Second City, and WashU’s Performing Arts Department. Favorite stage credits include *Legally Blonde* (Paulette), *Les Misérables* (Fantine), *Spring Awakening* (Ilse), *Mary Poppins* (Mrs. Corry), and Playback Theatre. By training, she’s a CPA, and by day, she works in e-commerce advertising. In her free time, you can find her volunteering at her local dog shelter, teaching WERQ dance cardio, or singing with Jewish a cappella groups. Jamie is forever grateful for the unwavering support from her family—Mom, Dad, Ashley, and Milo.

### **Philip J. Macaluso (Jimmy Understudy)**

Philip J. Macaluso has spent most of his life in New York’s Hudson Valley, but Chicago has been his home since 2021. He last appeared at Citadel Theatre in 2024’s *The Cottage*, and was also seen in 2023’s *Airness* and 2022’s *It Runs in the Family*. He’s also appeared at Chicago Children’s Theatre (*A Year with Frog & Toad*), Oil Lamp Theater (*Failure: A Love Story, Never the Bridesmaid*), Black Ensemble Theater (*That’s What Friends Are For, The 2023 Black Playwriting Festival*), The Impostors Theatre (*The Last Living Gun, Footholds Vol.4*) and The Athenaeum Center for Thought & Culture (*Antigone, Dante 360*). He is thrilled to be returning to Citadel for the fourth consecutive year and for his first show after marrying the love of his life, Paige.

### **Tom Dudzick (Playwright)**

Tom Dudzick is one of the few playwrights who makes a living at it. His first play, a Christmas tale called *Greetings!*, opened at New York’s John Houseman Theatre and starred Darren McGavin and Greg Edelman. It is now a holiday favorite across the country and has had well over one hundred productions. His next play, *Over the Tavern*, the first in a semi-autobiographical trilogy, has over three hundred productions under its belt, with many box office records broken throughout the U.S. *Tavern* has recently spawned a holiday musical as well, entitled *Christmas Over the Tavern*. The Irish adaptation, *Over the Pub*, also broke the box office record at Cork Arts Theatre in Ireland. Tom has written eight plays to date, most published by Playscripts, Inc. He was recently honored with a memorial plaque embedded in front of his boyhood home in Buffalo. And an even greater honor—he was once a question on Jeopardy!

### **Scott Shallenbarger (Director)**

Scott joyfully returns to Citadel Theatre having directed *I And You* last season and 2024's *Baby, the Musical*. Other representative credits: *Les Miserables*; *The Glass Menagerie* (Jeff-Award;); *Six Degrees of Separation*; *Love, Valor, Compassion*; *Our Country's Good*; *The Road to Mecca*; *Burn This*; *The Hot L Baltimore*; *Skyscraper*; *The Children's Crusade*; *Jeffrey*. Scott is a published playwright, teaching artist, and co-founder of The Power of Story Crew, a team of professional educators and theatre-makers who facilitate community building workshops for schools, businesses, therapeutic centers, and civic organizations. A tsunami of love to Brad, Riley, and Parker.

### **Mathew Kier (Stage Manager)**

Mathew Kier is a recent graduate from the University of Iowa, where he studied theatre with a focus in stage management. While at the University of Iowa, Mathew stage managed and assistant stage managed on many different productions, from new works and classics like *Macbeth*, *The Bacchae*, & *Romeo & Juliet* to dance performances and reading. Mathew is very excited to be working at for the first time at Citadel theatre and would like to thank his family for their support on his journey.

### **Bob Knuth (Scenic Designer)**

A 17-time Chicago JEFF Award nominee, Bob has received two awards for Outstanding Scenic Design with Circle Theatre. After 16 years as Creative Director and Resident Scenic Designer for The Second City (Chicago, Toronto, Hollywood, Kennedy Center), Bob has recently pivoted to freelance work and higher education. He is proud to be directing, designing, and teaching at Lake Forest College. Recent scenic design credits include *Misery*, *Miracle on Division Street*, and *Dames at Sea* (Citadel Theatre); *Godspell* and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Music Theater Works); *Hairspray* (Uptown Music Theater Highland Park); and several productions at Mercury Theater Chicago, including *Young Frankenstein* (JEFF Award nomination), *CLUE* (JEFF Award nomination), *Jersey Boys*, *Rock of Ages*, *The Color Purple*, and *The Addams Family*.

[www.bobknuth.com](http://www.bobknuth.com)

### **Danielle Reinhardt (Costume Designer)**

Danielle Reinhardt is excited to collaborate once again with the Citadel Theatre, having previously designed costumes for *Misery*, *A Jukebox for The Algonquin*, *I and You*, *Dames at Sea*, *Baby, She Loves Me*, and *The Mousetrap*. Other recent credits include *The 39 Steps*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Hairspray* (James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts), *Our Town*, *You Can't Take It With You*, *That Day in Tucson* (Elgin Community College Arts Center), *Me...Jane* (Deerfield Family Theater) as well as *Fairly Grimm Tales*, *The Summer's Tale* and *Pandora's Box* (Mudlark Theater). Danielle holds an MFA in Costume Design from Northern Illinois University. She would like to thank her family for their continued support.

### **Joel Zishuk (Lighting Designer)**

Joel Zishuk is a Chicago based Lighting and Projection Designer. Other professional credits include *Les Misérables* (Lighting, Uptown Music Theater), *Beehive: The 60's Musical* (Lighting, Cumberland County Playhouse), *Silent Sky* (Lighting, Citadel Theatre), *FORTS!* (Lighting, filament & Writer's Theatre), *Rubenology* (Projections, GableStage), *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* (Lighting, Florida REP), and *Lobby Hero* (Lighting & Projection, Florida REP). He received his BFA in Theatre - Design and Technology from the University of Central Florida.  
[www.JoelZishuk.com](http://www.JoelZishuk.com)

### **Maya Reter (Sound Designer)**

Maya Reter (she/her) is a sound artist and storyteller based in Chicago. Most recently, her work could be heard at Citadel Theatre in *I and You*, *Dames at Sea*, and *The Cottage* and at Hell in a Handbag's *Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer*. Outside of theatre, Maya spends much of her time working on fantastical audio fiction (*Tales From the Singing Porch*, *Weirdvoice*), film (*Body God*, *Cub*) and documentary pieces (*American Dendrite*), which often bring her to her favorite place: deep in the woods.

### **Ellen Markus (Properties Designer)**

Ellen is thrilled to be back at Citadel working alongside this amazing cast and crew. Her recent credits include *Jukebox for The Algonquin*, (Citadel), *Gaslight*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, *Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged*, *First Date*, *Cry It Out*, *Gift of the magi*, *Ripcord*, *Rooted*, *The Revolutionists*, *Now and Then*, *Murder on the Nile*, *Tally's Folly* (Oil Lamp), Midwest Premier of *Diana*, *Secret Garden* (Theo Ubique) *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Pippin*, *Ragtime*, *Little Mermaid* (Music Theatre Works) the world premiere of *Gods and Monsters* (Theater Wit) *Young Frankenstein* (Mercury Theatre). Enjoy this beautiful show!

### **Mitchell Pollitt (Technical Director)**

Mitchell Pollitt is a Chicago-based creator of theatre and film. His theatrical work can be seen across the Chicago storefront and underground scenes while his work in film has been featured in festivals both local and international.

### **Alex Trinh (Stage Crew)**

Alex Trinh returns for another show with Citadel to end the year. He graduated from Tribeca Flashpoint Chicago with an AFA in Audio Engineering. His recent theatre credits include *Misery* (Citadel), *Side by Side by Sondheim* (Oil lamp), *Tom and Eliza* (TUTA), *Frog and Toad* (Metropolis), *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (Oil Lamp), *A Jukebox for the Algonquin* (Citadel), *Carrie* (CCPA). Alex's recent film credits include *Power Off*, *Play On* (Adobe Stock and GKoh Films), *Awesome Intelligence* (Samsung and GKoh Films), and *Delivery Fee* (Lipsitz Films). IG: alex.mf.t

### **Scott & Ellen Phelps (Production Managers)**

Scott & Ellen Phelps are the founders of Citadel Theatre. Scott Phelps is the Artistic Director of the company, while Ellen Phelps serves as the Managing Director. Citadel Theatre, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization & one of Chicagoland's premier live theatres, is in its 23rd season.



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## A Note From The Author

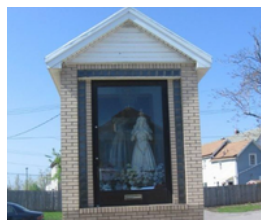
Tonight's play is pure fiction, based on a "true" local legend. Back in busy, bustling 1950's Buffalo, a block and a half from my father's tavern, there stood a barbershop. Next to the barbershop was a 20-foot-tall shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary--a beautiful life-sized statue encased in wood, brick and glass. It's *raison d'être*?--well, legend had it that the Blessed Mother herself appeared to this barber and gave him a message for the world concerning world peace. (She was in favor of it.) Whether this miraculous materialization actually took place is still a matter of conjecture, but, regardless, there it stood, this monument to a man's faith for us impressionable kids to gawk at and wonder about. The nuns at St. Pat's told us not to waste our prayers or coins on the ersatz saint as the mighty Roman Catholic Church had no intention of ever sanctioning this hokey miracle. And that's how the matter stood at the time I left the neighborhood in 1964.

Fast forward 45 years. My old neighborhood has all but disappeared. Businesses and homes have succumbed to hard times and neglect. Its denizens have fled to the suburbs, and St. Pat's is gone. But amidst the rubble of urban blight something still stands, dare I say, "miraculously?" You guessed it, the shrine to the Blessed Mother--spared from the wrecking ball by a promise from City Hall, lovingly preserved by a handful of faithful residents, its creator long passed away.

I made a pilgrimage to my old neighborhood several of years ago. I stood before the shrine--newly Windexed, freshly flowered, its mail slot still active with donations and requests for miracles--and I thought to myself, "There's a story here!" The real-life details of its origin were forever buried with the barber, so I needed to invent a family.

Tonight you will meet them, the Nowaks of Buffalo's East Side circa 2010--amalgams of people I grew up with, some friends and family, and a little of myself sprinkled in. After our close interaction these last couple of years I find that I've fallen head over bowling shoes for the Nowaks, with all their crassness, their squabbles, their secrets and their dreams. I hope they'll get under your skin as well. Enjoy!

Tom Dudzick  
Playwright



*Original shrine in Buffalo, NY*



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Written by William Goldman Directed by Scott Westerman



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Written by Tom Dudzick Directed by Scott Shallenbarger



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