

ILLINOIS THEATRE WE MAKE THEATRE MAKERS



**FAILURE: A LOVE STORY**  
**ILLINOIS THEATRE**

By Phillip Dawkins | J.W. Morrisette, director  
Thursday-Saturday, February 2-4, 2017, at 7:30pm  
Wednesday-Saturday, February 8-11, 2016, at 7:30pm  
Sunday, February 12, 2016, at 3pm



## BECOMING . . .

There is a saying in theatre: "Actors act. Stars do what stars do." Implicit in this statement is the idea that "stars" are commodities enriched for attaining a certain status and function within a rather narrow definition, while "actors"—and every artist, one might argue—are continually in a process of becoming.

The artistic process in theatre requires a developing understanding of the human body, spirit, and mind. An artist's education demands consistent development, metamorphosis, evolution. Indeed, education at its best is a continual process of becoming. At Illinois Theatre, our artists—students, staff, and faculty—are embarked on the exciting journey of becoming human beings.

It is the same for us when we consider which dramatic works to program in a given

season. What kinds of work do our students need to create at this point in their artistic development? Which plays or musicals feed that pedagogical imperative? And how do these works allow, encourage, or (sometimes) confound our ability to understand a bit more about the nature of human becoming? When we leave the theatre, do we feel more closely bound to our neighbors? If we feel alienated by the experience, do we understand why?

It is no accident that this note of welcome to our current season includes a litany of questions. Intellectual, emotional, and spiritual query are at the core of a great education. At Illinois Theatre, "we make theatre makers," but we also ask foundational questions on our pathways to creation. Along the way, we learn to think more deeply, critically, and analytically.

Questions about the nature of the human condition are never easy to resolve. The challenging road to the answers we seek encourages public discourse to thrive and pushes our performing arts to engage in positive, healthy transformation.

Thank you for joining us at this performance. We hope that you will be stimulated, provoked, and entertained by what you experience here, and we hope to see you again very soon.

Jeffrey Eric Jenkins  
Head, Department of Theatre  
Producer, Illinois Theatre



---

# PROGRAM

## **FAILURE: A LOVE STORY**

### **ILLINOIS THEATRE**

By Phillip Dawkins

J.W. Morrisette, director

Thursday-Saturday, February 2-4, 2017, at 7:30pm

Wednesday-Saturday, February 8-11, 2017, at 7:30pm

Sunday, February 12, 2017, at 3pm

Studio Theatre

TIME: The past

PLACE: 1920's Chicago

---

Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc. ([www.playscripts.com](http://www.playscripts.com))

---

## PROGRAM NOTE

A self-proclaimed Chicagoan, Philip Dawkins is one of the most successful playwrights of our time, writing over 22 full-length productions that have premiered at quite a few prestigious Chicago theatres, such as Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, Strawdog, and Northlight Theatre. Many of his plays take place in Chicago or the Midwest, drawing inspiration from Chicago's rich history and experimenting with new methods of theatrical storytelling. While choruses have appeared in theatrical works since the time of the Ancient Greeks, *Failure: A Love Story* breaks the mold of "traditional theatre," utilizing a series of memories and a large, all-knowing, energetic chorus to tell and manipulate the story, instead of merely using the chorus as a narrator. Many of Dawkins' plays demonstrate his love for unique theatrical storytelling and a fascination with the impact of time on his characters and their relationships with each other. These evolving relationships and the passage of time emphasize the elasticity of human nature, according to Dawkins; his characters are elastic, adaptive, and unpredictable. They must find themselves and their places in the world. Dawkins stated in an interview, "You aren't born the person you turn out to be—I feel like I found my heart in Chicago."

In 2012, Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago premiered Philip Dawkins' whimsical tragicomedy *Failure: A Love Story*. Set at the end of the Roarin' Twenties, in the midst of prohibition and Al Capone's reign in Chicago and directly following the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote, Dawkins' play follows a successful businessman named Mortimer Mortimer on his journey to find love. This quest brings him to the home of three very quirky

sisters, Gerty, Jenny June, and Nelly Fail (born in that order). From the very beginning of the show, Dawkins demonstrates the truest paradox of life—everything must come to an end, even our lives—for it is fated that each of the Fail girls will die within the year. We are taken, almost magically, into a world of lively clocks, talking animals, and competitive lake swimming, where daily life seems almost suspended in time, yet so close to its conclusion. For the Fail family, Time has always been something they were good at—making clocks, fixing clocks, and maintaining working clocks. It would seem that they have a sense of control over Time, but as Philip Dawkins suggests in this play, even those among us who seem to be in control of Time and their own lives have no control at all—in fact, Time controls them.

*Failure: A Love Story* also raises questions about what it means to love, illuminating many different types of love—familial, friendly, and romantic. Can love be something almost tangible?

Mortimer Mortimer seeks a terminal kind of love, in marriage, but ends up experiencing many different kinds of love while remaining unmarried throughout the play. He discovers that love can take many forms and, despite his bachelor status, he finds peace in his love-filled life. Though each romance comes to an end in the play, he realizes that love is eternal and everything—no matter its duration—can be seen as successful. As Pal the dog says, "Just because something ends, that don't mean it wasn't a great success." It is a story of love, of mourning, of family, and of self-discovery woven into the very fabric of 1928 Chicago.

—Kelsey Fenske, dramaturg

---

# FAILURE: A LOVE STORY

**PLAYWRIGHT**

Phillip Dawkins

**DIRECTOR**

J.W. Morrisette

**DRAMATURG**

Kelsey Fenske

**MUSIC SUPERVISOR**

Justin M. Brauer

**SCENIC DESIGNER**

Evan Park

**COSTUME DESIGNER**

Nicole Zausmer

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Michelle Benda

**SOUND DESIGNER**

Tyler Knowles

**PROPERTIES MASTER**

Kira Lyon

**STAGE MANAGER**

Marissa Gainey

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Roy H. Howington



---

# CAST

**GERTURDE (GERTY) FAIL**

Ellen Magee

**JENNY JUNE FAIL**

Jessica Kadish

**NELLY FAIL**

Katelyn Shennett

**MORTIMER MORTIMER**

Mark Tyler Miller

**JOHN N. FAIL**

Bryce Lunsky

**PAL/FRONT DOOR/CHORUS**

Nick Lannan

**MARIETTA FAIL/CHORUS**

Lauren Farbota

**GRAMOPHONE/CHORUS**

Christopher Khoshaba

**JOHNNY WEISSMULLER/MOSES/CHORUS**

Patrick Weber

**WALL CLOCK/GRANTLAND RICE/CHORUS**

Harry Belden

**CUCKOO CLOCK/MOSES/CHORUS**

Esther Fishbein

**COUNTER CLOCK/MAE/CHORUS**

Sara Freedland

**DECEMBER/CHORUS**

Yvon Streacker

**HENRY FAIL/GRANDFATHER CLOCK/CHORUS**

Aryamehr Mohseni

---

# PROFILES



**Harry Belden** (Wall Clock/Grantland Rice/Chorus) is a senior at the University of Illinois pursuing his BFA in acting. Harry has appeared in several productions at Krannert Center including *The Other Shore* (Crowd), *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of*

*Wrath* (Red Rustbucket) and *Oh What a Lovely War* (Russian Man/British Man).



**Lauren Farbota** (Marietta Fail/Chorus) is a junior BFA Acting student at the University of Illinois. She has recently appeared in *St. Lucy's Home for Girls*, *Raised by Wolves*, and *Mr. Marmalade* in the Armory Free Theatre; *The Flick* with Penny Dreadful Players;

and *The Other Shore* and *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath* at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. She is also involved in the campus troupe Hive Society Improv.



**Esther Fishbein** (Cuckoo Clock/Moses/Chorus) is from Glencoe, Illinois, and is a junior pursuing a BFA in Acting. Other Illinois Theatre productions include *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (2nd FBI Agent/Ensemble) and *John Steinbeck's: The*

*Grapes of Wrath* (Ruthie). She has also appeared in the Armory Free Theatre's productions of *A Midsummer's Nightmare* (Mallory), *Call Me Woman* (Devise) and *As Wind In Dry Grass*

(Gabby). She participated in the 2014 reading of *Good Kids* (Madison) by Naomi Iizuka.



**Sara Freedland** (Counter Clock/Mae/Chorus) is a senior in the BFA Acting Program at the University of Illinois from Los Angeles, California. Her recent performance credits at Krannert Center include *The Minotaur* (Ariadne), *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes*

*of Wrath* (Al's Girl/Tap Dancer), *The Other Shore* (Old Lady), *Into the Woods* (Little Red Ridinghood), and *Oh What a Lovely War* (Young Girl). Her other local credits include the Doctor in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Michelle Sterling-Matthews in *Might*, and part of the all-female ensemble of *Call Me Woman* at the Armory Free Theatre, as well as Philia in Champaign-Urbana Theatre Company's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. This past summer, she was selected for the Acting Company at the National Theater Institute at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.



**Jessica Kadish** (Jenny June) is in her second year of the MFA Acting program with Illinois Theatre. She was last seen at Krannert Center in *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (Colleen) and *Kingdom City* (Miriam). In Chicago, she is an ensemble member with Teatro

Aguijón and 2nd Story and has performed with Lifeline Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, 16th Street Theater, Pride Films and Plays, Voice of the City, and Colectivo El Pozo. Film/web series credits

include *You're So Talented* (OpenTV), *Easy Abby* (Juicy Planet), *DateSMASH!* (XVP Comedy), and *Absent Father* (Vanguard Cinema). She holds a BA in Theater and Performance Studies from the University of Chicago and has also studied at the University of Buenos Aires. Jessica also works as a director and teaching artist in Chicago, where she is represented by Gray Talent Group.



**Christopher Khoshaba** (Gramophone/Chorus) from Skokie, Illinois, is a senior Acting student at the University of Illinois. His past production credits at Krannert Center include: *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath* (George Rustbucket),

*Not About Nightingales* (Schultz), and *Oh What a Lovely War* (Ensemble). His Armory Free Theatre productions include *Rockman* (Rock) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (Ferdinand).



**Nick Lannan** (Pal/Front Door/Chorus) has appeared at Krannert Center in *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play (Matt) and *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath* (1st Agricultural Officer/Deputy Sheriff). He has also performed at the Armory Free Theatre and the Illini Ballroom in

roles as Deputy Figgle in *Midsummer's Nightmare*, Third Sheperd in *Second Sheperd's Play*, Priceps 3 in *The Assumption of Mary*, Michael Doyle in *Listen*, "FAP-App" Developer in *Moonside Manners*, and at Parkland's Second Stage Theatre as The Mute in *The Fantasticks*. Nick is a junior studying Theatre Performance at the University of Illinois, after spending six years in the United States Marine Corps. Outside of stage work, Nick is featured in a few local commercials and works on independent films within the Champaign-Urbana community.



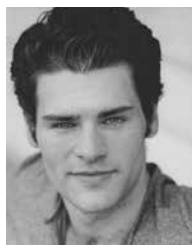
**Bryce Lunsky** (John N. Fail) is a sophomore pursuing a BFA in Acting. Prior credits include *Tusk* at the Piven Theater Workshop, and *Street Scene* at National Pastime Theater. He is originally from Chicago, Illinois, and *Failure: A Love Story* is his first performance

at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.



**Ellen Magee** (Gertrude) hails from Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is a junior pursuing a BFA in Acting at the University of Illinois. She appeared most recently in Illinois Theatre's productions of *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play (Jenny) and *Kingdom City* (Katie).

Other credits include the Lyric Theatre @ Illinois production of *Kiss Me Kate* (Gangster #2), the Illinois Theatre production of *1984* (Kid/Prole Woman), and the Celebration Company at the Station Theatre's production of *Appropriate* (Cassidy).



**Mark Tyler Miller** (Mortimer Mortimer) is a second-year MFA Acting student at the University of Illinois. Mark Tyler holds his BFA in Theatre from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, Washington. Previous credits include Orsino in *Twelfth Night* and

Slank/Hawking Clam in *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival), Bellamy in *Le Club Noel* (Taproot Theatre Company), Claude in *HAIR* and Woodson Bull III in *Third* (Artswest Playhouse), and Bobby in *Postcards from Hotel Cassiopeia* (NYC Strawberry Theatre Festival).





**Aryamehr Mohseni** (Henry Fail/Grandfather Clock/Chorus) is a native of Chicago who is currently enrolled in his senior year in the Acting program at the University of Illinois. He has recently performed in Illinois Theatre's production

of *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath, 1984*, and *Not About Nightingales*, as well as Indiana University's *School for Scandal*.



**Katelynn Shennett** (Nelly) is from Normal, Illinois, and is a sophomore in the BFA Acting program at the University of Illinois. This is her first production at Krannert Center. She has most recently appeared in the formal reading of *Wig Out! (Faye)*, *After Juliet*

(Rosaline) with the Penny Dreadful Players, and *Call Me Woman* in the Armory Free Theatre.



**Yvon Streacker** (December/Chorus) is a sophomore Acting major from Plainfield, Illinois. *Failure: A Love Story* is Yvon's first production at Krannert Center. Previous credits include Michal in *The Pillowman*, Connor in *Good Kids*, and We Beseech Thee

Soloist in *Godspell*.



**Patrick Weber** (Johnny Weissmuller/Moses/Chorus) is a sophomore in the BFA Acting program at the University of Illinois. He is from the Northwest side of Chicago. Previous credits at Krannert Center include *The Minotaur* (directed by Tom

Mitchell), in which he played the role of Theseus.



**J.W. Morrisette** (Director) has served in the Department of Theatre for 19 years. Currently the assistant head for academic programs, he is also a director whose work spans over 60 productions throughout the community, and he has directed the

Repertory Theatre Program for the past 17 years with the Summer Theatre Department at Interlochen Center for the Arts. For the University of Illinois, in addition to overseeing the BFA Theatre Studies Program, he teaches acting, directing, and an introductory course in theatre arts. He has been integral in developing components for the online course offerings in the department as well as supervising all senior theatre studies thesis projects. He has spent several summers acting with the Utah Shakespeare Festival and the Interlochen Shakespeare Festival.

**Michelle E. Benda** (Lighting Designer) is a freelance lighting designer and assistant lighting designer based in Chicago. Lighting design credits include *The Brothers Size* (Definition Theatre Company), *Save the Date: A Time Travel Trilogy Remix* (InGen Productions), *Not About Nightingales* (Illinois Theatre), *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Illinois Theatre), and *9 Parts of Desire* (Illinois Theatre) Assistant lighting design

credits include *Domesticated* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Goodman Theatre), and *Carlyle* (Goodman Theatre). Michelle is an alumna of the University of Illinois, where she received her MFA in Lighting Design and Technology.

**Justin Brauer** (Music Supervisor) is a graduate of the University of Illinois School of Music and holds a Master of Music degree in musicology and a Bachelor of Music Education in choral music education. He most recently served as music director for the U of I Department of Theatre Junior Acting Studio. Music direction credits include: *The Pajama Game* and *The Music Man* (Urbana Park District); *Floyd Collins* (Station Theatre); *The Wedding Singer* (Illini Student Musicals); *The Wild Party* (Lippa) and *Reefer Madness* (assistant music director, Armory Free Theatre); and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (assistant music director, Champaign Urbana Theatre Company). Selected keyboard credits are: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *Oliver!* (CUTC); *High School Musical* and *Working* (Urbana High School); *Aida* (Barrington High School); *Mary Poppins* (Palatine Park District); *Legally Blonde* and *Chicago* (Illini Union Board); and *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Illini Student Musicals). Justin is a member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 301.

**Kelsey Fenske** (Dramaturg) received a BA in History and Theatre Arts from the College of William and Mary in Virginia. She is currently a first-year master's student in Theatre Studies at the University of Illinois. She has worked as Dramaturg for Pride Films and Plays' production of *Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown*, William and Mary's production of *Spring Awakening*, and has worked as a Dramaturgy intern for the Chicago premiere of *The Boy From Oz* (also produced by Pride Films and Plays). She also Assistant Directed William and Mary's

production of *Avenue Q*. While finishing her bachelor's degree, Kelsey presented a paper at a European Studies Conference and worked as a costumed actor at Jamestown Settlement.

**Marissa Gainey** (Stage Manager) is a first-year MFA Stage Management student at the University of Illinois. She received her BA in Theatre from North Carolina Central University. She served as an assistant stage manager on the production of *Dontrell, who Kissed the Sea*. Marissa will spend this summer at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston Salem, North Carolina, where she will continue her position as the Executive Assistant to the Technical Director.

**Roy H. Howington** (Scenic Technology MFA) has had a career in technical theatre spanning over 15 years as a fabricator, technical director, teacher, and consultant, including work with Sapsis Rigging, Chicago Scenic Studios, Tisch School of Drama, George Tsypin Opera Factory, The Atlantic Theater, CAP 21 Studios, The Center for Puppetry Arts, The Alliance Theater, and Georgia Shakespeare. Roy is a third-year MFA candidate in Scenic Technology. Production credits at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts include *Poppea*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1984, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and *The Skin of our Teeth*.

**Tyler Knowles** (Sound Designer) is a second-year MFA Sound Design student. His recent credits include *Kiss me, Kate*; *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath*; *Beatrice and Benedict*; and *The Merry Widow* at the University of Illinois. This past summer, Tyler was the Assistant Sound Shop Supervisor at Hope Summer Repertory Theatre where he designed *The Cat in the Hat* and *Go, Dog! Go*.

**Kira Lyon** (Properties Master) ) is a first-year Properties Design and Management graduate student. She has been working in Chicago for the last three years designing for companies such as New Colony, Definition, and StageLeft. During the last year she was the props designer for the world premiere (and subsequent remount) of *Byhalia, MS*, which won three Jeff awards. She graduated with a BFA in Theatre Performance with a minor in History at the University of Southern Mississippi.

**Evan Park** (Scenic Designer) is a third-year Scenic Design student from Lonoke, Arkansas. He received his BA from Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. His previous University of Illinois credits include Scenic Design for *In The Blood*, Props Master for *The Other Shore*, Scenic Charge for *Not About Nightingales*, Assistant Scenic Charge for *Oh What A Lovely War*, and the Assistant Scenic Designer for *Polaroid Stories*. Evan has designed and painted on the productions of *Godspell* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* for Stage Door Productions in Memphis, Tennessee.

**Nicole Zausmer** (Costume Designer) is a second-year MFA Costume Design student at the University of Illinois. She received her BA from Indiana University in 2012. This is her first production in the Studio Theatre. Recent design work includes *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (Illinois Theatre); *Man of La Mancha* (Bigfork Summer Playhouse); *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Metropolitan State University of Denver); *Tarzan* (BSP); and *Boeing-Boeing* (Town Hall Arts Center). Recent assistant design work includes *The Sullivan Project: Long Lost* (Krannert Center), *John Steinbeck's: The Grapes of Wrath* (Illinois Theatre), and *Beatrice and Benedict* (Lyric Theatre @ Illinois).

---

# PRODUCTION STAFF

## **ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR**

Kate Fenton

## **ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR**

Tyler Harr

## **ASSISTANT DRAMATURG**

Kathryn Burke

## **ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER**

Maddie Martín

## **ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER**

Adeline Snagel

## **SCENIC CHARGE**

Emma St. John

## **MASTER ELECTRICIAN**

Omri Schwartz

## **AUDIO ENGINEER**

Brandon Reed