

The Birds of North America

By Matthew-Lee Erlbach.
Sullivan Playwright-in-Residence
Director: Latrelle Bright

SEP 15-16
Studio Theatre



College of Fine &
Applied Arts

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



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BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA is a poignant, dark comedy-drama set against the dynamic landscape of a rapidly changing era. This story delves into compelling themes, including immigration, the American Dream, and the unstoppable march of technology. At its core is the tale of a working-class family's struggle to preserve their identity from oblivion. Their roots as immigrants, tracing back to Germany and Ukraine, lend an additional depth to their narrative. The story unfolds against a backdrop of heart-rending scenes – immigrant birds plummeting from the sky, their cries echoing in agony, and their beaks bleeding. This haunting imagery serves as an affecting metaphor, mirroring the family's dilemma and drawing the attention of spectators. As the family confronts the challenge of survival and strives to adapt in a swiftly changing world, the play delves into the profound search for meaning amidst these transformations.

BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA is a compelling exploration of the timeless quest for identity and belonging, masterfully intertwined with the contemporary issues of society. The play's emotional journey resonates with the experiences of immigrants and the broader human struggle to adapt, survive, and thrive in shifting landscapes.

— Katayoun Salmasi, Dramaturg

BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

ARTISTIC TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT

Matthew-Lee Erlbach

DIRECTOR

Latrelle Bright

SCENIC DESIGNER

Reiko Huffman

DRAMATURG

Katayoun Salmasi

ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

Emilie Giles

CAST

CLAIRE

Gracie Benson

RICK

Emmanuel Peeples

ROBIN

Vivien Cohen

CHARLIE

Jake Majerczyk

ENSEMBLE

Gabriel McNabb

Avery Luciano

STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM

STAGE MANAGER

Amanda Rokosz

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Caitlyn Land

PRODUCTION STAFF

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Mary Lewis

LIGHTING COORDINATOR

Lisa Kidd

PROPS COORDINATOR

Adriane Binky Donley

PRODUCTION ADVISORS

STAGE MANAGEMENT MENTOR

Cynthia Kocher

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT ADVISOR

Terri Ciofalo

ILLINOIS THEATRE ADMINISTRATION

PRODUCER, ILLINOIS THEATRE

Lisa Gaye Dixon

HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Valleri Robinson

ASSOCIATE HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

J. W. Morrisette

KRANNERT CENTER PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Terri Ciofalo

ASSISTANT TO THE HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Cathy Feely

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Corey Campbell



Sullivan Playwright-in-Residence **MATTHEW-LEE ERLBACH**, a University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana alumni, is an actor and playwright from Chicago and New York City whose plays include his critically acclaimed solo play, *Handbook for an American Revolutionary* (Gym at Judson) and *Eager to Lose, a Burlesque Farce in Rhyming Verse* (Ars Nova). His work has been developed with The New Group, Vineyard, Ars Nova, MCC, Williamstown, NYTW, and Orchard Project. A Humanitas Prize New Voices Award recipient, his work has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Puffin Foundation, and the Laurents/Hatcher Foundation. He was also an Ars Nova's 2014-15 Play Group member. TV Credits include *Masters of Sex* (Showtime), *Gypsy* (Netflix), Nickelodeon, and WWE. A proud graduate of the public school system from K through college, he volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. He runs a writing program he created for single mothers transitioning out of homelessness and prison.

THE DANIEL J. SULLIVAN PLAYWRIGHT-IN-RESIDENCE program is a supportive space for both emerging and established playwrights, providing them a haven to explore bold narrative concepts and innovative forms. The program creates an environment that encourages deep artistic exploration. It offers students a valuable opportunity to engage with emerging theatrical creations, allowing them to challenge themselves by infusing their creativity and visions into works that are still evolving. This program fulfills the desire of Champaign-Urbana audiences to gain insight into the developmental process of theatrical scripts. In a time when many theatres face closure or a decrease in new productions, the importance of this initiative becomes even more evident. This program addresses the urgent need to support the creation of new works and maintain the vitality of the performing arts community.

Thank you to Susan & Michael Haney for their support of the Sullivan Playwright-in-Residence program.

For more information on ways to support Illinois Theatre, visit theatre.illinois.edu/about/giving.