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<https://www.arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/2324-press-kits/unknown-soldier/>ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR
D.C. PREMIERE OF HEARTFELT ORIGINAL MUSICAL**UNKNOWN SOLDIER**

Book by DANIEL GOLDSTEIN

Music by MICHAEL FRIEDMAN

Lyrics by MICHAEL FRIEDMAN and DANIEL GOLDSTEIN

Directed by TRIP CULLMAN

By Special Arrangement with HUNTER ARNOLD

(Washington D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announced today the cast and creative team for *Unknown Soldier*. Co-written by **Daniel Goldstein** and the late **Michael Friedman**, a reinvigorated version of the heartfelt original musical will make its D.C. premiere in Arena Stage's **Kreeger Theater**, directed by **Trip Cullman**. *Unknown Soldier* will run **March 29 – May 5, 2024**. Press Night will be held on **Thursday, April 11 at 8 p.m.** For information and tickets, please visit arenastage.org/soldier.

Cleaning out her grandmother's home, Ellen Rabinowitz discovers the photograph of an anonymous soldier tucked away in a box of keepsakes. And so begins a sweeping, romantic musical about a woman's journey to unearth the secrets buried in her family's past. Spanning three generations, *Unknown Soldier* unravels a delicate tangle of family lore, as Ellen chases the extraordinary story that unlocks her history—and charts her future.

Unknown Soldier comes to Arena Stage following its 2015 world premiere at Williamstown Theatre Festival and an early 2020 Off-Broadway run at Playwrights Horizons, both directed by **Cullman**. Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* hailed it a "thoughtful, history-spanning portrait of elusive identities that celebrates the urge to fully know people—in the present and the past."

"When it came time to think about a new production of *Unknown Soldier*, I only reached out to one theater, Arena Stage," said **Goldstein**. "There is no theater in the country better suited to support a new musical dealing with themes that affect our nation right now. The audiences at Arena are smart and interested in new work, the staff is unparalleled, and I am so honored to be a part of the incredible Hana Sharif's first season."

"We are grateful that Daniel has entrusted us with this stunning work, which journeys deep into one family's mythology to uncover a piece of America's hidden history," said Arena Stage Artistic Director **Hana S. Sharif**. "*Unknown Soldier* is a brilliant reflection of Arena's longstanding investment in new musicals that exemplify the American Spirit. We look forward to uncovering the mystery, joy, love, and hope explored in *Unknown Soldier*."

"Our cast is extraordinary, full of my favorite actors," continued **Goldstein**. "I can't wait to get started on this brand new and definitive version of *Unknown Soldier*."

Reprising their roles from the production's Off-Broadway run are **Kerstin Anderson** (Broadway's *My Fair Lady*) as Lucy Lemay and **Perry Sherman** (Broadway's *Fun Home*) as Francis.

The cast will also feature **Riglee Ruth Bryson** (*Annie* North American Tour) as Lucy Rabinowitz/Young Ellen, **Adam Chanler-Berat** (Broadway's *Peter and the Starcatcher*, Arena's *Next to Normal*) as Andrew, **Lora Lee Gayer** (Broadway's *Holiday Inn*) as Ellen Rabinowitz, **Nehal Joshi** (Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Arena's *Catch Me If You Can*) as Doctor, and four-time Tony Award nominee **Judy Kuhn** (Broadway's *Fun Home*) as Lucy Anderson.

Rounding out the company will be **Amy Griffin** (Broadway's *Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*), **Candice Shedd-Thompson** (Olney Theatre's *Kinky Boots*), **Jordyn Taylor** (Signature Theater's *Ragtime*), **Wood Van Meter** (Shakespeare Theatre's *Kiss Me, Kate*, Arena's *Ride the Cyclone*), **Elizabeth Vargo** (Arena's Voices of Now Mead Ensemble), **Ronald Joe Williams** (Howard University BFA Musical Theatre Program), **Taylor Witt** (Olney Theatre's *A Nice Indian Boy*, Arena's *Exclusion*), and **Sumié Yotsukura** (Olney Theatre's *Fiddler on the Roof*).

The *Unknown Soldier* creative team includes Choreographer **Patrick McCollum** (Broadway's *The Band's Visit*), Music Supervision by **Julie McBride** (Broadway's *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*) and **Marco Paguia** (Broadway's *Gutenberg! The Musical*), Music Director **Chris Kong** (*Mean Girls* National Tour), Tony Award nominee Set Designer **Mark Wendland** (Broadway's *Next to Normal*), Costume Designer **Jacob A. Climer** (Broadway's *The Boys in the Band*), Tony Award nominee Lighting Designer **Ben Stanton** (Broadway's *Fun Home*), Tony Award winner Sound Designer **Leon Rothenberg** (Broadway's *The Nance*), Tony Award nominee Projection Designer **Lucy Mackinnon** (Broadway's *Jagged Little Pill*), Hair, Wig, and Makeup Designer **J. Jared Janas** (Broadway's *Sweeney Todd*, Arena's *Ride the Cyclone*), Associate Director **Susanna Wolk** (Broadway's *& Juliet*), Associate Choreographer **Francine Espiritu** (Broadway's *The Lightning Thief*), Associate Music Director **Peter Leigh-Nilsen** (Broadway's *Harmony*), Dramaturg **Otis Ramsey-Zöe**, Casting Director **Joseph Pinzon**, NY Casting by **Patrick Goodwin**, **The Telsey Office**, Stage Manager **Lisa Ann Chernoff**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Dayne Sundman**.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES (in alphabetical order)

Kerstin Anderson (*Lucy Lemay*) (she/her) is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut! Her Broadway and National Tour credits include *My Fair Lady* (Eliza Doolittle) and *The Sound of Music* (Maria). Other theater appearances include *Cult of Love* (Berkeley Rep), *Unknown Soldier* (Playwrights Horizon), *Afterwords* (5th Avenue), *Doubt* (Westport Playhouse), and *Row* (Audible). She can be heard on Ryan Scott Oliver's albums *Darling: Live in Concert* and *Future Demons*, Ethan Carlson's *Her Sound*, and the Original Cast Album of *Unknown Soldier*. Upcoming short film: *Ventriculus*. Instagram: @kerstanderson1

Riglee Ruth Bryson (*Lucy Rabinowitz/Young Ellen*) is so excited to make her Arena Stage debut. Her most recent theater credits include Belinda in *A Christmas Carol* (Ford's Theatre), Pepper in *Annie* (National Tour), Young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (KCRep), Annie in *Annie* (The White Theatre, Kansas City), and Matilda in *Matilda* (Center Stage Academy, Kansas City). Special thanks to Lauren Braton,

Jessi Clayton (The Prep), Jason Bercy (Bercy Talent), and David Gilbert (Zuri Agency). Instagram: @ringleeruth

Adam Chanler-Berat (*Andrew*) originated roles on Broadway in *Next to Normal*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, and *Amélie*. Off-Broadway credits include *I Can Get It for You Wholesale*, *Assassins*, *Fortress of Solitude* (Lortel nomination), *Rent*, and *Fly by Night*. Regional credits include *Sunday in the Park with George* (Huntington) and *The Year to Come* (La Jolla Playhouse). He starred alongside Vince Vaughn in the film *Delivery Man* and has appeared on television in *Gossip Girl*, *Veep*, *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *Doubt*, *The Code*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, and *Soundtrack*. As a writer, Adam's work has been developed by Barrington Stage Company, the Civilians, New York Stage and Film, Rhinebeck Writers Retreat, and Ars Nova. Adam is a proud founding member of the social justice-minded theater collective The Commissary.

Lora Lee Gayer (*Ellen Rabinowitz*)'s DC credits include *Follies* (Kennedy Center) and *A Funny Thing...* [Helen Hayes nomination] (Shakespeare Theatre). On Broadway, Lora Lee has starred in *Holiday Inn* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *Doctor Zhivago* (Broadway Theatre), and *Follies* (Marquis Theatre). Off-Broadway: *Pipe Dream* (New York City Center Encores!), *These Seven Sicknesses* (Exit, Pursued by a Bear). Selected Regional: The Ahmanson, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Goodspeed Musicals, Alliance Theatre, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse, McCarter Theatre Center, Alley Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Film: *The Post* directed by Steven Spielberg. Television: *The Tick* (Amazon Studios), *House of Cards* (Netflix), *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC), *Little America* (Apple TV+). Lora Lee graduated from Carnegie Mellon University and Interlochen Arts Academy. Awards and nominations include Helen Hayes Award, Chita Rivera Award, NFAA finalist, National Arts and Letters Award, and Lotte Lenya Young Artist Award. Lora Lee has performed both nationally and internationally with symphonies and orchestras. Instagram: @loralee_gayer

Amy Griffin (*Swing / u/s Lucy Anderson*) has appeared on Broadway in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*; Off-Broadway in *The English Bride*, *Mr. President*, *Infertility*, *Forbidden Broadway*, *Newsical*, *Once Upon a Mattress* (with Jackie Hoffman); and in the first national tours of *Seussical* (with Cathy Rigby) and *Grinch*. Regional credits include Male Greek Chorus in *How I Learned to Drive* (Actors' Shakespeare Project, Critics' Choice Award), Alison in *Fun Home* (New England premiere, Critics' Circle Award), Loretta in *Fly Me to the Moon* (Public Theatre), Fairfax/Others in *Jane Eyre* (NYC workshops), Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Savannah Rep), Beggar Woman in *Sweeney Todd* (The Rev), and seven(!) flights as Peter Pan (Independent Theatre Award). Love to SB and NB. www.amy-griffin.com

Nehal Joshi (*Doctor*) This marks Nehal's 7th show, and 8th time appearing, at Arena Stage over 20 years. Arena credits include Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma!*, Amir in *Disgraced*, Hanratty in *Catch Me If You Can*, Mother Courage, *Music Man*, and *Señor Discretion Himself*. Other DC: Shakespeare Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth, Olney Theatre Center, Theater J, The Kennedy Center. Broadway: *The Cottage*, *All My Sons*, *Phantom of the Opera* (Closing Cast), *Flying Over Sunset*, *School of Rock*, *Gettin' the Band Back Together*, *Les Misérables* (Original Revival Cast), *Threepenny Opera*. Off-Broadway: *Cyrano* (made into a recent film), *Working* (2008 revision, Special Drama Desk Award), *Grand Hotel* (Encores!), *Three Sisters*. Video Game: *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*. TV/Film: *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC), *The Wire* (HBO), *Search Party* (HBO), *Blackout*. He would like to dedicate this performance to his late agent, Scott Manners, who found him at this theater. He is from Burke, Virginia. Instagram: @nehaljoshi

Judy Kuhn (*Lucy Anderson*) is a multiple Tony, Grammy, and Olivier Award nominee best known for her work on Broadway in *Fun Home*, *She Loves Me*, *Chess*, *Les Misérables*, *Rags*, Richard Nelson's play *Two Shakespearean Actors* (LCT), and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (OBC). DC appearances include *Fosca in Passion* at the Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration. In NYC, Judy most recently appeared in *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* (also directed by Trip Cullman) and *Assassins* (Drama Desk and OCC nominations), both at CSC. In 2019 she starred in Trevor Nunn's acclaimed production of *Fiddler on the*

Roof in London's West End (Olivier Award nomination). TV/Film includes *Dear Edward* (Apple TV+) Lin-Manuel Miranda's adaptation of *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (Netflix), *Enchanted*, and Disney's *Pocahontas* (title role). Judy has appeared on concert stages around the world and has recorded four solo albums.

Candice Shedd-Thompson (*Ensemble/ u/s Ellen Rabinowitz/Lucy Lemay*) is so excited to be making her Arena Stage debut! Favorite DC area credits include *A.D. 16*, *Nicola* in *Kinky Boots* (Olney Theatre Center); *Monica* in *Rooms: A Rock Romance* (MetroStage); *Gynecia* in *Head Over Heels* (Monumental Theatre); *Snow White* in *Disenchanted*, *Babette* in *Beauty and the Beast* (Creative Cauldron); and *Rita LaPorta* in *Lucky Stiff* (NextStop Theatre). Regional highlights include *Maureen* in *Rent* and *Woman 1* in *Songs for a New World* (Milton Theatre); *Mamma Mia!* and *Esmeralda* in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Riverside Center); and *Wide Open Country* at Hershey Park. She is a former Production Vocalist for Celebrity Cruises, and is currently a singer in Bachelor Boys Band, a wedding band that performs for events all over the region.

Perry Sherman (*Francis*) originated the role of Francis Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons and is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut. He has been seen at the Kennedy Center in National Tours of both *Next to Normal* and *Spring Awakening*. Broadway: *Fun Home* (Circle in the Square). Off-Broadway: *Milk and Honey* (The York Theatre), *Unknown Soldier* (Playwrights). Other credits include *Marius* in the Canadian Pre-Broadway Revival of *Les Misérables*, *Will* in *Burn All Night* at A.R.T., *Lucian* in the world premiere of *Amélie* at Berkeley Rep, and *Davey* in *The Ballad of Little Jo* at Two River Theater. TV: *The Deuce* on HBO. Studied at Carnegie Mellon University.

Jordyn Taylor (*Swing*) is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut! DC area credits include *Lucille*, *Bobbi Jean*, *José* in *Junie B. Jones* (Adventure Theatre MTC); *Sarah's Friend* in *Ragtime* (Signature Theatre); *Missy* in *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (NextStop Theatre); *Little Ti Moune*, *Ti Moune u/s* in *Once on This Island* (Constellation Theatre Company); and *Pearl Krabs*, *Sandy u/s* in *SpongeBob Musical* (Toby's Dinner Theatre). TV: *How Great Thou Art*, *A Sacred Celebration* (PBS). Direction/Music Direction: *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, *Summer Theatre Adventures* (NextStop Theatre); *Heathers the Musical* (Howard University). Howard University BFA in Musical Theatre (2023). Instagram: @favvvgeminiii TikTok: @jordyntaylorrr

Wood Van Meter (*Swing / u/s Francis*) is thrilled to be part of *Unknown Soldier* at Arena, after previously working on *Ride the Cyclone*. DC credits include *West Side Story*, *Shear Madness* (Kennedy Center); *Kiss Me, Kate* (STC); *Silence! The Musical* (Studio Theatre); *Singin' in the Rain* (NextStop Theatre); *Joseph...Dreamcoat* [Helen Hayes nomination – Lead Actor] (Toby's Dinner Theatre); *The Whale* (Rep Stage); and other performances at Signature Theatre, Olney Theatre, Imagination Stage, MetroStage, and Washington Stage Guild. Regional favorites include *Forever Plaid* (Pittsburgh CLO); *Ragtime*, *Rent* (Nashville Rep); *Gypsy* (Hangar Theatre); and *Camelot* (TheatreZone). Love and gratitude to my incredible support system, especially Bruce. Instagram: @woodvanmeter

Elizabeth Vargo (*u/s Lucy Rabinowitz/Young Ellen*) is making her Arena Stage debut. Ellie is a current member of the Voices of Now Mead Ensemble at Arena Stage, and attended Camp Arena Stage in 2023. She trains at the Metropolitan School of the Arts, is a member of the National Children's Chorus, and has performed in nearly two dozen musicals and recitals. Her most recent credits include *The Nutcracker* (MSA), *Metropolitan Follies* (MSA), *The Wizard of Oz* (St. Bernadette Summer Theatre Program), and *A Night at the Met* (MSA). Ellie was a featured performer in the Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School's Spring 2022 Musical Revue, for which she was awarded the Performing Arts Break Out Performer Award.

Ronald Joe Williams (*Ensemble / u/s Doctor*) is a Class of 2023 graduate from Howard University's BFA Musical Theatre Program. He is making his professional debut at Arena Stage! Instagram: @ronaldjoewilliams_

Taylor Witt (*Ensemble / u/s Andrew*) last appeared at Arena Stage in *Exclusion*. Virginia Rep: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Tuck Everlasting*. The Keegan Theatre: *An Irish Carol*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Shakespeare in Love*. Olney Theatre Center: *A Nice Indian Boy*. Signature Theatre: *The Upstairs Department*. Studio Theatre: *Admissions*. NextStop Theatre Co: *First Date*. Toby's Dinner Theatre: *Newsies* [Helen Hayes nomination – Supporting Actor], *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Ghost*. Riverside Center: *The Bridges of Madison County*, *Grease*. Imagination Stage: *New Kid*, *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed*. The Kennedy Center TYA: *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*. Instagram: @witt_taylor

Sumié Yotsukura (*Ensemble*) is delighted to be making her Arena Stage debut! She was most recently seen as Gussie in *Merrily We Roll Along* (Keegan Theatre) and Hodel in *Fiddler on the Roof* (Olney Theatre Center). Other DC credits include *King of the Yees* (Signature Theatre), *The Mortification of Fovea Munson* (Kennedy Center TYA), *Jennifer*, *Who Is Leaving* (Round House Theatre), *Beauty and the Beast* (Olney Theatre Center), *Triangle* (Free Range Humans), and more. Her regional credits include *The Full Monty* (Transcendence Theatre Company). She received her BA in Theatre and Asian & Pacific Islander American Studies from William & Mary. Instagram: @sumie.yotsukura

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Book by Daniel Goldstein

Music by Michael Friedman

Lyrics by Michael Friedman and Daniel Goldstein

Directed by Trip Cullman

By Special Arrangement with Hunter Arnold

In the Kreeger Theater | March 29 – May 5, 2024

ABOUT: Cleaning out her grandmother's home, Ellen Rabinowitz discovers the photograph of an anonymous soldier tucked away in a box of keepsakes. And so begins *Unknown Soldier*, a sweeping, elegiac musical from Daniel Goldstein and the late Michael Friedman on a woman's journey to unearth the secrets of her family's past... and which will chart her future.

CAST:

Lucy Lemay: Kerstin Anderson*

Lucy Rabinowitz/Young Ellen: Ringlee Ruth Bryson

Andrew: Adam Chanler-Berat*

Ellen Rabinowitz: Lora Lee Gayer*

Swing / u/s Lucy Anderson: Amy Griffin*

Doctor: Nehal Joshi*

Lucy Anderson: Judy Kuhn*

Ensemble / u/s Ellen Rabinowitz/Lucy Lemay: Candice Shedd-Thompson*

Francis: Perry Sherman*

Swing: Jordyn Taylor*

Swing / u/s Francis: Wood Van Meter*

u/s Lucy Rabinowitz/Young Ellen: Elizabeth Vargo

Ensemble / u/s Doctor: Ronald Joe Williams*

Ensemble / u/s Andrew: Taylor Witt*

Ensemble: Sumié Yotsukura*

CREATIVE TEAM:

Book and Lyrics: Daniel Goldstein

Music and Lyrics: Michael Friedman

Director: Trip Cullman
Choreographer: Patrick McCollum
Music Supervision: Julie McBride and Marco Paguia
Music Director: Chris Kong
Set Designer: Mark Wendland
Costume Designer: Jacob A. Climer
Lighting Designer: Ben Stanton
Sound Designer: Leon Rothenberg
Projection Designer: Lucy Mackinnon
Hair, Wig, and Makeup Designer: J. Jared Janas
Associate Director: Susanna Wolk
Associate Choreographer: Francine Espiritu
Associate Music Director: Peter Leigh-Nilsen
Dramaturg: Otis Ramsey-Zöe
Casting Director: Joseph Pinzon
NY Casting: Patrick Goodwin, The Telsey Office
Stage Manager: Lisa Ann Chernoff*
Assistant Stage Manager: Dayne Sundman*
*Members of Actors' Equity Association

Unknown Soldier is made possible through generous funding from **AARP** with additional support from **Patricia and David Fisher** and **Catherine and Chris Guttman-McCabe**.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets are \$56-95 plus applicable fees. Ticket prices and availability are subject to change. Arena Stage's many savings programs include discounts for U.S. military veterans, personnel, spouses, and families; "pay your age" tickets for those aged 30 and under; and "Southwest Nights" for those living and working in the District's Southwest neighborhood. To learn more, visit arenastage.org/savings-programs.

Tickets are available at arenastage.org. Tickets may also be purchased by phone at 202-488-3300, or in person at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C., Tuesday-Sunday, 12-8 p.m.

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.
Weekday matinees at 12 p.m. on April 17, April 25, and May 1

Southwest Nights: Wednesday, April 24 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, May 3 at 8 p.m.

Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, April 27, at 2 p.m.

ASL-Interpreted Performance: Saturday, April 27, at 8 p.m.

Mask-Required Performances: Sunday, April 21, at 2 p.m.; Tuesday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, May 1, at 12 p.m.; Saturday, May 4, at 8 p.m.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with the show beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with staff and artists on April 23 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; on May 2 following the 8 p.m. performance; and on April 17, April 25, and May 1 following the 12 p.m. matinees.

Full Calendar: arenastage.org/tickets/calendar

SAFETY: Arena Stage recommends but does not require that patrons wear facial masks in our theater except in our occasional mask-required performance. These conditions are subject to change, and Arena continues to consult with medical professionals, monitor government best practice recommendations, and engage in industry trainings to ensure the health and safety of our patrons, artists, and staff. For up-to-date information, visit arenastage.org/safety.

TRAVEL: Limited parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage for \$18 to \$30, including drive-up valet parking for \$30. Call 202-488-3300 to purchase in advance. For more information on transportation and other parking options around the Mead Center, visit arenastage.org/transportation.

For complete 2023/24 Season details, visit arenastage.org/season.

The first racially integrated theater in our nation's capital and a pioneer of the regional theater movement, Arena Stage was founded on August 16, 1950, in Washington, D.C., by Zelda Fichandler, Tom Fichandler, and Edward Mangum. Today—nearly 75 years later—Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. We produce plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep, and dangerous in the American spirit, and present diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Consistently contributing to the American theatrical lexicon by commissioning and developing new plays, Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement and serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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