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For Immediate Release

**American Blues Theater presents
The Cratchits (in America)
As part of the ongoing virtual
@Home Accessibility Series**

October 23, 2023 at 7:00pm Central

CHICAGO, IL – **American Blues Theater**, under the continued leadership of Executive Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside, presents a one-night-only live reading of *The Cratchits (in America)* by **James Still**, directed by **Helena Kays**, as part of its **@Home Accessibility Series** on **October 23, 2023 at 7:00pm Central**. Join American Blues Theater artists from across the country from the comforts of your own space. Inspired by American Blues' live-streaming events during the pandemic, the @Home Accessibility Series continues the new tradition by popular demand to bring the company's ephemeral programming to audiences worldwide. Tickets are available now at www.americanbluestheater.com or call (773) 654-3103. Suggested donation is \$10 or pay-what-you-can.

The Cratchit family. Weren't they in "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens? Yes. But this is about another Cratchit family that is both contemporary and American. Adult siblings Martha, Belinda, and (Tiny) Tim share history with Dickens' fictive family, but also have history of their own making. Maybe the American cousins from the future? Set in a declining American city called Dickens, some of the Cratchits live in the house they grew up in, some of them have moved away, some of them have suddenly returned. They are a family of broken relationships trying to find ways to repair and move forward. Of course, they're also trying to pay their electric bill, fighting for forgiveness, and getting to know each other all over again. There's also a wedding in the mix. And joyfully, disco music.

Zoom links will be sent the day before the reading and again 1 hour before the reading starts. The reading runs approximately two hours with intermission. Following the reading, stay in the virtual space for a group discussion and meet the artists. For more information, read the [Backstage Guide](#) (or [downloadable pdf](#)).

About the Artists

JAMES STILL (playwright) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater. His plays have been produced throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia, South Africa, China and Japan. His new plays include *Everybody's Favorite Mothers*; *The Cratchits (In America)*; *Dinosaur(S)*; *(A) New World*; *Joy Waves To You From A Distance*; and *Dash Climbs A Rope*. Recent work includes a trilogy of linked plays: *The House That Jack Built* (Indiana Repertory Theatre), *Appoggiatura* (Denver Center Theatre), and *Miranda* (Illusion Theater, Minneapolis). Also: APRIL 4, 1968: *Before We Forgot How To Dream* (Indiana Repertory Theatre); two plays about the Lincolns: *The Widow Lincoln* and *The Heavens Are Hung In Black* (both premiering at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.); a play for one actor about culinary icon James Beard called *I Love To Eat* (Portland Center Stage); a play for 57 actors called *A Long Bridge Over Deep Waters* (Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles); *Looking Over The President's Shoulder* at theaters across the country; and *And Then They Came For Me* at theaters around the world (most



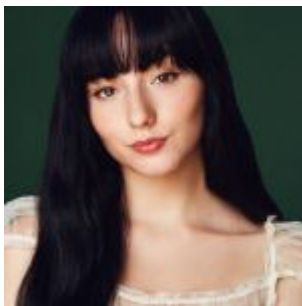
recently at Alabama Shakespeare Festival). His short play *When Miss Lydia Hinkley Gives A Bird The Bird* was a winner of Red Bull Theater's Short New Play Festival in New York and performed at many festivals. He has directed at theaters around the country including productions of *Oedipus*; *12 Angry Men*; *Red*; *A Doll's House, Pt 2*; *God of Carnage*; *The Mystery of Irma Vep*... and many others. Still is an elected member of both the National Theatre Conference in New York and the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center. He received the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award from the William Inge Festival, the Todd McNerney New Play Prize from Spoleto, and the Indiana Authors Award for Drama for his published trilogy *The Jack Plays*. His plays have been developed at the New Harmony Project, the O'Neill Conference, Sundance, Seven Devils, the Colorado New Play Summit, Launch Pad, and many others. He is a four-time Pulitzer nominee for his work in the theater, and a five-time nominee for his work in television. He is the Playwright in Residence at Indiana Repertory Theatre and lives in Los Angeles.



HALENA KAYS (director) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater. She is the head of the directing program for University of Michigan, teaching introductory and intermediate levels of directing and supervises senior directing thesis projects. She is a founding member of the artistic collaborative the Ruffians, a former member of the Big Apple Circus Clown Care unit, past artistic director of the Hypocrites, former co-artistic curator for Theater on the Lake, and co-founder and former artistic director of Playmakers Lab. As an artistic associate with the Neo-Futurists Chicago, she directed *Comfortable Shoes*, *Pop/Waits*, *44 Plays for 44 Presidents*, *Burning Bluebeard*, *Daredevils*, *Daredevils Hamlet*, *Fake Lake*, and *Wildcat!*. Other Chicago directing credits include *Endgame*, *Ivywild*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (the Hypocrites), *The Magic Play* (the Goodman), *Lord of the Flies* (Steppenwolf), *How a Boy Falls* (Northlight Theatre), *On Clover Road* (American Blues Theater), and *Feast* (the Goodman; part of a collaborative directing effort with the Albany Park Theatre Project). Regionally, she has directed *Do You Feel Anger?* (Circle X, LA), *Shapeshifter* (Bard at the Gate with the McCarter Theatre Center), *The Magic Play* (the Olney Theater Center, the Actor's Theater of Louisville, Portland Center Stage, and Syracuse Stage), *Love Song* and *The Welkin* (Nashville Story Garden), and *Secretary* (Nashville Rep's Ingram New Works Festival). She has been nominated for Jeff Awards for Best Supporting Actress, Best Direction, Best New Work, and Best Production; named one of the top 50 players in Chicago theatre by NewCity; and is a recipient of the prestigious 3Arts Award. She received her BS from Northwestern University and her MFA from the University of Texas at Austin. She is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).



DAWN BACH (Martha) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater. Since joining the Ensemble in 1993, Dawn has appeared in numerous Blues productions over the years, including *Catch-22*, *A Stone Carver*, *On the Waterfront*, *A Lie of the Mind* and *Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. She served as musical director/composer for *Medea* and wrote original music for *Toys in the Attic*, for which she received the After Dark Award for outstanding original music. She has hosted and narrated numerous industrial films and has appeared on the stages of Lifeline, Shakespeare Project of Chicago, Bailiwick, Next, Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Northlight (*Cowgirls*, *Smoke on the Mountain*) and Goodman Theatre (*A Christmas Carol*). A long-time student of the late Mary Ann Thebus, Dawn is also a trained singer and violinist.



MAYA HLAVA (Billie) is thrilled to back at American Blues Theater where she was seen in *Things With Friends* for the 2023 Blue Ink Theater Festival. Other Chicago credits include *Dory Fantasmagory* (YPPT/Greenhouse Theater); *Spring Awakening* (Porchlight Theater); *Act 5*, *The Killing Game*, and *The Nether* (A Red Orchid Theatre); *Zurich* (Steep Theatre); *Shrek*, *White Christmas* and *Bye Bye Birdie* (Drury Lane Theatre); *Oklahoma* (Marriott Theatre); *Violet* (Griffin Theater); *Trevor* (Writers Theatre); *Jake's Women* (Spartan Theatre Company); *The Secret Garden* (Court Theatre); *The Talking Cure* (Idle Muse Theatre Company); *Jane Eyre* (Lifeline Theatre); *The Wheel* (Steppenwolf Theatre); Film and Television Credits include *The Perpetrator*, *Chicago Med*, *The Chi*, and *The Big Leap*.



JOSLYN JONES (Mrs. F) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater. Credits include *Flyin' West* (American Blues Theater) *Steel Magnolias* (Theatre at the Center); *Intimate Apparel* (Theatre Squared); *ANDROMEDA* (Theatre Squared); *The Project(s)* (American Theater Company) Jeff Nomination, Best Production; *The Delany Sisters: Having Our Say – The First Hundred Years* (Fleetwood Jourdain Theatre); *Once On This Island* (Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre); *12 Ophelias* (Trap Door Theatre); *Weekend* (TimeLine Theatre), *Bourbon At The Border* (Eclipse Theatre) BTAA Nomination, Featured Actress; *Escape* (Live Bait Theatre); *Flyin' West* and *RAISIN* (Court Theatre), *Bee-Luther-Hatchee* (The University Of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign); *Fabulation: Or, The Re-Education of Undine* (Next Theatre); *Relevant Hearsay* (MPACCT: Theater on the Lake); *Bee-Luther-Hatchee* and *Smokey Joe's Café* (Open Door Theater); *Meshuggah Nuns!* (Chicago Jewish Theatre); *The Kurt Weil Revue: Songs of Darkness and Light* (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre) Jeff Nomination, Best Musical Production; *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Metropolis Performing Arts Centre); 2002 Class of The School at Steppenwolf. She has understudied: *Having Our Say* and *Crumbs From The Table of Joy* (Goodman Theatre); Film: *Cherry*, directed by the Russo Brothers with Tom Holland as her scene partner; Television: *South Side-Mrs. Odom* (HBO Max); *Chicago PD* (NBC). Joslyn is a proud member of Actors Equity Association and SAG-AFTRA. linktr.ee/JoslynJones



CAMILLE ROBINSON (Belinda) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater. She has been with the company since 2016, after making her debut in the critically-acclaimed production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. She has also appeared in 4 productions of Blues' smash holiday tradition, *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* Recent theater credits include: *Once on This Island* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Cinderella* (Paramount Theatre) and *The Color Purple* (Drury Lane Theatre). Proud member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA. Represented by Gray Talent Group. camille-robinson.com



MATTHEW SCHNITKER (Tim) is thrilled to be working with American Blues Theater! Hailing from Florida, he graduated from the University of West Florida with a B.A. in Acting. Recent Chicago credits include *Teenage Dick* (Theater Wit), *Non-Player Character* (Red Theater), *Curious George* (Northbrook Theatre for Young Audiences) and *We Found A Hat* (Lifeline Theatre). Matthew can also be seen working with Red Theater as one of their company members.



J.G. SMITH (Carol) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater. You may have seen her performing with Blues in *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!*, *On Clover Road*, *Ripped*, and virtual readings of *The Thanksgiving Play* and *On the Greenbelt*. Theatre: *I And You* (Peninsula Players); *Mother of the Maid* (Northlight); *Plantation!* (Lookingglass); *The Art of Sisters* (Vision Productions); *MARYSHELLEYSHOW* (National Tour, Chicago Fringe, TheTankNYC); *Peter and the Starcatcher* (City Equity Theatre); *Alice in Wonderland*, *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, *A Christmas Carol* (Alabama Shakespeare); and *Censored on Final Approach* (The GYM at Judson). Film/TV credits include Jennifer Reeder's *Knives and Skin*, MTV's *Short Comings*, *The Dancing Monkey*, *Dreaming Grand Avenue*, *Pry Me Open*, and *Dorm Therapy*. Her original films and performance art have shown at New Orleans' Hell Yes Film Festival, Williamsburg Circus, Salonathon!, Undiscovered Countries: The Infinite Fest, and TransVisions' virtual SOFT PALETTE festival. She is a proud Equity member and repped by Paonessa Talent Agency. AEA.

About American Blues Theater

Winner of the prestigious National Theatre Company Award from American Theatre Wing. American Blues Theater is an Ensemble of artists committed to producing new and classic American stories that ask the question: "What does it mean to be American?"

The diverse and multi-generational artists have established the second-oldest professional Ensemble theater in Chicago. As of 2023, the theater and artists received 232 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 44 Black Theatre Alliance Awards. The artists are honored with Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades.

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