



NEW
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ARTS

SAN DIEGO
REGIONAL
PREMIERE

MATT & BEN

WRITTEN BY
Mindy Kaling and
Brenda Withers

DIRECTED BY
Maria Patrice Amon



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PRESENTS



WRITTEN BY
**Mindy Kaling and
Brenda Withers**

DIRECTED BY
Maria Patrice Amon,
Dea Hurston Professional Fellow

MATT & BEN COMPANY

MAYA SOFIA ENCISO.....as Matt Damon
ALEJANDRA VILLANUEVAas Ben Affleck
AMY PFLEEGER.....Swing

MATT & BEN CREATIVES

MARIA PATRICE AMON.....Director
NATHAN WAITS.....Stage Manager
ISADORA SWANN.....Assistant Director
JESUS HURTADO.....Scenic & Projections Designer
CHARLIE AMON.....Costume Designer
STEPHANIE MA'ALONA.....Lighting Designer
ZOE YAHRLING.....Sound Designer
ANDREA MORIN FERNANDEZ...Assistant Stage Manager
& Props Designer
FREDY GOMEZ CRUZ.....Fight Choreographer
KALI BOSTON.....Dialect Coach
MARYKATE REEVES-HOCHE.....Costume Assistant
CHRIS RENDA.....Master Carpenter
ZACHARY ELLIOT.....Scenic Painter

PRODUCTION SPONSOR



RUN TIME
80 minutes with no intermission.

Matt & Ben is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com.

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We acknowledge that The Dea Hurston New Village Arts Center operates on the unceded land of the Payómkawichum (Pye-om-ko-wi-chom) (Luiseño) and Kumeyaay peoples. We further acknowledge that NVA was founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those who are the traditional Custodians and First people of the land on which we work, play, gather, share, and learn. New Village Arts honors the over 20,000 current tribal members living in the San Diego area, and promises to create a safe space for the local Native Communities to share the art, accomplishments, and history of their peoples. This is a starting point in our efforts to be more active in our local communities and we acknowledge that we have much further to go.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Matt & Ben is a fast, absurd comedy inspired by a Hollywood legend: the meteoric rise of an unknown. This mythic rise parallels the American dream. Two unknown best friends write a script, and against all odds, it changes their lives and the trajectory of the industry. That story, of talent triumphing over obscurity, has been told and retold as proof that meritocracy works. This play doesn't argue with that myth. Instead, it playfully bends reality until we can see how strange, fragile, and funny it actually is.

What makes *Matt & Ben* so sharp is that it never turns its characters into villains. Matt and Ben's friendship is sincere, their excitement is real, and their success is intoxicating. The comedy comes from watching a world that seems eager to reward them at every turn, often without question. Interruptions become gifts, obstacles dissolve, and success arrives fully formed. The play invites us to laugh while quietly asking: why did this story feel so inevitable?

This production leans into speed, theatricality, and comic danger, trusting farce as a tool of critique rather than explanation. Written by brilliantly talented women who used this play to launch their own careers, *Matt & Ben* is also a reminder that comedy has long been shaped by who was allowed to be seen as "brilliant" in the first place. My hope is that you leave not only wanting to revisit *Good Will Hunting*, but also curious about whose voices you seek out next—and how many extraordinary stories have been hiding in plain sight.



Learn More About
Good Will Hunting



LEARN MORE ABOUT

MATT & BEN



written by
Isadora Swann, Assistant Director

Matt & Ben, written by Brenda Withers and Mindy Kaling, is a comedic reimagining of the origin story behind *Good Will Hunting*. In reality, the film began as a 40-page script Matt Damon wrote for a playwriting class at Harvard. Kaling and Withers instead imagine the script literally falling from the ceiling, fully formed. In truth, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck's story began much earlier: they grew up just blocks apart in a Boston suburb, bonding over movies and basketball. At just 27 and 25, they won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

In today's divided world, where many struggle to meet basic needs, it's worth asking why this country once felt—or appeared—so “great.” For many, Damon and Affleck embodied the American Dream, yet Kaling and Withers question what privileges enable success. “We are white, we are American, we’re men. . .” Matt proclaims in the play, before acknowledging, “this does not happen to everyone.”

Ironically, Withers and Kaling experienced a similar surge of success. Their *New York International Fringe Festival* production of *Matt & Ben* won “Best of Fringe,” launching both of their careers. Mindy Kaling was soon hired as a writer on *The Office*, where she also performed, and later went on to create her own shows and publish multiple books. Withers founded her own theatre company and continued writing plays. Still, systemic barriers for women and people of color persist across industries.



Playwrites Mindy Kaling & Brenda Withers

Our production of *Matt & Ben* features Latina actresses and Tijuanaenses Alejandra Villanueva and Maya Sofia Enciso. Though this is their first project together, director Maria Patrice Amon notes their “natural chemistry” and deeply connected energy. At a time when Latinos hold only 3.1% of lead television roles, an entirely Latina cast, directed by a Latina, feels significant.

Interestingly, both Damon and Affleck have ties to Latino culture: Damon through his marriage to Argentine-born Luciana Barroso, and Affleck through time spent in Mexico as a child. These connections add nuance to the production, especially as the actresses navigate and embody the play's commentary on women's bodies and identity. We hope this production sparks conversation, inviting audiences to question who succeeds—and why.



MAYA SOFIA ENCISO (she/her),
Matt Damon

Maya Sofia is grateful to make her NVA debut. Attending a performing arts school from a very young age, her heart has always been on the stage. She feels immense gratitude anytime she gets the opportunity to perform. Local credits include *All the Men Who've Frightened Me* (La Jolla Playhouse), *One of the Good Ones*, *Murder on the Orient Express* (The Old Globe), *Fragmentos De Aire*, *Star of Ocotillo* (Onstage Playhouse), *Pásale Pásale* (TuYo Theatre), *West Side Story* (Teatro San Diego), *Rent* (SDMT). Other recent regional credits include *Cinderella: A Salsa Fairytale* (The Coterie, K.C., MI), and *Oy to the World! Christmas with a Twist* (El Portal Theatre, L.A., CA) She would like to thank these theatres for their trust, as well as her big, loving family for never missing a show.



ALEJANDRA VILLANUEVA (she/her/ella),
Ben Affleck

Portia (u/s Mark Antony) in Globe for All's: *Julius Caesar* (Old Globe), *Corp* (u/s Westmorland and Tutor) *Henry 6, Part One and Part Two* (Old Globe), Understudy of Dromio of Ephesus, Dromio of Syracuse, Luciana and Emilia in Globe for All's: *The Comedy of Errors* (Old Globe), Countess of Roussillion in *All's Well That Ends Well* (New Swan Shakespeare Festival), Paola in *The Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine Vote* (TuYo Theatre), Estela in *Real Women Have Curves* (Breakthrough Theatre), Queen Margaret in *Queen Margaret: A Shakespeare Adaptation* (USC), Laurencia in *Fuente Ovejuna: A Disloyal Adaptation* (USC), Melony in *The Cider House Rules, Parts One and Two* (USC). Education: B.A. in Theatre, University of Southern California.



AMY PFLEEGER (she/her),
Swing

Amy is beyond grateful to be debuting here at New Village Arts! She is a graduating student at MiraCosta College with an Associate's Degree in Theater Arts. Recent credits include *The SD County Creative Showcase* (Diversionary Theatre), *Swing*

in *Tale Travelers* (La Jolla Playhouse's WOW Festival), Narrator in *Suessification of Romeo and Juliet* (Trinity Theatre), Snow Chorus in *The Nutcracker* (Spreckels Theater), and ensemble chorus in Andrea Bocelli's USA Tour (Pacific Coast Chorale). Future plans include playing Olive in *A Mythical Quest*, an original play produced by debuting theatre company, House of Outcasts! @houseofoutcasts.co This will be performed at the Tenth Avenue Arts Center this Summer! She is a lover of film and spends her free time acting in various local short films for Mission Avenue Film Collective and Tanglewood Pictures. Many thanks to her friends, family, educators, and love who helped her get to where she is today.

CREATIVES

MARIA PATRICE AMON (she/her),
Director,
Dea Hurston Fellow

Maria Patrice is a director, producer, scholar, and leader. Directing: *Matt & Ben* (New Village Arts), *Pásale Pásale* (TuYo Theatre), *Hoops* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), *A Skeptic and a Bruja* (Urbanite Theatre), *Group! The Musical* (Passage Theatre), *Hoopla!* (La Jolla Playhouse POP Tour), *Azul* (Diversionary Theatre), *Mojada* (UCSD), *A Zoom of One's Own* (CSUSM), *Ich Bin Ein Berliner* (Theatre Lab), *DREAM HOUSE* (CSUSM/TuYo Theatre), *Fade* (Moxie Theatre), *The Madres* (Moxie Theatre), *Lydia* (Brown Bag Theatre Company). Dramaturg: *Little Foxes* (South Coast Rep), *Appropriate* (South Coast Rep), *Beachtown* (San Diego Rep). Patrice is a Killian Directing Fellow (OSF), O'Neil Theatre Center National Directing Fellow, and an Associate Artistic Director at San Diego Repertory Theatre, an Old Globe Classical Directing Fellow. She is a Co-Artistic Director of TuYo Theatre, a LTC Steering Committee member, and an associate professor at CSUSM. JD: California Western School of Law. PhD: UC Irvine. www.mariapatriceamon.com

NATHAN WAITS (he/him),
Stage Manager

Nathan has been stage managing and building sets for productions around San Diego for over 12 years. Previously, he has served as the master carpenter for *1222 Oceanfront: A Black Family Christmas* and *Fun*

CREATIVES

Home, and stage manager for *Desert Rock Garden*, Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Doubt*, *Fun Home*, *The 39 Steps*, *8-Track: The Sounds of the '70s*, *Miracle on 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play*, *The Half Life of Marie Curie*, Sandra Delgado's *La Havana Madrid*, *The Mountaintop*, [title of show], *RENT*, and *The Apiary* (New Village Arts). He served as the resident set builder for Scripps Ranch Theatre (*Lucky Stiff*, *Extreme Home Makeover*, *The Outsider*, *I Hate Hamlet*, *The Taming*, and more), the master carpenter for The Roustabouts (*Guntopia*, *Hand to God*, *True West*), and the resident set builder/designer for Sage Creek High School (*Les Miserables*, *Chicago*, *Legally Blonde*, *Into the Woods*, *Shakespeare in Love* and many more). Enjoy the show!

ISADORA SWANN (she/her), Assistant Director

Isadora is thrilled to be working with New Village Arts for the first time as Assistant Director on *Matt & Ben*. She moved to San Diego eight months ago to intern at

La Jolla Playhouse and quickly fell in love with the city's vibrant and deeply caring theatre community. Isadora is an actor, writer, and aspiring director, with a passion for collaborative, joy-centered storytelling. During the day, she works as the Education Coordinator at San Diego Junior Theatre, where she supports young artists and helps foster a lifelong love of theatre.

JESUS HURTADO (he/him), Scenic & Projections Designer

Jesus Hurtado is a Scenic and Projection Designer for theater, film, and live events. He received his Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Theater Design from The University of Southern California, class of 2022. Some of his recent works includes, *The Young Dolphins Chapter 2* (Inner City Arts), *Pasale Pasale* (WOW Festival, LJP), *La Llorona on the Blue Line* (TUYO Theater Co.), *The Red Suitcase* (The Broadwater), and *A Chorus Line* (USC Bing Theater). Jesus has recently completed his 2025 Projection Design Fellowship with Black Theater Coalition (BTC) and has

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assisted on projections for the following productions: *Real Women Have Curves* (Broadway), *Redwood* (Broadway), *SUMO* (The Public Theater). See more at Jesushurtadodesigns.com

CHARLIE AMON (they/them), Costume Designer

Charlie is a proud Queer Chicax Costume Designer in the Greater San Diego area. They have been working professionally as a Freelance Costume Designer since 2016. The same year, they graduated from San Diego State University with a bachelor's degree in theater with an emphasis in costume design. Their designs have been featured at the Old Globe's Globe for All, the La Jolla Playhouse's POP Tour, San Diego Repertory Theater, TuYo Theater, MOXIE Theater, Playwright's Project, New Village Arts Theater, Oceanside Theater Company, San Diego Junior Theater, San Diego State University, University of San Diego, San Diego City College, Southwestern College, Pacific Ridge School, Passage Theater in New Jersey, and Urbanite Theater in Florida.

STEPHANIE MA'ALONA (she/her), Lighting Designer

Stephanie is excited to be a part of this production. This is her second year at SDSU earning her MFA in Theatre Design and Technology, emphasis in Lighting Design. Earned her BA in Theatre Art Studies at BYU. Some of her credits include *La Llorona On The Blue Line* (TuYo Theatre/National City Depot), *Hamlet* (SDSU Prebys Stage), *House of Desires* (Studio Theatre), *Urine Town* (Horseshoe Theatre), *Merrily We Roll Along* (SDSU Main Stage). She loves lights, they bring her so much joy. You can find more of her work at StephanieMaalonaDesigns.com. She hopes you enjoy the show.

ZOE YAHRLING (she/her), Sound Designer

Zoe Yahrling is a San Diego-based sound designer who is currently finishing her bachelor's degree at San Diego State University. She has worked on a handful of student performances there with her biggest role as technical director for V-Day SDSU's *Raise the Vibration* that is performed every spring. Outside of SDSU, she

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CREATIVES

worked as sound designer for *Girl with the Golden Boots* (Mosaic Theatricals) and run crew for *Little Women* (Moxie). Although she is rather new to the San Diego theater world, she's excited to be involved with *Matt & Ben*, and she's ready to auditorily display the layers to Matt and Ben's friendship.

ANDREA MORIN FERNANDEZ (she/her),
Assistant Stage Manager & Props Designer

Thrilled to be part of the *Matt & Ben* team! Andrea is a San Diego/Tijuana based freelance theatre artist. Some of her stage management work: *Everything You Need to Know about Abortions...*, *The Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine Vote*, *Pasale, Pasale* (TuYo Theatre), *One of the Good Ones*, *Stir*, *Destiny of Desire* (The Old Globe Theatre), *The Unfair Advantage* (LPJ's WOW Festival). Other production work: *Our Lady of the San Diego Convention Center* and *La Llorona on The Blue Line* (TuYo Theatre), *Globe For All Tour* (The Old Globe). Special shoutout to Matt Damon and

Ben Affleck for becoming friends 40+ years ago, we literally wouldn't be here without y'all.

FREDY GOMEZ CRUZ (he/him), Fight Choreographer
Fredy is thrilled to contribute to *Matt & Ben* as the Fight choreographer. He holds a third-degree black belt in Traditional Okinawan Karate and Okinawan weapons. With over 15 years of fight experience, he strongly emphasizes crafting compelling narratives through authentic movement. His fight choreography incorporates swords, clubs, bones, turkey legs, and hand-to-hand combat. His fight choreography was recently seen in NVA's *Thanksgiving Play!* Previous fight choreography credits include: *Camino 23's This Bitch*, *STEW* (Scripps Ranch Theatre), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Coronado Playhouse).

MARYKATE REEVES-HOCHE (she/her),
Costume Assistant

MaryKate is a volunteer within the costume team

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The advertisement features a central image of a theater with red seats and a red curtain. Two large ice cream cones are positioned on the left and right sides. The text is overlaid on the image, with the Handels logo at the top, the 'Made Fresh Daily!' logo in a red circle on the left, and the 'Supports NEW VILLAGE ARTS' text in the center.

permanently assigned to the theater. She enjoys working with each of the costume designers on each show as an ongoing learning opportunity. She is a retired scientist with a passion for textiles.

CHRIS RENDA (he/him), Master Carpenter

NVA: *The Apiary, 8-Track: The Sounds of the '70s, Servant of Two Masters, Smokey's Joe's Caf , Avenue Q, American Hero, Awake and Swing, Oklahoma, Forbidden Planet, Sylvia, The Wier, Lord of the Flies, Stage Kiss, Trip to Bountiful* (Critics Circle Nomination), *Death of a Salesman, Suds, Circle Mirror Transformation, Wait Until Dark, Same Time Next Year, Much Ado About Nothing, Brilliant Mistake, Buried Child, Comedy of Errors, Santaland Diaries, Ah Wilderness!, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Sweet Storm, Waving Goodbye*. Christopher is the Technical Director at Mesa College. He also teaches lecture series and designs lighting at Mira Costa College. Design credits include: *Our Last of Kabebo, The Diary of Anne Frank, The Kid Thing, The Intelligence of Watson, Enron, A Modern Discourse with the Invisible World, The Crucible* (Moxie), *Much Ado About Nothing, Enemy of the People, Romeo and Juliet, King John, Taming of the Shrew, Quality of Life* (Intrepid), *The Little Dog Laughed, As Much As You Can, Bent* (Patt  Award) (Diversionary Theater), *Welcome Home* (Playwrights Project). Live microphone mixing: *A Little Night Music, It's A Wonderful Life: The Radio Play* (Cygnet). He wants to thank his wife and two little kids for their constant love and support.

MINDY KALING (she/her), Playwright

Mindy is an actress, comedian, writer, producer and shopper. She can translate Latin and is an avid slow jogger who covers small amounts of distance over long periods of time. Additionally, she is a New York Times best-selling author and can be seen on her primetime television show, *The Mindy Project* (Fox), in which she not only stars, but also created, writes, and executive-produces. Ms. Kaling was most recently seen on the eighth season of *The Office* (NBC), in which she starred as "Kelly Kapoor." Initially hired in 2004 as a writer and performer for the American version of *The Office*, she has written more than 18 episodes of the series, including

"Niagara," which scored her an Emmy nod. In 2009, she debuted as a director, with the episode "Subtle Sexuality," and she subsequently was named an executive producer on the series. Ms. Kaling was singled out when she was nominated for a 2008 Image Award in the "Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series" category. Most recently, *The Office* was nominated for a 2012 Screen Actors Guild Award for "Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series." Ms. Kaling penned her first book in 2011, entitled *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)*. The book was featured on the New York Times Best Sellers list as well as USA Today's Best-Selling Books list. Ms. Kaling's film work includes *The Five-Year Engagement, No Strings Attached, Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian, The 40-Year-Old Virgin, Despicable Me, Unaccompanied Minors*, and *License to Wed*. Her other



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television credits include *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and guest writing on *Saturday Night Live*, and her stand-up comedy was featured on the CD *Comedy Death-Ray*. She is the co-author of the Off-Broadway stage play, *Matt & Ben*, which is published by Samuel French. Ms. Kaling is currently writing the screenplay for *The Low Self Esteem of Lizzie Gillespie* with fellow *The Office* writer Brent Forrester. In addition to co-writing the romantic comedy, she will also star in a supporting role and executive-produce. She has been featured on Entertainment Weekly's list of the "10 Funniest Actresses in Hollywood." She was twice featured on Rolling Stone's "Hot List": once in 2007 as "Hot Hyphenate," for writing and acting on *The Office*; and then again in 2009 for "Hot Network Hope." She was most recently featured as one of Daily Variety's "10 Screenwriters to Watch." From Cambridge, MA, Ms. Kaling currently resides in Los Angeles.

BRENDA WITHERS (she/her), Playwright

Brenda Withers is a playwright, actor, and founding member of the Harbor Stage Company, a professional ensemble on Cape Cod. Her plays include *The Deer and the Antelope*, *Northside Hollow* (w/Jonathan Fielding), *The Ding Dongs*, and *The Kritik* and have been presented at places like Portland Stage, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Amphibian Stage Productions, and HERE. She is the recipient of the Clauder Prize and an Edgerton Award, has enjoyed playwriting residencies with the Huntington, New Georges, and the Camargo Foundation, and studied drama and religion at Dartmouth College.

KRISTIANNE KURNER (she/her)

Director, Founder & Executive Artistic Director

Kristianne founded New Village Arts in 2001, and she has grown the organization from a starting budget



THE WHITE FAMILY NEXT STAGE is New Village Arts' hub for dynamic events that go beyond traditional theatre. Named in honor of the White family's generous support, this space is designed to inspire creativity, connection, and lifelong learning. From improv nights to educational workshops, the Next Stage brings people together through the power of shared experiences.

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of \$2,500 with two employees to a current budget of \$1.6 million with over 20 employees. Trained as an actor and director, she has worked on every NVA theatrical production. She just concluded her 40th directorial achievement with *The Apiary*. Her other directing credits include *Awake & Sing!*, *The Weir*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *True West*, *Sailor's Song*, *The Waverly Gallery*, *A Lie of the Mind*, and the premiere outside of Broadway and London of Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*. Her work has received numerous awards, including San Diego Theatre Critics Circle and KPBS Awards for Theatre Excellence. She is the recipient of the Clare Rose Sabbatical Award from Fieldstone Leadership Network and serves on the Board of the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce. Education: BFA Theatre, College of William & Mary; MFA Acting, the Actors Studio/New School.

KALI BOSTON (she/her)

Dialect Coach, Artistic Producer

Originally from Massachusetts, Kali moved to California to pursue her passion in producing and directing. After graduating from the University of California, San Diego with a BA in Theatre, Kali has been a part of many different theaters and festivals including: *The Apiary*, *RENT*, [title of show], *The Mountaintop*, *La Havana Madrid*, *The Half-Life of Marie Curie*, *Miracle on 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play*, *8-TRACK: The Sounds of the '70s*, *The Color Purple*, *The 39 Steps*, *Fun Home*, *1222 OceanFront: A Black Family Christmas* (Producer, NVA), *Jewish Arts Festival 2024* (Production Manager), *Doubt* (Production Manager), *A Weekend with Pablo Picasso* (Assistant Director, NVA), *Heathers: The Musical* (Producer/Director, Zorina Productions). Kali will be directing the hit Broadway musical *Hairspray* upcoming up next!


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The Dea Hurston Fellowship program was created to address the lack of paid opportunities for women, BIPOC, and other underrepresented theatre artists and students in San Diego. The DHF is centered on the belief that a more diverse theatre environment leads to better and more inspiring stories that have a broader positive impact on our communities.



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"The Dea Hurston Fellowship was transformative to my art practice. I appreciated the time and space the fellowship provided that allowed me to learn and focus on my craft. NVA staff was very supportive, offering the tools and freedom to collaborate and explore new ideas. 10 out of 10 experience!"

—MIKI VALE (2024-2025 HURSTON FELLOW)



"The professional fellowship granted me the opportunity to cultivate my artistry on my own time as well as working within the theatre. I am grateful for how much it grew me and for the chance NVA gave me to create and put up work at their theatre."

—LILEA ALVAREZ (2024-2025 HURSTON FELLOW)



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