



Uptown Players presents Regional Premiere of *The View Upstairs*

DALLAS, May 23, 2018 – Uptown Players continues its 2018-2019 season with the regional premiere of *The View Upstairs*, by Max Vernon, running June 21 - July 7, 2019. The all-star cast assembled for this 2017 off-broadway hit includes the return to the Kalita Humphreys Theater of Blake McIver and New York Cabaret Singer, William Blake.

The View Upstairs opens in present day when Wes, a young fashion designer buys an abandoned space in the French Quarter of New Orleans. He's magically transported to its glory days: the UpStairs Lounge in 1973. Serving as a home, a church, and a gay dive-bar, the UpStairs Lounge was its own kind of paradise. As Wes meets the larger than life lounge regulars, he learns what has been gained and lost in the fight for equality, and how the past can help guide all of us through an uncertain future. On June 24, 1973, an arsonist set fire to the UpStairs Lounge, a gay bar in New Orleans' French Quarter, killing 32 people, making it the worst attack on the LGBTQ+ community until the 2016 massacre at The Pulse nightclub in Orlando. *The View Upstairs* takes the audience on an exhilarating journey of seduction and self-exploration, celebrating the lives of those forgotten, while featuring a soulful, rock and jazz score.

Playwright and composer Max Vernon is a three time Drama Desk nominee, Out100 Honoree, and recipient of the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical, Richard Rodgers Award, Jonathan Larson Grant, New York Stage and Film's Founders Award, New York Foundation of the Arts Fellowship, and the JFund Award from the Jerome Foundation. He has been a Dramatist Guild Theatre Fellow, MacDowell Fellow, and an artist in residence at Berkeley Rep, Ars Nova, Kimmel Center (via The Public Theater), Disney Creative Entertainment, and Rhinebeck Writer's Retreat, among others. His musical, KPOP, enjoyed a sold-out, extended run at Ars Nova this past October and was the most nominated Off-Broadway show of the 2017- 2018 season.

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Blake McIver has been seen on stage and screen since he was a child actor, and made his Uptown Players debut as Adam/Felicia in last summer's hit musical, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. "As an actor and member of the LGBTQ community", McIver says, "it is such an honor to be able to return to Dallas to work with a company that elevates queer voices and tells queer stories. Also, as the son of a proud Texan I'm so excited to spend another summer in the Big D!"

William Blake returns to Dallas and the Kalita Humphreys Theater stage after making the move to NYC in 2007. This Dallas native last performed one of his cabaret shows in Dallas in 2016, but many will remember him from his weekly gig for many years at Bill's Hideaway, a Dallas piano bar that closed in 2009. He is a MAC, Bistro, Nightlife and BroadwayWorld.com Award-winning vocalist in New York City. He has performed in such notable NYC venues as Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, Rose Hall at Lincoln Center, the Cafe Carlyle, Birdland Jazz Club and Joe's Pub performing his critically-acclaimed show, *Echoes of Etta: A Tribute To Etta James*.

The Uptown Players cast features William Blake, Will Carleton, Gigi Cervantes, Walter Lee, Blake McIver, Steven Pounders, Jericho Thomas, Jordi Viscarri, Taylor Wright, and Crystal Williams, along with Branden Bailey, Peter DiCesare, Jacob Hemsath and Alissa McCaffrey. The show is directed by Cheryl Denson, Choreographed by Trevor Wright, with Music Direction by Kevin Gunter.

The View Upstairs runs June 21 - July 7, 2019, with shows at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and 2 p.m. on Sunday (no performances June 23 or July 4). The Uptown Players production opens on the weekend of the 46th anniversary of this tragic event. Performances take place at the Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd (at Blackburn), Dallas, TX 75219. Tickets are \$35-\$50 and can be purchased online at www.uptownplayers.org or by phone at (214) 219-2718.



About Uptown Players:

Uptown Players is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, presenting plays and musicals that challenge audiences artistically and strive to create greater positive public awareness and acceptance through the performing arts. Now in its eighteenth season and tenth at the Kalita Humphreys Theater, Uptown Players has gathered a dedicated following and is providing an opportunity for a wide diversity of gender styles to come together and explore life choices through great theatre themes such as relationships, family, prejudice, and values. The response from the community and critics has been remarkable, including over 25 Leon Rabin Awards from the Dallas Theatre League, and over 30 Theater Critics Forum Awards in its first fifteen seasons. Uptown Players has also been named the best theatre company by the Dallas Voice Readers and by the Dallas Observer and was also featured in *D Magazine* and on WFAA's Daybreak and Good Morning Texas programs.

Uptown Players has presented world premieres, including *Redesigning Women* (2013), *Crazy Just Like Me* (2011) and the stage adaptation of *The Valley of the Dolls* (2007), along with the United States premieres of the West End hit musical *Soho Cinders* (2014), and the Pet Shop Boys Musical *Closer to Heaven* (2010). Uptown Players was the first regional theater in the United States to present the Tony Award winner *The Boy from Oz* and the Pulitzer Prize winning musical *Next To Normal*, following the closing of the Broadway productions. Each season, Uptown Players presents several regional premieres, including recent productions of *It Shoulda Been You*, *The Toxic Avenger*, *Mothers and Sons*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Nance*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Hello Again* (featured in a Broadway World article about the recent movie), and *The Producers*.

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