

Village Theatre Announces Show Titles Selected for Festival of New Musicals 23rd Annual Festival Takes Place August 7-9, 2026 Tickets Available to the Public May 28, 2026

ISSAQUAH, WA (May 14, 2026)– Village Theatre is thrilled to introduce four brand new musicals as part of its 23rd annual Festival of New Musicals August 7-9, in Issaquah. This musical-packed weekend brings together the nation’s brightest musical theater writers and provides Seattle area theater lovers with the rare opportunity to see first-hand how a new musical comes to life.

This year’s selected shows are:

Widows

Book by **Matthew Greene**

Music and Lyrics by **Kira Stone**

Bonnie feels trapped in her 1950s suburban life until a hit-and-run accident ends her abusive marriage and brings her face-to-face with a group of supportive fellow widows at the funeral home.

Soon Bonnie learns that these ladies were responsible for her husband’s death and the demise of countless other monstrous men like him. Given the chance to join them in their vigilante ways while her suspicious brother-in-law breathes down her neck, Bonnie wonders if she’s the murdering kind.

With a driving pop score, a dark sense of humor, and a big moral predicament, *Widows* takes the audience on one woman’s dizzying quest to regain her power.

Love Is Dead

Book and Music by **Brett Ryback**

Book and Lyrics by **Jeff Luppino-Esposito**

It’s a rom-com to die for! Created by rising star writers Brett Ryback and Jeff Luppino-Esposito, *Love Is Dead* is a wildly irreverent, girl-meets-ghost musical comedy that’s screamingly funny and bursting with spirited, pop-infused songs.

On Halloween weekend, heartbroken and recently single Jordan books a solo getaway to write the article that could change her life. When she finds her guest house has an unexpected roommate—a devastatingly sexy ghost who lives to torment short-term renters—sparks fly, souls collide, and things get delightfully weird.

Sometimes the only way to feel alive again... is to fall for someone who isn’t.

Jet City Improv presents: An Improvised Musical!

You bring the title—we bring the show. With Broadway in our hearts and chaos in our hands, the cast creates a fully improvised musical right before your eyes. No script. No plan. Every word, step, and note is made up on the spot—raw, fearless, and on fire.

From show-stopping numbers to wild twists, this is musical theater like you've never seen before.

One night only. One chance to witness the magic. Don't miss it.

Featuring the We Have Some Notes Ensemble

Let Me Fly

Book and Original Lyrics by **Minhyung Cho**

Music by **Chanhong Min**

English Translation and Lyrics by **Michael K. Lee**

Based on the original IP of Let Me Fly Ltd.

Developed by PROSLAB and Wooran Foundation

1969. Apollo 11 lands on the Moon. That same night in a backwoods city in Korea, Namwon—the town tailor—receives an acceptance letter to Korea's finest Design Academy, getting him closer to achieving his dreams. While envisioning the future, his life is unexpectedly transformed by a cosmic event, rendering him unconscious.

Next thing he knows, everything has changed yet seems eerily familiar. The year is now 2020, and he meets Sunhee, an elderly woman who agrees to help him. Determined to return to 1969 and the love of his life, Jungbun, Namwon constructs his plan to go back in time.

An utterly charming story of love across time and space, the Festival marks *Let Me Fly's* debut full English translation, following on the heels of its critically-acclaimed run in South Korea.

An Optimist's Guide To The Dark Ages

Music by **Michael Kooman**

Book and Lyrics by **Christopher Dimond**

The Dark Ages: A time of plagues, pestilence, and poor personal hygiene.

But in the midst of the mud and the muck, Percival von Schmootz remains impossibly hopeful. In fact, he is the world's one and only optimist, which does not go unnoticed by the jaded residents of his hometown, who are constantly irritated by his positive worldview.

When the Bubonic Plague wipes out the entirety of said hometown, Percival sets out on a quest to personally end the Dark Ages. His efforts meet with hilarious failure at every turn, until he ultimately learns what enlightenment truly means.

With the signature humor of Village favorites Kooman & Dimond (*The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes, The Break*) and a ridiculously fun musical theater score, *An Optimist's Guide to the Dark Ages* will have audiences

walking out with a sunnier outlook—and an urge to wash their hands.

"The Festival of New Musicals is one of my favorite times of the year at Village Theatre," said Village Artistic Director Adam Immerwahr. "It's a gathering space for the people who love new musicals to celebrate the art form with the people who make new musicals. These incredible writers from around the globe are bringing us extraordinary new shows, and I can't wait to explore them, relish in them, and share them with our audience."

Public admission to the Festival this year is \$10 per ticket.

Limited premium seats are available for donors of \$1,000 or more to support the New Works program and gain access to a host of private panel discussions and behind-the-scenes Festival events with artists. More information is at VillageTheatre.org/Festival.

2026 FESTIVAL SHOW INFORMATION

Widows

August 7, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Book by **Matthew Greene**

Music and Lyrics by **Kira Stone**

MATTHEW GREENE (*Book*). Plays include *Thousand Pines* (Westport Country Playhouse), *Good Standing* (United Solo Festival), and *Gregorian* (Working Artists Theatre Project). His works have been developed with the Jerome Robbins Foundation, Laurents-Hatcher Foundation, and Vineyard Arts Project. In 2020, he received the Stiles + Drewe Prize for musical theater. He is also a mystery novelist, an advocate for arts education equity, and a proud member of the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop.

KIRA STONE (*Music and Lyrics*) is a composer, lyricist, and writer creating bold, pop-driven theatrical work that centers complex female perspectives. Her musicals include *SALEM, Built for This*, *WIDOWS*, *Pride & Prejudice: An Ardent New Musical* (commissioned by Concord Theatricals), *Madhouse*, and more. A recipient of the ASCAP Foundation Cole Porter Award, her work has been developed at leading institutions nationwide, creating art where pop music carries the pulse of female ambition and transformation.

Love Is Dead

August 8, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

Book and Music by **Brett Ryback**

Book and Lyrics by **Jeff Luppino-Esposito**

JEFF LUPPINO-ESPOSITO (*Book and Lyrics*) is thrilled to bring *Love Is Dead* to Village Theatre. He's best known for his work as a writer, lyricist, and director on the musical podcast "In Strange Woods," an iHeartRadio Award nominee for Best Fiction Podcast. Other credits include the stage show *Nantucket! The MusACKal*, the short film *How She Was*, and ample embarrassing comedy videos on the Internet. More at: JeffLE.me

BRETT RYBACK (*Book and Music*) is the recipient of the ASCAP Foundation's Cole Porter Award. Works include: the musical podcast "In Strange Woods" (iHeartRadio Award nominee), *Passing Through* (Goodspeed); *Nate the Great* (Licensed by TRW); and *Joe Schmoe Saves the World* (NAMT, ASCAP/Dreamworks Workshop). His award-winning plays *Weird* and *A Roz By Any Other Name* are both published in "The Best American Short

Plays 2007-2008.” He lives in LA with his husband and his miniature schnauzer, Hilde. Brettryback.com

Jet City Improv presents: An Improvised Musical!

August 8, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

Jet City Improv has been Seattle’s premiere improvised theater company in Seattle since 1992. As one of the oldest improv theaters in the region, they are known for their flagship Ensemble, the live and improvised movie re-dubbing show Twisted Flicks, and over 100 genre-based improvised plays as well as more edgy late-night shows, experimental pieces, festivals, and opening up the stage for guest teams from Seattle's independent improv scene. Jet City also provides classes through The Improv Academy and outreach opportunities through Improv for Good.

Let Me Fly

August 8, 2026 at 8:00 p.m.

Book and Original Lyrics by **Minhyung Cho**

Music by **Chanhong Min**

English Translation and Lyrics by **Michael K. Lee**

Based on the original IP of Let Me Fly Ltd.

Developed by PROSLAB and Wooran Foundation

MINHYUNG CHO (*Book and Lyrics*). Born and raised in Korea, Minhyung Cho is a musical theater writer and lyricist. Her credits include book and lyrics for *Jungle Life*, *Myeong-dong Romance*, *Cha_me*, *Super Closet*, and *Let Me Fly*. She has also translated and adapted *Islander the Musical*, and translated and revised the play *Life of Pi*. Her work has reached international audiences through licensed productions of *Cha_me* in Japan and *Let Me Fly* in Taiwan.

CHANHONG MIN (*Music*). Born and raised in Korea, Chanhong Min is a musical theater composer. His credits include music for *Laundry*, *Rimbaud*, *Maurice*, and *Let Me Fly*. He has also composed for film, web dramas, and numerous theatre productions. He is the recipient of Best Lyrics and Composition at the 4th Musical Awards, and Best Music Awards at the 5th Yegreen Musical Awards and the 7th Korea Musical Awards.

MICHAEL K. LEE (*English translation*). American-born with Korean roots, Michael is an international actor, writer and producer. To date, he has appeared in over 40 professional stage productions both in the US and abroad, including shows at Village Theatre such as *The King and I*, *The Who's Tommy* (Seattle Times Footlight Award), and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He has also made numerous television appearances, including the globally #1 ranked Netflix series, *XO, Kitty*. Current projects involve introducing Korean content to international audiences, as well as producing an original Korean musical in 2027.

An Optimist’s Guide to the Dark Ages

August 9, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

Music by **Michael Kooman**

Book and Lyrics by **Christopher Dimond**

AN OPTIMIST'S GUIDE TO THE DARK AGES, formerly titled *THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF PERCIVAL VON SCHMOOTZ*, was originally commissioned by the Canadian Music Theatre Project. It received further development from the American Music Theatre Project, Adirondack Theatre Festival, and the Bloomington Playwrights' Project. The show will be presented in New York City as part of the Stagedoor Foundation's inaugural New Next Now festival in early 2027.

MICHAEL KOOMAN (*Music*) and **CHRISTOPHER DIMOND** (*Book and Lyrics*) are an Emmy-nominated writing team for the stage and screen. They wrote more than 150 songs for Disney's *Vampirina*, an animated musical TV series reaching over 100 million viewers in 115 countries. Other television work includes Netflix's *Ridley Jones*, *Dead End: Paranormal Park*, and *Spirit Rangers*.

Their other stage projects include *Romantics Anonymous* (Shakespeare's Globe - written with Emma Rice), *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes* (Village Theatre), *The Break* (Village Theatre's Festival of New Musicals 2024), *Finn* (John F. Kennedy Center - written with Chris Nee), *Orphie and the Book of Heroes* (John F. Kennedy Center), *Judge Jackie: Disorder in the Court* (Pittsburgh CLO), *Dani Girl* (Exit, Pursued by a Bear), *Golden Gate* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Homemade Fusion* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and *Junior Claus* (Orlando Repertory Theatre).

Learn more at koomandimond.com @koomandimond

ABOUT VILLAGE THEATRE

Based in Issaquah, Wash., with operations in Everett, Wash., Village Theatre is a leading producer of musical theater in the Pacific Northwest. Producing entertaining, quality productions since 1979, Village has grown into one of the region's best-attended theatres. Village is nationally recognized for its contribution to the development of new musicals, having supported the creation of more than 180 new works to date; and also takes pride in nurturing tomorrow's audiences through its Youth Education programs, serving thousands of young people and their families annually.

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FOR EDITORS/PRODUCERS

WHAT: The Festival of New Musicals

Don't miss your chance to see the next big musical hit at Village Theatre's annual Festival of New Musicals! Join this theatrically packed weekend to enjoy stage readings of brand-new works from some of the nation's brightest musical theater creators, presented in collaboration with some of the Seattle area's finest performers to create the future of America's most extraordinary art form.

Village Theatre has launched more than 180 new musicals into the universe, sending them across the country, to Broadway, and worldwide. The Festival jumpstarted Broadway favorites like *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Next to Normal*.

WHERE:

Village Theatre
Francis J. Gaudette Theatre
303 Front Street N, Issaquah

WHEN:

August 7-9, 2026

TICKETS:

\$10 for general admission

Seats must be reserved

Public ticket sales open May 28, 2026

For ticketing information >> VillageTheatre.org/Festival

CONNECT WITH VILLAGE THEATRE

VillageTheatre.org

Facebook - [/VillageTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/VillageTheatre)

Instagram - [@village_theatre](https://www.instagram.com/village_theatre)

YouTube - [/villagetheatre1](https://www.youtube.com/villagetheatre1)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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