A NEW BRAIN

Music and Lyrics by William Finn
Book by William Finn and James Lapine

Thursday, November 3 at 8 p.m.
Friday, November 4 at 8 p.m.
Saturday, November 5 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Sunday, November 6 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Varner Studio Theatre | 2022

Oakland University | School of Music, Theatre and Dance
A NEW BRAIN

Music and Lyrics by William Finn
Book by William Finn and James Lapine

Director
Rachel M. Stevens

Music Director
Alissa Hetzner

Sound Designer
Phillip Christiansen*

Lighting Designer
Joe Kocenda*

Stage Manager
Brady Jacot*

Costume Designer

Props Master

Hair & Makeup:
Whitney Locher

Assistant Stage Manager
Bailey Graham*

Scenic Designer
Jeremy Barnett

Assistant Director
Dramaturg/Dance Captain
Madeline Daunt*

November 3 - 7, 2022
Varner Studio Theatre

*We are pleased to acknowledge the work of our students on the production team.

Video/audio recording of any kind during this production is STRICTLY PROHIBITED

A NEW BRAIN is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com
A NEW BRAIN

THE COMPANY

GORDON.................................................................Travis Darghali
ROGER.................................................................Alec Diem
MIMI.................................................................Kennedy Vernengo
RHODA (*U/S LISA)...............................................Rachel Nesbitt
BUNGEE...............................................................Mark LeMire
LISA.................................................................Chanelle Beach
NANCY (*U/S MIMI)...............................................Faith Green
RICHARD.............................................................Tuger Xiong
DOCTOR/JOE.........................................................Alexander Hernandez
THE MINISTER....................................................Yeshua Hardy

COVER/SWINGS

Cover (GORDON, ROGER).................................Sam VanKampen
Cover (RHODA, NANCY).................................Grace Turner
Swing (RHODA, NANCY, MIMI, LISA)........Rachel Sarles
Swing (RICHARD, BUNGEE, MINISTER, DOCTOR)....Sullivan Saliby

Place & Time

Contemporary. A hospital room.

Running time: 105 minutes. There will be no intermission.

Content Disclaimer: This story explores themes of grief and loss. Please be advised, this play contains strong language that may not be suitable for younger audiences.
Musical Numbers

Prologue: Frogs Have So Much Spring (The Spring Song)
    Prologue: 911 Emergency
    I Have So Many Songs
    Heart and Music
    Mother's Gonna Make Things Fine
    Trouble In His Brain
    Be Polite to Everyone
    I'd Rather Be Sailing
    Family History
    Gordo's Law of Genetics
    And They're Off
    Roger Arrives
    Just Go
    MRI Tomorrow
    Poor, Unsuccessful, and Fat
    MRI Day
    Sitting Becalmed in the Lee of Cuttyhunk
    Craniotomy
    An Invitation To Sleep in My Arms
    Change
    Yes
    In The Middle of the Room (Part I)
    Throw It Out
    In the Middle of the Room (Part 2)
    A Really Lousy Day in the Universe
    Brain Dead
    The Music Still Plays On
    Don't Give In
    Craniotomy (Reprise)
    You Boys are Gonna Get Me in Such Trouble
    I'd Rather Be Sailing (Reprise)
    The Homeless Lady's Revenge
    Time
    Time and Music
    I Feel So Much Spring
**Director's Note**

Last school year, the faculty asked, what pieces would meet such a big moment of transition where not only our physical theater spaces would be going through renovations and renewal, but culturally, we were destined for new beginnings? We were intent on choosing material that at its core spoke to celebrating diverse identities and positionality, illuminated the power of community and collaboration and kept our storytelling simple. With these values in mind, *A New Brain* was immediately at the top of the list. As a little girl, I remember singing tunes from *A New Brain* with my father in the car and feeling innately seen. I didn’t know it then, but the reason *A New Brain* touched my heart was how personal it felt. It’s like a love letter to all the delightfully self-deprecating, ambitious creatives out there and the communities that ground them and get them to take deep breaths. Something even as a little girl I knew I needed. This deeply human, often sardonic but heartening and heartwarming piece explores the questions; What do we make of the time we are given? How do we measure our impact? And how do we apply our individual gifts to leave the world with a little more “spring” than we found it? *A New Brain* is a highly autobiographical story of composer William Finn’s own experience, which began as a collection of notes taken during his ordeal at the hospital. It is no surprise that the play, as an extension of the story subject’s life, explores the inner workings of a creative mind. It humorously presents the pressures and joys of creation, and drives home the healing power of art.

At this moment, our community has begun to emerge from a time of isolation and unrest, ready to begin again and make change. Working on telling this story with these people has been one of the most satisfying experiences. The play is anchored in the student’s unalerted bravery to tell this story from their hearts, honoring the characters on the page while championing themselves in their own skin, with their own lens. At a time when these young artists are on a sometimes harrowing journey of growing into the people who will leave OU and go out into the world, this story reminds us to honor moments of stillness and be present- it will only make our art and our lives more impactful. This process has given us just that, “time and music.” Thank you to the faculty and staff who have supported this journey with your creative partnership and collaboration, and to you, our audience, for joining us to celebrate where we are in process. Please enjoy, *A New Brain*.

With gratitude,
Rachel M. Stevens
Dramaturg’s Note

Riding high on the success of his musical *Falsettos* in 1992, composer William Finn’s world came crashing down when he was diagnosed with AVM, a life threatening brain condition. An arteriovenous malformation (AVM), a tangle of blood vessels and arteries, disrupted the flow of oxygen to Finn’s brain, and in the process his life and work. It was quickly determined that Finn required a risky surgical procedure to restore his brain to normal function. While in recovery at the hospital, Finn’s close collaborator, director James Lapine, urged him to write down his experiences and turn them into a song cycle. From William Finn’s ordeal sprang Gordon Michael Schwinn, a young composer who experiences a Finnian brain malformation. Gordon’s story was soon supported by a cast of characters loosely inspired by Finn’s family, friends and those who took care of him at the hospital. Workshopped into a full length musical at Lincoln Center, *A New Brain* enjoyed an Off-Broadway run in 1998 and a 2015 presentation at City Center’s Encores! Off-Center starring Jonathan Groff. The version of the show you’ll see today is produced through a special arrangement with Finn and Lapine and includes the 2015 changes that ground the show in Gordon’s reality.

Health scares, like an arteriovenous malformation, immediately bring strong emotions to the surface. Hospital patients and their families may feel trapped, confused and frightened about the decisions that will determine their futures. Good health is a precious gift that is often taken for granted until its security is threatened. When in jeopardy, we recognize what is truly important to us. In the same way that Gordon deals with isolation and the loss of the way of life he’s always known, COVID-19 made changes to every aspect of our lives. We’ve had the opportunity to slow down, reflect, and restructure to reflect on the values we want to live by; and learned to cherish our families, friends and the little things that make life wonderful. The pandemic has invited us to reevaluate our careers and align them with our personal missions. In the process, we have reemerged into schools and workplaces with a refreshed gratitude. Not ignoring the losses faced, we can trust that these experiences will guide our future choices towards what we truly want to leave behind.

Our production asks you to contemplate your relationship to your own legacy and how it’s changed throughout your life. Would you be happy with what you’ve left behind if suddenly faced with a life changing situation like Gordon’s? The luxury of time is not guaranteed, but the time we have is precious. Embrace the change.

Madeline Daunt
Dramaturg and Assistant Director
Land Acknowledgement Statement

Oakland University resides on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe, known as the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The land was ceded in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit and makes up southeast Michigan.

In recognizing the history and respecting the sovereignty of Michigan’s Indian Nations, Oakland University honors the heritage of Indigenous communities and their significant role in shaping the course of this region. Further, we recognize the wrongs done to those forcibly removed from their Homelands and commit to fostering an environment of inclusion that is responsive to the needs of First Peoples through our words, policies, and actions.

The preservation and perpetuation of customs and traditions of Indigenous nations are essential to our shared cultural heritage. A deep understanding of Native peoples’ past and present informs the teaching, research, and community engagement of the university in its ongoing effort to elevate the dignity of all people and serve as shared stewards of the land.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Oakland University is committed to creating and supporting a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for all community members; as well as those visiting our campus. Diversity, equity and inclusion objectives are grounded in the realization that one cannot build a foundation of collaboration while focusing on differences between contributors. Instead, the foundation must be built on the shared aspirations, commitments and surmountable challenges of all. At OU, learning and diversity are inevitably linked by the common pursuit of knowledge and understanding.
**Band Members**

Music Director/Keyboard 1 - Alissa Hetzner  
Keyboard 2 - Laura Blanchard  
Reeds - Ken Hebenstreit  
Cello - Andrew Toering  
Percussion - Dave Mety

**Production Staff**

Technical Director and Scene Shop Supervisor ..................... Joe Beck  
Assistant Technical Director...............................Randy Magner  
Carpenter..................................................Bailey Graham  
Costume Shop Supervisor .........................Christa Koerner  
Costume Shop Staff........................................Laine Hamburg, Tug Xiong, Liv Kunkle, Colin Franz, Madeline Daunt, Xandra Cross, Katie Lengyel, Kathryn West, Lilija Shuger, Jaci Taylor, Montana King, Phillip Christiansen  
Faculty Advisors..................................Jeremy Barnett, Joey Scarillo, David Gram, Kerro Knox 3  
Intimacy Choreographer...............................David Gram  
Fight Choreographer...............................Anthony Guest  
Guest Choreographer..............................Gregory Patterson  
Light Board Operator..................................Cayla Stus  
Fluorescent Lights Operator.........................Ximena Perez  
Sound Board Operator...............................Chris Brannon  
Wardrobe Head........................................Mary Kate Pardington  
Dressers/Wardrobe..........................Mary Kate Pardington, Calleigh Wilson  
Props Runner/Deck Crew..........................Matthew Sell, Evelyn Shelton  
Front of House Representative..................Kaila Pickett-Mckincannon  
Promotional Photos...............................JLBoonePhotography  
Marketing Manager..............................Carly Uhrig
A New Brain Company would like to extend a warm thank you to…

Jeremy Barnett
Riliegh Bautel
Katherine Boersma
The Nursing & Medical Staff Of Baker College
OU Department of Theatre Faculty
Manjit Gill
David Gram
Anthony Guest
Adam Heller
Megan Herald
Terry Herald
Kerro Knox 3
Alyse Alan Louis
Rachel Nesbitt
Greg Patterson
The OU Costume Shop
Dena Young
Josh Young

P. S. Pardon our dust!

We are in mid-renovation and will have shiny spaces in Fall 2023.

Enjoy the designs out in the hall, and please forgive the current inconvenience.
Cast and Crew Bios

Travis Darghali (Gordon)
Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Travis (He/Him) appeared in *Pippin* with Nicely Theatre and a very different musical this past winter… *Pippin* at Oakland University! Travis wants to thank his friends, family, and partner, Chanelle, for their love, support and adoration. He is so excited for all to come and revel in this phenomenal show that this cast and crew have poured their heart and souls into!

Alec Diem (Roger)
Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Alec (He/Him) is thrilled to be performing as ‘Roger’ in *A New Brain*. You may remember him from his work last year as a ‘Player’ in *Pippin*, or ‘Chip’ in *Spelling Bee*. He would like to thank his family and friends for their endless love and support!

Kennedy Vernengo (Mimi)
Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Kennedy (She/Her) is ecstatic to be portraying the fabulous ‘Mimi’! Her previous roles include ‘Rona’ in *Spelling Bee* and ‘Smitty’ in *How to Succeed*. Kennedy would like to thank her parents, sisters, and wonderful boyfriend for their constant support!
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel Nesbitt (Rhoda, U/S Lisa) Junior, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Rachel (She/Her) appeared in Oakland's <em>Pippin</em> last year. She is thrilled to be playing ‘Rhoda’, which is her first lead at Oakland, and would like to thank Rachel Stevens for the opportunity. She would also like to thank the wonderful cast, crew, band, and of course her family. Special thanks to Austin for keeping her sane :)</td>
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<td>Mark J. Le Mire (Mr. Bungee) Senior, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Mark (He/Him) is grateful for all the support from his family, friends, and peers that have helped him along the way. Past productions include <em>In Pieces</em> (‘Charlie’), <em>The Trojan Women</em> (‘Poseidon’), and <em>Hasting Street</em> (‘Lenny’). KERPLOP!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chanelle Beach (Lisa) Junior, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Chanelle (She/Her) has played ‘Marcy’ in <em>Spelling Bee</em> and the ‘Leading Player’ Understudy in <em>Pippin</em>. She wants to congratulate the entire cast and crew on an incredible process and give a special thanks to her friends, family, and partner, Travis. Enjoy the show! Instagram: @chanellebeach</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<td>Faith Green (Nancy, U/S Mimi)</td>
<td>Freshman, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Faith (She/Her) is from Janesville, WI. She previously attended Parker Arts Academy, and was last seen in the 2022 SMTD New Student Showcase at Oakland. She’d like to thank her friends and family for their undying support, and the cast and crew for being so incredibly welcoming.</td>
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<td>Tuger Xiong (Richard)</td>
<td>Sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Tuger Xiong “TOO - jur ZONG” (They/Them) Born and raised in California, they fell in love with theatre during their senior year of high school and moved to Michigan to further pursue their education. They were previously seen in Oakland University’s production of <em>Pippin</em> as a ‘Player’.</td>
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<td>Alexander Hernandez (Doctor/Joe)</td>
<td>Sophomore, BFA Musical Theatre</td>
<td>Alexander (He/Him) is honored to be able to be in an amazing production filled with even more amazing people. He would like to thank YOU, the audience members, for coming; and hopes you leave with a warm fuzzy feeling :)</td>
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Yeshua Hardy (The Minister)
Freshman, BFA Musical Theatre

Yeshua (He/Him) is from Atlanta, Georgia and graduated from Tri-Cities High School where he was involved in acting, singing, dancing and directing. He was recently in a production of *Ragtime* where he played ‘Booker T. Washington’. He is very excited for this new process.

Sam VanKampen (Cover [Gordon, Roger]), Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Sam VanKampen (he/him) is thrilled to return to the theatre, understudying the roles of Gordon and Roger. Sam is a senior musical theatre major at Oakland University. Recent Credits: Grey, In Pieces (Oakland University), Jordanaire, A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline (Meadowbrook Theatre), Billy Understudy/Sailor Quartet, Anything Goes (Nicely Theatre Co.). Sam is also a photographer! Portfolio: @sjvkphotos
Main Instagram: @sammy.vankampen

Grace Liz Turner (Cover [Rhoda, Nancy]) Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Grace (She/Her) is thrilled to be covering the roles of ‘Rhoda’ and ‘Nancy’. You may have seen her in the ‘Manson Trio’ in *Pippin* last spring, which was her first performance after a two year hiatus during the pandemic. Instagram: @graceakatimmyturner gracelizturner.com
Rachel Sarles (Swing [Rhoda, Nancy, Mimi, Lisa])
Junior, BFA Musical Theatre

Rachel (She/Her) is participating in her second show with Oakland University. Recent credits: ‘Olive Ostrovsky’ (...Spelling Bee with OU) and Female Swing (shows including Godspell, Nunsense, and Barefoot In The Park with Tibbits Opera House). She would like to thank her parents and friends for their constant support, and a huge thank you to the cast and crew for making this such a fulfilling experience.

Sullivan Saliby (Swing [Mr. Bungee, Minister, Doctor, Richard]) Freshman, BFA Musical Theatre

Sullivan (He/Him) is a transfer student who is so incredibly excited to be involved in A New Brain. Sullivan recently choreographed a production of The Wedding Singer in his hometown Janesville, Wisconsin. He would like to thank Rachel and Alissa for this opportunity to learn and grow as a performer.

Brady Jacot (Stage Manager)
Junior, BA Theatre and Music, Communications Minor

Brady (He/Him) has thoroughly enjoyed being the stage manager (for the first time ever!) on this production. Recent acting credits include ‘Austyn’ (In Pieces), ‘Talthybius’ (Trojan Women), and ‘Oliver’ (Lemons, Lemons, Lemons, Lemons, Lemons). He would like to thank Rachel Stevens & Joey Scarillo for constant support and guidance, as well as Kennedy Vernengo for all of the post-rehearsal sandwiches. Instagram: @bradleyjacket
Madeline Daunt (Dramaturg/Assistant Director/Dance Captain)
Senior, BFA Musical Theatre

Madeline (She/Her) has enjoyed her first dramaturgical and directorial experiences with the wonderful people in this production! At Oakland, she’s appeared in Sense and Sensibility (Marianne) as well as How to Succeed in Business (Scrubwoman/Dance Captain) and Cabaret (Frenchie). She’d like to thank David Gram and Rachel Stevens for being amazing mentors, and hopes the audience finds their own renewal through this story.

Bailey Graham (Assistant Stage Manager/Props Master) Sophomore, BA Theatre and Creative Writing

Bailey (She/They) has had a fantastic experience working with the cast and crew as the Assistant Stage Manager and Props Master. They want to give a big shout-out to everyone that worked so hard on the show and hope that you (the audience) enjoy every bit of it!

Whitney Locher (Costume Designer/Hair & Makeup)
Assistant Professor of Costume Design at Oakland University

| **Phillip Christiansen (Sound Designer)**  
Junior, BA Theatre |
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<td>Phillip (He/Him) is very excited about being the sound designer for this production. Though his focus is on acting, he always enjoys getting to employ his adjacent technical skills behind the scenes.</td>
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| **Joe Kocenda (Lighting Designer)**  
Junior, BSE Electrical Engineering and BFA Theatre Design and Technology |
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<td>Joe (He/Him) worked on props for Oakland University’s spring 2022 production of <em>Pippin</em>. He would like to thank his family for being so supportive. Joe would also like to thank his friends for tolerating most of his bad jokes and says “there’s no pun in it I swear”.</td>
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| **Jeremy Barnett (Scenic Designer)**  
Chair, Department of Theatre and Associate Professor of Scenic Design at Oakland University |
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<td>Jeremy (He/Him) is a Detroit-based scenic and event designer. He is a co-founding member of Amarant Design Collective, a Detroit-based installation art organization. Jeremy holds a Master's of Fine Arts in Scenic Design from Boston University and a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Drama from Carnegie Mellon University. He studied photography at Pittsburgh Filmmakers Institute and at Studio Art Centers International in Florence Italy. He studied Stone Sculpture at the Tengenenge Sculpture Gallery in Guruve, Zimbabwe. Jeremy served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine from 2003 to 2005.</td>
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The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program, is generously funded by David M. Rubenstein.

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; and the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation.

Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.
UPCOMING THEATRE EVENTS

**Pizza Man**
by Darlene Craviotto
Friday- Saturday, November 18 - 19 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, November 20 at 2 p.m.
Varner Lab Theatre | $6 all seats

**Directing II: An Evening of 10-Minute Plays**
Thursday - Friday, December 8 - 9 at 8 p.m.
Varner Lab Theatre | Free admission

**A Little Night Music**
Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim | Book by Hugh Wheeler
Thursday, March 23 at 8 p.m. | Friday, March 24 at 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.
Saturday, March 25 at 2 and 8 p.m. | Sunday, March 26 at 2 p.m.
Flagstar Strand Theatre for the Performing Arts
$22 general, $12 students

**Twelfth Night**
by William Shakespeare
Thursday - Saturday, March 30 - April 1 at 8 p.m.
Pontiac Little Art Theatre | $15 general, $8 students

**Love and Information**
by Caryl Churchill
Thursday - Friday, April 6 -7 at 8 p.m. | Saturday, April 8 at 2 and 8 p.m.
Pontiac Little Art Theatre | $15 general, $8 students

For a full listing of events, visit: oakland.edu/smtd/performances-and-events.