

The Second City
TRAINING CENTER

**CONSERVATORY
GRADUATION SHOW**

**WAITING
FOR THE
PUNCHLINE**

**AUGUST 31
SEPTEMBER 8
SEPTEMBER 14
SEPTEMBER 21
ETC THEATER**

**Directed By: Jess Mitolo
Musical Director: Darwin Noguera
Stage Manager: Vicky Diaz-Escobar**

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Second City Conservatory is an advanced six-level program dedicated to the art of utilizing improvisation as a tool to create a Second City-style revue, the cornerstone of The Second City Training Center.

Students in the Conservatory program build upon the fundamentals of improv, advance their scenic and character skills, explore forms and styles and learn how to turn improvised scenes into written material for a satiric comedy revue.

PERFORMED BY:



Maddy Blasingame (she/her)

Maddy Blasingame was born and raised in Minnesota and got her start as a member of the improv troupe Identity Crisis at UCLA. After earning her degree in Statistics and Data Science, she pursued her childhood dream of becoming an insurance professional. Before coming to The Second City she performed at HUGE Improv Theater in Minneapolis. When she isn't working in Excel or performing, she can be found drinking coffee, spending time with friends, or at the beach. If you just can't get enough of Maddy follow her on Instagram at @maddyb100



Alex Buckmann (he/him)

Alex Buckmann is from Merion Station, Pennsylvania and graduated with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Alex went through the improv program at The Second City before joining the Conservatory. When he's not at The Second City, Alex can be found reading, riding his bike somewhere, or getting into all sorts of shenanigans with his friends.



Daniel Fleming (he/him)

Daniel moved to Chicago two years ago to continue his teaching career and pursue improv at The Second City Training Center. He is a member of Funny Business Improv, performing and opening for shows around the Chicago area. When he's not in the classroom or on stage, Daniel enjoys combining creativity, technology, and storytelling to connect with others.

PERFORMED BY:



Erik Kalberg (he/him)

Erik Kalberg is an Illinois native, growing up in the north suburbs of Chicago. Making his stage debut after finishing the Second City Conservatory program, he is excited to begin his career. Outside of comedy, he likes to assemble wooden puzzles. You can find him on Instagram at [eric.withacay](#) as well as most social platforms.



Rachel Kiser Rucker (she/her)

Rachel is passionate about inspiring others to discover their creative genius through music, theater, and storytelling. She has devoted her career to education, performance, and writing, sharing the transformative power of the arts with audiences around the world. Her performance credits encompass independent films and various music and theatrical productions, including her original one-woman show, *Ma Voix*, featured at the Hollywood Fringe Festival. Rachel is the founder of INK Theater and holds a bachelor's and master's degree in music from the University of Wisconsin—Madison. More info found at [Rachelkiser.com](#)!



Michael Nicholas

Michael Nicholas is an actor, singer, and sandwich enthusiast, originally from Palatine, IL. He received his BA in Theatre Arts from Marquette University in 2018, where he was the proud recipient of the Chris Farley Memorial Scholarship. Since then, he's performed Shakespeare across Wisconsin, spent two years singing on Mississippi River paddlewheel boats, and most recently, gave architecture tours on the Chicago River. Now, he uses his expertise as a travel advisor at Travel Gallery, Inc. (take a trip!). He sincerely hopes you enjoy the show!



Tucker Brewster Schuster (he/him)

Tucker Brewster Schuster is from Sleepy Eye, MN. (Yes, he knows he sounds like a cartoon character.) Before moving to Chicago, Tucker has spent the past few years performing all around the world as a stunt man, an actor, and a stilt walker! He enjoys playing *Magic the Gathering*, Power Lifting, doing Gymnastics, and doing silly little bits. He wants to thank his girlfriend, Jessica, for all of the love and support and you can find him on Instagram @tucktuckno

PERFORMED BY:



Kallie Scott (she/her)

Kallie Scott, born and raised in West Texas, comes to the Second City Training Center in a bold attempt to prove to herself that she really is funny. Kallie holds a B.A. in Theatre from West Texas A&M University and a M.F.A. in acting from Western Illinois University. She has been known to sneak around Chicago and perform a little stand-up or jump on a sketch show. You can follow her on instagram @kallie_scott for show dates.



Sarah "Swannie" Willstein (she/her)

Sarah "Swannie" Willstein grew up in Missoula, MT and graduated St. Olaf College with a degree in English, and an emphasis in creative writing. Swannie's comedy career began March 9, 1998 when her younger brother was born and she became THE middle child. Since that impactful day she has performed improv, sketch, and stand up routines from the living room to The Second City stages. To continue to see Swannie's work, follow her @swanniewills on instagram, and come see her live at Background Bits's next production! Swannie would like to thank her friends and family for their support and encouragement throughout her conservatory experience.



Christopher Willumsen

Chris Willumsen was last seen on stage understudying Artistic Home's Superior Donuts and Artist Home Ensemble's Cut to the Chase. Prior to that, he appeared in Synetic Theater's The Trial in D.C. Chris made his directorial debut with Yas, And Comedy's pilot show "Yas, And!" in June, 2025, presented at the Annoyance Theatre, since then he has directed "Slay!", "Queers & Fears", and most recently "Blue Dress!" You can find Chris @CWillumsen_

BEHIND THE SCENES



Director - Jess Mitolo (she/her)

Jessica Mitolo loves to make ridiculous new things with ridiculously talented people. She is the current Senior Artistic Director of The Second City Training Center and has taught improvisation and sketch writing over ten different countries including Jordan, Greece, Bulgaria, and Saudi Arabia. She loves to direct material with an eye towards social change and recent collaborations include productions with The Zebra Project and Funny You Should Care.



Music Director - Darwin Noguera (he/him)

Hailing from Managua, Nicaragua, pianist and composer Darwin Noguera is an eclectic artist who continues to enthrall and excite listeners with rich compositions and his improvisational prowess. He is currently a musical director at The Second City of Chicago, as well as a teaching artist with the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic. In 2017, the artist made his Carnegie Hall debut, along with contemporary icon Bobby Sanabria Multiverse Bigband, and garnering a Grammy Award Nomination for their acclaimed recording, "West Side Story: Reimagined" live at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Darwin is also a furious bandleader, who fuses his native Nicaraguan folk music, Afro Cuban Jazz and hip hop. The artist is swiftly becoming an emerging voice in the Latin Jazz scene, with commissioned works, performances and masterclasses worldwide.



Vicky DiAx-Escobar (any/all)

Vicky is a Chicago-based stage manager who has worked at The Second City as a studio stage manager since 2018. Here and at other theatres around town, Vicky works on a mix of variety shows, sketch, improv, and plays. Before Chicago Vicky studied directing and stage managing at TCU in Fort Worth Texas. (Go Frogs!). Vicky is excited to work on another Grad Review 3 show this term with this talented group of actors!