VAN GUARD THEATER presents

NEXT TO NORMAL

MUSIC BY TOM KITT
BOOK & LYRICS BY
BRIAN YORKEY

VANGUARD THEATER COMPANY PRESENTS NEXT TO NORMAL
NOVEMBER 10-21, 2021
Thank you to our Show Sponsors!!

Darkness Rising
A Mental Health Nonprofit

Tee Rico
by Lin-Manuel Miranda

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A NOTE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

When we chose Next to Normal as the season opener in our new home in Montclair, NJ, I knew I wanted to take a fresh look at the 2008 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning musical.

The themes of Next to Normal are universal; there is something in this show that will resonate with everyone. But with our mission of changing the narrative through theater dedicated to DREAM - Diversity, Reciprocity, Education, Activism & Mentorship - I was curious to explore how casting a diverse group of actors would add additional layers to the story. Casting a Black actor as Diana - the incredibly talented Erica Dorfler, who was a mentor in our 2019 and 2020 Broadway Buddy programs - immediately changed the narrative of this piece. In our story, the family confronts not only grief, depression, suicide, drug abuse, ethics in modern psychiatry, and the underbelly of suburban life, but they face these momentous issues while existing as an interracial family in a predominantly white suburban neighborhood.

In addition to casting a Black actor as Diana, I also took an experimental approach when casting the teenagers within the piece. Diana and Dan’s son and daughter Gabe and Natalie have been double-cast with both black and white actors. It’s been interesting in the rehearsal room observing how shifting the complexions of the actors tells a very different story - even with the same text.

To serve Vanguard’s commitment to Education and Activism, we wanted this production to call attention to the fact that in the African American community, mental health issues are often compounded by the psychological stress of systemic racism, which, though not written into this story - certainly plays a major part through our color conscious casting.

As Erica so aptly put it in one of our press releases:

As someone who has lived in and moved through predominantly white spaces in my life, I have experienced the challenges of feeling out of place, feeling unheard, and feeling as though you can’t explore your true self because of the environment around you. If you add the challenge of a mental disorder, especially one as severe as Diana’s, the result is an incredibly complex character and story.

While feeling out of place and unheard is certainly not unique to people of color, it’s important to note that real disparities exist in diagnosis of mental illness, and access to resources and healthcare between Black Americans and other Americans. According to the American Psychiatric Association’s Mental Health Facts for African Americans, while the rate of bipolar disorder is the same among all populations, Black Americans are significantly less likely to receive a diagnosis and, therefore, treatment for this illness. Black adults are also less likely to receive guideline-consistent care, less frequently included in medical research, and more likely to use emergency rooms or primary care (rather than be treated by mental health specialists). Stigma and judgment often prevent Black Americans from seeking treatment for their mental illnesses. And when they do seek treatment, Black Americans are offered medication or therapy at significantly lower rates than the general population.
The “R” in our mission of DREAM stands for Reciprocity. One of the ways we seek to give back to the community is by partnering with non-arts organizations to highlight their missions. For *Next to Normal*, we are partnering with Montclair’s Integrated Care Concepts (integratedcareconcepts.com), which offers a holistic approach to mental healthcare, and New York City’s Darkness Rising Project (darknessrisingproject.org), offering, among other things, free community wellness workshops geared toward people of color. Our partnerships will highlight the important work these organizations do, provide them a platform to offer information and resources to audiences at all of our performances, as well as participate in a talk-back after the November 14th matinee.

We hope that by presenting *Next to Normal* in the context of a diverse family, this production will help shine a light on not only mental illness, but also the disparities in treatment between different groups, as well as share valuable resources for all those who need support.

There will be light!

**Janeece Freeman Clark**

Founding Artistic Director,
Vanguard Theater Company
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January 7 - 16, 2022
180 Bloomfield Ave, Montclair
VANGUARD THEATER COMPANY PRESENTS

NEXT TO NORMAL

Music by TOM KITT
Book & Lyrics by BRIAN YORKEY

starring ERICA DORFLER* and LOU STEELE*
Appearing courtesy of Actors Equity Association

Morgan Scott . Josslyn Shaw . Racquel Williams

Music Direction Alex Ratner
Stage Management Meaghan Finlay
Directed by Janeece Freeman Clark

Choreography Lawrence Dandridge
Costumes Veronica Gonmiah
Lighting Design Michael Kimmel

Production Manager Terri Gorgone
Graphic Design Jessica Sporn
Sound Design Mark Keeler

Original Broadway Production Produced by David Stone,
James L. Nederlander, Barbara Whitman, Patrick Catullo and Second Stage Theatre

Carole Rothman, Artistic Director . Ellen Richard, Executive Director
'Next To Normal' was subsequently produced by Arena Stage in November 2008

Developed at Village Theatre, Issaquah, WA (Robb Hunt, Executive Producer, Steve Tomkins, Artistic Director)
An earlier version was presented in the 2005 New York Musical Theatre Festival.

Support for the development of "Next To Normal" was provided by the Jonathan Larson Foundation

Next to Normal is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).
All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited
# MUSICAL NUMBERS

## ACT ONE
- "Prelude" – Orchestra
- "Just Another Day" – Diana, Natalie, Gabe, Dan
- "Everything Else" – Natalie
- "Who's Crazy" / "My Psychopharmacologist and I" – Dan, Doctor Fine, Diana
- "Perfect for You" – Henry, Natalie
- "I Miss the Mountains" – Diana
- "It's Gonna Be Good" – Dan, Natalie, Henry, Diana
- "He's Not Here" – Dan
- "You Don't Know" – Diana
- "I Am the One" – Dan, Gabe, Diana
- "Superboy and the Invisible Girl" – Natalie, Diana, Gabe
- "I'm Alive" – Gabe
- "Make Up Your Mind" / "Catch Me I'm Falling" – Doctor Madden, Diana, Dan, Natalie, Gabe, Henry
- "I Dreamed a Dance" – Diana, Gabe
- "There's a World" – Gabe
- "I've Been" – Dan
- "Didn't I See This Movie?" – Diana
- "A Light in the Dark" – Dan, Diana

## ACT TWO
- "Wish I Were Here" – Diana, Natalie
- "Song of Forgetting" – Dan, Diana, Natalie
- "Hey #1" – Henry, Natalie
- "Seconds and Years" – Doctor Madden, Dan, Diana
- "Better Than Before" – Doctor Madden, Dan, Natalie, Diana
- "Aftershocks" – Gabe
- "Hey #2" – Henry, Natalie
- "You Don't Know" (Reprise) – Diana, Doctor Madden
- "How Could I Ever Forget?" – Diana, Dan
- "It's Gonna Be Good" (Reprise) – Dan, Diana
- "Why Stay?" / "A Promise" – Diana, Natalie, Dan, Henry
- "I'm Alive" (Reprise) – Gabe
- "The Break" – Diana
- "Make Up Your Mind" / "Catch Me I'm Falling" (Reprise) – Doctor Madden, Diana, Gabe
- "Maybe (Next to Normal)" – Diana, Natalie
- "Hey #3" / "Perfect for You" (Reprise) – Henry, Natalie
- "So Anyway" – Diana
- "I Am the One" (Reprise) – Dan, Gabe
- "Light" – Diana, Dan, Natalie, Gabe, Henry, Doctor Madden

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CAST

Erica Dorfler*

Lou Steele*

Aaron Bowes**

Charlie Fusari***

Draytin Freude***

Josslyn Shaw**

Marcus Beckett**

Morgan Scott

Racquel Williams***

*appearing courtesy of Actors Equity Association

**appearing on odd numbered performance dates

***appearing on even numbered performance dates
Erica Dorfler (Diana) Broadway: *A Christmas Carol, Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812, The Book of Mormon, Memphis, Baby It’s You!, Scandalous.* Off-Broadway: *Carmen Jones (Classic Stage), Married An Angel (Encores!), Avenue Q (New World), Witness (Playwrights Realm), Forbidden Broadway (Davenport Theater), Silk Stockings (York Theatre).* National Tours: *Rent, Mamma Mia!* Regional/NYC: *The Way of the World (Folger Theatre), Pamela’s First Musical (Two River Theater), THIS (Barrington Stage), Here’s Hoover (Les Freres Corbusier), West Side Story (L.A. Philharmonic), Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812 (ART).* Television: “The Family.” A very special thank you to Vanguard and this wonderful cast and crew for such a warm welcome back into the world of live theater. Lots of love to Tony Cloer of Blue Ridge Entertainment, and to my friends, family, and community. For Brian. [www.ericadorfler.com](http://www.ericadorfler.com).

Marcus Beckett (Gabe; Dr. Madden Cast) A native of East Orange, NJ, Marcus is an artist and educator throughout the NYC/NJ area. Past Vanguard credits include: *The Music Man and The Little Princess.* Other on-stage credits include: *Till (Emmett), Another Part of the Forest (Oscar), The Colored Museum (Guy/Man/Waiter), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Bottom), Noises Off (Garry), Magic Tree House (Dipper), Pippen (Leading Player), Spelling Bee (Mitch), DreamGirls (Jimmy), The Movement (Tobias), You’re A Good Man Charlie Brown (Schroeder).* Inspire by Example*

Aaron Bowes (Henry; Dr. Madden Cast) has appeared in MANY Vanguard productions including: *Hairspray, Memphis, Runaways, Carrie, Heathers, Spring Awakening,* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona.* He was in the 1st and 2nd National Tours of *Showtime With Shakespeare* in the title role of William Shakespeare. He currently heads the band: *Pilot Jonezz.* Aaron studied acting at The New School of Drama. Thank you to Janeece and the Vanguard family for your belief and inspiration.

Draytin Freude (Henry; Dr. Fine Cast) is delighted to be making his professional debut with Vanguard Theater Company. Recent credits include *West Side Story (Tony) with Saugus Theater, Bravo a New Musical (Emilio), Next to Normal (Gabe)* with Saugus Theater and many more. Originally from Los Angeles, Draytin is currently a student at Marymount Manhattan College obtaining his BFA in Musical Theater. Outside of the stage lights, you can find Draytin being a Barista at various coffee shops in the city. “Thank you to my Mom and Melissa, and everyone who has become my second family on and off stage. Thank you to Gina Painter for guiding and molding me into the actor I am today.”

Charlie Fusari (Gabe; Dr. Fine Cast) is a recent graduate of Sacred Heart University and is thrilled to be making his professional debut at Vanguard Theater Company! Recent credits include “Guy” in *Once* and “Davey” in *Newsies.* He wants to thank the entire team at Vanguard for this incredible opportunity to tell this magnificent story. He’d also like to thank all his family and friends (SN, HS, MK, JW, The Holes) for all of their undying support and love. This performance is dedicated to his brother Marco: our hearts will mend together and there will be light. When he’s not on stage you can probably find Charlie with an autographed jersey or trading card, so if you ever need some memorabilia, he’s your guy! [charlesfusari.com](http://charlesfusari.com) // IG: @charliefusari

Morgan Scott (Drs. Fine/Madden) Most recently Morgan was fortunate to perform a sold out run of *BRILLIANT* for the New York Broadway Bound Theater Festival. During the shutdown, she starred in the streaming new musical *Rewind: An Original 80’s Pop Musical* (Gina). Prior favorite
roles include Into the Woods (The Baker's Wife), Evita (Eva Peron) and Chicago (Roxie Hart). When she's not singing showtunes, you can find her rocking out with Elan Artists' variety bands (lead vocalist), dipping her toe in stunt work (Becky Lynch stunt double), and/or polishing vocals with her teacher Mike Maixner of Matt Farnsworth Vocal Studio. The support of her family and friends has been integral in every opportunity she has been given. Stay up to do date with her on IG: @mscott3 or morganscott.org

Josslyn Shaw (Natalie; Dr. Madden Cast) is thrilled to make her Vanguard debut! Favorite credits include Shrek (Princess Fiona), Unlimited: The Music and Lyrics of Stephen Schwartz (Josslyn), Heathers (Heather Duke), and An American Hero (Mary Jean Wallace) at the New York Musical Festival. She is a recent graduate of the Dobbins Conservatory through Southeast Missouri State University with a BFA in Musical Theatre. When not onstage, you can find her out with friends or on her personal quest to find the best chocolate milkshake! www.josslynshaw.com // @jossygirl11

Lou Steele (Dan) is a NJ based professional actor/singer. He is thrilled to be collaborating with VTC and this phenomenal group of performers, to pull the curtain back on mental health struggles within family units. Past performances include VTC's film version of Songs for a New World, Aida (Radames), Miss Saigon (Chris), Tick, Tick... Boom! (Jon), and the World Premiere of Sheryl Crow and Barry Levinson's musical Diner, under the direction of Kathleen Marshall. Thank you to Janeece for the opportunity and to friends and family for their constant love and support. Much love to his wife Laura, and children, Juliet and Lucas. For more, visit www.lousteele.net

Racquel Williams (Natalie; Dr. Fine Cast) was raised in Birmingham, Alabama where she found her passion for musical theatre, and was a part of Red Mountain Theatre Company. After graduating high school she moved to New York for college, attending The American Musical and Dramatic Academy for two years. Directly after college she was hired to be a Lead Singer with Norwegian Cruise Lines and had the opportunity to travel the world for two years. She performed various types of shows, from Rock n Roll to the Golden Era of Hollywood Movie Musicals. In 2019 she had the opportunity to perform in The Last Five Years as Cathy, making her regional theatre debut with Cygnet Theatre in San Diego, California. Racquel is currently living in New York City and is thrilled to be making her Vanguard debut as Natalie in NEXT TO NORMAL! IG: @theracquelwiliams

Meaghan Finlay (Production Stage Manager) holds a Master's Degree from Rider University in Arts Management and Executive Leadership. She works frequently as a stage manager and production manager throughout NJ and NY. Meaghan spent three years as the resident stage manager at Bristol Valley Theatre in the Finger Lakes. Additional credits include: the North American premiere of The Lehman Trilogy (Park Avenue Armory), 2nd National Tour of Magic Tree House; Showtime with Shakespeare (NJPAC), & the World Premiere of A King's Legacy (Bristol Valley Theatre)

Janeece Freeman Clark (Director) is a Professor of Theater at Seton Hall University, where she also serves as special advisor to the Arts Council. As a Theater Director, her New York productions of Everything is Fine Until It's Not, and A Portrait of Ray, have won numerous awards and critical acclaim. Her production of Showtime with Shakespeare premiered at Geostreet Play-
WHO’S WHO

house and NJPAC, followed by two successful national tours. Janeece is the founding Artistic Director of Vanguard Theater Company, based in Montclair, NJ. Under Janeece’s direction Vanguard has presented NYC productions of: Runaways, Spring Awakening, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Children’s Letters to God, A Little Princess and NJ productions of Memphis, Hairspray, Heathers, Carrie, The Music Man, and Songs For A New World (film). In addition to VTC’s theatrical season offerings, their robust educational programming equips the younger generation with the tools to be professional performers as well as gatekeepers within the industry. Signature programs such as: Broadway Buddy pairs Broadway artists with mentees who are aspiring to a professional career in the industry; VTC Next trains and mentors a diverse group of up-and-coming “theater-gatekeepers” (writers, producers, directors, choreographers, stage managers, etc.); and DreamVTC teaches the importance of artist activism alongside performance skills. Janeece has cultivated and produced video media revolving around the “Origins of Blackface Minstrelsy”; she has presented TedX talks centered on Diversity and Inclusion; and has created theatrical curriculum for institutions such as New Jersey Performing Arts Center, where she is in residence. Janeece received her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan and her Masters from Rider University. As an actor, Janeece has appeared on Broadway, off-Broadway, national tours, television, film, commercials, and voiceovers. Janeece resides in South Orange, NJ and married to Broadway Actor, Dwayne Clark, with whom she shares two children: Jada & DJ who’ve been a part of every VTC Kids production. HBO’s Game of Thrones, made its London debut in February 2020, following the release of a concept album starring two-time Tony winner Christine Ebersole. As a member of the BMI Advanced Workshop, Alex is the winner of the Jerry Harrington Award and the Jean Banks Award for his ten-minute musical Salad Days, a recording of which can be found on Spotify, etc. featuring Tony nominee Lilli Cooper and Solea Pfeiffer. Credits include War Paint (Broadway), Far From Heaven (Williamstown; Playwrights Horizons) and The Flamingo Kid (Hartford Stage). As an arranger, Alex adapted the score of Children of Eden, Junior for MTI, and wrote vocal arrangements as a member of the Yale Whiffenpoofs.

Jessica Sporn (Managing Director) joined Vanguard after seeing the impact it had on her daughter. Prior to Vanguard, she spent 20 years with Gas Lamp Players, which she incorporated as a not for profit in 2007 and helped grow to a robust, year-round performing arts company in residence in Glen Ridge, NJ. She has developed a strong reputation as an arts leader, creating a legacy of excellence and community involvement through producing musicals, developing educational and scholarship programs, and creating community partnerships. Jessica is an accomplished visual artist who creates stencils, stamps and Judaica products, among other pieces. Originally an actress, she switched to law after becoming involved in politics. Then, after her first daughter was born, she turned her love of art into a career. Recently, she designed the artwork for the new “In The Heights” movie and for Lin-Manuel Miranda’s campaign to assist Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. She previously designed artwork for Miranda after the Orlando shooting in June, 2016.

Alex Ratner (Music Director) is honored to be back at Vanguard after music directing last season’s Songs for a New World and Walk in My Gravity. His latest project, Tyrell, a musical prequel to
Veronica Gonmiah (Assistant Director, Assistant Stage Manager, Costumes) Veronica Gonmiah is a Newark native and Arts High School alum. Veronica is a freelance photographer, as well as an independent professional flyer and content creator. Along with performing as a singer and in musical theatre, Veronica also works on the production side of things, taking on such roles as production manager, stage manager, production designer, and set/costume design for many film and theatrical pieces. (@becauseveronica for more updates and visit becauseveronica.com for more content.)

Terri Gorgone (Production Manager) (VTC Music Supervisor) is a freelance musician and musical director in theatres and venues throughout New York and New Jersey. She has been a music educator for over 30 years, presently teaching musical theatre at Cicely L. Tyson School of Performing Arts, where she is the director and music director of several shows produced throughout the school year. One of the founding board members of Vanguard Theater Company, Terri has been instrumental in creating and developing shows and educational content for the company. She has been the musical director for the Encore Youth Theatre at the New Jersey School of Dramatic Arts and worked as music director and accompanist at NJPAC. She is a graduate of the Crane School of Music with Piano Performance concentration and has a Masters degree from NYU in theater. Some of her most recent musical directing credits include: Dreamgirls, The Addams Family, A Little Princess, Runaways, We Will Rock You, Working, Children’s Letters To God, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Heathers, Memphis, Carrie, Sister Act, James And The Giant Peach, The Wiz, Nania, Rent, The Frogs, Hairspray, Shrek, Little Women, Tommy, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Seussical, Honk, 13, Once Upon A Mattress, Into The Woods, The Color Purple, Pippin, Songs For A New World, Most Likely To... Senior Superlative, Once On This Island, Joseph, Guys and Dolls, Sleeping Beauty, Gypsy.
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