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Contact: Sarah Kriger Hwang

Phone: 414-273-0800

Email: shwang@rtwmke.org



Renaissance Theaterworks Launches 2026 with CARDBOARD PIANO — a Gripping, Heart-Rending Love Story from Acclaimed Playwright Hansol Jung

December 15, 2025 (Milwaukee, WI) Renaissance Theaterworks (RTW) ignites the second half of its 33rd season with the **Wisconsin Premiere** of **CARDBOARD PIANO**, Hansol Jung's searing, urgent, and deeply human drama about forbidden love, spiritual conflict, and the long shadow of war. The production runs **January 11 – February 1**, with preview performances on **January 9 and 10**, at the Theater on 255 S. Water Street in Milwaukee's Harbor District.

Set in a chapel in war-torn Uganda on **New Year's Eve 1999**, **CARDBOARD PIANO** begins with the secret wedding of two teenage girls—one Ugandan, one the daughter of American missionaries. Their celebration is violently interrupted, setting off a story that spans years and asks unflinching questions about faith, forgiveness, and the transformative power of love. RTW's production is helmed by celebrated director **Elyse Edelman**, marking her third directorial collaboration with the company.

RTW's Artistic Director, Suzan Fete, commented about her choice to produce this play.

"Theater exists not only to entertain but to illuminate. At RTW, we choose brave stories—women's stories—that challenge, provoke, and inspire. This is how we keep the art alive and relevant."

RTW continues its commitment to access and inclusion with **\$17 Affordable Cost Tickets (ACT)** for Wednesday Matinees, Thursday Nights and Friday Nights, as well as a Pay-What-You-Choose (PWYC)* preview performance on Friday, January 9 at 7:30pm. Tickets range from **\$17–\$49** and are available at rtwmke.org, by phone at 414-278-0765, or in person at the box office (open 12:00–5:00 p.m. daily, and two hours before performances). *PWYC tickets go on sale same-day, in-person only, at 6:30pm.

Throughout the run of **CARDBOARD PIANO**, RTW offers a range of accessibility services including **Open Captioned performances, ASL Interpretation, Sensory-Friendly performances, Audio Description**, a fully **wheelchair-accessible venue**, and a **hearing loop system**. These features ensure that every patron, regardless of ability, can experience live theater comfortably and fully. (See Performance Schedule and Special Events for details)

(Added Dec 30, 2025) RTW is proud to partner with **Uganda Behavior Health Alliance (UBHA)** to promote CARDBOARD PIANO and expand our reach throughout the community. Uganda Behavioral Health Alliance (UBHA) is a nonprofit entity founded in Wisconsin, with a clear vision of utilizing personal, professional, and multidisciplinary relationships inspired by the dream of promoting mental health within the broader context of health and wellbeing—first among the people of Uganda and eventually in neighboring countries and beyond. More information at <https://ubha.org/>. Representatives from UBHA will lead our talkbacks following the performances on Friday, January 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Wednesday, January 21 at 1:30 p.m. (See performance schedule and special events.)

CARDBOARD PIANO ARTISTIC TEAM

CAST

CHRIS.....	Rebecca Kent*
ADIEL/RUTH.....	Tyler Cruz*
PIKA/FRANCIS.....	Ethan Hightire
SOLDIER/PAUL.....	Dimonte Henning*
U/S CHRIS.....	Sarah Zapiain
U/S ADIEL.....	Terris Johnay Robinson
U/S PIKA/FRANCIS.....	Joseph Brown Jr.
U/S SOLDIER/PAUL.....	Ethan Hightire

PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR.....	Elyse Edelman
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER.....	Bailey Wegner*
ASST. STAGE MANAGER.....	Beck Trumbull
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR.....	Tony Lyons
LIGHTING DESIGN.....	Colin Gawronski
SCENIC DESIGN.....	Doug Dion
COMPOSITION & SOUND DESIGN	Josh Schmidt**
PROPS DESIGN	Jim Guy
COSTUME DESIGN	Trinae Williams-Henning
DIALECT COACH.....	Michele Lopez Rios
VOCAL COACH.....	Jill Anna Ponasik
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER	Reese Madigan*
INTIMACY DIRECTOR.....	Victoria Hudziak

*Member of Actors' Equity Association

** Member of the United Scenic Artists of America

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: HANSOL JUNG

Hansol Jung is an internationally celebrated playwright and director whose works— **Cardboard Piano**, **Among the Dead**, **Wolf Play**, **Wild Goose Dreams**, and others— have been produced and developed at the Royal Court, New York Theatre Workshop, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, and major theaters across the U.S. and abroad. Her honors include the P73 Playwright Fellowship and the Rita Goldberg Playwrights' Workshop Fellowship at The Lark. She holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and is a member of the Ma-Yi Theatre Writers Lab.

SELECT ARTIST BIOS

Elyse Edelman, DIRECTOR

Elyse is a Wisconsin-based theatre artist, working as a director, actor, and arts leader, currently serving as Artistic Associate at Next Act Theatre and on the Advisory Company at Forward Theater in Madison. Cardboard Piano is her sixth production with Renaissance Theaterworks, a company that has become a creative anchor throughout her career. Elyse's work spans national tours, contemporary plays, Shakespeare, new work, musicals, and theatre for young audiences. Selected credits include Forward Theater, Chamber Theatre, First Stage, TAP, American Players Theatre, In Tandem, Milwaukee Rep, Door Shakespeare, Children's Theater Madison, and regionally The Guthrie, Park Square, Utah Shakespeare, Minnesota Shakespeare, Chicago Children's Theater, People's Center, Mixed Blood, among others. Training: UMN/Guthrie BFA, Globe Theatre, LISPA. Website: elyseedelman.com.

Rebecca Kent, CHRIS

Rebecca Kent is a Milwaukee based, London-born actor and writer. This is her Renaissance Theaterworks debut. Her credits include THE BRIGHTEST THING IN THE WORLD (Della U/S), GHOSTS (Helene Alving), AFFINITY (Miss Jelf/Mr.Dance), at the Yale Repertory Theater; JULIUS CAESAR (Portia/Casca) and LOVES LABOR'S LOST (Costard) at The Iseman Theater. Her film work includes UPRIVER (Lila) and PHOSPHOR (Voice).

Tyler Cruz, ADIEL/RUTH

Tyler Cruz is a New York City based actress and artist. This is her Renaissance Theaterworks debut. Her credits include THE Z-TEAM and INVASIVE SPECIES (Off-Broadway); THE TEMPEST (Elm Shakespeare); THE WINTER'S TALE, MARYS SEACOLE, LOVE'S LABOR LOST and BODA DE SANGRE (David Geffen School of Drama at Yale). MFA: David Geffen School of Drama at Yale '23. IG: @tylerrcruz

Ethan Hightire, PIKA/FRANCIS

Ethan Hightire makes his professional debut with Renaissance Theaterworks. Hightire recently completed his formal training from UWM's Acting BFA program and is excited to start his career. Prior credits include GHOST BIKE (Ora/Alvin) at Milwaukee Repertory Theater; ROMEO AND JULIET (Benvolio) and EMMA (Ensemble) at Door Shakespeare; THE MEETING (Malcolm X) and BLACK NATIVITY (Ensemble) at Bronzeville Arts Ensemble; TOPDOG/UNDERDOG (u/s Booth) at Milwaukee Chamber Theater; MACBETH (Macbeth), PIPELINE (Omari) and SWEAT (Chris) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Dimonte Henning, SOLDIER/PAUL

Dimonte returns to Renaissance Theaterworks after appearing in THE NETHER (2025). As an actor, some of his favorite regional theater credits include: SEVEN GUITARS, (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); TOPDOG/UNDERDOG and THE ISLAND (Milwaukee Chamber Theater); TONI STONE (Alliance Theatre); STICK FLY (Writers Theater); THE NETHER (Renaissance Theaterworks); KILL MOVE PARADISE (Next Act); OUR TOWN, A CHRISTMAS CAROL, & DREAMGIRLS (Milwaukee Rep). Some of his favorite directing credits include: CLYDE'S and THE MOUNTAINTOP (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre); FAIRVIEW (Marquette University); ROMEO& JULIET (Door Shakespeare); DREAM,QUICKIE! DREAM! (First Stage); BLACK NATIVITY (Black Arts MKE); THE NICETIES (Forward Theatre Co.); and PRETTY FIRE (Milwaukee Black Theater Festival).

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE & SPECIAL EVENTS

Week 1

Friday January 9th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Pay-what-you-can Preview
Saturday January 10th, 2026	4:00 p.m.	Preview
Sunday January 11th, 2026	5:00 p.m.	Opening Night

Week 2

Wednesday January 14th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday January 15th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	
Friday January 16th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	PRIDE & Talback
Saturday January 17th, 2026	4:00 p.m.	
Sunday January 18th, 2026	2:00 p.m.	Playclub

Week 3

Wednesday January 21st, 2026	1:30 p.m.	Talkback & Open Captions
Wednesday January 21st, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday January 22nd, 2026	7:30 p.m.	ASL Interpreted
Friday January 23rd, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Pre-show Talk
Saturday January 24th, 2026	4:00 p.m.	Open Captions
Sunday January 25th, 2026	2:00 p.m.	

Week 4

Wednesday January 28th, 2026	1:30 p.m.	Sensory Friendly
Wednesday January 28th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday January 29th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	
Friday January 30th, 2026	7:30 p.m.	Audio Described
Saturday January 31st, 2026	4:00 p.m.	
Sunday February 1st, 2026	2:00 p.m.	Closing Performance

Season Sponsors: Laura & Mike Arnow, George & Sandy Dionisopoulos, Herzfeld Foundation, Shubert Foundation, Bert L & Patricia S. Steigleder Charitable Trust , CAMPAC, City of Milwaukee Arts Board, UPAF, Wisconsin Arts Board, Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

Show Sponsors: Judges Jean & John DiMotto, Sherry & Rick Lundell and Sandy Zingler

About Renaissance Theaterworks

RTW is Milwaukee's first professional theater company founded and led by women and the nation's second-oldest professional theater devoted to gender equality. RTW is a resident company at 255 South Water St. in Milwaukee's Harbor District, with increased capacity and improved accessibility.

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