Chicago Premiere Production

EUREKA DAY

written by **Jonathan Spector**

directed by **Lili-Anne Brown**

Timeline Theatre Company

BACKSTORY YOUR GUIDE TO TIMELINE PRODUCTIONS

THE TIMELINE EXPERIENCE
AN INTRODUCTION

At TimeLine Theatre, we believe in creating theatre that extends far beyond the stage.

Our collaborative organization presents riveting stories that link our past, present, and future—exploring today's social and political issues through the lens of the past and inspiring ourselves to re-imagine tomorrow—performed, directed, and designed by some of Chicago's finest artists in an intimate theater where you are never too far from the action.

The TimeLine experience includes many elements designed to enhance your enjoyment of the play. This *Backstory* magazine is created for every production, providing historical context, artist interviews, and more behind-the-scenes insight.

We invite you to explore interactive lobby experiences created for each production (don't miss the one in the Broadway Playhouse lobby today), engage in conversation with artists and fellow audience members at discussions, and visit our online lobby and Behind the 'Line blog

Coming Spring 2026! TimeLine's new home in Uptown will be a center for entertainment, education, and community. See page 14 of this magazine for more about this thrilling project! (HGA)

for expanded content like videos and more. **Visit timelinetheatre.com/eureka-lobby to further explore *Eureka Day*,** including details about three virtual discussions scheduled during the run, and much more!

These are just some of the ways TimeLine creates space for you to indulge your curiosity and take action on whatever the art on stage inspires.

"Productions at TimeLine are a 'getaway' for the mind."

– TimeLine patron

Eureka Day is part of TimeLine's milestone 29th season, which culminates this spring with the inaugural production at our new home, *An Enemy of the People*. Check out the back cover of this magazine for more about that production, and sign up to stay connected via the QR code or *timelinetheatre.com/eureka-lobby*.

STAY IN TOUCH

Visit our booth in the lobby today to chat with a TimeLine team member, learn more about upcoming shows, enter our (free) raffle, sign up for our mailing list, or just check out the merch! **And for more, visit timelinetheatre.com.**

BE SOCIAL

Find us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube at the handle **@TimeLineTheatre**. We'd love to hear about your experience at *Eureka Day*, so don't forget to tag us and use hashtags #EurekaDay and/or #TimeLineTheatre!

FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PJ POWERS
A MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Welcome to TimeLine's production of *Eureka Day*. Whether you've followed TimeLine in Chicago for nearly three decades, or you're new to our work, we're delighted to introduce you to this Tony Award®-winning play, directed by Lili-Anne Brown.

Since 1997, through more than 95 productions of new plays and revitalized classics, TimeLine has used the lens of history to make connections between past, present, and future, while sparking conversation about the social and political issues that define our moment in time.

Following our productions of *The Lehman Trilogy*, *Oslo*, and *To Master The Art* on this stage, we're honored to further our relationship with Broadway In Chicago, returning here at an exciting moment as TimeLine is about to fulfill a long-held dream to establish a home of our own in Uptown.

You can read more on page 14 of this magazine about the spring opening of this new cultural asset for Chicago—a center for theatre, education, and community engagement at 5035 N. Broadway. It'll be a space that encourages you to arrive early and stay late, as we expand our artistic possibilities and deepen opportunities for community connections, providing you with experiences that extend far beyond the stage.

As we prepare to open our doors in May with Amy Herzog's fresh adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's masterpiece *An Enemy of the People*, we're thrilled to be back here at the Broadway Playhouse with this Chicago premiere of Jonathan Spector's wickedly smart and hilarious play, fresh off an acclaimed run on Broadway.

Set in the idyllic, progressive Eureka Day elementary school in Berkeley, California, a group of seemingly like-minded parents preach inclusivity and values-based policy-making, and are committed to consensus-based decisions.

What could possibly go wrong?

Well, if you've ever found yourself on, let's say, a PTA, or a non-profit board, or even a condo

(Pictured, clockwise from top) A 250-seat flexible black box theatre will be home to TimeLine's season of plays inspired by history that connect to today's social and political issues; view of the rear of TimeLine's new home in Uptown, as seen from the newly renovated CTA Red Line stop at Argyle; the first-floor bar and café is a centerpiece of the facility, offering a welcoming gathering place whether you are seeing a show or not. (Renderings by Jeffrey D. Kmiec and HGA)

association task force, *Eureka Day* is holding space for you.

If you've tried to be the facilitator of rational, data-driven decisions among a disparate group of folks spouting opinion and emotion, we see you. And feel your pain.

If you've ever said: "Perhaps we should re-read the bylaws," you are welcomed here. And appreciated.

If you've ventured into the treacherous waters of the "group chat" or forced yourself to stay on mute during a Zoom meeting from hell, this is a safe space for you.

We value your unique perspective.

And if you've had to bite your tongue in the spirit of group unity, we invite you to pull up a kiddie chair and join this crazy-town of privilege, conspiracy theories, and unsubstantiated claims as the parents of Eureka Day and its beleaguered head administrator face a controversy about to erupt, with a mumps outbreak inside the school's hallowed halls.

Once that inconvenient truth is revealed, discussion turns to a topic that might feel like the third rail of polite conversation—sharing opinions about vaccinations.

Originally written and premiered in 2018, Jonathan's script was already ahead of its time—if not clairvoyant— about what would soon unfold, or where we find ourselves today.

It pre-dated not only COVID-19, but also the more recent upheaval at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including the removal of the entire Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which provides guidance regarding the administration of vaccines.

As I write this in December 2025, there's a dizzying list of additional developments regarding health and human services, growing by the day.

This year has seen more measles cases than in any other year since the contagious virus was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000. Soon, that elimination status might be lost.

Other long-settled scientific conclusions have been revised and/or removed from the CDC website, with policies upended, prompting dismay, confusion, and uncertainty about where to turn for truth.

While that all might sound like heady stuff—and it is—Jonathan's play is also a refreshingly humorous respite from the calamity of our times. His earnest, recognizable characters allow us to share a laugh at ourselves, our institutions, our behaviors and biases, and the ways in which we communicate—both in person and online—inspiring us to ponder how to find our way back to the glory days of civil discourse and reasoned debate.

We're glad to have you with us for *Eureka Day* and to join the conversation as we grapple with the issues of yesterday and today, looking toward the possibilities of tomorrow.

Best,

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BEFORE THE OUTBREAK: JONATHAN SPECTOR AND THE MAKING OF *EUREKA DAY*

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Playwright Jonathan Spector.

WRITTEN BY **DERON S. WILLIAMS,** DRAMATURG

Jonathan Spector occupies a distinctive place in contemporary American theatre as a playwright whose plays grapple with the moral logics of liberalism, the fragility of consensus, and the painful disjunction between the well-meaning and moral clarity.

Spector is often called a political playwright, and yet his plays are rarely easy to categorize as polemic. Rather, his plays spotlight moments of common discomfort, making room for moments when civility, ideology, and community come up against each other and showing audiences that they often need to dwell in the discomfort of those collisions instead of leaping toward resolution. We see this clearly in the play *Eureka Day*, written before the COVID-19 pandemic but now with sharp, unsettling implications.

Spector grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, a place that has had a profound influence on his theatrical imagination. Much of his writing takes place in the Bay Area, remembered as the land of progressive politics, educational revolution, social innovation—not caricature, but living reality with its own contradictions (as he puts it, "social problems"). He studied playwriting at Brown University and later at the University of California, San Diego, where he refined a dramaturgical attitude anchored in dialogue, structure, and ethical inquiry, not radical didacticism. From early in his career, however, Spector developed an interest in how groups converse with one another and talk themselves into—or out of—the absolute truth of morality, and how language itself becomes an instrument of care but also of exclusion.

THE TIMELINE:
VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

Circa 200 BCE – 1700s Forms of variolation—deliberate exposure to smallpox material to induce immunity—are practiced in China, India, and parts of Africa, centuries before modern medicine. These practices reflect an early empirical understanding of acquired immunity, despite significant risks of severe illness or death.

1400s – 1700s Variolation becomes more formalized, particularly in China and the Ottoman Empire, where it is recognized as reducing mortality from smallpox. These non-Western medical practices will later shape European approaches to disease prevention.

1721 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu promotes inoculation in England after witnessing the practice in Turkey and having her children inoculated. Her advocacy sparks public controversy and marks one of the earliest moments of cross-cultural medical exchange shaping Western public health.

Memorial to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Lichfield Cathedral. (Wikimedia Commons)

1774 Farmer Benjamin Jesty intentionally infects his family with cowpox after observing that dairy workers rarely contract smallpox. Although dismissed by contemporaries, his

Before *Eureka Day*, Spector's plays such as *Siesta Key* and *This Much I Know* dealt with political radicalism, generational strife, and the afterlives of activism. These works set in motion his interest not only in what people believe but also in how belief functions within social systems. Spector's interest is less in heroes and villains than processes—meetings, debates, compromises, moments when principle quiets its voice for pragmatism. This tendency manifests most sharply in *Eureka Day*, a play that is almost entirely set in school board meetings at a private elementary school in the Northern California area of Berkeley.

What is crucial to recognize about *Eureka Day* is that it was written and developed before COVID-19 recast conversations around public health, vaccination, and institutional trust.

Unveiled in 2018, the play was Spector's response to his cultural moment, one of increased skepticism of expertise, intensification of polarization within progressive communities, and a growing conviction that consensus itself could be a moral armor. Back then, discussions of vaccination were almost universally marginal in mainstream liberal spaces, often written off as fringe concerns or the province of conservative or anti-science forces. Yet Spector acknowledged that vaccine hesitance was not exclusive to one ideological camp. In liberal spaces, the concept often took different, more rhetorically digestible forms—appeals to personal research, bodily autonomy, historical suspicion, and individualist notions of truth.

Eureka Day is less about vaccines per se than how communities grapple with truth, authority, and care in moments of uncertainty.

Spector has mentioned encounters with real decisions made at the school board level that echoed those dramatized in *Eureka Day*. These were not hostile environments, but rather environments where respect, inclusion, and emotional safety were upheld. What fascinated Spector was how these values, which were generally called virtues, could ironically thwart collective efforts. In attempting to ensure that everyone felt heard, institutions risked losing sight of decision-making processes grounded in shared responsibility. *Eureka Day* stemmed from this tension: the question of what happens when the impulse to kindness is surpassed by the need to be clear.

The play's setting—a progressive private school—was a conscious decision. Spector situates the issue not in an antagonistic or reactionary landscape, but in a milieu that is attuned to ethics. It offers a chance to see liberalism not as an abstract idea but as something concrete, messy, and often flawed in its very nature. This approach is its very strength and a key fault. It shows, for lack of a better word, how procedural fairness can obscure broader unfairness and unresolved power asymmetries.

The fact that *Eureka Day* predates COVID is no accident; it is crucial to understanding the play. When the pandemic arrived, the problems Spector had brought to light were suddenly among the issues discussed at global forums: mistrust of vaccines, institutional paralysis, and the politicization of public health. What had once approached a sharply observed but contained form of social critique turned, for many audiences, eerily prophetic. But framing *Eureka Day* as predictive risks missing Spector's larger achievement. The play doesn't predict a particular crisis so much as illuminate the structural and ethical conditions that render a crisis so unmanageable.

Spector shows that the conflicts dramatized in the play were already embedded within contemporary liberal culture. These tensions did not spring into being in response to the pandemic; the pandemic deepened and illuminated them. Trust in the system was in doubt, we were disputing expertise, and individual comfort was already being prioritized over collective obligation in public life. Thus, *Eureka Day* is less about vaccines per se than how communities grapple with truth, authority, and care in moments of uncertainty.

Spector's tone supports this. His dialogue is fierce, disarmingly funny, and meticulously constructed. In a sense, humor serves as a vehicle for criticism: audiences who have been left implicated in the play's moral quandaries will identify with the characters. There is no one mouthpiece for the author's ideas; instead, Spector dispenses insight and contradiction over a whole ensemble. This refusal to provide easy answers goes along with his more serious artistic philosophy: theatre functions as a space for group accounting rather than as a place for moral criticism.

In the years since it premiered, *Eureka Day* has been revived with great frequency. It's often cast as a "pandemic play" when, in fact, it was made in anticipation of a pandemic. But we should not give in to popular belief, as if the time when this play was made is at an end. For anyone reading this as an attempt to avoid the temptation to think of *Eureka Day* as a series of pre-COVID events, it is important to recognize that we don't have to imagine all the fear that *Eureka Day* portrays as some kind of oddity of crisis, but as a product of contemporary civic life.

What Jonathan Spector represents for American theatre is a dramatization of the spaces where certainty fails, where values clash. *Eureka Day* is as much a record of his keen cultural observation as it is of his readiness to investigate communities that take themselves to be ethically elevated. Situating the play before the pandemic, Spector suggests that the very public questions of trust, responsibility, and the limits of consensus—those most challenging questions that lie before public life—were waiting to be posed.

experiment will provide crucial evidence that cross-species infection could confer protection.

1796 Edward Jenner develops the first modern vaccine by systematically demonstrating that cowpox exposure protects against smallpox, coining the term "vaccination" from *vacca* (cow). This event marks the beginning of immunology as a scientific discipline.

A chromolithograph depicting Louis Pasteur inoculating a man with the rabies virus. (Wellcome Collection / Wikimedia Commons)

1881 – 1885 Louis Pasteur develops vaccines through controlled attenuation (or weakening) of pathogens, including anthrax and rabies. His work transforms vaccination from folk practice into laboratory science grounded in germ theory.

1885 Pasteur's rabies vaccine proves that immunization can be effective even after exposure, expanding the functional scope of vaccines. This breakthrough alters how medicine understands prevention and treatment.

Emergency hospital during the influenza epidemic, circa 1918. (National Museum of Health and Medicine / Wikimedia Commons)

1918– 1919 The H1N1 influenza (known as the "Spanish Flu") pandemic kills between 20 million to 50 million people globally, revealing the catastrophic

WRITTEN BY **DERON S. WILLIAMS,** DRAMATURG

Skepticism toward public health institutions in Black communities is often misunderstood as hesitation, misinformation, or resistance to science. However, when examined through a historical and structural perspective, skepticism is not a flaw but a logical response. It is rooted in generational memory and built on centuries of medical exploitation. Black mistrust acts as a survival strategy—an understanding shaped by lived experience rather than abstract theory.

Jonathan Spector's *Eureka Day*, although set within a predominantly white progressive context, serves as a crucial space for exploring these issues. The play shows how public health discourse often assumes a universal trust without acknowledging how race fundamentally influences access, vulnerability, and belief.

The roots of mistrust stem from the early history of American medicine. During slavery, medical knowledge was often gained through experiments on enslaved people without their consent, anesthesia, or proper care. Black individuals were treated as research subjects rather than patients. This exploitation continued after emancipation, with forced sterilizations, segregated hospitals, and unethical clinical studies into the 20th century, all of which reinforced racial hierarchies within public health.

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study is perhaps the most well-known example—not because it is unique, but because it exemplifies ongoing harm. It serves as a reminder of the government's willingness to sacrifice Black lives in the name of science and national interest.

A participant in the Tuskegee Study in the 1930s. A lingering mistrust of the medical system among many Black people is rooted in the infamous study. (National Archives)

This context clarifies that mistrust is not an irrational emotional reaction. It is a historically justified judgment of institutional behavior. When public health systems have repeatedly failed or endangered Black communities, skepticism serves as a form of protection.

In contrast, *Eureka Day* depicts a community where institutional trust is often assumed. The play examines how progressive ideals of consensus, inclusivity, and dialogue break down under the pressure of a public health crisis. However, the play's framework presumes that institutions ultimately serve the community's best interests—an assumption that cannot be universally applied when these systems have long failed to protect Black lives.

In contemporary America, the legacy of medical racism remains evident. Black maternal mortality rates are disproportionately high, medical pain is often under-assessed for Black patients, and public health crises disproportionately impact Black neighborhoods. Technological systems designed to improve care can still perpetuate inequity through algorithmic bias. These patterns show that mistrust is not just inherited memory; it is continually renewed by ongoing violations. The system that caused historical harm still influences outcomes today.

The inclusion of race in the play illuminates the wider cultural tendency to universalize public health discussions—treating "the public" as if all experience the system similarly.

By positioning *Eureka Day* alongside this history, the inclusion of race in the play becomes meaningful. It illuminates the wider cultural tendency to universalize public health discussions—treating "the public" as if all experience the system similarly. Yet, true consensus exists only when participants believe that the system works for them. Black communities do not have equal access to that belief, given long histories of structural racism, unequal care, and justified mistrust of health institutions. The play then serves as a lens to explore the limits of collective trust. It shows how ideas of community break down when trust is assumed rather than built.

If public health aims for greater equity, trust shouldn't be seen as just a behavioral problem to fix. Instead, it should be viewed as a relational matter that needs repair. Institutions must recognize past and current harm, work on rebuilding trust through accountability, and prioritize Black voices in decision-making. Skepticism shouldn't be met with punishment but with understanding that it often comes from lived experience, not ignorance.

Public health trust, then, must be built through structural change—not just rhetorical persuasion. Repair requires more than outreach efforts or culturally aware messaging. It calls for policy changes, resource reallocation, and a commitment to transparency. It demands that institutions clearly show, in tangible ways, that Black lives are valued and protected.

Seen through this perspective, *Eureka Day* resonates not because it depicts the Black experience but because its thematic concerns reveal how fragile trust becomes when it lacks historical context. The play exposes the tension between ideology and lived reality, between belief and risk. In relation to the history of Black medical skepticism, it emphasizes that trust is not a neutral expectation but a political and historical negotiation.

Skepticism in Black communities is not a rejection of public health; it is a memory of survival. It stems from a long history of state violence and medical neglect. Until institutions directly address this history, mistrust will remain justified—not as resistance to progress, but as a protective strategy in a system where harm has been the norm rather than the exception.

consequences of viral disease without vaccines. The crisis accelerates influenza research and state involvement in disease surveillance.

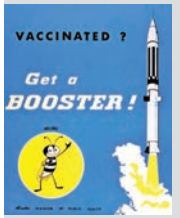
1921 The Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine becomes the first vaccine against tuberculosis, a leading cause of death worldwide. Its uneven effectiveness will later influence debates about global health equity and infrastructure.

An early French advertisement for BCG. (Wikimedia Commons)

1937 Max Theiler and colleagues develop a safe, effective yellow fever vaccine, dramatically reducing mortality in endemic regions. Theiler's work earns the Nobel Prize and strengthens international disease control efforts.

1945 The first influenza vaccine is licensed for United States military personnel, prioritizing force readiness after lessons from World War I. This marks a key moment in government-sponsored vaccination policy.

1946 Civilian approval expands vaccination into public life, establishing seasonal immunization as a recurring public health strategy. Annual flu vaccination will become a model for managing mutating viruses.



Poster featuring the Wellbee, a national symbol of public health created in the 1960s to remind the public to get vaccinated. (CDC)

1940s Combination vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (or whooping cough), known as DTP, are widely adopted, dramatically reducing childhood mortality. These vaccines help normalize routine childhood immunization schedules.

WRITTEN BY **GRACE HERMAN**,
ASSISTANT DRAMATURG

Right now, the United States is divided and shrouded in darkness. We are increasingly pushed apart by the algorithms, headlines, and opinions that live in our pockets, making it more challenging than ever to have conversations and truly hear one another. Comedy functions as a tool to bridge that gap. Laughing together swiftly establishes common ground, brings down our defenses, and allows for communal catharsis—opening more pathways to have difficult conversations and genuinely listen.

It feels like we are hitting an inflection point with technology. Phones and social media have been around long enough that we're witnessing the widespread implications they have on our social structures. The overwhelming consensus is that our phones and these popular platforms are a mirage of connection, leaving us craving honest conversations, relationships, and release, yet unable to cultivate them. Digital engagement gives us immediacy, but not intimacy, constant access, but rarely depth. Comedy, especially live comedy and theatre, reintroduces presence—people breathing in the same room, reacting in real time, without the buffer of a screen.

Comedy can be a tool to bridge that distance; it offers us a life vest back to genuine connection, conversation, and catharsis. At its core, comedy is a dramatic form intended to induce laughter. Laughter—often called the best medicine—is key to all of this.

Scientifically, laughter helps us let our guard down and forge connections. This is the work of chemical and biological reactions in the body and of laughter's role as a social signal of shared understanding and safety. Neuroscientists note that shared laughter triggers oxytocin, the "bonding hormone," which literally makes us feel closer to the people around us. So, when an audience laughs together, it creates a sense of common ground and lowers defenses. As a result, comedy does not simply entertain; it physiologically prepares us to receive one another.

"Laughter is the best medicine"—in a theatre, and beyond. (Caiaimage / Robert Daly)

From this point, we can move toward catharsis, a process of releasing intense, repressed emotions, where laughter is one of the most accessible ways to achieve it. Laughter is not just an expression of joy; it is also a way of expressing discomfort, anger, sadness, and fear, releasing shame, and recognizing ourselves in others. In this way, comedy becomes a pressure valve allowing us to confront harsh truths indirectly rather than head-on, making the unbearable suddenly more tolerable.

The playwright Jonathan Spector asks the artists working on his play to "aim for the humor of recognition, which is always deeper than the humor of mockery." He reminds us that comedy is a chance to hold up a mirror and choose to laugh in recognition of how the characters are like us, how their situations are like ours, and to find catharsis in that recognition, not through ridicule, but through reflection—something social media and news headlines rarely offer. In the theatre, we get to go through this process together. Sharing cathartic

Neuroscientists note that shared laughter triggers oxytocin, the "bonding hormone," which literally makes us feel closer to the people around us.

moments reminds us of our humanity, our inherent fallibility, and our many shared traits. It's a collective exhale—a reminder that none of us are navigating this complex world alone. There is so much healing in a good joke.

In *Eureka Day*, comedy is more than just entertainment. It acts as a tool that encourages both the cast and audience to engage in conversation. As we sit together, sharing breath and laughter, the play softly disarms us, promoting recognition before judgment. The jokes land, awkward moments sting, and suddenly we find ourselves laughing not *at* the characters, but *with* them, and sometimes at ourselves. In doing so, the production creates a space where catharsis can happen, where tension is released through shared laughter instead of conflict. The theatre becomes a rehearsal space for empathy, a place to practice listening, forgiving, and noticing nuance in those across from us. Comedy offers the gift of release and reflection, a way to understand, and an invitation to leave feeling a little lighter, a bit more connected, and perhaps more willing to talk with each other beyond the stage.

Dramaturg DeRon S. Williams (left) and director Lili-Anne Brown at first rehearsal of Eureka Day. *(Emma Schoenfelner)*

1952 – 1955 Following massive trials involving more than 1.3 million children, Jonas Salk's inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) is declared safe and effective. The campaign symbolizes mid-century faith in science, government, and collective action.

Polio vaccine clinics, 1956. (Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History / Wikimedia Commons)

1960 – 1961 Albert Sabin's oral polio vaccine (OPV) is approved, providing longer-lasting community immunity and easier global distribution. It will become central to international eradication efforts.

1963 The introduction of the measles vaccine sharply reduces childhood death and disability from one of the most contagious viral diseases. It underscores the importance of herd immunity.

1967 The World Health Organization (WHO) launches the Intensified Smallpox Eradication Program, an unprecedented global effort to eliminate smallpox. The campaign demonstrates the power of international cooperation in public health.

The mumps vaccine is introduced, reducing complications such as hearing loss and infertility and further strengthening childhood immunization programs.

1969 The rubella vaccine targets congenital rubella syndrome, reframing vaccination as protection for unborn children. It links immunization to reproductive and maternal health.

1971 Maurice Hilleman combines measles, mumps, and rubella into a single vaccine, simplifying schedules

During pre-production for TimeLine's Chicago premiere production of *Eureka Day*, director Lili-Anne Brown (LB) spoke with dramaturgs DeRon S. Williams (DSW) and Grace Herman (GH) about humor, community, and the choreography of a punchline.

(DSW) What was your initial reaction to reading *Eureka Day?*

(LB) I could not stop laughing. I did not know it at all, and I was immediately excited.

(GH) How do you see *Eureka Day* in relation to other contemporary comedies being produced today?

(LB) There really aren't a lot of truly excellent comedies in modern day. American theatre got into this space where comedy isn't taken seriously—like it can't be important work. But humor holds a truly special place and can be more effective. A well-done comedy does all the things we need theatre to do, plus it makes people laugh.

(GH) What social or human questions do you think the play is grappling with beneath all the humor and chaos?

(LB) It's not a play about vaccination—it's a play about how people come together. It's really a play about community and how to be in community. If we say everyone deserves to be heard, everyone deserves to have their rule implemented, everyone gets to win—this play explores what happens when we try that.

(DSW) One scene I find extremely funny and interesting is the virtual meeting scene. It's famous for its chaos. What excites you most about staging it?

(LB) Artistically, I want to keep it simple. It's genius as written. My job is directing attention—timing, timing, timing. I'm going to draw on my musical theater background. It comes in handy. Musical theatre is 5-6-7-8. Not "move when you feel it." Timing is choreography. I just bring 5-6-7-8 into the room and say, "It's exactly this every time." That's how we make punchlines happen—like music and choreography.

(GH) All of the characters believe they're the most ethical versions of themselves. Who do you think will be the most interesting to explore?

(LB) Suzanne. She's the best. You want to hate her. At auditions, I had to give this spiel about her to ensure the auditions were fair. It would be a disservice if people came in playing "a Karen." But I said: Don't do that. You must believe in Suzanne. You must believe in her cause.

She's not a bitch. She doesn't yell at anybody. She hasn't done anything to warrant the title of Karen, except be a white woman with an unpopular opinion.

(DSW) How did questions of race, equity, and medical trust shape the way you approached the play?

(LB) That's a great question, DeRon. I'm somebody who has experienced not a small amount of medical racism. I know for a fact it exists. But Carina, our one Black character, is not really coming from a perspective of vaccine skepticism. The sort of racial dynamics that are happening in the show—which is also the thing that makes us want to call Suzanne a Karen—is her microaggressions. And that is valid.

(DSW) When the audience leaves the theatre, what do you hope stays with them?

(LB) I hope people go home thinking about how to be in community, because we really need to be, now more than ever. And comedy helps the medicine go down. It lets us see ourselves without massive amounts of shame—like, "oh, damn, do I do that?" Being able to laugh gives us a little bit of slack, and maybe that is what allows us to actually examine something or change a behavior.

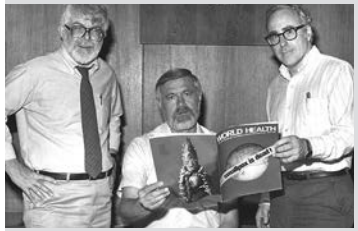
THIS INTERVIEW IS EDITED; VISIT **TIMELINETHEATRE.COM/EUREKA-LOBBY** TO READ THE FULL VERSION.

and increasing uptake. The MMR vaccine will become central to pediatric care worldwide.

1974 WHO establishes the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), which aims to provide universal access to vaccines for diphtheria, measles, polio, tetanus, tuberculosis, and pertussis. This initiative frames vaccination as a global public good.

1978 The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine is licensed, protecting against multiple strains of pneumococcal disease, particularly in older adults. It expands vaccination beyond childhood prevention.

1980 WHO officially declares smallpox eradicated, the first disease eliminated through human intervention. The achievement will remain unparalleled.



Drs. J. Donald Millar, William H. Foege, and J. Michael Lane, all former directors of the Global Smallpox Eradication Program, read the news that smallpox has been eradicated. (CDC / Wikimedia Commons)

1981 As the first vaccine to prevent a sexually transmitted infection and liver cancer, the hepatitis B vaccine expands the scope of immunization. It also raises ethical and cultural debates about adolescent vaccination.

1987 The Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) vaccine is introduced, dramatically reducing childhood meningitis and pneumonia and highlighting the effectiveness of conjugate vaccine technology.

1988 WHO and its partners launch the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, committing to eliminate polio worldwide. The effort will ultimately reduce global cases by more than 99%.

2000 Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) is introduced, improving protection for infants and young children and reducing antibiotic resistance. It will become a major tool in reducing childhood mortality globally.

2006 The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is approved, becoming the first vaccine to prevent cancer, targeting cervical and other HPV-related cancers. It redefines vaccination as long-term disease prevention.

2015 RTS,S (Mosquirix), the first malaria vaccine, receives regulatory approval, becoming the first vaccine against a parasitic disease. Though modest in efficacy, it represents a major scientific milestone.

After devastating outbreaks in West and Central Africa, WHO prequalifies an Ebola vaccine for emergency and preventive use. This marks a shift toward rapid-response vaccine development.

2020 COVID-19 is declared a public health emergency and a pandemic, triggering global scientific mobilization. The crisis exposes profound inequities in health systems and public trust.

December 2020 The first COVID-19 vaccines, using mRNA and viral-vector technologies, are administered, representing the fastest vaccine development in history. Decades of prior research make this possible.

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are made available to the public by 2021. (Agência Brasília / Wikimedia Commons)

2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaigns expand worldwide, though uneven access and hesitancy shape outcomes. The rollout demonstrates that vaccines are as much social and political instruments as scientific ones.

BACKSTORY:
THE CREDITS

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Backstory is published to accompany each production

OUR MISSION

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative organization produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

IT'S TIME
THE CAMPAIGN FOR **TIMELINE'S NEW HOME**

OPENING SPRING 2026!
A NEW CULTURAL ASSET FOR CHICAGO, IN UPTOWN.

TimeLine's new home in Chicago's vibrant Uptown neighborhood will be a welcoming gathering space for entertainment, education, and community. Located in the historic Uptown Entertainment District, it will feature an intimate and flexible 250-seat black box theatre; exhibit galleries that enhance the production experience; a dedicated room for education and community programming; expanded social spaces, including a bar and café; office, rehearsal, and production space for staff and artists; opportunities for future expansion, and much more! **Explore all about the project via the link below.**

MAKE HISTORY WITH US! Join us in taking this bold step toward a new home, where everyone is welcomed and where great artistry collides with topics relevant to today's social and political issues. Gifts at every level are appreciated with special recognition available for major gifts:

- Donors of **$10,000**+ will be recognized on our campaign donor wall.
- Donors at the **$25,000** level are invited to the exclusive first event in our new home in March.
- Donors at **$50,000** can join an exclusive group to be recognized in the Artist Lounge backstage.
- Donors at the **$100,000** level can name a TimeLine show poster from a past production, displayed in a fourth-floor history hallway.
- Donors of **$200,000** and above are eligible for special naming opportunities in the building.

This once-in-a-lifetime project is a private and public funding partnership. For more information about how you can support, please contact Miguel Fernández, Director of Development, at *miguel@timelinetheatre.com* or 773.281.8463 x130.

TIMELINETHEATRE.COM/ITS-TIME

A DONATION TO TIMELINE GOES **BEYOND** WHAT YOU SEE ON STAGE!

YOUR CONTRIBUTION TODAY:

- **Illuminates our mission** through the creation of dramaturgical displays and this *Backstory* magazine!
- **Inspires the next generation of Chicago artists** through our TimeLine South and Living History programs!
- **Sustains a vibrant community** of artists, staff, and teaching artists who make all this work possible!

As we stand on the precipice of making our new home a reality, **a donation to TimeLine's Annual Fund welcomes you to our growing community of supporters!**

JOIN US! Scan the QR code to donate and learn more about deepening your connection to our work—at every giving level.

(From left) Eileen LaCario, recipient of TimeLine's 2025 History Maker Award, and her husband Tony D'Angelo get a hard-hat tour of TimeLine's new home; Lorenzo Rush Jr., Miciah Lathan, Justin Albinder, and Bri Sudia entertain guests with holiday carols at Step Into Holiday Time in December; and Director of Education Juliet Hart in the classroom with students in TimeLine's Living History Program.

THE NEXT SHOW

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

COMING SOON

THE INAUGURAL PRODUCTION AT TIMELINE'S NEW HOME!

CHICAGO PREMIERE

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

BY **HENRIK IBSEN**

A NEW VERSION BY
AMY HERZOG

DIRECTED BY
RON OJ PARSON

MAY – JUNE 2026

presented at
TimeLine Theatre's new home, 5035 N. Broadway in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood

A fresh, award-winning new take on the historic masterwork about citizens standing up to power.

When a respected doctor in small-town Norway makes a deadly discovery that threatens the health of the entire village, he raises the alarm. But as local leaders scramble to protect their own interests, the truth becomes inconvenient, and the doctor finds himself the target of the very community he's trying to protect. Winner of the 2024 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Adaptation, this "brilliant" *(The Daily Beast)* and widely acclaimed version of Ibsen's thunderous masterwork was hailed by *The New York Times* as "crackling and persuasive … a bitter satire of local politics that soon reveals itself as a slow-boil tragedy of human complacency."

MEET THE MOMENT

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