



BY AUDREY HANES  
PHOTOGRAPHY SUBMITTED

Later this month, The Link Theatre Company's highly anticipated annual fundraising event, A Night of Stars, will showcase Broadway stars and local talent side by side onstage in an effort to raise money for the organization's youth educational programming and professional productions.

Broadway performers Matt Cavanaugh and Jenny Powers, a husband-and-wife team determined to foster the thriving arts community in Jonesboro, launched The Link Theatre Company in 2020. As Northeast Arkansas' only professional theater company, The Link's founders, board and guild aim to enrich the local theater scene by creating compelling musicals, plays, concerts and other cultural experiences through innovative design and imaginative storytelling while engaging Broadway, university, local and regional talent.

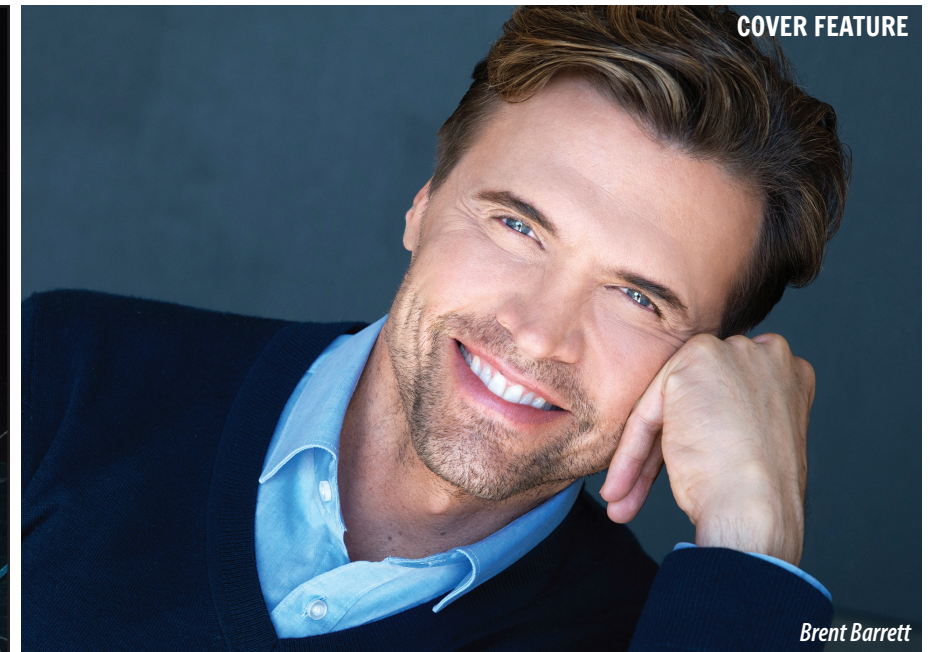
"Since 2020, The Link Theatre Company has grown to include nine board members and 24 guild members," said Powers. "We have continued to produce two professional productions per season, which involve Broadway, university and local talent. Our Elevate youth musical theater and acting programming has grown exponentially to now include semester long classes for grades two through 12, as well as weekend-long intensives with Broadway guest artists."

Joining Cavanaugh and Powers on the Board of Directors are Matt Modelevsky, Leah Wood, Travis Marsico, Audrey Lott Poff, John Mixon, Melissa McDaniel and Brooke McClure. Together with the guild, The Link's volunteers are working to grow the theater company and expand its offerings, especially with area youth.

"Our family is involved with The Link because we love Matt and Jenny and their amazing vision for having a professional theater company in Jonesboro," said guild member Jill Bristow, whose two daughters are involved with The Link. "I serve on the guild because I've seen firsthand the magic Jenny Powers creates for her students and anyone who has the privilege of seeing her perform. Her passion for teaching and encouraging her students of all ages is evident in everything she does."

"As she shares her love for theater and the arts, it becomes something tangible that anyone can have. When they bring in talent, whether it's a local person who has had success or someone right off Broadway, it changes the game for our kids. They get to see that regular people can achieve amazing things when they put the work in. It's such a gift for us to get a glimpse of big city theater in our town."

Supporting its founders' vision is A Night of Stars, The Link's annual gala. If last year's sold-out event is any indication, the



Brent Barrett

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-Jenny Powers

Jonesboro community is eager to support what the company is doing for local theater. A longtime Jonesboro fundraising event, A Night of Stars is being produced by The Link Theatre for the second year and has moved to a larger venue because of the overwhelming interest.

"It's the biggest Broadway party of the year," said Cavanaugh. "Where else can you go in Northeast Arkansas to hear these amazing Broadway performers, as well as some incredible local talent?"

The event's main attraction, Broadway's Brent Barrett, is set to perform songs from several of the shows he has starred in.

"Our headliner for the evening is Broadway's Brent Barrett," said Powers. "His extensive experience playing the Phantom in 'The Phantom of the Opera' gave us the idea to lean into a masquerade ball theme for this year's Night of Stars. Attendees are invited to wear more upscale formal attire, including elaborate gowns or cocktail dresses. Everyone should bring a mask to hide their face or to at least hold and have fun with."

"Brent is such a pro," added Cavanaugh. "Whether it's playing The Phantom, or Tony in 'West Side Story,' or Billy Flynn in 'Chicago,' or his extensive concert performances, Brent is a true showman that we know Jonesboro is going to fall in love with."

In addition to his many starring roles on Broadway, Barrett

frequently stages in the West End, concert halls, recording studios and television. He is also a recipient of a Los Angeles Drama Critics Award. Barrett, a founding member and producer of The Broadway Tenors, received critical acclaim performing as a soloist at Carnegie Hall, The Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls in London, with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Boston Pops, Minnesota Opera, Opera Pacific, Michigan Opera, the Birmingham Symphony and the Liceu Opera House in Barcelona.

"I have known Matt and Jenny for many years, and they asked me to come down and sing a few songs for the gala," said Barrett, who is excited to support The Link's mission. "This will be a varied program with songs from my Broadway career: 'West Side Story,' 'Chicago - The Musical,' 'Kiss Me Kate,' 'The Secret Garden' and, of course, 'Phantom of the Opera.' I will be doing a couple of duets with local artists, and there will also be a choir made up of local students."

While Barrett will be a highlight of the fundraising event, The Link's second annual A Night of Stars has so much more in store for attendees.

"Guests can expect a delicious dinner, signature cocktails and Broadway entertainment hosted by Matt Cavanaugh," said Powers, who will also be performing. "For the entertainment portion of the evening, Brent Barrett will dazzle us with his Broadway tenor



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**-Jill Bristow, The Link guild member**



voice. He will also be joined by some special guest artists. Those will include Miss Arkansas, Camille Cathy, who will be sharing her talent and inspiring words. Local stars and Jonesboro natives Anna Marie Wright, Mary Hollis Inboden and Jonathan Forsythe will also light up the stage with their stellar voices. Some of NEA’s extraordinary young artists will also be taking the stage.

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Cavanaugh and Powers say it’s a big event that takes a herculean effort to pull off, so it wouldn’t be possible without the theater company’s talented volunteers.

“We have an all-volunteer board and an amazing guild that work tirelessly to make it happen,” said Cavanaugh. “Leah Wood and Teresa Burns are leading this passionate team, and it is sure to be an incredible night.”

Guild President Burns says she most looks forward to witnessing the Jonesboro community, small businesses and local talent coming together and supporting the cause itself.

“The proceeds raised through A Night of Stars enables The Link Theatre to continue its endeavor to elevate the arts in Jonesboro,” said Burns. “We are in a rare situation to be able to not only bring this level of talent to our area for our personal enjoyment, but The Link is also committed to training and cultivating our local talent through their educational programs and utilizing them alongside Broadway performers. It just doesn’t get any more exciting.”

All the proceeds from A Night of Stars will be poured back into the professional theater company, especially its growing children’s programming.

“The Link has no permanent paid staff, so 100% of the money raised goes directly to fund our youth educational programming and professional productions,” said Powers. “There has been a

big demand to expand our Elevate classes and intensives not only for our youth, but also for adults in our area. Therefore, we hope that this event will bring us the financial support needed to grow and expand The Link’s offerings. A donation to The Link is also an investment in the quality of life here in Northeast Arkansas. Our professional theatre company is a means to raise Northeast Arkansas to national distinction as a vibrant arts community and a cultural destination. ...

“We recently added a new Elevate Acting Intensive this fall for grades two through 12 that is taught by Mary Hollis Inboden, who is a professional TV and stage actress,” said Powers. “Therefore, it’s a huge opportunity for our youth to gain even more skills and knowledge from a performer who just recently shot a guest spot on a brand new TV show.”

The community has stepped up to support The Link from day one, for which the company’s founders are incredibly thankful.

“We have no programming without the generous support of local individuals and businesses,” said Cavanaugh. “As Jenny said, all of the funds go into our professional productions and educational programming. A Night of Stars is our biggest fundraising effort, and we are excited to share an amazing night with the community.”

Bristow says the night is as special as what the Broadway couple has done for Jonesboro by founding the professional theatre company in the first place.

“There isn’t any other event like it,” said Bristow. “Matt and Jenny are doing something with The Link that isn’t ordinary. They use their professional theatre connections to bring Jonesboro a true Broadway experience. It’s an amazing night, and it’s a treat to hear all of the talent in Jonesboro, from local kids to Matt and Jenny themselves.”

A Night of Stars – Masquerade Ball will take place at 6 p.m. on Oct. 17 at the Embassy Suites Ballroom on Red Wolf Boulevard. For more information or for tickets, go to [thelinktheatre.com](http://thelinktheatre.com).



THE LINK THEATRE COMPANY presents

# A NIGHT OF STARS

## *Masquerade Ball*

Starring Broadway’s Brent Barrett  
from Phantom of the Opera

Thursday, October 17, 2024 · 6 PM  
Embassy Suites Ballroom  
223 Red Wolf Blvd, Jonesboro, AR 72405

*Wear your best mask*

\$175/person or \$1400/table  
RSVP by Oct. 1, 2024 to [info@thelinktheatre.org](mailto:info@thelinktheatre.org) For tickets, go to [www.TheLinkTheatre.org](http://www.TheLinkTheatre.org)