

# A WICKED

## Night of Stars

starring Jonesboro's Own  
Kyle Dean Massey

BY AUDREY HANES  
PHOTOS BY LUKE FONTANA AND SUBMITTED

When Broadway comes to Jonesboro later this month for The Link Theatre Company's exciting annual fundraiser gala, A Night of Stars, it will feature the talent of one of Jonesboro's own Broadway stars, Kyle Dean Massey. A Wicked Night of Stars, inspired by "Wicked," will raise money for the nonprofit organization's youth educational programming and professional productions.

### THE LINK THEATRE COMPANY

The Link Theatre Company, Northeast Arkansas' premiere professional theater company, was founded in 2020 by Matt Cavanaugh and Jenny Powers. The talented couple met on Broadway and is working to further enrich the vibrant local arts community in the City of Jonesboro, thanks in large part to generous supporters, passionate volunteers and funds raised from A Night of Stars, a previously existing event they adopted three years ago.

"The Link has no permanent paid staff, so 100 percent 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 theater company

is a means to raise Northeast Arkansas to national distinction as a vibrant arts community and a cultural destination."

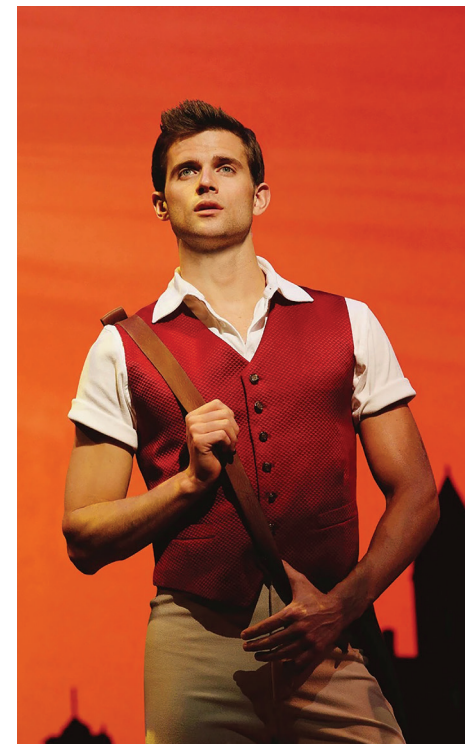
Since 2020, The Link has grown to include nine board members and 24 guild members. The theater company produces two professional productions per season that involve Broadway, collegiate and local talent. Joining Cavanaugh and Powers on the Board of Directors are Leah Wood, Dr. Travis Marsico, Audrey Poff, John Mixon, Melissa McDaniel, Jonathan Forsythe 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.

McDaniel's daughter, Eviegale, has enjoyed youth programming and The Link's Elevate classes, which are designed to develop acting and vocal skills in young performers.

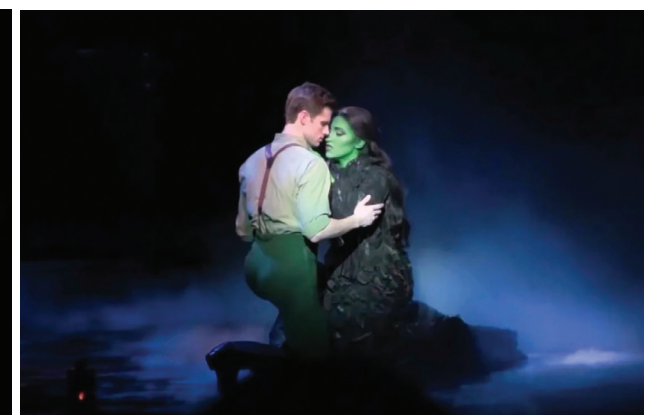
"Eviegale has loved her five years participating in the Elevate training program," said McDaniel. "It's probably one of the highlights of her year. The growth we have seen in her has been phenomenal, and it has opened up doors and even allowed her the opportunity to perform at Disney next June with her fellow Elevate alumni."

"The Link Theatre brings professional-level experience to Jonesboro while partnering with local talent to grow our students in a way no other program offers. It's an incredible gift to our community."

Powers says the Elevate youth musical theater and acting programming continues to explode and nurture the talents of its young performers.



"Bringing 'Wicked' to Jonesboro is especially fun for me. I've been singing these songs for almost 20 years, and now I get to share them with my hometown."  
-Kyle Dean Massey



"We are always trying to expand our educational offerings to area youth under our Elevate program," she said. "This past month we were able to bring in the Associate Artistic Director of the St. Louis MUNY, Michael Baxter. The MUNY is the largest outdoor theater in our country and is also the recipient of the 2025 Tony Award for Best Regional Theatre. (He) offered a Musical Theatre Audition Intensive for young artists in grades 6-12. What an opportunity to have someone of his experience and caliber pour into our talented youth in Jonesboro."

"One of our goals is also to raise enough money to start producing an annual Elevate show. Elevate is our youth musical theater training program. It would be great to have one show a year that is 100 percent for our youth to star in."

"The Link is also committed to training and cultivating our local talent and young artists through educational programs and professional performing opportunities alongside Broadway guest artists," added Cavanaugh.

### THE MAIN EVENT

As the theater company's biggest fundraiser of the year, Cavanaugh says the proceeds raised from Night of Stars enable The

Link to continue its mission to elevate the arts in Jonesboro by offering world class productions, concerts, plays and programs.

On Oct. 23., supporters of The Link are invited to "A Wicked Night of Stars," which will feature Broadway's Massey alongside many other talented performers.

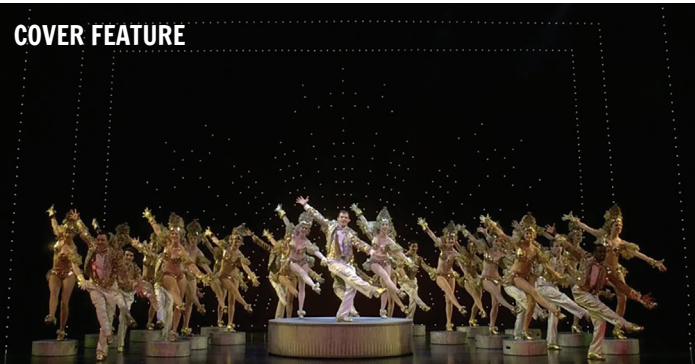
"Audiences can expect to feel like they are attending a Broadway concert in New York City," said Powers. "They are always mesmerized by the stars we bring in and with the local talent featured."

"Guests are encouraged to dress in 'Wicked' cocktail attire, so it will definitely be a green and pink party. Our incredible volunteer guild, led by Teresa Burns, has been working tirelessly on the delicious and festive menu, as well as the spectacular 'Wicked' decor."

As one of those Broadway artists, Massey returns to his hometown to headline the gala and support the artistic community where he first found his own love for theater.

"This year's Night of Stars will absolutely be 'Wicked' awesome," said Powers. "Our headliner is a hometown hero and celebrity, Kyle Dean Massey, who has starred as Fiyero in 'Wicked' on Broadway and in the musical's first national tour. Kyle's set list includes some of his favorite 'Wicked' songs. We also have a few





surprise guests who will serenade us with songs from the ‘Wicked’ score. ...

“This Night of Stars is a special one because we are able to bring a Broadway and Hollywood star back to his hometown to perform. Matt and I are grateful to Kyle for supporting The Link Theatre Company by giving us his time and talent. Audiences should expect one of the best Night of Stars ever. Kyle is a fantastic performer, singer and storyteller.”

As a guild member and longtime supporter of performing arts in Jonesboro, McDaniel says she and her family can’t wait to see Massey perform in person.

“Night of Stars is always a highlight of the year, and I’m especially excited to see Kyle Dean Massey return home for a ‘Wicked’ performance that promises to be both entertaining and unforgettable,” she said.

**HOMETOWN STAR**

Massey is best known for his work on Broadway in “Pippin,” “Next to Normal,” “Wicked,” “Xanadu,” “Company” and “The Boys in the Band,” along with his role as Kevin Bicks for three seasons on ABC’s “Nashville.” He has also appeared on a number of popular TV shows and has been a voice-over artist for two Emmy-winning children’s programs on Nickelodeon, “Peter Rabbit” and “Sunny Day.”

While on Broadway, Massey starred in and hosted two popular web-blog series, “Normal Life” and “Fresh Prince” on Broadway.com. Internationally, Massey starred in “Pippin” at the The Royal Theatre in Amsterdam, played the title role in “Jekyll and Hyde” in Seoul, played Billy Lawlor in “42nd Street” in Tokyo and starred in “Casi Normales” in Buenos Aires. As a vocalist, Massey has performed across the country in concerts with symphony orchestras and in more intimate cabaret settings with his one-man show.

“I’m excited to come into town for this event because I’ve been so impressed with what Jenny and Matt have built in Jonesboro, and I’m thrilled to support it in any way I can,” said Massey. “They’ve been talking to me for years about coming to do something with The Link, but the timing was never right. I’m just happy that this year everything worked out.”

Much of Massey’s family still resides in the Jonesboro area, so coming home to headline such a good cause is incredibly meaningful to him.

“It’s always a treat to come back to Jonesboro and perform,” said Massey. “Being near my family and having them see me sing is special on its own. But Jonesboro was also the place that nurtured me artistically as I grew up – through Edgar Hall and Christine McNeil in dance, Harriet O’Neill for piano, Fonda Lofton, Robin Yates and Ellis Julien for choir, Julia Lansford for voice and the theater department at Jonesboro High School – these teachers shaped me and gave me the drive to pursue the arts as a full-time career. Coming back now and helping inspire a new generation of kids is incredibly fulfilling, and I’m truly excited to be here.”

The Night of Stars headliner says supporting theater and the arts is vital because society’s cultural contributions are what endure.

“When we look at past civilizations, what remains are their art, their design, their cultural impact; that tells us just how essential the arts are,” said Massey. “Day to day, we all have jobs and responsibilities, but the arts are what we live for; they’re our entertainment, our leisure, the things that bring us together.

“On a personal level, having creative outlets is vital. It allows

people to use their talents in a way that impacts their community, and that’s deeply meaningful. Supporting local theater and the arts is about nurturing that cultural growth right where we live. It says, ‘Yes, this matters.’ It belongs alongside math and science and other critical disciplines. For me, it’s absolutely on that same level of importance.”

“Wicked” in particular has a special place in Massey’s heart. He says it is special to him because of how long he was a part of the production – 13 years in total, including on tour, in Los Angeles and most extensively on Broadway.

“It’s such a terrific show that always lands on every level, and people are genuinely excited to see it,” said Massey. “That’s not always the case with theater; some shows are more artistic but not for everyone. ‘Wicked’ just resonates with everybody. It also became a family for me. I spent countless birthdays and holidays with the cast and crew at the Gershwin Theatre, and those people became my community. Stephen Schwartz, who wrote ‘Wicked,’ and ‘Pippin,’ another show I performed in on Broadway, has been responsible for a big part of my career, and it’s always inspiring to see his music continue to thrive across the world.

“Bringing ‘Wicked’ to Jonesboro is especially fun for me. I’ve been singing these songs for almost 20 years, and now I get to share them with my hometown. Along the way, I’ll share some stories, including the backstage mishaps and funny moments people love to hear about. I’ve got plenty of those, and I can’t wait to bring them to life here.”

More than two decades after first singing some of the songs in “Wicked,” Massey says the numbers hold different meaning for him now.

“I’m excited to revisit some of the songs I’ve been singing for years,” he said. “It may sound a little cheesy, but they feel like old friends to me. Every time I return to them at a different point in my life, they take on new meaning. Some of the songs I’ll perform in Jonesboro I haven’t sung in several years, and a lot has changed for me since then.

“For example, when I first sang ‘Dancing Through Life’ from ‘Wicked,’ I was in my mid-20s. Now, in my mid-40s, as a parent with much more life experience, the lyrics resonate differently. They still hold their truth in the context of the show, but personally they speak to me in a new way. I’m looking forward to those discoveries in the moment.”

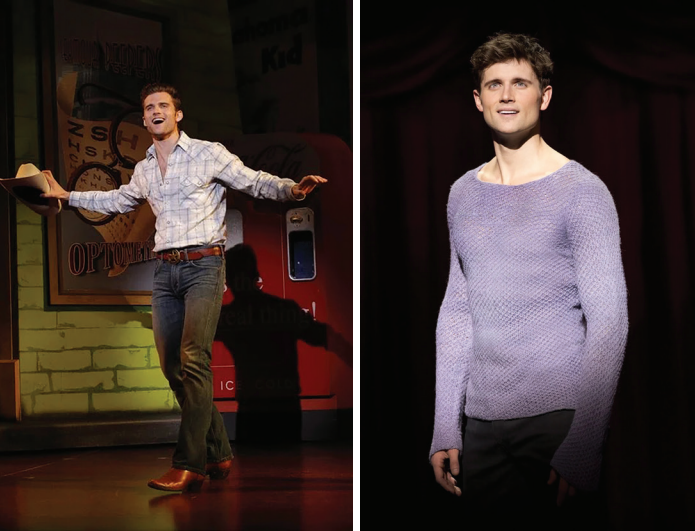
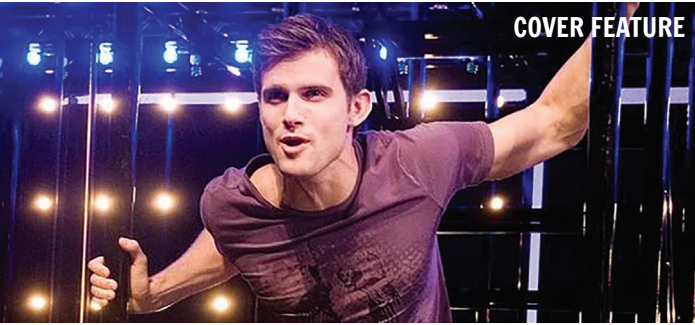
The talented performer is looking forward to sharing his talents with supporters of The Link and a new generation of actors and vocalists.

“I’m also excited about performing with friends, especially the duets I’ve planned,” said Massey “And singing with younger performers from the community is something I’m really looking forward to. When I was growing up, anytime I had the chance to sing with a professional, like in all-state choir, it felt incredibly special and inspiring. I learned so much from those moments, and I hope these kids will have a similar experience.”

Massey and his husband, Taylor, are parents to Rafa and Gigi. He is a passionate supporter of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, The Trevor Project and various human rights groups. Massey is the co-founder of Elevate, an assisted reproductive agency, and he is also a producer and co-owner of High Tea Productions.

**COMING SOON**

Next up, The Link is co-producing a concert version of Broadway’s “The Secret Garden” with the Delta Symphony Orchestra (DSO) this November. The upcoming concert version



will feature Broadway veterans, as well as a large cast of Northeast Arkansas favorites and a community choir. DSO founder and conductor Dr. Neale Bartee will lead the orchestra.

Three talented local performers will star in the production: Bethania Baray-Harrison will play Lily, Steele Daniel will star as Mary and The Link’s own Cavanaugh will play Archibald. Baray-Harrison has been a featured soprano with Opera Memphis on numerous occasions and was previously the director of opera and vocal instructor at Arkansas State University. Cavanaugh is a Broadway veteran, most notably recreating the iconic role of Tony in the 2009 revival of “West Side Story.”

“The Secret Garden” shows will take place on Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 9 at 3 p.m. at the Fowler Center on the A-State campus.

A Wicked Night of Stars will take place on Oct. 23 at Cooper Alumni Center on the Arkansas State University campus. For tickets or more information, visit thelinktheatre.org.