

# La MaMa

Experimental Theatre Club

in association with Practical Cats Productions

presents

## OKLAHOMA SAMOVAR

By Alice Eve Cohen

Winner of the National Jewish Playwriting Contest



The Downstairs  
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003  
December 4-21, 2025

# OKLAHOMA SAMOVAR

By Alice Eve Cohen

Winner of the National Jewish Playwriting Contest  
World Premiere

Directed by Eric Nightengale

## FEATURING:

Hattie and others	Sarah Chalfie*
Sylvia and others	Joyce Cohen*
Emily and others	Nadia Diamond
Ben and others	Alex J. Gould*
Little Rose and others	Seren Kaiser
Jake	Sahar Lev-Shomer

Set and Puppet Design: Anna Kiraly

Costume Design: Barbara Erin Delo

Lighting Design: Federico Restrepo

Sound Design: Eric Nightengale

Assistant Scenic Designer and

Prop Designer: Qingan Zhang

Intimacy and Fight Coordinator: Jacqueline Holoway

Puppetry Consultant: Dan Hurlin

Assistant Director and Associate Producer: Eliana Cohen-Orth

Production Stage Manager: Tom Dricoll

Publicist: John Wyszniwski, Everyman Agency

Producer: John Breen for Practical Cats Productions

\*Equity Member appearing with Permission of Actors Equity Association

**ACT I: EAST TO WEST (45 minutes)**

**10-minute intermission**

**ACT II: WEST TO EAST (1 hour and 15 minutes)**

**After the play, enjoy an Oklahoma Samovar-themed  
drink, down the block at Phebe's.**



Actors' Equity Association, founded in 1913, represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers nationwide. Equity seeks to foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions.

## **A note from the playwright:**

*Oklahoma Samovar* is a work of dramatic fiction, inspired by the family stories I heard from my Great Aunt Sylvia. I first met Sylvia in 1987 when she was 87 years old. A bountiful storyteller, Sylvia's tales – true, invented, probably a combination of both – unlocked doors to the ancestral history I had never known. The stories reshaped the way I perceived my family, my mother's untimely death, my cultural identity, and my ideas about Jewish history. I've shared Sylvia's stories with my daughters, written about them in my memoirs, and transformed and fictionalized them in my plays. *Oklahoma Samovar* is a play about storytelling: stories that change over time with every teller and each new telling. I know more now than I did when I met Aunt Sylvia. I've changed, the meaning and weight of her stories have changed, and the play, which has gone through many iterations, has changed over time.

*Oklahoma Samovar* is a foundational work for me. I am grateful and honored to premiere it at La MaMa, a theatre I have loved for as long as I have loved theatre.

*The play is dedicated to my mother,  
Louise Giventer Cohen, and to Sylvia Wilk.*

*Oklahoma Samovar* is produced by special arrangement with the Playwright and Elaine Devlin Literary, Inc., 1115 Broadway, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10010.

**Alice Eve Cohen (Playwright)** is a playwright and author, winner of the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, the National Jewish Playwriting Contest, 2025 NYFA Artist Fellowship, 2025 NYSCA Individual Artist Award, *Oprah* magazine 25 Best Books of Summer and *Elle* Literary Grand Prix for Nonfiction. Her play *In The Cervix Of Others* is an official selection of the 2026 WPI Conference in the Philippines. Her plays have been performed for over 200,000 people on 4 continents, at theatres including: the Kitchen Theatre, New Georges, New York Theatre Workshop, Here, Six Points Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Group, and at theatres in Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Israel, Trinidad, and Canada. Cohen's critically acclaimed memoirs are published by Penguin and Algonquin, her plays are published by NoPassport Press, and her monologues are published in 6 monologue anthologies. A recipient of awards and residencies from NYSCA, the NEA, Yaddo, the Orchard Project, Saltonstall, and VCCA, she is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect, and a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre, the EST Playwrights Unit, Honor Roll!, and the Jewish Theatre Circle. The founding artistic director of Practical Cats Productions, she has a BA from Princeton University and an MFA from The New School. Alice teaches playwriting and creative writing at The New School, where she received the Distinguished Teaching Award. [www.AliceEveCohen.com](http://www.AliceEveCohen.com)

**Eric Nightengale (Director)** served as artistic director of 78th Street Theatre Lab from 1995 -- 2008. New York credits include work with SoHo Rep, Concrete Temple Theatre, Penguin Rep, Theatre Breaking Through Barriers, New Circle Theatre Company, Keen Company, Dixon Place, Minetta Lane, 59E59, The Acting Company, Circle Rep, PS21, Symphony Space, The Brick, The Flea, Cherry Lane Theatre, The Barrow Group, St Clements, Ensemble Studio Theatre, HERE, and Classic Stage Company. Chicago credits include Victory Gardens, Actors Repertory Theatre, Chicago Dramatists Workshop, Bailiwick, Steppenwolf, and Second City. His work at the Edinburgh Fringe has resulted in four adaptations for BBC radio, four off-Broadway productions, and a London transfer. Recent projects include *KENNEDY: Bobby's Last Crusade*, available on Broadway On Demand.

**John Breen (Producer for Practical Cats Productions)** is best known as the writer/director of the hit play *Alone it Stands*. It is estimated that two hundred and sixty thousand people worldwide have seen the play. In New York he recently produced *King of The Jews* by Leslie Epstein directed by Alexandra Aron which was nominated for an Outer Critics Circle Award. He is the General Manager of Loose Change Productions and Magis Theatre and with Loose Change Productions he produced *Export Quality*, By Dorotea Mendoza, Erica Miguel and Carolyn Antonio at HERE Arts, directed by Sonoko Kawahara and *The Mulberry Tree* at La MaMa and most recently *Angel in the Ashes* for Magis at La MaMa, His adaptation of *The Quiet Man* by Maurice Walsh premiered at the Dublin Theatre Festival in October of this year.

**Federico Restrepo (Lighting Designer)** has designed lighting for theatre productions in New York as well as abroad since moving to New York in 1999. In addition he is the Artistic Director of Loco7 Dance Puppet Theatre, with his company he has created and performed a number of original pieces and toured internationally over the past thirty plus years. He is a resident puppet designer, choreographer, performer and director at La MaMa, as well as the Producing Director of *La MaMa Puppet Festival*, a bi-annual event. [www.loco7.org](http://www.loco7.org)

**Barbara Erin Delo (Costume Designer)** is a Costume Designer and Artisan working in dance, theatre and opera. A New York native, she has previously designed costumes for Bay Street, Berkshire Theatre Group, Theatre at St Clements (*The Bigot*, Off Broadway premier), Judson Church (*Beyond Babel*, Off Broadway Premier), The Flea, HideAway Circus (Touring), York Theatre, Capital Repertory Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Company Castillo Theatre, Martha Graham Dance Company, Paul Taylor Dance Company, Parsons Dance Company, Megan Williams Dance Projects, Battery Dance Company, NYC Fringe Festival, Chain Theatre Company, Third Rail Productions as well as many other NY and regional theatres. She studied costume design at SUNY Binghamton and NYU Tisch. [www.barbaraerin.com](http://www.barbaraerin.com)

**Dan Hurlin (Puppetry Consultant)** has been creating original theater since 1980. His work has won multiple awards (two OBIEs, two Bessies and a UNIMA Citation of Excellence) and has been seen at a variety of alternative presenting spaces throughout the US and Europe. Until his retirement, Dan was the director of the Graduate Program in Theatre at Sarah Lawrence college, where he taught performance art, dance and puppetry. In addition to being a four-time fellow at MacDowell, Dan received a Guggenheim fellowship for choreography, a USA Artist Fellowship and the Alpert Award for theatre, and the 2013 Jesse Howard Jr. Rome Prize for visual art.

**Qingan Zhang (Assistant Scenic Designer and Prop Designer)** is a New York and Boston based scenic and prop designer. Her work explores metaphorical narratives through physical materiality, geometrical motif and integrated spatial experience. Selected scenic design credits include *Lizard Boy* (SpeakEasy Stage), *Silent Sky & The Chinese Lady* (Central Square Theater), *Destination Undefined* (Theatre 154). Associate credits include *Franklin's Key* (Pig Iron), *Cymbeline* (NAATCO), *SUR* (LA MAMA). Qingan's co-devising puppetry pieces have been showcased at New Ohio Theatre Ice Factory, Rattlestick Theater GFTF, and HERE Arts Center. Qingan is the co-founder of the non-profit interdisciplinary production company Cellunova Productions. [qinganz.com](http://qinganz.com)

**Sarah Chalfie\* (Hattie)** New York: *FillFillFillFillFillFillFill* (The Flea). Regional: *Hamlet* (St. Louis Shakespeare), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Hartford Stage), *The Rose Tattoo* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Off the Main Road* (Williamstown). Film: *Take Pains*. Education: Columbia University MFA Acting, class of 2024; productions include: *Small Tragedy*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Halfway Bitches Go Straight to Heaven*, *Moscowx6*. sarahchalfie.com

**Joyce Cohen\* (Sylvia)** Recent credits: World Premiere of *The Reservoir* at DCPA (Henry Award nominee) and Alliance Theatre Company. Broadway: *Once A Catholic*. Off-Broadway: *Keen*, *Life Jacket*, *HERE*, *Mint*, Playwrights Horizons, Westside Arts. Regional theaters across the country. TV/Film (incl): *High School Musical*, *Independence Day*, *Read It And Weep*, *A Picture Perfect Holiday*, many Hallmark Christmas movies, "Touched By An Angel", "Archie Bunker's Place". Sundance Institute Playwright's and Film Labs, Festival of New Theatre (Geva), Colorado New Play Summit (DCPA), JPP, New Ground Theatre Festival (Cleveland Playhouse), Powerhouse Theatre. www.actressjoycecohen.com

**Nadia Diamond (Emily)** is a San Francisco-raised, Brooklyn-based actor. A company member of Brave New World Repertory Theatre, her other NYC collaborations include *As You Like It* (The Brick), *Women Screaming* (The Tank), *The Debates* (Theater in Asylum), *BREATHE* (Blackberry Productions Theater Co. & New Professional Theatre), and *Cassie Goes to Congress* (New Perspectives Theatre). BA in History, Princeton. MFA in Acting, University of Houston. *Until we are all free, we are none of us free*. - Emma Lazarus, 1883. nadiadiamond.com

**Alex J. Gould\* (Ben, Fight Captain)** is an actor/fight and intimacy director. Off-Broadway credits include *The Woodsman* (New World Stages, 59E59), *Midsummer: A Banquet* (Third Rail Projects/Food of Love Productions), *BALLS* (59E59), *Show Trial* (The Tank), and *The Radicalization of Rolfe* (2016 NYC Fringe Fest Best Overall Play). Other credits include *Student Body*, *The Mysteries*, *a cautionary tail*, and Thomas Bradshaw's *Job*. Regional/International credits include *BALLS* (Stages Repertory Theater), *Mary's Wedding* (Portland Center Stage), *Whaddabloodclot* by Katori Hall (Williamstown), *Stockade* (Local Theater Company) and *Happily After Ever* (Edinburgh Fringe 2015). He has been part of readings/workshops with New York Theater Workshop, New Dramatists, Chautauqua Theater Company, McCarter Theatre, Rattlestick Theater, and Jewish Plays Project. Gould is a member of Ensemble Studio Theater in NYC. @agouldini.

**Seren Kaiser (Little Rose)** is a sixth grader whose credits include, among other roles, Horton in *Seussical, Jr.* and Mary Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (both with

Ghostlight Theater Camp), Duffy in *Annie, Jr.* (Kidz Theater) and Pig Pen and Marcy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Atlantic Theater Company Acting School). Seren would like to thank their parents, their sister, their mentor (Kidz Theater director Kristen Ceaser), as well as Susan Glass, and—especially—*Oklahoma Samovar* playwright Alice Eve Cohen, Director Eric Nightengale, and Assistant Director Eliana Cohen-Orth for this amazing opportunity.

**Sahar Lev-Shomer (Jake)** is a New York City based actor, singer and dancer. He was a member of the first cohort of Dot in the Box Theatre Company where he was mentored by Billy Bustamante. As part of the company he played Macbeth in *Macbeth* directed by Mark Nelson, and was a soloist in the new musical workshop of *buried* by Berkson & Malina. Sahar is a recent graduate from Circle in the Square Theatre School, winning the inaugural Alan Langdon Award for Excellence in Contemporary Theatre. He is thrilled to be making his La MaMa debut with *Oklahoma Samovar*! [saharlevshomer.com](http://saharlevshomer.com)

**Tom Driscoll (Stage Manager)** is thrilled to be joining Practical Cats Productions for their production of *Oklahoma Samovar*! Past management team credits include Smoking Mirror Theatre's *King John*, Amore Opera's *Madame Butterfly*, New Light Theater Project's *Night Sings Its Songs*, The Curtain's *Macbeth* and The Tank's Midnight Coleslaw's *Tales from Beyond the Closet*.

**Eliana Cohen-Orth (Assistant Director and Associate Producer)** is a playwright, director, and producer from NYC. Her play *Affecting Expression*, a queer tragicomedy inspired by real 19th-century figures, was recently presented at The Tank and at Princeton University. Directing credits include Jen Silverman's *The Moors*, Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*, Kate Hamill's adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Dracula*, and the premiere of Emma Watkins' *Unbecoming*. This fall, she is co-directed a production of her original comedic play, *Jungle Restaurant*, and co-produced a performance series for a new solo show, *Polin*. Eliana holds a B.A. from Princeton University. [www.ElianaCohenOrth.com](http://www.ElianaCohenOrth.com).

**Anna Kiraly (Set and Puppet Design)** is a visual artist and set designer. She's designed for the Pig Iron Theater Company (her set was nominated for a Barrymore '25), Talking Band, The Play Company, Peter Sellars, and universities such as Barnard/Columbia, Fordham, The New School, Montclair, Colgate, and created visuals for operas and concerts. She is a recipient of multiple NYSCA artist grants, the Arts Link Grant, the NEA/TCG Program for Designers, the TCG New Generations, and the Jim Henson Foundation's grant. She's taught set design at Barnard/Columbia and design for directors at SUNY/Purchase. <https://www.annakiraly.com/>



Sarah Chalfie\*



Joyce Cohen\*



Nadia Diamond



Alex J. Gould\*



Seren Kaiser



Sahar Lev-Shomer

**Practical Cats Productions (Founding Artistic Director, Alice Eve Cohen)** Our award-winning original productions include plays, solo shows, and multi-genre pieces combining dance, music, film, puppetry, storytelling, mask, and theatre. Practical Cats, Inc. (incorporated 1980) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) arts organization. More at [www.PracticalCatsProductions.org](http://www.PracticalCatsProductions.org)

Thanks to the following organizations and individuals whose generous contributions made this production of *Oklahoma Samovar* possible:

*Oklahoma Samovar* is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



*Oklahoma Samovar* won the 10th National Jewish Playwriting Contest and received development and fiscal sponsorship by the Jewish Plays Project. Learn more at [www.jewishplaysproject.org](http://www.jewishplaysproject.org)

This production is made possible with generous contributions from:

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### **Special Thanks:**

Judith Bowman, Mark Nelson, Susan Glass, and Jackie Reingold for their expert help with casting. Wendy Wilk for the family photos and cousin bonding, the Ensemble Studio Theatre Playwrights Unit; Clare Garfield for continuing the tradition, Madeline and Jennifer Cohen for sharing the journey, lim mui for the lobby design, Kim Ima for tea and inspiration; David Winitsky, Illana Stein, Heather Helinsky, and everyone at JPP, the Marlene Meyerson JCC, Honor Roll!, Dee Pelletier, Joan Lipkin, Sean Manley, Cat Filloux, Zishan Urgula, Ellen Maddow, Paul Zimet, Sylvia Wilk, Lou Rackoff, and the actors and designers who have shared their artistry in the development of the play.

Very Special Thanks to everyone on the *Oklahoma Samovar* team for your beautiful work, and for being such generous, dedicated, kind and talented collaborators.

And to everyone at La MaMa... with great love and appreciation.

**A full program with information on this production can be found on the La MaMa website page of *Oklahoma Samovar***

**In addition you can scan the QR code Poster located in the theatre lobby for access to detailed information on this program.**

# LA MAMA



## RESTORE A BUILDING REMAKE A WORLD



Rendering: 74 East 4th St.

La MaMa's historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street underwent an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit [www.lamama.org/remakeaworld](http://www.lamama.org/remakeaworld)

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The Club

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Dec 4-14, 2025  
Ellen Stewart Theatre

**Oklahoma Samovar**  
Dec 5-21, 2025  
The Downstairs

**La MaMa Kids:**  
**Winter Wonderland**  
Dec 13, 2025  
The Club

## COMING SOON

**Birth + Carnage**  
Dec 19-21, 2025  
Ellen Stewart Theatre

**Christmas in Nickyland**  
Dec 22-23, 2025  
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**The Ford/Hill Project**  
Jan 7-11, 2025  
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**The Rest of Our Lives**  
Jan 7-17, 2025  
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Jan 9-11, 2025  
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