

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE



Image Description: A poster for Northlight Theatre's production of Birthday Candles. A woman stares straight at the camera with a slight smirk. She has gray hair that reaches the back of her neck. She wears a short sleeved pink top with thin red and white vertical stripes. In front of her is a cake with white frosting, colorful sprinkles, and six tall lit candles of various colors. The word Birthday Candles is in large pink letters in front of the cake with a long blue ribbon wrapping around some of the letters.

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ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

GUIDE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Northlight’s production of *Birthday Candles* by Noah Haidle.

This production will run at Northlight Theatre from September 7 through October 8, 2023. The address is 9501 Skokie Blvd, Skokie, IL, 60077.

This guide holds many different accessibility tools to make your experience at the show as comfortable as possible. Please be aware that not every element of this guide will be useful to each individual. Therefore, please feel free to pick and choose which accessibility tools would be most beneficial to you.

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PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Tuesday - Saturday Evenings (all times are estimates)

- 6:30pm The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 7:00pm The auditorium opens for you to take your seat.
- 7:30pm The show will begin.
- 9:00pm The show will end.

Saturday - Sunday Matinees (all times are estimates)

- 1:30pm The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 2:00pm The auditorium opens for you to take your seat.
- 2:30pm The show will begin.
- 4:00pm The show will end.

Weekday Matinees (all times are estimates)

- 12:00pm The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 12:30pm The auditorium opens for you to take your seat.
- 1:00pm The show will begin.
- 2:30pm The show will end.

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FULL SHOW SYNOPSIS **(spoilers ahead)**

Please note that the following was created during a preview performance. It is possible that changes to the script and/or production may not be reflected below.

Run time: 1 hour and 30 minutes with no intermission

The play takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is evening, and the sun is setting. Ernestine and her mother, Alice, are in their kitchen. Ernestine, at 17, wonders if she has wasted her life. Guests are coming and they begin to make the cake. Ernestine appears to be having a mini existential crisis. They act out parts of a school play Ernestine is preparing for. Alice measures Ernestine's height. Alice reminisces over the past and makes Ernestine promise to find her place in the universe.

Time passes. Ernestine starts making the cake. Kenneth, her awkward neighbor, enters startling Ernestine. We find out that last year Ernestine had gotten the role she desired in the play. We find out that her mother died and that Kenneth has a crush on Ernestine, and he gifts her a fishbowl with a goldfish in it. Matt enters. Ernestine vows to herself that she will leave town and find her place in the universe. Ernestine notices Matt, and welcomes him. Ernestine explains how her mother made the same cake every day on Ernestine's birthday, and Ernestine keeps her alive by continuing the tradition. She invites Matt to help. They get along well and have a lot of chemistry. Matt gives her a gift. Matt asks her to prom. She refuses but kisses him.

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23 years pass. Matt and Ernestine have married, and their 17 year old son, Billy, plays the piano badly. Billy asks if he has wasted his life. Billy accuses Ernestine of joining the life of conformity, and leaves angrily. Ernestine and Matt keep making the cake. Ernestine contemplates whether they have settled. At 41 years old, Ernestine questions what she has done with her life. Matt reminds her that raising a family is a worthwhile thing to do with her life. Madeline enters, as a college senior.

We jump ahead in time and now Madeline is a social media consultant. She is now going by Athena. Billy enters. Matt and Ernestine are sad that they don't get to talk with Billy much since he has moved out. People talk about Billy's previous prom date. Billy reveals he is dating someone named Joan.

Some more time passes, and Ernestine continues baking the cake, and Joan gifts her nail polish for her birthday. She tells Ernestine that since she and her mother had a tradition of painting their nails every year, Joan and Ernestine can continue that tradition. Joan is an anxious mess. Billy announces to the family that he and Joan are getting married. Ernestine reminisces about Billy's childhood the same way her mother did with her, and laments the passage of time.

Time passes and Joan enters, holding a baby named Alexandra. Matt enters. He is now a grandfather. Later, Joan paints Ernestine's nails for her birthday.

At least a year passes. Ernestine is nearly ready to put the cake in the oven. There is an argument which distresses Ernestine. Madeline enters, depressed. She has a mini existential crisis. She has moved back in with her parents Matt and Ernestine because of

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her depression. Ernestine is sad about how little time she gets to spend with her family, specifically her granddaughter.

At least a year passes. Madeline measures Ernestine, then dies. 3 years pass. Kenneth enters, startling Ernestine just as he did in the first scene. Kenneth reveals that he has gone through a divorce. He is fifty years old. Ernestine recites her lines from her childhood play, better than last time. Kenneth confesses his undying love for her, again. Ernestine rejects him, again. Matt walks in, giving Ernestine a gift for her fiftieth birthday.

Years later, Ernestine discovers that Matt is having an affair. She shuts him out of her life, and cries as he leaves the room, still baking the cake and lamenting about not being a rebel of the universe.

Time passes. Billy plays the piano very well in the next room. Alex, at seventeen years old, enters the room and wonders if he has wasted his whole life. Ernestine has started a baking business and is happy.

At least a year passes, and Ernestine is going on the vacation she has always desired.

Ernestine is looking at her photo album from her vacation. Alex and Billy are present. Alex surprises everyone by revealing that she has invited Matt, whose presence angers Ernestine.

At least a year passes. Matt has had a stroke, and Ernestine takes feeds him baby food. He dies.

Alex has a daughter, named after Ernestine, or “Ernie” for short.

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Ernie turns 17. She is trying out for the same play as Ernestine when she was 17. Kenneth enters, startling Ernestine, as always. He gives her a gift. They seem to be dating. They kiss. He proposes to her and she accepts. The rest of the family walks in on them kissing and they all congratulate them.

More years pass as Ernestine and Kenneth are living happily together. Billy enters, in the middle stages of Alzheimer's. Ernestine takes care of him. As she comforts him, he talks about how she is surprising God. Billy still plays the piano very well. More time passes. The cake is finally ready.

Later in life, Ernestine laments not letting Kenneth into her life sooner. Kenneth dies. Ernestine is sad and alone. She throws the cake away.

More time passes, and Ernestine begins the cake again. However, it is revealed that this is no longer her kitchen. She lives in a retirement home which she hates, and has snuck back into her old house, waking up the current residents. A woman who lives in the house now, Beth, threatens to call the retirement home to have her taken back. John, Beth's partner, walks in and lets Ernestine finish her cake. They bake the cake together, Ernestine guiding John to carry on this tradition. Ernestine dies.

As her life flashes before her eyes, she sees all of her family members, both dead and alive. Last of all, she sees Alice, her mother, wishing her many beautiful hours, wonder, grace, breath, music, and mystery. To which Ernestine replies, "All of it comes true."

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SENSITIVITY GUIDE

CONTENT NOTES

- Multiple conversations about loved ones passing away (parents, children, spouses)
- There is talk of divorce
- A character pulls out an unopened condom wrapper
- There is talk of an affair
- Characters use the word shit, pussy, asshole, damn, and fuck

SENSORY NOTES

- There are several moments when characters are startled and scream
- Some actors enter from the audience during blackouts, and sometimes those entrances are accompanied by the actor shouting their lines as they enter
- Characters argue and raise their voices

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does this production contain any technical elements that could be loud, bright, or shocking?

Like many of Northlight's plays, this production will include technical elements that may trigger sensory sensitivities. Northlight has done its best to design elements so that they will be accessible to all, but each person is different, thereby making it impossible to plan for every individual. If you believe that you may have some sensory sensitivities to the show, please consult the guide above to make you are aware of them before they happen. Please also remember that Northlight has noise canceling headphones as well as sunglasses available to borrow for any of these moments.

What types of accessibility options does Northlight provide?

Northlight provides a wealth of accessibility options for its audience members. These tools can be broken up into two specific categories: Specific Date Accessibility and General Accessibility. For specific date accessibility, Northlight will provide accommodations on predetermined dates throughout the run. We highly recommend reserving tickets for these dates ahead of time. These accommodations include: Audio Description, Open Captions, and Relaxed/Sensory Friendly Performances.

For general accessibility, Northlight provides a wide range of tools that can be requested at any performance of the show free of charge. These include: assisted listening devices and accessible seating. For accessible seating, it is recommended you request the

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necessary seats when purchasing your tickets, as they may not be available the day of the performance. For assisted listening devices, please go to the House Manager or ask an usher.

For more information, visit northlight.org/visit/#accessibility or email Ruben Carrazana, Community Engagement Manager, at rcarrazana@northlight.org.


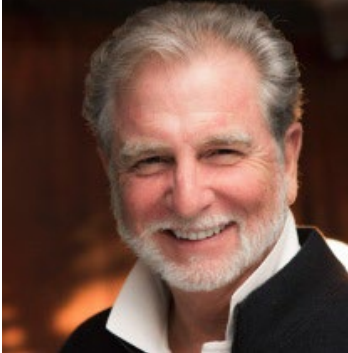


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REFERENCE PHOTOS

	<p>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Exterior</p> <p>Id: The front of North Shore Center on a sunny day. The building has white columns and its sides are primarily made of windows.</p>
	<p>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Entrance</p> <p>Id: The doors to North Shore's building. The doors are paneled glass and there is a hand railing leading up. A man is entering the doors.</p>
	<p>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Parking Lot</p> <p>Id: The parking lot at the theater. It is a sunny day with many clouds, there is a sign that says "Theatre Parking Only" and several cars parked.</p>
	<p>Northlight's Auditorium</p> <p>Id: The doors leading directly into the theater. There are three doors which are all light brown wood. Two doors are open. A sign above the doors reads North Theatre. A man is waving hello.</p>
	<p>The Set for <i>Birthday Candles</i></p> <p>Id: The set is the kitchen inside a home. There is a counter on the left hand side that runs diagonally to a door. On that counter is a sink. To the right of the door are drawers with a shelf on top. Above the sink is a window, and on either side of the window are two shelves. The window and shelves are suspended in the air. There are no walls. In front of the counter is a kitchen island with two stools in front of it. The stools are white with a brown wooden seat. Closer to the audience is a dark brown round wooden dining table with three matching chairs.</p>





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 A portrait of Ruben Carrazana, a Hispanic man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark maroon sweater. He is sitting and resting his head on his hand, looking directly at the camera against a black background.	<p>Ruben Carrazana Community Engagement Manager</p> <p>Id: A Hispanic man sits and stares at the camera with his head resting on his hand. He has black hair and wears a dark maroon sweater in front of a black wall.</p>
 A portrait of BJ Jones, an older man with a white beard and silver hair, wearing a dark jacket over a white shirt. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera against a dark background.	<p>BJ Jones Artistic Director</p> <p>Id: A picture of a jolly older man with a white beard and hair going silver.</p>
 A portrait of Kate Fry, a white woman with light brown hair, wearing a black sleeveless top. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile against a white background.	<p>Kate Fry Ernestine Ashworth</p> <p>Id: A White woman looks directly into the camera. She has brown eyes, and light brown hair that goes to behind her neck. She wears small round earrings, and wears a black top with no sleeves in front of a white background.</p>
 A portrait of Cyd Blakewell, a white woman with curly blonde hair, wearing a black top. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile against a black background.	<p>Cyd Blakewell Alice/Madeline/Ernie</p> <p>Id: A White woman in her mid 40's stares into the camera with confidence and composure. The background is black, her shirt is black and her jacket is black. She has a curly blonde bob and a slight smile with her red lips.</p>

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 A portrait of Chiké Johnson, a Black man with a goatee, wearing a light blue dress shirt with an open collar, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.	<p>Chiké Johnson Matt/William</p> <p>Id: A Black man stares at the camera with a serious expression on his face. He has dark eyes, a black goatee, and wears a light blue dress shirt with an open collar.</p>
 A portrait of Samuel B. Jackson, a Black man with short black hair, wearing a light red t-shirt, smiling slightly against a light blue background.	<p>Samuel B. Jackson Billy/John</p> <p>Id: A Black man in his mid 20's stares at the camera with a youthful smirk, showing himself from the chest up. He has short black hair, no facial hair, and wears a light red shirt standing against a light blue background.</p>
 A portrait of Timothy Edward Kane, a White man with blue eyes and black hair, wearing a blue and white plaid dress shirt with an open collar and a dark blazer, looking directly at the camera.	<p>Timothy Edward Kane Kenneth</p> <p>Id: A White man stares at the camera wearing a blue and white plaid dress shirt with an open collar. Over the shirt is a dark blazer. He has blue eyes, and black hair that is heavier on top but balding in the front.</p>
 A portrait of Corbette Pasko, a Jewish woman with shoulder-length layered black hair and bangs, wearing a black sleeveless jumpsuit and yellow earrings, looking directly at the camera against a red background.	<p>Corbette Pasko Joan/Alex/Beth</p> <p>Id: A Jewish woman in her mid 40s with shoulder length layered black hair and bangs stands in front of a red wall, looking at the camera. She is wearing a black sleeveless jumpsuit and yellow earrings.</p>