BY
MOLLY SMITH METZLER

DIRECTED BY
JESSICA FISCH

Scenic Design Andrew Boyce, USA
Costume Design Stephanie Cluggish, USA
Lighting Design Paul Toben, USA
Sound Design Kevin O’Donnell, USA
Casting Director Lynn Baber, CSA
Production Stage Manager Rita Vreeland, AEA

OPENING NIGHT: MAY 18, 2018
at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie

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Northlight has always been interested in new work, both world premieres and plays fresh off their first production. Last year one of the hits of the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre in Louisville was Molly SmithMetzler’s Cry It Out. Artistic Associate Lauren Shouse saw it and thought it would be something Northlight audiences would enjoy. On reading it, I agreed. Funny and timely, Cry It Out is the story of young women struggling with the exhausting adjustment to one of the most difficult jobs of all: motherhood. The work-life balance is a challenge for all of us, but for a new mother whose career was everything to her, it becomes a psychological battle: the choice or necessity to stay home, or to return to work and leave their babies with caregivers. The guilt inherent in the latter is so powerful it can distract from focusing on a professional career.

My son and his wife have two boys, ages four and one. Both parents work downtown, taking the Metra into the city nearly every day. They are fortunate that Candy and I live close by and can spearhead taking care of the boys. They are blessed and they know it, because the daily juggling act of raising and providing for children is a dizzying prospect. I would argue that the cost of raising children now is much higher than when I was their age. And as often as I was home (being a freelance actor), when all is said and done, it was Candy that held it all together, stage managing our lives to perfection. It was a time when we could afford the luxury of her being home when school let out. But the financial demands of today’s economy—paying off school loans, scraping together a down payment for a mortgage, transportation costs, food costs, and the cost of children’s clothing and health care—are a burden beyond what I remember. But of course, everything is rosier in the rear view mirror.

At the helm of Cry It Out is Director Jessica Fisch. Her husband Paul Toben is our lighting designer, and their daughter Olivia, not yet a year old, is already broken in as a “green room” baby. Hailing from New Jersey, Jess knows the geographical and emotional territory of this play because she is living it in real time. Molly Smith Metzler’s writing is familiar and surprising, fresh and resonant. She writes the kind of conversations that I hear in my home, between my children and their friends. This is why we jumped at the chance to bring Cry It Out to Northlight.

BJ Jones, Artistic Director
Molly, what was the inspiration for *Cry It Out*?

**Molly:** When I was six months pregnant, my husband and I relocated from NYC to a small Long Island suburb called Port Washington. He was starting a new teaching job nearby, and we thought Port seemed like a quaint little beach town in which to start our family. What we didn’t consider was how isolated I would be, home with a newborn. We knew absolutely no one in town, and we couldn’t afford a second car, so I was trapped at home all day during the longest, snowiest, coldest winter in the history of Long Island. It was basically Winterfell, and I was dying of loneliness. But then one day, I met another mom. She lived within walking distance, and she had a baby the same age as mine, and even though we had very little in common, she saved my life and introduced me to this beautiful community of moms in town, who all shared their stories with me. I was surprised to realize that no matter what economic background we came from, we all had the same struggles. The experience of having a baby really cracks your career open, your marriage open, your identity open… and it’s mom friends who support you and get you through it all. I thought their stories belonged on stage.

Jessica: Were you writing while Cora was first born?

**Molly:** No, I didn’t write about motherhood until I had some distance from it. But I knew I was going to write about it, so I took a lot of notes while she napped. I was home with her a lot the first two years, which I now realize was luxurious. (I mean, we ate ramen, don’t be too jealous.) But a lot of women have to go back to work immediately, and it can be a downright terrifying experience. The choice to go back to work is not a choice for everyone. It’s a deeply classist problem in this country.

**Jessica:** Yeah, I’ve friends and cousins who had to go back to work at 8-12 weeks. I have a very distinct memory of Olivia asleep on the couch at 8 weeks old, and staring at her and being like: “What if I was dropping this 8-week-old off somewhere?” And that was so terrifying.

**Molly:** I don’t think it’s fair that we’re not more open and empathetic about it as a culture. And we load the “working mom” issue with tons of judgment and opinion. The fact is, it’s unnatural to have to leave your baby that quickly and it’s unnatural to have to make those decisions while you’re covered in breastmilk. I couldn’t believe how profoundly difficult those questions were to answer.

Jessica, what was your first experience with this play?

**Jessica:** Well, it was a year ago. I found out I was pregnant in January, and during my first trimester, my husband Paul was out of town lighting shows. So the only way to be together was for me to travel to where he was. I took a trip down to Louisville where he was working at the Humana Festival. Paul got me a ticket to *Cry It Out* but he didn’t know anything about the play, and I didn’t get in early enough to have a program, or read anything. So the play starts, and out comes a girl named Jessie (which is what my family calls me), and she has a daughter named Allie (which is my sister’s name), and they sound like everyone I grew up with and I ended up crying 15 minutes into the play. I was seeing so much of my future self on stage. I ended up laugh-crying through the whole play. So much so that the man next to me put his hand on me and asked “Are you okay?” To which I exclaimed: “Yes, I’m pregnant!” I wasn’t showing yet and I think he was afraid I was having a nervous breakdown. I just felt so immediately seen by the play because those characters were having conversations that at that point I was only having with myself. It was surreal, I felt like I knew these people.

How has having a baby affected your artistic careers?

**Molly:** Now that I’m a mother, I find that I have way more I want to say as an artist. The scope of what I care about is much larger. I want to talk about things that count. I want to write plays that my daughter will want to read someday, plays that will make her proud. And practically, I got more ambitious. I started thinking about the business of being a writer,
how to provide for my child. I began reading pilots and screenplays, and putting some of my writing eggs in those baskets, too.

Jessica: Prior to Olivia, I gave my work more than 100% of myself, and I think that looking back it made some of my work not as good as it could’ve been. Now, with this show, I couldn’t give 100% if I wanted to. No matter what, even if Olivia is with Paul in a different room-- some portion of my brain is with them. But now, I think that I do a better 80% than my 100% used to be.

Molly: That’s just it, I used to sit down to write and I would design a playlist of what to listen to while writing. Now I write in the car at a red light, or in the five minutes before Cora comes out of pre-school, or on a napkin in Starbucks while in line. In a weird way, because my life is more compartmentalized, I’m more efficient in those handful of minutes than I was when I had hours. I’m hungrier.

What's your relationship to Manorhaven, and why did you set the play there? And Jess, what is your relationship to the North East, how close to home are these people to you?

Molly: When I first arrived in Port Washington, I was so struck by the shape of the city. It’s one of the most affluent zipcodes in the whole country because of Sands Point, the part of the city that is up on the cliff. There are all these big, beautiful mansions up there, and they are literally looking down over Manorhaven, a rental community with some seedy areas. I lived in a beat-up duplex in Manorhaven and I would look up at those Sands Points estates every morning and feel a play brewing. I love to write about class, and here I was living in a visual representation of it.

Jessica: I grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, right on the other side of Lincoln Tunnel from Manhattan, in an area of “New-York-periphery.” It had a big effect on the community I lived in. Montclair is the combination of old money, established multi-generational Italian families, artists and young professionals leaving Manhattan looking for more space and families leaving Newark for safer neighborhoods and a good public school system. Class was a huge part of my everyday experience as a result of growing up there. It was only in hindsight, when I was in more homogeneous environments, that I realized how important that experience was to shaping who I am today.

What's your best parent fail moment story?

Jessica: When Olivia was 12 days old, Paul had to go out of town for work and my parents were in to help out. We were rushing to get out of the house and everytime we put Olivia into the carseat she would scream like she was being murdered. Paul had figured out that if he swung the seat on his forearm a few times she would settle down, so I instructed my dad to swing the carseat back and forth like a pendulum. Which worked, but I had just fed her and between the swinging back and forth and the full stomach, we basically gave her motion sickness and she projectile vomited all over everything. That was definitely one of those, we broke the baby moments.

Molly: So, in general, I have a fairly bad mouth. I don’t curse like a sailor, but it’s pretty bad. Anyway, I have since cleaned up my language completely, but when Cora was 2, I had a gigantic parent fail. When I picked her up from nursery school, the teacher informed me that Cora had announced in class that she had a “shart” in her diaper. The teacher was trying to be so sweet about it, too, saying, “We just wanted to make you aware, Cora did use the word “shart” today.” I was mortified. I mean, she only knew four words total. Milk, Dog, Mommy, Shart. It was definitely my fault.

What’s the best piece of advice you got as a new parent?

Molly: When I had Cora, my best friend told me: “Don’t worry, it can wait.” And when I said, “What can wait?” she said, “Everything!” It’s advice I tried to take to heart. I tried to snuggle with Cora and ignore the world for as long as possible. It did wait.

Jessica: That’s going to pay off in dividends; I mean you made that person into a person. You want to make the time to help her become someone special. A friend also told me once “When the baby cries, don’t immediately go. Give them a second, they might settle themselves.” which sounds so counterintuitive, because you want to be this good parent who will run immediately. But ultimately this advice is about self-reliance and fortitude. Having a daughter, I really want Olivia to be her own person, who trusts herself, and is capable, and doesn’t always need to look to someone else to solve her problems.
LAURA LAPIDUS
(Lina) previously appeared at the North Shore Center as Daphna in Theater Wit's Bad Jews. She later reprised the role in other productions at DC’s Studio Theatre and New Jersey’s George Street Playhouse. Other credits include Stay Lit (Steppenwolf LookOut Series); Balm in Gilead, Golden Boy, Port (Griffin Theatre); The Seagull (The Artistic Home); Pains of Youth (Odradek/Oracle); and breaks & bikes (Pavement Group). Film/Television: Chicago PD, The Two (co-writer, producer). She holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Michigan. Laura is the winner of a 2018-19 Fulbright Award and will pursue a Masters in Classical Acting at LAMDA this fall. This one is for Ghita.

DARCI NALEPA
(Jessie) is thrilled to be working with this stellar team at Northlight Theatre. She is a proud ensemble member of The Gift Theatre where she has appeared in A Swell in the Ground, A Life Extra Ordinary, and Good for Otto. Other Chicago credits include: Queen (Victory Gardens), Kill Floor (American Theatre Company), Northanger Abbey (Remy Bumpoo), and The Drunken City (Steppenwolf). Darci appeared in Stephen Cone’s film Henry Gamble’s Birthday Party and is the co-creator of the upcoming web series The Force. Television credits include Patriot, Shameless and Chicago Fire. She is a graduate of The School at Steppenwolf and proudly works as an Instructor at Black Box Acting. Darci is represented by Gray Talent Group. For Cyd, Sarah-Jayne, and Robin.

GABRIEL RUIZ
(Mitchell) A proud ensemble member of Teatro Vista, Chicago credits include You Got Older, The Rembrandt, The Way West, How Long Will I Cry? and The Motherfucker with the Hat (Steppenwolf); Native Gardens (Victory Gardens); Agamemnon and Man in the Ring (Court); Arcadia and Company (Writers); City of Angels and Singin’ in the Rain (Marriott); The Upstairs Concierge (Goodman); The Wolf at the End of the Block and White Tie Ball (Teatro Vista); Creditor (Remy Bumpoo); Sita Ram (Chicago Children’s Choir); Working: The Musical (Broadway Playhouse); Richard III and Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Chicago Shakespeare) and Arabian Nights (Lookingglass). His regional credits include Native Gardens (Cincinnati Playhouse), Harvey (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre), Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them (Forward Theatre Company), and Blood and Gifts (Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York). He has composed music and lyrics for Don Chipotle performed at DCASE, and Epic Tale of Scale for Chicago Children’s Theater. He has appeared on television in Boss, APB, Electric Dreams, Chicago Fire, Chicago Justice, and Chicago PD.

KRISTINA VALADA-VIARS
(Adrienne) is a theatre artist living in Chicago. As an actor and director, her work has been primarily devoted to new work development and first and second productions of new American plays. Most recently, she was seen in Steppenwolf for Young Audience’s production of The Crucible, the independent web series The Force, and served as Assistant Director on
**MOLLY SMITH METZLER** (Playwright) is a Los Angeles-based playwright and screenwriter. Her plays -- which include *Cry It Out, Elemeno Pea, The May Queen,* *Carve, Close Up Space,* and *Training Wisteria* -- have been produced across the country and Off-Broadway. Metzler’s awards include the Lecomte du Nouy Prize from Lincoln Center, the National Student Playwriting Award and Mark Twain Comedy Prize from The Kennedy Center, and, most recently, a 2018 ATCA/Steinberg New Play Award Citation for *Cry It Out.* Metzler is an alum of the Ars Nova Play Group and the Dorothy Strelsin Writers Group at Primary Stages in NY. Her television credits include *Casual* (Hulu), *Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix), *Codes of Conduct* (HBO), and *Shameless* (Showtime), where she is currently a writer/producer. In film, Metzler wrote the adaptation of Ali Benjamin’s award-winning novel *The Thing About Jellyfish,* which was just acquired by Universal, and is currently writing films for Fox and Disney. Metzler was educated at SUNY Geneseo, Boston University, New York University’s Tisch School for the Arts, and The Juilliard School. She is a member of the LA Writers Workshop at Center Theatre Group, where she’s working on new plays for South Coast Rep and Manhattan Theatre Club.

**ANDREW BOYCE** (Scenic Design) Chicago: Goodman, Writers, American Theater Company, Victory Gardens.
New York: Lincoln Center Theater, Roundabout, Primary Stages, Atlantic Theater Company, Playwrights Realm, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance, etc. Regional: Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theatre, American Players, Alliance.
Baltimore Centerstage, Long Wharf, Mark Taper Forum, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare Theater, Portland Center Stage, and Yale Repertory Theater, among many others. MFA, Yale School of Drama. Currently Assistant Professor of Set Design at Northwestern University. www.andrewboycedesign.com

STEPHANIE CLUGGISH (Costume Design) Chicago: Stories and Songs of Chicago (Lyric Opera Unlimited); T. (American Theatre Company); The Firebirds Take the Field, Winter (Rivendell); Marry Me a Little (Porchlight); Betrayal (Raven); Good for Otto (The Gift); In the Penal Colony (Chicago Fringe Opera); Posh (Steed). Regional: The Marriage of Figaro (Wolffrap Opera); Carmen, The Magic Flute, The Rake’s Progress (Music Academy of the West). Assistant/Associate: Sweeney Todd (Kansas City Rep); Trevor (Writers); A Funny Thing... (MUNY); The Year I didn’t Go to School (Children’s Theatre); Rusalka (Metropolitan Opera); Out of Shadowland (Disney Tokyo Sea); Mary Page Marlowe, East of Eden (Steppenwolf); The White Snake (Goodman, Old Globe, Guthrie). Proud member of USA829; MFA from Northwestern University. stephanie-cluggish.com

PAUL TOBEN (Lighting Design) Chicago: The Mystery of Love and Sex (Writers), Electra (Court), The Firebirds Take the Field (Rivendell). Regional: Angels in America Parts 1 and 2, Peter and the Starcatcher and many more (Actors Theatre of Louisville); five seasons of the Humana Festival including Evocation to Visible Appearance, Airmen, The Grown-Up, and The Roommate; NSFW (Roundhouse); Silent Sky, Triangle, Outright Grand (TheatreWorks); Fly by Night, Medea, School for Wives (Dallas Theater Center); The Who and the What (Kansas City Rep); Daddy Long Legs (New York, regional and international premieres); Another Way Home (The Magic Theatre); and Caravan Man, Demon Dreams (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Broadway: The Story of My Life. Off-Broadway: The Judy Show (DR2), Saturn Nights (Incubator Arts Project), Electra in a One Piece and The Realm (The Wild Project), The Redheaded Man (Fringe Encores) and many more. www.paultoben.com.

KEVIN O’DONNELL (Sound Design) is thrilled be back at Northlight where previous credits include The Legend of Georgia McBride, Miss Bennet, You Can’t Take It With You, The Lady with All the Answers, and Inherit the Wind. As a composer and sound designer he has received 10 Jeff Awards (20 nominations), and is a company member with The House Theatre. Locally he has worked with Steppenwolf, Chicago Shakespeare, Lookingglass, Court, and many others. Regionally: The Pasadena Playhouse, The Southern Rep, Le Petite Theatre, The Seattle Rep, The Signature Theatre, The Olney Theatre Center, The Adrienne Arscht Center of Miami, and others. He is also a drummer.

RITA VREELAND (Production Stage Manager) is proud to continue her 11th season at Northlight where she is fortunate to have been the stage manager for 29 productions as well as two trips to Galway. Recent credits elsewhere in the Chicagoland area include productions at Theatre at the Center (Munster, IN), Victory Gardens, Route 66 Theatre Company, Goodman, and the annual Christmas Schooner at the Mercury Theater. She is the proud wife of actor Tom Hickey and mom to five-year-old Charlie, and has been a member of Actors’ Equity for over 17 years. Thank you for supporting live theatre!

BJ JONES (Artistic Director) is in his 20th season as Artistic Director of Northlight. Mr. Jones is a two-time Joseph Jefferson Award Winning actor and a three-time nominated director. He has directed the world premieres of Relativity, Funnyman, Faceless, Charm, White Guy on the Bus, Stella & Lou, The Outgoing Tide, Better Late, and Rounding Third. Notably he has directed productions of Outside Mullingar, Grey Gardens, The Price, The Odd Couple, A Life, and The Beauty Queen of Leenane. As a producer he has guided the world premieres of Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, Shining Lives, The Last Five Years, The Gamester, and Studs Terkel’s ‘The Good War’. Additional directorial credits include: Pitmen Painters (Timeline); 100 Saints You Should Know (Steppenwolf); Glengarry Glen Ross (Alliance Theatre, Atlanta); The Lady with All the Answers (Cherry Lane, New York); Animal Crackers (Baltimore Center Stage); Three Musketeers, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing (Utah Shakespeare Festival), and four productions at the Galway International Arts Festival. As a performer, he has appeared at Northlight, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court, and other theatres throughout Chicago. Film/TV credits include The Fugitive, Body Double, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Early Edition, Cupid, and Turks, among others.

TIMOTHY J. EVANS (Executive Director) leads Northlight Theatre’s overall strategic, management and long-range initiatives. Prior to his arrival at Northlight, Tim spent over 20 years at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in management and producing positions. He created, curated and produced Steppenwolf’s acclaimed TRAFFIC Series including a partnership with Chicago Public Radio for subsequent broadcasts. Tim founded Steppenwolf Films, of which he is still a partner with Gary Sinise, Terry Kinney and Jeff Perry, to develop film and television projects. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the League of Chicago Theatres and on the theater selection panel for the Princess Grace Foundation Awards. He also serves on the USA selection committee for The Eisenhower Fellows, Philadelphia, PA. Previously, Tim served on the board of the Independent Film Project (IFP) and was a charter member of the Governor’s Task Force for Media Development.

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Monday, May 22
2:00-3:00pm
at Wilmette Public Library
1242 Wilmette Ave, Wilmette, IL

Wednesday, May 30
10:30-11:30am
at Highland Park Public Library
494 Laurel Ave, Highland Park, IL

FREE and open to the public. Info at northlight.org/events

Engage with Audience Events

Cry It Out explores issues such as the dilemma of staying home versus returning to work, parental expectations placed on women versus men, the impact of social class on parenthood, and more. Join us for discussion and Q&A on the greater context of the play with artists related to the production.

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2:00-3:00pm
at Wilmette Public Library
1242 Wilmette Ave, Wilmette, IL

Wednesday, May 30
10:30-11:30am
at Highland Park Public Library
494 Laurel Ave, Highland Park, IL

FREE and open to the public. Info at northlight.org/events
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Emily Meister

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THE NORTH SHORE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS IN SKOKIE opened in 1996 and operates as part of the Village of Skokie’s plan to provide cultural, and educational programs, benefiting the citizens of Skokie and the surrounding communities.

IN CONSIDERATION OF OTHER PATRONS
• Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

• Please turn off your cell phones and refrain from using them during the show. They are distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.

• Assisted listening headsets are available in both North Shore Center theatres. A valid driver’s license, state ID or major credit card will be requested. A T-coil amplification system is installed in the Northlight Theatre for those that have a compatible hearing aid. Please see the house manager for assistance.

• Lost and Found: please call (847) 679-9501 ext. 3202 for lost items.