Wichita Repertory Theater
Presents

RED VELVET

by Lolita Chakrabarti

November 13-22, 2026
Fridays & Saturdays @ 7:30 p.m.
Sundays @ 2:00 p.m.

Performed at
The Fisch Haus
524 S. Commerce Street

Julie Longhofer
Artistic Director

ICTREP
Wichita Repertory Theater

presents

Stan Longhofer
Managing Director

RED VELVET

by Lolita Chakrabarti

STAGE MANAGER
ABBY LOWE

COSTUME DESIGN
JULIE LONGHOFER

LIGHTING DESIGN
STAN LONGHOFER

SOUND DESIGN
KIRK LONGHOFER

SCENIC DESIGN
JULIE LONGHOFER

TECHNICAL DIRECTION
STAN LONGHOFER

INTIMACY DIRECTOR
ABBY LOWE

DIRECTED BY
JULIE LONGHOFER

RED VELVET is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.
www.concordtheatricals.com

RED VELVET

by Lolita Chakrabarti

Cast of Characters

in order of appearance

Casimir	**JAMES EARLYWINE**
Halina	**LYDIA PIRILLI**
Terence	**NICK WETTA**
Ira Aldridge	**TOREY WILSON**
Connie	**JENEÉ JENKINS SAFFOLD**
Betty Lovell	**LYDIA PIRILLI**
Henry Forester	**JAMES EARLYWINE**
Bernard Ward	**NICK WETTA**
Charles Kean	**BRADEN LABRUE-LAYMAN**
Ellen Tree	**JILL NICOLE HERBERT**
Pierre LaPorte	**CHRIS SHARKEY**
Margaret Aldridge	**KEELEY COON**

SETTING

Backstage at Paradyż Theater (Łódź , Poland), 1867 & Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London, 1833

There will be a 10-minute intermission

CAST



TOREY WILSON

Ira Aldridge

Torey is excited to be back on the ICTRep stage! Torey would love to thank first and foremost God for giving him the passion and abilities to perform, and his beautiful fiancé Keeley Jean and the opportunity to share the stage with her again, playing her husband. He would love to dedicate this performance to his mama and grandma, two of the strongest Black people he knows. This is an important story to tell in many ways. This is a moment to look at the people around you and understand that as humans, we are more similar than we think. Enjoy the show.



Aldridge as Shylock



Aldridge as Macbeth



Aldridge as King Lear





NICK WETTA

Terrence/Bernard Ward

Nick (he/him) is so excited to make his ICTRep debut! You may recognize him from various performances around Wichita, including *Newsies* (Music Theatre Wichita), *Butch Cassidy and the Can't Dance Kid* (Mosley Street Melodrama), or *Rocky Horror* and *Once* (Roxy's Downtown). He would like to thank this amazing cast and crew as well as his partner, Gretchen, for her unending support. He hopes you enjoy the show!



JAMES EARLYWINE

Casimir/Henry Forester

James (he/him) is an actor-musician from Paola, KS. ICTRep acting credits include: *The Explorer's Club*, *Travesties*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *The Old Man & The Old Moon*. Other recent acting credits include: *The Tempest*, *Echoes of the Sea*, *Tecumseh!* (Sugarloaf Mountain Amphitheatre), *Macbeth*, *Misery* (Pipe Dreams Studio Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Holy Chicken Sandwich*, *Clybourne Park* (Millikin University), and *Stupid F##king Bird* (Wichita State University). Recent directing credits include: *Gaslight* (ICTRep), *The Nightmare Story* (PDST), Sleuth (ICTRep-A/D), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Empty Space Theatre-A/D). James would like to thank Julie and Stan Longhofer, Leslie Coats, and his parents for their amazing support. Education: BFA-Acting, Music Minor, Millikin University. Instagram: @James_earlywine

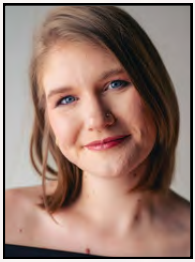


LYDIA PIRILLI

Halina/Betty Lovell

Lydia is happy to be back for her fifth show with ICTRep, most recently appearing in *Silent Sky*. You may also recognize her from other theaters around town, including her recent performance as Maria in *The Sound of Music* with the Guild Hall Players. By day, Lydia is a speech-language pathologist, working with adults on voice and communication. Many thanks to the effervescent Julie, Stan, Sir Lionel, cast and crew, and YOU for supporting live theater!

Assistive listening for this performance is available through an Auracast™ feed. Look for the "ICTRep" feed in your Auracast™ compatible device.



JILL NICOLE HERBERT

Ellen Tree

Jill is delighted to be back on the ICTRep stage as Ellen Tree in *Red Velvet*. Recent credits include Henrietta Leavitt in *Silent Sky* (ICTRep), Grace Richards in *Into the Breeches* (Wichita Community Theatre), Cecily in *Travesties* (ICTRep), Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (ICTRep), and Gabriella in *Boeing Boeing* (ICTRep). When she's not onstage, Jill works as a graphic designer, happily embracing creativity in all its forms. She is especially excited to be performing alongside such talented castmates and is grateful for the opportunity to help bring this story to life.



Ellen Tree Kean



BRADEN LABRUE-LAYMAN

Charles Kean

Braden is an actor/comic in Wichita. He has performed at numerous theatres around the Wichita area, including Kechi Playhouse, Guild Hall Players, Wichita Community Theatre, and the Empire House Players in Cowtown! He is known in the community for his comedic presence in shows such as *Puffs* (Cedric and Mr. Voldy), *Lend Me a Soprano* Jerry Wiley), and *Charlie's Aunt* (Lord Fancourt Babberly). Now, he is excited to make his debut with the ICTRep as Charles Kean in ***Red Velvet***!



Charles Kean



Charles Kean and Ellen Tree Kean



CHRIS SHARKEY

Pierre LaPorte

Chris is delighted to return to ICTRep after having played the role of Count Johann Kilian von Strack in *Amadeus* last year. He is an active member of the Wichita performing arts community; a few highlights include Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* (Kechi Playhouse), Ernst Ludwig in *Cabaret* (Roxy's Downtown), Carleton Fitzgerald in *Light up the Sky* (Wichita Community Theatre), and Mike in *Wait Until Dark* (Prairie Pines). Many thanks to the cast and crew and to you for supporting live theater!



JENEÉ JENKINS SAFFOLD

Connie

Jeneé is an attorney by day and lover of all things theater by night. You may have seen her in the original stage play *Witnesses* with Guild Hall Players or as the Clerk of the Court in ICTRep's *Witness for the Prosecution*. Most recently, she was Cynthia in *Sweat* with ICTRep. She loves spending time with her family, getting lost in a good book, or bingeing the latest Netflix drama, sci-fi, or fantasy series. Thank you for supporting local theater!



KEELEY COON

Margaret Aldridge

Keeley is delighted to be making her professional debut at ICTRep. Her favorite educational roles have been Katherine Plumber in *Disney's Newsies*, Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls*, and Cinderella in *Into the Woods*. She holds degrees in Music Education (K-12 Instrumental/ Vocal) and in Musical Theatre Performance. She currently teaches K-12 music and theatre at a rural Kansas school. She would like to thank her amazing fiancé, Torey, friends/family, and Jesus above all. Ephesians 5:19–21.
Instagram: @keeley.jean.mc



Margaret Gill Aldridge



Amanda Aldridge



Amanda Brandt Aldridge

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

There are good reasons why people are fascinated with the story of Jesse Owens or Jackie Robinson, Marian Anderson or Mae Jemison, Hattie McDaniel or Katherine Johnson. Everyone knows the experience of accomplishing something for the first time – **something very challenging, something which had real obstacles to success.** Obstacles and challenges are part of all human stories, but when people of color, women, and other marginalized or disenfranchised individuals break through obstacles to become 'The First' to achieve something monumental, we have the opportunity to learn unique lessons. Red Velvet is a play about many things, including how a Black actor (an American, no less!) broke through established barriers in the professional performance of Shakespeare plays. Ira Aldridge's achievements are not well known. This is in part because his native country never had any interest in his genius and in part because political opponents to the abolition of the slave trade made it so that Aldridge's artistry (though applauded by audiences) was disparaged by the press.

I have read this play and watched it unfold dozens of times in rehearsal, and it is still a revelation to me. Ira's story reveals **how great was his talent and his courage and how uncompromising was his dedication to the theater.** More than that, parts of his story clearly demonstrate the racial prejudice which tried to erase him from the history of the theater – in particular, the suspiciously catastrophic fire at The African Grove Theater in Manhattan (1823) and the callous smear campaign printed against him in the British press in 1833 – and these true events will always be quite shocking to me.

Aldridge was much more than "the first Black man" to perform Shakespearean heroes on a professional stage. **He was an innovator who – at least in part because he was an outsider – created his own style of acting.** This was no imitation of Irving or Kemble or Kean or Booth. And the visceral, realistic way which Aldridge performed is a harbinger of the revolutionaries who would create modern theater practices at the turn of the century (Saxe-Meiningen, Ibsen, Chekhov, Stanislavski).

Groundbreaking Authentic Art is often a legitimate arbiter of how well – or how poorly – a society treats its marginalized groups. For Ira, through his daughters Luranah and Amanda, had next-generation connections to the great Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, and thus his legacy continues to inspire unfettered achievement of Black artists. **Now that you know Ira's story, we invite you to share it and celebrate it.**

~ Dr. Julie Longhofer





Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden.

COMPLETE SUCCESS!!!

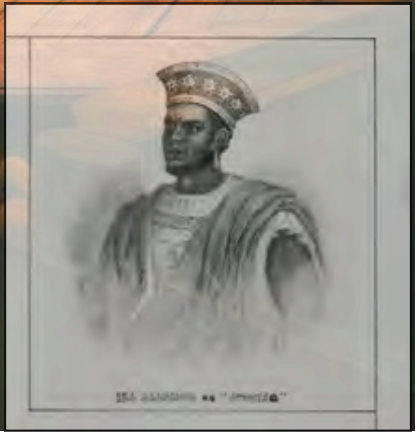
This present WEDNESDAY. April 10, 1833,

Will be performed SHAKSPEARE's Tragedy of

OTHELLO.

The Duke of Venice, Mr. RANSFORD,
Brabantio, Mr. DIDDEAR. Gratiano, Mr. TURNOUR,
Lodovico, Mr. PAYNE. Montano, Mr. HAINES,
Othello by Mr. ALDRIDGE,
(A NATIVE OF SENEGAL,
Known by the appellation of the AFRICAN ROSCIUS.
who has been received with great applause at the Theatres Royal, *Dublin, Edinburgh, Bath,* and most of the principal provincial Theatres,
His First Appearance on this Stage.
Cassio, Mr. ABBOTT,
Iago, - Mr. WARDE,
Roderigo, Mr. FORESTER, Antonio, Mr. IRWIN, Julio, Mr. Matthews
Giovanni, Mr. J. COOPER, Luca, Mr. BRADY, Lorenzo Mr. Bender
Messenger Mr MEARS, Marco Mr Collet, Cosmo Mr Heath, Paolo Mr Stanley
Desdemona, - Miss E. TREE,
Emilia, Mrs. LOVELL.





CREATIVES



Lolita Chakrabarti

Playwright

Lolita Chakrabarti is an award winning Actress and Writer. She has worked extensively as an actress on stage and screen. An actor, playwright, and theatrical producer, Chakrabarti's debut play, *Red Velvet* (2012), won the Evening Standard Theatre Award for Most Promising Playwright and The Critics' Circle Award. She also wrote the acclaimed stage adaptation of *Life of Pi*, which won five Olivier Awards in 2022 and three Tony Awards in 2023 and adapted Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2023. Chakrabarti runs Lesata Productions alongside her husband Adrian Lester and Rosa Maggiora.



KIRK LONGHOFER

Sound Design

Kirk is a theatrical sound designer, editor, producer and live engineer who has been playing with sounds and sound systems since the age of 12. He is so pleased to be back home at ICTRep! Kirk's theatrical designs are heard in more than 100 academic, community, and professional theaters around the world each year. Recent theatrical credits include *And Then There Were None* (Lyceum Theatre, MO), *Tenderly, The Rosemary Clooney Story* (Theatre Silco, CO), *The Play that Goes Wrong* (White Theatre, KC), *Wait Until Dark* (Maples Repertory Theatre, MO), *The Explorers Club*, and *Gaslight* here at ICTRep!



ABBY LOWE

Stage Manager & Intimacy Director

Abby (she/her) is an actress from Peoria, Illinois. Recent credits: *Gaslight* (ICTRep), *The Little Mermaid* (Arclight Productions), *Cinderella* (Choreographer-Arc Light Productions), *The Grown Ups* (Pipe Dreams Studio Theatre), *The Tempest* (Millikin University), *Everybody Rocks Rocks Rocks* (Stage Manager-Millikin University), *God of Carnage* (Illinois Central College), *Women Playing Hamlet* (Stage Manager-Illinois Central College), *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (Illinois Central College). Abby would like to thank her friends and family for their never-ending support. Education: Associates in Arts-Illinois Central College, BFA Acting-Millikin University.

MANAGEMENT TEAM



DR. JULIE LONGHOFER, Artistic Director

Costume & Scenic Design

Julie earned her MA/PhD in dramatic literature & theater history from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1995. For almost 40 years, she has served as stage director, costume designer, actor, and dramaturg (literary analyst). Julie has taught hundreds of teenagers and college students how to be stronger theater artists.

In 2023, Julie took on the role of Artistic Director for Wichita Repertory Theater (ICTRep). Her vision is for a regional theater company which (1) finds the best comedies, serious plays and thrillers of literary merit, (2) uses regional talent to produce the highest quality plays in terms of acting and production values, and (3) connects deeply with Wichita audience members from all walks of life.

This is her philosophical approach in all she does:

- Live theater is a love letter from ***The Playwright*** to ***The Actors*** for ***The Audience.***
- Live theater should be a cohesive and thought-provoking experience for its community.
- *"Dramatically Good"* is more than just a tagline for us. Our creative teams are doing their best work while challenging themselves to a new level of artistic excellence so that our audiences are emotionally moved in a memorable way.



STAN LONGHOFER, Managing Director

Lighting Design, Technical Direction

As Managing Director, Stan oversees all of ICTRep's business operations. He is also the company's resident technical director and frequent lighting and scenic designer. Recent scenic design work includes *Gaslight*, *The Explorers Club*, *Sweat*, *A Jukebox for the Algonquin*, *Witness for the Prosecution* (ICTRep), and *Lend Me a Soprano* (WCT). Favorite past lighting designs include *Gaslight*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson - Apt. 2B*, *Travesties* (ICTRep), *Light Up the Sky* (WCT), and *The Cover of Life* (Guild Hall).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Nina Longhofer, Keeley Coon, Jill Harper
Skyler Lewis & Elizabeth Stevenson with the Fisch Haus

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ICTRep gratefully acknowledges the City of Wichita for general operational support.

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SUPPORT ICTREP

Ticket sales cover only 38 percent of ICTRep's expenses. As a result, the memorable theatrical experiences we create wouldn't be possible without the support of generous individuals, corporations, foundations, and governmental arts programs. Thanks for helping us hire actors and creatives, create costumes and scenery, rent light/sound equipment and interesting venues, and bring Wichitans together for great theater!

Scan to read our 2025 year-end report.

Giving and In-Kind Donationsbetween May 2025 and November 2026

Diamond ($5,000+)

Brian L. Johns & Michael S. Owings
Kansas Arts Commission
Colby Sandlian
Anita Jones
Julie & Stan Longhofer
City of Wichita
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Platinum ($2,500-$4,999)

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The Trust Company of Kansas

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Helene Longhofer

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THE ASTONISHING IRA ALDRIDGE

Ira Aldridge, a Black American, was one the greatest and most celebrated Shakespearean actors of the 19th Century. In a career that spanned five decades, he played the great Shakespearean roles and was decorated multiple times by the crowned heads of Europe.

Most Americans have never heard his name. Perhaps as he becomes more well known, that will be corrected – for among theater's 19th century talents, he was as great as (if not greater than) Booth, Keane, Irving and Terry. He had an astonishing life, not only as an actor, but as a theatrical innovator and an activist.

Born in New York in 1807 (at the height of the Atlantic Slave Trade) Ira attended the African Free School in New York City, established for children of slaves and free people of color by Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. He received a classical education there and got his start in acting at **the African Grove Theatre, the first theater troupe to be founded by free Blacks (William Brown and James Hewlett), performing theater for free Blacks.** After three years of creative work, the company disbanded after their building was burned to the ground under suspicious circumstances in 1823.

Aldridge perceived that he could not have a career as an actor in America and so he emigrated to Great Britain, long before the start of the Civil War. He was 17 years old.

After studying briefly in Glasgow, Aldridge began performing in the English provinces. He first played Black-only characters, but then he moved on to a variety of Shakespearean roles.

A real-life tragedy ultimately became a turning point in Aldridge's career when the eminent British Shakespearean Edmund Kean, collapsed on stage while playing Othello (in blackface); Kean would die several weeks later. Aldridge, who had played the role in the provinces, was asked to replace Kean by Theater-Royal, Covent Garden's Manager Pierre LaPorte. **Doing this, Aldridge became the first Black actor to play Othello on the professional London Stage.** Most historians agree that audiences were thrilled by his performance, but articles in the British press (probably prompted by political opponents to the ban of the Slave Trade in Parliament) tore his performance to shreds.

An innovation that Aldridge introduced early in his career was a direct address to the audience on the closing night of his engagement at a given theatre. In the years leading up to the emancipation of all slaves in the British colonies in 1832, he would come on stage after the curtain call and speak to the audience as himself. The lines below are an excerpt from his quite longer speech (all in iambic pentameter) on the injustice of slavery:

Through deserts wide the Negro strays alone
In happy innocence, untaught, unknown...
But soon the white man comes, allured by gain –
O'er his free limbs flings slavery's galling chain
Transforms him to a brute.

In 1852 Aldridge started touring continental Europe. He was a sensation, performing in Russia, Hungary, and Prussia, Austria and Switzerland, among other countries. He performed Othello, Macbeth, Lear, and Shylock (the latter roles in whiteface).

Aldridge received the Prussian Gold Medal for Arts and Sciences from King Frederick William III, the Golden Cross of Leopold from the Czar of Russia, and the Maltese Cross from Bern, Switzerland. He performed Othello in Russia and was lionized, earning more money than any Russian actor. One Russian critic said that the evenings on which he saw Aldridge's Othello, Lear, Shylock and Macbeth "were undoubtedly the best I have ever spent in the theatre." **"After Aldridge," wrote another, "it is impossible to see Othello performed by a white actor, even Garrick himself."**

Aldridge wed a white Englishwoman, Margaret Gill, and they were married 40 years until her death in 1864. His second marriage was to Amanda Brandt, a Swedish-born opera singer. Two of Aldridge's daughters, Luranah and Amanda had careers in opera; Amanda was also a voice teacher and taught the great American singer Marian Anderson and the actor Paul Robeson.

Although he planned a 100-show tour of the post Civil War U.S., he died in Poland in 1867 of pneumonia. **Ira Aldridge is the only African American to have a bronze plaque among the 33 actors honored at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon.**

– Stephen Legawiec

stephenlegawiec.com
February 2021

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