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## **Near West Theatre Shares a Fresh Perspective on a Contemporary Classic - The Last Five Years**

### ***Community theatre puts a modern twist on this heart-wrenching musical of love and loss to Gordon Square***

CLEVELAND – August 15, 2023 – Get ready to experience a powerful, intimate tale of a relationship between two artists in “The Last Five Years,” as it makes its way to Near West Theatre (NWT) to be featured in the round in its Blackbox Theatre. The musical runs two weekends from September 15 through September 24, 2023, at the theatre’s building in the heart of the Gordon Square Arts District.

“The Last Five Years,” written by Tony Award-winning composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown, is a poignant exploration of the intricacies of love, trauma, rejection, and the passage of time. The show’s unique narrative structure unfolds the story of Jamie and Cathy, a young couple navigating the challenges of their five-year relationship where Cathy’s perspective is told in reverse chronological order and Jamie’s is told chronologically.

However, unlike traditional interpretations of “The Last Five Years,” director Jordan Cooper wanted to cast queer artists to tell this story, giving it a culturally relevant viewpoint while still maintaining the integrity of the original script.

“I was so excited to be approaching this material in a new way because not only is it a beloved piece in the musical theatre canon, it is also a piece everyone in the world can relate to – we’ve all experienced the feelings of love and loss,” Cooper said. “By bringing queer voices to this story it not only offers a fresh perspective to the piece but it also allows a chance to create a new dialogue with a new generation of people.”

“I want audiences to walk away with the idea that emotions are a universal human experience, not specific to one sexual orientation,” Cooper continues. “I’m not happy and gay; I’m just happy. I’m not sad and straight; I’m just sad. That is something that can actually bring us together.”

The musical runs two weekends through September 24, 2023. Pay What You Choose tickets are available. Standard tickets are \$20. Tickets are available at [nearwesttheatre.org](http://nearwesttheatre.org) or by calling the Box Office at 216-961-6391 on weekdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theater, constructed as part of the Gordon Square Arts District capital campaign, is at 6702 Detroit Avenue. The facility is a state-of-the-art, ADA-compliant building that is climate controlled and fully accessible by wheelchair.

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### ***About Near West Theatre***

Near West Theatre builds loving relationships and engages diverse people in strengthening their sense of identity, passion, and purpose, individually and in community, through accessible, affordable, and transformational theatre arts experiences. Since 1978, Near West Theatre has been shaping, changing, and saving the lives of children, teens, and adults. The community theater hosts a variety of free community events and free after-school programs to underline its commitment to accessibility for all people. The organization serves people of all ages, but a focus on youth goes back to its founding and continues to this day. [www.nearwesttheatre.org](http://www.nearwesttheatre.org). @nearwesttheatre. NWT is grateful to receive financial support from the Ohio Arts Council and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. For more information, visit [nearwesttheatre.org](http://nearwesttheatre.org) or follow the theatre on Facebook ([facebook.com/nearwesttheatre](https://facebook.com/nearwesttheatre)) and Instagram (@nearwesttheatre).

### **[TOMBSTONE INFO]**

#### **"The Last Five Years"**

*"You and you and nothing but you..."*

*Fall Blackbox Production, Recommended for Ages 16 & up  
Runtime: 90 minutes, No intermission*

Written and Composed by JASON ROBERT BROWN  
Originally produced for the New York stage by Arielle Tepper and Marty Bell  
Originally Produced by Northlight Theatre - Chicago, IL

THE LAST FIVE YEARS  
is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All  
authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

The Last Five Years is rated PG-13. The show contains mature themes related to sexuality and gender, inferred strong language and innuendo, suggestive depictions of intimate acts, and some violence.

Near West Theatre Production Cast

Sarah Blubaugh and Kyla Burks  
u/s Kate League-Weston

Production Staff

Director/Musical Director: Jordan Cooper. Asst. Director/Intimacy Coordinator: Molly Andrews-Hinders. Costume Designer/Props Designer: Vanessa Cook. Technical Director: Perren Hedderson. Asst. Technical Director: Emily Hehnen. Production Manager: Michael Stein. Stage Manager: Julie Billingham. Sound Technician: James Romeo. Artistic Director: Trinidad Snider.

Performance Dates

Fri. September 15 - 7:30 PM

Sat. September 16 - 7:30 PM

Sun. September 17 - 2:00 PM

Fri. September 22 - 7:30 PM

Sat. September 23 - 7:30 PM

Sun. September 24 - 2:00 PM

Suggested Performance Listing

**Near West Theatre**, 6702 Detroit Ave., Cleveland's Gordon Square Arts District. Box Office: 216-961-6391 or [nearwesttheatre.org](http://nearwesttheatre.org). "The Last Five Years" runs **Sept. 15, 16, 22, and 23 at 7:30 p.m.; September 17 and 24 at 2:00 p.m.** General Admission: Standard ticket price: \$20 and Pay What You Choose. "The Last Five Years" is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com).