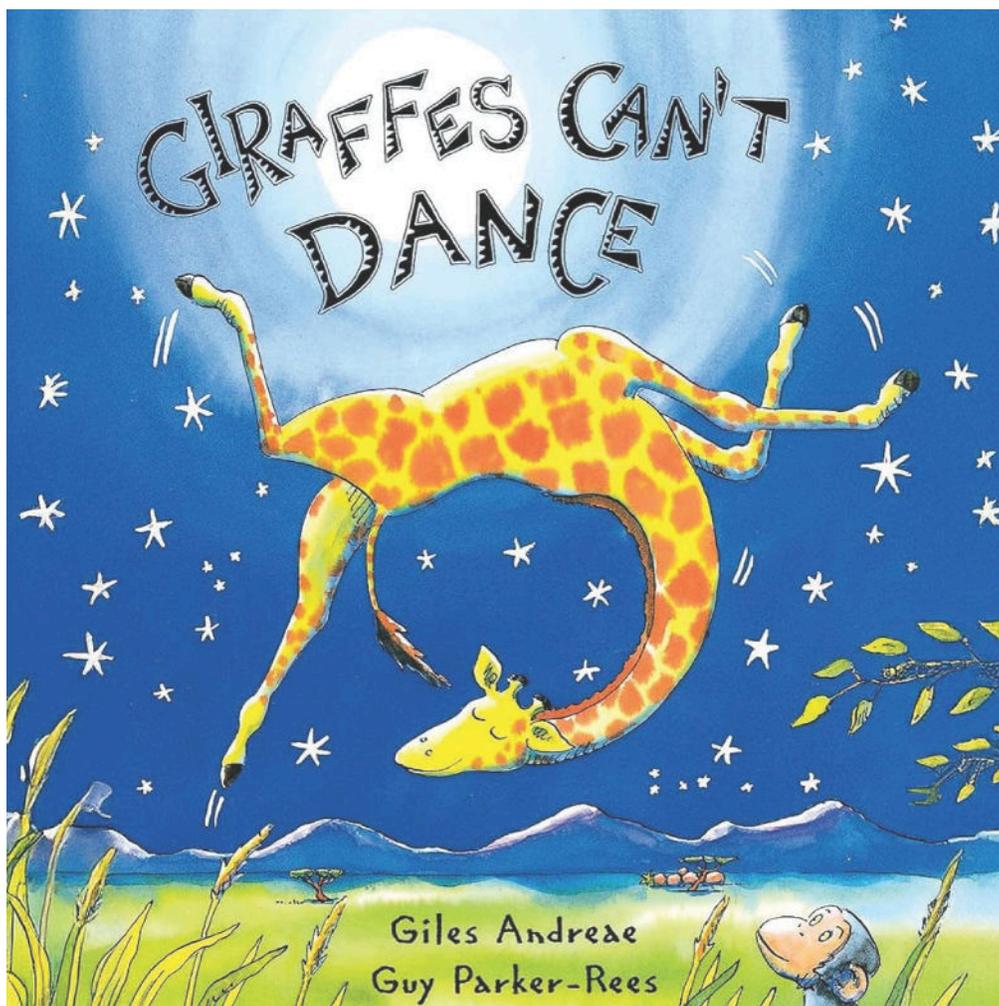


RESOURCE GUIDE



GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

January 23 - February 22, 2026

Book & Lyrics by Gloria Clunie

Music by Elton Bradman & Lila Oleszkiewicz

Based on the book by Giles Andreae and Guy Parker - Rees

Directed by Kymani Kahlil

ABOUT STAGES THEATRE COMPANY



Since our founding in 1984, Stages Theatre Company has put the well-being and growth of youth at the center of everything we do—on stage, backstage, in the audience, and in the classroom. When a youth enters any of our spaces, they are the center of not only why we do what we do, but how we do it.

Through our Productions, our Education Programming, our Fundraising Initiatives, the Development of New Work for the TYA Stage, and our Mentorship Programs we strive to center youth in the stories we tell, the plays we create, the curriculum we develop, the activities we initiate, and the decisions we make. As a company and a community of artists and teachers, the youth and families we serve drive what we do first, last, and always.



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*Photos by
Amy Rondeau Photography*

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Synopsis

Giraffes Can't Dance follows the heartfelt journey of Gerald, a gentle, daydreaming giraffe who longs to dance—even though he can barely walk without tripping. With his knobby knees and wobbly legs, Gerald is painfully aware that he doesn't move like the other animals who live with him on the vibrant West African savanna. As dancers from around the world prepare to gather for the much-anticipated Blue Moon Ball, Gerald is filled with dread. The others—Lion, Monkey, Zebra, Monkey and more—tease him relentlessly, insisting “Giraffes can't dance!” until Gerald begins to believe it himself.

Encouraged by his loyal friend Cricket, Gerald decides to attend the festivities “just to watch.” But at the Djembe Dance Academy, where Elephant leads the community in spirited lessons celebrating global movement—from waltz and salsa to tango, cha-cha, Scottish reel, and traditional African forms—Gerald's attempts end in mishaps and embarrassment. The taunts grow louder, and after a very public stumble, Gerald flees the dance circle in tears, convinced he will never belong.

In a quiet moonlit clearing, Gerald finds comfort in the wise and compassionate Moon, who reminds him that being different doesn't dim your shine. Cricket coaxes Gerald to listen to the rhythms of the earth—the swaying grass, the rustling trees, the pulse of the savanna. Slowly, Gerald discovers his own music: a “different song” that awakens a dancer inside him he never knew existed.

When Gerald returns to the Blue Moon Ball, he dances with breathtaking confidence and originality, astonishing the entire savanna. The animals who mocked him cheer that he is “the best dancer we've ever seen!” and Gerald graciously accepts their praise, sharing the lesson he has learned: “We all can dance—when we find music we love.”

Meet the Creators



Giles Andreae

Author

Award-winning children's author who has written both fiction titles and bestselling picture books, such as PANTS and THE LION WHO WANTED TO LOVE. He has won the Federation of Children's Book Award and the Booktrust Early Years Award, but he is probably most famous as the creator of the phenomenally successful Purple Ronnie, Britain's favourite stick man. Giles Andreae is the author of several children's books, including the best-selling GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees.



Guy Parker-Rees

Illustrator

An internationally best-selling illustrator and author of the Dylan series of books (including DYLAN THE DOCTOR) currently made into an international animation series. He has illustrated many bestselling books, including GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE and BRAVE DAVE by Giles Andreae; SPOOKYRUMPUS, DINOSAURUMPUS!, and ALL AFLOAT ON NOAH'S BOAT by Tony Mitton and many others. He lives in Brighton, England.



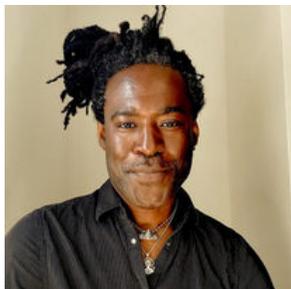
Meet the Creators



Gloria Bond Clunie

Book & Lyrics

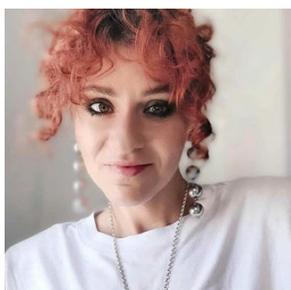
Award-winning playwright, educator, and director. She is a founding member of the Playwriting Ensemble at Chicago's Regional Tony Award-winning Victory Gardens Theater where her plays *North Star*, *Living Green*, and *Shoes* premiered, and the founding Artistic Director of Evanston's Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre. Other works by this Northwestern University graduate (B.A. Theater, MFA-Directing) include *Sweet Water Taste*, *Smoke*, *Quark*, *Bankruptcy*, *My Wonderful Birthday Suit*, and *The Last Stop on Market Street*.



Elton Bradman

Music

2021-2022 composer/sound designer credits include West Coast premieres (*Trayf* at the Geffen Playhouse), audio dramas (Aurora Theater's *The Bluest Eye*), student productions (UC Riverside's *Red Oleanders*), Zoom theater (Actors Theaters' *Romeo & Juliet*: Louisville 2020), podcasts (*Z Space/Word for Word's Retablos* trilogy), filmed theater (San Francisco Playhouse's *Hieroglyph*), hybrid visual/audio (New Conservatory Theater Company's *Interlude*), and outdoor performances (Oakland Theater Project's *The Waste Land*). Other recent adventures include teaching an online undergraduate course in theatrical sound design and co-writing a musical for Bay Area Children's Theater and the Rose Theater in Omaha, Nebraska. Stop by and say hello at eltonsounds.com.



Leela Oleszkiewicz

Music

Composer, songwriter, and vocalist Leela Oleszkiewicz has been a performer since the age of five. Her work as a vocalist has ranged from classical art songs, Polish folk music, and '70s singer-songwriter jams. She is half of synth-pop duo *Basetla*, who released their debut album *Woman on The Run* in 2021. Leela has contributed her piano, composition, and vocal arranging/editing skills to a wide range of projects, including (from *Twelfth Night* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival to *Wives* at Aurora Theater), film (the documentary *A Place to Breathe*), TV (HBO's *The Anarchists*), and musicals (*Covid: The Musical*). Leela was the primary composer for South Coast Repertory's 2022 production of Greg Banks' *Snow White*.

Meet the Characters

Gerald

A clumsy, awkward, thoughtful, uncoordinated, observant and fun loving giraffe.

Cricket

A wise, helpful friend and side-kick to Gerald.

Elephant

Found of the Djembe Academy! Bossy, and a little bit of a diva who loves to dance.



Lion

Leader of the pack, smart and sarcastic.

Monkey

Likes to follow a leader and a smart tech wiz.

Zebra

A prima donna who loves to follow Lion.

The Moon

Magnificent and expressive.

Djembe

A beautiful creature of the Savannah and comments like a talking drum.



A-Z of Dance

Did you know that you can fill the alphabet with different dances from around the world. How many did you know from this list? Can you add to the list?

A	Acro	H	Hip Hop	O	Odissi	V	Vougue
B	Ballet	I	Irish Dance	P	Pambiche	W	Waltz
C	Cha-cha	J	Jingle Dress Dance	Q	Qhapaq Qulla	X	Xaxado
D	Disco	K	Kangeli	R	Rhumba	Y	Yangee
E	Ekizino	L	Latin Dance	S	Sudanese Dance	Z	Zaouli
F	Folk	M	Meke	T	Tap Dance		
G	Geommu	N	New Vogue	U	Uzundra		



A Global Language for Young People

Around the world, young people dance to celebrate, connect, and express who they are.

Long before humans had written language, movement helped communities share feelings and stories. Today, every culture still moves in its own way—shaped by history, beliefs, and daily life. From the energy of West African rhythms to the storytelling of Hula or the precision of ballet, dance allows young people to experience the world through their bodies.

In many ancient cultures, dance emerged from ritual. In Africa, tribes used rhythmic footwork and drumming in ceremonies to connect with ancestors and gods, while in Indigenous cultures, sacred dances like the Ghost Dance or Sun Dance were performed to honor spirits or bring healing.

Dance and movement can also reflect cultural values: Latin American dances like the salsa or tango are passionate, partner-based, and socially driven, whereas East Asian traditions such as a Japanese Noh or Chinese court dances are precise and stylized, reflecting discipline. In other parts of the world, dance can be part of a social identity - in Ireland, step dancing with rapid footwork evolved as both social recreation and national pride. In West Africa, dances differ by tribe and occasion, each with distinct rhythms and meanings.

Although the movements might look different, the purpose of dance is universal and explores how every culture can act as a living history. Dance builds emotional intelligence in children and teens by creating self-awareness through movement, fostering empathy and an understanding of others, and providing an outlet for emotional expression and creativity. The structure and community that dance can bring gives young people a safe place where they can feel seen, heard, and be given a place of grounding and mentorship.

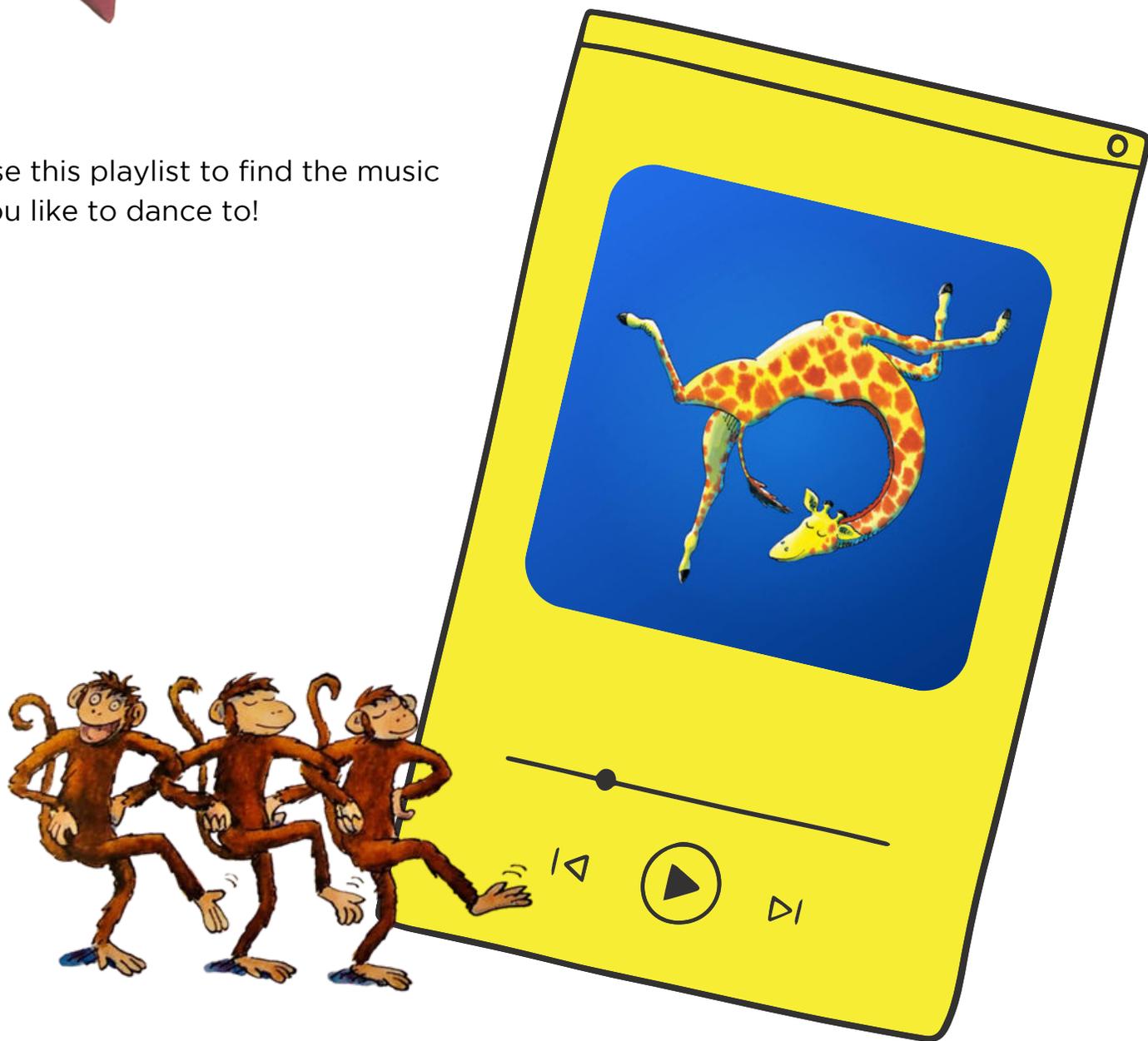
While the way cultures move and use dance is different, it is an incredible tool for communication - both of your own emotions and understanding others!



Songs To Dance To!

[CLICK TO VISIT](#)

Use this playlist to find the music you like to dance to!



Discussion Questions

How do you think Gerald's feelings changed when he heard the cricket's advice? What caused that change?

Why do you think the other animals changed their opinion about Gerald? What can we learn from this about how we treat others?

What advice would you give to Gerald?

What are some unique talents you have that are special to you?



The Power of YET

Write a list of things you CAN do and feel confident in

Write a list of things you can't do YET but would like to get good at

What did you do to feel like you COULD do something?

Pass The Dance Move

Pass the Dance Move is a fun dancing activity that is best for when you have a larger group of children. It is a fun way for kids to practice their memorization skills and is usually best for older children.

To play, one child will start by choosing one dance move. The next child must repeat this move and then add their own, and so on.

The more people you have, the more difficult it gets to remember all the previous dance moves, but that's part of the fun!



Moving Vocabulary

Students learn how to move their bodies as well as their voices to choreograph a series of movements and introduces tempo and rhythm!

Pick a variety of verbs (eg: jump, stumble, twist, bounce, skate, fly, shimmy, glide, slide) and write them on an individual note card. Put all the cards in a container and ask the students to pick a note card.

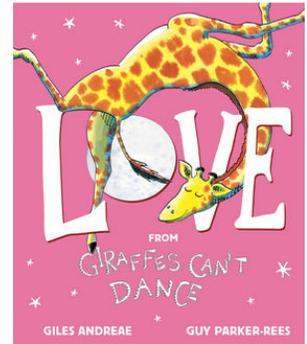
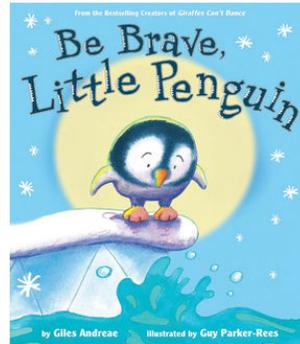
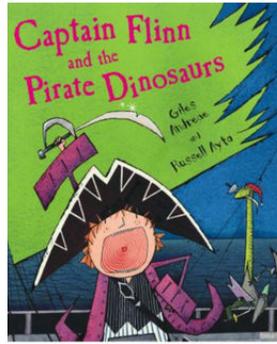
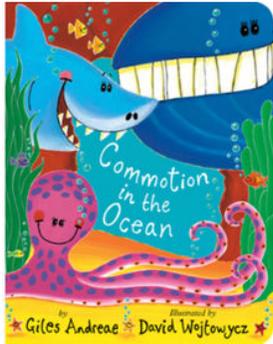
While music is playing, students enter the circle one by one and demonstrate their movement to the group. (You'll notice that the students will keep time with the music as they demonstrate their movement!).

Break them into groups of 4 or 5 and have them put their movements together into a dance; each person must incorporate their movement into the dance. The group can decide the order of movements and must find a way to smoothly transition from one move to another.

Have the groups perform for each other, making sure the movements accompany the tempo of the music! You can repeat the activity, asking them to incorporate their movement twice into the group dance.



Recommended Reading



If you liked *Giraffes Can't Dance*, you might also like the following:

The Gruffalo
by Julia Donaldson

Grumpy Monkey
by Suzanne Lang

Dragons Love Tacos 2: The Sequel
by Adam Rubin and Daniel Salmieri

The Magical Yet
by Angela DiTerlizzi

The Most Magnificent Thing
by Ashley Spires



General Information

Ticket Policy: Ticket orders will not be processed without full payment. We do not issue refunds. Exchanges can be made up to 24 hours prior to a scheduled performance. Exchanges can only be made for another performance of the SAME TITLE. Subject to availability.

Box Office Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. and one hour prior to all performances.

Mainstage: Unless otherwise noted, performances take place in the mainstage theatre. Seating is reserved and begins 30 minutes prior to showtime.

Jaycees Studio: All performances of *Señorita Mariposa*, *When You Trap A Tiger*, and *Tell Me Your Dreams* will be in the Jaycees Studio, a versatile space located in the Hopkins Center for the Arts. Seating is general admission and begins 30 minutes prior to show time. Come early for the most seating options!

Land Acknowledgment

Stages Theatre Company acknowledges with respect and gratitude that the land on which we live and work is the unceded, traditional land of the Dakota Nation. We are committed to learning from the past and critically examining the implications of colonial histories in our day-to-day lives.

To honor the traditional custodians of this land, complimentary tickets to every performance are available specifically for our indigenous community. We hope these resources can move us in taking collective action towards land repatriation.

Please call our box office at (952) 979-1111 to secure these complimentary tickets.



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Accessibility

At Stages Theatre Company we believe that theatre experiences are for everyone! We are working towards a fully inclusive environment where all programs and performances are accessible to all.

Sensory-Friendly Performances

Relaxed performances designed for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder, or others with sensory sensitivities.

American Sign Language (ASL)

Interpreted Performances
American Sign Language interpretation by certified interpreters for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Audio Described (AD) Performances

Audio Description services are intended to enhance the understanding of and access to visual information, primarily for but not limited to people who are blind or have low vision.

Pay What You Can Performances (PWYC)

These performances have no minimum price, and patrons are asked to “pay what you can” the day of the show to support the theatre’s programming.

Open Door Program

The Open Door Program provides free and reduced-cost tickets, bus subsidies, and tuition assistance to families, schools, and social service agencies. An application and further information can be found on our website: stages theatre.org/access

Additional Services Available

- Assisted Listening Devices are available for all Stages Theatre Company’s Mainstage productions.
- Wheelchair Accessible Seating is available at every Stages Theatre Company performance.
- Accessible Parking and Accessible Restrooms are available at the Hopkins Center of the Arts.

Accessibility Performances are available for all season subscription options.

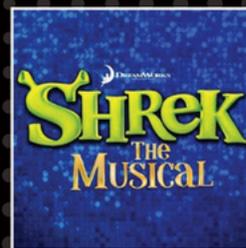
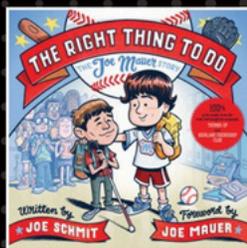
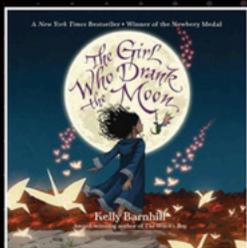
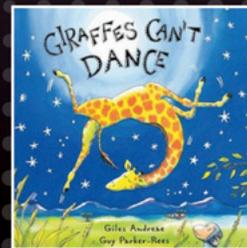
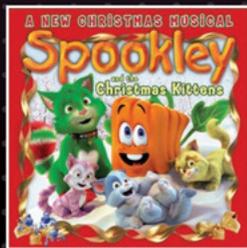
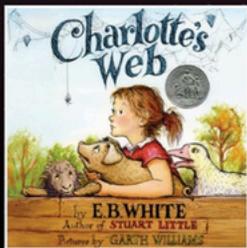


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THAT BRINGS US
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2025-26 SEASON



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