



Lourds Lane
(Books/Music/Lyrics Writer)



Lourds spent many years as lead singer/songwriter/violin shredder of her own touring rock band. Although her “stage” may have changed from rock clubs to schools, Carnegie Hall, and now Skylight, her approach to empowering others is still very rock and roll. She uses original anthemic music and “call and response” audience interaction to inspire youth and adults to find their inner rock star superhero... and don’t be surprised if she jumps onto a table to belt out vocals or wall on her electric violin.

In 2013, Lourds founded and created an educational arts and music-based non-profit and curriculum called the **SuperYou FUNDation**. Through empowerment workshops and trainings, tens of thousands of youths and adults globally have learned how to notice and celebrate the superhero qualities in themselves and others. Her superhero name is “Shine.” Her superpower is “Love.” In these uncertain times, Lourds is committed to unleashing her “superpower” in every way she connects with others to inspire empathy, inclusivity, and empowerment worldwide.

Being surrounded by powerfully dynamic and diverse female talent was the inspiration behind writing the book, music, and lyrics to **SuperYou**, the musical. This rock musical is about a female comic book artist who learns to love herself when her own super heroine creations come to life. A prolific songwriter, Lourds is a two-time finalist of the prestigious Fred Ebb award for Musical Theater Songwriting in 2012 and 2018 and is an alumnus of the Johnny Mercer’s Writer’s Colony at Goodspeed Musicals for her humanitarian work. Lourds is also a 2018 Actor’s Equity Association Paul Robeson Award Finalist for her dedication to the “betterment of humankind,” and the winner of the 2019 Ideagen Global Leadership Award. She has empowered audiences at TEDWomen, TEDYouth, The United Nations, the Microsoft Global Women, BlogHer, the United Federation of Teachers, the Capital Region Human Rights Institute, and global women’s prisons. Lourds combines original music, violin playing, and poignant storytelling to uplift and inspire. Lourds also had the distinct honor of being the opening and closing speaker/performer at the inaugural Forbes Women’s Summit in 2013 where she galvanized Fortune 500 women executives to become a stand for service and community.

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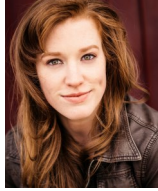
The **SuperYou FUNDation** curriculum uses a blended approach to learning and includes writing music, art, presentation, collaboration, and technology for students to notice the superhero qualities in themselves and others, so they feel empowered to positively impact the world around them. The program is geared towards character development and building positive behavioral outcomes. The **FUNDation** focuses on creating strong interpersonal skills using a cooperative approach to learning. This program promotes social and emotional learning in the context of school communities involving students, teachers, and parents, building a positive school climate and culture.

SUPERYOU'S SUPERHEROINES

(Illustrations by Erik Teague)

LIGHTNING GIRL

Katie played by Kennedy Caughell



What is your character's superpower?

Lightning girl shoots electricity, absorbs the ions from the atmosphere, and is the battery for charging up her friends powers.

What is your personal superpower?

My personal superpower is definitely being able to scarf any Asian dish within 15 seconds. Haha! But also—seeing the unseen. Seeing the unseen, and shining your light to charge up others is a great combo to effect positive change in the comic book realm, and ours!

LIGHTNING GIRL

Young Katie played by Serena Parrish



What is your character's superpower?

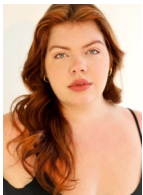
Young Katie's super power is inspiring people and charging people up like electricity.

What is your personal superpower?

My personal super power is understanding people, I'm every good at seeing all sides and helping people through discourse. I think the two powers intertwine very well. I think I as a person am able to see the best in people and young Katie's power helps me put a voice to how I see the world in the show.

IMA MAZING

Played by Shelby Griswold



What is your character's superpower?

Ima Mazing is all about confidence! Loving the skin you're in and not being afraid to take up space is a superpower

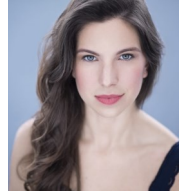
all on its own. Her boldness and courage translate into the Superhuman ability to grow to an enormous size and stomp away her enemies.

What is your personal superpower?

I view my own confidence - or rather my ability to be bold and express myself as genuinely as possible - as my own superpower. It's an active choice everyday to wake up and love yourself and the people around you feel the power of it. I don't want to just look cute, or good or how others want me to look - I want to look like art. I think that very easily ties into the message Ima Mazing is sharing through the song Be Big!

BLAST

Played by Jenna Rubaii



What is your character's superpower?

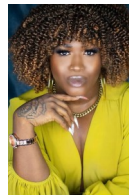
Being associated with the element of fire, Blast ignites creativity & passion.

What is your personal superpower?

Fierce loyalty. In all forms. I think it takes a certain fire within to stay loyal to yourself, to the people in your life, and the work you are creating; especially in this career path of extreme uncertainty and sacrifice. Never giving up on your creative interests (be it art, love, nature) and the spark you hold within is something I try to carry with me every day—in my performance world and in my personal life.

SEVEN

Played by B. Noel Thomas



What is your character's superpower?

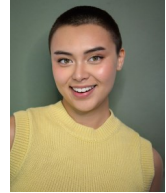
Seven's power is the power to control water and to make others speak the truth. My character is a trans femme character that was constantly told that her truth is not real and gets beat down for trying to live it. The further she gets from toxic people she owns her truth fully. By owning her truth she is able to bring the truth out of others.

What is your personal superpower?

I have a personality that makes people want to confide in me and trust me on too of being very strong. Both my powers and my character's powers stand in truth and supporting people to feel that they have the power to own their own truth.

RISE

Played by Wren Rivera



What is your character's superpower?

Harnessing the power of Creative Thinking. Rise's freedom of self-expression helps Katie "Rise Up" and find confidence in her own quirks.

What is your personal superpower?

My personal superpower is the ability to stay true to my identity regardless of the wishes of those around me. I used to keep my head down, but now I choose to maintain my truth. I have had to repeatedly announce my own identity and negate the naysayers. My truth of being non-binary hurts no one, and absolutely aids in my own happiness and longevity. Rise is the perfect reminder that standing in your truth is important, beautiful, and worthy of calling heroic.

Honking Ovations



In 2020, *SuperYou* made history as the first theatrical production to perform live for an audience since the pandemic started by presenting two nights of socially distant concerts from the beds of pick-up trucks at drive-in movie theatre in upstate New York.

Author Lourds Lane, director JoAnn M Hunter, and producer Melissa Jones along with 40 Broadway veterans, actors and crew members dealt with some unfamiliar struggles as rain blew in shortly after rehearsal started. The rain mercifully lifted just before showtime. The sold-out crowd was a mix of Dutchess County locals and New York City theater fans and received many honking ovations!

A (Very) Brief History of Female Superheroines



In February of 1940 we saw the introduction of what may have been the first female superhero, created by Fletcher Hanks and appearing in *Jungle Comics #2*, **FANTOMAH**, Mystery Woman of the Jungle.

Fantomah was a woman who protected her jungle with an array of supernatural abilities including flight, transmutation, and levitation.



1941 brought in Miss Fury, a superhero created by female artist Tarpe Mills, and the most widely recognized female superhero: **WONDER WOMAN**. She was created by William Moulton Marston, who was

inspired to make a female superhero by his wife, Elizabeth Holloway, and their life partner, Olive Byrne. Her first appearances were brought to us by All-American Publications, one of the three companies that later merged to form DC Comics. This era also saw a rise in heroine partners to male heroes, reflecting the growing numbers of women taking on jobs typically belonging to men during World War II. These 'Partners' were typically the wives or girlfriends of the heroes, brought in to help their partners. After WWII, the archetype of the Femme Fatale, a woman who refused to stay in her "proper" place, became popular as women were pushed back into more traditional roles with the end of the War.



The '50's and '60s saw a decline in those female superheroes, or central female characters in general. In 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America introduced a code

in an attempt to regulate morals of the medium. They tried to create an industry-wide interest in the value of women in the home and the sanctity of marriage. DC Comics implemented their own company-wide regulation stating that women should be secondary in importance in their comics. These all fell in line with the end of the World War II, when the men returned home and the old societal norms were put back into place. However, over at Atlas Comics (known today as Marvel Comics) they were beginning to introduce new heroines, such as **INVISIBLE GIRL**, aka Susan Storm of the Fantastic Four.

From Music Supervisor, Wendy Bobbitt Cavett

(Excerpted from *Shepherd Express* Article)



Lourds is a composer of incredible musical diversity. For every musical style represented in the current show, there are multiple other equally stylistically authentic

songs that were cut. The eventual CD of songs that didn't make it will include country pop, old-fashioned hoedown, poetic acoustic folk, rock shuffle, as well as multiple songs in styles we will hear within the show. I think that the songs that are featured most specifically represent the initial essence of the character who sings them as we meet them: heavy swing shuffle for a confident **IMAMAZING**; punk rock for **BLAST**; boisterous big band swing to represent **SEVEN'S** wit and sophistication; electronic rock and epic arena rock for **RISE**; gospel, and contemporary pop-rock for **KATIE**. In addition, our characters traverse multiple styles because they are blended together as part of the whole, who is **KATIE**.

I've never enjoyed a team more than this one. In my opinion, the alchemy of Jo-Ann, Lourds, Melissa and myself is a rare occurrence and a gift. I treasure the experience of developing this show with them.

Interview with Author, Lourds Lane



FRED DIGGINS (Education Manager): How did *SuperYou* come about?

LOURDS LANE: I founded, hosted, booked and headlined a yearly sold-out rock festival called the Medusa Festival. The purpose of the event was to create a community of rock artists that celebrated women lifting other women, as well as to shine a spotlight on incredible women indie rock musicians and singers. To me, these women were "larger-than-life" and real-life superheroes.

So, I had this idea to ask my favorite rock artists I toured with to perform music I wrote for a big concert where they would play superheroes. People loved it so much, they wanted to know the story behind these ferociously talented "superheroines." I majored in Writing / English / American Lit. at Harvard, so the concept of writing a backstory would normally

excite me. But, at that point I was going through a rough breakup and my self-esteem was at an all-time low. I could barely get out of bed, let alone write anything.

Then, something amazing happened. The beginning of a groove came up softly on my playlist and it immediately started to lift my spirits. I thought to myself, "Man, I wish I wrote that song," and as I listened further, I realized that I had written that song. That's when I realized that music heals and what I do matters. Suddenly, I came up with the idea to write a rock musical about an artist who realizes her worth when her own superheroine creations come to life. Her own art saves her, as my own art has saved me, over and over again, through the years. Music is what got me out of my depression and I began writing feverishly.

The whole world experienced grief, loss, and pain during the pandemic. My heartache that I am still struggling with, comes from losing my mom, who I was extremely close with. When I rewrote the script in the past few months, I gave more care and attention to the mom role who speaks only through dance. One of the new songs that puts me to tears whenever I hear it is a reflection of the last moments with my mom.

"And I'm holding her face
Every fold I memorize
As I clean out her mouth,
Wipe the crust off her eyes,
Time seems to fly,
I don't wanna say goodbye..."

The last restructure and rewrite which we are debuting at Skylight speaks to our collective pain, healing from grief, our indomitable resilience, and unleashing the power we have from within.

In the opening number, the cast sings, "No matter what the age, the face, the name, underneath the mask, we're all the same." As the show opens, we recognize that every single one of us is connected by a common pain – whether it be the pain of loss, of not feeling loved, of not fitting in -- pain from the words people call us, or worse, pain from the words we call ourselves.

FD: I've heard that besides being a musical phenomenon, you also have a foundation based upon the show. Can you tell us more about that?

LL: My mission is to inspire youth and adults around the world to connect to their most empowered "superhero" selves through theater, music, and education. I founded and wrote the curriculum for a global non-profit called The SuperYou FUNdation (www.superyoufun.org) that teaches youth and adults to notice and celebrate the "superhero" qualities in themselves and others through writing, music, theater, dance, and art.

Lourds Lane Interview (continued)

Our small but mighty non-profit of dedicated heart-centered volunteers has inspired over 100 schools and thousands of youths and adults worldwide. The data-based curriculum enhances self-worth, enabling participants to feel valued for their unique strengths, and fostering a culture of empathy, tolerance, and respect.

The heart of the non-profit, as well as the musical, is to bring awareness to an undeniable file that exists within us all, which I call "SuperYou." It is the truth of who we are – that we are enough, and loved and whole. We all have the power within us to follow our dreams and become the heroes we're meant to be. We don't need extraordinary superpowers or flashy costumes with capes to be superheroes – we're already superheroes, just as we are.

See, the world has this affliction, and for some, it's an addiction, which I call "Clark-Kenting." It's when we put on our figurative "glasses" and present ourselves as a more toned-down version of who we really are – to hide, to fit in, play it safe, or because we're broken or afraid. We walk around in disguise, hiding our true selves, not expressing the fullness of who we are. The sad part is, we often buy into our own disguise. We don't see our own "bigness." We've forgotten that Clark Kent is our alter-ego. Superman is our truth.

The biggest gift we can give to ourselves, and others is to show up powerfully and completely as our authentic selves, to love ourselves fiercely, and to follow our dreams. "Don't wait, create" – not just for our own happiness, but for the good of the world.

The final song in *SuperYou* is called "Light of the World," and the chorus repeats: "When you dim your light, you dim the light of the world." So many of us have dreams that we let slip away, and the takeaway of *SuperYou* is that we owe it to ourselves and the world to shine our unique light as brightly as we can shine, or the whole world gets a little darker. The stakes are that high.

Interview with Director/ Choreographer, JoAnn M Hunter



MICHAEL UNGER (Artistic Director):

JoAnn, thanks so much for coming to Milwaukee to do this show. I love that you and I met when I was assistant directing a Broadway Show and you were one of those true triple-threats we all hear about!

JOANN M HUNTER: Yes, Kander and Ebb's *Steel Pier*. What a gorgeous show.

MU: How many Broadway shows have you worked on? I've lost count.

JH: I have performed in 12 Broadway shows but have a total of 21 Broadway shows to my credit as either a performer, an associate choreographer, or choreographer.

MU: Where did you grow up?

JH: I was born in Japan. My father was in the military. Before I was in the first grade, we moved to Hawaii, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island - where I grew up. I moved to New York City between my junior and senior year of high school.

MU: Can you talk a little bit about the difference between directing a musical that is brand new (like this one) compared with a show that might "come out of a box" from a licensing house?

JH: The difference for me is that a revival already has not only a framework but also a painting within it. You can shift it, you can recolor it, but it basically has the full structure. Unless you're deconstructing it, but even then, the reference points are there. With a new musical, you're taking a frameless, blank piece of paper and filling it in, which is much harder. But I prefer it. You get to help guide the writer to what perhaps works best on stage, which may differ from what was on the page.

MU: Can you talk about your working relationship with Lourds Lane, who wrote book, music, and lyrics for *SuperYou*?

JH: We have a great relationship. She's brilliant – and she does not hold anything she's written to be too precious. I can say to her that some material does not work and together we make sure the intent on the stage is exactly what the audience

needs to get the story. You don't want too many words in a musical because you want to get to the next song. Sometimes I don't actually know what is necessary until I'm on my feet. Sometimes I realize something may be extraneous because I can show that either through movement or staging.

MU: What is the director's job as the link between the audience and the writer's work?

JH: I think a lot of people assume that most of what a director does is work with the actors. But as you know, the director starts working a gazillion months prior because you're the umbrella under which everything else sits: from design, to look, to writing, to music, everything. The director's job is to help guide all those elements so that we're all on the same page, aiming for the same goal of telling the story from the same point of view.

MU: Is your job as a director of a new musical to honor the audience experience, the material, or both.

JA: Probably a little of both. But art is subjective. Some people say of the Mona Lisa that it is a masterpiece. Others may think it's not such a big deal. It's all a matter of opinion. As the leader of a new musical you have to be faithful to your vision, but guide the show too. I'm not a huge believer in catering to an audience. I think we sometimes dumb down our shows in this country – I think audiences are much smarter than some shows give them credit for. I like leaving some blanks for them to fill in. I like the audience to go away and have to think on the piece. Now, I don't mind a bit of fluff either – sometimes there's nothing wrong with two hours of sheer entertainment. Especially in today's world. But I personally prefer a show that lingers in your mind. That's a great thing for a show – and I hope that's what this show offers Milwaukee audiences.

MU: What is your hope that our audiences take away from this show?

JH: First of all, the talent we have on stage is fabulous, these actors are great. I think audiences will find that undeniable. But what I hope audiences take away from this show is that you don't have to put someone else down to own who you are or to raise yourself up. Find your love of yourself through compassion and kindness.



In July of 2021, the anthemic rock musical *SuperYou* by **Lourds Lane** and directed by Japanese American director and choreographer JoAnn M. Hunter, arrived at **Carnegie Hall**. The empowering concert of the music from the show gave audiences a glimpse of the original, uplifting story of a defeated comic book artist who finds her voice - and learns to love it - when her superheroine creations come to life.



Skylight
music theatre

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Research/Writing by Fred Diggins for ENLIGHTEN,
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