



From left, Good Egg Productions founders Sarah K. Michael, Sarah Mitchler and Ian Dyer. Credit: Jana Marcus

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Good Egg Productions hatches a new theater model with 'Matt & Ben'



BY JANA MARCUS March 2, 2026

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Good Egg Productions, a new Santa Cruz theater company, opens with "Matt & Ben," the satirical two-person comedy by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers that imagines how Matt Damon and Ben Affleck wrote "Good Will Hunting." Performances run March 13-22 at Actors' Theatre.

A funny thing happened during Mountain Community Theater's 2024 production of "Evil Dead, the Musical." Three local actors became good friends and started asking themselves a familiar question: What if, instead of waiting for the right opportunity, they made one themselves? That became the seed of Good Egg Productions, a brand-new Santa Cruz theater company launching in March.

It's an impulse as old as show business itself. When artists are unseen or unconvinced by the choices in front of them, they create their own work. That through-line connects the origin of the Oscar-winning film "Good Will Hunting," the satirical play "Matt & Ben" by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers, and Good Egg Productions' decision to make that play its first production. Each begins with actors refusing to wait, choosing instead to write, produce and perform the work they want to make.

If you go

Who: Good Egg Productions
What: "Matt & Ben" by Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers
When: March 13-22
Where: Actors' Theatre, 1001 Center St., Santa Cruz
Tickets & info: [Click here](#)

For the trio behind Good Egg Productions, that refusal was not just an idea but a starting point. Santa Cruz, once home to a wide range of small theater companies, has not seen a new startup in quite some time, particularly one aimed squarely at millennial audiences. The founders saw an opening not only for a production, but for a different way of working.

Santa Cruz actors Ian Dyer, Sarah K. Michael and Sarah Mitchler are the brains and brawn behind Good Egg Productions. Their collaboration began, fittingly, with a specific play in mind.

"The genesis of Good Egg Productions really started with wanting to do 'Matt & Ben,'" explains Michael. The three actors share an affection for the play. "It's funny and endearing, and the questions it asks are still so relevant," she says. "So we started asking: Where could we do this play? What theater company could we pitch it to?"

As they explored those options, they ran up against a familiar reality. Many local theater companies operate within programming calendars and production structures that leave little room for a project like "Matt & Ben." What began as a search for the right producing partner quickly became something else entirely.

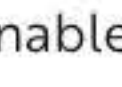
"That was the moment the switch flipped," says producer and director Dyer. "We went from wanting to be in a show to realizing we might need to produce it ourselves."

As they mapped out what that would mean, the team found themselves caught between two familiar theatrical models: community theater groups bursting with energy but light on pay, and equity union houses that require administrative infrastructure and financial resources beyond the reach of small or emerging producers.

Good Egg Productions rose from that gap to build a structure that strives to value both artistic agency and compensation. "We're experimenting with a co-op, revenue-sharing model," says Dyer. "The goal is to compensate everyone involved, cover the costs of the production and still have something left to put toward the next show."

Once they crunched the numbers, the dream started to feel possible. "We realized it was feasible for us to produce this show and experiment with that model," says Michael. "'Matt & Ben' is the perfect first project. It's a two-person cast, it doesn't require a complicated set, and the licensing fees are reasonable. Most importantly, it's a play we genuinely love."

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That choice underscores the company's philosophy. "Matt & Ben" is more than a convenient first production. It is a statement. As a comedy about actors who stop waiting to be discovered and instead write themselves into existence, the play mirrors the very impulse that led to the creation of Good Egg Productions. What Matt Damon and Ben Affleck did in life, and what Kaling and Withers later skewered onstage, now finds a local echo in a company choosing to produce the work it believes in, on its own terms.

Written by Emmy-nominated actress Kaling ("The Office," "The Mindy Project") and playwright Withers, "Matt & Ben" grew out of the pair's shared experience as college friends at Dartmouth, dreaming, like many young actors, of finding a way into an industry that rarely opens its doors easily. Their solution was a familiar one: write your own script. In that impulse, Kaling and Withers recognized a kindred spirit in Damon and Affleck, who, while still in college, wrote a screenplay that would become "Good Will Hunting" and propel them almost overnight into superstardom.

First staged in 2002, "Matt & Ben" imagines an entirely fabricated version of how that screenplay supposedly came into being. The play is a wildly funny reimaging of the origin story, inventing a chaotic and exaggerated version of artistic inspiration. Less concerned with facts than with mythology, it gleefully pokes at the idea of genius appearing fully formed, dropped from the heavens.

But, there's another twist: "Matt & Ben" is written by women for women, with female actors bringing the famous duo to life. In this production, Michael slips into Affleck's shoes, while Mitchler steps up as Damon. For Mitchler, the comedy opens the door to some deeper questions.



Sarah Mitchler (left) portrays Matt Damon and Sarah K. Michael (middle) portrays Ben Affleck in the comedy "Matt & Ben," directed by Ian Dyer (right), opening March 13 at Santa Cruz County Actors' Theatre. Credit: Jana Marcus

"I see the premise of the play asking, how did these two nobody actors write such a brilliant script?" Mitchler says. "Where does that brilliance come from? Why doesn't it happen more often, especially for women, or for anyone else outside a very narrow lane of privilege?"

Beneath its big laughs, "Matt & Ben" quietly interrogates the systems that allow certain artists to move quickly toward success while others struggle to be seen, examining the layers of access and advantage that shaped the path Damon and Affleck found themselves on when they wrote "Good Will Hunting."

In the end, "Matt & Ben" is less about Hollywood legend than about a classic artist's truth: When the door won't open, some people build a new door. With its inaugural production, Good Egg enters Santa Cruz's theater landscape by choosing its own path, launching not just a first show, but a way of working that insists on making room for what the actors want to do, the way they want to do it.