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THE PORCH ON WINDY HILL

A NEW PLAY WITH OLD MUSIC

WRITTEN BY **SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN, LISA HELMI JOHANSON,
MORGAN MORSE, & DAVID M. LUTKEN**

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY **SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN**

APRIL 3-21



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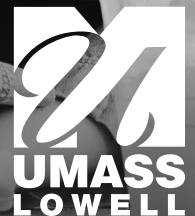
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COURTNEY SALE

NANCY L. DONAHUE EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear MRT Community,

Welcome to the fourth show of our 45th season, *The Porch on Windy Hill*. We are thrilled to welcome back David M. Lutken (MRT's *Woody Sez: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie*) alongside this immensely talented cast and creative team from across the country to bring this family reconciliation story (with song) to life.

When I first heard *Porch* in a reading, I was reminded how music has the power to reach across divides and

heal old wounds. The relationship of Edgar and Mira—the centrifugal force of the play—elucidates the ways those closest to us can betray our trust. Through song and dialogue, they also show us a path to how to return to one another. What a great message to experience as the natural world renews with life in the New England spring time.

Porch has allowed us to work with theatre partners across the country in sharing this production. Special thanks to our friends at Northlight in Chicago, People's Light in Pennsylvania, and Weston Theatre Company in Vermont for

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being wonderful collaborators. We at MRT feel a tremendous responsibility to our community in the stories we share. Our trusted colleagues have beautifully enhanced and enriched this endeavor.

Thank you for joining us to this trip to Appalachia. We love filling Liberty Hall with story and music. We are grateful these formidable artists and musicians make it so.

In Service,
Courtney

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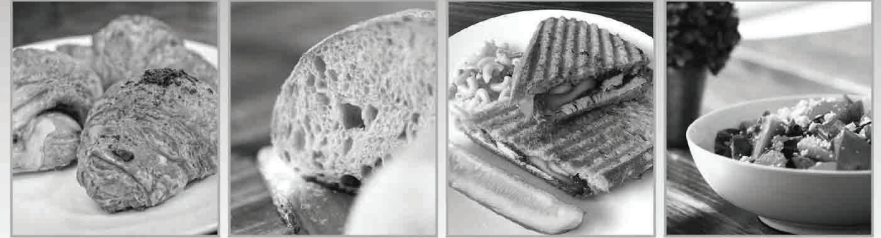


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PRESENTS

THE PORCH ON WINDY HILL

WRITTEN BY

**SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN
LISA HELMI JOHANSON
MORGAN MORSE
& DAVID M. LUTKEN**

FEATURING

**DAVID M. LUTKEN*
ROB MORRISON*
EJ ZIMMERMAN***

SCENIC DESIGNER

MARA ISHIHARA ZINKY^

COSTUME DESIGNER

GREGORY GRAHAM^

LIGHTING DESIGNER

DAWN CHIANG^

SOUND DESIGNER

SUN HEE KIL^

MUSIC DIRECTION

DAVID M. LUTKEN

STAGE MANAGER

LINDSAY EBERLY*

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY

SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN+

NEW YORK CASTING BY JZ CASTING

APRIL 3-21, 2024

*Appearing through an Agreement between this theatre, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

^Member of United Scenic Artists

+Member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers

CAST

David M. Lutken* Edgar
Rob Morrison* Beck
EJ Zimmerman* Mira

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Lynn Sullivan Production Assistant
Emily Allinson Props Artisan
Kimberly O'Loughlin Associate Sound Designer

COLLABORATIVE SCENE SHOP

Obadiah Savage Director of Collaborative Scene Shop
Ken Decker Master Carpenter
Bryan Drossel Lead Carpenter
Laura Brignull Charge Artist
Cynthia Smith Operations Specialist

Costumes provided by Northlight Theatre, Chicago.

The Porch on Windy Hill was first performed at the Ivoryton Playhouse, Ivoryton, CT on September 23, 2021. It was produced by Jacqueline Hubbard and directed by Sherry Lutken; original cast: Lisa Helmi Johanson, Morgan Morse and David M. Lutken.

Subsequent development thanks to The New Ohio, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Northlight Theatre and Weston Theater Company.



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



+Member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, a national theatrical labor union.



^The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in this production are represented by United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



Merrimack Repertory Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.



Merrimack Repertory Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a consortium of regional theatres throughout the nation, and AEA (Actors' Equity Association), SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Society), and USA (United Scenic Artists).

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WHO'S WHO



DAVID M. LUTKEN (Co-Writer/Music Director/Performer; Edgar) he/him/his. David is happy to be back at Merrimack

Repertory Theatre, and looking forward to the hootenanny! **Broadway:** *Inherit the Wind*, *Ring of Fire*, *The Civil War*, *The Will Rogers Follies*. **N.Y. City Opera:** *Paul Bunyan*. **Off-Broadway:** *Southern Comfort*, *Stars in Your Eyes*, *Winter Man*, *The Portable Pioneer & Prairie Show*, and *Woody Sez: The Life & Music of Woody Guthrie* (Outer Critics' Circle, Off-Broadway Alliance and Drama League Best Musical nominations). **London:** *Dark of the Moon*, *Woody Sez* (Evening Standard Best Musical nomination). **Regional UK:** *Bonnie and Clyde*, *A Month In The Country*. **Regional US:** *Our Town*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Big River*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, *Fire On the Mountain*, *Lost Highway*, *Buddy*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *The Love List*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *On Golden Pond*, *Mark Twain's River of Song*, *Almost Heaven*, and *The Porch on Windy Hill* (Best Actor nomination, Connecticut Critics' Circle Awards). With *Woody Sez*, he and his company have toured Europe, the British Isles, China, the Middle East and The United States. For his portrayal of Woody Guthrie, David won the Helen Hayes and the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Actor. His most recent, favorite performance is the 10-hour audiobook recording of his

late father, Peter K. Lutken, Jr.'s, memoir: "A Thousand Places Left Behind: One Soldier's Account of Jungle Warfare in WWII Burma", available on Audible, libro.fm, and other audiobook platforms.



ROB MORRISON (Performer; Beck) he/him/his. Rob makes his Merrimack Repertory Theatre debut. He recently appeared in *The*

12 at Goodspeed under the direction of John Doyle. **Off-Broadway:** *Avenue Q* (New World Stages), *Nevermore* (NWS), *Assassins* (Classic Stage Company), and *Frankenstein* (CSC), a production for which he also composed and performed an original score. **Regional:** the titular role in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Cincinnati Playhouse), *Working* (Berkshire Theatre Group), *Million Dollar Quartet Christmas* (Capital Rep), *Wild Fire* (Denver Center), *Nerds* (Philadelphia Theater Company), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (North Carolina Theatre), *Big River* (Goodspeed). Rob voices Doodle on Nickelodeon's *Sunny Day*, and many characters on the Emmy-winning PBS series *Peg + Cat*. **TV/Film:** *Unforgettable*, *Alpha House*, *Freedom*. **As composer:** *Frankenstein* (stage score), *Sun Belt Express* (film score), *It Could Be Worse* (Hulu). A multi-instrumentalist and songwriter, Rob is a member of the folk bands The Hollows and The Booklights. BFA, Emerson College. Love to Lauren. [@therobmorrison](https://www.instagram.com/therobmorrison)

WHO'S WHO



EJ ZIMMERMAN (Performer; Mira) she/her/hers. MRT debut! **Broadway:** *Les Misérables* (Eponine u/s, Ensemble).

National Tour: *Avenue Q*. Other favorites: Nancy in *Oliver!* (Goodspeed Opera House); Ex-Coach Nancy in *The Perfect Game* (Off-Broadway); Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* (Gulf Shore Symphony); Kim in *Miss Saigon* (Riverside Theatre, Arvada Center - Henry Award); Reza and Ex in *Once* (Geva Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Group); Miss Shields in *A Christmas Story* (Pioneer Theatre); *Writing Kevin Taylor* (Meadow Brook Theatre); *Rent* (Oguma Playhouse); *The Porch on Windy Hill* (Ivoryton Playhouse); Iris in *Yoko's Husband's Killer's Japanese Wife*, *Gloria* (O'Neill Center, The 5th Avenue Theatre); and all the roles originated and developed in workshops, festivals, and readings. Love and gratitude always to my parents, my people, and Avalon Artists Group. And to Sherry, David, Morgan, and Lisa: thank you endlessly for writing a fiddle-playing Korean American woman—I am so proud to play Mira. Representation matters. [@ejzimmerman47](https://www.instagram.com/ejzimmerman47)

SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN (Director/Conceiver/Co-Writer) she/her/hers. Sherry directed the premiere of *The Porch on Windy Hill* at The Ivoryton Playhouse (Connecticut Critic Circle nomination: Best Dir.) and at The Northlight Theatre in Chicago.

She is excited and proud to make her Merrimack directorial debut! **Off-Broadway** and **Regional** directing and choreography credits include: *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *The Million Dollar Quartet*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *Hank Williams: Lost Highway*, *Almost Heaven*, *Stand By Your Man*, *Stars in Your Eyes*, *Hopscotch* and *Anything Goes*. In 2009, she directed the first Regional production of *Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash* at North Carolina's Flat Rock Playhouse. Along with more than a dozen subsequent stagings around the US, Sherry directed *Ring of Fire's* European Premier at Vienna's English Theatre in 2017, and at The Deutsches Theater in Munich. As Associate Director of the critically acclaimed *Woody Sez: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie*, Sherry has set productions of the musical in Chicago (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination: Best Musical Revue), Washington D.C. (Helen Hayes Award nomination: Best Musical), Florida, Pennsylvania, as well as its first National Tour of Great Britain.

LISA HELMI JOHANSON (Co-Writer) she/her/hers. Lisa is a multi-hyphenate who has a passion for developing new works, authentic storytelling, and intentionality in representation as a means to further the work of racial justice and social equity. **Broadway:** *Potus, Or Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying To Keep Him Alive*; **Tours:** *Into the Woods*, *Avenue Q*; **Off-Broadway:** *Avenue Q*, *Einstein's Dreams* (OC),

WHO'S WHO

Rescue Rue (OC), *Three Sisters*, *Women Beware Women*, *Soft Butter* (Ars Nova AntFest). **Select Regional:** *The Chinese Lady* (Milwaukee Rep; Best Actress in a Play, Broadwayworld), *Anything Goes* (Arena Stage), *Vietgone* (Denver Center), *Amadeus* (Syracuse Stage), *The Drowning Girls* (Drama League, NYC). **TV/Film:** *Law and Order*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *A Holiday Spectacular* (Hallmark); Lisa and her husband are close to launching a sitcom podcast called *Preschool* in which she co-directs, acts, and sound designs. She is represented by The Katz Company and HCKR and family to her life's joy, Junho and Jake. *For the lives lost in Atlanta and the ones that continue with more fear than before.*

MORGAN MORSE (Co-Writer) he/him/his. Morgan is a writer, actor and musician originally from Connecticut. Selected acting credits: *Southern Comfort* (The Public Theater), *Once*, *Godspell*, and *Stand By Your Man* (Ivoryton Playhouse), *Once* (Cape Playhouse), *Bright Star* (Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre), *Hester Street* (Theater J) and *Ring of Fire* everywhere from Houston to Vienna. In addition to theatre, he also writes and performs original music, and makes comedy videos online (linktr.ee/themorsecoda for more info!). All my love to Lisa, David and Sherry for collaborating on this show - all of our voices are woven inextricably into it (like a tapestry!). Many thanks to the cast and crew at MRT for all the work they've put into making the Porch a reality.

MARA ISHIHARA ZINKY (Scenic Designer) she/her/hers. Mara Ishihara Zinky is a Chicago-based, Cambridge-born scenic designer. She is delighted to be back with *The Porch On Windy Hill*, having designed a previous production at Northlight Theater. Other Chicago credits include *Dial "M" For Murder* (Northlight Theater), *Nightwatch* (Raven Theater), *Routes* (Remy Bumppo), and *Last Hermanos* (A Red Orchid Theatre).

GREGORY GRAHAM (Costume Designer) he/him/his. *Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet*, *Dream: A Community Reimagining of A Midsummer's Night Dream* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); *Mothers* (Gift Theater); *The Writer* (Steep Theatre); *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *Routes* (Remy Bumppo Theatre); *The Porch on Windyhill*, *Garbologist*, *Fireflies* (Northlight Theatre); *Once* (Writers Theatre); *Is God Is* (A Red Orchid Theatre); *A Mile in the Dark* (Interronbang Theatre Project); *1919* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Enough to Let The Light In* (Teatro Vista); *Private Lives* (Raven Theatre); *Ernest Shackleton Loves Me*, *Rent*, *Porchlight Revisits: Passing Strange* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *On the Greenbelt*, *Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins* (Strawdog Theatre); *The Tragedy of Othello*, *the Moor of Venice* (Court Theatre). **Regional:** *The Wiz* (Children's Theatre of Madison); *Raisin* (Skylight Music Theatre); *Blood at the Root* (Millikin University, School of Theatre and Dance). Education: BA in Theatre

WHO'S WHO

Design, University of Illinois at Chicago. www.gregorygrahamdesign.com

DAWN CHIANG (Lighting Designer) **Broadway:** *Zoot Suit*, co-design for *Tango Pasion*. **Opera:** Resident lighting designer, New York City Opera. **Off-Broadway:** *Til Death*, *Little Girl Blue*, *Robin and Me*; Manhattan Theatre Club, Roundabout Theatre, the first two seasons of the *Encores!* (City Center/New York). **Regional theatre:** Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, Denver Center Theatre Company, South Coast Repertory, Guthrie Theater, Syracuse Stage, Arena Stage, and many more. **Awards:** Broadway World Award for Off-Broadway, Two Dramalogue awards, two Lighting Designer of the Year awards (Syracuse Area Live Theatre). **Nominations:** American Theatre Wing/Maharam Design Award, Los Angeles Drama Critics' Award and San Francisco Bay Area Drama Critics' Award. **Other:** Mentor for Theater Development Fund's "Wendy Wasserstein Project" theater outreach program for New York City high school students. Board member, Behind the Scenes charity, which provides grants to entertainment technology professionals who have a serious illness or injury. www.linkedin.com/in/dawnchiang/

SUN HEE KIL (Sound Designer) she/they/hers. *As You Like It* (Public, Shakespeare in the Park), *Suffs* (Public, Henry Hewes nomination), *The Visitor* (Public), *I Can Get It For You Wholesale*

(CSC), *A Man of No Importance* (CSC), *New Victory Dance* (New Victory), *Fiddler On The Roof* (Paper Mill Playhouse), *Sound of Music* (Paper Mill Playhouse), *Shout Sister Shout* (Ford's), *Exclusion* (Arena Stage), *Brothers Size* (Selected Finalist at World Stage Design 2021), *Brooklyn Gaze* (Selected US Exhibit at Prague Quadrennial) **Associate:** 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics Opening & Closing Ceremonies; **Broadway:** *Suffs*, *Choir Boy*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *The Rose Tattoo*; **Off Broadway:** *Emmet Otter* (New Victory), *Greater Clements* (Lincoln Center), **International Tour:** *Dreamgirls*. Assistant Professor of Sound Design at SUNY Purchase www.sunheekil.com | Sunny is a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, Audio Engineering Society and Theatrical Sound Designers & Composers Association.

EMILY ALLINSON (Props Artisan) Emily has been working as a props supervisor/designer and theatre technician in New England since graduating college in 2017. Primarily, she is the props supervisor for the Peterborough Players in New Hampshire. Merrimack Repertory Theatre: Props Supervisor for *Gaslight* and *A Christmas Carol*. **Regional:** (Greater Boston Stage Company) *Boulevard of Bold Dreams*, *Clue*, *Titanish*. (Peterborough Players) All productions since 2018, including *Our Town*, *Mornings at Seven*, *She Loves Me*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Cabaret*.

WHO'S WHO

LYNN SULLIVAN (Production Assistant) she/they/hers. Lynn is a recent graduate from UMass Lowell with a BA in English Creative Writing and a minor in Theatre Arts. This is her third show as a Production Assistant for MRT after spending her fall semester as the Marketing Intern, and she is so appreciative of all the opportunities. Currently, they also serve as the Secretary for UML's student-run drama club, the Off-Broadway Players, and will be returning to the stage in their spring show this April. Lynn is grateful for everyone's hard work in this production, and to her friends and family for their never-ending love and support.

LINDSAY EBERLY (Stage Manager) she/her/hers. **Off-Broadway:** *Wish You Were Here* (Playwrights Horizons), *Prayer for the French Republic; Bella, Bella* (MTC), *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark; Paradise Blue* (Signature), *A Sign of the Times* (LDK), *Tell Hector I Miss Him* (Atlantic), *Intractable Woman* (PlayCo), Carnegie Hall's *West Side Story*. **Regional:** 11 seasons at Contemporary American Theater Festival including *The Overview Effect, The Fifth Domain, Whitelisted, Antonio's Song, The Niceties, pen/man/ship, The Second Girl, The Full Catastrophe, We Are Pussy Riot, Modern Terrorism*, and others. 3 seasons at Baltimore Center Stage including *A Civil War Christmas* and *Amadeus*. Recent *Alien Abductions* (ATL). *Queens For A Year* (Hartford Stage).

COURTNEY SALE (Executive Artistic Director) she/her/hers. Courtney proudly serves as the MRT's Executive Artistic Director. She joined the company in March of 2020 and is honored to work for a remarkable organization with incredible people. At MRT she has directed *Gaslight, The 39 Steps, A Woman Of The World, Wild Horses*, and both seasons of *A Christmas Carol*. Playwrights commissioned under her tenure include Trista Baldwin, Vichet Chum, Kevin Kling, Melinda Lopez, Dael Orlandersmith, Kanean Ung. She launched the Sokhary Chau Playwriting Fellowship. Under her leadership, MRT has increased service to students, strengthened its partnership in community, and ensured artistic excellence. She serves on Lowell's Canal Cultural District Management Committee. Courtney's directing has been seen across the country: *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Seattle Rep), *The Overview Effect, Support Group For Men, The Cake, Wild Horses, Not Medea* (Contemporary American Theater Festival), *The Mountaintop, The Mousetrap, April 4 1968*, (Indiana Rep, also Associate Artistic Director 2013-2016), *Gaslight* (Cincinnati Shakes), *On Clover Road* (Phoenix Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (IndyShakes). She previously served as the Artistic Director at Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT), the nation's leading generator of new work for family audiences. She has developed new work with Denver Center, New Harmony, Dorset Theatre Festival,

WHO'S WHO

Emerson Stage, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, and the Orchard Project. Other distinctions include Cornish College Distinguished Alumni Award, IBJ's 40 under 40 designation, and the 2017 keynote at the International Council of Fine Arts Deans. Courtney is a member of the National Theatre Conference. BFA, Cornish College of the Arts. MFA, The University of Texas at Austin.

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE (www.mrt.org) Merrimack Repertory Theatre (MRT) celebrates 45 years this season as the Merrimack Valley's professional theatre. With a steadfast commitment to new voices, MRT's season includes several premieres, in the 279-seat Nancy L. Donahue Theatre at Liberty Hall.

Under the leadership of the **Nancy L. Donahue Executive Artistic Director Courtney Sale**, MRT strives to fulfill its mission to "create remarkable new and contemporary plays that bring joy to our art form while engaging, entertaining and enriching our community." The non-profit company guarantees that shows are accessible to audiences of all incomes; partners with businesses and other non-profits to fully engage the community; and contributes to the economic vitality of Lowell by attracting diverse audiences from throughout the region.

Recent acclaimed productions include *Letters from Home, The 39 Steps, Best*

Summer Ever, Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End, Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, the bestselling production in MRT's history, and *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley*, both by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon; *Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee and *KNYUM* by Vichet Chum, works in celebration of Lowell's Cambodian community; *The Haunted Life*, a world premiere adaptation of Jack Kerouac's unfinished novel; the world premiere of *The Rise and Fall of Holly Fudge* by Trista Baldwin; and plays about the Black experience, including *Until the Flood* by Dael Orlandersmith, *Nina Simone: Four Women* by Christina Ham, and *Back Together Again: The Music of Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway*.

SPECIAL THANKS

Sherry, Lisa, Morgan and David want to thank all the folks who have given unwavering, invaluable help in creating, cultivating and producing *The Porch on Windy Hill*, especially Jacqui Hubbard at The Ivoryton Playhouse, and Courtney Sale and all the staff here at MRT.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to BJ Jones, Susanna Gellert, Georgette Verdin, Christine Mok, Leean Torski, Carol Ann Tan, Elizabeth Wu, Greg Pak, EJ Zimmerman, Allison Butler, Chris Heller, Lisa Green, Audrey Kastner, Peter and Ellen for all their help, advice and support. Thanks, also, to our musical consultants: Andy Teirstein, David Finch and Kendra Jo Brook, and to our hardest-working supporters, Jake Leibold, and Baby Junho!

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing. He is not a good man, who without protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name, and with the means which he helps to supply, because he will not trouble himself to use his mind on the subject. —John Stuart Mill (1867)

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
—Martin Luther King, Jr. (1965)

Written 100 years apart, these ideas—and the lives of the men who wrote them—are proof positive that we continue to be faced with the same choices and the same truths about ourselves and our world. We are living through extraordinary times: Racial Injustice, Income Inequality, Climate Change, Gender Discrimination, Political and Religious Extremism, the list goes on and on, yet our ‘Times’ are by no means unique. Everyday we are faced with decisions, the sheer number and scale of which can make us turn away or stay on the sidelines. But abstention is a choice. We can’t sit things out just because we’re not thrilled with the hand we’ve been dealt.

That can seem unfair. After all, we don’t choose when we get to be on this earth. It’s easy to look around at the state of things and blame the generation before or after, and, yes, sometimes they deserve part of the blame. Hindsight, though, is just that. Every new generation will learn some of the lessons that time and experience teach, and also see how some choices don’t age well. In those clear-eyed moments, hindsight can be a gift—looking back and examining decisions (or moments of silence) that have contributed to our present in ways both small and large, and to have the chance to try again—to right old wrongs, to hear new voices, to hold new thoughts. To appreciate experience as well as new ideas. To speak up, to act, to do something even when it isn’t easy.

If you see what is right and fail to act on it, you lack courage. —Confucius

The greatest menace to freedom is an inert people. —Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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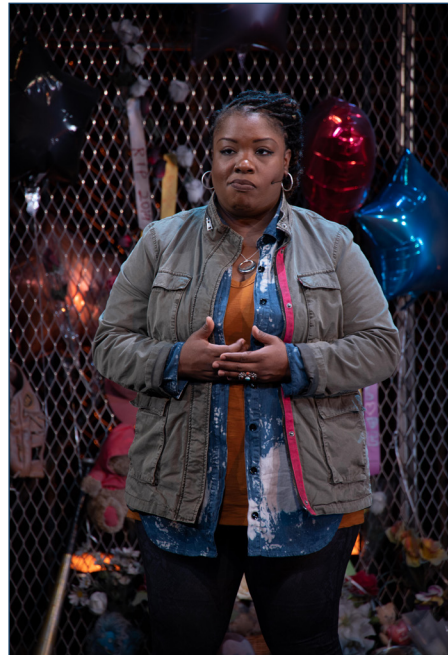
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Kalean Ung in *Letters from Home* (2023).

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Photo by Kathy Wittman.

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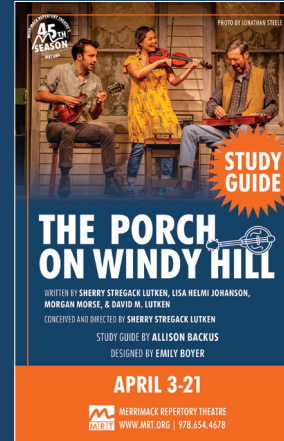
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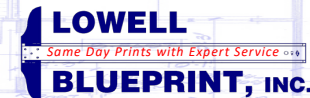
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Chris Thorn and Alexis Bronkovic with the Green Youth Cast in *A Christmas Carol* (2023).
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