



MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE



# MURDER FOR TWO

BOOK & MUSIC BY Joe Kinosian

BOOK & LYRICS BY Kellen Blair

DIRECTED BY JC Clementz

OCTOBER 17 – NOVEMBER 11, 2018



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*Murder for Two*



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*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*  
*The Haunted Life*



*Murder for Two*  
*The Haunted Life*



*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*  
*The Haunted Life*

## FROM SEAN DANIELS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



One of my favorite parts of this job is introducing my favorite artists to my favorite audience (*read: you*).

Joe Kinosian is one of those artists—nationally recognized and loved by critics and audiences everywhere—but more importantly he is a talented generous artist who is truly “one of the good guys of the American Theater.”

Our obvious goal is to create great work for our audience, but another goal we talk about a lot is creating a respectful work environment for our staff—a place that is conducive to them growing as artists and administrators, a place where they feel supported enough to make real roots in the community.

For us in artistic and production, much of that starts with who are the artists we invite into our building. Those that are game to join our growing and talented team and work with us. That all sounds pretty simple, but you’d be surprised how rare it is in our industry. Theatre is a weird art form in that we hire a lot of people to come to join us for a few weeks of stressful/creative theatre making, and as soon as a project is over, they rush off to their next one, and us to our next show. So, when you see artists return to us several times (actors, designers and directors) you know that they mesh well with MRT and have become truly part of our extended family.

So I’m thrilled for you, and our staff to meet Joe and see his sublime writing and gifted performance. And to know that we’re a better community as we have him in our midst.

## FROM BONNIE J. BUTKAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Here we go! The second show in our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season!

*Murder for Two* reminds me of the reason I loved theatre as a child. The sheer athleticism, comedic timing, and musicality of these performers takes me back to why I believed (and still believe) that theatre is magic. And although you only see two actors onstage, please know that it takes a theatrical village to make the magic happen—from finding a baby grand piano that works and can be painted to finding a turntable to rent from one of our colleagues so that we can stay under budget.

You’re part of our village too! When you make a donation, purchase a subscription, post about our shows, or tell your friends to get tickets, you are affirming your role as an important part of our theatrical village.

We hope you’re enjoying our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season celebration. We’re featuring different community members each week with special pre-show curtain speeches, two tickets for \$40 at every show, more community partnerships, great “throwback” photos on our social media pages, and a continued commitment to serving as many people as possible including special offers for educators, military personnel, students, Lowell residents, and our famous \$5 night on the first preview of each show.

We’ll wrap up this landmark season on Saturday, June 22 with a big glamorous gala celebrating the last 40 years and looking ahead to another 40 telling your stories on stage. Save the date—I hope to see all of you there!

Lastly, my one-year anniversary has arrived. Thank you for making me feel welcome in Lowell and at Merrimack Repertory Theatre. I can’t wait to see what we can do together.

## Q&A: JOE KINOSIAN, ACTOR, COMPOSER, AND BOOK WRITER



Joe Kinosian, the original star of *Murder for Two*, as well as the composer and book writer of the musical-comedy-mystery, makes his Boston-area debut as The Suspects. After the original production at the Chicago Shakespeare Festival, Kinosian was nominated for the prestigious Jefferson Award for Best Actor in a Musical, and he and co-creator Kellen Blair won the award for Best New Musical. The show ran for nearly two years Off-Broadway in New York City.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Kinosian dazzles “with a plethora of talents and eye-popping energy,” and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* said, “Kinosian absolutely nails his performances as a variety of quirky characters.”

**Theatre writers note the influence of The Marx Brothers, Agatha Christie, “Murder She Wrote,” and Vaudeville in *Murder for Two*. Were any of these genres especially influential for you growing up?**

Absolutely. I became an old movie fan at a very early age, largely the result of time spent with my grandma, the consummate fan of 1930s and 40s Hollywood. She first showed me The Marx Brothers films, and something about their anarchic combination of intellectual screwball wordplay and physical zaniness has never stopped appealing to me. I was also a fan at a young age (too young?) of murder mysteries, Agatha Christie in particular. When Kellen and I first came up with the idea for *Murder for Two*, we framed it as “what if The Marx Brothers put on an Agatha Christie story?” (I must pay tribute to *The Thin Man* films as well, which remain the ultra-classy gold standard of blending comedy and mystery.) As far as vaudeville is concerned, we definitely wanted to channel that comedically broad, “anything for a laugh” approach.

All of that formed the basis of *Murder for Two's* style.

**Audiences and critics rave about how each of your characters are so distinct. What was the process for creating a host of suspects with such unique mannerisms and voices? How difficult was the creation of so many characters? Do you have a favorite?**

That is very nice of those audiences and critics to say! In developing my performance(s) of *The Suspects*, I began with an aspect of each of the characters that I connected to, be it an accent or an aspect of their physical vocabulary or whatever. From there, they all took on a life of their own. Over the years, they've all continued to change and develop, and I always look forward to diving in again and seeing where they're at now. Being the co-writer of the book gave me insight as to why the characters were the way they were and what inspired their creation, so in that regard, it was less difficult than it might have been had I not served in the

## Q&A: JOE KINOSIAN, ACTOR, COMPOSER, AND BOOK WRITER

role (no pun intended) of writer as well. My favorite character (and the favorite of most actors who've played *The Suspects*, too, I'm pretty sure) is Dahlia Whitney, the daffy widow of the deceased. Her penchant for saying what she's thinking and not feeling the way she's supposed to feel is a beautiful, liberating thing to play.

I rely on the audience to keep it fresh. Since they haven't heard this story before (or have, and are hopefully looking forward to hearing it again), I try to see it a little bit through their eyes, and let the comedy and clues unfold as though for the first time.

**After five years, how do you keep your performance fresh?**

I'm really lucky to be able to do a production of *Murder For Two*, step away for weeks or months, and then go back in to a new production. Since each production differs in terms of creative team, theater, co-star, etc., nothing ever gets too routine. But even more than that,

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Martin Landry and Joe Kinosian during *Murder for Two* rehearsal. Photo by Meghan Moore.

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SEAN DANIELS  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BONNIE J. BUTKAS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

MURDER FOR TWO

BOOK AND MUSIC BY JOE KINOSIAN  
BOOK AND LYRICS BY KELLEN BLAIR

FEATURING  
JOE KINOSIAN MARTIN LANDRY

SCENIC DESIGNER  
REGINA GARCÍA^

COSTUME DESIGNER  
MISTI BRADFORD^

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
AIMEE HANYZEWSKI

SOUND DESIGNER  
DAVID REMEDIOS^\*

PRODUCER  
PETER CREWE

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER  
NICOLE KUTCHER

DIRECTED BY  
JC CLEMENTZ

OCTOBER 17 – NOVEMBER 11, 2018

40th Anniversary Community Voices Project recorded, edited, and mastered by David Remedios.

*Murder for Two* is presented through special arrangement with Murder for Two Musical LLC.  
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Merrimack Repertory Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), Actors' Equity Association (AEA), Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), and United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



The Cohort Club is funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society  
Actors and the Stage Manager appear courtesy of Actors Equity Association  
^ Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829.*

*\*Member of MRT Patriot Program*



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## CAST

*In alphabetical order*

Marcus..... Martin Landry  
 The Suspects ..... Joe Kinosian

## ADDITIONAL STAFF

Associate Director..... Ashlee Wasmund  
 Sound Engineer ..... Rebekah Rudinec  
 Dance Captain ..... Martin Landry  
 Original Movement Coordinator..... Kelley Faulkner

## SPECIAL THANKS

Absolute Piano, Jude Reveley

*Run time is approximately 85 minutes with no intermission.*



The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.



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



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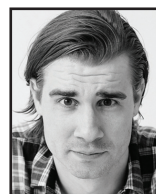
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## WHO'S WHO



### JOE KINOSIAN

*(The Suspects, Book and Music)* Joe is the co-book writer (with lyricist Kellen Blair) and composer of *Murder for Two*, which he's also performed in nearly 700 times as *The Suspects*. *Murder for Two* had its world premiere at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, receiving the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Musical and earning Joe a nomination for Best Leading Actor, before going on to an acclaimed off-Broadway run, where it earned Drama Desk, Drama League, and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations. A two-year national tour and well-received productions in Japan, China, Korea, England, Chile, and Argentina followed. Joe's work with Kellen has been showcased at The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and on Broadway at the Theatre World Awards, and their new musical *Diane*, a backstage farce, is currently in development at Second Stage Theater. Joe received the ASCAP Foundation Mary Rodgers/Lorenz Hart Award for excellence in musical theater, selected and presented by Stephen Schwartz, and the Harrington Award from the BMI Workshop. His acting credits include the Off-Broadway hit *Dear Edwina*, as well as regional productions of the Mae West bio *Dirty Blonde* (with Emily Skinner), *An Act of God*, and the title role in the comedy *The Nerd*. [kinosianandblair.com](http://kinosianandblair.com)



### MARTIN LANDRY

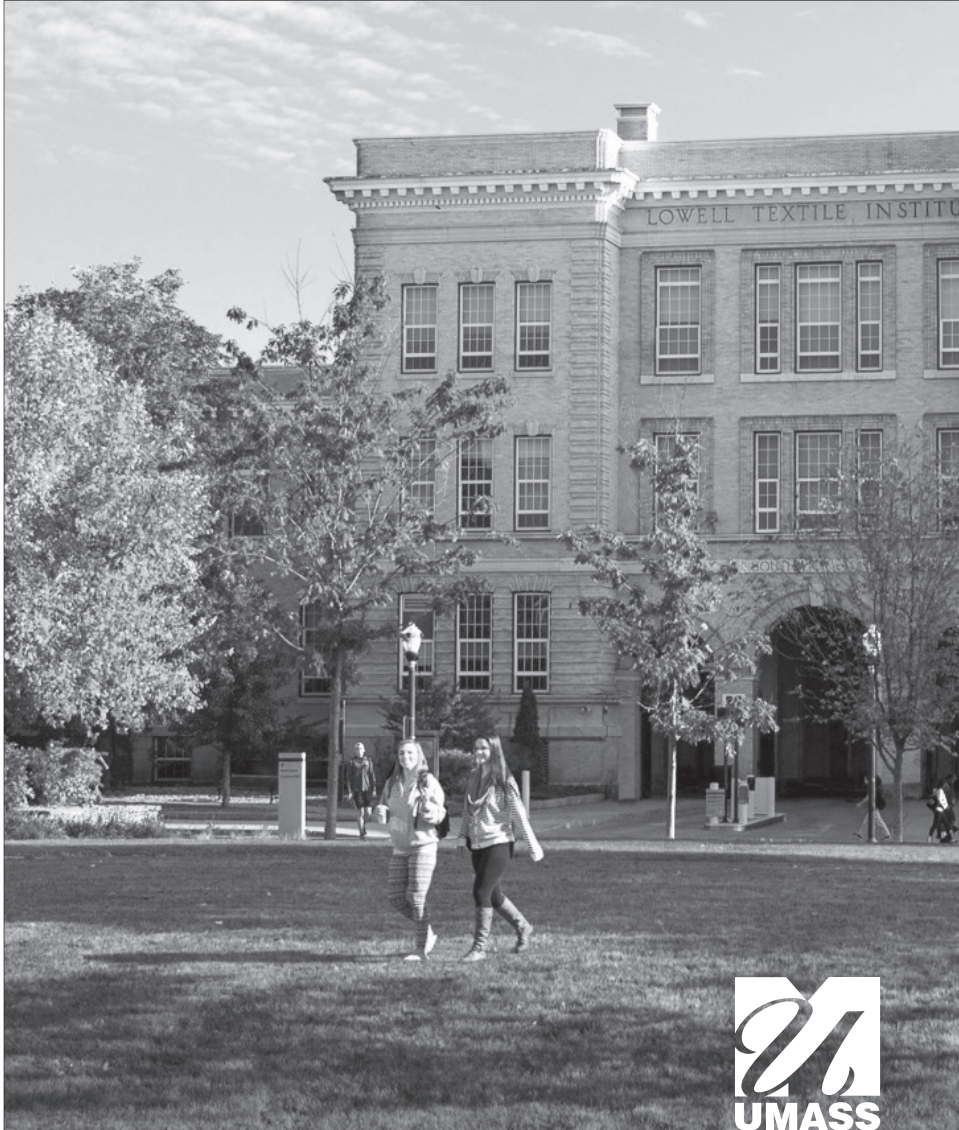
*(Marcus)* has worked Off-Broadway, regionally, and toured, either as an actor, musician, music director, or a multi-hyphenate combination. Some of his credits include playing a hipster dragon/apple-loving horse/exasperated chicken in the world premiere of *Dragons Love Tacos and Other Stories* (TheatreworksUSA, co-written by Joe Kinosian), the national tour and regional productions of *Murder for Two* (co-written by Joe Kinosian), and his first theatrical job in NYC where he met his wife, *Dear Edwina*

(stand-by for Joe Kinosian). He's done a lot of other stuff, but the point is that Joe Kinosian is great, and Martin is thrilled to appear opposite him. For more info, visit [www.martinlandry.net](http://www.martinlandry.net). Love to Janice (always) and enjoy the show!

**JC CLEMENTZ** *(Director)* JC is excited to make his MRT debut. His directing credits include *The All Night Strut!*, *Murder for Two*, Irving Berlin's *I Love a Piano*, *The Devil's Music: The Life and Blues of Bessie Smith*, *The Doyle & Debbie Show*, *Forever Plaid*, and five seasons of *Rep Lab* (Milwaukee Repertory Theater) and the New York premiere of *Waiting: A Song Cycle* (The World's Stage/Cherry Lane). As Casting Director at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and previously at Milwaukee Rep, JC has cast over 75 productions out of Chicago and New York City. Highlights include the world premieres of Tracy Letts' *The Minutes* and *Linda Vista*, *The Doppelganger* (an international farce) starring Rainn Wilson, and Antoinette Nwandu's *Pass Over*, which was filmed at Steppenwolf by Spike Lee and made its debut at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. He most recently cast and served as Artistic Producer on Steppenwolf's world premiere production of Bruce Norris' *Downstate*, which will transfer to The National Theatre of Great Britain in spring of 2019. JC holds an MFA in Directing from Western Illinois University. Much love to Phil and Tinkin. [www.jcclementz.com](http://www.jcclementz.com)

**KELLEN BLAIR** *(Book and Lyrics)* Kellen is the Drama Desk nominated co-creator of *Murder for Two*, which ran for over a year off-Broadway (Second Stage Uptown; New World Stages) and has been continually produced across the United States and internationally since 2014. Kellen and co-writer Joe Kinosian are the recipients of the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Musical Work in Chicago (2011) and the ASCAP Foundation Mary Rodgers / Lorenz Hart Award (2013). Their work has been showcased on Broadway, at the Kennedy Center, and in theaters across the country. Kellen is also a co-writer of *Diane Steals the Show* (in development with Second Stage

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## WHO'S WHO

Theatre), *Scrooge in Love* (available through Tams-Witmark), and *Just Between the All of Us* (commissioned by Pittsburgh CLO). Updates and sheet music can be found at [www.kinosianandblair.com](http://www.kinosianandblair.com).

**REGINA GARCÍA** (*Scenic Designer*) A Chicago-based scenic designer, Regina has long standing relationships with renowned Latino theaters, including Repertorio Español, the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, INTAR, Teatro Vista, and Pregones Theater. Regina is a Fellow of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and the Princess Grace Awards, USA. She is an ensemble member with Rivendell Theatre Company, Advisory Board member of the Latinx Theatre Commons, and a Regional Associate Member of the League of Professional Theatre Women. Recently completed projects include Steppenwolf Theatre Company, GALA Hispanic Theatre (Helen Hayes Nomination), and Denver Center for the Performing Arts. She joins the Design Faculty at DePaul this Fall.

**MISTI BRADFORD** (*Costume Designer*) **MRT:** Debut. Proud member of USA Local 829, Theatre Arts Department Chair and Associate Professor of Costume Design at the University of Wisconsin Parkside in Kenosha, WI. Misti's most recent design and costume crafts artisan credits include: American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Door Shakespeare, Children's Theatre of Madison, First Stage Children's Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre in Logan, Utah, PCPA Theaterfest in Santa Maria, CA, Michigan Shakespeare Festival.

**AIMEE HANYZEWSKI** (*Lighting Designer*) Aimee is glad to be working with Merrimack Repertory Theatre. She is the Resident Lighting Designer at Edgewood College in Madison, WI. She has designed for Milwaukee Repertory Theater for over 13 years for such hits as *Always Patsy Cline*, *Black Pearl Sings!*, *The Devil's Music: The Life and Times of Bessie Smith*, *I Love a Piano*, *Liberace*, *Debbie and*

*Doyle, Ain't Misbehavin'*, *From My Hometown*, *Fire on the Bayou*, *Grafton City Blues*, *Venus in Fur*, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *A Christmas Carol*, and many others. Other theaters Aimee has designed for are Children's Theatre of Charlotte, In Tandem Theatre, Next Act Theater, Forward Theater, Madison Savoyards Ltd, and The Legacy Theatre. Not only a lighting designer, in 2010 Aimee was nominated for a Jefferson Award in Chicago for her scenic design of *Of Mice and Men* for Oak Park Festival Theatre.

**DAVID REMEDIOS** (*Sound Designer*) **MRT:** *The Villains' Supper Club*; *KNYUM*; *The Royale*; *Women in Jeopardy!* (Onstage Theatre Award); *The Making of a Great Moment*; *Abigail/1702*; *Home of the Brave*; *I and You*; *Out of the City*; *Oceanside*; *The Best Brothers*; *Year Zero* (original music and sound); *Two Jews Walk into a War*; *The Blonde, the Brunette, and the Vengeful Redhead*. **Recent:** *Berta, Berta*; *A Late Morning (in America)* with Ronald Reagan, Contemporary American Theater Festival; *Old Money*, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (IRNE Award), SpeakEasy Stage Company. **Regional:** American Repertory Theatre; Huntington Theatre Company; Portland Stage; Trinity Rep; Geva Theatre Center; The Studio Theatre; 59E59; Theatre for a New Audience; La Jolla Playhouse; Berkeley Rep; Center Stage Baltimore; Cincinnati Playhouse. **International:** Prominent arts festivals in Bogotá, Paris, Hong Kong and Edinburgh. **Awards:** IRNE, Connecticut Critics Circle, Elliot Norton. David is Program Head of Sound Design at Boston University, a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local USA 829, and is a founding member of MRT's Artistic Patriot Program. [remediiosound.com](http://remediiosound.com)

**ASHLEE WASMUND** (*Associate Director*) Ashlee joins the *Murder for Two* team from North Carolina, where she proudly serves as the head of Musical Theatre and Dance at Western Carolina University's School of Stage & Screen. She also choreographs and directs professional-





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## WHO'S WHO

ly around the country, most recently as the choreographer for New Light Theatre's production of *Hitler's Tasters* in NYC. Prior to her move to North Carolina, Ashlee worked as a Chicago-based actor, choreographer, and director with area theaters such as Milwaukee Repertory, Drury Lane Theatre, Midsommer Flight, First Folio Theatre, and Provision Theatre, among others. She holds an MFA in Acting from Western Illinois University. As always, endless love and gratitude to Colin and Fiona for holding down fort while I'm away.

**NICOLE KUTCHER** (*Production Stage Manager*) Nicky is thrilled to be making art with the incredible team at MRT for the seventh time! **MRT:** *Little Orphan Danny*, *A Christmas Carol* (Stage Manager), *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend*, *Women in Jeopardy!*, *Going to See the Kid*, *45 Plays for 45 Presidents* (Assistant Stage Manager); 2016-2017 Stage Management/Company Management Apprenticeship. **Other Selected Credits:** *I and You*, *Dancing Lessons*, *Mothers and Sons*, *Tribes* (Production Stage Manager), Vermont Stage; *Quiz Show* (Stage Manager), Strawdog Theatre Company; *The Tennessee Williams Project* (Stage Manager), *All Our Tragic*, *Endgame*, *Romeo Juliet Parks Tour*, *Fall of the House of Usher* (Assistant Stage Manager), *The Hypocrites*. *Short Shakespeare!* *Macbeth* (Stage Management Intern), Chicago Shakespeare Theatre. **Events:** First Night Burlington (Site Manager). **Education:** BA in Technical Theater from Columbia College Chicago. This one goes out to Mr. Cope!

**PETER CREWE** (*Producer*) **MRT:** Producer: *Native Gardens*, *The Villains' Supper Club*, *Little Orphan Danny*, *Lost Laughs: The Slapstick Tragedy of Fatty Arbuckle*, KNYUM, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Royale*, *Going to See the Kid*, *Abigail/1702*, *45 Plays for 45 Presidents*, *Home of the Brave*, *Tinker to Evers to Chance*, *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. Stage Manager: *The Outgoing Tide*. Assistant Stage Manager: *Out of the City*, *Oceanside*, *The Best Brothers*, *13 Things About Ed Carpolotti*, *Dusk Rings a Bell*,

*Equally Divided*, *The Devil's Music: The Life and Blues of Bessie Smith*, *Stella and Lou*, *Proof*, *Red*, *Half'n Half'n Half*, *Mrs. Whitney*, *The Voice of the Turtle*, *Two Jews Walk Into a War...*, *The Exceptionals*, *Tryst*, *Four Places*, *The Last Days of Mickey & Jean*, *Black Pearl Sings!*, *Fabuloso*, *The Seafarer*, *Bad Dates*, *Tranced*, *The Fantasticks*, *A View of the Harbor* (workshop), Stage Management Intern (2004). **Regional:** Company Manager, Studio Arena Theatre; Production Assistant, Studio Arena Theatre; Assistant Stage Manager, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, Seaside Music Theatre; Assistant Stage Manager, *Lucie de Lammermoor*, Boston Lyric Opera; Stage Management Intern, Trinity Repertory Company. Education: BFA, Salem State College in 2004.

**SEAN DANIELS** (*Artistic Director*) **MRT:** *The Villains' Supper Club*, *Little Orphan Danny*, *Silent Sky*, *My80-Year-Old Boyfriend*, *Women in Jeopardy!*, *The Making of a Great Moment*, *45 Plays for 45 Presidents*, *Home of the Brave*, *Tinker to Evers to Chance*, *I and You*, *The Lion*. Sean has directed at Manhattan Theatre Club (*The Lion*, Drama Desk Award & Theatre World Award, nominated for Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle), Lynn Redgrave (NYC), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), St. James (West End, London – *The Lion*, winner of Best New Musical), Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Portland Center Stage, Geva Theatre, Old Globe, The Geffen, Playmakers Rep, A.C.T., Cleveland Play House, Milwaukee Rep, Alliance Theatre, California Shakespeare, Dad's Garage Theatre Company, Swine Palace, Neo-Futurists, Aurora Theatre, Crowded Fire and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Sean has been named "one of the top fifteen up & coming artists in the U.S., whose work will be transforming America's stages for decades to come" and "One Of 7 People Reshaping And Revitalizing The American Musical" by *American Theatre* magazine. His direction and shows have won "Best Play" and "Best Director" in the Bay Area, Portland, Rochester and Atlanta. He's previously served as the Artist-At-Large for Geva Theatre Center and spent four

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## WHO'S WHO

years at the Tony Award-winning Actors Theatre of Louisville as the theatre's Associate Artistic Director (where he directed 17 productions including five Humana Festivals). Mr. Daniels is the former Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director of the California Shakespeare Theater and before that spent a decade as the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Dad's Garage Theatre Company in Atlanta. He has developed new work with the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, Ars Nova, PlayPenn, Lark, PlayLabs, New York Stage and Film, Asolo Rep, Goodspeed Opera, Weston Playhouse, Bay Area Playwrights, Magic Theatre and was the first American director asked to attend the Baltic American Playwrights Conference in Hiiumaa, Estonia. He'd love to hear from you, on Twitter @seandaniels or email him at sean.daniels@mrt.org.

### **BONNIE J. BUTKAS** (*Executive Director*)

Bonnie most recently served as the Senior Director of Foundation Relations at Rochester Institute of Technology, where she led the university's strategic efforts to secure funding from private and family foundations. During her tenure, RIT secured its first significant gifts from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation. Prior to RIT, she was the Director of Development at Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY overseeing five years of unprecedented growth in the company's contributed income and playing a key role in a successful \$10 million capital campaign to renovate the building and grow the theatre's endowment. In New York City, she served as the Director of External Relations at the York Theatre Company, the Director of Development and Communications at TADA! Youth Theatre, Directing Assistant on *The Lion King* on Broadway, and the co-founder of Lexington Dance Collective. Prior to moving to NYC, she was the Managing Director of Bristol Valley Theater in Naples, NY. Butkas was raised in the Finger Lakes region of Western New York and holds degrees in Journalism and Dance from the University at Buffalo. She volunteered with the Association of Fundraising Professionals of

Genesee Valley, Girl Scouts of Western New York, and the YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County. In Fall 2016, she co-founded Action Together Rochester. She lives in Westford, MA with her family.

### **MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE**

(MRT) celebrates 40 years this season as the Merrimack Valley's professional theatre. With a steadfast commitment to contemporary voices and new plays, MRT produces seven works, including several world premieres, each season. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Executive Director Bonnie J. Butkas, MRT strives to fulfill its mission "to share theatrical stories of human understanding that reflect and engage our community." The company guarantees that shows are accessible to audiences of all incomes; partners with businesses and non-profit groups to fully engage the community; and contributes to the economic vitality of Lowell by attracting diverse audiences from throughout the region.



Martin Landry and Joe Kinosian during *Murder for Two* rehearsal. Photo by Meghan Moore.

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# CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN LOWELL

*A brief history of MRT*



**In 1978** Lowell resident **Barbara Abrahamian** befriended director **Mark Kaufman** and actor **John Briggs** at a summer stock theatre in Salem, New Hampshire. She convinced the young men to return with her to Lowell to start a theatre company. The three formed the “**Committee for Legitimate Theatre in Lowell,**” and they quickly inspired other residents to jump on their bandwagon.

**John Duff**, the first president of UMass Lowell, offered the trio Mahoney Hall for a home, and **Nancy L. Donahue** agreed to form a fundraising board and serve as its president. Hundreds of volunteers sold more than 1,700 subscriptions and raised \$41,000. Kaufman and Briggs became the company’s first Producing Artistic Directors, with Abrahamian serving as the first Director of Audience Development.

They named their new venture **Merrimack Regional Theatre**, and the company officially opened on **October 23, 1979**, with a production of *The Passion of Dracula* by Bob Hall and David Richmond.

In 1982 **Dan Schay** took over as the new Artistic Director. MRT relocated to Liberty Hall in the fall of 1983 and changed its name to **Merrimack Repertory Theatre**. Schay produced MRT’s first world premiere, Jack Neary’s *First Night*, in 1987. He also produced a beloved production of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* that played for 11 consecutive seasons.

The national spotlight found MRT when Artistic Director **David Kent** (1990-2001) produced The Lowell Trilogy by playwright Jon Lipsky from 1992-94. The series included Lipsky’s original play *Living in Exile*, plus his adaptations of Lowell native Jack Kerouac’s *Maggie Cassidy (Maggie’s Riff)* and Haing S. Ngor’s *Cambodian Odyssey (The Survivor: A Cambodian Odyssey)*. The tenure of Artistic Director **Charles Towers** (2001-2014) brought a rare staged reading of Kerouac’s only play, *Beat Generation*; and MRT’s first Off-Broadway transfer, Bob Clyman’s *Secret Order*.

In 2012 the company underwent a \$750,000 renovation. The lobby was refurbished, and an accessible modern box office was completed, closing the decades-old basement ticket booth. The theatre reopened as the **Sage Bank Lobby** and the **Enterprise Bank Box Office** in the **Nancy L. Donahue Theatre**.

Current Artistic Director **Sean Daniels** joined MRT in 2015 with a new vision for the company — the full-time production of contemporary voices and new plays. Recent acclaimed productions include his own autobiographical play, *The White Chip*; *I and You, Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson, the most produced playwright in America; *Women in Jeopardy!* by Wendy MacLeod (directed by Daniels); and *The Lion*, singer-songwriter Benjamin Scheuer’s award-winning musical memoir (also directed by Daniels), which launched its national tour from MRT in August 2015, following critically acclaimed runs in New York and London. Daniels also introduced his innovative audience immersion program, The Cohort Club, which offers the community unprecedented access to the creative process, and he formed The Patriot Program, a network of more than 60 artists, which is revolutionary in its approach to artistic associate programs.

MRT’s budget has grown from \$200,000 in 1979 to \$2.9 million today, and the theatre has provided entertainment, education, and an artistic home to more than two million Merrimack Valley residents over the last 40 years.

1. Jack Kerouac’s *Maggie Cassidy (Maggie’s Riff)* was part of The Lowell Trilogy by playwright Jon Lipsky between 1992-94. Pictured are David Zoffoli and Angela Christian. Photo by Kevin Harkins.

2. Artistic Dan Schay produced the beloved production of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* in 1993, which played for 11 consecutive seasons.

3. *Living in Exile* was part of The Lowell Trilogy and an original play by Jon Lipsky. L-R: Richard McElvain as Agamemnon, Steve Hofvendahl as Patroclus, Jonathan Epstein as Achilles, and Kathleen Patrick as Briseis. Photo by Kevin Harkins.

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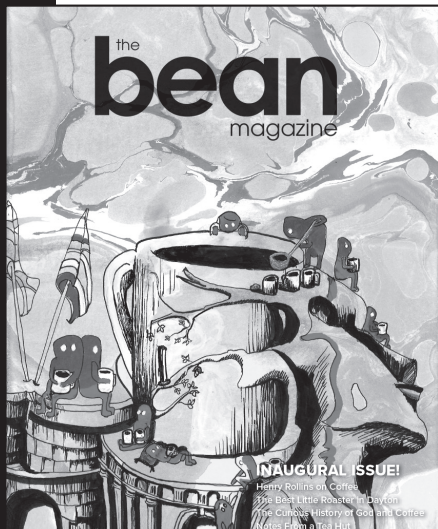


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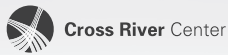
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The Cohort Club is funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

To learn more about the Cohort Club, go to [mrt.org/cohortclub](http://mrt.org/cohortclub)



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Nancy L. Donahue and son Philip Donahue at MRT's 39th Anniversary Gala, on June 2, 2018. Photo by Sidney M. Hoang.

## "COMMUNITY VOICES" CELEBRATES OUR 40 YEARS

Community Voices is a series of pre-show announcements, or "curtain speeches," designed to highlight our 40th Anniversary Season. In approximately 180 announcements, one before every performance this year, a supporter of Merrimack Repertory Theatre will welcome the audience.

During *Native Gardens*, you heard the voices of **Francey Slater**, co-founder of Mill City Grows; **Nancy L. Donahue**, MRT current chair, original president, and member of the Board of Trustees for 40 years; **Bill Wyman**, president of the MRT board of trustees; and **Tim Greenwood**, one of the original members of The Cohort Club.

During this production, you will hear the voices of **Karen Oster**, professor of performing arts at Middlesex Community College; **Ted Panos**, radio personality at WCAP-AM Lowell; **Dr. Sharon Clark**, chair of Fine Arts for Lowell Public Schools; and **Kevin Snow**, a member of the MRT Young Company.

## LOWELL HONORS MRT ON OUR BIRTHDAY

Mayor William Samaras will be presenting a proclamation on October 23 to founding board president Nancy L. Donahue in honor of Merrimack Repertory Theatre's 40th Anniversary. Originally named Merrimack Regional Theatre, the company officially opened in 1979 with a performance of *The Passion of Dracula* at UMass Lowell. The City hosted a reception before the official presentation at the City Council meeting. Visit our Facebook page for photos and details.



UMass Lowell students reading the stage play. Photo courtesy of Owen Johnson/Connector.

## UMASS LOWELL HOSTED READING OF THE HAUNTED LIFE IN ORIGINAL MRT SPACE

More than 100 people attended a developmental reading of Sean Daniels' adaptation of Jack Kerouac's *The Haunted Life*, which was generously hosted by UMass Lowell at the Comley-Lane Theatre, the original home of MRT 40 years ago. Thank you to Associate Professor Todd Tietchen and everyone at the Theatre Arts Department, the Department of English, and the Department of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

# MRT EARNS \$450,000 GRANT FROM THE BARR-KLARMAN MASSACHUSETTS ARTS INITIATIVE



Barr-Klarman  
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Arts Initiative

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Photo Credit: Merrimack Repertory Theatre

The Barr-Klarman Massachusetts Arts Initiative recently selected MRT to receive a grant of \$450,000 – the largest foundation grant in the theatre's 40-year history. A partnership between two Boston-based foundations - Barr and The Klarman Family Foundation – the initiative is a \$25 million, six-year investment in 29 arts and cultural organizations from across Massachusetts.

Participating organizations receive flexible, multi-year operating support grants, in addition to training and technical assistance from TDC, a nonprofit consulting and research firm. MRT's engagement in the initiative begins with two grants totaling \$450,000 over a three-year period.

Executive Director Bonnie J. Butkas said, "The Barr-Klarman Massachusetts Arts Initiative is an incredible opportunity to become financially stable, build capacity, and grow our focus on Equity Diversity and Inclusion. We are thrilled to work with both foundations to position Merrimack Repertory Theatre for growth and success."

Artistic Director Sean Daniels said, "The ability to create more engagement opportunities, diversify the work we do on stage, and invite our community more into the creation of new work, all leads to our goal of being the leader in new play production in the country. Today we're a huge step closer."

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If you have already made MRT part of your estate plans, we invite you to join the Living Legacy Society. Thank you.

*For more information, please contact:*

**Bonnie J. Butkas, Executive Director at 978-654-7558 or [bonnie.butkas@mrt.org](mailto:bonnie.butkas@mrt.org).**

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Ramona Lisa Alexander and Thomas Silcott in *The Royale*, 2017-18 Season.  
Photo by Meghan Moore.



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Vichet Chum in *KNYUM*,  
2017-18 Season. Photo by  
Meghan Moore.

Ticket sales and subscriptions only cover 60% of our production expenses. Support from people like you make up the rest. Your gift is critical to our success and makes it possible for MRT to produce award-winning productions for Lowell and the Greater Merrimack Valley. Your support underwrites lighting, costumes, artist salaries, free and discounted tickets for students, community outreach efforts, and free discussions and tours.

Please consider a tax-deductible donation to Merrimack Repertory Theatre today. Simply go to our secure website at [mrt.org/donate](http://mrt.org/donate) or call 978-654-7579.

Polly Lee, Victoria Grace, Alexis Bronkovic, and Julia Brothers in *Silent Sky*, 2017-18 Season.  
Photo by Meghan Moore.



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*For more information, please contact:*

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978-454-2739 | 61 Market St.

### 5. CAVALEIRO'S

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978-458-2800, | 573 Lawrence St.

### 6. COBBLESTONES

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91 Dutton St.

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134 Merrimack St

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### 10. OLYMPIA

(Greek)  
978-452-8092  
453 Market St.

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107 Merrimack St.

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(American/Bar)  
978-455-6537  
197 Market St.

Most of downtown Lowell's great restaurants are a five-minute walk from MRT, so you only need to park once for dinner and a show. See page 50 for more information on parking locations and rates.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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**134 MERRIMACK ST. ~ 978.458.5858**  
**277 PAWTUCKET ST. ~ 978.458.6969**

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

If you have any problems during a performance, please ask one of our volunteer ushers to locate the House Manager.

### ACCESSIBILITY

#### Open Captioning

Thanks in part to a grant and guidance from Theatre Development Fund (TDF), we will offer an open captioning performance during a Sunday matinee for all shows. Open captioning uses a text screen on the side of the stage to display simultaneous translation of dialogue and lyrics during a live performance. When booking your seats, mention your interest in open captioning in order to secure the most advantageous view. Visit [www.mrt.org](http://www.mrt.org) for dates.

#### Listening Devices

Please reserve our free listening devices through the box office when you make your reservation.

#### Wheelchair Seating

Wheelchair space is available by notifying the Box Office when purchasing tickets. A ramp is located to the left of MRT's main entrance.

### RESTROOMS/LATECOMER POLICIE

Restrooms are located in Lowell Memorial Auditorium (LMA). Follow the signs down the hallway on the left side of the theatre. Please do not go past any barriers in the LMA hallways or an alarm will sound. If at any time you leave your seat during the performance, the House Manager will seat you in the rear balcony when you return.

No one will be admitted once the performance begins. The House Manager will seat you in the rear balcony until intermission, at which time you may take your ticketed seat.

### EMERGENCY CALLS

If you expect an emergency call during a performance, please leave your name and seat location with the House Manager. MRT's emergency phone number is 978-654-4678, press 9.

### FIRE REGULATION

Please take a moment to locate the nearest emergency exit. If the fire alarm sounds, please remain in your seat until the House Manager directs you to the nearest exit. Do not run. Exit the theatre in a calm and orderly manner.

### BAD WEATHER POLICY

MRT does not cancel performances due to bad weather except in the event of highway closure by the State

Police. If you are concerned about driving in poor weather, contact the Enterprise Bank Box Office.

### COURTESY/CONCESSIONS

Please silence your cell phones, beeping watches and electronic devices when entering the theatre. Please do not text during the performance.

Refreshments are available before performances and during intermission. Food is not allowed in the theatre. Intermission beverages may be pre-purchased at the concession stand. If you bring a beverage into the theatre, please carry out the trash when you leave. Please refrain from unwrapping cellophane wrappers during the performance. For the comfort of all patrons, please avoid wearing strong perfumes, colognes, and hairsprays.

### RECORDING/PHOTOGRAPH REGULATIONS

The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, is strictly prohibited during the performance. EXCEPTION: You may take photos of the set before the show. If you post photos on social media, please acknowledge the designers.

### PARKING

#### • Davidson Lot: 1-199 Davidson St. Lowell

Free parking for Subscribers and Producers Circle members only.

#### • Church Lot: 144 East Merrimack St. Lowell

The Immaculate Conception Church generously offers parking for free to MRT patrons when not in use by Lowell Memorial Auditorium (LMA). When in use by LMA, you must pay a fee to park. Visit [lowellauditorium.com](http://lowellauditorium.com) for LMA's schedule.

#### • Garage Parking

Garage parking is available for \$5 with validation provided at MRT Concession Stand at:

- Lower Locks Parking Garage: 90 Warren St. Lowell
- John St. Parking Garage: 75 John St. Lowell

#### • Street Parking

Street parking for evening and weekend performances is available first-come, first-served. MRT is not responsible for parking tickets or tows.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### GROUPS & DISCOUNT

*Discounts may not be used in combination.*

• **Students:** \$15 any performance.

• **Groups:** Discounts are available for groups of six or more. For more information, call 978-654-7561.

• **Lowell Night:** Second Thursday night performance of each run for Lowell residents. Restricted seating. Purchase in person, \$10 each (cash only), at the Box Office three hours prior to curtain. Must show ID. Limit two per person.

• **Military:** MRT is a proud member of the Blue Star Theatre program and offers all active duty, veteran, or retired military personnel \$10 off on up to four tickets per production. Use the code MIL when ordering online or call 978-654-4678. MRT also offers 50% tickets for military personnel for our special Military Day performance of each show – 4 pm of the second Saturday performance.

• **Educators:** Take 50% off up to four tickets for Educators Day – the 4 pm performance of the second Saturday of each show.

• **\$5 First Preview Night:** Wednesday evening preview. Restricted seating. Purchase in person (cash only) at the Box Office three hours prior to curtain. Limit two per person.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Enterprise Bank Box Office/ Nancy L. Donahue Theatre

50 East Merrimack Street  
Lowell, MA 01852-1205  
Phone: 978-654-4678, press 1  
Fax: 978-654-7575 Email: [box\\_office@mrt.org](mailto:box_office@mrt.org)

#### Enterprise Bank Box Office Hours

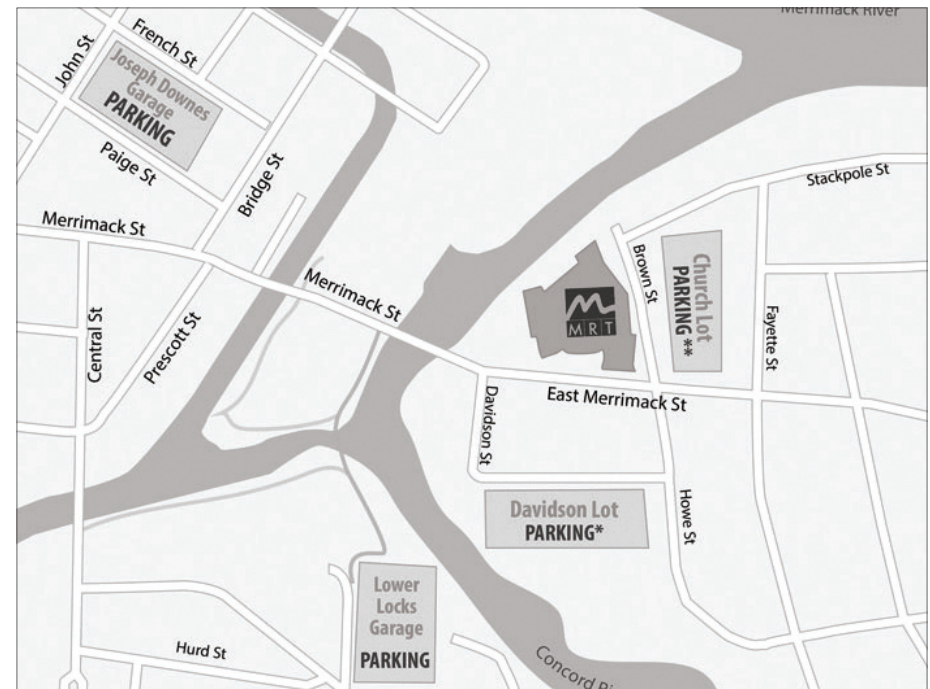
Tuesday – Saturday: 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm  
*Open through curtain on performance nights.*  
Sunday: 12:00 pm through curtain on performance nights.  
*Closed on non-performance nights.*

#### Order online: [mrt.org](http://mrt.org)

Subscriber ticket exchange by email:  
[box\\_office@mrt.org](mailto:box_office@mrt.org)

#### Administrative Offices/Mailing Address

132 Warren Street  
Lowell, MA 01852-2208  
Phone: 978-654-7550  
Fax: 978-654-7575 Email: [info@mrt.org](mailto:info@mrt.org)





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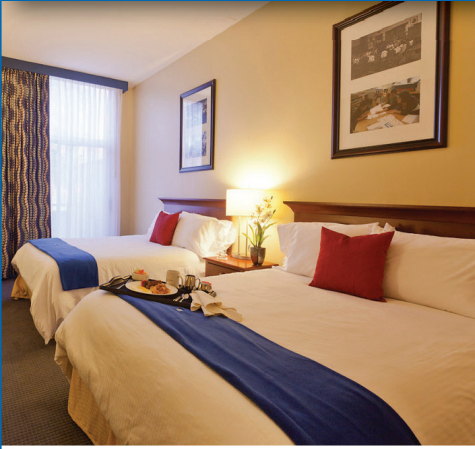
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