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NATIVE GARDENS

BY Karen Zacarías

DIRECTED BY Giovanna Sardelli

SEPTEMBER 12 – OCTOBER 7, 2018



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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



Welcome to MRT's 40th Anniversary Season.

It is a true testament to this community that for 40 years MRT has been bringing world class theatre to this area. It's also a celebration of the countless people who, over four decades, made sacrifices to keep the doors open—subscribers, donors, people who decided to bring a new couple with them to introduce them to the theatre—four decades of community support has made this into a local treasure and a nationally respected and envied institution.

Also, like most people around 40, MRT is really now coming into its own—with shows that premiered here starting to appear in other cities (several going Off-Broadway), and other productions winning local awards like: Best Director, Best Production and Best Actor.

It's a great time to be a part of MRT and to continue the legacy that has been started for us by so many countless supporters.

It's with this that we dive into Karen Zacarías' show that has been sweeping the nation, helmed by the nationally recognized Giovanni Sardelli. A deeply smart and subversive take on class, and who we choose to let into our community. Karen is one of the hottest playwrights in the country right now with plays at Oregon Shakes, Denver Center and us—we're thrilled that such a prolific and successful playwright considers this one of her homes.

Thank you for your support—whether you are new or this is your 40th year attending. We can't wait to create this season with you.

FROM BONNIE J. BUTKAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to Merrimack Repertory Theatre's 40th Anniversary Season. We would not be here without you—our donors, subscribers, volunteers, trustees, staff, business supporters, and audience members. You are the reason for our longevity and our success. Thank you!

The regional theatre movement, which established theatres like MRT all over the country, is nearly 60 years old. Over the years, we have seen regional theatres close as they struggled to find enough support for their artistic work. We feel fortunate to live in a community that values the presence of a professional theatre, especially a theatre dedicated to new works. We will be celebrating all season with ticket specials (two tickets for \$40 at every performance), special guests for our pre-show speeches, “throwback” photos on our social media pages, interviews with key people from our history, and a big, glamorous gala at the end of the season.

In order to continue for another 40 years, we need your help.

The average production budget per show this season is \$112,000. Much of that is determined by our union agreements and the going rates for professional artists. Ticket sales and subscriptions only cover 60% of our production expenses. In every department, we find creative ways to save money each year. Some of our staff members do two jobs; volunteers take on various responsibilities throughout the building; and our local businesses donate food, dry cleaning, and lodging. However, we still need the support of subscribers, ticket buyers, business supporters, and donors like you to keep us on solid financial footing.

We need you to support this organization that brings yours stories to life. From our mainstage productions to our training programs to our student matinees to our audience discussions, we are investing in our community. We hope you will invest in MRT by making a gift or increasing your donation today. Your gift translates to a more vibrant regional economy and directly supports the work you see on stage today.

Q&A: PLAYWRIGHT KAREN ZACARÍAS



Karen Zacarías' plays include the recent, critically acclaimed *Destiny of Desire: A Brechtian Telenovela*, *Mariela in the Desert* (Susan Smith Blackburn finalist, Francesca Primus Award), *The Sins of Sor Juana* (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Play), *The Book Club Play*, *Just Like Us*, *Legacy of Light*, and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

Founder of Washington, D.C.'s Young Playwrights' Theatre, she regularly writes musicals (*Jane of the Jungle*, *Cinderella Eats Rice and Beans*) for young audiences with composer Debbie Wicks La Puma. Her musical *Chasing George Washington* at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts toured nationally, and when published, included a foreword by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Current projects include a new stage adaptation of *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the libretto for the Washington Ballet's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and a Brazilian-themed musical version of the Oliver Twist story. She resides in D.C. with her husband and three children.



Left to right: Navida Stein, Joel Colodner, Vivia Font, and Gabriel Marin. Photo by Meghan Moore.

Q&A: PLAYWRIGHT KAREN ZACARÍAS

You tackle a lot of dark issues with outright hilarity. Why is humor an important part of your storytelling?

I think humor can be “disarming”. Especially if it's not mean...and it brings light to personal foibles. If you laugh, you usually have to uncross your arms...and open up...and that allows other ideas and perspectives to come in. What people have told me about *Native Gardens* is that even though you side with different sides of the fence in different scenes, the person you end up judging is yourself.

Did a specific incident prompt you to write *Native Gardens*?

I was at a dinner party looking for an idea for a play, and someone suggested I write about the fight they were having with a neighbor. Then someone else recounted a neighbor story and so on. I was struck by how common, how primal, and poetic, and somewhat absurd all these epic battles can be and decided to explore the thorny issues of feuds through a biting comedic play.

Are you a gardener yourself?

No. But I learned a lot about gardening researching this play. Who would have known that plants could be so political?!

What has most shaped your perspective?

Being born in Mexico has shaped my perspective. Moving from Mexico to Boston when I was 10 shaped my perspective. Being an immigrant with immigrant parents shaped my perspective, and writing and art is the way I reconciled the bridges...and walls that I've encountered in my path. Art is a map for navigating the world, and a tool for making sense of the insensible.

What does *Native Gardens* mean to you personally?

I think there are over 12 productions of *Native Gardens* scheduled for this next year. I am so grateful that a play written by a Latinx artist, giving voice to characters we don't often see on stage, is getting to interact with so many people from across the country. It means to me that plays like this are part of the American canon, and our stories are part of the mainstage of the American story.

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SEAN DANIELS
 ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BONNIE J. BUTKAS
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

NATIVE GARDENS

BY
KAREN ZACARÍAS*

FEATURING

JOEL COLODNER*

VIVIA FONT

GABRIEL MARIN

NAVIDA STEIN

SCENIC DESIGNER

ALEXIS DISTLER

COSTUME DESIGNER

MIRANDA KAU GIURLEO

LIGHTING DESIGNER

KAREN PERLOW

SOUND DESIGNER & ORIGINAL MUSIC

DANIEL ERDBERG* & URSULA KWONG-BROWN

CASTING DIRECTOR

JUDY BOWMAN, CSA*

PRODUCER

PETER CREWE

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

MAEGAN ALYSE PASSAFUME

DIRECTED BY

GIOVANNA SARDELLI

SEPTEMBER 12 – OCTOBER 7, 2018

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

Native Gardens is produced by special arrangement with THE GERSH AGENCY,
 41 Madison Ave. 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10010

Native Gardens was commissioned and first produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the
 Park under Blake Robison (Artistic Director) and Buzz Ward (Managing Director).

SEASON SPONSOR



Merrimack Repertory Theatre is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



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
 United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829, represents the designers.*

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CAST

In alphabetical order

Frank Butley.....Joel Colodner
Tania Del Valle.....Vivia Font
Pablo Del Valle.....Gabriel Marin
Virginia Butley.....Navida Stein

Landscape Technicians, Zachariah Gonzalez
Surveyor, Inspectorand Jeomil Tovar

TIME AND PLACE

Georgetown in Washington, D.C. September. Present day.
Run time is 90 minutes with no intermission.

ADDITIONAL STAFF

Fight Captain.....Maegan Alyse Passafume

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Brian Finn of Athol, MA, for providing the oak tree and Travis, Mark and Jeff from the Athol DPW for their assistance in getting it performance-ready.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Please celebrate our local community partners, who support and enrich our productions. Thank you to each of them.

Mill City Grows – Native Gardens

The Jane Austen Society of North America/
Massachusetts Region – Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley

The Michelle Canning Band/Alzheimer's Foundation of America – The Heath

The Luna Theatre – The Haunted Life

Two Great Magazines from One Local Publisher



Merrimack Valley Magazine is your guide to community, culture, cuisine and home in the MV. It brings you fresh, original stories on local art & music, food & dining, home & garden, design, history, people and more! Additional stories and calendars online at

MVMag.net

The Bean Magazine is devoted to global cafe culture and its connections to travel, adventure and the arts. It's a magazine to be savored by everyone — from third wave coffee aficionados who enjoy single-origin beans in the comfort of their kitchens, to adventurers who start each day with a cup of home-brewed mud. The Bean Magazine is a slow read for a fast world. We wouldn't have it any other way.

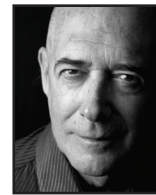
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WHO'S WHO



JOEL COLODNER (*Frank Butley*) has appeared at MRT in *A Christmas Carol*, *Going to See the Kid*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, in *Rimers of Eldritch* and *That Hopey Changey Thing* at Stoneham, and as

Solomon Galkin in *Imagining Madoff*, Freud in *Freud's Last Session* and Itzaq in *Two Jews Walk into a War* at the New Rep. Joel was the Stage Manager in *Our Town* at The Huntington Theatre, Signor Naccarelli in *Light in the Piazza* at SpeakEasy Stage and V. Ira Taub in *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* at Lyric Stage. He played King Henry in Henry IV parts One and Two, the Cardinal in *The Duchess of Malfi*, King of France in *King John*, Marcus in *Titus Andronicus*, and Polixenes in *Winter's Tale* for Actors' Shakespeare Project. He played the role of Uncle Peck in *How I Learned to Drive* Off-Broadway, Starbuck in *The Rainmaker* for The Guthrie Theatre, Ritchie in *Streamers*, Mick in *Comedians* and Horatio in *Hamlet* at the Arena Stage, Konstantin in *The Seagull* at Pittsburgh Public Theatre and was in the revival of Arthur Miller's *An American Clock* at the Mark Taper Forum.



VIVIA FONT (*Tania Del Valle*) **MRT:** Debut. **NYC:** *villa*, *Wild Project* (playco), *underneathmybed*, *Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre*, *Fernando*, *The New Ohio*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *NY Classical Theatre*.

Regional: *Bad Dates* Cincinnati Playhouse, *The Sign* in Sidney Brustein's *Window*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Tenth Muse*, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, *Richard III*, *As You Like It*, *Inherit the Wind*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Six Degrees of Separation* at The Old Globe, *Map of Heaven*, *Mariela in the Desert* at the Denver Center, *Songs for the Disappeared* at the Passage Theater, *Mutual Philanthropy* NJ Rep. She has also performed in plays and workshops for the Public Theatre, Playwright's Realm, INTAR, New Dramatists, The Lark, Primary Stages, McCarter Theatre, Perry Mansfield.

She writes and directs as well. **Film and TV:** *One Life to Live*, *Sarbanes Oxley*, *Love, Repeat*. www.viviafont.com



GABRIEL MARIN (*Pablo Del Valle*) is excited to make his MRT debut. **Selected Regional:** (American Conservatory Theater) *Between Riverside and Crazy*; *Napoli*; *The Play's The Thing*, *Love and*

Information; (TheatreWorks) *Finks*, *Superior Donuts*; (Ensemble Theatre Company) *Husbands and Wives*; (Kansas City Rep) *Fire in Dreamland*; (Kitchen Theatre) *Birds of East Africa*; (San Francisco Playhouse) *Stage Kiss*, *Storefront Church*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *The MotherF**ker with the Hat*, *Wirehead*, *Landscape of the Body*, *Bug*, *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, *Our Lady of 121st Street*; (San Jose Rep) *The Understudy*, *Love in American Times*; (Marin Theatre Company) *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, *Bellwether*; (Aurora Theatre Company) *Rapture*, *Blister Burn*, *This is How it Goes*, *Collapse*, *Jack Goes Boating*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *St Joan*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Gunplay*; (Magic Theatre) *The Happy Ones*, *Tape*, *The Rues of Charity*; (Center Rep) *Red Speedo*, *Mirandolina*, *The Book Club Play*, *Pilgrims* *Musa and Sheri in the New World*, *A Number*, *Arms and the Man*, *Noises Off*, *Rumors*, *Tuesdays with Morrie*. He has performed on NBC, CBS, PBS and the BBC.



NAVIDA STEIN (*Virginia Butley*) is delighted to be a part of MRT's artistic family. She is an award winning storyteller, actress, musician and writer. As an actress, Navida has worked Off-

Broadway and regionally, including Actors Theater of Louisville, Cleveland Playhouse and Virginia Stage Company, doing new plays, musicals and Shakespeare. Navida's one woman show *URBAN ZEN* won a 2012 United Solo Festival award and *Secrets of a Watchful Sparrow*; *Daddy, Me & OCD*, her new solo show was part of the 2018 midtown reading



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WHO'S WHO

series at St. Luke's. TV credits range from *Law & Order* to spots for Nickelodeon, and she has appeared in independent films and commercials. As a storyteller, Navida tells stories from around the world in many places: New York Public Libraries, the Hans Christian Anderson statue in Central Park, Scandinavia House, community centers, festivals and many schools. She's narrated *Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals* and *Peter and the Wolf* with The Chelsea Symphony ("Mozart in the Jungle"). As the guest vocal soloist for *Get Happy*, an all Harold Arlen program with the New York City Community Chorus, Navida sang a diverse selection of Mr. Arlen's songs from the familiar to some obscure gems. She's written plays, adaptations (*The Willa Cather Salon*), the librettos for two musicals and an opera and regularly writes for StageBuddy.com, an online NYC arts magazine. Navida is a dedicated teaching artist (aka Miss Navida), a recipient of numerous grants to bring storytelling to immigrant children and families as well as an accomplished violinist. www.navidastein.com, www.missnavida.com



ZACHARIAH GONZALEZ
(Landscape Artist) is ecstatic to be a part of this MRT season as an extra in the production of *Native Gardens*. Zach is most known for his work with the local theater

company Studio 506. He is a theater student at Middlesex Community College, where he was in their production of *Spring Awakening*. Zach is also a local musician and plays the guitar.



JEOMIL TOVAR
(Landscape Artist) is feeling grateful to be able to have the opportunity to assist a Latinx story progress further at Merrimack Repertory Theatre! Previous credits

include various roles at Marblehead Little Theatre, Heart & Daggers Productions, The Center of Arts in Natick, The Hanover Theatre,

and Salem State University where he seeks his BFA degree in performance. When not in a theatre production, he is usually shooting a commercial and/or using his voice to educate others on the injustices that marginalized folk face every day and what we can do to make the world a better place.

GIOVANNA SARDELLI (Director) Los Angeles: *Archduke* (World Premiere the Taper, CTG), *Guards at the Taj* (Geffen Playhouse, 2017 Ovation Award for Best Production of a Play), *Constellations* (Geffen Playhouse). Her select Off-Broadway World Premieres include *Little Children Dream of God* (Roundabout), *Wildflower*, *Animals Out of Paper*, *All This Intimacy* (Second Stage), *Apple Cove* (Women's Project), *The Leopard and the Fox* (Alterego Productions), *Huck & Holden* (Cherry Lane). Other Off-Broadway plays include *Describe The Night* (Atlantic Theater Company), and *Finks* (Ensemble Studio Theatre). Her regional credits include *Somewhere* and *The Whipping Man* (The Old Globe); the world premiere of *An Entomologist's Love Story* (San Francisco Playhouse); and the world premiere of *Describe The Night* (Alley Theatre); *Mr. Wolf*, *All The Way*, and *The Whipping Man* (Cleveland Play House); *The Mountaintop*, *Absalom* (Actor's Theatre of Louisville); *Clybourne Park*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Muckrakers*, and *The North Pool* (Barrington Stage Company); *Crimes of the Heart*, *Velocity of Autumn*, *The Lake Effect*, *Somewhere*, and *The North Pool* (TheatreWorks Silicon Valley). Though based in New York, Sardelli is the Director of New Works for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. She received her MFA from New York University's Graduate Acting Program and is a graduate of their Director's Lab.

KAREN ZACARIAS (Playwright) was recently hailed as one of the most produced playwrights in the US. Her award-winning plays include *Destiny of Desire*, *Native Gardens*, *The Book Club Play*, *Legacy of Light*, *Mariela in the Desert*, *The Sins of Sor Juana*, the adaptations of *Just Like Us*, *Into the Beautiful North*, *Ella Enchanted*, and *How the Garcia*

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WHO'S WHO

Girls Lost Their Accent. She is the author of ten renowned TYA musicals and the librettist of several Ballets. She is one of the inaugural resident playwrights at Arena Stage, a core founder of the Latinx Theatre Commons, and a founder of Young Playwrights' Theater. Born in Mexico, Karen resides in Washington, D.C. with her husband and three children. For more information visit www.karenzacarias.com.

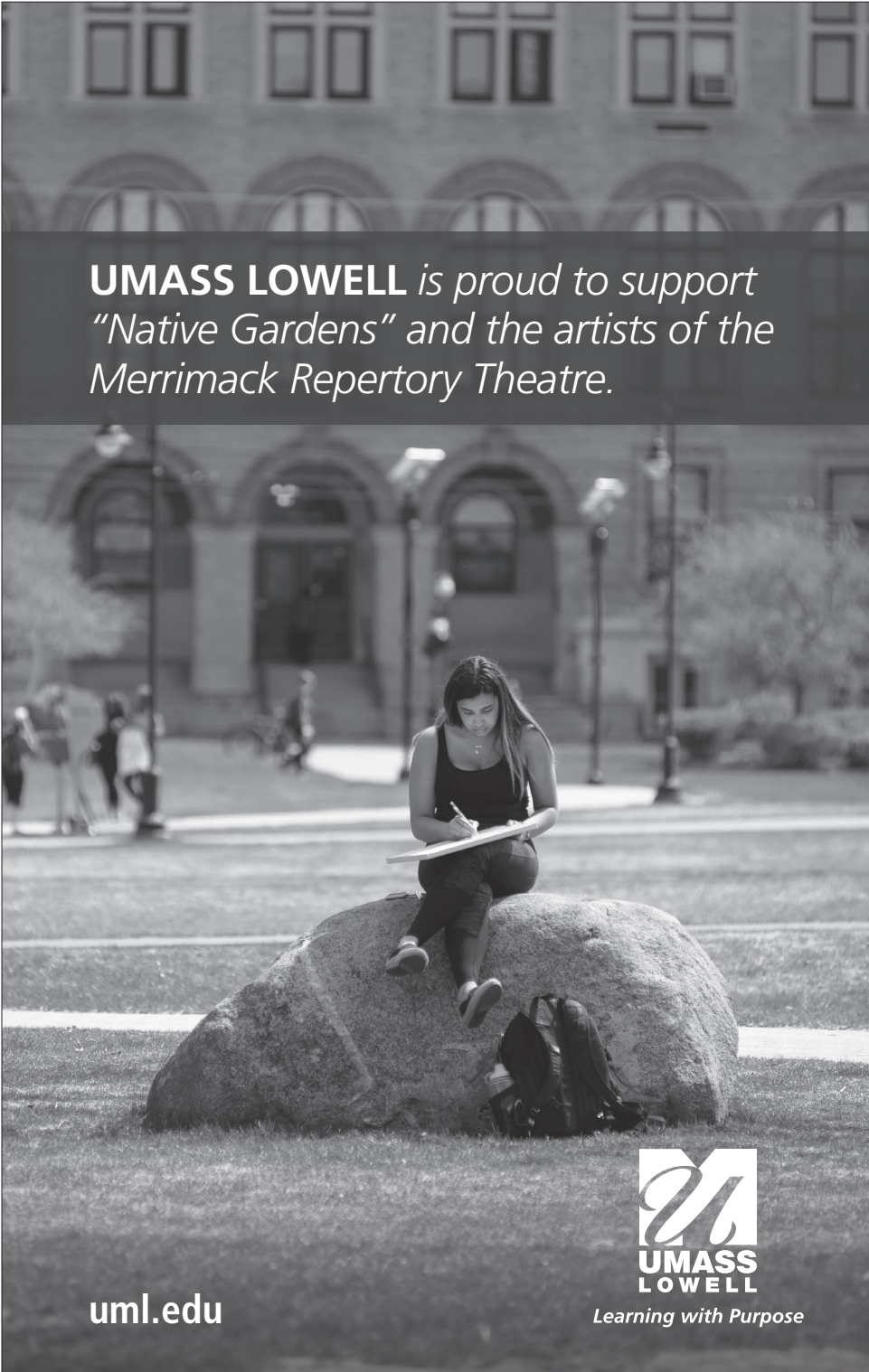
ALEXIS DISTLER (*Scenic Designer*) Recent credits include: *The Christians* and *Tartuffe* (Playmakers Repertory Company), *The Government Inspector* (New World Stages and The Duke), *Intimate Apparel* (McCarter Theatre), *The Piano Lesson* (Hartford Stage), *Nureyev's Eyes* (George Street Playhouse), *Toast* (The Public Theater), *Il Turco in Italia* (Juilliard Opera), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Juilliard Opera). Winner of the Barrymore Award for *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play* (The Wilma Theater). **MFA:** NYU. www.alexisdistler.com

MIRANDA KAU GIURLEO (*Costume Designer*) Previous Merrimack Repertory Theatre credits include: *The Royale*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Chill*. Other regional credits include: *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *True West*, *The Effect*, *Flight of the Monarch*, *Totalitarians*, *Lettice and Lovage*, *The New Electric Ballroom*, *Fighting Over Beverly*, *Ponies*, *Dear Liar*, *Our Son's Wedding*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Calvin Berger* (Gloucester Stage Company); *The Scottsboro Boys* (IRNE Award for Outstanding Costume Design), *Allegiance* (SpeakEasy Stage Company); *The Convert*, *Matchless/The Happy Prince*, *Matt and Ben*, *Roots of Liberty* (Central Square Theatre); *Leftovers*, *Dry Land*, *Shockheaded Peter*, *She Kills Monsters*, *Love Person*, *Neighbors*, *GRIMM*, *The Good Negro*, *After the Quake* (Company One); *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's 2nd Stage); *Richard III*, *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Actor's Shakespeare Project). Miranda has also designed and built costumes

for the U.S.S. Constitution Museum's original production "Sailor's Wives and Sailor's Lives." She is currently on the faculty at Bridgewater State University where designs include: *Gypsy*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Assassins*, *Pilgrims of the Night*, *The Foreigner*, *Conference of the Birds*, and *Three Penny Opera*. MirandaGiurleo.com

KAREN PERLOW (*Lighting Designer*) returns to Merrimack Repertory Theatre after designing last year's *The Royale*. She has designed lights for many greater Boston venues including: SpeakEasy Stage Company, Lyric Stage Company, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New Repertory Theatre, Actors' Shakespeare Project, Boston Playwrights' Theater, Central Square Theater, and Shakespeare and Company. She has taught Lighting Design at Northeastern University, and MIT, and guest designed at Boston College, Salem State University, and Boston Conservatory. She also serves as the treasurer of the Theater Community Benevolent Fund. She has received several IRNE Awards for Best Lighting Design, and Best Light Design at the NYC United Solo Theater Festival.

DANIEL ERDBERG (*Original Music and Sound Designer*) is pleased to return to Merrimack Rep, where previous work includes *The Lion*, *The White Chip*, *My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend*, and *Little Orphan Danny*. Daniel's designs have been heard at numerous New York City theatres, including The Public, Roundabout, City Center, 59E59, Atlantic, Prospect and HERE. Highlights include the American premiere of Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You*, Mike Daisey's *Last Cargo Cult* and *Time it Was with Bill Irwin*. Regional credits include Arena Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Geffen Playhouse, ACT, Geva Theatre Center, Virginia Stage, Northshore and Long Wharf, as well as productions in Korea, Japan, China, Canada and Cuba. He is a frequent Broadway associate designer, where credits include *The Iceman Cometh*, *Significant Other*, *Violet*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Heiress*, and *The Nance*. Daniel is a member of USA829, IATSE, SDC and the Lincoln



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Learning with Purpose

WHO'S WHO

Center Director's Lab. He is a faculty member at Tisch/NYU and a graduate of Northwestern University.

URSULA KWONG-BROWN (*Original Music and Sound Designer*) is a composer and media artist from New York City. Described as "atmospheric and accomplished" by *The New York Times*, her work has been performed in diverse venues, including Carnegie Hall, Le Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre and the Manhattan Movement & Arts Center in New York, and the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Awards include a 2017-2019 fellowship with the Berkeley Symphony, the 2016 George Ladd Prix de Paris Prize, the 2015 Composers, Inc. BAMM Prize, and the 2014 Bowdoin Festival Prize, as well as honors from ASCAP, the New York Composers' Circle and the Chicago Ensemble. This past year she was commissioned by the Composers, Inc. Matthew Paul Finnegan Commissioning Prize to write a string quartet, and by the San Francisco Friends of Contemporary Music to write for the Black Cedar trio. Plans for 2019 include new works for both the Berkeley Symphony and the UC Berkeley Symphony. In May 2018, Ursula finished a Ph.D. in Music Composition & New Media at UC Berkeley with support from a Mellon-Berkeley fellowship. She received her B.A. from Columbia University in 2010, graduating with honors in music and biology.

JUDY BOWMAN, CSA (*Casting Director*) **MRT:** *Abigail/1702*. Recent work with Actors Theatre of Louisville, Dorset Theatre Festival, Studio Theatre DC, Cleveland Play House, DCPA, Woolly Mammoth, & NJ Rep. **New York:** *Perfect Teeth* (TheaterLab), Greg Keller's *Dutch Masters* (Wild Project/Andre Holland), *Arden/Everywhere* (BPAC), *Nibbler* (Rattlestick). **Film/Television:** *Big Dogs*, *Hurricane Bianca*, *Lost Cat Corona*, *Block Island*, *Gold Star*. Artios Award nominee for Best Webseries Casting. PT Barnum Award recipient. www.judybowmancasting.com

MAEGAN ALYSE PASSAFUME (*Production Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be returning to

MRT for *Native Gardens*! Selected previous credits include stage manager on *Guards at the Taj* (Central Square Theater); *The Royale* and *Chill* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *The Effect* and *A Measure of Normalcy* (Gloucester Stage Company); *Creditors* and *Ugly Lies the Bone* (Shakespeare & Company); *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Greater Boston Stage Company); assistant stage manager on *She Loves Me*, *Mame*, *Lucky Stiff*, *Sweet Charity*, *Funny...Forum*, and *How to Succeed... Trying* (Greater Boston Stage Company). Maegan received her BFA in Stage Management from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. She and her fiancé live with their dog in Lowell, MA.

PETER CREWE (*Producer*) **MRT:** Producer: *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*,

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WHO'S WHO

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" & "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 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.



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. MRT's first production, *The Passion of Dracula*, featured Matt Williams, best known now as the creator/producer of the classic sitcoms “Home Improvement” and the original “Roseanne,” and Judith Townsend.
2. John Lipsky's *The Survivor: A Cambodian Odyssey* in 1993. Photo: Kevin Harkins.
3. U.S. Representative Jim Shannon, MRT Co-founder John Briggs, and original Board President Nancy L. Donahue at the box office at Mahoney Hall in 1979. Note the original name and logo in the background.

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To learn more about the Cohort Club, go to mrt.org/cohortclub



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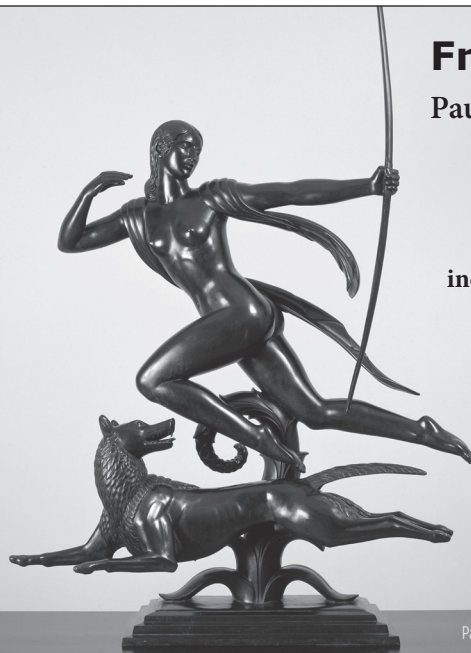
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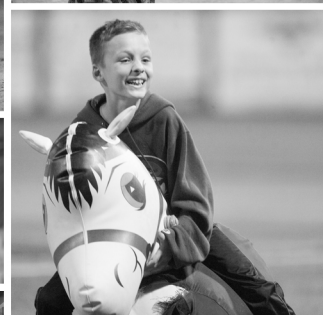
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For more information, please contact:

Bonnie J. Butkas, Executive Director at 978-654-7558 or 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.

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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:

Jill Meredith Vinci, Development Manager at 978-654-7579 or jill.vinci@mrt.org.





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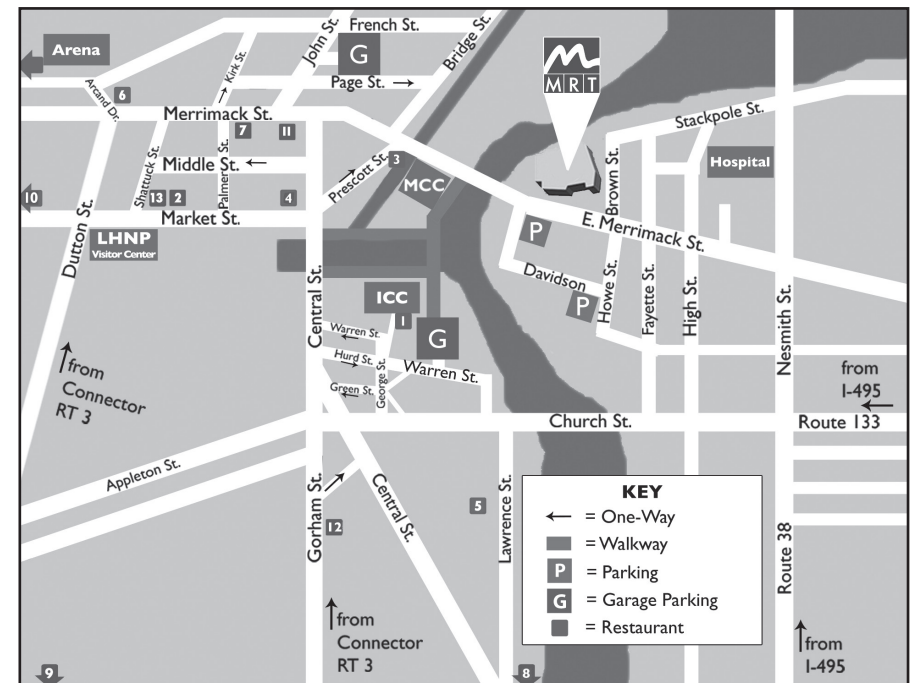
DINING GUIDE

Dine at one of MRT's restaurant partners. *Come early, enjoy a meal, and see a show!*

- | | | |
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107 Merrimack St. |
| 3. BLUE TALEH
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978-701-7225 92 Bolt St. | 12. THE KEEP
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978-455-3666
111 Gorham St. |
| 4. BREW'D AWAKENING COFFEEHAUS
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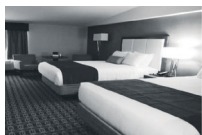
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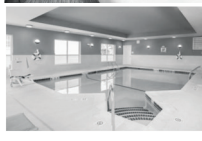
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Lauren Gunderson, Playwright. *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley and The Heath*.

STAGESOURCE 'STANDING O' FOR WOMEN

MRT earned four 'Standing O' citations, an unusually high number for one season, from StageSource for plays primarily created, directed, designed, and produced by women. The winning plays are *Native Gardens*, *The Heath*, *Cry It Out*, and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*. StageSource provides leadership and services to advance the art of theatre in the Greater Boston and New England region.



R. N. Sandberg and Megan Sandberg-Zakian at the reading of *Zabel in Exile*.

ZABEL IN EXILE

In August MRT presented a reading of the world premiere of *Zabel in Exile* by R.N. Sandberg, an historical play about the extraordinary life of Armenia writer, political activist, and feminist Zabel Yessayan. More 150 attended the reading, which was directed by 2017/18 MRT Resident Director Megan Sandberg-Zakian, who won the IRNE Award for Best Director for our production of *The Royale*. The play was a commission by Judith Saryan.



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JEANNE D'ARC SUPPORTS STUDENT MATINEES

Jeanne D'Arc has graciously agreed to sponsor the publication of all MRT PlayGuides this season. The PlayGuide is an in-depth study guide for the thousands of Merrimack Valley youth who attend student matinees here each year. Jeanne D'Arc's support will allow each student to receive their own printed copy for the first time in years.



From L-R: Lyla El-Gamel, Breanna Terrero, Olivia Molligi, Maggie Gearan, Khaleel Parrish, Abigail E. Ramirez, and Catherine Snow.

YOUNG COMPANY SOARS

The 14 teenagers in the MRT Young Company Class of 2018 gave a soul-stirring performance in August to end their month-long summer workshop. Under the guidance of Program Director Will Rogers and Associate Director Richard Liccardo, this season of the Young Company was generously supported by the attendees of our Annual Gala and Auction, the Aubert J. Fay Charitable Trust, Trustees of the Ayer Home, and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley.

MRT OPEN CAPTIONING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TDF

Thanks in part to a grant and guidance from TDF, Merrimack Repertory Theatre will offer an open captioning performance for all shows this season. Similar to TV captions, text representing all words and sounds will be displayed during the performance. Open Captioning is designed to make theatre accessible to our deaf and hard of hearing patrons.

Open Captioning performances are the third Sunday, 2:00 p.m. matinee of each play:

NATIVE GARDENS – September 30, 2018

MURDER FOR TWO – November 4, 2018

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY – December 16, 2018

SLOW FOOD – January 27, 2019

THE HEATH – March 3, 2019

THE HAUNTED LIFE – April 7, 2019

CRY IT OUT – May 12, 2019

When booking your tickets, mention your interest in open captioning in order to secure the best view of the display. Please call the Box Office at 978-654-4678. Visit mrt.org/opencaptioning for further updates and information. *Dates are subject to change.*



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Phone: 978-654-4678, press 1
Fax: 978-654-7575
Email: 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
Subscriber ticket exchange by email:
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

GROUPS & DISCOUNTS

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.

THEATRE ACCESS

MRT will offer **open captioning** performances for all shows this season, thanks in part to TDF. **Wheelchair** space is available by notifying the Box Office when purchasing tickets. A ramp is located to the left of MRT's main entrance. Please reserve **listening devices** through the box office. For further information, please visit mrt.org, or contact the Enterprise Bank Box Office.

RESTROOMS

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.

PARKING

Free parking is available at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, at 144 E. Merrimack St, Lowell. The church lot is unavailable on Saturdays at 4pm. Parking in the church lot may be unavailable when LMA events are held. Check your email or our website for updates. To discuss parking availability please call our Enterprise Bank Box Office at 978-654-4678.

Additional covered 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

LATECOMER POLICY

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.

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.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

COURTESY REMINDERS

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

For the comfort of all patrons, please avoid wearing strong perfumes, colognes, and hairsprays. If you bring a beverage into the theatre, please carry out the trash when you leave. Coat racks are available in the outer lobby.

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.

SMOKING

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building. Ashtrays are available outside the main entrance.

CONCESSIONS

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.

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. You will be notified if you are called.

FIRE REGULATIONS

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.



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.



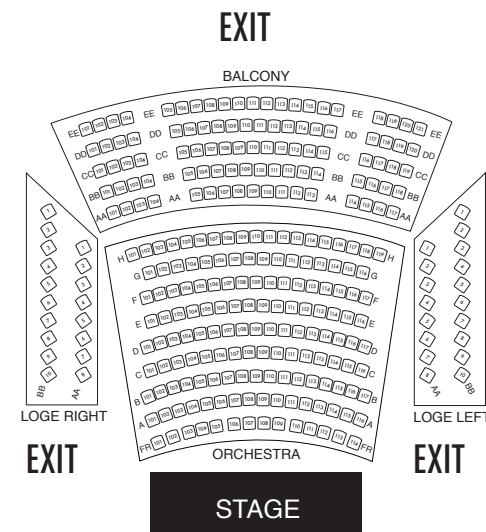
The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.



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



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



COMING NEXT!
OCTOBER 17 – NOVEMBER 11



MURDER FOR TWO

BOOK & MUSIC BY Joe Kinosian

BOOK & LYRICS BY Kellen Blair

DIRECTED BY JC Clementz

ONE MURDER. TWO ACTORS. SIX SUSPECTS. AND ONE PIANO!

Who killed the great American novelist Arthur Whitney at his own surprise party? In this zany, whodunit, comedy musical, every guest has a motive. Was it the prima ballerina, the widow, the niece, the psychiatrist—or even the detective? Two actors play 13 roles—and the piano—in this entertaining homage to old-fashioned murder mysteries. The play stars co-writer Joe Kinosian, in the role he originated Off-Broadway.

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