



ICONIC COMEDY

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

BY **JANE WAGNER**

DIRECTED BY **COURTNEY SALE**

OCTOBER 2-20, 2024



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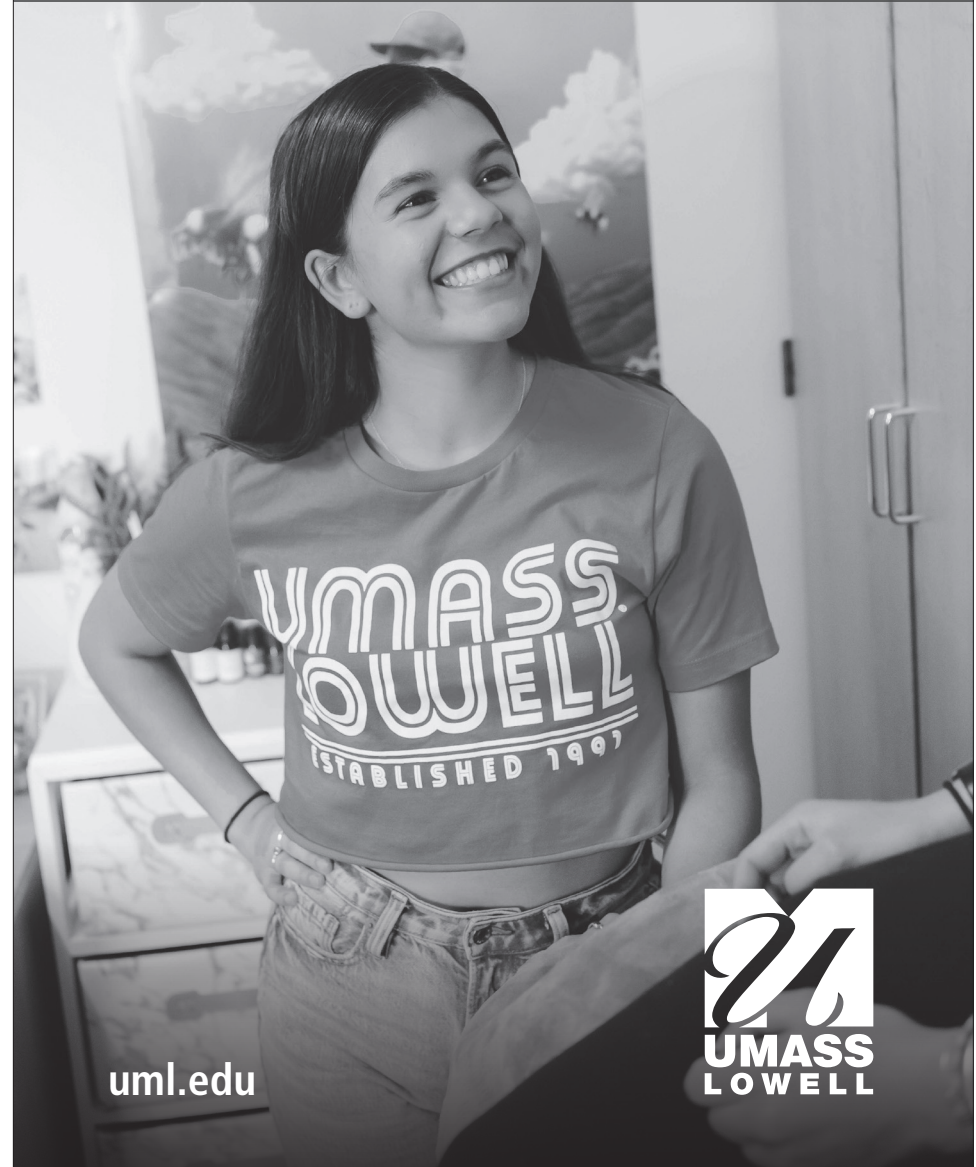
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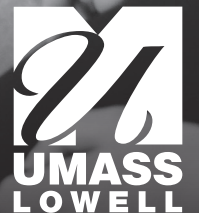
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COURTNEY SALE

NANCY L. DONAHUE EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear MRT Community,

Whether you're a long-time subscriber or a new patron of MRT, **it is my pleasure to welcome you to the first show of our 46th season:** Jane Wagner's *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. This iconic comedy, famously brought to life by Lily Tomlin, explores the themes of society, power, art, and life with sharp wit and insight.

When planning the 2024-25 season, we anticipated a contentious election year, but we couldn't have

predicted how much the political landscape would evolve before the play's run at MRT. This play lifts women's roles in history, including Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to run on a major US national ticket, while also attempting to fill the blanks on the demands placed on women—motherhood, gender equality, and economic empowerment. Wagner's satirical humor brings these issues to the forefront with striking relevance and artistry. The play's exploration of these themes with such artistry and remarkable depth is what truly makes it a standout piece of theatre.

We're excited to welcome the wildly funny and talented Kathryn Van Meter in the starring role (she plays 12 characters!) in this production. Solo performance demands a special kind of courage, endurance, and fearlessness, all of which

Kathryn possesses in abundance. This performance is truly a conversation between performer and audience, so we encourage you to relax, laugh out loud, and enjoy the experience.

Our creative team features MRT favorites: Brian Lillienthal (lighting), Dave Remedios (sound), and Yao Chen (costumes). If you've enjoyed their work in the past, you can look forward to more of the same exceptional quality in our current season. We're also pleased to introduce Adam Baacke's scenic design to our stage. A talented Lowell resident, Adam has crafted a playful and imaginative set, with a nod to exaggerated office supplies.

We have a thrilling season planned for you, filled with unforgettable performances and captivating stories! If you haven't already, we warmly invite you to become a subscriber so you don't miss a single moment of the magic. By subscribing, you'll gain access to our upcoming shows, each one designed to inspire, entertain, and provoke thought. Join us as we embark on this exciting journey, and let's make the 46th season one to remember! **Your presence not only supports the arts but also contributes to the vibrant community we've built together at MRT. Let's celebrate all season long.**

In Service,
Courtney

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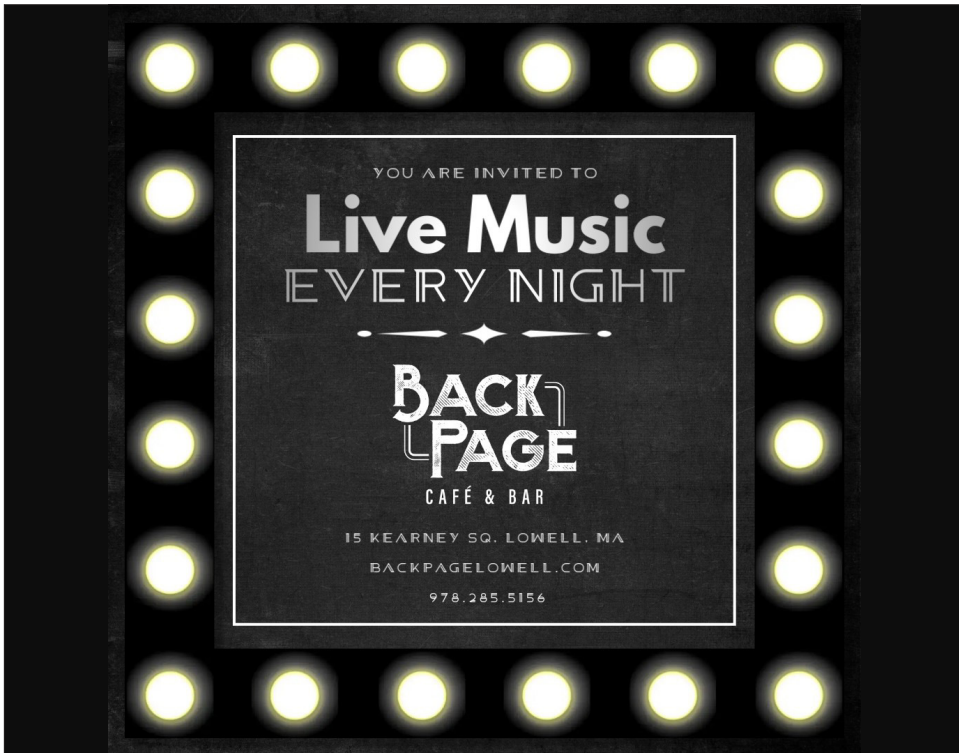
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WHO'S WHO?

G. GORDON LIDDY (1930-2021)

G. Gordon Liddy was an American lawyer and former FBI agent best known for his role in the Watergate Scandal. Along with E. Howard Hunt, Liddy orchestrated the burglary of the Democratic National Committee Headquarters in 1972, an attempt at gaining intel and helping Richard Nixon win re-election. Liddy served eight years in prison for burglary, conspiracy, and illegal wiretapping. In 1980, Liddy published his autobiography, *Will*.

RICHARD LEAKEY (1944-2022)

Richard Leakey was a Kenyan-born paleoanthropologist and conservationist. Leakey's discovery of numerous early human fossils provided the field of anthropology with significant insight into human evolution and its origins in Africa.

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM (1924-2005)

Shirley Chisholm was an American politician. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress. She served seven terms representing New York's 12th congressional district and became a well-known champion of racial and gender equality. In 1972, she became the first Black American to run for president and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

PATTY HEARST (1954-)

Born into a wealthy publishing family, Patty Hearst became the subject of public interest when she was kidnapped from her Berkeley apartment and held for ransom by the anarchist Symbionese Liberation Army in 1974. Hearst allegedly suffered confinement and humiliation by the SLA, who coerced her into saying she joined the group of her own accord. Hearst was convicted of armed robbery in 1976 along with other members of the SLA, and she served time in prison before her sentence was commuted in 1979.

RUPERT MURDOCH (1931-)

Newspaper publisher and media magnate Rupert Murdoch is best known for News Corp, a media and publishing company that oversaw an empire that once included Fox News, 20th Century Fox, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Sun*, and *The Times*.

ISAAC STERN (1920-2001)

Isaac Stern was a Ukrainian-born American violinist. Hailed as one of the greatest musicians of the 20th Century, Stern is also well-remembered for his successful campaign to save Carnegie Hall from demolition in 1960. The Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall is named in his honor.

GERALDINE FERRARO (1935-2011)

Geraldine Ferraro was an American politician and attorney. She served in the United States House of Representatives and was the Democratic vice-presidential nominee alongside Walter Mondale in 1984. She was the first female vice-presidential nominee put forth by a major party.

WHAT'S WHAT

PEPSODENT

An American toothpaste brand that peaked in consumer popularity in the 1940s and 1950s.

HOWARD JOHNSON'S

The now-defunct Howard Johnson's was one of the first national restaurant chains in the United States. It was known for its orange and teal interior design scheme and menu of American culinary favorites, including ice cream, pancakes, burgers, and yes, fried clams.

NOBEL SPERM BANK

The Nobel Sperm Bank, also known as the Hermann J. Muller Repository for Germinal Choice, was a sperm bank in California founded in 1980 by Robert Klark Graham. Graham, a eugenicist, hoped to create a genius generation by only accepting sperm donations from Nobel Laureates. However, with few Nobel Laureates willing to donate, the bank was forced to rely on donations from celebrated academics and, later, athletes.

PETER PRINCIPLE

Developed by Laurence J. Peter, the Peter Principle states that competent employees in workplace hierarchies will continue to climb the ladder of success, continually being promoted until they reach a level where they are no longer competent.

ANDY WARHOL'S CAMPBELL'S SOUP CANS

Painted in 1962, Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* is one of the most celebrated pieces of modern art. It is a series of 32 canvases, each canvas depicting a different flavor of Campbell's soup.

UPANISHADS

The Upanishads are a series of late-Vedic Hindu texts that explore humanity's role within the interconnected universe.

WOMEN'S STRIKE FOR EQUALITY MARCH

Organized by Betty Friedan and the National Organization for Women (NOW), The Women's Strike for Equality March in 1970 marked the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States. In New York City, 50,000 women marched, chanted, and blocked traffic, demanding free abortion, free childcare, and equal opportunities in the workforce and education.

BATAKA BATS

These wooden bats, with thick padding around the end, help children release aggression and energy in a safe way.



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN 2023-24 SEASON!

PHOTOS BY MEGPIX/MEGHAN MOORE: (1) Alaudin Ullah in *Dishwasher Dreams*. | (2) Celena Lopes in *Red Riding Hood*. | (3) (L-R) David M. Lutken, EJ Zimmerman, and Rob Morrison in *The Porch on Windy Hill*. | (4) The Youth Cast in *A Christmas Carol*. | (5) (L-R) Kristin Yancy and Tom Coiner in *Gaslight*. | (6) Dael Orlandersmith in *Spiritus/Virgil's Dance*. PHOTO BY SETH FREEMAN. | (7) (L-R) Tom Coiner, Chris Thorn, Karen McDonald, Alexis Bronkovic, Kristin Yancy, and The Youth Cast in *A Christmas Carol*.



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PRESENTS

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

BY

JANE WAGNER

FEATURING

KATHRYN VAN METER*

SCENIC DESIGNER
ADAM BAACKE

COSTUME DESIGNER
YAO CHEN^

LIGHTING DESIGNER
BRIAN LILLIENTHAL^

SOUND DESIGNER
DAVID REMEDIOS^

STAGE MANAGER
ELIZABETH RAMIREZ*

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
JENNY LAVERY+

DIRECTOR
COURTNEY SALE+

OCTOBER 2-20, 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

Kathryn Van Meter* Trudy

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Carolyn Abraham Production Assistant

Emily Allinson Props Artisan



*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).

THE VIDEOTAPING OR MAKING OF ELECTRONIC OR OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VISUAL RECORDINGS OF THIS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTING RECORDINGS OR STREAMS IN ANY MEDIUM, INCLUDING THE INTERNET, IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED, A VIOLATION OF THE AUTHOR(S)'S RIGHTS AND ACTIONABLE UNDER UNITED STATES COPYRIGHT LAW

WHO'S WHO



KATHRYN VAN METER (Performer) she/her/hers. Kathryn Van Meter is an award winning, multi-hyphenate theatre and film artist, whose 25 year career encompasses work as an Actor, Director, Choreographer, Educator and Intimacy Director and her work has been seen from opera houses to fringe theaters and everything in between. Kathryn loves telling big hearted stories about complicated beings. Some favorite roles include Judy (*Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*), Lady Anne (*Richard III*) Shirley Markowitz (*The Producers*) and Sylvia (*Sylvia*.) As an artist/activist, Kathryn worked with *Arts Ignite*—formerly *A.S.T.E.P. (Artists Striving to End Poverty)*—to develop *One World Through Theatre*, a generative theatrical conversation between students in South Africa, North Carolina, and Washington State. Onscreen, Kathryn choreographed *13 Reasons Why* (Netflix) and *Crater* (Disney+) and was the Intimacy Coordinator for *Echoes* (Netflix) and the upcoming season of *Outer Banks*. She is a proud member of SDC, AGMA, AEA, and Choreographer's Guild and is passionate about cultivating an embodied practice grounded in consent, joy and curiosity.

COURTNEY SALE (Director; Nancy L. Donahue 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*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Playwrights commissioned under her tenure include Trista Baldwin, Vichet Chum, Kevin Kling, Melinda Lopez, Dael Orlandersmith, James Still, Kanean Ung, and 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 the Denver Center, New Harmony Project, Dorset Theatre Festival, Emerson Stage, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, and the Orchard Project. Other distinctions include Cornish College Distinguished Alumni Award,

WHO'S WHO

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.

JENNY LAVERY (Associate Director) she/her/hers. Jenny Lavery is a director, arts leader, and educator who champions stories that foster connection. **Selected Regional Credits:** *Wizard of Oz* at San Pedro Playhouse; *Into the Woods* at Mary Moody Northen Theatre; *Ride the Cyclone*, *Pretend It's Pretend*, *Red Bike* at UT Austin; *Merrily We Roll Along* at Public Theatre of San Antonio; *ROE* at ZACH Theatre; *Junie B Jones* at Magik Theatre, *Dance Nation* at Theatre en Bloc. Jenny holds a BFA from NYU, an M.Ed. from UMass, a Non-Profit Management and Strategic Planning Certification from UPenn, and an MFA in Directing from UT Austin. Jenny is a member of SDC. **Upcoming:** *What the Constitution Means to Me* at ZACH Theatre; *Elephant and Piggie: We are in a Play* at Magik Theatre. jennylavery.com

ADAM BAACKE (Scenic Designer) he/him/his. Although this is his MRT artistic debut, he is familiar to many in Lowell for his work as a planner and administrator for UMass Lowell and the City of Lowell and currently serves as commissioner of capital asset management for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Scenic credits include

work at Missouri Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Indiana Rep, Portland Center Stage, National Theater of the Deaf, Cornell Center for Theater Arts, Western Washington University, Skylight Opera, & the NY State Theater Institute. Museum and special event design credits include Exploration Place (Wichita), Yale University, Cornell University, Amherst College, Brandeis University, The Waynflete School, and Lowell's first Winterfest. He is also an MRT trustee.

YAO CHEN (Costume Designer) **Merrimack Repertory Theatre:** *Until the Flood*, *Holly Fudge*, *Macbeth*, *Letters from Home*. **Regional:** Seattle Children's Theatre (*Little Prince*), Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Mid Winter Nights Dream*), Berkshire Theatre Group (*The Music Man*) Trinity Repertory Company (*Radio Golf*), Indiana Repertory Theatre (*Paper Dream of Harry Chin*, *Diary of Ann Frank*, *The House that Jack Built*, *The Folks at Home*, *The Glass Menageries*), Merrimack Repertory Theatre (*Until the Flood*, *Holly Fudge*, *Macbeth*, *Letters from Home*), Contemporary American Theatre Festival (*Babel*, *Ushuaia Blue*), Orlando Repertory Theatre (*Skippy Jone*, *Diary of Worms*, *Nancy Drew and Her Biggest Case ever*, *Pete the Cat*), Orlando Shakespeare Theatre (*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*), TheatreSquared (*Miss you like Hell*), Children's Theatre of Charlotte (*Elephant and Piggie: We are in a play*), First stage (*Emily Song*

WHO'S WHO

and *Queen of the Night*), Utah Opera and Musical Festival (*Cats*), Lyric Company of Boston, Boston Playwright Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. **International:** Seven Ages, Ltd, Beijing China (*Mozart l'opera rock*) Espresso Theatre (*Amadeus*) in San Jose, Costa Rica. Education: UT Austin. **Personal Comment:** USA829, www.yao-chen.com

BRIAN LILLIENTHAL (Lighting Designer) **Merrimack Repertory Theatre:** 38 Productions including: *I and You, the realness: a break beat play, Silent Sky, 45 Plays....., A Christmas Carol* ('22, '23) **Regional:** Over 300 productions including: 60 productions at Actors Theatre of Louisville (including over 25 world premieres), Alley Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Arizona Theatre Company, Capital Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cleveland Playhouse, GEVA Theatre Center, Gloucester Stage, Hartford Stage, The Huntington Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Milwaukee Rep, Pasadena Playhouse, Playmakers Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, over 30 productions at Trinity Repertory Company, among others. **Education:** MFA: California Institute of the Arts. He has won the Los Angeles Ovation Award for lighting design, as well as the 2016 Artistic Achievement Award from Merrimack Rep, and has been nominated multiple times for Boston's IRNE and Norton Awards. MFA: California Institute of the Arts. Mr. Lillienthal teaches lighting design at Tufts University. He is an in demand

drummer in the Metro Boston area working with country, indie-folk, jump blues, rockabilly, and americana bands both live and recording situations.

DAVID REMEDIOS (Sound Designer) **MRT:** *The 39 Steps; The Rise and Fall of Holly Fudge; A Woman of the World; The Wickhams and Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley; The Haunted Life; Slow Food; Murder for Two; The Villains' Supper Club; Knyum; The Royale; Women in Jeopardy!; 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; Two Jews Walk into a War; The Blonde, the Brunette, and the Vengeful Redhead. Recent:* *The Winter's Tale* and *Macbeth* (Norton Award, Commonwealth Shakespeare); *Tornado Tastes Like Aluminum Sting* (Contemporary American Theater Festival); *The Hours Are Feminine* (INTAR); *Thirst* (Lyric Stage); *Machine Learning* (Central Square Theater); *A Christmas Carol* (Northern Stage); *We Had a Girl Before You* (Norton Award, Greater Boston Stage). **Regional:** Arizona Theatre Company; Everyman Theatre; Huntington Theatre; Portland Stage; City Theatre Company; Alley Theatre; Trinity Rep; Geva Theatre Center; The Studio Theatre; 59E59; American Repertory Theatre; Theatre for a New Audience; La Jolla Playhouse; Berkeley Rep; CENTERSTAGE Baltimore; Cincinnati Playhouse. **International:** Prominent arts festivals in Bogotá, Paris, Hong Kong and Edinburgh. Awards: Elliot Norton, IRNE,

WHO'S WHO

Connecticut Critics Circle. remedios-sound.com.

EMILY ALLINSON (Props Artisan) she/her/hers. **Merrimack Repertory Theatre:** Props artisan for *Gaslight, A Christmas Carol, and The Porch on Windy Hill. Regional: Greater Boston Stage Company (*Boulevard of Bold Dreams, Clue, Titanish, Dial M for Murder, Guys and Dolls*) Peterborough Players (All productions since 2018 including *The Drowsy Chaperone, She Loves Me, Our Town, Cabaret, Noises Off, and The Man of La Mancha*). 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.*

ELIZABETH RAMIREZ (Stage Manager) she/they/hers. **Merrimack Repertory Theatre:** *Macbeth 2022* (Stage Manager). **Regional:** *Tootise, Frozen* (North Shore Music Theater), *Evita, Twilight Los Angeles 1995, Macbeth in Stride* (American Repertory Theatre), *Syzygy, Optional Boss Battle* (Two River Theater), *Luchadora* (Seattle Children's Theatre), *South Pacific, The Music Man, Anything Goes* (Reagle Music Theatre), *A Strange Loop, Fairview* (Sub), *Songs for a New World* (Speakeasy Stage), *Diaspora, Raisin in the Sun, Keyring, Lonely Planet, Statements after an Arrest* (New Repertory Theatre), *Urban Nutcracker* (City Ballet of Boston).

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE (www.mrt.org) Merrimack Repertory Theatre (MRT) builds community through theatre. Our shows celebrate new stories, new interpretations of classics, new voices on stage, new audiences, and new collaborations that help people feel, think, and connect.

As one of the leading performing arts organizations in the Merrimack Valley, we aim to enhance the quality of life in our region by creating space for joy, thought, conversation, and shared experiences. We are a hub for compassionate community, dynamic cultural expression, learning experiences, and economic vitality.

We lead with artistic excellence. We foster a culture of belonging and inclusion. We embrace lifelong learning and education. We practice sustainable stewardship of resources.

As a non-profit, we aim to provide a welcoming and inclusive space for all. We partner with businesses and other non-profits to fully engage the community; and contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of Lowell.

Recent acclaimed productions include *Spiritus/Virgil's Dance, The Porch on Windy Hill, 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

WHO'S WHO

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*.

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ABOUT US

The Sahel is a largely semi-arid belt of barren, sandy and rock-strewn land, the Sahel marks the physical and cultural transition between the continent's more fertile tropical regions to the south and its desert in the north. At Sahel Restaurant & Lounge "SAHEL", our leitmotiv is the quality of the food and service. Our menu represents the traditional culinary African and Caribbean cuisines with some Cameroonian-influenced alternatives. SAHEL is situated in the heart of downtown Lowell (City of Lowell, MA) in a 3,500 square feet of newly renovated space just about a mile away from the main campus of UMass Lowell. Sahel is open everyday from 11am to 10pm. SAHEL offers a 200 seats fine dining restaurant upstairs with 75 seats lounge area in the basement lower level.



WHAT WE DO AND OFFER?

SAHEL focus primarily on Afro-Caribbean menu with a touch of French and Cameroonian influences. The menu contains traditional favorites such as Ndole, Egusi Soup, Jerk Chicken, Mofongo, Fufu, Puff-Puff, Attieke, Eru, Manfe, Jollof Rice, Achu Soup,okra Soup, Burgers, Pasta, Burritos, Riz Cole, Griot and Plantains amongst others. These traditional dishes are prepared by recognized chefs. The consistency in delivery the same quality of food and services is the pride of the management.

SAHEL'S front of the house staff members are hired to communicate the menu and specials and enhance your overall dining experience. Our staff goes through extensive training, ensuring high quality customer service.

In addition to in-house dining, the restaurant will offer a full and complete take-out and catering services as well.



POPULAR DISHES

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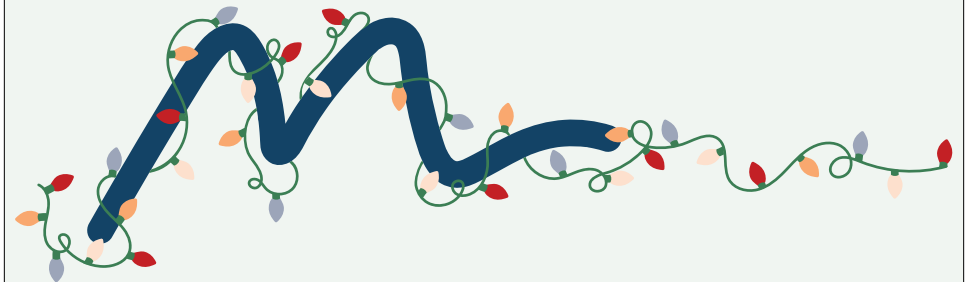
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