



MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE



# WILD HORSES

SEPTEMBER 17-OCTOBER 3

VIDEO ON DEMAND OCTOBER 4-17

## COURTNEY SALE

### NANCY L. DONAHUE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

At long last we gather in person to experience the exhilaration of live theatre. Our world has changed dramatically since we were last together. Over the past



19 months, the entire global community has experienced loss in many forms. The sheer act of gathering reminds us of the extraordinary power of theatre; the ability to be transformed in community. We have missed you. We are grateful you are here.

I am delighted to mark this time with Allison Gregory's funny and fierce *Wild Horses*. Allison's world and words take us to the youngest spaces of ourselves; inviting adventure, surprise, and

the yearnings of our teenage years. When planning this season, we wanted to center humor, healing, and celebration. *Wild Horses* is the perfect launch for this selection of shows which I hope will thrill you all season.

We are overjoyed to welcome back to MRT stages Leenya Rideout, who has approached every moment of this process with generosity and fearlessness. The musical stylings of Rafael Molina have brought such vibrancy and nuance to this production. The entire MRT team has taken on the challenges of touring with rigor and heart. Our special thanks to Mosiac Lowell who has partnered with us to present the piece in various locations around Lowell. Our Sunday shows include a post-event discussion for folks to contribute to Lowell's next cultural plan. The future of arts and culture are better when everyone is at the table. Thank you Mosiac Lowell!

We are in challenging times. Whether in person or streaming, I hope *Wild Horses* provides you moments of levity, elation, and catharsis. I believe profoundly artists will continue to lead us out of this crisis; challenging us to see our world anew. Thanks for being here.

In service,  
Courtney

## BONNIE J. BUTKAS

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you for coming along this journey with us. It's hard to believe that we have reached the moment that we planned and prepared for—performing live with an audience.



I'll say it again: you lifted and sustained MRT to reach this moment. Your donations, renewed subscriptions, kind notes, and support for our Covid safety policies helped tremendously. Thank you!

You've all had a chance to "meet" our artistic leader Courtney Sale through Zoom events, weekly updates, and her work as a director on *A Woman of the World*. As Courtney and I celebrate our first season together, I want you to know what a gift her leadership has been throughout the last 18 months. She has brought joy to our work, a willingness to make hard decision, great flexibility, a strong commitment to equity, and an artistic vision that feels inclusive and exciting.

I hope you'll join me in congratulating Courtney on her extraordinary work. You and I couldn't have asked for a better artistic director.

Gratefully,  
Bonnie

## Welcome.

## This is a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space.

2021-22 SEASON

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

SEE ALL 4 SHOWS FOR AS LOW AS \$84

THE RISE AND FALL OF HOLLY FUDGE

By Trista Baldwin

November 26-December 12, 2021

The most wonderful time of year?! A new comedy.

ERMA BOMBECK: AT WIT'S END

By Allison Engel and Margaret Engel

January 19-February 6, 2022

America's Funniest Mom. Ever.

BACK TOGETHER AGAIN: THE MUSIC OF ROBERTA FLACK AND DONNY HATHAWAY

March 30-April 17, 2022

IN CONCERT: "Where Is the Love?,"

"The Closer I Get to You," "Killing Me Softly"

BEST SUMMER EVER

Written and Performed by Kevin Kling

May 4-22, 2022

A kid's life — simple joys and startling surprises.



SUBSCRIBE & CELEBRATE NOW!

See all 4 shows for as low as \$84\*

www.mrt.org/subscriptions

\*Previews, Zone D. Prices vary/subject to change.

ON TOUR: WILD HORSES

Details @ www.mrt.org/wildhorses

Stevens-Coolidge House and Gardens in North Andover

Friday, Sep 17 at 6 PM

Saturday, Sep 18 at 6 PM

(Rain Date: North Common Park, Lowell, Oct 3 at 3 PM)

Stoklosa Middle School, Lowell (seated)

Sunday, Sep 19 at 3 PM

In partnership with Mosaic Lowell

Whistler House Museum of Art in Lowell (seated)

Thursday, Sep 23 at 7 PM

Friday, Sep 24 at 7 PM

Saturday, Sep 25 at 2 PM

Saturday, Sep 25 at 7 PM

Unitas Community Center, Lowell (seated)

Sunday, Sep 26 at 3 PM

In partnership with Mosaic Lowell

Western Avenue Studios (seated)

Thursday, Sep 30 at 7 PM

Friday, Oct 1 at 7 PM

Saturday, Oct 2 at 7 PM

North Common Park, Lowell

(picnic-style, bring your own chair)

Sunday, Oct 3 at 3 PM

BUY TICKETS!

For tickets to live performances, call the Enterprise Bank Box Office at 978-654-4678.

\$21 Adults, \$15 Students

VIDEO

Video on Demand OCT 4-17 Book at www.mrt.org \$21 Adults, \$15 Students

# MRT's COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

FROM THE LOWELL SUN, AUGUST 25, 2021

“The health of our patrons, staff, artists and volunteers is our foremost concern as we prepare to reopen our doors,” said Bonnie J. Butkas, Executive Director. “Our decision to require proof of vaccine or negative test results and masking came from feedback from our patrons and the latest public health recommendations. It underscores our commitment to public health and safety.”

The new policies go into effect immediately and will remain in effect at least through Oct. 31, after which they will be re-examined on a regular basis through the fall and winter.

Merrimack Repertory Theatre banded with 18 other Greater Boston theaters in adopting the new policy which applies to audiences, theater staffs and actors, although actors won't wear masks while performing.



Bonnie J. Butkas (left) and Courtney Sale in the lobby at MRT's Nancy L. Donahue Theatre — next to the poster for the first two shows cancelled due to the pandemic. Photo by Lowell Sun.

## COVID-19 PROTOCOLS UPDATED SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

As we resume live performances, we are committed to the health and safety of all of our artists, employees, and guests. We joined hands last month with 18 fellow theatres in the Boston area to announce our commitment to public safety as live, indoor performances restart in the region. All of our organizations will require proof of vaccination or a recent negative test.

We suggest you **arrive 45 minutes before** the start of the performance in order to be screened and enter.

Beginning September 14 and through at least October 31, 2021, to ensure the safety of all MRT theatregoers, our policies are:

1. Patrons who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (at least 14 days after final dose) will need to **present proof of vaccination**. You can show either paper or electronic documentation (including a photo of your card or a vaccination app, such as Bindle, VaxYes, Commonpass, Clear, etc.). Those who have not been fully vaccinated will need to submit a COVID-19 test (see below). *If you forget* your proof of vaccination or negative test, there will be no admittance, and we will work with you to arrange a future visit or video access, or to refund your payment.
2. All unvaccinated guests will be required to **show proof of a negative COVID-19 test** administered within 72 hours prior to the performance. Both PCR and antigen tests are acceptable. We will also accept negative at-home (“rapid”) tests administered within 24 hours prior to the performance. Guests can show either paper or electronic documentation (including a photo of negative results). Persons with a *religious or medical exemption* must still present a negative test result to enter. *If you forget* your proof of vaccination or negative test, there will be no admittance, and we will work with you to arrange a future visit or video access, or to refund your payment.
3. MRT requires all guests to **wear a mask covering your nose and mouth** at all times while in the theatre or at an off-site location for a MRT performance, including outdoor locations, except while actively eating and drinking. MRT will provide complimentary masks to guests who forget to bring one. *If you choose not to wear a mask*, there will be no admittance to the aforementioned properties, and we will work with you to arrange a future visit or video access, or refund your payment.

We will update this information as the pandemic changes. For further information, please feel free to email either [box\\_office@mrt.org](mailto:box_office@mrt.org) or [marketing@mrt.org](mailto:marketing@mrt.org).

**DETAILS AT [WWW.MRT.ORG/COVID](http://WWW.MRT.ORG/COVID)**

## INTERVIEW: PLAYWRIGHT ALLISON GREGORY

When Courtney Sale first directed *Wild Horses* at Contemporary American Theatre Festival in 2017, trustee Sharon J. Anderson interviewed playwright Allison Gregory about horses and teenagers and all things wild. We're thrilled to reprint this talk between two amazing women. Learn more about Gregory at [www.allisongregoryplays.com](http://www.allisongregoryplays.com).

Epigraphs to the script of *Wild Horses*:

"Against all this, Youth,  
Flaming like the wild roses,  
Flashing like a star out of the twilight,  
Its fierce necessity, it's sharp desire,  
Singing and singing."

**Prairie Spring by Willa Cather**

"I have my freedom but I don't have much time."

**The Rolling Stones, "Wild Horses"**

**Sharon J. Anderson:** *Your play begins with a couple of epigraphs. The first one is part of a poem by Willa Cather called Prairie Spring. The opening of the poem describes the prairie landscape in almost funereal terms, then "youth" bursts into the scene with its "fierce necessity" and "sharp desire."*

**Allison Gregory:** When we are young, everything has an edge to it. We look for the edges, try to scale them, and fall off all the time. I love the imagery of this particular quote because fairly recently I went through the teens with my own two teens. I remember how that felt. There was no proportion to life. Everything felt hugely mundane or massively incomparable or insanely wrong.

**Your other epigraph is from the song, "Wild Horses" by the Rolling Stones: "I have my freedom, but I don't have much time."**

As an adult, you realize how quickly everything goes. All of a sudden, the bulk of your life is behind you and you're like, "What? That was just yesterday!" Teens do not have enough time for anything. They don't have enough time to make the world better, their lives better, or their bedrooms better.



**You often talk about how your kids brought you to your knees. Did you ever bring your parents to their knees?**

Yes, very much so. I was a good girl, but my family – like many families – had a lot of secrets, and a lot of misinformation and missing information. In my middle school years, I started to rebel against it. I didn't know that that was what I was doing. I just did it.

As a parent myself now, every time I discipline my kids or enforce any kind of punishment, I look in my rearview mirror and ask, "How would I have responded to that?" which is sometimes helpful and sometimes completely debilitating. Sometimes you just have to act. In some of their responses to my rebelling, my parents probably fostered even more misbehavior. I don't know if there was a good way out. I don't know if what I went through could have been avoided.

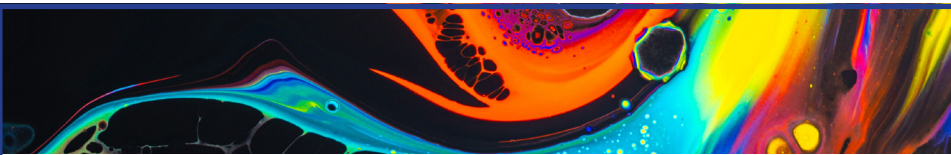
**Willa Cather also said, "People are always talking about the joys of youth – but, oh, how youth can suffer!"**

Gosh, yes. It's insufferable. I don't know anyone who wants to go back to that time. It's impossible to be a teenager, and I don't mean just today. I mean in the scheme of life. It's hard because you have so much desire. You have so many needs, and you have so little power.

I wrote *Wild Horses* because I watched this struggle with my own kids who are in a very different dynamic than I was growing up in terms of our family life, what's going on in the world, and their level of privilege. But it doesn't matter. Being a teenager is hard. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. (continued on Page 24)



(right) Rafael Molina and Leenya Rideout in rehearsal at The Stevens-Coolidge House & Gardens.



# Mosaic Lowell

Many creatives, many cultures, one community  
*An arts and cultural economy plan for all of Lowell*

Ubunifu mwingi, tamaduni nyingi, jamii moja  
*Mpango wa uchumi na utamaduni wa Lowell yote*

Muita criatividade, muitas culturas, uma comunidade  
*Um plano econômico cultural e artístico para toda a região de Lowell*

ការវិវឌ្ឍន៍វិស័យសិល្បៈ, វប្បធម៌វប្បធម៌, សហគមន៍មួយ

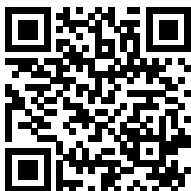
ជាសិល្បៈ និងគំរោងវប្បធម៌សេដ្ឋកិច្ចមួយ សំរាប់មនុស្សទាំងអស់ នៅ Lowell

Muchas entidades creativas, muchas culturas, una comunidad  
*Un plan para las artes y la economía cultural para todo Lowell*

## Mosaic Lowell will:

- Enliven all of Lowell and its neighborhoods as places to live, work, and visit
- Attract new audiences for Lowell's many cultural, creative, and artistic organizations
- Build equity by elevating opportunities for all - bringing new attention and resources to them
- Raise new revenues for the City and creative enterprises through increased visitorship and sales and by attracting new businesses
- Engage youth with arts and culture, critical elements for a complete education, and a happy and successful life
- Position arts, culture, and the creative economy as core elements of the City of Lowell's strategic master planning for the future

Join our List



To become involved, contact us at  
[mosaiclowell@glcfoundation.org](mailto:mosaiclowell@glcfoundation.org).

COURTNEY SALE  
NANCY L. DONAHUE  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BONNIE J. BUTKAS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

# WILD HORSES

BY

ALLISON GREGORY

STARRING

LEENYA RIDEOUT\*

WITH RAFAEL MOLINA

COSTUME DESIGNER

A. LEE VILIESIS

FILMMAKER

KATHY WITTMAN

STAGE MANAGER

MAEGAN A. CONROY\*

DIRECTED BY

COURTNEY SALE+

SEPTEMBER 17-OCTOBER 3, 2021  
VIDEO ON DEMAND OCTOBER 4-17

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
MOSAIC LOWELL

\*Actors and Stage Managers appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association  
+Member of Stage Director and Choreographers Society

Wild Horses is produced by special arrangement with BRET ADAMS, LTD., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036.  
[www.bretadamsltd.net](http://www.bretadamsltd.net)

Originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in July 2017, under the leadership of Ed Herendeen, Producing Director, and Peggy McKowen, Associate Producing Director.

Wild Horses was first produced as a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere by Contemporary American Theater Festival (WV), New Jersey Repertory Company (NJ), Vortex Theater (TX), and JCC Rochester (NY). For more information please visit [www.nnpn.org](http://www.nnpn.org).



# BILLBOARD: TOP 20 BESTSELLERS OF THE 1970s

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. "You Light Up My Life" - Debby Boone, 1977                                       | 11. "Stayin' Alive" - Bee Gees, 1978                                  |
| 2. "Tonight's The Night (Gonna Be Alright)" - Rod Stewart, 1976                     | 12. "Hot Stuff" - Donna Summer, 1979                                  |
| 3. "Le Freak" - Chic, 1978  | 13. "You're So Vain" - Carly Simon, 1973                              |
| 4. "How Deep Is Your Love" - Bee Gees, 1977   | 14. "Play That Funky Music" - Wild Cherry, 1976                       |
| 5. "I Just Want To Be Your Everything" - Andy Gibb, 1977                            | 15. "My Sharona" - The Knack, 1979                                    |
| 6. "Silly Love Songs" - Wings, 1976   | 16. "Killing Me Softly" - Roberta Flack, 1973                         |
| 7. "Let's Get It On" - Marvin Gaye, 1973  | 17. "Best Of My Love" - The Emotions, 1977                            |
| 8. "Night Fever" - Bee Gees, 1978   | 18. "The Way We Were" - Barbra Streisand, 1974                        |
| 9. "Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Ole Oak Tree" - Dawn Featuring Tony Orlando, 1973 | 19. "A Fifth Of Beethoven" - Walter Murphy & The Big Apple Band, 1976 |
| 10. "Shadow Dancing" - Andy Gibb, 1978  | 20. "I Will Survive" - Gloria Gaynor, 1979                            |

## CAST

Leenya Rideout ..... Woman  
 Rafael Molina ..... Musician

## TIME AND PLACE

Open Mic Tonight

## ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Casting ..... JZ Casting-Geoff Josselson, CSA & Katja Zarolinski, CSA  
 Lighting Programmer and Resident Sound Engineer ..... Bekah Rudinec  
 Stage Manager (Oct 1-3) ..... Susan L. Hudspeth, Member, Actors' Equity Association

## THANK YOU

Mosaic Lowell  
 Greater Lowell Community Foundation  
 Western Avenue Studios  
 Whistler House Museum of Art  
 Stevens-Coolidge House & Gardens  
 Stoklosa Middle School  
 Unitas Community Center  
 North Common Park/City Of Lowell  
 Lowell Memorial Auditorium  
 Brad Buitenhuys and the Lowell Litter Krewe (Lowell Conservation Commission)



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



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



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

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## WHO'S WHO



**RAFAEL MOLINA** (Musician) Rafael is an artist and an activist. Recent acting credits include *Just Press Save* (Pride Plays) & *She Loves Me* (Village Theatre). His musical

compositions were recently featured in "Closed for Installation," an exhibit in collaboration between the De Young Legion of Honor & the Harvey Milk Photo Center. BFA Cornish College of the Arts. Love to Sofia and the fam. [www.molinarafael.com](http://www.molinarafael.com)



**LEENYA RIDEOUT** (Woman) Pronouns: she/her/hers. MRT: *Avenue X*. Broadway: *War Horse*; *Cyrano de Bergerac*; *Company*; *C a b a r e t . O f f - B r o a d w a y*; *Wild*

*Abandon*, Irish Rep.; *Before We're Gone*, 13th St. Rep.; *Fire and Air* and *As You Like It*, Classic Stage; *The Taming of the Shrew*, Public Theater; and *Cowgirls*, Minetta Lane Theatre. Regional: *Into the Woods*, HVSF; *August Rush*, Paramount; *That Face*, Baltimore Center Stage; *Camelot* and *The Secret Garden*, Capital Rep; *Fairfield*, Cleveland Playhouse; *Man of La Mancha*, Milwaukee Rep; *On Golden Pond*, Casa Manana; *Woody Sez*, Theaterworks; *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, Hangar Theater; *Holidays with the Chalks*, Alliance Theatre; *Merrily We Roll Along*, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; *Cardenio*, ART; and *The Canterbury Tales*, Guthrie Theater. International Tour: *My Fair Lady*. Film: *Love, Repeat*; *Mona Lisa Smile*; *Loser*;

*Bittersweet*. Television: "Bull" (CBS); "Company" (PBS); "Nashville Star" (USA Network), Jerry Lewis Telethon. Radio: Selected Shorts, NPR. Original Cast album of *Wild Abandon* available online. Love to Ted...

**ALLISON GREGORY** (Playwright) Allison's plays have been produced nationally and internationally, and she has received commissions, grants, and development from Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Kennedy Center, South Coast Repertory, Indiana Repertory Theatre, the Playwrights' Center, the Skirball-Kenis Foundation, Geva Theatre Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT Theater, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Northwest Playwrights' Alliance, LATC, and Austin Scriptworks. Her work has been the recipient of the Julie Harris Playwriting Award, South Coast Repertory's Playwright's Award, Garland & Dramalogue Awards, and finalists for the O'Neill Conference, Bay Area Playwright's Festival, American Blues Blue Ink Award. Her plays include *Not Medea* (National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere); *Wild Horses* (NNPN RWP); *Motherland* (Harriet Lake Playfest selection, NNPN Showcase of New Plays). She is currently working on a commission about silent-film icon Louise Brooks for Geva Theatre, *Lulu in Rochester*, and *The Loyals*, a comedy about treason centering on Mrs. Benedict Arnold, and *BackStory*, based on a program in the Texas women's prison system. She has benefitted from residencies at Hedgebrook, the New Harmony Project, and Banff Playwright's Lab, and has been a

## WHO'S WHO

Core Writer of the Playwrights' Center. Allison was recognized this year by TYA USA as "One of the 10 Most Produced TYA Playwrights." Her plays for young audiences include *Go Dog Go!*, adapted from the P.D. Eastman book and co-written with Steven Dietz; *Even Steven Goes to War* ("Zoni" Best New Script Award; AATE and UPRP awards; Kennedy Center New Visions/New Voices selection); *Peter and the Wolf* (Seattle Times Best New Play Award; National tour), *Junie B. in Jingle Bells*, *Batman Smells!* and *Junie B. Is Not A Crook* (over 200 professional productions), adapted from the beloved book series by Barbara Park. *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, adapted from Astrid Lindgren's story, premiered at Teatr Pinokio in Poland, followed by a U.S. premiere. Her adaptation of *Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*, a seven-theater commission, recently premiered at all seven theaters. Allison lives in Seattle and Austin, where she is the co-founder of the Marthas, a playwright collective. Her plays are published by Playscripts, Smith & Krauss, Dramatic Publishing, and Rain City Press. [allisongregoryplays.com](http://allisongregoryplays.com)

**COURTNEY SALE** (Director, Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director) Pronouns: she/her. Courtney joined MRT as the Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director in March of 2020. At MRT she has directed readings of *Gaslight* by Steven Dietz and *The Pill* by Tom Horan, in collaboration with UMass Lowell, as well as *A Woman of the World* by Rebecca Gilman. MRT commissions under her leadership include Vichet Chum, Dael Orlandersmith, and Trista

Baldwin. Prior to MRT, she served as the Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT), the nation's leading generator of new work for young audiences. At SCT, she directed *Black Beauty*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, and *The Little Prince*. Commissioned writers under her tenure include Idris Goodwin, Cheryl L. West, Allison Gregory, Karen Hartman, Trista Baldwin, Ramon Esquivel, and James Still. Recent directing projects: *Tiny Beautiful Things* at Seattle Rep, the world premiere of Steven Dietz's *The Ghost of Splinter Cove* at Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and Ellen Faurey's *Support Group for Men* at Contemporary American Theatre Festival (CATF). Other credits include *The Cake*; *Wild Horses*; *Not Medea* (CATF); *Mr. Burns, A Post Electric Play*; *On Clover Road* (The Phoenix Theater); *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* (Indy Shakes); and *Zen Prayers & Songs* (Fusebox), written and performed by Kirk Lynn. She spent three years as Associate Artistic Director at Indiana Repertory Theatre, where directing credits include the world premiere of *April 4, 1968: Before We Forgot How to Dream*, *The Mountaintop*, *The Mousetrap*, *Jackie & Me*, and two iterations of *A Christmas Carol*. She has developed new work at Denver Center Theatre Company's Summit New Play Festival, The New Harmony Project, Write Now, Dorset Theatre Festival, TheatreWorks (Palo Alto), New Plays for Young Audiences at NYU/Provincetown Playhouse, and The Orchard Project. Other distinctions included Indianapolis Business Journal's Forty Under Forty designation, Cornish College of the



## WHO'S WHO

Arts Distinguished Alumni Award, and the keynote speaker at the 2017 International Council of Fine Arts Deans. She has taught at Summer at Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle Children's Museum, Temple College, and The University of Texas at Austin. Ms. Sale is a proud member of the National Theatre Conference and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. She is represented by A3 Artists Agency in NYC. BFA, Cornish College of the Arts. MFA, The University of Texas at Austin.

**A. LEE VILIESIS** (Costume Designer, Production Manager) Pronouns: Ms./she, her, hers. Credits include the 2016 National Tour of *Fame!*; *A Woman of the World*, *Fannie Lou Hamer: Speak On it!*, *45 Plays for 45 Presidents*, *Tinker to Evers to Chance*, *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, *This Verse Business* (starring Gordon Clapp), and *Stella and Lou* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *Silent Sky* (Merrimack College); *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Dorset Theatre Festival); *Godly Creatures* (The Hub Theatre Company of Boston); *Our Town* (Riverside Theatre Works); *Forbidden Broadway*, *Shout! The Mod Musical*, *Annie*, *The Producers*, and *Nunset Boulevard* (The Arundel Barn Playhouse); *Hansel and Gretel's Grim Tale* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Virginia Stage Company Educational Tour). Education, BFA Theater Design, Rutgers University, Mason Grass School of the Arts. Lee is the Production Manager and Costume Shop Manager for Merrimack Repertory Theater and has worked in other costume shops including: Dorset Theatre Festival, Theatre by The Sea, Virginia Stage

Company, and Opera Theater of St. Louis. [www.aleeviliesis.com](http://www.aleeviliesis.com)

**KATHY WITTMAN** (Filmmaker) is a Boston-based photographer, video designer and documentary filmmaker. She is the principal artist at Ball Square Films, a video production company specializing in documentary photo and video for the performing arts. Recent projects include the video design for *Our Time*, a theatrical time capsule at Suffolk University, and director of photography for *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at New England Conservatory. She also produces virtual performances and maintains video archives for many Boston organizations, including Blue Heron, Boston Baroque, The Huntington Theatre Company, and the Boston Early Music Festival.

**JZ CASTING** (Casting) Partners Geoff Josselson, CSA and Katja Zarolinski, CSA are New York-based casting directors, handling productions for Broadway, Off-Broadway, major New York and regional theatre companies, as well as film and television. Wild Horses is their first collaboration with Merrimack Rep. Previous and current work includes productions for Arena Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Baltimore Center Stage, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Cape Playhouse, Cleveland Play House, Denver Center, Marriott Theatre, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Pittsburgh CLO, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre, Theaterworks Hartford, and the Weston Playhouse. For more

information, please visit [www.jz-casting.com](http://www.jz-casting.com).

**MAEGAN A. CONROY** (Stage Manager) Pronouns: she/her/hers. Maegan is thrilled to return to MRT for *Wild Horses*. Selected previous stage management credits include *Until the Flood*, *Nina Simone: Four Women*, *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Cry It Out*, *The Heath*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Native Gardens*, *The Royale* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *Creditors*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *DibbleDance: Shoes On, Shoes Off*, *Private Lives*, *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare & Company); *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Greater Boston Stage Company); *Guards at the Taj* (Central Square Theatre); *The Effect*, *A Measure of Normalcy* (Gloucester Stage Company). Maegan received her BFA in Stage Management from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. She and her husband live with their dog in Lowell, MA. Maegan is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

**BONNIE J. BUTKAS** (Executive Director) Pronouns: she/her/hers. Bonnie has served as the Senior Director of Foundation Relations at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Director of Development at Geva Theatre Center, Director of External Relations at the York Theatre Company, Director of Development and Communications at TADA! Youth Theatre, a Directing Assistant on *The Lion King* on Broadway, and the co-founder of Lexington Dance Collective. Achievements include: a \$10 million capital campaign at Geva; pivotal funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Bill

## WHO'S WHO

and Melinda Gates Foundation for RIT; and significant growth in contributed revenue at the York, TADA!, and Bristol Valley Theatre. At MRT, she oversaw the company's 40th Anniversary Gala breaking previous fundraising records; led MRT through a yearlong artistic director search and transition; posted three of the top 10 best-selling shows for the company; secured a prestigious Barr Klarman Massachusetts Arts Initiative grant; and led sustained growth in contributed income. She teaches at Middlesex Community College and serves on the Board of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). Previously she volunteered with Girl Scouts of Western New York, YWCA of Monroe County, and co-founded Action Together, a progressive coalition of volunteers. She lives in Westford with her family and extends gratitude to the Trustees, staff, artists, patrons, and volunteers of MRT.

**MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE** (MRT) celebrates 43 years this season as the Merrimack Valley's professional theatre. With a steadfast commitment to new plays, MRT normally produces seven works, including several premieres, in the 279-seat Nancy L. Donahue Theatre at Liberty Hall. Under the leadership of the Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director Courtney Sale and Executive Director Bonnie J. Butkas, MRT strives to fulfill its mission to "create remarkable new and contemporary plays that bring joy to our art form while engaging, entertaining and enriching our community." The non-profit company guarantees that shows are accessible

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 27**

SPECIAL EVENT—FEB 23-MAR 13, 2022

(not part of the subscription series)

# WOODY SEZ: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF WOODY GUTHRIE

Joyous, toe-tapping, and inspirational, *Woody Sez* brings to life the stories and songs of America's great troubadour. The four performers, playing more than 20 instruments, transport the audience through the riveting and often controversial life of Woody Guthrie. Musical numbers include "This Land Is Your Land," "Pastures of Plenty," "Bound for Glory," "Hard Travelin'," and "So Long, It's Been Good To Know Yuh." Recommended for ages 12 and older.

HOOTENANNIES! An informal hootenanny, or folk music jam session, will follow the Sunday matinees on February 27 and March 6 and 13. Local musicians and audience members are encouraged to perform along with the cast.



[www.mrt.org/woody](http://www.mrt.org/woody)

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Denise Cormier in *A Woman of the World* this past spring, photo by Kathy Wittman.

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Your support will ensure that MRT continues its vital role in arts, education, and community building for years to come.

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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**This play is about a baby boomer looking back on her youth. Why look back? Does looking back heal teenage trauma?**

Writing forward can certainly heal. I wasn't in any great pain about my own period of adolescence, but watching what my kids were going through, waking up in their skin – that itchy skin of adolescence – made me uncomfortable and anxious.

I started out writing a completely different play, a play about a mother giving driving lessons to her daughter, a play about a mother trying to break through to her daughter to find the person who was so covered. I didn't think *Wild Horses* was going to be my one-woman play because it began with these two characters. But as I wrote it, it started going in a different direction. We were going back further than driving, and at some point I realized that it was this woman's memory. It's not my memory. I wouldn't even call it a memory play. It's a reliving for this woman, a very visceral reliving for her.

**Why one actress playing eleven characters? This is not a monologue. This is a monopoly-logue.**

I wanted to activate the play. Having one character tell us a story could only take us so far. We could only listen for so long. When I started bringing in the other voices, it was a matter of, "Do I want to bring eleven actors on stage? Can this story hold that?" I wanted to keep the story feeling more intimate.

**Isn't it risky to have one actor playing eleven characters?**

It asks an enormous amount of the actress who plays the part. It's exciting for the audience to watch this person change. That pulls us into the story more than if someone walked onto the stage and walked off. Or more than if she put on a hat and a jacket and became Cousin Dirk. She's changing internally right before our eyes which makes the play gallop.

**The music in this play seems like another character.**

The music plays a huge part both in setting the scene and in the way it can articulate feelings that nothing else can. I am so envious of musicians and songwriters because music imprints on us certain feelings and more importantly, certain times in our lives.

**Nearly all of the music in this play is from the early 1970's, what Tom Wolfe called, the "me decade." Is that why you chose this time period?**

Any decade can be called the "me decade," really. Perhaps it was the first "me decade," and there were subsequent "me decades." I love the music of the seventies. So does my daughter. There's something about that music that invited us in; that told stories in a way that I could really listen and relate to – so much heartbreak, longing, and yearning.



Leenya Rideout in rehearsal at Stevens=Coolidge House & Gardens.

**At one point in the play, the dad says, "Horses come back; they know where home is."** Horses are just magical. They run in slow motion, just like a gazelle, though they're bigger. They're 1,200-pound ballerinas. They have all this power, but their biggest, most upfront instinct is fear which plays against their muscular, graceful, strong exterior.

Horses obey 8-year-old girls who are as thin as a stick. Don't horses know that that tiny thing on the back of them could fall off and they could jump that fence and just go? They are not leadership animals. They are receptive animals.

**"We weren't freedom fighters, we were freedom takers" is a powerful line in this play.**

These characters didn't have much power. They aren't being taken seriously, so it's up to them to create their own agency. By living their lives the way they did, they weren't going to be given freedom, so they took it in whatever way they could, whether that was stealing those horses and setting them free or driving a car when they are only 13 years old.

Society says to teenagers, "No you can't. No you may not." We don't give teenagers much credit at all. A teenager has to be an Eagle Scout or something before he or she will be listened to. Part of that is because teenagers are crazy. They are all impulse and appetite. It takes too long to earn an Eagle Scout badge. If you see a wrong as a teenager, you want to go out and make it right immediately however you think it should be done. It's not always the best way, but it's a way.

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Maiesha McQueen in *Until the Flood* this past spring, our first video on demand production and the first show of the 2021-22 Season, photo by Kathy Wittman.

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to audiences of all incomes; partners with businesses and other non-profits to fully engage the community; and contributes to the economic vitality of Lowell by attracting diverse audiences from throughout the region.

Recent acclaimed productions include *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley* and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, the two bestselling productions in MRT's history; *The White Chip* (Off-Broadway transfer); *I and You* (Off-Broadway transfer) and *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson; *Women in Jeopardy!* and the world premiere of *Slow Food* by Wendy MacLeod; *KNYUM* by Cambodian-American playwright and actor Vichet Chum; and *The Lion*, singer-songwriter Benjamin Scheuer's award-winning musical memoir, which launched its national tour from MRT in 2015, following critically acclaimed runs in New York and London.



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