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MERCER UNIVERSITY THEATRE

PRESENTS

Independence

by Lee Blessing

Directed by

Scot J. Mann

at the

Back Door Theatre

November 13-17 at 7:00 PM

November 18 at 2:00 PM

Tickets: \$5

For Reservations and Information, call 478.301.2974

Box Office Opens 30 Minutes Before Curtain

Mercer Theatre Production Staff

Technical Director Zach Broome
Fight Choreographer Scot Mann
Stage Manager..... Liam McDermott
House Manager John Farrington
Props Manager Larry E. Ross
Costume Shop Crew Shelley Kuhen, Lauren Parris,
Marian McHugh, Jonathan Willis
Light Technician Isaac Callahan
Sound Technician Tory Johnson
Backstage Crew Cohen Bickley, John Farrington
Scenic Crew John Farrington, Tony Schmidt,
Patrick Hamilton, Suzanne Stroup, Ninti Chance,
Larry Ross, Liam McDermott, Jake Adams,
Leah Parris, Isaac Callahan, Leanne Griffin,
Cohen Bickley, Hannah Hyde, Hannah Fancher,
Scot Mann, Marian Zeilinski
Lighting Crew Marian Zielinski
Graphic Design..... Darlene Murphy

Director's Notes

Family. As Thanksgiving approaches many of us turn our thoughts to family, but what "family" means to each of us is as distinctive as our fingerprints. Just as families differ, how an individual member of a family chooses to be a part (or to not be a part) of that family is unique. So, when a family is gathered, sometimes enthusiastically in celebration, sometimes seemingly against their will, there is both a collective and individual experience. The Norman Rockwell Thanksgiving portrait is a pleasant myth for us to imagine, but every family has its challenges that lurk just out of the frame. Ghosts from the past, denials, triumphs, struggles for control, jublations, and arguments that have gone on for lifetimes surface and fade, creating yet another year of memories for better or worse. *Lee Blessing* gathers a fragmented family for us to visit that may well be a reflection of what's going on outside the frame of our own family portrait. Sometimes it is nice to know you're not the only dysfunctional family in the neighborhood. Or, as my grandmother often observed, "normal people are just people you don't know anything about."

The story is set in 1983 in Independence, Iowa - a town that's hard to stay in, but even harder to leave behind. A gripping, often humorous rollercoaster ride of a story looks unflinchingly at the lives of three grown daughters and their offbeat mother, offering a vivid, tender and humorous window into a family, each seeking their own independence

Who's Who

Pam Burkhalter (Evelyn) is performing with the Mercer Players for the first time, but she has worked onstage and backstage at Theatre Macon and Macon Little Theatre. Her favorite roles were in *Murder at the Howard Johnson*, *You Can't Take it With You*, and *Steel Magnolias*. A retired teacher, Pam spends her time gardening, reading, and subbing in an extremely limited fashion. Pam's husband lives and works in Connecticut for the time being. Her son lives and works in Seoul, South Korea. Her oldest daughter is a teacher at Central High School, and her youngest daughter is a freshman at Macon State. Pam wants to thank Scot for giving her this opportunity* and Zach for giving the cast a wonderful set. Dubious thanks go to Liam for writing down the inappropriate things Pam said during rehearsals. To Evelyn's poor, beleaguered offspring....mea culpa.

Zach Broome (Technical Director) is beginning his sixth season as part of the Theatre department's creative staff. He most recently served as TD for the Mercer University production of *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as for *A Little Night Music* and as the scenic and puppet designer of *Alice in Wonderland*, both of which were performed at Macon's historic Grand Opera House. Zach is excited about the wide range of productions scheduled for this season and welcomes the new challenges that each show will bring. He thanks his family and friends for their love and support during recent months.

Ninti Chance (Sherry) is a Mercer freshman. Her hobbies consist of theatre-ing around, playing the trumpet, watching television, obsessing over Disney and not enjoying riding her bike to school. She can't decide what she wants to do because

she loves everything, but she's majoring in Theatre while running down the Pre-Med track! She's been in a few productions here and there. Anyway, she would like to thank Scot for being, as always, an amazing director and the entire cast and crew for being such beautiful little rays of sunshine! And she would especially like to thank you. You there, reading this right now.

Hannah Fancher (Understudy - Sherry) is a freshman Theatre major, and she enjoyed her first performance in *The Merchant of Venice*. She is very excited to be working in her second show with Mercer University Theatre. She loves to act and looks forward to many more successful productions with Mercer Theatre.

John Farrington (House Manager) is a second year student at Mercer University planning to double major in Theatre and Psychology. He has enjoyed working on all the sets for the past two years, and hopes to continue helping both on and offstage for years to come. John personally finds long walks on the beach cliché and thinks that people who demand others love a specific animal need to calm down and accept different beliefs.

Leeanne Griffin (Understudy - Evelyn) is a recent Mercer graduate with a degree in English Literature and Theatre. She is extremely excited about having started her new "big girl" job at Learning Solutions in October. She has been involved in several Mercer productions over the last few years, her favorite roles being Madam Pace from *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and The White Queen from *Alice in Wonderland*. Leeanne was most recently in Mercer's production of *The Merchant of Venice* as Shylock's only friend, Tubal.

Hannah Hyde (Understudy – Kess) is a student at Mercer University studying English and French. She has been acting for several years, appearing in performances such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Grease*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Most recently, she played Rhoda in Irving Berlin's musical *White Christmas*. This is her first show at the Back Door Theatre and she is very excited about it! Thanks to Scot, cast, and crew for such a wonderful experience!

Tory Johnson (Sound Technician) graduated from Mercer in May 2011 and is honored to work on this production with such a talented group of actresses and production crew. Tory was most recently seen in Macon Little Theatre's production of *Legally Blonde: The Musical* as a member of the ensemble/D.A. Joyce Riley. Some of her favorite Mercer Theatre credits include *Ye Gods* (Psyche/Naomi), *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Ensemble), and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Stepdaughter). I'm very proud of this show, and I'm humbled that I get to be part of it. Thanks to all involved for letting me come play with you all again!

Shelley Kuhen (Costume Designer) is in her seventeenth season as Mercer Theatre's Costume Director. Her designs have most recently been seen in our productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Colored Museum*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. She is also Costume Designer for Mercer Opera where her creations were seen in their latest productions of *The Toy Shop*, *Indomineo*, and *The Merry Widow*. Also employed by Theatre Macon, Shelley's work was last seen in *The First Breeze of Summer*, *Becky's New Car*, *Anything Goes* and *Titanic*. She thanks her wonderful family for their continued love and support. She also thanks her amazing costume crew for their

countless hours of hard work and for their encouragement, love and laughter.

Scot J. Mann (Director/Fight Choreographer) is the Director of Theatre at Mercer. As a director, he received a Meritorious Achievement Award for his direction of *Scapin*, by the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival in 2005. Scot is also an internationally recognized and award winning Fight Master, certified through the Society of American Fight Directors and the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat. He has choreographed, performed and coached theatrical violence with such companies as The Steppenwolf Theatre, The Alliance Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Georgia Shakespeare Festival, and The North Carolina School of the Arts. He has also served as an instructor for the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat in London, and Stage Combat Deutschland in Freiberg, Germany. As an actor, Scot has appeared with the Georgia Shakespeare Festival, New American Theater, New American Shakespeare Theatre, Atlanta Opera, motion capture talent for digital media, and various voice-over recordings for radio, T.V. and the Internet. Scot appeared as a stunt-player and served as tactical choreographer and gun wrangler for the Sci-Fi movie, *Eyeborgs*, as well as on-set Swordmaster and stunt double for the "Bollywood" epic, *Drona*. Recently, he served as Fight Director for the world premier of *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, written by Stephen King and John Mellencamp. Scot is an alumnus of the MFA/PAT program at The Alabama Shakespeare Festival and holds a BA in Communications and Theatre from Mercer University. He thanks Kelly, for her understanding and support, and his magical daughter, Madelyn!

Liam McDermott (Stage Manager) is a sophomore Theatre major who has performed in *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Ye Gods*, and *A Little Night Music* since he

arrived at Mercer. Liam is also certified as an Actor-Combatant by the Society of American Fight Directors. This is his first venture as a Stage Manager with the Mercer Players, and he has enjoyed every moment of working with such a wonderful cast and crew. He would like to thank all the actresses and crew members who have made this an incredible experience. He would also like to thank Scot Mann, Marian Zielinski, Zach Broome, Shelley Kuhlen, and Darlene Murphy for all of their hard work and endless dedication.

Alethea (Allie) McNary (Understudy – Jo) is a freshman English Education major. This is her first theatre experience and she is delighted to be working with such a lovely cast. She has enjoyed the opportunity and hopes that this will not be her last appearance in the Back Door Theatre. She would like to thank her friends and family for their continuous support.

Sarah (SB) Roach (Jo) is a junior Accounting major, Psychology minor at Mercer University. She has recently been seen in *Ye Gods* and *I love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. She would like to thank her family and friends for supporting her theatre obsession throughout the years.

Larry E. Ross (Props Manager) is a senior-transfer from Natchitoches, Louisiana. He is a Theatre major and Photography minor here at Mercer University. His technical credits include dresser for *CATS*, properties designer for *My Children! My Africa!*, and program designer for *New Faces*. His favorite thing in theatre besides acting and singing is to paint sets and build props and sets. He would like to thank Phil Kidd for all his patience in the scene shop back home and his family and friends for being supportive. He would also like to thank Scot Mann and Liam McDermott for putting up with him one more time and allowing him to be a part of a great cast and crew.

Suzanne Stroup (Kess) is a senior Theatre and Journalism major from Marietta. She was last seen in the Back Door Theatre in *The Merchant of Venice* as Portia. She has also been seen recently in *The Rain in Spain*, *A Little Night Music*, *Ye Gods*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. She is president of the Mercer Players and of the Mercer Alliance for Reproductive Freedom, as well as a staff writer for The Cluster. Suzanne would like to thank her friends, family, Flurry and the cast and crew (especially SB) for making this show so much fun!

Marian Zielinski (Lighting Designer) is a Professor of Theatre at Mercer University. In addition to designing theatre productions, Marian has written and presented conference papers on the arts in Germany, Japan, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Poland, British Columbia, and Great Britain. She is also an award-winning fiber artist, whose most recent art quilt, *Goodnight, Sweet Prince* has been accepted into the prestigious juried Quilt National '13 exhibit at the Dairy Barn in Athens, Ohio and will be included in the book, *Quilt National 2013: The Best of Contemporary Quilts*. She also loves swimming and painting, though not necessarily at the same time. She lives in Macon with her husband, Dr. Frank Macke and two cats, Panda and Yo-Yo. She dedicates this work to Frank for his love and inspiration.



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