

INVENTING VAN GOGH

By Steven Dietz

Directed by Paul Oppy
Set Design by Tony Pearson
Lighting Design by Marian Ziellinski
Costume Design by Shelley Kuhne

CAST

Patrick Stone.....Joshua McCoy
Vincent van Gogh.....J.P. Haynie
Dr. Jonas Miller / Dr. Paul Gachet.....Tim Smith
Hallie Miller / Marguerite Gachet.....Emily Barringer
René Bouchard / Paul Gauguin.....Ayren Selzer

Time and Place

The present, an abandoned warehouse in a large American city; and various moments from the late 1800s, France.

Please turn off all beepers, cell phones, and watch alarms.
No cameras or recording devices may be used during the performance.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

*"I always feel confident when I am doing portraits ...
it is the only thing which moves me to the depths,
which more than anything else lets me feel the infinite."*

Everyone knows van Gogh. He's the madman who cut off his ear to suffer for his art. He's the poor, uneducated, self-taught loner who cared not a whit about being accepted by the public; the artist who never sold a painting in his lifetime, and was not recognized as a genius until after his death.

This is all very familiar. The only problem is that none of it is true.

The myth of van Gogh has long since eclipsed the man; the iconic power of the images now overwhelms the actual canvases. In a culture which needs to believe that insight and brilliance are a rarified form of madness, we like our heroes tragic, our endings messy. We want to believe that suffering is the recompense for great art. We invent a van Gogh.

Still. The man went in a room and made a painting. Yes, certainly, the man suffered. He often lived on coffee and bread, glasses of absinthe and heaps of tobacco. He surely battled mental delirium, a form of epilepsy, various kinds of poisoning (self-inflicted, intentional and not), as well as poverty, loneliness and depression. Still. The man went in a room and made a painting. And the suffering did not lift the brush. The artist did.

No one engaged the visual world more fiercely. No one had such a visceral, sacred, ongoing love affair with Nature — "inventing a landscape as it invents him" as Robert Hughes has said. However, in time, this obsession with capturing the power of the outdoors overwhelmed him, sending him into bouts of despair. And when that happened, he turned to the portrait. The portrait became his sanity, his salvation. And his ultimate subject, of course, was found in the small, round hand mirror which he carried with him everywhere. The roughly forty van Gogh self-portraits provide a visual autobiography unrivaled by any artist except Rembrandt.

Upon his death, his pictures (and the numerous copies he'd made) were scattered across Holland and France. As his fame grew, so too grew the "hunt" for his work. Many people had simply tossed them away, or refused them when offered. Others, who'd used the seemingly worthless canvases to patch their chicken coop (for example), now did their best to reclaim his art. A frenzy ensued. And, naturally, forgeries followed — enough forgeries that the van Gogh catalogue, to this day, is still considered to be extremely corrupted. Last in this rustic van Gogh himself. The man who shot himself in a field at the age of thirty-seven, insuring his place as a secular saint, has now been granted the standard mythic anonymity. The man considered by many to be the first modernist painter — the man of whom Picasso said "after van Gogh ... we must all recreate an entirely new language" — that man is now a pop-culture staple, featured repeatedly in severed ear jokes, *Sunflower* magnets and *Starry Night* mouse pads.

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That is where our play begins.

Steven Dietz — 12 March '01 — Tuscan

Production Staff:

Stage Manager.....Matthew Stewart
Stage Manager.....Stephanie Web
Assistant Stage Manager.....Andrea Gauld
Assistant Stage Manager.....Alison Amyx
Prop Director.....Holly Turner
Technical Director.....Tony Pearson
Lighting Crew.....Erika S. Adolphus, Niavana M. Daniel
J.P. Haynie, Mandy Morris, Tim Smith
Master Electrician.....Tony Labell
Costume Director.....Shelley Kuhne
Costume Crew.....Andilynn Williamson, Marian McHugh, Laurel Astie
Hair and Make-Up.....Laurel Astie
Sound Board Operator.....Stephanie Webl
Music Consultant.....Richard Marcus
Sound Design.....Matthew Stewart
Poster and Program Design.....Penni Hartley
House Manager.....Holly Turner

Who's Who

Alison Amyx (Assistant Stage Manager) is a freshman and this is Alison's first involvement in the theatre here at Mercer University. She has acted in many previous productions but has thoroughly enjoyed her first backstage experience. Alison hopes to major in political science and looks forward to one day reforming the two-party system in America. She would also like to thank the cast and crew for welcoming her so warmly to this production.

Emily Barringer (Halle Miller/Marguerite Gache) is a senior here at Mercer University majoring in Communication and Theatre Arts. She has been a part of multiple Mercer productions both onstage and behind the scenes. After graduation, Emily plans to attend graduate school and eventually own her own craft shop and an apple orchard on the Northeast coast. She would like to thank her family and friends for helping her through the good times and the bad, and always remembering "Mayo-on-cheese!" "Oh funny...."

Andrea Gould (Assistant Stage Manager) has had a fantastic time working backstage on her second Mercer Theatre production. In the last production, *Arcoxia*, she shared the duty of Assistant Stage Manager with Stephanie Webb. Andrea is on the Pre-pharmacy track. She can't wait to work on future productions and wishes to thank the lovely cast and crew for making this such a great experience.

J.P. Haynie (Vincent van Gogh) is a senior here at Mercer after only three years. His favorite roles include Marius in *Les Miserables* and Pippin in *Pippin*. He was most recently seen on the Mercer stage as Septimus in *Arcoxia*, and along side his friends Charles, Mark and Zach in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (abridged). J.P. is a Theatre major and plans on attending graduate school at NYU. He would like to thank his brother, family, friends, and Kate for all their support.

Shelley Kuhlen (Costume Director) designed costumes for Mercer Theatre's recent productions of *The Misanthrope*, *Proof*, *The Marriage of Bette and Bob*, *Childs Byron*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Into the Woods*, and *Arcoxia*. Shelley's designs were also seen in Theatre Macon's recent production of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Ragtime* and Macon Stage College's *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. This is Shelley's ninth year as Costume Director for Mercer Theatre.

Joshua McCoy (Patrick Stone) is a freshman from Columbus, Georgia majoring in Biology. He is a 4-year ROTC scholarship recipient, who plans to attend medical school after graduation and pursue a career in the military. "Thank you so much Mom and Dad for showing me that all the world is truly a stage. I love you both, and God bless!"

Jess Mercer (Light Board Operator) is a senior majoring in CIA and minoring Political Science. He is from Moultrie, GA. He is not related to the founder of Mercer University.

Paul Oppy (Director) is the Davenport Professor of Communication and Theatre Arts. He has been teaching and directing at Mercer for thirty-one years. This is the 90th production he has directed for Mercer Theatre. He was Director of the Georgia International Festival for Young Audiences for three years, and has been actively promoting the development of former and current Mercer student playwrights through Mercer Theatre's new play project.

Tony Pearson (Set Design/Technical Director) has designed scenery for plays at Theatre Macon and Macon State College, as well as Mercer. He received his MFA in set design at UGA and a Drama/theatre concentration at Mercer where he received his BA. His most recent designs were Theatre Macon's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and Mercer Opera's *The Magic Flute*. Tony is available for independent contract as a faux finisher.

Ayran Selzer (Rané Bouchard/Paul Gouguin) is a junior from Dade County, Georgia majoring in Spanish and German. He would like to thank Dr. Taylor, his high school drama teacher, who has always encouraged him to pursue the theatre wherever he goes, and Professor Paul Oppy for all of his wonderful direction.

Tim Smith (Dr. Jonas Miller/Dr. Paul Gache) is a senior at Mercer. This is the seventh show he has appeared in with Mercer Theatre. He most recently appeared in Moliere's *The Misanthrope*, and earlier this semester, in *Arcoxia* by Tom Stoppard.

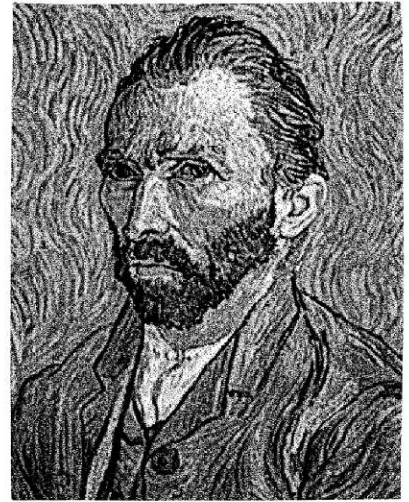
Matthew Stewart (Stage Manager and Sound Board Operator) is a freshman majoring in Business Management with a minor in theatre. He is from Atlanta, GA. Thank you to all of the cast for their great performances.

Holly Turner (Prop Director) transferred from Andrew College this fall and is a junior here at Mercer. She is pursuing a double major in Studio Art and CTA. She would like to thank all her family and friends for their support. Love you guys.

Stephanie Webb (Stage Manager and Sound Board Operator) is a freshman here at Mercer University. Although she has not yet been seen on stage, she was heavily involved with Mercer Theatre's last production, *Arcoxia* by Tom Stoppard, where she shared the position of Assistant Stage Manager with Andrea Gould. Stephanie plans to major in the Stetson School of Business and Economics with a BBA and a concentration in International Advertising through the MAPS program. She also wishes to triple minor in Theatre, Technical Communication, and Photography. Stephanie wishes to thank all of the cast and crew for their diligence and dedication to the production. God bless.

Marian Zielinski (Lighting Design) is beginning her 23rd season with Mercer Theatre. Some of the highlights of her tenure here include directing *Waiting for Godot*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *All in the Timing*, *The Good Doctor* (which toured to Japan), and *The Illusion*, designing the sets for *Night of the Iguana*, *Beyond Therapy*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Sharon's Grave*, and *Under Milk Wood*, costumes for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and lighting for *Proof* and *An Inspector Calls*. She has designed professionally for Music Theatre Louisville, The Shawnee Theatre, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Marian is an avid painter, fiber artist, and photographer, and her primary, ongoing research interest is visual semiotics. Her paper, "Habit, Memory, Perception, and Visual Pattern: A Phenomenology of Form and Ornament As a Reflection of the Human Condition" presented last summer at the International Human Science Research Conference in Stockholm has been accepted for publication in the *American Journal of Semiotic*.

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