

THE COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS



I Love To Eat

by James Still
April-June



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WELCOME BACK!

Welcome to our 33rd season. I can't begin to describe the anticipation, the joy, the relief we are all feeling, being able to bring live theater back to you all after what has been the most trying season in the company's history. That you are choosing to spend the next few hours with us, sharing stories of unique, courageous, warm, funny people in our quest to further understand what it means to be human, is a gift for which we say thank you from the bottoms of our hearts.

Please relax and enjoy the fruits of our labor and please stay safe and healthy as we begin to return to a world where sitting together in darkened theaters and sharing our mutual stories is once again a meaningful event in each of our lives.

Warmly,



Hal Cropp
Producing Artistic Director

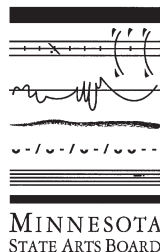


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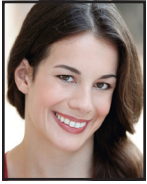


The Commonweal Theatre Company is a member of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group. Funding is provided in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and by private funders.

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THE COMPANY



LIZZY ANDRETTA is in her fifth season at the Commonweal. Favorite roles include *Peter & the Starcatcher*, *Boeing Boeing*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dracula: Prince of Blood*, and *Sanders Family Christmas* as well as choreographing for *Peter & the Starcatcher* and *Stones in His Pockets*. Other Commonweal credits include *The Root River Anthology*, *Headspace Theatre*, and *A Driftless Christmas*. Lizzy holds an M.F.A. in acting from the East 15 Acting School in England and a B.S. in Theatre from Skidmore College. Lizzy is originally from New Jersey and is proud to call Lanesboro her home.



STELA BURDT is grateful to celebrate her 22nd season with our Commonweal family. Past onstage work includes roles in *Souvenir*, *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Zombies from the Beyond*, *A Midnight Dreary*, *Harvey* and *Man of La Mancha*. In addition to performing, Stela is a music director, sound designer, freelance vocalist and the Commonweal's Patron Relations Manager. Currently, Stela is in the role of a lifetime as mom to Kieran. Love and Light, #TeamScottyForever.



HAL CROPP is in his 30th season, where favorite roles have been in *Ghost-Writer*, *Dracula: Prince of Blood*, *Outside Mullingar*, *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, *The Drawer Boy*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Groucho and Talley's Folly*. Selected directing credits include *Headspace Theatre*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Brand*, *Heartland Portrait*, *The Wild Duck*, *Measure For Measure*, *Peer Gynt*, *Hedda Gabler*, *A Midnight Dreary*, *Enchanted April*, *Ghosts* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Hal holds his B.A. from Brown University, M.B.A. from Santa Clara University and an M.F.A. from National Theater Conservatory. He was the Sally Irvine Award winner for Initiative, 2006.



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ELIZABETH DUNN is in her seventh season with the Commonweal. Favorite credits include *Boeing Boeing*, *On the Verge*, *Scotland Road*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *Dracula: Prince of Blood*. She has traveled in multiple tours with Prairie Fire Children's Theatre, and lived in Chicago for a stint, where she studied improvisation at iO (formerly ImprovOlympic). Originally hailing from Georgia, Elizabeth is a 2010 graduate of Valdosta State University where she earned her B.F.A. in Theatre Arts.

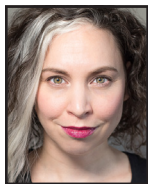


BEN GORMAN joined the Commonweal ensemble in 2016, previously performing as a seasonal actor next door at the St. Mane in '01, '02 and '05. Favorite roles and productions here include *The Elephant Man*, *Scrooge* (twice), *Pride's Crossing*, Black Stache in *Peter and the Starcatcher*, the Poet in *An Iliad* (Wealhouse); elsewhere: Hamlet, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hannay in *The 39 Steps* and Torvald Helmer in *A Doll's House*. Ben loves Shakespeare and has toured with the American Shakespeare Center. He also eagerly promotes sustainable living and renewable energy.

KELSEY HEATHCOTE serves on the Commonweal's production team as the Technical Director and Assistant Production Manager. Since completing her apprenticeship in 2018, her work here has been seen onstage in several shows, including *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *Bakersfield Mist*. In 2020, Kelsey designed the set, sound, and lighting for *Fully Committed* and was one of two audio engineers for *A Driftless Christmas*. She looks forward to many new and exciting challenges as we reopen our doors this year!



DAVID HENNESSEY serves on the development team and has played in over 50 shows over 22 years, including *The Root River Anthology*, *Headspace Theatre* and *A Driftless Christmas* last year. Other favorites: *Holmes and Watson*, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, *Around the World in 80 Days* and *The Drawer Boy*. He designed costumes for *Ice Maidens* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, provides audio descriptions for the visually impaired, and has worked at In Heart Theatre, Park Square Theatre, Jungle Theatre and American Players Theatre. He lives in Preston with Linda, his favorite scene partner for 48 years.



JACLYN JUNE JOHNSON joined the Commonweal at the start of 2020. An arts administrator, actor, director, playwright, costume designer and teaching artist, Jaclyn has credits across the country, performing and designing with companies such as St. Croix Festival Theatre, Children's Theatre Madison, Creede Repertory, Riverside Shakespeare Festival, Chicago's UTG Improv Theatre. Jaclyn received her B.A. from Cornell College. She wishes to thank: her family, friends, spouse and their cats for their encouragement and love; and you for your support of the arts and specifically to the uniquely healing community of theatre.

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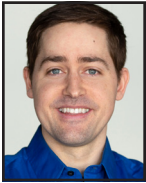
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RIVKA KELLY joined the Commonweal family in 2020 as the Production Stage Manager. Rivka hails from California but has spent the last decade as a traveling stage manager, mostly around the Midwest. Selected stage management experience includes shows with American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Skylight Theatre and Two Crows Theatre. Rivka received her B.A. from the University of Vermont. She's grateful for this welcoming community and her family's unflinching support.



RACHEL KUHNLE returned to the Commonweal in 2018, seven years after completing her acting apprenticeship in which she performed in *Metamorphoses* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Seen most recently in *Boeing Boeing*, *Peter and the Starcatcher* and as June in *Sanders Family Christmas*, Rachel also proudly contributed to the *The Root River Anthology* and directed *A Driftless Christmas*. She completed her M.F.A. in acting at the U. of S. Carolina in 2017. She loves her cats and is grateful to her husband, Josiah, for being awesome. Every day, Rachel is inspired by the resiliency of her Commonweal family—here's to the future!



JOSIAH LAUBENSTEIN joined the Commonweal late in 2018. He is the resident videographer and most recently took the virtual stage in *Fully Committed*. Other Commonweal favorites include *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *Boeing Boeing*. Previously, Josiah worked at Festival Theatre in St. Croix Falls, WI, as Marketing Director and acting in nine productions over two years. Prior to that he lived in Columbia, SC, earning his M.F.A. in Acting from the University of South Carolina. Josiah is a proud member of Glassbox Theatre Group, a co-founder of Highway Walkers Media Company and is happily married to Rachel Kuhnle.



PHILIP MUEHE proudly rejoins the Commonweal for his sixth season! Favorite acting credits include Rev. Mervin Oglethorpe in *Sanders Family Christmas* and Leaf in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Favorite directing credits include *A Bright New Boise*, *Constellations*, *I Am My Own Wife* and *Tigers Be Still*. He holds a B.F.A. in Musical Theatre from the University of North Dakota and is also the producing artistic director of In Heart Theatre in Rochester. Hugs and thanks to his loved ones. L'úbim t'a Andrej!



BRANDT ROBERTS is in his eighth season at the Commonweal. Favorite roles include Robert in *Boeing Boeing*, John Merrick in *The Elephant Man*, Mr. Coffee in *On the Verge*, Ragnar Brovik in *The Master Builder* and Fancourt Babberley in *Charley's Aunt*. Cherished regional credits include *Measure for Measure* and *Henry IV Part I* at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Brandt's original one-person show, *The Art of the Entertainer*, has been performed in several states and was adapted into an online presentation last year. Roberts holds a M.F.A. in Performing Arts from Savannah College of Art and Design.



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JODI RUSHING is in her third season at the Commonweal. Her favorite credits include *Headspace Theatre*, *An Iliad* (Wealhouse), and *On The Verge*. Before her tech apprenticeship with the Commonweal in 2019-2020, she stage managed for Doniphan Dance Project in Tupelo, MS, and served as the conference manager for the 2019 ACDA South Conference. Originally from Mississippi, Jodi is a 2019 graduate from the University of Mississippi with a B.A. in Theatre and Film.



ADRIENNE SWEENEY is grateful to be in her 21st season with the Commonweal, serving as the Assoc. Art. Dir. and Dir. of External Relations in addition to artistic roles. From Philadelphia, she holds an M.F.A. in Acting from the U/AZ. A commercial voice talent, she can be heard regionally on radio and TV. Favorite shows here include *Silent Sky* (director), *Boeing Boeing*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Outside Mullingar*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Sylvia*. Adrienne believes that the act of sitting together in the dark, sharing stories, can help bring light to the world, something we all crave now more than ever. She looks forward to sharing time and space with you.



JEREMY VAN METER is enjoying a milestone tenth season in residence at the Commonweal. Favorite credits here include C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*, Anthony Reilly in *Outside Mullingar* and the title role in *Dracula: Prince of Blood* by Scott Dixon. His professional career began at The Barter Theatre in Virginia and he has appeared regionally at Riverside Theatre, Lexington Children's Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival and Great River Shakespeare Festival. Jeremy holds an M.F.A. in Acting from the U. of Iowa and makes his home in Lanesboro with his lovely and extremely talented wife, Catherine Glynn.

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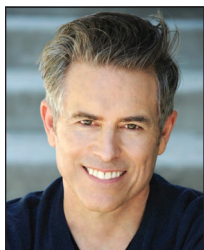
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ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



James Still (born May 31, 1959). James Still's plays have been produced throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, South Africa, China and Japan. His plays have been nominated four times for the Pulitzer Prize. Still's work includes a trilogy of linked plays: *The House That Jack Built*, *Appoggiatura* and *Miranda*; *April 4, 1968: Before We Forgot How to Dream*; two plays about the Lincolns: *The Widow Lincoln* and *The Heavens Are Hung in Black* (both premiered at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.); *I Love to Eat*; a play for 57 actors called *A Long Bridge Over Deep Waters*; *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*; and *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank* which has been produced at theatres around the world. Still is an elected member of both the National Theatre Conference in New York City and the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center. He received the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award from the William Inge Theatre Festival and the Todd McNerney National Playwriting Prize from the Piccolo Spoleto Festival and has been nominated for five Emmys. He is the playwright in residence at Indiana Repertory Theatre and artistic affiliate at American Blues Theater in Chicago. He lives in Los Angeles.

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I LOVE TO EAT

by James Still

Director	Hal Cropp
Rehearsal Stage Manager	Rivka Kelly
Performance Stage Manager	Jodi Rushing
Scenic Designer	Brandt Roberts
Lighting Designer	Kelsey Heathcote
Sound Designer	Josiah Laubenstein
Costume Designer	Jodi Rushing
Costume Assistant	Jaclyn June Johnson
Props Designer	Jeremy van Meter

CAST

James Beard Philip Muehe

Setting

James Beard's brownstone apartment in Greenwich Village, New York City.
The middle of the night. 1984. A few months before Beard's death.

The play will be presented without intermission.

Runtime is approximately 80 minutes.

Special thanks to our show sponsors Heidi and Phil Dybing.

Produced by special arrangement with
DRAMATIC PUBLISHING, Woodstock, Illinois.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

First, a confession. I am a foodie. I love to cook and I love to eat (no pun intended). So of course I had heard of James Beard long before I picked up this amazing script. I didn't have any real appreciation for who Mr. Beard was as a person, however. Then I began to read. The play presents a wonderful, funny, intelligent person who, like all of us, has his flaws. So, a portrait of a human being.

That, in and of itself, made the play compelling. But what drew me to it as an artist is the way the portrait is painted. It is common knowledge that the human brain is an amazing organ, capable of generating 16 images per second. And the ability to "get inside of this organ" is one of the great aspects of our art form. It calls to mind quotes from both Henrik Ibsen and David Mamet—and I'm paraphrasing here—"what keeps me up at night is the story that holds the question for which I have no answer."

This, then, is the genius of Mr. Still's portrayal of Mr. Beard. The conceit is that his spirit is fully occupied in his kitchen, with an audience, while his ailing body lies abed upstairs. What follows is a journey through his very existence, a memory play but more, a fascinating look into the mind of the man.

A second confession. This is the first "solo" piece I have had the pleasure to direct. And what a pleasure it was. From the amazingly talented actor, Philip Muehe, to the incredibly inventive designers—Brandt Roberts, Kelsey Heathcote, Josiah Laubenstein, Jodi Rushing, and Jeremy Van Meter—to the supremely competent Stage Manager (and right hand extraordinaire) Rivka Kelly, we have a team that has worked diligently to bring to life this amazing story. All we need now to complete the picture is you. Enjoy!

—Hal Cropp



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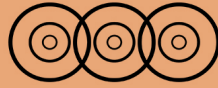


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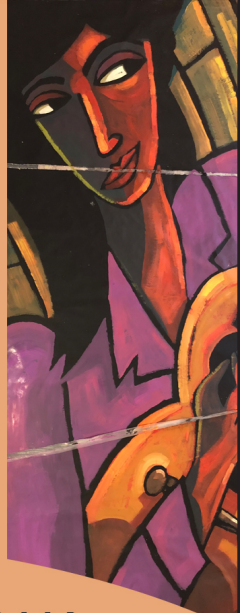
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Here are all ongoing MDC pledges and all memorials made from **January 1, 2020, to February 15, 2021**. Due to space limitations, we cannot list all our donors here. Please find them on our website, www.CommonwealTheatre.org. For information on all our individual donor programs, contact **Jeremy van Meter: 507-467-2905 x211, jeremyvm@commonwealtheatre.org**

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