

# Dancing Lessons

by Mark St. Germain

May-August



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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

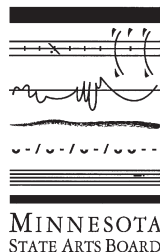


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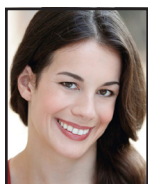


The Commonweal Theatre Company is a member of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group. Funding is provided in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and by private funders.

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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.

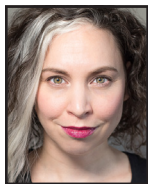


**BEN GORMAN** joined the Commonweal ensemble in 2016, previously performing as a seasonal actor next door at the St. Mane in '01, '02 and '05. Favorite roles and productions here include *The Elephant Man*, *Scrooge* (twice), *Pride's Crossing*, Black Stache in *Peter and the Starcatcher*, the Poet 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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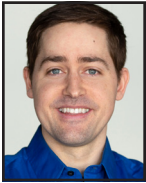
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**RIVKA KELLY** joined the Commonweal family in 2020 as the Production Stage Manager. Rivka hails from California but has spent the last decade as a traveling stage manager, mostly around the Midwest. Selected stage management experience includes shows 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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## ALSO FEATURING

**Paul Epton** (Lighting Designer, *Dancing Lessons* and *Come Back*) returns to Commonweal for a 6th time, having most recently lit *Sanders Family Christmas* and *Silent Sky*. He started designing lights at Carleton College, spent 11 years in Detroit, Michigan, and returned to Minnesota in 1992. Paul has designed for the Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company, Mixed Blood Theatre, Jon Hassler Theater, and Paul Bunyan Playhouse. A year-round bicyclist, one of his early designs was for *Spokesong*. Awards: Lighting Designer, Ivey Award Honoree, *Ruined*. Lighting Designer, Ivey Award Honoree, **Psst!**. *Detroit Free Press* Theatre Excellence Award in Design. *Detroit News* Drama Critics Award in Theatre Craft.

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



**Mark St. Germain.** Mark's play *Freud's Last Session* ran for two years Off-Broadway. The play has been open in Argentina since January, 2012 and in repertory in Sweden, Australia and Denmark. His play *Becoming Dr. Ruth* premiered in 2012 at the Barrington Stage Company, played at Hartford Theaterworks and was brought to NYC to the Westside Theatre. *Scott and Hem in the Garden of Allah* co-premiered in the summer of 2013 at the Contemporary American Theater Festival and Barrington Stage Company. His play *The Best of Enemies* was first produced by the Barrington Stage Company. *The Fabulous Liptones*, a musical comedy co-written with John Markus, premiered at the Theatrical Outfit in Atlanta in 2013. Mark's other plays include *Camping With Henry and Tom* (Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Ears on a Beetle*, *The God Committee*, *Out of Gas on Lover's Leap*, and *Dancing Lessons* (premiered at the Barrington Stage Festival).

Mark wrote *Stand By Your Man: the Tammy Wynette Musical*, which began at the Ryman Theater in Nashville. With composer Randy Courts, Mark has written the perennial musical *The Gifts of the Magi* as well as *Johnny Pye and the Foolkiller* (AT&T Award Grant) and *Jack's Holiday* (Playwrights Horizons). TV work includes Writer/Creative Consultant for *The Cosby Show* and Dick Wolf's *Crime and Punishment*. He co-wrote director Carroll Ballard's film *Duma* and produced and directed the documentary *My Dog: An Unconditional Love Story*, with Richard Gere, Glenn Close, Edward Albee and others. Mark also wrote the award-winning children's book *Three Cups*. Mark is an Associate Artist of the Barrington Stage Company, a recipient of the William Inge Festival's New Voices Award, and a member of the Dramatists Guild and the Writer's Guild East. He is an alumnus of New Dramatists.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Sydney Paredes, Mixed Blood Theatre, Theatre in the Round Players, Andrew Saboe, Ben O'Konski, Kirsten Boehne, Bill Cassidy, Scandinavian Inn, Eric Lee.

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# DANCING LESSONS

by Mark St. Germain

Director	Rachel Kuhnle
Rehearsal Stage Manager	Rivka Kelly
Performance Stage Manager	Stela Burdt
Scenic Designer	Kelsey Heathcote
Lighting Designer	Paul Epton
Sound Designer	Stela Burdt
Costume Designer	Jaclyn June Johnson
Projections Team	Thomas White, Adrienne Sweeney, Kelsey Heathcote
Props Designer	Adrienne Sweeney, Elizabeth Dunn
Choreographer	Lizzy Andretta

## CAST

Senga Quinn	Lizzy Andretta
Ever Montgomery	Josiah Laubenstein

## Setting

New York City, pre-pandemic.

*The play will be presented without intermission.*

*Runtime is approximately 90 minutes.*

World Premiere, August 13, 2014, at Barrington Stage Company, Pittsfield, MA;  
Julianne Boyd, Artistic Director and Tristan Wilson, Managing Director.

DANCING LESSONS premiered in August, 2014, at Barrington Stage Company (Julianne Boyd, Artistic Director) in Pittsfield, MA. It was directed by Julianne Boyd; the choreography was by Christine O'Grady; the set design was by James Fenton; the costume design was by Sara Jean Tosetti; the lighting design was by Mary Louise Geiger; the projection design was by Andrew Bauer; the sound design was by Will Pickens; the production stage manager was Renee Lutz.

DANCING LESSONS is presented by special arrangement with  
Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

### *Can anybody ever really change?*

This question, which is central to the play *Dancing Lessons*, goaded me all of 2020 as we struggled to adapt in the face of uncertainty. As the live events industry came to a complete standstill, we asked ourselves *how do we create? how do we tell stories? how will we survive this?*

I first loved *Dancing Lessons* because it introduced me to the concept of “neurodiversity,” helping me better understand my friend and coworker Lizzy. In real life, Lizzy, who plays “Senga,” is like Ever—an adult with Asperger’s who is high-functioning, low-support.

Not that Lizzy is all that much like Ever. As autism advocates say, “If you meet a person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.” In many ways, Lizzy is more like Senga—an artist who finds herself sidelined by events beyond her control. For Senga, it’s a debilitating injury. For Lizzy, (and me, and, well, all of us) it’s the pandemic.

So can anybody ever really change? What do we keep? What do we let go? What does it take to really create lasting change? And do we have what it takes? It has truly been a blessing to work through those questions with this beautiful little play.

—Rachel Kuhnle



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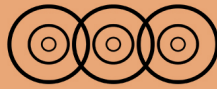
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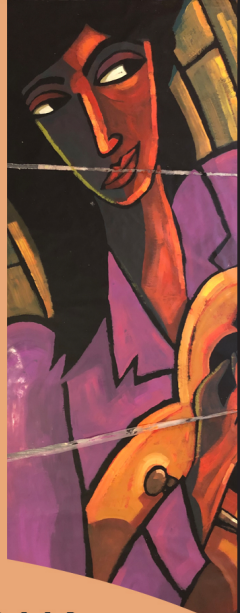
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—Ken & Sally Mogren,  
Winona, MN

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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](http://www.CommonwealTheatre.org). For information on all our individual donor programs, contact **Jeremy van Meter: 507-467-2905 x211, [jeremyvm@commonwealtheatre.org](mailto:jeremyvm@commonwealtheatre.org)**

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Contact Jeremy van Meter about this or any of our donor programs: (507) 467-2905 X211  
[jeremyvm@commonwealtheatre.org](mailto:jeremyvm@commonwealtheatre.org)



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