

COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# LONE STAR SPIRITS

by Josh Tobiesen



A small-town comedy  
July 12–October 25

PROFESSIONAL LIVE THEATRE

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**W**e, at the **Commonweal Theatre**, acknowledge that we work and gather on the ancestral lands of the Dakota Nation and other Indigenous peoples. We recognize these Nations as the original caretakers of this land and acknowledge the injustices committed against them. We strive to promote healing and inclusion through storytelling, which is fundamental to our mission.

As artists in our community we have a responsibility to create a welcoming, inclusive, and nurturing environment where visitors and community members can gather and explore big ideas through live theatre. Fostering such an environment begins with education and reflection. Our Land Acknowledgement is just one way the **Commonweal** exercises our commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Thank you to the Minnesota Historical Society, Lanesboro Historical Society, Prairie Island Indian Community, Mississippi Valley Archeology Center, and Mower County Historical Society for assisting in the research that led to the formation of our Land Acknowledgement.



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Metis artist Victoria Scattergood is inspired by historical ledger drawings which were popular across the northern and southern plains of Canada and the US. She puts a unique perspective on it, using actual historical ledger prints from the late 1800s with beautiful, hand drawn animals.

# WELCOME TO THE COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY!

We're eager to share Josh Tobieessen's small-town comedy, *Lone Star Spirits*, with you. Whether it's your first time joining us or your 37th, it's wonderful you've made the journey to gather with us in this ritual of storytelling.

And speaking of, this play specifically explores rituals, gathering, and the highs and lows of small-town life. While Lanesboro and the Texas town in *Lone Star Spirits* aren't precisely the same, there is a shared, recognizable *something* there. Perhaps it's the fact that the gathering spaces in small towns bring its residents together more overtly. There simply aren't as many options for people to commune together.

Those small-town community spaces—church basements, park pavilions, football stands, and bars—allow for people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences to come together. Those can be excellent conditions for drama and humor.

In a recent message to Commonwealth company members, playwright Josh Tobieessen said *Lone Star Spirits* "is about things that divide us both on a personal and national level—location, economics, education, as well as many other things. It's also about the things that hold us together, that tie us, that build communities, that make our relationships closer—history, beliefs, spirituality, family, shared commitments that we have with each other."

You may or may not be from a small town. But right now, in this space, we are literally in this together! We think that's a beautiful, profound thing. And we couldn't be more honored to share this story with you today.

Thanks for gathering with us  
—Your friends at the Commonwealth



The Commonwealth Theatre Company is a member of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

208 Parkway Avenue N., P.O. Box 15  
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# THE COMPANY

## THE ARTIST/ADMINISTRATOR MODEL

The Commonwealth Theatre operates under a unique model in which all resident company members have specific, non-artistic responsibilities in addition to their artistic projects. As actors, designers, stage managers, and the like, they also serve as fundraisers, educators, marketers, builders, ushers, box office staff, and more. Company members come from all over the country and have made their home in Lanesboro. They work year-round to bring you a set of stories like the one you're about to experience.

### LIZZY ANDRETTA (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2017

#### **Actor/Development Associate/Dixon House Artist Residence Manager**

**This Season:** Marley (*Lone Star Spirits*), Assistant Stage Manager (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Rumors*, *She Loves Me*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Leading Ladies*, *Dancing Lessons*, *Sanders Family Christmas*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Dracula: Prince of Blood*, *The Elephant Man*. Choreographer for *A Christmas Carol* (2021), *Stones in His Pockets*, and *Peter & the Starcatcher*

**Education:** MFA in Acting from the East 15 Acting School; BS from Skidmore College  
"I'm proud to call Lanesboro home alongside my beloved cat Henry."

### CODY BEYER (he/him)



Company Member  
Since 2022

#### **Actor/Director or Production**

**This Season:** Director (*True West*, *Apprentice Capstone*), Lighting Designer (*The Angel Next Door*), Drew (*Lone Star Spirits*), Kent (*King Lear*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Mr. Darcy (*Christmas at Pemberley*); Stevie (*Ugly Lies the Bone*); Edmond Rostand (*Bernhardt/Hamlet*); *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Scenic Design); *Deathtrap* (Props Design) **Other Credits:** Chicago credits include: Banquo in *Macbeth* for Theatre-Y; and Technical Director for several Hell in a Handbag Productions

**Education:** BA Honors Theatre, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

"Here's to another year of sharing stories with this wonderful community!"

### STELA BURDT (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2001

#### **Actor/Music Director/Director of Administration**

**This Season:** Hertha Ayrtton (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Women in Jeopardy*, *She Loves Me*, *Good People*, *Souvenir*, *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Zombies from the Beyond*, *A Midnight Dreary*, *Harvey*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Sanders Family Christmas*; sound design and music direction for various productions

**Education:** Proud graduate of Luther College with studies in music and theatre

"Continued gratitude to our community. Thank you for being here!"

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### HAROLD CROPP (he/they)



Company Member  
Since 1992

#### **Producing Artistic Director**

**This Season:** Arthur (*The Angel Next Door*), Lear (*King Lear*), Scrooge (*A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Ernie Cusack (*Rumors*), Arthur Vance (*The Outsider*), Borkman (*John Gabriel Borkman*), Shylock (*The Merchant of Venice*), Groucho (*Groucho: A Life in the Theater*), Matt Friedman (*Talley's Folly*), Scrooge (*A Christmas Carol*), Einstein (*Picasso at the Lapin Agile*). Director for 29 productions and playwright of 3 world premieres **Other Credits:** Managing Director, VITA Shakespeare Festival; actor with San Jose Stage Company, Magic Theater, San Jose Civic Light Opera; playwright of 4 published plays

**Education:** MFA National Theatre Conservatory; MBA Santa Clara University; BA Brown University

"My work honors my wife, Adrienne, and my family and ancestors."

# THE COMPANY

**SARA HUESER** (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2022

**Props Designer/Props Manager/IT Technician**

**This Season:** Props Designer (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*, *Lone Star Spirits*, *King Lear*, *A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Props Designer (*Doubt: A Parable*, *Rumors*, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*), Co-Props Designer (*Ugly Lies the Bone*), Sound Designer (*The Outsider*) **Other Credits:** Stage Manager for Centre Stage SC; Stage Manager and Deck Stage Manager for Savannah College of Art and Design. Sara is also an editor for movie and TV scripts

**Education:** BCompSc, Pennsylvania College of Technology; BFA in Dramatic Writing at Savannah College of Art and Design



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# THE COMPANY

## JOSIAH LAUBENSTEIN (he/him)



Company Member  
Since 2018

### **Actor/Marketing Associate/Literary Manager**

**This Season:** Sound Designer (*Lone Star Spirits*, *A Sherlock Carol*), Edgar/Cornwall (*King Lear*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Dave (*The Outsider*), Georg (*She Loves Me*), Jack/Stephanie (*Leading Ladies*) **Other Credits:** Worked and directed at Rochester Community & Technical College (2024-2025)

**Education:** MFA in Acting, University of South Carolina; BA in Theatre, Concordia University, St. Paul

"Love to my wife, Rachel (without whom I would not be in Lanesboro) and my two truly remarkable children, Franny & Jude."

## ISABELLA ANASTASIA LEIGH (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2023

### **Production Stage Manager/Administrative Team Associate**

**This Season:** Rehearsal Stage Manager (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*, *A Sherlock Carol*), Production Stage Manager (*The Angel Next Door*, *King Lear*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Rehearsal Stage Manager (*Doubt: A Parable*, *The Outsider*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *She Loves Me*, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*); Rehearsal/Performance Stage Manager (*Rumors*, *Deathtrap*) **Other Credits:** Stage Management and Directing with: Austin Shakespeare, Jarrott Productions, ScriptWorks (Austin, TX); Broom Street Theatre, Children's Theatre of Madison, Forward Theater, Music Theatre of Madison, and StageQ (Madison, WI)

**Education:** BA in Gender & Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison

"Much love to my kitties: Rosalind, Beatrice, Mercutio, and Tybalt."

## SYNTH MANUEL (they/them)



Company Member  
Since 2023

### **Designer/Dramaturg/Assistant to the Technical Director**

**This Season:** Sound Designer (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*), Assistant Stage Manager, Props Designer (*The Angel Next Door*), Scenic Designer (*King Lear*), Intimacy Coordinator (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*, *King Lear*, *A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Stage Manager (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*), Scenic Designer/Intimacy Coach (*Rumors*), Scenic Designer/Stage Manager/Intimacy Director (*The Effect*) **Other Credits:** Quad City Area Credits include: director (*The God of Vengeance*); stage manager (*Cabaret*, *Ride the Cyclone*); assistant director (*The Threepenny Opera*, *The Mountaintop*); dramaturg at The Spotlight Theatre

**Education:** BA in Theatre History and Tech & Design, Augustana College

"Be a voice. Not an echo."

## JOHN B. NICOL (he/him)



Company Member  
Since 2022

### **Actor/Scenic Painter/Assistant to the Dir. of Administration**

**This Season:** Watson (*A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Arthur de Bourgh (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*), A.C. Peterson (*The Outsider*), Arpad Laszlo (*She Loves Me*), Michal (*The Pillowman*), Deputy (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*)

**Education:** BS in Theatre Arts, Minnesota State University, Mankato

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# THE COMPANY

## MATTHEW JAMES RALPH (he/him)



Company Member  
Since March 2025

### **Stage Manager/Assistant Director/Marketing Associate**

**This Season:** Rehearsal Stage Manager, Assistant Director (*Lone Star Spirits*), Fight Choreographer (*Lone Star Spirits*, *King Lear*)

**Other Credits:** Stage Manager: Skylight Music Theatre (Milwaukee, WI), Stagedoor Manor (Loch Sheldrake, NY), Theatre Wit and About Face Theatre (Chicago, IL), Thin Air Theatre Company (Cripple Creek, CO), and The Clarence Brown Theatre (Knoxville, TN). Direction: Hattiesburg, MS: *The Bear*, *Stop Kiss*, *The Seagull* or *How to Eat It*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, and *Big Fish*. Elsewhere: *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, *Homebound: A Play for Nobody*, *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*.

**Education:** MFA in theatre, University of Southern Mississippi; BA in theatre & marketing, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

"...Thank you all for coming. A man is as rich as his friends. I am a tycoon."

## LAURIE ROBERTS (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2022

### **Actor/Development Associate/Apprentice Advisor**

**This Season:** Marie (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*), Regan (*King Lear*), Irene (*A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Lizzy Darcy (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*), Chris (*Rumors*), Jess (*Ugly Lies the Bone*), 8 Shoppers (*She Loves Me*), Myra (*Deathtrap*), Duchess (*Alice in Winter Wonderland*), Assistant Director (*Bernhardt/Hamlet*), Choreographer (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*) **Other Credits:** In Chicago: A Red Orchid Theatre, Hell in a Handbag, Facility Theatre, Theatre Y, and Red Tape Theatre. Elsewhere: Know Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and Cincinnati Fringe Festival (2015 Producer's Pick.), and at On the Boards in Seattle. Her work has been devised and performed internationally in Pontlevoy, France, and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Laurie also works as a teacher, movement director, and choreographer.

**Education:** MFA, University of South Carolina

"...for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it." - "The Hill We Climb," Amanda Gorman

## JODI RUSHING (they/she)



Company Member  
Since 2019

### **Performance Stage Manager/Assistant to Costume Designer/Front of House Supervisor**

**This Season:** Assistant to Costume Designer (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*, *King Lear*), Performance Stage Manager (*Lone Star Spirits*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** *The Outsider*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Good People*, *Leading Ladies*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised]*, *I Love to Eat*, *On the Verge* **Other Credits:** Makeup Artist (*The Wonder of the World...* currently in post production), Stage Manager (Doniphan Dance Project)

**Education:** BA in Theatre & Film, University of Mississippi

## TIM SAILER (he/him)



Company Member  
Since 2021  
(plus 2009-2011)

### **Actor/Assistant Director of Marketing**

**This Season:** Oliver (*The Angel Next Door*), Edmund/King of France (*King Lear*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** *Rumors*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, *She Loves Me*, *Leading Ladies*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. **Other Credits:** More than 50 roles across 35 plays at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, VA; Utah, Houston, and Texas Shakespeare Festivals; Park Square Theatre; Theater L'Homme Dieu; audiobook narrator

**Education:** MFA in Acting, University of Houston

"We must risk delight." – poet Jack Gilbert

# THE COMPANY

## ALEX SCHLESINGER (they/them)



Company Member  
Since 2022

### Actor/Designer/Assistant Technical Director

**This Season:** Projections Designer & Performance Stage Manager (*The Half-Life of Marie Curie*), Ben (*Lone Star Spirits*), Lighting Designer (*King Lear*), Crachit (*A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Bingley (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*), Glenn (*Rumors*), Projections Design (*Ugly Lies the Bone*), Sound Design (*Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*), Clifford (*Deathtrap*), Stevie (*Good People*) **Other Credits:** Riff Raff (*The Rocky Horror Show*) at New Minowa Players in Decorah; Amos Hart (*Chicago*) at Luther College

**Education:** BA in Theatre, Luther College

"Thank you to my mentor, professor, and good friend Jeff Dintaman for his years of support and sharing of knowledge that has gotten me to where I am today!"

## ADRIENNE SWEENEY (she/her)



Company Member  
Since 2001

### Actor/Director of External Communications/Associate Artistic Director

**This Season:** Charlotte (*Angel Next Door*), Director (*Lone Star Spirits*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** Lulu Peakes (*The Outsider*), Sarah Bernhardt (*Bernhardt/Hamlet*), Scrooge (*A Christmas Carol*) Sylvia (*Sylvia*) **Other Credits:** Commercial voice over artist

**Education:** MFA in Acting, University of Arizona

"I believe that sharing stories is an act of humanity and healing. Thank you for being here."

## JEREMY van METER (he/him)



Company Member  
Since 2012

### Actor/Director of Development

**This Season:** Walter (*Lone Star Spirits*); Sherlock Holmes (*A Sherlock Carol*)

**Commonweal Highlights:** *Doubt: A Parable*; *I Ought to Be in Pictures*; *Come Back; Dracula: Prince of Blood*; *Brand*; *The Philadelphia Story* **Other Credits:** Caffeine Theatre (Chicago) Artistic Associate (2009-2011); Great River Shakespeare Festival (2009); Illinois Shakespeare Festival (2007); Riverside Theatre/Shakespeare Festival Actor in Residence (2000-03); Barter Theatre Actor in Residence (1991-95)

**Education:** MFA in Acting, University of Iowa

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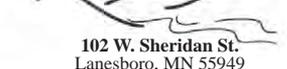
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# LONE STAR SPIRITS

by Josh Tobiessen

## DESIGNERS & SPECIALISTS

Director	Adrienne Sweeney
Assistant Director/Rehearsal Stage Manager/ Fight Choreographer	Matthew James Ralph
Scenic Designer	Bill Duwell
Costume Designer	Jason Resler
Lighting Designer	Paul Epton
Props Designer	Sara Hueser
Sound Designer	Josiah Laubenstein
Dialect Coach	Catherine (Catie) Glynn
Intimacy Coordinator/Scenic Dressing	Synth Manuel
Scenic Painter	John B. Nicol
Props Assistant	Dylan Delagardelle
Performance Stage Manager	Jodi Rushing
Assistant Stage Managers	Alexa Gutierrez, Amanda Byers
Production Manager	Isabella Anastasia Leigh

## CAST

DREW	Cody Beyer
WALTER	Jeremy van Meter
JESSICA	Georgia Doolittle
MARLEY	Lizzy Andretta
BEN	Alex Schlesinger

## SETTING

A liquor store in a small town in West Texas. (2013)

*Produced by special arrangement with DRAMATIC PUBLISHING, Woodstock, Illinois.  
Lone Star Spirits was originally produced by Crowded Outlet in New York City;  
Artistic Director, Wes Grantom.*

## PRODUCTION UNDERWRITER



PETERSON CREATIVE  
PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN

## PRODUCTION SPONSORS



Harmony Spirits  
Andy & Tara Craig

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Using an undergraduate degree in philosophy along with training from the Improv Olympic in Chicago, Josh started writing plays in Ireland with Catastrophe Theatre Co. After having several plays performed at such venues as the Galway Arts Festival and the Dublin Fringe Festival, he returned to the States to get a playwriting MFA at the University of California, San Diego. Since then his plays have been produced or developed at such places as The Alliance Theatre, Atlanta; Crowded Outlet, New York City; The Jungle Theater, Minneapolis; Mixed Blood Theatre, Minneapolis; The O'Neill New Play Conference, Connecticut; Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland; Pioneer Theatre Company, Salt Lake City; Second Stage Theatre, New York; Slant Theatre Project, New York; and AiShangChu Theatre, Hong Kong. *Election Day* is published by Samuel French and in the Smith and Kraus anthology, *New Playwrights, Best Plays of 2008*. *Lone Star Spirits* and *Spoon Lake Blues* are both published by Dramatic Publishing Co. Josh received a 2023 Finalist award from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



Exploring the father/daughter dynamic has always held great interest to me, probably because my own relationship with my father was complicated, to say the least. It's why I gravitated towards *I Ought to Be in Pictures* (which I directed in 2022) and surely the first theme that drew me to *Lone Star Spirits*. However, the deeper we got into rehearsals, other questions started popping up. What constitutes the idea of family? Can you choose family or must you be born into it? And what about community? What defines a community? What defines the idea of "home?" Why do some feel the pull to leave and explore, while others choose to stay and strengthen their ties to their roots? What are our opinions of each choice? It's easy to generalize, to buy into stereotypes: the one that got away, the one stuck in the "glory days." (Now you've got that Springsteen song stuck in your head!) Ultimately, that's what I love most about this play. Because for all the choices made, this is a "family" of people who love each other and are just trying their best to get by, and to do right by each other. And isn't that really what we're all doing?

## COMMONWEAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chuck Aug, Alan Bailey, David Boen, Chris Hanson, Julie Kiehne, Sara Kling-Punt, Wendy Mattison, Ken Mogren, André Novack, Megan Pence, Sarah Peterson, Jose Rivas.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Guthrie Theater, Granny's Liquor, Indiana University South Bend Department of Theatre and Dance, The Root River Saloon, Lisa Scheps at Ground Floor Theatre, Tony Semmens, Tucker Shepherd

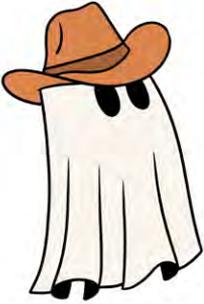


## QUESTION CORNER

Consider the following questions after the performance—whether it's enjoying a meal in town or on your drive home.

**What has changed  
about your hometown?  
What's stayed the same?**

**What are  
some rituals  
you have?**



**Have you ever  
encountered  
a ghost or  
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## MEET THE 2025–2026 APPRENTICE CLASS

The Commonwealth Theatre Company offers exciting 11-month apprenticeships intended to help young theatre artists transition into the professional world. Apprentices serve on either a performance or technical track. Additionally, they work alongside company members on the Marketing, Development, and Production teams. Because of this rare organizational model, Commonwealth apprentices experience the full scope of running a nonprofit theatre company. It culminates in a final capstone production which is chosen, designed, and performed by the apprentice company.



**AMANDA BYARS** (she/her, acting apprentice) is a recent graduate from Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia and earned her BFA in Theatre Performance. She is thrilled to be joining the Commonwealth Theatre Company as an apprentice! Favorite credits include Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Beth in *John Proctor is the Villain*, Judy Moody in *Judy Moody and Stink*, and Laurie in *Pipeline*. Amanda would like to thank her family, friends, and mentors for all of their support!



**DYLAN DELAGARDELLE** (he/him, senior technical apprentice) is so excited to be part of the Commonwealth Apprentice program for a second year! In addition to his technical and carpentry work with the company, he also appeared on stage in *Rumors* and *True West*. Dylan is from West Des Moines, Iowa. He has served as stage manager many times for DMACC Ankeny Theater with shows such as *No Exit*, *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Head Over Heels*. Dylan is very excited to continue down his path of technical theater and learn the most he can during his time at the Commonwealth.



**ALEXA GUTIERREZ** (she/her, technical apprentice) is a theatre artist and stage manager from Miami, FL. She is a Florida International University graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre. Some recent credits include *The Museum Plays* (assistant stage manager) and *All the Natalie Portmans* (assistant stage manager). She is thrilled to be joining the Commonwealth team!



**ELISABETH MEYER** (she/her, acting apprentice) cannot wait to be a part of her first Commonwealth season as a member of the apprentice class! She graduated in May of 2025 with her BFA in Acting/minor in Dance from Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI. Favorite roles include Kaliope in *She Kills Monsters* and Gertrude in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. She also enjoys costume, hair, and makeup design and construction. She would like to thank her family and friends for their unwavering support of her lifelong dream to be an artist. Thank you for supporting the arts!

**The next apprenticeship begins in the spring of 2026!**

**If you or someone you know is interested  
in applying for the next class, visit:**

**[commonwealththeatre.org/education/apprenticeships](https://commonwealththeatre.org/education/apprenticeships)**

## THIS PRODUCTION ALSO FEATURES...



**GEORGIA DOOLITTLE** (Jessica, she/they) is thrilled to return to the Commonweal after appearing as Lydia last winter in *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*. She recently co-directed and played Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night*, appeared as Ella in *Life Sucks* with Open Eye Theatre & Girl Friday Productions, and understudied multiple roles in *Alice in Wonderland* at the Children's Theatre Company. She has also performed in *Antigonick* (Full Circle Theater Company); *Hairball! The Bigfoot Musical* (Open Eye), *Analog & Vinyl* (Minneapolis Musical Theatre) and assistant directed *Moscow, Moscow, Moscow* with Craig Johnson at the University of Minnesota.



**BILL DUWELL** (scenic designer, he/him) is a Dodgeville, WI resident and is the Technical Director for The Children's Theatre of Madison, WI. Last season, he served as the scenic designer for *Ugly Lies the Bone*. He was also Tech Director at American Players Theatre in Spring Green, WI for many years. He received his BA in Theatre from SW Minnesota State University.



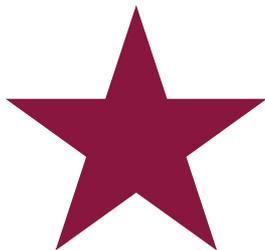
**PAUL EPTON** (lighting designer, he/him) is back at the Commonweal for two productions this season: *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* and *Lone Star Spirits*. Past favorites here include *Come Back*, *Sanders Family Christmas*, and *Silent Sky*. He started designing lights as an undergraduate at Carleton College, spent 4 years in grad school (not in theatre) at Rice University, then returned north to Detroit. After 3 years in industry, he switched careers to theatre, stayed in Detroit for 11 more years, then moved to Minnesota in 1992. He continues to design and do tech work for numerous companies. A year-round bicyclist, one of his early designs was for *Spokesong*.



**CATHERINE (CATIE) GLYNN** (dialect coach, she/they) is delighted to be returning to the Commonweal. Being a theatre-maker for the better part of her life, she now serves as the Artistic Director of A.R.T. (Audacious Raw Theater) and a Speech and Presentation Coach at her firm, Voce Veritas. Her career has included being a part of Collaboraction Theater Company in Chicago, creating solo shows in Minnesota, and spending summers at the Riverside Shakespeare Festival, where she met Jeremy van Meter and joined forces for life. Her CWL highlights include *Doubt*, *Arcadia*, *Memory of Water*, *Bliethe Spirit*, *Philadelphia Story*, *Arsenic & Old Lace*, and *Pillars of Society*. Having spent nine years in Austin, Texas, going to school, teaching at UT, and being an Artistic Associate with the Texas-based Rude Mechs, she feels very comfortable saying and teaching others to say "all y'all" and having a splash or two of Tito's vodka. Cheers!



**JASON RESLER** (costume designer, he/him) has designed 11 productions with the Commonweal Theatre Company, most recently *The Angel Next Door* and *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*. Jason's other designs include *The Medora Musical* (10 seasons), *The Medora Gospel Brunch*, and *HonkyTonk Angels* (all in Medora, North Dakota) as well as productions with Trollwood Performing Arts, Phoenix Theatre, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Great Lakes Theater Festival, Hope Summer Repertory, Park Square Theatre, History Theatre, Illusion Theater, Cortland Repertory, and Citadel Theatre Company. Jason is Associate Professor and Department Chair of Theatre at Indiana University South Bend. [www.jasonleeresler.com](http://www.jasonleeresler.com)



## SMALL-TOWN PRIDE

by Matthew James Ralph, assistant director

In West Texas, civilizations may not be seen for miles, but in the towns that are built there, pride runs deep. Like in Lanesboro, this script shows how deeply citizens love their home and their way of life. It's where they belong. The culture is rich with hospitality, tradition, independence, and community connection. Neighbors are cherished like family. Yet, these community values can become strained as industry begins to surge. Metropolitan areas flourish, causing small towns to shrink. The world keeps "moving forward," which pushes small towns to do the same or eventually die.

Many towns in West Texas rely on oil, agriculture, and manufacturing to survive. So, when one of these industries is hit, the whole town suffers. An example can be seen during the 2008 recession when oil prices initially dropped, hitting the economies of these communities heavily. At the same time, although the housing market may not have hit small towns as hard as major urban areas, they still faced challenges of unemployment, foreclosure due to job loss, property values declining, and more restrictions with financing.

*Lone Star Spirits* speaks to the concerns of how a town is slowly dying out, and a family cannot agree on how to move forward. The *Commonweal*, residing in Lanesboro, has a wonderful capacity to relate to the struggles these characters face. We as a community can empathize and explore these challenges. Home is a cherished place, so small towns find ways to prosper. In the 1980's when Lanesboro struggled economically, the town found a way to bring about new life. The train tracks that were no longer in use became the Root River Bike Trail. Additionally, the Lanesboro Art Council was founded, and out of that grew the *Commonweal Theatre Company*, presenting this small-town story to you today.



A small-town mainstreet in Texas. Photo courtesy of Renelibrary, Wikimedia Commons.



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The lifeblood of the Commonwealth is the MDC, which consists of individuals and households who make a non-binding, 10-year commitment of support. For membership details, please visit the Support page at [CommonwealthTheatre.org](http://CommonwealthTheatre.org).

"When the MDC was initiated, we immediately joined. This level of giving helps ensure a solid financial base for the organization to meet their annual expenses while planning for the future. We encourage you to join us in supporting the Commonwealth, so we all can continue to enjoy the wonderful productions we have come to treasure."

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Decorah, IA

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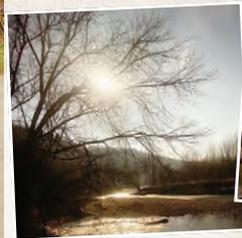
- Inns, campgrounds, vacation rentals

## PLACES TO EAT

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