



Full Circle Theater Company Presents:

The Second Event in Our

Spring 2021 Virtual Event Series

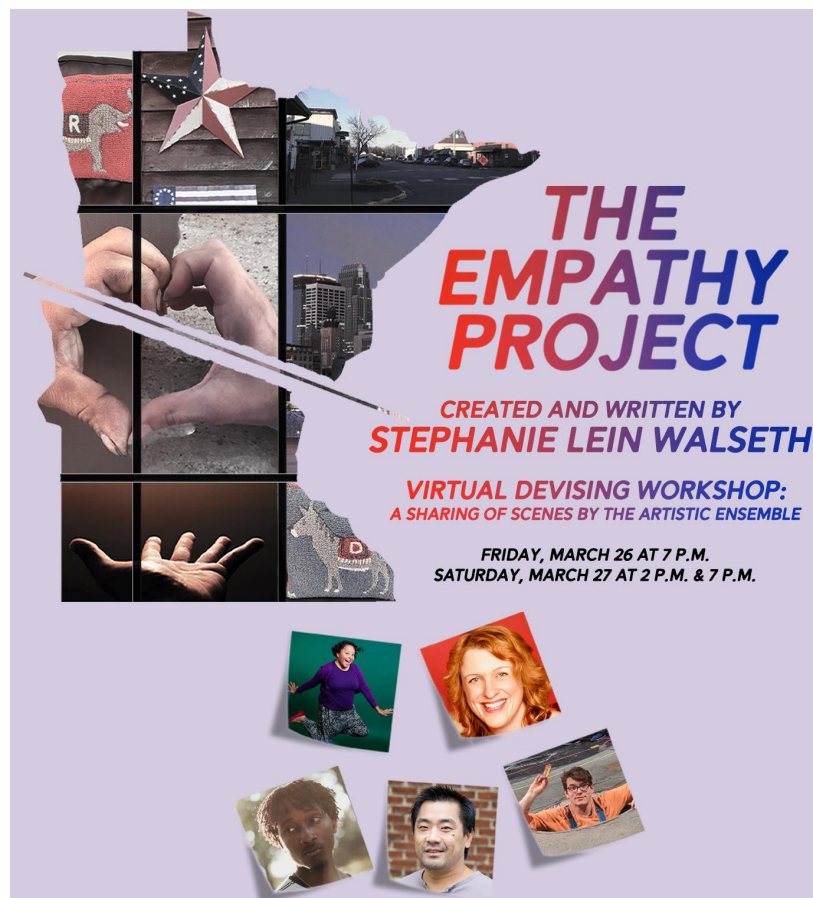
The Empathy Project

Written and Created by Stephanie Lein Walseth

Directed by Claribel Gross

A Virtual Devising Workshop: A Sharing of Scenes by the Artistic Ensemble

March 26-27, 2021



“Empathy is a strange and powerful thing. There is no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘You’re not alone.’” - Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

PRODUCTION TEAM

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Playwright/Story Weaver | Stephanie Lein Walseth |
| Director | Claribel Gross |
| Technical Director/Video Designer | Quinci Bachman |
| Technical Consultant | Aaron Fiskradatz |
| Post-Play Discussion Moderators | Christina Ogata and Martha J. Johnson |
| Publicity Associate | Kenji Shoemaker |
| Intern | Faith Milon |
| Producer | Rick Shiomi |

CAST (Listed Alphabetically)

Malick Ceesay*
Alex Church
Shanan Custer
Song Kim
Oogie_Push

*Music credit: Golden Doves created by Malick Ceesay for use in the scene “Where's the Escape?”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS, AS WELL AS PHOTOS AND BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PRODUCTION TEAM + CAST, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: <https://www.fullcircletheaternn.org/empathy>

FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

In the fall of 2020, Full Circle Theater presented virtual staged readings of The Empathy Project - the first draft of a new play exploring empathy across geographic, political, and racial divides based on interviews of rural and urban Minnesotans. This spring we take the script development process to the next level! Join us on March 26th and 27th as our artistic ensemble shares theatrical moments from a week-long collaborative devising workshop. Playing with sound and light, objects and movement, text and language (all over Zoom!), we will investigate the power and limits of empathy in a deeply fractured world. The richly textured, highly imaginative ideas that emerge from this workshop will guide the play’s development as it moves toward a fully staged production in the fall of 2021. Get a firsthand, behind-the-scenes look at the messy and beautiful process of script transformation, and join us in a dialogue about the present and future of The Empathy Project!

Disclaimer: *The Empathy Project* is a work of creative nonfiction, not a statement of fact, or journalism. This piece is based on interviews of actual Minnesotans between November 2019-June 2020. Like the fall iteration of the play, this workshop version uses some of the interview language verbatim, and at other times uses poetic license in the exact phrasing in order to layer or juxtapose the story's meaning. In this workshop, the text was simply a jumping off point and was not an attempt to capture the interviewees themselves. Names of interviewees have been changed to protect their identities.

Claribel Gross (Director)

Claribel Gross is a nomadic theater maker and teaching artist with a passion for languages. She has training and experience in Social Justice Theater, Devised Theater, Theater of the Oppressed, Theater for Young Audiences, Viewpoints, Playwriting, Experimental writing and Solo performance. She has a passion for new work, works in development and devising work with communities. As a performer, teaching artist and arts administrator Claribel has worked with Penumbra theatre, Teatro del Pueblo, English speaking Theater of Rome, Bedlam Theater, Pillsbury House Theater and Hamline University. Claribel holds a BA from the University of Minnesota and after several years of working in the theater obtained her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College.



Stephanie Lein Walseth (Playwright/Story Weaver)

Stephanie Lein Walseth is a Full Circle Theater Core Artistic Leadership Group Member and one of the co-writers for Full Circle's debut production of Theater: A Sacred Passage, one of the directors for 365 Days/365 Plays: A 2017 Remix, and the dramaturg for Under This Roof. As an actor, director, dramaturg, and stage manager, she has worked with Penumbra Theatre Company, Mu Performing Arts/Theater Mu, Sod House Theater, the Playwrights' Center, Guthrie Theater, Theatre Unbound, Starting Gate Productions, Theater in the Round, Frank Theatre, Native Voices at the Autry (CA), and Portland Stage Company (ME).

Stephanie is also a theater educator and administrator whose work in the Twin Cities has included tenures with Penumbra, Mu, Mixed Blood Theatre, Oakland Theater Project (CA), Augsburg University and the University of Minnesota, where she serves as affiliate faculty. She received her Ph.D. in Theatre Historiography from the University of Minnesota, and her research interests include the cultural poetics and politics of Native American, African American, and Asian American theatre, as well as theatre historiography, cultural studies, performance ethnography, critical and feminist pedagogies, and theatre for social change. She also works at the Perpich Center for Arts Education as the Theater Education Specialist with the Professional Development and Resources team. In this capacity, she supports K-12 and college/university theater educators and directors across the state.



Alex Church (Performer/Ensemble)

Alex Church (He/Him) is a Minneapolis based, Moorhead born, and Minnesota bred comedian, actor, playwright, improviser, and rabble rouser. In May, he's graduating from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities with a degree in Theater, Journalism, and Political Science, one that will serve him well in his future career as a dramaturg. When he's not writing plays or contemplating going to grad school, Alex is often seen around town doing stand up, improv, or sketch comedy. Sometimes all at once!



Malick Ceesay (Performer/Ensemble)

Malick Ceesay is an LA-based playwright of Gambian-American heritage. As a writer and performer, he has worked with Underdog Theatre, Capri Theatre (PCYC), Red Eye Theatre, Full Circle Theatre, The Playwrights' Center, Lyric Arts, and the Guthrie. Malick sits as the Associate Artistic Director of Ambiance Theatre Company. As a Twin Cities native, he received his BFA from Augsburg University and is pursuing his MFA in Playwriting at UCLA as a Graduate Opportunities Fellow.



Oogie Push (Performer/Ensemble)

Oogie Push is Meskwaki from Tama, Iowa currently residing in St. Paul Minnesota, land of the Dakota. She's a Company Member with Wonderlust Productions and Ensemble Member with Pillsbury House + Theatre's Breaking Ice. She is an Actor, Dancer, Meskwaki Twine Bag Weaver, Storyteller and Writer. Overall she is a homebody who is enjoying working remotely during these socially distanced times. When she isn't working she is catching up on her favorite shows and playing with her cat Luna Grrl.



Shanan Custer (Performer/Ensemble)

Shanan Custer is a theater maker, writer and improviser who has worked with Park Square Theatre, Interact, History Theatre, Frank Theater, Theatre Pro Rata, The Mystery Café, Mu Performing Arts and the Brave New Workshop. Shanan is a member of the Mysterious Old Radio Listening Society and an actor/writer for Sue Scott's Island of Discarded Womenpodcast. Her play Bad Things, Good Whiskey (with Carolyn Pool) will open 2021 at Park Square or when the world is open again to play.



Song Kim (Performer/Ensemble)

Song Kim (he/him) grew up in Portland, OR and has worked in different capacities with various companies in the Twin Cities and elsewhere. He has performed with Nimbus, Theater Mu, Full Circle Theater Company, and most recently appeared as 'Uncle' in Julia Cho's Aubergine, at Park Square Theater.



SPECIAL THANKS...

Special Thanks from Stephanie Lein Walseth for the entirety of this project can be found in the playbill of our Fall 2020 production. You can view that playbill [linked here!](#)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE to The Empathy Project...

The Empathy Project is FREE to view, but we will gladly accept your tax-deductible contributions towards the project to help offset the costs and pay artists living wages. If you feel so moved, [click here to donate](#) or send a check to Full Circle Theater Company, P.O. Box 40174, Industrial Station, 1430 Concordia Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, and include "Empathy Project" in the memo line. Thank you for your support!

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

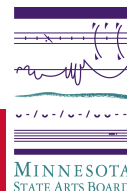
**P.S. If you enjoyed the piece and would like to recommend it to others,
please share the registration link:**

<https://tinyurl.com/empathyprojectworkshop>

Full Circle Theater Company is supported by:

Full Circle Theater expresses its gratitude to to the McKnight Foundation for general operational support of our company, and to the Minnesota State Arts Board for awarding us a 2021 Creative Support for Organizations Grant to produce this spring series: 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.

McKNIGHT FOUNDATION



***Other Music Credits:** «Beautiful Morning», «Rendezvous», «Chilled to Zero» and «Emotional Wilderness» from <https://www.purple-planet.com>

ABOUT FULL CIRCLE THEATER COMPANY: Founded in 2014, Full Circle Theater is led by a [Core Artist Leadership Group](https://www.fullcircletheatermn.org/) made up of Co-Artistic Directors Rick Shiomi and Martha B. Johnson and Core Artistic Leadership Group Members Stephanie Lein Walseth, Lara Trujillo, Ricardo Beaird (Full Circle's 2020-2021 Resident Core Artist.) To learn more about Full Circle Theater and our season, please visit <https://www.fullcircletheatermn.org/>.

