

Mars Hill University
Theatre Arts Presents

TRUE CRIME

A

live

immersive

theatre experience

OCT. 19, 20, 21 & 26, 27, 28, 2023

SETTING

TRUE CRIME presents audience members with an interpretation of events both real and imagined, told in a unique setting exploring the unsolved murder of a young woman in Madison County, North Carolina in 1970. This production was inspired by the book, *Met Her On The Mountain: The Murder of Nancy Morgan* by Mark I. Pinsky

ACT I

Scene 1: Memorial Room
Scene 2: The Magician
Scene 3: Local Gossip
Scene 4: Season of the Witch
Scene 5: Block Wide Mile Long Hell Deep
Scene 6: Mountain Justice
Scene 7: Bloody Madison
Scene 8: Ghost Town in the Sky

ACT II

Scene 1: Across the Universe
Scene 2: Blanket Fort
Scene 3: Inner Sanctum
Scene 4: The Reporter
Scene 5: Eyewitnesses
Scene 6: Ghost Woman

ACT II

After Party

THE CAST

Magician.....	Mason Thompson
Gossipers.....	Emma-Leigh Brookshire, Fernanda Guerrero-Resendez, Christina Stark, Alexis Stephens
Nancy.....	...Regan Sellers
Head Medical Examiner.....	Valerie Buchanan
Sheriff.....	James Greene
Accused.....	Nat Ogden
Funeral Attendants	Ivy Brooks, Sarah Wheeler
Spirit Guides.....	Marlee Bishop, Briana McFalls
Reporter.....	Faith Giles
Detective.....	Alisa Absher
Soldiers.....	Jared Benain, Cristina Schmidt
Ghost of Nancy.....	Blaine Hovis

THE CREW

Writers.....	Sue Fair, Jeff Mason
Director.....	Sue Fair
Technical Direction.....	Sue Fair
Assistant Technical Director.....	Blake Freeman
Choreographer.....	Amanda Hoyte
Costume Designer.....	Anne Knight
Set Design.....	Sue Fair, Jeff Mason
Lighting/Sound Designers.....	Sue Fair, Blake Freeman, Jeff Mason
Stage Manager.....	Emma Hall
Production Manager.....	Sue Fair
Box Office Manager.....	Emma Hall
House Manger.....	Blake Freeman
Set Construction.....	Sue Fair, Blake Freeman, Jeff Mason, TA 102 Theatre Workshop

GUEST ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Jeff Mason is a luminary of immersive arts, that has been honed since his graduation from the North Carolina School of the Arts in film. This exceptional foundation paved the way for an illustrious decade spent in the bustling heart of Hollywood, where he further enriched his artistic palette. He serves as a vibrant beacon within the

cultural tapestry of Asheville. His devotion to the world of theater and art knows no bounds. Jeff is not merely an observer; he is an active participant in the vibrant tableau of immersive arts. Having journeyed to the far reaches of the globe, he has reveled in the spectrum of immersive experiences, from the professionally curated to the beautifully raw expressions of amateurs. In the course of his artistic journey, Jeff has seamlessly integrated himself into the very essence of immersive artistry, where he collaborates and shares the immersive space with fellow creative visionaries. His artistic journey has brought him to the hallowed halls of Mars Hill University, where he is honored to have contributed his expertise and energy. With a heart brimming with excitement, he aspires to ignite and nurture a profound love for immersives within the hearts of the local community.

WHO'S WHO



Ivy Brooks is a junior musical theatre major and dance minor. She is also a women's lacrosse player at the university! She is originally from the Washington DC area, but is now native to Chapel Hill, North Carolina as of last year. Ivy has had many roles and positions in the productions on campus, including those of SART.

This summer she was the artistic director's personal assistant, lead in the Frank Sinatra Tribute Musical *My Way*, prop designed

Church Basement Ladies, workshopped a children's musical *Denton The Dragon*, and stage managed *Golden Boy Of The Blue Ridge*. Her roles in the theatre department at Mars Hill include Lucy in *The London Merchant*, The Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella*, Sam in the *Medieval crimes* dinner show, and Helene in *Sweet Charity*. After graduation, Ivy hopes and plans to get her master's at UNC Chapel Hill to be close to home. Her dream is to move to New York City and act professionally on stage, then eventually be a professor at a university. You can find out more about Ivy on Instagram @ivyybrooks !



Emma-Leigh Brookshire is a senior this year at Mars Hill University. She is from Asheville, North Carolina. You may have seen her in past Mars Hill productions such as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Cinderella*, and *Sweet Charity*. She plans to graduate in the spring with her BFA in Musical Theatre.



Faith Giles is currently a senior at Mars Hill University double majoring in Theatre Arts and English. In her time at Mars Hill, she has stage managed for a student directors' showcase, run the light booth for that show, run the sound booth for the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*, and participated in *Cinderella* and *Sweet Charity*. Before coming to Mars Hill, Faith attended Watauga High School where she was heavily involved in the theatre program. There, you may have seen her in the shows *Guys and Dolls*, *Cinderella*, *Newsies*, or *Ernest and the Pale Moon*. In the future, Faith hopes to continue to grow in her acting and playwriting abilities at Mars Hill and beyond.



James Greene is a senior theatre arts major, who also plans to have a Business Administration minor. James Greene has been in multiple shows here at Mars Hill, some of these are *The Medieval Murder Mystery Show*, *Sweet Charity*, and *The London Merchant*. James Greene plans to be a voiceover artist after his time in Mars Hill.



Emma Hall is a sophomore Theatre Arts major at Mars Hill University. She is a native of Candler, North Carolina. Emma has performed in shows such as *A Charlie Brown Christmas* as Patty and *Seussical* as The Sour Kangaroo. She was also an ensemble member in shows such as *Mamma Mia*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Sweet Charity*. In 2022, she even wrote, directed, and performed in an original play called *He Was Mine*. After college, she plans to become a high school theatre teacher.



Blaine Hovis is a junior at Mars Hill University, double majoring in Musical Theatre and Elementary Education. She was most recently Julia in MHU's dinner theatre production, *Medieval Crimes*. She would like to thank her family and friends for supporting her pursuit to do what she loves, and she cannot wait to see what the future holds.



Regan Sellers is a senior Musical Theatre major and Music minor at Mars Hill University. She is a native of Kings Mountain, North Carolina. You may have seen her in MHU's production of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* as The Stepmother, Rosie in *Sweet Charity* and as Belle in SART's production of *A Christmas Carol*. Upon graduation, she plans to attend graduate school to receive her master's degree in musical theatre as well as receive the credentials for Theatrical Intimacy Education. Regan would like to thank her friends and fellow peers for supporting her through her artistic journey and she can't wait for her next project.



Alexis Brooke Stephens is a senior Musical Theatre major at Mars Hill University. She is a native of Icard, North Carolina. Alexis has performed in such shows as *A Southern Appalachian Christmas* as Mary Beth, in *The Virginia Monologues* as Woman 3 and The Flood. Her technical work includes Stage Management of *Church Basement Ladies*, Assistant Stage Manager of *Sweet Charity*, as well as Box Office Manager of

Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre for their 49th season. She plans to graduate in 2024, then work professionally as an actor.



Sarah Wheeler is a native of Oxford, North Carolina. She is a senior about to graduate with her BFA in musical theatre with a minor in music. You may have seen her in productions at Mars Hill such as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Cinderella*, and *Sweet Charity*! She has also been featured at McGregor Hall's regional theatre and has done professional film work. Upon graduation, Sarah plans on pursuing stage performance professionally and eventually going back to school to earn her master's in theatre to teach.



Alisia Absher, Marlee Bishop, Fernanda Guerrero-Resendez, Briana McFalls, Christina Stark, Mason Thompson

THEATRE ARTS FACULTY & STAFF



Sue Fair
Department of Theatre Arts
Chair & Associate Professor

Sue Fair is the Theatre Arts Department Chair at Mars Hill University and is on the Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre Board of Directors. She was born in Asheville, NC, and was a graduate of West Henderson High School, Florida A & M University, and Florida State University, from where she holds a graduate degree in Theatre Education. She also served her country in the Army Reserves for eight years as an Intelligence Officer. Sue has worked professionally at Gardner-Webb University as the Theatre Arts Interim Department Chair, Instructor, Designer, and Managing Director, from where she proudly received the Faculty

of the Year award in 2015. Sue has also worked at SART, Flat Rock Playhouse, Florida State University, Tallahassee Community College, Young Actor's Theatre and South Georgia Performing Arts. She has written screenplays for two Nickelodeon series and has been in the background in several popular films and series. Sue has been involved in theatre and film for 35 years with over 70 performances under her belt, and has been teaching professionally for over 22 years. Her true love is theatre education and inspiring people of all ages with the wonders of live theatre.



Blake Freeman
Department of Theatre Arts
Assistant Technical Director

Blake Freeman is a recent graduate of Mars Hill and is returning as Mars Hill's newest assistant technical director. Blake has worked on many of our productions including Cinderella, Little Shop of Horrors, Sweet Charity and much more. While he was a student, Blake was able to work for SART as an intern and was able to achieve the SART outstanding intern award. Blake was also awarded the Gray/Stewart Technical Excellence award in his senior year. Alongside to working at Mars Hill, Blake is a Lighting Technician for Pisgah Audio, Visual, and Lighting here in Asheville. At Pisgah, Blake has been able to further his knowledge in lighting and is able to work on big productions at venues such as the Biltmore, Omni Grove Park Inn, and even Rabbit Rabbit doing wedding lighting and concert lighting.



Chelsey Gaddy
Department of Theatre Arts
Adjunct Instructor & Musical Theatre Director

Chelsey Lee Gaddy is a native of Asheville, NC, and a 2006 graduate of Mars Hill University. She moved back to Asheville 9 years ago after a diverse career in Pigeon Forge, TN, where she did everything from impersonating Lucille Ball to singing backup for Dolly Parton. Most recently she has starred as Hazel Grubbs in *Golden Boy of the Blue Ridge*, Linda

in *The Wedding Singer*, Cathy in *The Last Five Years*, and Alice Murphy in the WNC Regional Premiere of Steve Martin's *Bright Star*. Her MFA in Acting from Florida Atlantic University has provided a variety of experience in both teaching and performance and led her back to her Alma Mater as the director of the MHU Musical Theatre Program. Chelsey teaches a variety of classes, and her specialty is preparing students for professional careers in the arts after graduation. She is currently the Senior Artistic Director for Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, a nonprofit professional theater company housed on the campus of Mars Hill University. Voted “Best of WNC” for multiple years under her management, SART provides relevant professional theatrical experience for MHU students before they graduate. In her spare time, she is actively involved in connective networking throughout western North Carolina to promote inclusion in education and theatre, autism acceptance, and support for survivors of domestic violence. Chelsey's passion is finding effective ways for using theatre as a vehicle for societal change. She is blessed to have the opportunity to be both a mother and an artist, bringing her tenacity and dedication to the theatrical home that shaped the beginning of her career.



Amanda Hoyte

Department of Theatre Arts

Adjunct Instructor & Dance Program Director

Amanda Hoyte is a proud graduate of both the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.S. in Psychology, and the University of South Florida with a M.S. in Medical (Health) Sciences, with over 25 years of formal dance training in styles including ballet, tap, and jazz dance, and theatrical and concert stage performance experience that spans 20 years. Amanda has devoted most of her professional dance career to educating individuals of all ages in the art and joy of music through movement and to building a diverse dance community in Western North Carolina. Amanda joined the

Theatre Arts Department faculty at Mars Hill University as the Dance Program Director in 2020. In addition to her instruction and program direction at the university level, Amanda teaches at the primary and secondary levels; she is a resident instructor and jazz and tap choreographer for the competitive dance team at Art of Dance Studio in Flat Rock, NC. Amanda also teaches tap and jazz master classes and choreographs professional productions (recent credits: *BLVCK BRILLIANCE: A Celebration of Melanin* (2021) and *Little Shop of Horrors* (2021)). Throughout her career, she has traveled and performed with professional dance companies on stage in cities across America and developed a love for performing. She continues her performance career regionally, with most recent appearances in music videos for artists including The Get Right Band, Alfred Nomad, and Eleanor Underhill, and on theatrical stages, including the 2021 production of *BLVCK BRILLIANCE: A Celebration of Melanin* and SART's 2022 production of *The Wedding Singer*. She is also very active as a jazz-tap dancer/musician in Asheville's live music scene and is a leader in the NC Chapter of the Southern Open Rhythm Collective. As Dance Program Director at MHU, Amanda is working to build a holistic dance program that creates informed and experienced practitioners/performers. Her efforts in this regard have led her to several scholarly and creative pursuits examining the relationship between dance, music, and American culture.



Anne Knight

Department of Theatre Arts

Costume Shop Manager & Costume Designer

A native of Asheville, NC; Anne graduated from North Carolina School of the Arts. Trained in Costume Construction, she worked in various

costume shops, theme parks, and costume rental stores before opening her own costume creation business, operating it for 20 years. Her shop specialized in costumes for ballet and Irish step dance companies, Civil War reenactors, professional clown performers and sci-fi enthusiasts. Anne also did custom sewing, especially for the physically challenged folks. As Shop Manager she maintains the department's costume collection and instructs students in sewing and wardrobe maintenance. Anne has also

worked as the Costume Shop Manager for the Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre Company here on campus in the past. This summer, Anne worked with Asheville Terpsichores Theatre of Dance's Production of "*Cleopatra*" as an Assistant to the Costume Designer.



Danielle Buice Plimpton

Director of the Bailey Mountain Cloggers & MHU Spirit Teams

Danielle Plimpton is in her 16th year as Director and Choreographer for Bailey Mountain Cloggers. She is a graduate of Mars Hill University and a former member of the Bailey Mountain Cloggers. She has performed in Ireland, Spain, Costa Rica, Greece, England, France, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Columbia, the Netherlands, and Portugal. She also appeared in Uncle Earl's music video Streak o' Lean, Streak o' Fat. She is trained in many styles of dance including Ballet, Jazz, Clogging, Gum Boot, Irish, Hip Hop, Musical Theatre, and Tap. She has directed the team for 17 of their National Titles. Danielle also serves as Director of Mars Hill University's Spirit Teams. Bailey Mountain is her second home and will always be her extended family.



Richard Riccardi

Department of Theatre Arts

Musical Theatre Accompanist

Richard Riccardi is a native New Yorker who started pursuing his piano studies at the age of four. After an embarrassing moment (for his teacher and parents) of hiding under the piano at his first public recital, he recovered his decorum and went on to study at Mannes College of Music in the preparatory department, and then to Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, earning his Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance. As part of his Oberlin studies, he spent a year studying piano at the Akademie Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and followed his bachelor's degree earning a Master of Musical Arts degree at Yale University School of Music. After graduate school, he spent many years teaching music at all levels

in the public schools, mostly in California, and retired in 2008 two years after being one of the recipients of the Mister Holland's Opus award for excellence in teaching. Retirement, in truth, is a non-existent word in Richard's vocabulary, and he continued to teach for the next eight years at Sonoma State University before relocating to North Carolina. He has been an active music director, and in a year in which teaching was interrupted by budget cuts, Richard was on tour with the third national company of Annie, as assistant conductor. Richard and his wife Sandy continue to music direct shows, perform their original comedy cabaret, and are both adjunct professors at Brevard College.



Chuck Taft

Department of Theatre Arts

Musical Theatre Instructor

Chuck Taft is an educator, performer, conductor, and music director based in Western North Carolina. Chuck attended Mars Hill University for two years before graduating from Western Carolina University (Bachelor of Music - Vocal Performance) and holds a Master of Music from Lee University. He has over 20 years' experience as Music Director for over 60 musicals performed all over North Carolina. He currently serves as Director of University Chorale, Applied Voice Instructor, and Music Director and Conductor for the Reuter Center Singers at UNC Asheville, as Applied Voice Instructor – Theatre Arts at Mars Hill University, as Director of the Givens Estates Choir, and as Music Director at First Congregational UCC - Asheville.

Mr. Taft has served as Music Director and Conductor for Haywood Arts Regional Theatre, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, Asheville Community Theatre, and as Music Director for BioFlyer Productions and Hendersonville Theatre. He has served as Interim Conductor of the Blue Ridge Orchestra, Guest Conductor of the Asheville Choral Society, Conductor of the Asheville Chamber Players, and as Music Director, Chorus Master and Conductor for various productions of the Asheville Lyric Opera and has also performed and/or conducted at many area theaters, including Highland Repertory Theater, Mars Hill College, Parkway

Playhouse, UNC Asheville, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theater, MAHEC, Asheville Community Theater, BioFlyer Productions, Asheville Arts Center and Western Carolina University.

Chuck brings energy and joy to his work in various settings, facilitating personal and musical growth with students and colleagues, while deftly navigating conflict to achieve desired outcomes. He strives to practice the principle of People over Process in a positive, possibility-filled environment.

THEATRE ARTS PROGRAMS

- *Master of Arts in Teaching for Theatre*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts*
- *Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre*
- *Minor in Musical Theatre*
- *Minor in Dance*



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Mars Hill University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award bachelor's and master's degrees. The university is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BE A THEATRE MAJOR FOR THE DAY

**NOVEMBER 15
FEBRUARY 28**

- 9:30AM Check-in Moore Auditorium
- 10AM Voice for the Actor
- 11AM Film as an Art Form
- 12:30PM Lunch
- 1:30PM Campus Tour
- 2:30PM Musical Theatre Dance Styles
- 3PM Meet with Theatre Arts Faculty



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