

Thornton Wilder's

Our Town

**Directed by
Kathleen M. McGeever**

The Clifford E. White Theater

April 21, 22, 23 at 7:30 pm

April 23 & 24 at 2:00 pm



Director's Note

A STAR IS MIGHTY GOOD COMPANY

When I think of *Our Town*, I am reminded of this quote, “There is something way down deep that’s eternal about every human being. You’d be surprised how people are always losing hold of it” (Wilder, 81). We strain away, struggling on this planet to make something of ourselves while overlooking the moments of life (Wilder, 9). *Our Town* is everyone’s town. Wilder describes his play as “the life of a village against the life of the stars.” The moon and the stars give us pause in this story because next to them, human beings are a part of something larger. They are the eternal that connects each of us to humanity. *Our Town* is a seemingly simple story about something all human beings must do – be born, grow up, live life, and die. *Our Town* is essential, it is universal, and it has remained as relevant as life itself, morphing in meaning as we age and as life happens around us.

Our Town has been produced by innumerable theatre companies including High Schools, Universities, Community Theatres, and professional companies, all over the world. In my pre-production research, I stumbled across a new text, *Another Day’s Begun Thornton Wilder’s OUR TOWN in the 21st Century* written by Howard Sherman, Methuen Drama, 2021. In the text, Sherman explored the play’s history and uncovered why a play that premiered in 1938 would continue to remain as relevant today as the day it premiered. The most common question in Sherman’s book was why this play speaks a truth about “tie that binds” us as human beings.

In every production interviewed, there was a transformation of one or more participants. One of the interviews that struck me deeply was an RTA (Rehabilitation through the Arts) production in 2013 at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Sing Sing is a maximum-security prison located an hour north of New York City that houses extremely violent prisoners and is where many will remain for the rest of their lives. RTA is a not-for-profit theatre company that produces plays that include a few professionals and inmates with the goal of advancing empathy, socialization, self confidence, and talent in the austerity of prison. When the play was announced to the inmates, many felt that the play would not speak to them- that it was not their story. They wondered why tell this boring story where nothing happens but, when the curtain closed, there was a profound shift in thought. In each case, the inmates were moved by the universally human story that Thornton Wilder created.

“You had two guys in here; one of them was in his 70’s, the other in his 60’s. One of them has 150 years, so he’s never going home. To someone like him, the play takes on a whole different meaning because when you see death you realize, ‘I’m going to be carried out of this place. What’s it going to be when my time comes?’ It forces him to face that reality and I believe he’s one of the guys who said, “You finally did a play for us. I know my time is going to come one day. And I’m able to face it now. The biggest fear of a convicted felon is dying in prison.” (Sherman, 243)

Our Town is essential, it is universal, and it is about all of humanity. No matter where you come from by the end of the play, you are confronted with a purpose. The character, Emily, says it best near the end of OUR story, “Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? – every, every minute?” (Wilder, 95).

In the devastating wake of COVID, *Our Town* has a profound message that I did not observe thirty years ago when I directed this play with my high school students. After the last two-years, there is much we need to rediscover about “living and dying and the lives we lead in between.” We have been shut up in our little boxes– our homes, offices with shut doors, and the virtual world confined by a screen. Therefore, *Our Town* is an important story to tell right now. *Our Town* illuminates what matters and exposes what is of little consequence. It is not just that we need to be truly cognizant of what matters in difficult times, it is about living life purposefully and fully, with grateful reflection as much as we can, and together with those that we love and care about. Kate Powers, the director of the RTA production, shared this in her final response to Sherman: “The men said, over and over, variations on, ‘We’re shut up in little boxes, too. We’re literally shut up in little boxes. The difference between these men and Emily, as several of them described it, is that when they come home, they’ve got a chance to do it differently, whereas Emily has really lost that opportunity by the time she gets to that part of the play” (Sherman, 245). We have a chance to live life differently as well; and remember, “a star is mighty good company” (Wilder, 96).

Welcome to our town!

Kathleen M. McGeever, Director

Our Town

By Thornton Wilder



Cast

Stage Manager

Dr. Gibbs

Howie Newsome

Mrs. Gibbs

Mrs. Webb

George Gibbs

Rebecca Gibbs

Wally Webb

Emily Webb

Mr. Webb

Simon Stimson

Mrs. Soames

Constable Warren

Sam Craig

Joe Stoddard

Passionate Person

Person in Theatre/ASM

Lady in Theatre

Lady in Theatre /ASM

Professor Willard

Jo Crowell

Si Crowell

Farmer McCarty

Ensemble

Alexander Furash*

Jack Skummer

Jeremiah Montgomery*

Aurora Howard

Chaiah Durst*

Casey Young

Holly Glave*

Tyler Dean*

Kelsey Brown*

Ian Burnett*

Noah Hascall

Emma Gasior

Kane Courtney

Camryn McMahan*

Richie Szopinski^

Quinten Kessler*

Mirjam Prayer

Isabella Hibbs

Cameron Middaugh

University Professor

Amanda Emery

Olivia Charlson

Isaac Wilson

Jeremiah Montgomery*

Kane Courtney*

Isaac Wilson

Quinten Kessler*⁺

Isabella Hibbs

Olivia Charlson

Amanda Emery

Creative Team

Director	Kathleen M. McGeever
Asst. Director	Brett Puppilo* ⁺
Costume Design	Jennifer Peterson
Asst. Costume Design	Isabel Dial ⁺
Asst. Costume Design	Sydnee Messerschmidt* ⁺
Scenic Design	Mark Delancey
Asst. Scenic Design	Katelynn Garcia ⁺
Lighting and Sound Design	Ben Alexander
Asst. Lighting Design	Asher Robinson*
Asst. Sound Design	Lexi Connell ⁺
Voice and Speech	Rebecca Whitehurst
Music Director	Christine Graham

Production Team

Technical Director	Mark Delancey
Stage Manager	Gemma Haraksin ⁺
Assistant Stage Managers	Cassie Freedman*
	Connor Stewart*
Costume Shop Manager	Nancy Parr
Draper	Kate Ellis
Department Chair and EP	Kathleen M. McGeever
Poster Design	Isabella Otott
Program Design	Kelsey Brown*
Pianist	Samuel Gingher

Special Thanks

Chris Boyer, Dean of CAL
Kareli Vanessa Cota, CTO
Christine Graham
Samuel Gingher
Peaks Audio
Zachary Ziegler, CAL Events Director
Patricia Murphey
Craig Knoth
Cristi Mallery
Greg Hales

Bob Yowell, Gioia Woods, Luis Fernandez and Bjorn Krondorfer

Scenic Crew

Crew: Sydney Lybbert, Connor Carreon, Naomi Rusk, Macy Bodrero, Theta Rector, Claire Schecter, Jynrus Roberts, Isabela Herckes and Olivia Carter

Carpenters: Kevin Chan, Jeremiah Montgomery*, Kane Courtney*, Gabriella Nelson, Isaac Wilson, Richard Szopinski, Hayley Diaz*, Baili Watt, Noah Hascall, Ian Little, Casey Young

Costume Crew

Crew Head: Ainsley Brown

Crew: Arielle Leiser, Abby Minter, Elle Zizzi, Nanae Ushijima, Fernando Rubio*, Jamie Stanton and Kylie Soto

Lighting Crew

Crew: Trinity Brandenburg, Tina Sommer, Virgil Shipman[†], Twig Sencan, Kyla Manzutto and Brianna Flanagan

Events Promotion

Events Promotion Head: Kelsey Brown*

Members: Kylie Soto*, Chaiah Durst*, Grace Rich, Brett Puppilo*[†], Ian Burnett*, Elle Zizzi, Caleb Ellis* and Cassie Freedman*

House Management

House Managers: Hayley Diaz* and Mary Ryan*





The Process



WELCOME TO OUR TOWN THE LAST PRODUCTION OF
THE 2021- 2022 SEASON

NAU Theatre is thrilled to end our 2021- 2022 season with Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize winning play. Our Town is a 1938 metatheatrical, groundbreaking, three-act play that remains as relevant today as the day Wilder penned it. As one of the most produced plays worldwide, many know the story well, yet some are being introduced to it for the first time. You're all very welcome to Our Town because it is YOUR TOWN too...that is all I am going to say for fear that I will give something away.

This season, Of Storms and Clear Skies, has explored the full range of tragedy and loss all the while keeping an eye for humanity's hopeful resilience. We end our exploration with Our Town as the snow melts, the days lengthen, and our resilience has prevailed. Our Town is the first unmasked show of the season, and it is a joy to see our performer's faces and to hear and understand them better! Thank you for sharing this season with us!

If you have liked what you have seen this season, please consider giving to the Harper Family Endowment for Production by following this link. The Harper Family Endowment for Production was founded by two philanthropic alums who saw the power of creating theatre in education and beyond, and wanted to give back. Thank you Bill and Jana! This fund helps us to produce our season and bring amazing stories to life for you, our audience. Most importantly, the Harper fund provides opportunities for student actors, designers, stage managers, crews, and front of house staff to learn theatre by doing theatre (#DoingTheatre), which is essential for the next generation of Theatre makers. Please consider giving any amount to this important fund.

2021-2022 has been an exciting season and we are looking forward to many more to come. In fact, we are still putting the final touches to our 2022-2023 Season and though our Season announcement is delayed, we invite you to keep an eye out on our Facebook page for the reveal. It will be coming soon!

Sla'inte (Cheers) and best wishes to all!

Kathleen M. McGeever
Department Chair
Professor of Performance
NAU Theatre