

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

After retiring from full-time teaching at MMC in June of last year, it is an honor to be invited back to direct this Spring Mainstage (my 15th !) of Kenny Finkle's wonderful revision of his play, *A Thousand Years*. It is a greater honor to join the Theatre Arts department in dedicating these performances of Kenny's play to the legacy and memory of our dear colleague, Professor John Basil, who passed away last May. John had an incredible impact on the lives of many Theatre Arts students in his 14 years at MMC. Kenny's funny, fantastical play is one that John would have loved not only for its humor and boldness, but also for its insights into the potential of positivity and the power that love offers in our challenging world.

It has been a wonderful learning opportunity for the students collaborating on this production – actors/musicians, designers, stage managers, assistant director, dramaturg, production crew – to work with a playwright of Kenny's caliber on the revision of a play that is epic in its scope and requires artistic imagination to create, and physical stamina to perform. The play you see in performance and the script that has evolved over our 11-week rehearsal process is very different than the play the actors read for auditions and that the creative team first read to start developing the visual world you now see. The previous version of *A Thousand Years* was written to be performed by 4 actors playing all the roles and read very much like a chamber play. For the play to be performed in a theatre that is as large as the Theresa Lang, and for the epic nature of the play to work in this space, the play has gone through many changes: the cast has been enlarged to 16 actors; the visual world although still minimal as Kenny has written, has been scaled up to fill the stage of the Lang; live music created by the actors has been added to support Kenny's writing and the play's style; and Kenny has added new scenes to the play and written backstories for some characters to share, in addition to giving characters greater agency in the storytelling.

Most of our students' experiences in classes and in our productions are with well-known plays and musicals that have production histories and traditions as to how they are performed. The creative process of developing a new play is quite different as we are the first interpreters of the play. That carries with it an awesome responsibility as well as a kind of freedom, as we establish the model for future interpretations. It has been a privilege for both Kenny and me to share this

type of theatre-making experience with our students to create the first production of this revision of *A Thousand Years*.

Words of gratitude: First, to the Production Committee and especially Theatre Arts department chair, Jill Stevenson, and assistant chair for Production Pedagogy, Lori Zepp, all of whom embraced my return to MMC and supported the idea of producing on our Mainstage, for the first time, a new work by the head of our Writing for the Stage concentration. Second, to Kenny Finkle, for entrusting me with directing his play and embracing the journey of presenting *A Thousand Years* in this production style. We have had a great experience collaborating on this. Thank you to all my colleagues on the Theatre Arts faculty that have warmly welcomed me back to direct this semester, particularly to my design colleagues, Rob Dutiel and Ray Recht, whose vision and passion for visual storytelling have contributed so much to this production. To the cast, student designers, assistant director, dramaturg, and crew, who have contributed incredible imagination, hard work, and enthusiasm to this project, thank you for all you have contributed to bringing this play to life. These students let go of egos in service of something larger – telling the story of this play in a unique style – and making that story more important than the success of any one individual. And finally, a thank you to someone from outside MMC – my wife, Becky, who always listens to my ideas, inspires, and challenges me to make them stronger, and whose support is unending, even when I spend three months in NYC away from our home in Buffalo to direct a play.

Enjoy the carnival ride that is *A Thousand Years*.

- David Frederick Mold, Director