

For Immediate Release:

URBAN STAGES presents the New York Premiere of

THE PORCH ON WINDY HILL

A New Play with Old Music

Written by

Sherry Stregack Lutken, Lisa Helmi Johanson,
Morgan Morse & David M. Lutken

Conceived and Directed by Sherry Stregack Lutken



Starring

TORA NOGAMI ALEXANDER, DAVID M. LUTKEN, and MORGAN MORSE



**PERFORMANCES BEGIN SEPTEMBER 12
OPENING NIGHT SET FOR SEPTEMBER 18**

At URBAN STAGES

“Begin[ning] with edges jagged enough to draw blood, they end like sea glass, polished into a rough beauty.” – *Chicago Sun-Times*

“*The Porch on Windy Hill* has its hands on the wheel of something that’s real.

It is powerful theater.” – *Manchester Journal*

“A musical treat to the ear and a soulful treat to the heart.” – *Evanston RoundTable*

(New York, NY) – Urban Stages (Frances Hill, Founding Artistic Director; Antoinette Mullins, Associate Artistic Director) is proud to present the New York premiere of a heartwarming and melodically rich new musical play, ***THE PORCH ON WINDY HILL: a new play with old music***, written by Sherry Stregack Lutken, Lisa Helmi Johanson, Morgan Morse, and David M. Lutken. Performances begin

September 12 at *Urban Stages Theater* (259 W 30th St, NYC) with an official opening on **September 18** and will run through **October 11**.

Conceived and Directed by Sherry **Stregack Lutken**, *The Porch on Windy Hill* blends Appalachian, Old Time and Bluegrass songs with a deeply personal, contemporary story of discovery and reconciliation. The show follows Mira, a biracial Korean American classical violinist, and her folk-song-collector boyfriend Beckett as they escape pandemic isolation in Brooklyn and journey to the mountains of western North Carolina. When they unexpectedly reconnect with Mira's estranged grandfather, Edgar, they uncover a tangled legacy of love, loss, and music—and discover the unforeseen harmony that can arise when generations and genres collide.

"At Urban Stages, we've always believed in the power of great storytelling to bridge divides, spark empathy, and celebrate what connects us. The Porch on Windy Hill is a shining example of that—a play that's musically rich, emotionally resonant, and unapologetically human. It's the kind of theatre that honors tradition while speaking to the moment, and we're proud to give its New York premiere a home on our stage." **Frances Hill, Founding Artistic Director of Urban Stages,**

Set against the backdrop of the Blue Ridge and its timeless American melodies, the Urban Stages production features a dynamic cast of actor-musicians: **Tora Nogami Alexander** (NBC's "Rise"), **David M. Lutken** (IRT's *Woody Sez: The Life & Music of Woody Guthrie*; Broadway's *Inherit the Wind*, *The Civil War*, *Ring of Fire*, *The Will Rogers Follies*), and **Morgan Morse** (The Public's *Southern Comfort*).

The creative team includes scenic design by **Andrew Robinson**, lighting design by **John Salutz**, sound design by **Sun Hee Kil**, costume design by **Grace Jeon**, and the production stage manager is **Leigh Selting**.

Developed during the pandemic by its director and original team of actor-musicians: Sherry Stregack Lutken, Lisa Helmi Johanson, Morgan Morse and David Lutken, *The Porch on Windy Hill* premiered at Ivoryton Playhouse in Connecticut in 2021, where it received four CT Critics' Circle Nominations, including Outstanding Director (Sherry Lutken), Outstanding Actor in a musical (David M. Lutken), Outstanding Actress in a musical (Lisa Helmi Johanson), and Best Ensemble. The show has since traveled across the country, with acclaimed productions at Northlight Theatre in Chicago, Merrimack Repertory Theatre in Massachusetts, Weston Theater Company in Vermont, and People's Light in Pennsylvania. Each production has deepened the play's unique blend of Appalachian music and the multi-generational tale of a family broken by intolerance and ignorance, uncovering the hope of redemption and understanding.

The Porch on Windy Hill begins performances on September 12 and will open September 18, initially running through October 11, 2025. It will play Monday, Wednesday – Friday at 7 PM, Saturday at 3 PM and 7 PM, and Sunday at 3 PM. Tickets and more information can be found at www.urbanstages.org. Urban Stages is located at 259 W 30th St, NYC. Runtime approximately 2 hours with an intermission.

Press performances are: Sunday, September 14 at 3 PM; Monday, September 15 at 7 PM; Wednesday, September 17 at 7 PM, and Thursday, September 18 at 7 pm (Opening)

The cast and creative team are available for interviews. To arrange interviews and press seats, please contact JT Public Relations, / joe@jt-pr.net

Creative team bios

SHERRY STREGACK LUTKEN (Co-writer/ Director) directed the world premiere of *The Porch on Windy Hill* at the Ivoryton Playhouse. Her Off-Broadway and regional directing and choreography credits include *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *The Million Dollar Quartet*, *Almost Heaven*, *Hank Williams: Lost Highway*, *Stand By Your Man*, *Stars in Your Eyes*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *Hopscotch*, and *Anything Goes*. In 2009, she directed the first regional theater production of *Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash* at North Carolina's Flat Rock Playhouse, and has since staged many productions of the show across the U.S. and abroad, including at Vienna's English Theatre and Munich's Deutsches Theater. As Associate Director of *Woody Sez: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie*, she has set productions in Chicago (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination), Washington D.C. (Helen Hayes Award nomination), Florida, Pennsylvania, and the show's first national U.K. tour.

LISA HELMI JOHANSON (Co-writer) is a multi-hyphenate who has a passion for developing new works and pursuing intentionality in representation to further the work of racial justice and social equity. Broadway: *POTUS* Select Off-Broadway/NYC: *DRAG: The Musical*, *Avenue Q*, *Einstein's Dreams* (OC), *The Drowning Girls*, *Rescue Rue* (OC). Tours: Fiasco's *Into the Woods*, *Avenue Q*. Select Regional: *Anything Goes* (Arena Stage), *Vietgone* (Denver Center), *The Chinese Lady* (Milwaukee Rep; Best Actress award – Milwaukee Broadwayworld), *Amadeus* (Syracuse Stage), *Once* (Cape Playhouse), *Waterfall* (5th Avenue Theatre & Pasadena Playhouse), *A Christmas Carol* (McCarter Theatre), *4,000 Miles* (St. Louis Rep.). Film/TV: "Law & Order," "A Holiday Spectacular" (Hallmark Channel), "Law & Order: SVU." As a playwright, Lisa has co-written *Kim Loo Gets a Redo*, *The Porch on Windy Hill*, and was a semi-finalist with the O'Neill Musical Theater Conference with a new musical in development called *Zitkala Sa's Astonishing Wild West* with collaborator Lizzie Hagstedt. Also in development with collaborator Drayton Alexander is: *Aygoo*, *Jinja / Oh my God*, Really? @hurricanhelmi

MORGAN MORSE (Co-writer/ performer) is an actor, musician, and writer originally from Connecticut. Theatre credits include *Southern Comfort* (The Public Theater), *Once* (Cape Playhouse, Ivoryton Playhouse, Maltz Jupiter Theatre), *Bright Star* (Arrow Rock Lyceum), *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* (Ivoryton Playhouse), *Almost Heaven: John Denver's America* (Weston Playhouse, Riverside Theatre) *Hester Street* (Theater J), and *Ring of Fire* (venues from Houston, TX to Vienna, Austria). In 2020, he began creating music and comedy content online, gaining a following on TikTok and Instagram (@themorsecoda on both). He also writes and performs original non-comedy music! More info at morganmorse.com.

DAVID M. LUTKEN (Co-writer, performer, and music director) is an award-winning actor and musician whose Broadway credits include *Inherit the Wind*, *Ring of Fire*, *The Civil War*, and *The Will Rogers Follies*. He performed the role of The Balladeer in Benjamin Britten's opera *Paul Bunyan* at Lincoln Center, and has appeared Off-Broadway in *Woody Sez*, *Southern Comfort*, *Stars in Your Eyes*, *Winter Man*, and *The Portable Pioneer and Prairie Show*. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, Cooper Union, 92nd Street Y, the Ryman Auditorium, and has been featured on "NPR", "Voice of America", "BBC", "ORF" (Austria), "Polskie Radio Troika" (Warsaw), and "The Louisiana Hayride". David devised the critically acclaimed *Woody Sez: The Life & Music of Woody Guthrie*, which has toured extensively throughout the U.S., the U.K., Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, earning numerous accolades including the Edinburgh Fringe Critic's Pick, Brighton Festival Argus Angel Award (Best Musical), Joseph Jefferson and Helen Hayes Awards (Best Actor), and nominations from the London Evening Standard, Off-Broadway Alliance, Outer Critics Circle, and Drama League.

URBAN STAGES is an award-winning, not-for-profit, Off-Broadway Theatre Company founded in 1984 by current Artistic Director Frances Hill. For over 40 years, Urban Stages has produced dozens of world, American, and N.Y. premieres, including Pulitzer Prize Finalist *Bulrushier* (2007) by Eisa Davis. We have been honored with awards, nominations, and recognition from the Drama Desk, Obie Awards, Audelco, Outer Critics Circle, and more. Plays produced at Urban Stages often move on to larger venues and/or publications. *People Of The Book* by Yussef El Guindi (2024), *The Audit* by Lynda Crawford (2025), *The American Dream* by Juan Ramirez

Jr. (2025), *The Making Of A Great Moment* by Peter Sinn Nachtrieb (2023), *Eleanor and Alice: Conversations Between Two Remarkable Roosevelts* by Ellen Abrams (2022/2023), *Charmed Life: From Soul Singing to Opera Star* by Lori Brown Mirabal (2021), and *Bars and Measures* by Idris Goodwin (2019) were critically acclaimed. *Gratitude* by Oren Safdie (2022) was recognized as one of the top ten productions of the year by TheaterScene. *Death of a Driver* (2019) by Will Snider went on to a regional production at The Salt Lake Acting Company. In our 2017/18 season, *A Deal* by Zhu Yi (world premiered at Urban Stages) toured China, and *Dogs of Rwanda* by Sean Christopher Lewis (New York Premiere at Urban Stages) toured regionally. Other notable productions include the world premiere of the musical *Langston in Harlem* by Walter Marks (music and book) and Kent Gash (book and direction), which garnered a Drama Desk Nomination, a Joe A. Calloway award, and 4 Audelco awards, including Best Musical Production of 2010. Critically acclaimed hits *Mabel Madness* by Tony-winner Trezana Beverley (2016), *Communion* by Daniel MacIvor (2016), and *Angry Young Man* by Ben Woolf (2017), which transferred to the John Drew Theatre at Guild Hall in East Hampton, have premiered at Urban Stages. In addition, *Unseamly* by Oren Safdie (2015) was a N.Y. Times Critics' Pick. Jim Brochu's *Character Man* (2014) was nominated for a Drama Desk and an Outer Critics Circle award for Best Solo Performance, and *Honky* (2013) by Greg Kalleres saw a regional run at San Diego Rep and was televised nationally on PBS in late 2015. 1996's *Men on the Verge of a Hispanic Breakdown* by Guillermo Reyes and *Minor Demons* by Bruce Graham both moved to commercial theatres. *Chili Queen*, a play by newscaster Jim Lehrer, transferred to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. (1989). *My Occasion of Sin* (2012) by Monica Bauer won critical acclaim when it moved to Detroit Rep. Bill Bowers (appearing on our stage once again!) has toured regionally and internationally with his two Urban Stages' premieres, blending mime and theatre – *Beyond Words* (2012) and *Under a Montana Moon* (2002)! Some Urban Stages premieres have even been developed into film and television projects, such as *Scar* by Murray Mednick, *Conversations with the Goddesses* by Agapi Stassinopoulos, and *Cotton Mary* by Alexandra Viets. In addition to plays and musicals, annually, we hold a music festival - Winter Rhythms - that features famous and up-and-coming cabaret musicians, lyricists, and other music artists. In 2016, *Winter Rhythms* was honored with the Bistro Award for Outstanding Series, and in 2015, it received the Ruth Kurtzman Benefit Series M.A.C. Award from the Manhattan Association of Cabarets and Clubs.