



WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

Poster image coming soon

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

By Mike Kenny

From an original idea by Gavin Stride

Produced by special arrangement with Plays for New Audiences

Streamed Performance

Directed by Nick Vargas

Press Release

Contact: Jenna Corcoran, Marketing Coordinator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Date: Saturday, May 1 at 2:00pm

Email or call for press access link, images, pre-production interviews, and more information.

WHAT:

Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University (WFT@BU) and Boston University's School of Theatre announce their virtual co-production of *Walking the Tightrope*.

Written by Mike Kenny. Directed by Nick Vargas.

Recommended for ages 6+.

ABOUT:

A story of family, loss, and the poetry of the circus. At the end of every summer, Esme goes to stay with her Nanna and Grammy Sofie. But this summer, Nanna Queenie is missing. Unable to express that Nanna Queenie has passed away, Grammy instead shares that Nanna Queenie has joined the circus: "She looked like an ordinary woman, but inside beat the heart of a tightrope walker." Grammy's story unravels, however, when the circus comes to town. "Although Grammy struggles with revealing the truth of Nanna's death to Esme," says actor and School of Theatre Assistant Professor Elaine Vaan Hogue, "she also creates the space for Esme to come to the realization on her own terms, in her own time. The love between the two of them is so open and generous, fierce and fragile."

"We often ask ourselves, how do we teach children about any number of big topics, grief being only one?" says Wheelock Family Theatre Artistic Director, Emily Ranii. "Sometimes we forget that everyone, regardless of age, needs practice in being human together. I love that Grammy Sofie and Esme learn these skills from each other in an entirely collaborative way."

Actor and School of Theatre BFA student Valyn Turner shares: "What's exciting to me about this play is the agency that is given to Esme, a young girl, to curate the retelling of her own story exactly as she remembers it—complete with her brilliant childlike understanding of things. To me, that's quite liberating."

The play, as originally written, called for Esme to visit Grandad Stan. Wheelock Family Theatre received permission from playwright Mike Kenny to change the role of Grandad Stan to Grammy Sofie in order to explore the multiplicity of family structures that our young audiences encounter in the world today. "I identify as queer, gay, lesbian (all of those things!) and have been married to my partner for 25 years," says Vaan Hogue. It is so important to represent ALL kinds of families and to celebrate diversity."

The story will be told through the lens of toy theatre, as if through the eyes of a child or the magic of the circus. What is toy theatre? Miniature worlds made out of paper. Or, as the director of the production and Associate Artistic/Associate Education Director of Wheelock Family Theatre, Nick Vargas, describes the experience: “We are using the vocabulary of paper and children's drawings as a way of inviting audiences’ imaginations into our storytelling. Accompanied by shadow puppetry, our blank page will come to life through the use of vivid lighting, simple but poignant costumes, live and recorded sound, as well as live video. Audiences will be in the middle of the action, safely from home.” After all, “How can we continue to tell stories that warm our hearts and open our minds?” asks School of Theatre Director Susan Mickey. “Puppets! Toy Theatre! Actors playing two beautifully written characters!

WHEN:

Saturday, May 1, 2021
2:00 PM

WHERE:

Virtual Wheelock Family Theatre. www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org/walking-the-tightrope/

TICKETS:

Tickets are FREE for this production. Patrons must reserve their ticket.

- Online at wheelockfamilytheatre.org
- By phone at (617) 353 - 3001

ACCESSIBILITY:

Open Captioning will be provided. Questions regarding access? Please contact Audience Services Manager Jamie Aznive at jznive@bu.edu.

CAST: Valyn Turner (Esme), Elaine Vaan Hogue (Grammy Sofie).

CREATIVE TEAM (in alphabetical order): Klara Ballay (Assistant Lighting Designer), Sam Bliss (Assistant Sound Designer), Qian Chengyuan (Lighting Designer), Erin Davis (Dramaturg), Sean Doyle (Sound Designer), Emma George (Costume Designer), Lawren Gregory (Technical Director), Grecia Hernandez (Production Manager), Angelene Kim (Film/Video), Samantha Knox (Stage Manager), Samantha Mastrati (Scenic Designer), Daniel Perkins (Assistant Stage Manager), John Tomlinson (Film/Video), Nick Vargas (Director).

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Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University is the greater Boston area's leading professional theatre offering a shared experience for the entire family. Founded in 1981, WFT@BU's long-standing commitment to equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion has garnered recognition and awards at the local and national level. WFT@BU's productions have served more than a half-million audience members and WFT@BU's education programs have provided hands-on training to tens of thousands of students across the state of Massachusetts. On June 1, 2018, Wheelock Family Theatre became a program of Boston University.

Founded in 1839, **Boston University** is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 33,000 students, it is the fourth-largest independent university in the United States. BU consists of 17 schools and colleges, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes integral to the University's research and teaching mission. In 2012, BU joined the Association of American Universities (AAU), a consortium of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.