



NIAGARA
UNIVERSITY
THEATRE

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Independence

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY PLAYERS PRESENTS
an all-student run production of

Independence

by Lee Blessing

Directed by
Catriona Goodsell
(Class of 2021)

Artistic Director
Skylah Fields
(Class of 2021)

Production Stage Manager
Nefantee Mayers
(Class of 2023)

Technical Director
Spencer Dick
(Class of 2022)

Costume Designer
Amaya Mack
(Class of 2023)

Assistant Artistic Director
Tricia Lazatin
(Class of 2022)

Scenic/Video Design
Spencer Dick
(Class of 2022)

Presented Virtually
March 19-21, 2021

Independence is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service,
Inc., New York

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this Production is strictly
prohibited

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY PLAYERS

The Niagara University Players is a student theatre organization that has been in existence for over sixty years and organizes social activities (Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas party, Kris Kringle gift exchange, annual Players' Banquet and more), fundraisers and community service activities. The NU Players also present an all-student production once a year. Join us this year for our production of Independence. Any NU student is eligible for membership (contact: nuplayers@niagara.edu).

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY PLAYERS BOARD OF OFFICERS

2020-2021

Co-Presidents	Michael Kelleher, Isabel Merkel
VP/Concessions	Ben Hayes
Secretary	Sydney McKinley
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Co-Head Events	Reagan Zuber
Public Service	Marley Judd
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Publicity	Morgan Hilliker
Apparel	Catriona Goodsell

PLAYERS PRESENTS:

Artistic Director	Skylah Fields
Assistant Artistic Director	Tricia Lazatin
Technical Director	Spencer Dick

Remaining Players
Board Members

Emily Augello, Justin Durrett, Taylor Grosskopf,
Audrey Grout, Benjamin Kulwanowski, Amaya Mack,
Austin Marshall, Josephine Reynolds, Jason Stopinski,
Jeremy Vicario

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Throughout my final year with the Niagara University Theatre, my studies have focused on the meaning of identity and how personal identity translates into everything we do. Personal markers such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and much more play such a large role in our lives, both in the day-to-day functions as well as the art that we produce.

Independence is a further exploration into those markers, particularly focusing on gender and sexuality. Throughout the rehearsal process, we as a cast and crew have discussed our own identities, and how these identities influence our connections to the characters we present on stage (or in this case, on screen). These identities impact everything we do, and help to define not only how we see the world, but in many cases how the world sees us.

My hope is that we can all take a moment to be introspective, and recognize these identities. I invite you to think about these identities, and how they help you to relate to not only the characters in *Independence*, but how they relate to the people and world around you.

Thank you,
Catriona Goodsell

INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

By: **Tricia Lazatin, Assistant Artistic Director**

Coming into the world of *Independence*, by Lee Blessing, we are brought into a family dynamic that differs from your typical idea of an American family. *Independence* brings a sense of truth and explores the varying degrees of human relationships, especially within a familial environment. We are given a personal look into the world of Evelyn Briggs and the dysfunctional relationship she has with her three daughters. It seems as though Evelyn's mental state is a barrier that draws a divide between her and her daughters. This play helps us to recognize the stigma of mental health in today's society and the need to advocate for better mental health, especially among women. The set of data below will help bring together certain questions that the play presents- how does mental health affect family life and relationships? How does mental health differ between men and women? What is the importance of mental health advocacy? And most importantly, why is there a stigma behind mental health and illness in today's society?

Parents with a history of mental illness expose children to increased rates of depression and other mental illnesses when being compared to children of parents who do not have any affective illness. According to Mental Health America, children whose parents have a mental illness are at risk for developing social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems. The severity and duration of a parent's mental illness, the extent of their symptoms, and how their condition affects their behavior and familial relationship, will determine the risk of their child developing similar conditions.¹ It also appears that a mother's affective state has a more profound effect on the child than a father's illness.² Research has shown that there are identified differences between men and women in regard to risk, prevalence, and treatment of mental health. Though, men and women have similar rates of mental health problems, the types of conditions experienced may differ.

In the United States, 1 in 5 women have a mental health condition such as depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or an eating disorder.³

Twice as many women experience depression in their lifetime than men, and approximately 1 in 9 women, 18 and older have had at least one major depressive episode within the past year.⁴ Women are also twice as likely to experience PTSD or an anxiety disorder or panic disorder. In addition to this, women attempt suicide more often than men, however, men are four times more likely to die by suicide, according to the American Psychiatric Association.⁵

INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

By: **Tricia Lazatin, Assistant Artistic Director**

There are often myths and misperceptions about mental health, and the people who live with mental illness, that contribute to the stigma surrounding the topic of mental health. In certain cultures and environments, mental health can be viewed as a taboo topic. Those who live with mental illness or mental health conditions may also be afraid or scared to speak up about how it affects their livelihood. However, the less we talk about it, the less we are able to speak up and normalize the occurrence of mental health issues in our society.⁶ The stigma surrounding mental illness causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. This poses the question: “How do you fight the stigma?”. The National Alliance on Mental Illness suggests the following as some ways to stand up to the stigma: talk openly about mental health, educate yourself and others on mental illness, be conscious of language and refrain from using mental health conditions as adjectives, encourage equality between physical and mental illness, be honest about mental health treatment, and do not harbor self-stigma. You can make a difference by acknowledging that mental illness is not anyone’s fault, regardless of societal stigma.⁷

For more resources or guidance, please refer to the following services below:

Niagara University Counseling Services: (716) 286-8536

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): 1-800-950-6264

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 1-800-662-4357

INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

By: **Tricia Lazatin, Assistant Artistic Director**

FOOTNOTE SOURCES:

- 1 “Parenting.” Mental Health America, www.mhanational.org/parenting.
- 2 Keller MB, Beardslee WR, Dorer DJ, Lavori PW, Samuelson H, Klerman GR. Impact of severity and chronicity of parental affective illness on adaptive functioning and psychopathology in children. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 1986;43:930-7. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- 3 5 National Center for PTSD. 2015. Women, Trauma, and PTSD. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/women/women-trauma-and-ptsd.asp>
- 4 National Institutes of Health. 2008. Males and Eating Disorders. *Medline Plus*, 3(2):18. www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/spring08/articles/spring08pg18.html
- 5 American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.
- 6 “An Interview About Mental Health Stigma and Healing.” *Womenshealth.gov*, 8 Feb. 2018, www.womenshealth.gov/blog/mental-health-stigma.
- 7 “9 Ways to Fight Mental Health Stigma.” NAMI, www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/october-2017/9-ways-to-fight-mental-health-stigma.

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Jo **Samantha Dell'Acqua**

Kess **Sydney McKinley**

Sherry **Emily Kuster**

Evelyn **Taylor Grosskopf**

TIME

PLACE

The Present Independence, Iowa

CAUTION: *Independence* contains adult language and situations

~There will be no intermission~

PRODUCTION

Assistant Artistic Director **Tricia Lazatin**

NU Players Faculty Advisor **Doug Zschiegner**

Faculty Technical Advisor **Jack Wrobel**

Scenic Crew **Justin Durrett, Shyheim
Rodriguez**

Video Op/Crew **Sean Taylor**

Box Office Supervisor **Keirsten Thomas**

Box Office Personnel **Catriona Goodsell, Christian Hines,
Tricia Lazatin**

Publicity **Derek Moran**

Social Media **Steve Braddock, Adriano Gatto, Audrey
Grout, Morgan Hilliker, Josephine Reynolds**

Graphic Design **Suzanne Karaszewski**

Playbill Coordination **Tricia Lazatin**

CAST & PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

SAMANTHA DELL'ACQUA, from Albany, N.Y., is pursuing a Theatre Performance major. NU Credits: *Independence* (Jo). Outside Credits: *Moon Over Buffalo* (Eileen), *Les Miserables* (Ensemble), *Almost, Maine* (Glory), *The Music Man* (Ensemble), *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday* (Gillian), *Speak to Us Of...* (Featured Player). Offstage: *Shakespeare's Kings & Queens* (Video Technician), *Cat in The Hat* (Props Master).

TAYLOR GROSSKOPF, a sophomore from North Tonawanda, N.Y., is pursuing a Theatre Performance major as well as minors in English and ASL. NU credits: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Assistant Stage Manager), *The Laramie Project* (Reggie Fluty and others), Short Play Festival 2021 - *Rules of Comedy* (Caroline) and *Love, Mom* (Mom). Outside credits: At Ghostlight Theatre, *The Silver Lady* (Raven), *A Night of Dark Intent* (Wilma), *Nonsense I & II* (Ensemble), *Beauty and the Beast* (Ensemble and Set Manager), and *Lottie and Bernice Livin' Large* (Teen Bernice). At NTHS, *Xanadu* (Erato), *Bye Bye Birdie* (Mae Peterson), and *Shrek The Musical* (Dragon, Mama Ogre and Rat Tapper). She loves being on stage, but she also really enjoys learning about all the different aspects that go into a production.

EMILY KUSTER, from Eden, N.Y., is a sophomore currently pursuing a Theatre Performance major at Niagara University and has an associate degree in Liberal Arts from Erie Community College. NU credits include: *Independence* (Sherry Briggs), *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* (Video Technician), and *Shakespeare's Kings & Queens* (Video Technician). Outside credits include: *42nd Street* (Costume Director), *The Little Mermaid* (Sebastian), *Catch Me If You Can* (Carol Strong), *Shrek* (Humpty Dumpty, One of the Three Blind Mice, Tap Dancing Rat, and Duloc Dancer), *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (Townsperson), *L.O.V.E.* (Elizabeth), *Once Upon A Mattress* (Princess #12 and Lady in Waiting), *Hello Dolly* (Waitress and Parasol Dancer), *The Wedding Singer* (Flower Girl and Folder Dancer), *The Little Mermaid Jr.* (Sebastian), and *Willy Wonka Jr.* (Matilda). Emily had won the Blossom Cohan Award at the Kenny Awards for playing Carol Strong in *Catch Me If You Can* during her junior year of high school. She was also an active participant in student costume construction and set construction for her musicals from 7th -12th grade.

SYDNEY MCKINLEY, a senior from East Amherst, N.Y., is pursuing a Theatre Performance major with a minor in Design/Technology. NU credits include *Independence* (Kess), *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* (Tilly), *Shakespeare's Kings and Queens* (Props Acquisition), 2021's Short Play Festival *Going Viral* (Viewer #1), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Borachio), *Firebugs* (Sound Tech), *Anton in Show Business* (Casey), *Legally Blonde: The Musical* (Props Run Crew), *Pygmalion* (Clara), 2019's Short Play Festival, *Do-Overs* (Young Soul) and *Kill Me, Please!* (Gloria), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Props Acquisition), *Chicago* (Props Acquisition) and 2018's Short Play Festival *Wedding Story* (Storyteller). Outside Credits include *Beauty and the Beast: A Faery's Tale* (Faerie Tale), *Cyrano and Roxanne* (Lady Celimene & others), and *Frankenstein* (Townsperson).

CAST & PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

SPENCER DICK, of Lockport, N.Y., is a junior Theatre Production and Design major pursuing minors in Fine Arts and Communications. Spencer's highschool roles include *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Jem Finch) and *Picking the One Act Play* (co-author and Props Manager). His NU positions are *Little Shop of Horrors* (Props Acquisition), *Pygmalion* (Assistant Stage Manager) *Legally Blonde* (Sound Technician), Nurt 2019 (Stage Manager), *Go Dog Go* (Stage Manager) *Freaky Friday* (Props Acquisition), Short Play Festival 2020 (Sound Coordinator), *Sylvia* (Set Designer), and *Independence* (Technical Director and Scenic/Video Design). His outside involvement includes *Bye Bye Birdy* (Scenic Designer) and *Frozen Jr.* (Assistant Stage Manager).

JUSTIN DURRETT of Lancaster, N.Y., is a sophomore Theatre/Design and Production major. During his time at Niagara University, Justin has helped in the execution of several shows, including *Freaky Friday* (Light Board Operator), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Swing Tech), *Independence* (Scenic Painting), *An Ideal Husband* (Audio), and *Songs For a New World* (Audio). In addition, Justin has also acted in several Niagara University Theatre shows, such as in the 2019-2020 NU Players' Production of *Sylvia* (Tom/Phyllis/Leslie) and in *Good Kids* (Ty). Justin is also a proud member of the NU Players Board and NU Esports.

SKYLAH FIELDS, from Brooklyn, N.Y., is a senior Theatre Performance major. NU credits include 2017/18 Short Play Festival *Favor's* (Alison), 2018/19 Short Play Festival *Don't Hang Up* (Big Y), NURT 2018, *TYA: Click Clack Moo: Cow's that Type* (Cow 1), *The Wolves* (#00), *Pygmalion* (Anitha Dolittle), Live Literature Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hippolyta/Titania), *Anton in Show Business* (T-Anne, Andwyneth, Gatekeeper, Don Blout), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Leonato). She is also the Artistic Director of the NU's Player's production of *Independence*.

CATRIONA GOODSSELL, is a Senior Theatre Specialization and Criminal Justice dual major from Mexico, NY. Theatre credits with Niagara University Theatre include: *The House of Bernarda Alba* (ASM), *Copenhagen* (ASM), *Anton in Show Business* (ASM), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Stage Manager), *Good Kids* (Stage Manager), 2019 Short Play Festival (Director), and finishes off her senior year with directing *Independence*.

CAST & PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

TRICIA LAZATIN, of Niagara Falls, N.Y., is a junior double major in Marketing and Theatre Specialization. Onstage credits at NU include: *The Laramie Project* (Zubaida Ula), 2020 Short Play Festival, *Goat* (Lil), *Dancing in the Light* (dancer), and *Legally Blonde: The Musical* (Bookish Client/Ensemble). Offstage credits at NU include: *Independence* (Assistant Artistic Director), *Vital Signs* (Stage Manager), 2021 Short Play Festival, *A Harmony of Both* (Director), *The Laramie Project* (Stage Manager), *Sylvia* (Assistant Stage Manager) and *Anton in Show Business* (Assistant Stage Manager/Stage Crew Ensemble). Tricia also worked as part of costume crew and scene shop crew for the 2018-2019 Season. Her past theatre credits include: *The Addams Family* (Ancestor), *Shrek the Musical* (Duloc Dancer/Dance Captain), *Hairspray* (LouAnn/Dance Captain), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Bielke/Russian Dancer/Dance Captain). Additionally, she performed and danced with Niagara Dance Centre for 10 years.

AMAYA MACK, a sophomore from East Amherst, N.Y., is pursuing a Theatre Design/Production major with a Fine Arts minor. Niagara University credits: *Independence* (Costume Designer), *An Ideal Husband* (Graphic Designer), *Sylvia* (Wardrobe head), N.U. Costume Shop Assistant, 2019 Short Play Festival's *Canker Sores and Other Distractions* and *Green Dating* (Stage Manager), *Freaky Friday* (Assistant Stage Manager), High school credits: *The Addams Family* (Ensemble), *The True Story of Cinderella* (Deckhand), and *Seussical* (Prop Crew).

NEFANTEE MAYERS, of Rochester, N.Y., is a sophomore Theatre Directing Specialization major. During her senior year of high school, she chose and directed her school's spring play *Almost, Maine*. Also, in her freshman year at Niagara University she was a part of the wardrobe crew for *Anton in Show Business*, and did sound for *Much Ado About Nothing*.

SEAN TAYLOR, from North Tonawanda, N.Y., is a sophomore Theatre Performance major who is also triple minoring in Design/Production, Dance, and Film Studies. His previous performance credits at NU include *Vital Signs* (Carl/Others) and *Good Kids* (Tanner). His production roles include *Independence* (Video Op/Setup Crew) *Vital Signs* (ASM) and *The Laramie Project* (Props Acquisition). A transfer from NCCC, his credits there include *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Mr. Van Daan), *Into The Woods* (Deck Crew Head, Build/Lighting Crew), *Godspell* (ASM), and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Deck Crew).

BREAKING THE STIGMA:

Please join us for a discussion following Niagara University Players Presents production of *Independence* by Lee Blessing. This conversation will occur on Zoom (details below) following the Sunday matinee performance of *Independence* at approximately 4:00pm.

Zoom Post-Show Discussion

Topic: Independence Post-Show Discussion
Time: Mar 21, 2021 04:00 PM America/Toronto

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://niagara-edu.zoom.us/j/88010260844?
pwd=boihaFptMlAyQTZhRHRpRjZmUoNxQT09](https://niagara-edu.zoom.us/j/88010260844?pwd=boihaFptMlAyQTZhRHRpRjZmUoNxQT09)

Meeting ID: 880 1026 0844

Passcode: NUTheatre

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+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 880 1026 0844

Passcode: 179918577

Find your local number: <https://niagara-edu.zoom.us/u/kd87sxfScp>

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**PLAYERS PRESENTS
RETROSPECTIVE:
2010-2020**

2020: Sylvia

2019: Some Girl(s)

2018: Recent Tragic Events

2017: The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon
Marigolds

2016: Extremeties

2015: Love Song

2014: The Shape of Things

2013: Time Stands Still

2012: The Twilight of the Golds

2011: How I Learned to Drive

2010: Proof



NU Theatre invites you to return for our upcoming shows:

An Ideal Husband (Apr. 15-18)
Songs for A New World (May 6-9)

For more information on our upcoming shows, and to reserve tickets, please visit our website:

<https://theatre.niagara.edu/>

Or contact our box office:

Ph: (716) 286-8685

Email: boxoffice@niagara.edu

In 1986, a group of long-time theatre goers incorporated themselves as the Friends of Niagara University Theatre in order to raise awareness and develop support for the theatre department.

Now you too can join the Friends' efforts to help ensure the future of one of the oldest professional theatre training programs in the region, and help students both on and off stage.

For more information, please visit theatre.niagara.edu/support or call 716-286-8483.

Join Today to help us build for Tomorrow!