

***MATILDA THE MUSICAL***

***The Cast***

Matilda Wormwood	<b>Zada Lile</b>
Miss Agatha Trunchbull	<b>Geoff Johnson+</b>
Miss Honey	<b>Sarah Ripley</b>
Mr. Wormwood	<b>Jeff Graves +</b>
Mrs. Wormwood	<b>Mandy Irons Gardner +</b>
The Escapologist/Doctor/Rudolpho	<b>Conor Sheehan+</b>
The Acrobat	<b>Cassandra Yuponco Owen+</b>
Mrs. Phelps	<b>Debbie Meyers</b>
Michael Wormwood	<b>Declan McAlvany</b>
Sergei/Mechanic	<b>George Gross</b>
Children's Entertainer/Henchman 1	<b>Riki Tsethlikai+</b>
Cook/Henchman 2	<b>Katie McCrea</b>
Henchman 3	<b>Nicholas Parker</b>
Nurse	<b>Ashley Rose Hunt</b>

**THE YOUNG KIDS:**

Bruce	<b>Noah Oury</b>
Lavender	<b>Sadie Hanson</b>
Amanda	<b>Tess McAlvany</b>
Nigel	<b>Luca Sandoval McCallum</b>
Erica	<b>McKenzie Oury</b>
Alice	<b>Ellie Bruckbauer</b>
Hortensia	<b>Lillian Fenberg</b>
Felicity	<b>Ava Allen</b>
Violet	<b>Genevieve Thompson</b>

**THE BIG KIDS/ENSEMBLE:**

<b>Riki Tsethlikai+</b>	<b>Rebecca Thurston</b>
<b>Conor Sheehan+</b>	<b>Nicholas C. Parker</b>
<b>Cassandra Yuponco Owen+</b>	<b>Shaunibah Morfin</b>
<b>Mohriah James +</b>	<b>Mady Brand+</b>

THE DANCERS:

<b>Mohriah James+</b>	<b>Rebecca Thurston+</b>
<b>Cassandra Yuponco Owen+</b>	<b>Mary Lynn Clark</b>

THE ENSEMBLE:

<b>Daphne Tingey</b>	<b>Katie McCrea</b>
<b>Ashley Rose Hunt</b>	<b>George Gross</b>
<b>Lori Fisher</b>	<b>Mary Lynn Clark</b>

*The Creative Team*

Director	<b>Mona Wood-Patterson+</b>
Tech Director/Designer	<b>Charles Ford+</b>
Music Director	<b>Tom Kyser</b>
Choreographer	<b>Dallas Padoven+</b>
Costume Designer	<b>JoAnn Nevils +</b>
Asst. Director	<b>Marc Arbeeny+</b>
Choreographer for “Loud”	<b>Suzy DiSanto+</b>

*The Production Team*

Stage Manager	<b>Liz Gray+</b>
Asst. Stage Manager/Props	<b>Samantha Duncan+</b>
Asst. Stage Manager/Costumes	<b>Katy Schneider</b>
Ticket Manager	<b>Greta Richter+</b>
Production Assistant	<b>Diane Panelli+</b>
Wardrobe Foreman	<b>Jennie Albert +</b>
Rehearsal Accompanist	<b>Jill Langoni</b>
Trunchbull’s Costume Design	<b>Janet Blankenship</b>

*The Crew*

Lights	<b>Jamie Pickering+</b>
Sound Operator	<b>Mick Souder+</b>
Projection Operator	<b>Heather Rasmussen Thomas+</b>
Stagehand	<b>Jeff Widen</b>

Costume Manager	<b>Natalie Cohn</b>
Dresser	<b>Grace Dendy</b>
Props Master	<b>Diane Panelli+</b>
Props Asst./Trunch Hair Design	<b>Heather Howe+</b>
Trunchbull's Hair/Makeup	<b>Ashley Rose Hunt, Mady Brand+</b>
Dance Captain	<b>Mohriah James+</b>
Cast Captain	<b>Riki Tsethlikai+</b>
Master Carpenter	<b>Michael Lee+</b>
Set/Scenery/Props Creation Crew	
<b>Ann Christensen/ DHM Design</b>	
<b>Charlie Grice</b>	<b>Diane Panelli+</b>
<b>Genevieve Thompson</b>	<b>Heather Howe+</b>
<b>Jamie Pickering+</b>	<b>Jeff Widen</b>
<b>Jenny Mason</b>	<b>Jessica Wood</b>
<b>Justin Brumley</b>	<b>Jim Ottman</b>
<b>Margaret Patterson</b>	<b>Natalie Cohn</b>
Photographer	<b>Kara Cavalca+</b>
Poster Hanging	<b>Kerry Tichi, Tara Fraser, Tami Hanson</b>
Parking Lot Supervision	
<b>Marc Arbeeney+, Charles Ford+, Joy Kilpatrick, Lindie Hunt, Johnny Whitt, Mary-Catherine McAlvany</b>	
Concessions	
<b>Greta Richter+, Linda Mack, Leanne Beasley, Keegan Oury, Daniel Hunt</b>	

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

Please silence or turn off your cell phones; they don't work that well down here anyway.

*We welcome you to take photos/video in the theatre before and after, **but not during**, the performance. If you post photos of the stage, please be sure to credit and tag Merely Players. @merely\_players\_durango*

In accordance with our production contract, the videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

*We know that, for many of you, taking performance photos or video of your loved ones is a huge temptation. Please respect this rule of theatre etiquette and resist! Phone use during a show is distracting to actors and audience members, violates our contract, and is disrespectful of our creative property. Live theatre is meant to be temporal – let it be just that. Thank you!*

**There will be a 15-minute intermission between acts so that you can collectively worry about Bruce's fate. Concessions will be on sale. It's a *Cash Only* deal.**

*MATILDA* was first commissioned and produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and premiered at the Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, England, on 9 November 2010. It transferred to the Cambridge Theatre on the West End of London on 25 October, 2011 and received its US premiere at the Shubert Theatre, Broadway, USA, on 4 March 2013.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### ACT ONE:

Miracle	<i>Ensemble, Doctor, &amp; Mrs. Wormwood</i>
Naughty	<i>Matilda</i>
Acrobat Story 1	<i>Acrobat and Escapologist</i>
School Song	<i>Kids</i>
Pathetic	<i>Miss Honey</i>
The Hammer	<i>Trunchbull &amp; Ensemble</i>
Naughty Reprise	<i>Matilda</i>
Chokey Chant	<i>Kids</i>
Loud	<i>Mrs. Wormwood, Rudolpho, &amp; Ensemble</i>
This Little Girl	<i>Miss Honey</i>
Bruce	<i>Kids &amp; Ensemble</i>

### ACT TWO:

All I Know	<i>Mr. Wormwood &amp; Dancers</i>
When I Grow Up	<i>Kids, Miss Honey, Matilda</i>
I'm So Clever	<i>Mr. Wormwood</i>
Acrobat Story IV	<i>Escapologist &amp; Matilda</i>
The Smell of Rebellion	<i>Trunchbull &amp; Young Kids</i>
Quiet	<i>Matilda</i>
My House	<i>Miss Honey &amp; Escapologist</i>
Revolting Children	<i>Kids</i>
Bows	<i>Company</i>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our sincere gratitude to those who helped us with this show. Many hands and kind hearts help us to do our work:

Ann Christensen/ DHM Design  
Ben Mattson  
Colorado Comfort  
Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado  
David McAlvany  
David Thorsby  
DHS Thespian Troupe 1096  
Dick White and Faye Schrater  
Durango Herald  
Gary Miller  
Geoff Johnson  
Heather Howe

Helen Bruckbauer  
Janet Blankenship  
Jaimie Pickering  
Jeff Widen  
Jennie Albert  
Jessica McCallum  
JoAnn Nevils  
Janet Curry and Peter Arcomano  
Lynne Murison  
Mary-Catherine McAlvany  
Mary Lynn Clark  
Nancy and Tom Mace  
Natalie Cohn  
Shine Salon  
Star Liquor/Mike Vermette  
Parents of Students and Families/Friends/Significant Others for providing support and love to those on our team

### WHO'S WHO

**Jennie Albert** (*Wardrobe Foreman*) is excited to be joining Merely Players once again, working alongside JoAnn Nevils. Jennie has been involved with Merely Players, both on and off stage, for years. A favorite memory was acting with her daughter in the musical *Shrek*. She stays busy with a private therapy practice; and loves spending time going on adventures with the love of her life, Luke, and three amazing kids, Abbie, Will and Gabriella.

**Ava Allen** (*Felicity*) is excited to be working with Merely Players for the first time. Ava is a Freshman at Durango High School, and has performed in musicals with Troupe 1096 and the Durango Arts Center. Some of her favorite productions include *The Addams Family*, *Schoolhouse Rock*, *The Music Man*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Ava took some time off from theater for competitive dance, but is so happy to be back on stage singing and acting again.

**Marc Arbeeny** (*Assistant Director*) has worn many hats for Merely Players. His first performance with the company was in *Metamorphoses* (2012). His most recent performance was in *Men on Boats* (2021). He has worn the stage manager hat for *Collected Stories* (2016), *Macbeth* (2020), and the sound production hat for *Wrinkle in Time* (2017). He has served on the Merely Players board since 2015. He was thrilled to be asked by Mona to wear the Assistant Director's hat for *Matilda*.

**Mady Brand** (*Big Kid/Ensemble*) is excited to be playing again with Merely Players—she has worked with the company since early high school! During the pandemic shutdown, Mady had the opportunity to be a part of numerous theatrical read-throughs over Zoom. Her most notable read-through roles include: Rose (*Gypsy*), Dolly Levi (*Hello, Dolly!*), Fosca (*Passion*), Mrs. Lovett (*Sweeney Todd*), Dot (*Sunday in the Park with George*), Joanne (*Company*), Tzeitel (*Fiddler on the Roof*), Mame (*Mame*), Diana (*Next to Normal*), Meg Giry (*Love Never Dies*), Hope (*Birds of Paradise*), Carrie (*Carousel*), Norma Desmond (*Sunset Boulevard*), and Anya (*Anastasia*).

**Ellie Bruckbauer** (*Alice*) is very excited to be in a Merely Players' production for the

first time. At the age of eight, Ellie began performing at the Durango Arts Center in shows like: *Big Bad (Red)*, *Magic Tree House (Annie)*, *The Knight at Dawn*, and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Violet)*. She has been dancing since she was four and loves hip hop, ballet, and jazz. She also performed as a Snowflake in the Durango Dance's *The Nutcracker* in December of 2020. In her free time, she enjoys mountain biking and skate skiing (and racing!) among other things. Enjoy the show!

**Mary Lynn Clark** (*Dancer/Ensemble*) is delighted to be a Dancer/Parent/Teacher in *Matilda*. For many years, she has had the joy of working on sets with Merely Players because of her daughters' acting involvement--being a cast member for the first time is checking off a major box on her life bucket list. Mary Lynn taught ballroom dancing for six years and is excited to relive her Arthur Murray days in the *Matilda* dance number, "LOUD". Teaching dance is how she met her wonderful husband, who ended up bringing her to Durango; so, she would like to thank Matt and her three kids (Laura, Ellie & Gabe) for all their love & support. Thanks to Mona for this opportunity.

**Natalie Cohn** (*Costume Manager/Construction Asst.*) is very excited to participate in Merely Players' production of *Matilda*. She has worked primarily as the Technical Director in Durango High School's theatre department. Natalie would like to give a special shout out to her students at DHS, and encourages everyone to see their Spring Musical: *Into the Woods*. She also would like to thank Charles Ford for giving her the opportunity to learn more about tech.

**Roald Dahl** (*Author*) lived from 1916-1990 and was the author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The BFG*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and many more of the world's best-loved children's stories. He remains one of the world's greatest storytellers and is celebrated annually by the world's biggest author-based event, Roald Dahl Day – which is recognised across the globe on 13th September. Today, his stories are available in 59 languages and, by a conservative estimate, he has sold more than 250 million books. Many of these stories have also been adapted for stage and screen, including the 1971 film classic *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, Wes Anderson's acclaimed *Fantastic Mr Fox*, and the Royal Shakespeare Company's multi-award winning production of *Matilda The Musical*. <https://www.roalddahl.com>

**Grace Dendy** (*Costume Crew*) doesn't have much experience in theatre, but is excited to learn more. She is a creative and solution-focused person, so she decided to come work with Merely Players to stretch her skills--it is her fun, new hobby! Grace has a background with music, performing in multiple bands and singing in choir; she has three cats (Remy, Elliott, and Ruby); and she loves crystals.

**Suzy DiSanto** (*Choreographer for LOUD*) has taught, performed and choreographed throughout California and Colorado. She holds an M.A. in Dance History from Mills College in Oakland, California, as well as a teaching credential in Laban Movement Studies from Laban Centre in London, England. Suzy has choreographed for 3rd Ave Dance Company, FLC Theater Dept., San Juan College Theater Dept., Snowdown Follies, Sandstone Productions, Durango High School Troupe 1096, Durango Arts Center Theater Series, Merely Players, and 20Moons Dance Company. Some of her favorite shows that she choreographed are *Chicago*, *Cabaret*, *Rent*, *Spring Awakening*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Rock of Ages*. She has taught for over 20 years in the Four Corners area, and currently she teaches in the Fort Lewis College Theater Department.

**Samantha Duncan** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is thrilled to return backstage for *Matilda*—she has been involved in local theatre since 2011. Her previous Stage Managing credits include Merely Players’ productions of *Baskerville*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *Mamma Mia!*; and, Durango Playfest’s *The Dizziness of Freedom* and *Two Handers*. Samantha has Assistant Stage Managed the Merely Players' productions *Mary Poppins* and *The Secret Garden*. She is eager to get back into the vibrant theatre community that Durango has to offer.

**Lillian Fenberg** (*Hortensia*) is thrilled to be performing with Merely Players and is excited for her debut appearance on the stage! Lillian loves all things musical—her best performances are held in her bedroom performing numbers from *Hamilton*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and most recently, *Encanto*. Outside of theater, she enjoys outdoor adventures with friends and family. Lillian is also very passionate about animals, especially hedgehogs. She is grateful to her family for their support and to the theater community for this opportunity to perform.

**Lori Fisher** (*Ensemble*) is grateful to be joining Merely Players after a 20-year hiatus from the theater world. In her previous theater life, Lori enjoyed playing the parts of Annie in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Anita in *West Side Story*, and Ruth in *Pirates of Penzance*. When not on stage, Lori can be found teaching Humanities at Animas High School, rafting rivers with her family, and lounging in hammocks. Lori believes it’s never too late to return to what you love, and is so happy to have the opportunity to perform again with this amazing cast and crew.

**Charles Ford** (*Technical Director and Designer*) is a master backstage technician and the Technical Director of Merely Players. An avid puppeteer, mask-maker, make-up artist, robotics engineer, and special effects designer, he has designed dozens of sets for a variety of theatrical genres. During his career as Durango High School's tech director and resident designer, Charles was the recipient of several awards, including the Durango Foundation of Educational Excellence's Outstanding Teacher Award and the Rocky Mountain Theatre Association Technical Theatre Award. Charles’ world travels have seen him climbing to the top of Machu Picchu, swimming with sea turtles, and riding a camel. He has tried to bring the joy and exhilaration of travel back and use the inspiration to create theatre magic.

**Mandy Irons Gardner** (*Mrs. Wormwood*) is thrilled to be LOUD in *Matilda*. Favorite roles with Merely Players include Aimee Blake (*The Humans*), Aldonza in (*Man of La Mancha*), Fiona in (*Shrek*), Mrs. Banks in (*Mary Poppins*). She participated in the Merely Studio Series in the socially distant production of *Much Ado About Nothing* as Beatrice. Favorite roles with the Durango Arts Center include Sally Bowles (*Cabaret*) and Justice in (*Rock of Ages*). Most recently, Mandy directed *True West*, the inaugural show for the Durango Art Canter’s Repertory Theatre Company (DART). Mandy sings with the Durango Women’s Choir, serves at Christ the King Lutheran Church, coordinates DAC’s annual 10 Minute Play contest, and has an amazing teenage daughter.

**Jeff Graves** (*Mr. Wormwood*) is thrilled to be back home with Merely Players. Jeff is a graduate of DHS ('04) and co-founder of Durango’s Devise and Conquer Improv. Favorite recent appearances include Lee (*True West*, DAC); Brad (*Rocky Horror*, DAC); Marc (*Art*, Merely); Claudio (*Much Ado*, Merely Studio); Malcolm (*Macbeth*, Merely);

Richard (*Humans*, Merely). Jeff is grateful for his incredible wife, Katie McCrea, and all the other blessings on the way.

**Liz Gray** (*Stage Manager*) graduated from NYU's Tisch School of Arts (Stella Adler Studio/Excellence in Acting award recipient), The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (London), and The Upright Citizens Brigade (NYC). As an actor with Merely Players, you may have seen her in *All Together Now*; as Guy in *Wakey, Wakey*; and as Titania/Snug in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She co-directed *Men on Boats* and is directing the upcoming Merely play, *The Children*. Currently, she works as Merely Players' Communications Director and Company Manager. Liz is also faculty in the Theatre Department at Fort Lewis College, and a member of the improv troupe Devise & Conquer. [www.liz-gray.com](http://www.liz-gray.com)

**George Gross** (*Sergei/Ensemble*) was born and raised in New York City and Long Island, and moved to Durango in 2015. He is delighted to be in his first Merely Players production and is thrilled to be part of the *Matilda* cast. The last time he graced the stage was in his third grade Spring Production—he was a cricket. For his day job, George is an ICU nurse at Mercy Regional Medical Center.

**Sadie Hanson** (*Lavender*) is overjoyed to be in the cast of *Matilda*... for real this time! You may have seen her singing her heart out on the Durango Arts Center stage or in *All Together Now!* with Merely Players. Her favorite shows that she has participated in are *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Lion King*, *Oliver*, and *Gypsy*. She hopes you enjoy the show and wants to remind you to eat more chocolate cake.

**Heather Howe** (*Props Assistant*) has been involved with Merely Players, both on and off stage, for years; currently, she proudly serves on the Board of Directors. Performance has always been in Heather's life - she studied Voice in Paris with Skyler Hamilton when she was younger. After moving to Durango over 30 years ago, Heather's love of live theatre continued to grow; her awesome son, Dallas, keeps her very involved. Last fall, Heather acted in Merely Players' production of *Men On Boats* (Old Shady). As with all Merely Players' shows, she is so pleased to be able to be a part of *Matilda*. She would also like to acknowledge her other amazing son, Dakota.

**Ashley Rose Hunt** (*Ensemble*) is excited to join her first production with Merely Players. Previously, she has acted on stage at Fort Lewis College in such productions as *Gypsy*, *Urinetown*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, and *Trojan Women: A Love Story*. Ashley would like to thank her family, friends, and soon-to-be husband, Kristian Sigloch, for always supporting her and encouraging her to pursue what she loves.

**Mohriah James** (*Big Kid/Dancer/Ensemble/Dance Captain*) loves *Matilda* in all forms. She enjoyed the movie/book as a kid, and is thrilled to be part of this musical version. Mohriah went to Bayfield High School (during which a friend from another school thought her name actually was "Matilda") and attended Fort Lewis College, where she graduated with a degree in Theatre. Her most recent roles include Columbia in *The Rocky Horror Show* (Durango Arts Center), Sumner in *Men on Boats* (Merely Players), and *Matilda* in *All Shook Up* (Sandstone Productions). Mohriah is consistently inspired by fellow actor Geoff Johnson, whom she has the great pleasure to be married to and who, luckily, is not like the Trunchbull in real life.



**Geoff Johnson** (*Agatha Trunchbull*) is thrilled to join his wife, Mohriah James, as a member of this revolting cast. Roald Dahl was Geoff's favorite author as a child, so this show is a dream come true. *Matilda* blends his greatest loves: acting, reading, and terrorizing children. Recent Merely Players credits include Yvan in *Art* and the Porter in *Macbeth*. He also played Austin in *True West* (Durango Arts Center), Frankenfurter in *The Rocky Horror Show* (DAC), and Herbie in *Gypsy* (Fort Lewis College). Geoff is a co-founder of Devise and Conquer: an improv group that performs at the Durango Arts Center. Geoff was born and raised in Durango and holds degrees from Fort Lewis College in Theater and Engineering.

**Dennis Kelly** (*Book*) Work for theatre includes *Debris*, *Osama the Hero*, *After the End*, *Love and Money*, *Taking Care of Baby*, *DNA*, *Orphans*, *The Gods Weep*, and *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, *Pinocchio* and *Girls and Boys*. His plays have been performed worldwide and to date have been translated into nearly forty languages. For television, he co-wrote and co-created *Pulling* and wrote and created *Utopia*; for film he wrote the screenplay for *Black Sea*, directed by Kevin MacDonald. He also wrote the book for the Olivier and Tony winning *Matilda the Musical*. In 2010, *DNA* became a set text on the GCSE English Literature syllabus.

**Tom Kyser** (*Music Director*) retired in 2018 after 44 years in Music Education. During that time, his DHS choirs performed at Disneyland and Carnegie Hall, as well as at festivals throughout Colorado. Tom has loved working musically with directors like Mona Wood-Patterson, Tony Walker, Kristin Winchester, and Ben Mattson. The highlight of his musical theater career was emerging from the orchestra pit in a sequined jumpsuit and platform shoes (thanks to JoAnn Nevils) to sing "Beauty School Dropout" in the DHS production of *Grease*. Other musical direction credits include Merely Players' *Forever Plaid*, *Dames at Sea*, and *Mamma Mia!* It is with great joy that he's back to work on this production of *Matilda!*

**Jill Langoni** (*Rehearsal Accompanist*) was born and raised in small town Iowa and graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in vocal performance. She worked professionally in summer stock theater during her college years. Jill started her teaching career in Denver and Trinidad and retired from School District 9-R, having taught Elementary music for 30 years. She was recognized as Elementary Teacher of the Year in 1996 and was the musical co-director for DHS Theatre for 23 years. Being fully retired allows for summer gardening, regular exercise, camping, and enjoying her two grown daughters and three grandsons.

**Michael Lee** (*Master Carpenter*) was born and raised in Minnesota, but got here as fast as he could about 35 years ago. Michael is an ex-Marine, ex-high school English teacher, ex-Outward Bound instructor, ex-ski instructor and ex-remodeling contractor. His work in wood, steel, teaching, and mirth gave him some flavor of theatre that whole time. "Working with Merely Players for these nearly twenty years has allowed me to give free reign to my lifetime of acquired skills and live in the boundless joy of imagination and creativity around this theater group. And I have probably eaten my own body weight in free post-production pizza."

**Zada Lile** (*Matilda*) is a Freshman at Durango High School, where she recently played Pugsley in *The Addams Family*. A performer since she was 3, you may have seen Zada in Four Corners Musical Theatre's production of *Mamma Mia!*, or as Teen Louise in *Gypsy*

at FLC. Favorite DAC performances include Natalie/Ed (*All Shook Up Jr.*), The Genie (*Aladdin Kids*), Timon (*The Lion King Jr.*), The Artful Dodger (*Oliver*), and Mayzie La Bird (*Seussical the Musical Jr.*). Zada enjoys cosplaying her favorite anime characters to her large TikTok following, plans on pursuing a degree in Musical Theatre college, and hopes to be a professional actor (currently SAG Eligible). Zada is over the moon to be playing Matilda in her first ever appearance with Merely Players!

**Tess McAlvany** (*Amanda*) is making her Merely Players debut in *Matilda*. She has grown up dancing at Ballet Durango and Durango Dance, playing piano with Gabi Dugan, and singing with the Durango Children's Choral. Tess is excited to share the *Matilda* stage with her older brother, Declan. Tess is a 5th grader, and when she is not singing and dancing she is writing stories about dragons, crafting, and reading.

**Declan McAlvany** (*Michael Wormwood*) is happy to be on stage again with Merely Players. At 9, he attended his first audition, watching his mother audition for *Mary Poppins*--he's been hooked ever since. You may have seen him recently singing in *All Together Now!* His favorite roles have been Young Shrek in *Shrek the Musical* and Scar in *The Lion King Jr.* Declan is excited that his sister, Tess, has followed in his theater steps and is joining him in *Matilda*. In his spare time you can find him reading his favorite books, playing video games, doodling on loose paper, or assembling builds out of Legos.

**Katie McCrea** (*Ensemble*) is making her Merely Players debut, and she couldn't be more excited to join them! She and her amazing husband, Jeff Graves, are welcoming their own Miracle in a few short months. She is grateful for the opportunity to surround their Miracle, Evelyn, with singing, love, and laughter starting in the womb.

**Debbie Meyers** (*Mrs. Phelps*) has been part of the Durango community for over 35 years. After arriving in the 80's, she performed with Lively Arts and The Company in such roles as Tzeitel in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Agnes Gooch in *Auntie Mame*; and in leading roles in *Relatively Speaking*, *Bedroom Farce*, and *See How They Run*. She returned to the stage in 2019 as Cassandra in the Merely Players' production of *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, and again 2022 as an Emcee in *All Together Now!* Debbie is a nurse practitioner who provides women's health care in her own practice in Durango, CO. Thanks to Steve!

**Tim Minchin** (*Composer/Lyricist*) is a musician, actor, comedian, writer and director. He's toured extensively in the US, UK and Australia, performing solo, with bands, and with symphony orchestras. He's released five DVDs, the most recent recorded with the Heritage Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall. Screen acting credits include *Robin Hood Origins* (2018), *Secret River* (2015), and *Californication* (Season 6 - 2013). Stage acting credits include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Sydney Theatre Company) and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (UK/Australia tours). Tim has written extensively for theatre, and is the composer-lyricist of *Matilda the Musical* (with Dennis Kelly) and *Groundhog Day the Musical* (with Danny Rubin).

**Shaunibah Morfin** (*Big Kid/Ensemble*) is from Window Rock, Arizona on the Navajo reservation. She graduated from Fort Lewis College in 2019 with a B.A. in Theatre with an emphasis in Directing. Her most recent acting credits include *Men on Boats*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, and *I'm Native And*. She is thrilled to join

Merely Players for a second time for *Matilda the Musical*. Though she is active in the Durango theatre community, this is the first musical she has participated in in ten years! She is thankful for the cast, crew, creative team, and audience members, who are all coming together to share in this beautiful story.

**JoAnn Nevils** (*Costume Designer*) has spent most of her life playing with costumes, fabric, and embellishments. She has an ETSY shop (CoComfortDurango) and has worked closely with Merely Players for many years. You may have seen her recent costume runway show during Merely Players' latest production of *All Together Now!*, showcasing costumes of past Merely productions. *Matilda* has been a reminder of the many, many musicals she has costumed for Merely Players. So much fun!

**McKenzie Oury** (*Erica*) was born in Durango and is a 5th grader at Mountain Middle School. She is the youngest of four siblings, so she learned at an early age that theatrics will get you everywhere! She loves all things that involve singing, dancing, and being on stage. McKenzie has been in many shows at Durango Arts Center, and is incredibly honored to be a part of this Merely Players production. She's definitely quite naughty and her most revolting passion is Pugs and Starbucks!

**Noah Oury** (*Bruce*) was born in London, England, and has lived in Durango since he was five years old. He started acting at the Durango Arts Center when he was six, and hasn't looked back since! Recently, Noah was honored to sing with his Durango High School choir at Carnegie Hall; he also performed in *The Addams Family* and *Radium Girls* with Troupe 1096. He was originally cast as Bruce over two years ago, and was super sad when the production couldn't happen. He is over the moon to be back as Bruce, albeit... a little bit taller, a little bit older, and a lotta' bit naughtier. He's super excited to be performing for you tonight, so welcome back to the theatre!

**Cassandra Yuponco Owen** (*Big Kid/Acrobat/Dancer/Ensemble*) once upon a time, believed that she, herself, indeed, was Matilda. As a child, her brains were so brimming with imagination, that they threatened to squeeze out of her head straight onto her art projects and peers. This is Cassandra's fourth production with Merely Players, and her first musical as an adult (since she's grown out of her child wonder britches, she's been relearning how to Work It). She is trained in classical ballet, along with various dance traditions of the world. Cassandra creates with Wildwood Dance Project, a collective of dancers and creatives based in Durango, CO (@wildwooddanceproject). In addition to managing projects at the local Conservation Corps, she teaches dance, tutors, and offers heart-based coaching and mentorship.

**Dallas Padoven** (*Choreographer*) is so grateful to be back with Merely Players. You have most recently seen him onstage in *All Together Now!* and as Sky in *Mamma Mia!* You may have also seen his choreographic work in *Men on Boats*. After almost a decade of East Coast living, working at top regional theatres across the country, he could not be more appreciative to Mona, Charles, and Merely Players for welcoming him back with open arms. His love for theatre started within the walls of Merely Players, and it's a dream come true being back. Love to Mom, Dakota, and Zach.

**Diane Panelli** (*Props Master/Production Assistant*) was co-founder of a production company at Sarah Lawrence College. After graduating from cooking school in New York, she went on to own a restaurant in Telluride before moving to Durango. She

currently serves on the board for Merely Players and thrives on the "Treasure Hunt" of finding all the little goodies that make a play come to life. Diane loves what she does!!

**Nicholas C. Parker** (*Big Kid/Ensemble*) was last seen with Merely Players in *Mary Poppins* as Miss Andrew. His other theatrical credits include: three different productions of *Into the Woods* (Narrator, Jack, and Cinderella's Prince/The Wolf), *Titanic: A New Musical* (Harold Bride), *Beauty and the Beast* (Cogsworth), *Spring Awakening* (Hanschen), *The Producers* (Lead Tenor, Leo Bloom U/S), *The Civil War: the Musical*, and two seasons with *The Lost Colony* in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Currently a flight attendant, Nicholas makes use of spare time to participate in the arts and other shenanigans/tomfoolery. This performance is dedicated to the memory of Jim Wrinn.

**Jamie Pickering** (*Light Board*) is relatively new to Merely Players. While trying to find her place in the theater world, she was given the opportunity to learn the light board. Having helped illuminate *Men on Boats* and *All Together Now!*, she is looking forward to bringing light to the magic of *Matilda*.

**Heather Rasmussen Thomas** (*Projection Operator*) is ecstatic to be joining Merely Player's *Matilda*. A Durango native, she has grown up with the local theatre scene in her bones. Heather was last seen on stage in Merely's *Sense and Sensibility* as Fanny/Lucy, and has been the wireless microphone operator for many Merely Players' musicals such as *Mamma Mia*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. She hopes you enjoy the show!

**Greta Richter** (*Ticket Manager*) was born and raised in Sierra Madre, not far from Hollywood and Burbank. She grew up enjoying musicals and was excited when her children became involved in theatre when they moved to Durango. Formerly the Box Office Manager for Durango High School's Theatre, Greta loves her work as Merely Players' Ticket Manager. She is grateful to God for bringing amazing theatre people into her life.

**Sarah Ripley** (*Miss Honey*) has had a passion for theatre since the fourth grade. She participated in many plays in high school and college, and holds a BFA in Theatre Education from Texas State University. Sarah was a middle school theatre director in Austin for five years until the mountains called her to Bayfield, where she directed youth plays and musicals for 4 years. Now, Sarah teaches Special Education at Mountain Middle School. When she isn't teaching kids or rehearsing for a play, you will find Sarah riding her bike, listening to an audiobook, hiking with her dog (Lupita) or trying a new recipe in her kitchen. "I've taught them, that's all. With kindness and patience and respect." -Miss Honey

**Luca Sandoval McCallum** (*Nigel*) has been performing ever since the day Doc chopped the umbilical cord. He first fell in love with musical theatre in 4th grade after seeing Merely Players' *Man of La Mancha*, and he has been at it ever since, mostly with the DAC Youth Theatre Company. He recently played Charlie Bucket in *Willy Wonka*, the latest in a sequence of impoverished male youth roles, including *Oliver Twist* and Jack in *Into the Woods*. This is his second show with Merely Players; he had a blast in *All Together Now!* Luca plays bass in a middle school band and aspires toward rock legend status. Between performances, he attends 8th grade and sings Disney with his 4-year-old sister.

**Katy Schneider** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is excited to be back behind the curtain. This is her first show with Merely Players since 2012, and she is delighted to be working with this group again. Some of the shows that Katy has previously stage managed include *Eat the Runt*, *Marjorie Prime*, and *Young Frankenstein*. She has also dabbled in lighting and costuming. Outside of theater, Katy works as a software project manager and enjoys hiking and sewing in her free time.

**Conor Sheehan** (*Rudolpho/Big Kid/Escapologist/Doctor/Ensemble*) is ever-so-revved up to rebel, revolt, and rhumba with such a magnificently multi-talented cast! A proud Merely Players company member, his past roles include Pepper in *Mamma Mia!*, Gordon/Dwight in *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, and Henry Harry in *Brilliant Traces*. He wishes to thank the entire cast and crew; Mona and Charles; his friends (here, there, and everywhere); Roald Dahl for the story; Tim Minchin for the songs; and, most of all, thanks to his family for everything.

**Mick Souder** (*Sound Operator*) has been the Sound Board Operator for Merely Players' spring musical productions since 2015; he enjoys Merely's culture of excellence and gratitude. Prior to that, he was the resident techie for Titanic Players. Based in an Irish pub in Minneapolis, he also directed one of the Titanic plays. Mick has been involved in various aspects of educational/community theatre, radio, and video production since the Nixon Administration.

**Genevieve Thompson** (*Violet*) is thrilled to act with the Merely Players cast in *Matilda!* Last time you saw her, she was singing "When I Grow Up" in the Merely show *All Together Now!* Genevieve is a high school freshman, and practices 3D-modeling and computer science in her free time. She also volunteers at the Power House Science Center throughout the year. Genevieve is a fun, crazy person who is full of new ideas; she highly values the importance of helping and teaching others.

**Rebecca Thurston** (*Big Kid/Dancer/Ensemble*) is thrilled to be a part of another Merely Players production. She was last seen rowing down the river as Hawkins in *Men On Boats*. She grew up performing in the Durango community and is so happy to be back at it!

**Daphne Tingey** (*Ensemble*) is so excited to be joining Merely Players for the first time. She loves acting and singing, and has been involved in the local theater scene for the past 7 years. She completed a Sanford Meisner acting program at the Ted Bardy Studio in NYC before moving back to the area. Most recently, she played God at the Chelsea Rep Lab's Summer Fest One-Act Play Festival. She has also appeared locally in *Mary Poppins* (Sandstone Productions), the 10 Minute Play festivals (Durango Arts Center), and a musical theatre review (Sunflower Theater). Daphne loves working with the kids in *Matilda*, and is enjoying the local Durango theatre community.

**Riki Tsethlikai** (*Big Kid/Halloween Lion/Ensemble/Cast Captain*) is overjoyed to be joining Merely Players once again—he has been involved in many productions over the years. His first Merely performance was playing Papa Bear in *Shrek the Musical*. He has gone on to portray Nephew Fred in *A Christmas Carol*; the evil Red Eyes in *A Wrinkle in Time*; and, most recently, Donalbain in *Macbeth*. After the struggles of these last couple of years, Riki is excited to be back on the stage, bringing his excitement and passion for the delightment of others.

**Jeff Widen** (*Stagehand/Construction Asst.*) doesn't have a theatrical background, aside from playing King Arthur in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade and a few years in the Snowdown Follies. With a BS in Environmental Studies from San Jose State University, Jeff works for The Wilderness Society, working to enact new laws protecting areas of public land. His renewed love of theater started when his daughter, Siena Widen, became immersed in the theater program at Durango High School. There, he began volunteering his set building skills, and he continues to do so today! As Siena continues her theater education and has appeared in several Merely Players productions, Jeff's love of theater has only grown stronger. He finds much joy in working behind the scenes while volunteering his time with Merely Players.

**Mona Wood-Patterson** (*Director*) has devoted her professional life to studying, teaching, and making theatre. The Artistic Director of Merely Players, Mona has been the recipient of numerous awards; including Colorado Theatre Teacher of the Year and Fort Lewis College Distinguished Alumnus. Mona was recognized as the director of an exemplary theatre program by the International Thespian Society, and was awarded a Fulbright to teach theatre in England. In 2011, she was inducted into the Colorado State Thespian Hall of Fame, and she was selected as a participant in LaMama's International Director's Symposium in Italy in 2019. She is grateful that she gets to work and play amidst remarkable people in Durango.

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