

Merely Players
Presents
The Half-Life of Marie Curie
by Lauren Gunderson

November 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 2022 at 7:00 pm
November 13, 20 at 2:00 pm

Our Sponsors:
NEA, City of Durango, Colorado Creates, Ballantine, El Pomar, Community Foundation

The Half-Life of Marie Curie

CAST

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Marie Curie | Sarah Choszczyk+ |
| Hertha Ayrton | Maureen May+ |

CREATIVE TEAM

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Director | Mona Wood-Patterson+ |
| Technical Director/ Designer/Projection Technician | Charles Ford+ |
| Costume Designer | JoAnn Nevils+ |
| Stage Manager | Marc Arbeeny+ |

CREW

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Light Technician | Selena Trujillo+ |
| Sound Technician | Genevieve Thompson* |
| Props Master/Dramaturg/ Box Office Manager | Diane Panelli+ |
| Ticket Manager | Greta Richter+ |
| Company Manager | Mary Lynn Clark+ |

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Tech Assistant | Kristian Sigloch |
| Master Carpenter | Michael Lee+ |
| Photographer | Kara Cavalca+ |
| Poster Design | Kate Ishay+/Psyche Digital |

Set Construction/Scenic Painting

Natalie Cohn
Jeff Widen
Joel Ryan
Mary Lynn Clark
Charlie Grice

Poster Distribution

Grace Dendy
Anna Newman
Mary Lynn Clark
Parking Lot Supervision/Concessions
Amiah Hanson
Annie Pare
Cassandra Owen
Deb Schultz
Jamie Pickering
Katy Schneider
Sadie Hanson
Sharina Ramsey-Adams

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

*Company intern in Merely Players' Apprentice Intern Program

This show will be performed with no intermission.

Please silence 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*

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!

WHO'S WHO

Sarah Choszcyk (*Marie Curie*) is beyond excited to be back in Durango for another Merely Players adventure. She is a natural experimentalist - studying nutrition, martial arts, motorcycle riding, herbal medicine, gardening, backpacking, functional medicine, music, and of course, theater. She travelled the rapids as John Wesley Powell in *Men on Boats* to open the magical Merely Players space in 2021, and before that she played Mrs. Who in *A Wrinkle in Time*, the Barber in *Man of La Mancha*, and Regina in *Rock of Ages*, among others. She now lives in Colorado Springs, but often returns to her favorite town to visit her parents, explore the wilderness, and commune with her theater family.

Maureen May (*Hertha Ayrton*) has been involved with live theater in Durango since the late 1980s. Some of her favorite past roles with Merely Players have been Rose in *The Children*, Ruth Steiner in *Collected Stories*, Polly Wyeth in *Other Desert Cities*, Rose in *Neglect* and Sister Aloysius in *Doubt*. Other roles she has enjoyed are Agnes in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Melissa in *Love Letters*, Dotty Otley/Mrs. Clackett in *Noises Off*, and Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit*, all with The Durango Repertory Theater Company. She is also a visual artist and her work can be viewed at maureenmayart.com. Maureen is ecstatic to be working again with Mona and Charles, and honored to be working with Sarah Choszcyk and the crew of *The Half-Life of Marie Curie*. Though the work is ever challenging, it is always worth the journey!

Marc Arbeeny (*Stage Manager*) 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.

Mary Lynn Clark (*Company Manager*) recently appeared in the ensemble of *Matilda*, and is thrilled to be part of the Merely Players family as the new Company Manager. For many years, she has had the joy of working on sets with Merely Players because of her daughters' acting involvement. Mary Lynn taught ballroom dancing for six years, where she met her wonderful husband, who ended up bringing her to Durango. She and Matt are parents to Laura, Ellie, and Gabe.

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. World travel is a passion, and he strives to bring the joy and exhilaration of travel back to use the inspiration to create theatre magic.

Lauren Gunderson (*Author*) is one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list thrice including in 2022/23. She is a two-time winner of the

Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company.

www.LaurenGunderson.com

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."

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!

Diane Panelli (*Props Master/Dramaturg/Box Office Manager*) 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!!

Kristian Sigloch (*Tech Assistant*) is a sound designer and stagehand based out of Durango, CO. Graduating from Fort Lewis College with a BA in Technical Theatre & Design, he has designed for Fort Lewis College, Durango PlayFest, Durango Theatreworks, and the Durango Arts Repertory Theatre. He always enjoys working with students, and hopes to eventually teach Technical Theatre after spending more time in the professional world. Kristian wants to thank his family, friends, and his wife, Ashley, for continuing to inspire him every day.

Selena M. Trujillo (*Light Operator*) is a Durango native. She was the production and backstage manager for Salt Fire Circus and Bare Bones Burlesque and has stage managed and worked tech for Merely Players, Durango Arts Center, the Henry Strater Theatre, Snowdown Follies, 20Moons Dance Company, Imaginario Circus, Tami Graham Presents, Montgomery Gentry and Chippendales. Recently she worked both onstage and backstage in Merely Players' production of *As You Like It*. A forever dabbler, she likes to play with art mediums outside theatre and use her skills in digital media. Selena enjoys playing with her dogs, painting miniatures, drawing, playing video games and playing Dungeons & Dragons with friends.

Genevieve Thompson (*Intern*) is thrilled to be Merely Players' intern. Last time you saw her, she was playing Violet in *Matilda the Musical*. Genevieve is a high school sophomore, 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 full of new ideas and she highly values the importance of helping and teaching others.

Mona Wood-Patterson (*Director*) has devoted her professional life to studying, teaching, and making theatre. She has directed somewhere around 150 productions in various venues and presented at educational and theatre conferences both in the United States and abroad. 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.

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:

City of Durango
Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado
Cristen Alexandria/4 Corners Arts Forum/ KDUR
Durango Herald
Powerhouse Science Center
Susan Blankenship and Dan Fazzen

ABOUT THE PLAY

Marie Curie (1867–1934) was the first woman to ever be awarded a Nobel Prize. She is also the first person in history to have won Nobel Prizes in two different sciences (Physics-1903 and Chemistry-1911.) She and her daughter, Irene, are the only mother-daughter pair to have both won a Nobel Prize. Marie Curie was also the first woman to earn a title of professor at the University of Paris.

Hertha Ayrton (1854-1923) was a mathematician, an engineer, a physicist, an inventor, and a suffragette. Electric arc lighting was widely used in the late 19th century, and Ayrton solved the flicker problem of electric arcs. Her study on the ripple effect in sand and water is credited as a notable contribution in the world of Physics. She was the first woman nominated to become a fellow of the Royal Society.

In 1912, Marie Curie took refuge in Hertha Ayrton's home in the English countryside to recuperate from depression and illness and to escape from the press. It has been a

pleasure to embrace theatricality as we tell the story of that summer and the extraordinary tenacity, courage, and genius of these two brilliant women.

We admire both women for their progressive views and discoveries in a time where women were not encouraged to contribute to science. The most exciting thing about this piece for us has been lifting them from the legend and shedding light on both women as real people. Their story is more than that of their formidable intellect and skill. They lived life fully and sometimes messily. They were mothers who loved deeply - humans who made mistakes and experienced failure as well as success. This play weaves in the themes of friendship, healing, loss, love, loneliness, scandal, and mother-daughter connections. We hope that you find inspiration in their lives and bravery in your own.