

Merely Players
presents
The Lifespan of a Fact

by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell
based on the book by John D'Agata and Jim Fingal
March 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 2023

Sponsored by: NEA & Colorado Creative Industries

The Lifespan of a Fact

The CAST

Jim Fingal	Conor Sheehan+
Emily Penrose	Melanie McLean+
John D'Agata	Stephen Bowers+

The CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Mona Wood-Patterson+
Tech Director/Scenic Designer/ Sound Technician	Charles Ford+
Light Designers	Kristian Sigloch Charles Ford+
Stage Manager/Light Technician	Kate Ishay+

The CREW

Tailor	JoAnn Nevils+
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Production Assistant/ Box Office Manager	Diane Panelli+
Ticket Manager	Greta Richter+
Photographer	Kara Cavalca+
Poster Design	Kate Ishay+/Psyche Digital

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

This play will be performed without an intermission. DHS Student Gabe Clark and his business, Gabe's Goodies, will be providing concessions before the play.

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!

The Lifespan of a Fact is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc. It was originally produced on Broadway by Jeffrey Richards, Norman & Deanna Twain, Will Trice, Barbara H. Freitag, Suzanne Grant, Gold/Ross Productions, Jamie deRoy, Jennifer Manocherian, Barbara Manocherian, ManGol Productions, Carl Moellenberg/Wendy Federman, Ken Greiner, Van Kaplan, Dominick LaRuffa Jr., Marc David Levine, WitzEnd Productions, Eric Falkenstein/Moreland Mott, Caiola Productions, Rimmel T. Dickinson, & Jayne Baron Sherman

WHO'S WHO

Stephen Bowers (*John D'Agata*) is acting in his third show with Merely Players in less than a year, made possible by his retirement after a 22-year career in astrophysics*.

**False. Stephen had a 22-year career with the Indian Health Service. He wanted to be an astrophysicist but couldn't handle the math.*

During his 17 years commuting to work in New Mexico and Arizona~, he drove a distance equal to going to the moon and back.+

~Confirmed

+ *Not confirmed.* Stephen took a photo of the odometer reading over 525,000 miles when he left his 4Runner to a non-profit in Bluff, Utah. However, he does not account for the miles driven while not commuting, specifically the round trip from Shiprock, NM to New Haven, CT and fly-fishing trips too numerous to count. Moreover, this assertion would depend at what point in the moon's elliptical orbit one made the measurement. At perigee, the moon is about 226,000 miles from Earth; at apogee it is approximately 251,000 miles away. So, depending on which distance he chooses to invoke and his non-commuting mileage, Stephen may or may not have driven that far.

Stephen's productions with Merely Players include five musicals^, four shows with Conor*, three shows with Melanie~ and two shows as an acerbic bachelor+.

^Six, actually, if you count All Together Now!

*Confirmed: Mamma Mia!; All Together Now!; and As You Like It were the others

~False. This is Stephen's fourth Merely Players show with Melanie: Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike; Man of La Mancha; and All Together Now! being the others.

+Debatable, depending on one's definition of acerbic and bachelor. Stephen is probably referring to his current role as John D'Agata and perhaps his role as Vanya, in the aforementioned Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike. However, Duke Senior in As You Like It, Sam in Mamma Mia!, and the Tin Man in Wizard of Oz are, arguably, all bachelors, though probably not acerbic.

This is his first show without braces since they were put on two years ago.^

^Confirmed.

Melanie McLean (*Emily Penrose*) was raised in Boulder, CO* with "theatre in her blood"~ Her parents made sure she was involved at a very young age.

*Confirmed.

~Unable to confirm such a statement without a blood test, and, even then, what would "theatre in her blood" look like under a microscope and how could it be confirmed to actually be "theatre"?

Melanie earned a B.A. in Theatre from Fort Lewis College a long time ago.+

+Although FLC's records confirm that she earned a B.A. in Theatre in 1981, it is only her opinion, and not a fact, that 1981 was a "long time ago."

She has performed in multiple local productions over the years with Fort Lewis College, The Company and Merely Players.^

^Confirmed. Records show that Melanie has performed in more than one production with each of these groups in the past.

In November 2019, she played Tessie Tura in *Gypsy* at Fort Lewis College and considers this to be one of her favorite roles.*

*Although it can be confirmed that Melanie played Tessie Tura, there is no evidence to support that this was "one of her favorite roles." The role is that of a stripper, for goodness' sake! And sources say that Melanie is usually quite fickle and usually expresses that every role is her favorite, which would be ridiculous.

She has performed in *It's a Wonderful Life – A Live Radio Play*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Man of La Mancha* and *All Together Now* with Merely Players.*

*Confirmed.

Melanie is a retired CPA~ and sings Soprano with the Durango Choral Society.+

~Confirmed. The Colorado Society of CPAs' records prove that this is correct.

+Misleading. While Melanie does sing with the Durango Choral Society, outside sources confirm that she sings the part of Soprano II and is not a high Soprano.

Conor Sheehan (Jim Fingal) is a proud Sagittarius* who is excited to be a part of such a fresh, relevant and necessary piece of work~, with such a multi-talented crew of cast and creatives+.

**No in-depth research was necessary to discover that Mr. Sheehan is, in fact, a Cancer. This can be supported by the everything about him*

~This statement is indeed supported by the essay “Conor’s SubCONscious, Years 1992-2023.”

+Upon further investigative journalism, the crew of cast and creatives are actually multi-MULTI-talented. Mr. Sheehan apologizes for his understatement.

You may have seen him in such roles as the titular characters in *Matilda*, *Heathers*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*^, or in his downtime, as a proud Diamond Belle saloon girl*.

^Mr. Sheehan was indeed a part of these productions, but not as, as he stated, the titular characters...as much as he wanted to be (Verified by “Conor’s Odd Dream Roles: A Study” to be published in July 2024)

**We assure you that Mr. Sheehan is a grateful employee of the Glacier Club, and not, as he erroneously stated, a Diamond Belle. You don’t need a fact checker to verify that...no one wants that.*

He is in no way grateful for his friends, family, Mona, Charles, the playwrights, the authors, the fact checkers, nor Durango theatre for all they’ve given him, and – furthermore - hopes you despise the show.*

**Moral Dispute: Mr. Sheehan furiously reached out to our editorial to inform us that he ACTUALLY is infinitely and endlessly loving towards and grateful for the individuals listed. He also wishes that you walk away from this show with a further appreciation for the truth. Deepest apologies for this publication’s wild accusation that he felt the polar opposite.*

Love you all and that’s an irrefutable fact.+

+This checks out. Thank you and enjoy the show.

Charles Ford (Scenic Designer) is the Technical Director for Merely Players.*

**Confirmed. Newspaper archives confirm he held this position going back to 1995.*

He has been creating theatre magic for over 33 years.* Over the years he has designed and built over 200 theatre sets~ with his own hands.+

**Vague and generalized. What is magic? How many years over 33 years? Please revise.*

~Designed and built over 200 theatre sets – This statement is difficult to confirm.

Incomplete archival records prevent an accurate number, but the actual number seems closer to 140 productions. Is this intentional exaggeration on Mr. Ford’s part, or poor memory?

Uncertain. Brain testing is recommended.

+Deceptive. The wording implies that he single-handedly built and painted all of the sets. Many hands are involved in creating a set. The average production takes 700 to 1200 person hours of work to complete. Taking an average of 900 hours per performance and multiplying by 140 productions yields 126,000 hours of work. Divide that by a 40-hour week, and you get 3150 weeks. There are 52.17857 weeks in a year, which works out to 60.369 years straight. This figure is obviously absurd and therefore the wording should be amended.

For a brief time he was an accomplished actor on Durango stages,^ but quickly found that his true calling was behind the scenes.

^Disputed. While Charles played roles in productions with Durango Repertory Company, Durango Lively Arts Company, and Merely Players, “accomplished” should be changed to “adequate.”

An avid puppeteer, Charles was on *Jim Henson’s Creature Shop Challenge* in 2014.*

**While his puppetry experience can be verified, he never appeared on this show. Charles He was interviewed for the show and offered a follow-up in-person meeting at the Henson Studios, which he declined due to a previously scheduled vacation abroad.*

Kate Ishay (Stage Manager) is a Merely Players board member. She has stage managed over a dozen shows* for Merely Players since graduating from DHS Troupe 1096~.

**Kate has stage managed 16 shows for Merely Players*

~Technically she graduated from Durango High School, not the Theatre Troupe.

In her professional life she recently founded a marketing agency in Durango called Psyche Digital Marketing.+

+Vague. What is “recently”? The agency was founded in 2020 and specializes in branding and website design.

When not working or in the theater Kate divides her time between horseback riding and mountain biking with her husband, Rotem.^

^Misleading/Deceptive - She is mountain biking behind her husband, Rotem, as he is a professional cyclist and is very fast.

Mona Wood-Patterson (Director) is both the Artistic Director of Merely Players and the director of this show.*

**Confirmed.*

She brings vast* proof-reading experience to this play, having been a journalist in an earlier phase of her life+ and a grader of high school essays for over two decades.^

**Compared to what? This adjective is vague, generalize, and immeasurable. Delete.*

+Confirmed. Mona was both a reporter and an editor for collegiate newspapers.

^Inaccurate. While it is true that Mona was a high school teacher for 24 years, it isn't believable to think that she graded essays that entire time. If she graded papers 8 hours a week for 36 weeks for 24 years, then the accurate time spent grading essays is 6912 hours, or 288 days, or .789 year.

She enjoyed her work as an acrobat in a circus intensive in Italy in the summer of 2019.+

+There is no evidence of this experience. Mona was at an international directors' symposium in Umbria, Italy, in the summer of 2019. While “circus intensive” might be more intriguing, this is simply a fraudulent statement.

She has blue eyes* and is rather short of stature.^

**Confirmed. Although there is a brown freckle in her right eye, so “predominantly blue” would be more accurate.*

^Leave out the inaccurate qualifier “rather.” She's definitely short.

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:

Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado
Dallas Padoven
Durango Herald
Mac Ranch
Margie Dudley/4 Corners Arts Forum/ KDUR

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Mere words cannot describe how honoured we are by your support. We encourage our audience members to solicit these businesses and to tell the individuals that they are grand!

ARTISTIC

Luann Andrew
Rebecca Arndt
Lynnette Apo
Sherrod Beall
Lyndee Beller
Linda Bellush
Lillian Boe
Judy Bolen
Abby Bowen
Kip and Nellie Boyd
Marjorie Brinton
Tracy Brothers
Deborah and Patrick Callahan
Carol Calkin
Kara Cavalca
Mary Lynn Clark
Jennifer Cocchia
Natalie Cohn
Nanc Cole
Deanna Collins
Barbara Conn
Chris Cooke
Libby Cowles
Jennie Dear
Jonathan and Alicia DeLacey
Margy Dudley
James Eidson
Kim Eisner
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Lindsay Elworthy
Ron and Jan Enge
Sarah Fischer
Judi Fitts
Mark Franklin
Richelle Gensheer
Barry and Lyn Goldberg
Emily Golden
Charlie and Daisy Grice

Tami Hanson
Jessica Jane and Jacob Harris
Satoko Harris
Jessie Harrison and Donald Archuleta
Donald and Wendy Hassemer
Diana Hassett
Susan Hillmeyer
Suzy and Roy Horvath
Ann and Rick Huttner
Dawn James
Bonnie Johnson
Deborah Johnson
Mariah Kaminsky
Maureen Keilty
Caitlin Kneller
James Koenigsfeld
Darlene Koontz
Esther Kopf
Jill Langoni
Michael Lee
Deborah List
Amy Lochte
Wendy Ludgewait
Priscilla Lukens and Tammy Hoier
Linda Mack and Wynn Berven
Jan Mayer-Gawlik
Brian McAleer and Carol Shepard
Marianne McClain
Janelle McCallum
Jessica McCallum
Dawn McDermond
Barbara McLachlan
Ember Michel
Paula Millar
Kevin Miller
Jim and Sue Mooney
Grace Morledge
Donna Nelson
JoAnn Nevils
Lindsey Nicholson
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Donna and Larry Perino
James Peters
Lindsay Petersen
Mike and Christine Phillips
Claire Raines
John Redemske

Honor Reynolds and John Edens
Greta Richter
Emily Rodman
June Russell and Frank Lockwood
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Jill Schuman
Peggy Sharp
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Lynda and James Thompson
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Barb Gysel and Frank Viehmann
Gyana Gomar
David Jeffers
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MERELY PLAYERS was founded in 1995 and has been bringing theatre to our community ever since. Our vision is to consistently provide quality theatre in this region, while broadening the range of types of experiences available to local theatergoers through relevant, exciting productions. Merely Players is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and we assure you that any money donated will go toward making quality theatre in Durango both now and in the future.

Our 2022-2023 MERELY PLAYERS THEATRE SEASON continues:

An Exhilarating Bluegrass Musical
Bright Star

May 5 - 21, 2023

Tickets are on sale on our website now.

For more information on Merely Players, to buy tickets, to get involved, or to be added to our mailing list:

Website: <http://www.merelyplayers.org/>

Telephone: 970.749.8585

Email: merelydirectors@gmail.com

Like us on Facebook: Merely Players-Durango

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MERELY PLAYERS ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Artistic Director	Mona Wood-Patterson+
Technical Director	Charles Ford+
Company Manager	Mary Lynn Clark+

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Merely Players is supported in part by an American Rescue Plan Act grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support general operating expenses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for spending your time with us. We would love to know what you thought about the play. Drop us an email at merelydirectors@gmail.com or share with us on Facebook at Merely Players – Durango.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The Lifespan of a Fact is a play based on a nonfiction book by writer John D'Agata and fact-checker Jim Fingal. The book, published in 2012, originated from an essay by D'Agata entitled "What Happens There." In the essay, D'Agata tells the story of a teenager who jumps to his death from the observation deck of the Stratosphere Tower in Las Vegas. However, Fingal, who was assigned to fact-check the piece, discovered that D'Agata had taken liberties with certain facts surrounding Levi Presley's death. Their resulting debate explores the relationship between literature, news, facts, storytelling, and the nature of truth.

The book is structured as a dialogue between the two men, with Fingal challenging D'Agata on every detail of his essay. D'Agata argues that writers of nonfiction are not bound by a strict adherence to the facts, but that they have a responsibility to present the truth in a compelling and meaningful way. Fingal, however, takes a more literal approach to fact-checking, insisting that every detail be verified and that inaccuracies be corrected. The exchanges are often humorous and occasionally heated, as the two men debate the relative importance of accuracy and artistry in nonfiction writing.

In 2018, the book was adapted for the stage and opened on Broadway starring a Cherry Jones, Bobby Cannavale, and Daniel Radcliffe.

In today's society, perhaps, this play is more relevant than ever. In the wake of James Frey's memoir, fabrications by politicians, AI chatbots, and a political and journalistic milieu that struggles with defining just what truth is, we continue to be faced with important questions about the importance of accuracy, the responsibilities of writers, and the relative value of facts and storytelling.

It's been a great joy to develop this thought-provoking piece. That's a fact.

Mona Wood-Patterson, Director

AFTER THE SHOW:

We invite you to stay for a discussion of the play with actors, creatives, and fellow audience members at AfterWords, our popular talkback series, commencing ten minutes after each performance. Talkbacks are intriguing and fun, and community dialogue is healthy and exciting. We'd love to hear what you have to say. We will not be hosting the talkback on Sunday, March 19, for we have to strike our show on that day.