

I GREW UP IN THE MIDDLE OF SEVERAL cornfields, surrounded by silos, horses, and pole barns. I still remember my regular early morning monologue: one day, I'll leave. So much wasn't even considered due to the consequences of this consistent mantra.

West Lafayette, IN is not necessarily a small-town. Home to Purdue University, the area is overflowing with students and 10 year 4-H members. Like much of the midwest, hearts were wide open and hands were always hard at work.

Growing up gay, with a love for musicals and a passion for making theatre, made me the outsider. From an early age I considered my exit. It only made sense. First, school in Pittsburgh and then off to the Big Apple to finally "be myself."

Funny how the hunt for one's "self" is an exhaustive journey home. Looking back on it all, it was naive of me to think such an exit was necessary. The greatest service we can do is to be entirely ourselves, especially around those who may not get it, understand, or show interest. That is where the real work begins. How midwestern.

My journey with Stu Rasmussen began in 2009. On my first trip to Seattle as Associate Producer of *Intiman* I took a day trip to Silverton and met this unique and truly special folk-hero. We met

in a bakery, straight out of Mayberry. Drinking milk and cookies, Stu told me that although he didn't see much special about his life we certainly could try and make it a musical. And so it all began.

Musicals can be very difficult. This musical is based only on real lives - not on a book, play, or movie - and with that comes another layer of complexity. Playwright Peter Duchan and musician Breedlove are two intuitive and talented craftsmen who have made this process run as smooth as Silver Creek. A story is only as good as its tellers, and luckily we've got some good ones. I hope this is the first of many collaborations between us.

I've known Will Reynolds since we were students at Carnegie Mellon together, and we're lucky to have him as Music Supervisor. Scott Chaloff and Derek Zasky have guided the writers and I through every step of this process. Ali el-Gasseir worked tirelessly to bring together a cast of all-star actors who are as talented as they are kind. And, a very special thanks to Ian Eisendrath and David Armstrong at The 5th Avenue Theatre for their support throughout this process. Our theatrical Silverton wouldn't be standing were it not for the supreme commitment of *Intiman's* hard-working staff and deep-caring board of trustees. I could go on and on. Many people have played a role in bringing this musical to life.

Stu For Silverton represents why I believe in theatre, and why I'll continue launching new stories on stage. Instead of moving away, Stu stayed strong. Instead of tossing him aside, Silverton embraced one of Silverton's sons. May Silverton give us a little more courage to both be ourselves and ask others to do the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Silverton, Oregon, USA.

—ANDREW
RUSSELL, DIRECTOR



PETER DUCHAN AND BREEDLOVE