

By **David M. Lutken** with **Nick Corley** and  
**Darcie Deaville, Helen Jean Russell and Andy Teirstein**  
Directed by **Nick Corley**  
**Wayne and Kristine Lueders**, Associate Producers

# Woody Sez

## PLAY GUIDE

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Milwaukee Repertory Theater presents

# WOODY SEZ

## The Life & Music of Woody Guthrie

January 7 – February 9

Stackner Cabaret

By David M. Lutken with Nick Corley and  
Darcie Deaville, Helen Jean Russell and Andy Teirstein

Directed by Nick Corley  
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### MARK'S TAKE

"After seeing this beautifully-crafted piece in Chicago, I knew that we had to bring it to Milwaukee. Even though Woody Guthrie wrote songs responding to the people and events of a particular period, like any other pieces of great art, his songs still rouse the heart, capture the imagination, and resonate just as strongly today as when they were first written—true classics!"

**-Mark Clements, Artistic Director**

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# SYNOPSIS

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame calls Woody Guthrie “the original folk hero; a man who, in the Thirties and Forties, transformed the folk ballad into a vehicle for social protest and observation and in so doing, paved the way for Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and a host of other folk and rock songwriters who have been moved by conscience to share experiences and voice opinions in a forthright manner. Fueled by a boundless curiosity about the world, the colorful life he led became as legendary as the songs he wrote.”

*Woody Sez* is a joyous, toe-tapping, and moving theatrical concert event that uses Woody’s words, and over twenty-five of Woody’s songs to transport the audience through the fascinating, beautiful, and sometimes tragic life of Woody Guthrie. Performed by a talented group of four versatile actor/musicians who play fifteen instruments ranging from guitar and fiddle to jaw harp and dulcimer, *Woody Sez* brings to life the many people who are the fabric of Woody Guthrie’s amazing story.

Woody Guthrie gave voice to the beauty and struggles of the common man and *Woody Sez* gives the same to the spirit of the man himself.



Woody Guthrie

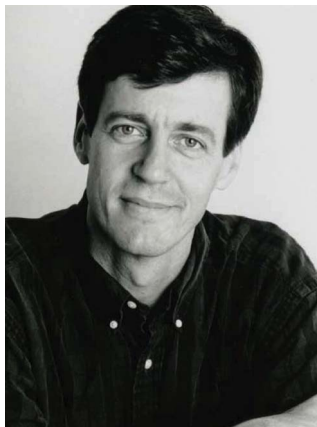
**“Any fool can make something complicated.  
It takes a genius to make it simple.”**

- Woody Guthrie

## PERFORMERS IN *WOODY SEZ*



David Finch



David M. Lutken



Leenya Rideout



Helen Jean Russell

# TIMELINE OF WOODY'S LIFE AND SONGS

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie, third child of Charley and Nora, is born on July 14th. **1912**

**1913** Woodrow Wilson elected president of the United States.

Guthrie family moves into the "Old London House" in Okemah, OK. **1914**

Woody's older sister, Clara, dies in a fire. **1919**

Oil discovered 12 miles southwest of Okemah. **1922**

Siblings George and Mary Jo sent to stay with aunt in Pampa, Texas. **1926**

Father, Charley, severely burned in fire. Mother, Nora, hospitalized. Charley moves to Pampa, Texas, and Woody stays with his brother Roy in Okemah. **1927**



From left: Woody, Nora, Charley, and George Guthrie at their home in Okemah, Oklahoma, 1924.

Woody Moves to Pampa, Texas. Mother, Nora, dies at hospital in Norman, Oklahoma. **1929**

**Stock Market crash on Oct. 29th, known as "Black Tuesday."**

Woody forms his first band, The Corncob Trio. **1930**

**FDR elected 32nd President of the United States. 1932** Height of the Great Depression

Woody marries Mary Jennings. **1933**

Woody and Mary's first child, Gwendolyn, is born. **1935**  
**Work Progress Administration formed.**

**April 14: Black Sunday Dust Storm**  
**Songs:** *Don't You Marry, Dusty Old Dust*  
*(So Long It's Been Good to Know You)*

Woody leaves Texas for California  
In July, Woody and Mary's second child, Carolyn, is born.  
In September, Woody and Maxine "Lefty Lou" Crissman perform for the first time on KFVD Radio.

**1937** **Songs:** *Do Re Mi, Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues, Oklahoma Hills*

In December, Woody, Mary and their kids move to Glendale, CA.



Lou, Woody, and an unidentified musician.

The Woody and Lefty Lou's show ends on June 18th. **1938**

**Songs:** *Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore, Gypsy Davy*

The first "Woody Sez" column published in the People's Daily World, a Communist Party newspaper published in San Francisco.

**1939** ***The Grapes of Wrath* is published in March and wins the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award.**

Woody meets Will Geer and travels with him in support of migrant worker unions.

In October, Woody and Mary's third child, William, is born.

Woody moves to New York in February.  
In March, Pete Seeger hears Woody perform for the first time.  
Woody is hired by Columbia Broadcasting System. **1940**

**Songs:** *Great Dust Storm (Dust Storm Disaster), Jolly Banker, New York Town, This Land Is Your Land, Ballad of Tom Joad, Union Maid, Vigilante Man, Why Do You Stand There in the Rain*

Woody, Mary, and kids leave New York for California.  
Woody begins the manuscript for his autobiography.  
Woody records with the Almanac Singers, and after returning to New York, tours with them, including a stop in Milwaukee.

**1941** Songs: *Biggest Thing That Man Has Ever Done, Curley Headed Baby, I Ride and Old Paint, Pastures of Plenty*

**Bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7th.**

Woody meets Marjorie Mazia in January.  
In July, RCA rejects Woody's proposal to record his war songs.  
Woody and Mary divorce.

**1942** Song: *Sinking of the Reuben James*

Woody and Marjorie's first child, Cathy Ann, is born in February.  
Woody's autobiography *Bound for Glory* is published.  
Woody ships out with the Merchant Marines in June.  
Woody, Marjorie, and Cathy move to Brooklyn.

**1943** Songs: *Jackhammer John, Talkin' Merchant Marine*

**1944** Songs: *Muleskinner Blues, Going Down That Road Feelin' Bad*

Woody joins the army on May 8th and is discharged on December 21st.

**1945** End of World War II

Cathy Guthrie dies in an electrical fire in February.  
Woody and Marjorie's second child, Arlo Guthrie, is born on July 10th.

**1947**

Woody and Marjorie's third child, Joady, is born.

**1948** Song: *Riding In My Car*

Woody and Marjorie's fourth child, Nora, is born.  
Woody enrolls in classes at Brooklyn College.

**1950** The Korean War begins on June 25th.

Afraid for her children due to Woody's declining health, Marjorie asks for a separation. They remain friends throughout Woody's life.  
Woody moves to Topanga Canyon, CA and meets Anneke Van Kirk.

**1952** Song: *I've Got to Know*

Woody and Anneke Van Kirk marry and have a daughter, Lorina Lynn.

**1953** On July 27th, the Armistice Agreement is reached to end the fighting on the Korean peninsula.

Woody checks himself into Brooklyn State Hospital.

**1954**

Woody and Anneke dissolve their marriage.

**1955**

Woody is officially diagnosed with Huntington's Disease. Woody voluntarily checks out of Brooklyn State Hospital, and later is hospitalized at Greystone Hospital in New Jersey.

**1956** Song: *Columbus Stockade*

Bob Dylan visits Woody in the hospital.  
Woody is transferred to Creedmore State Hospital in Queens.

**1961**

Woody receives the Conservation Service Award from the Department of the Interior.

**1966**

Woody Guthrie dies on October 3rd at the age of 55.

**1967**

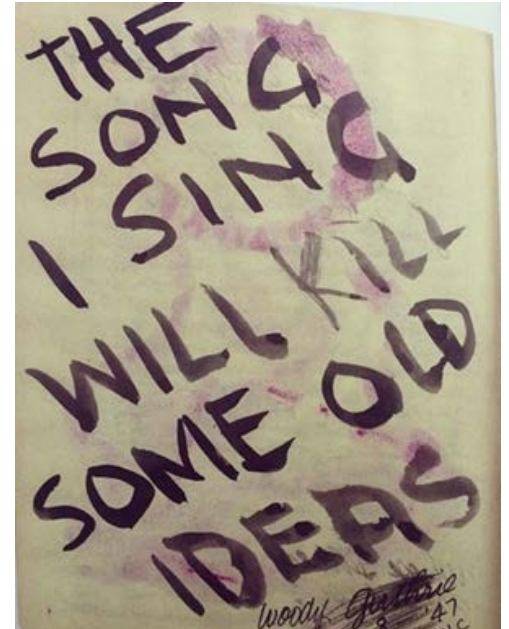


The Almanac Singers, 1941: (left to right) Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, Pete Seeger



Arlo and Majorie Guthrie hold up Woody's Service Award.

# THE VISUAL ARTWORK OF WOODY GUTHRIE



Woody Guthrie notebook page,  
Coney Island, 1947



**Above:** Untitled; **Left:** Self  
Portrait; **Right:** Woody and  
Charley in a Tornado



Throughout his life, Guthrie often earned a living doing advertising design, portraits, painting signs, and creating illustrations. Many of his works include both image and text and often speak to many of the same themes found in his music.

We have little evidence that Guthrie ever had any formal training, but we do have thousands of line drawings, squiggles, illustrations, political cartoons, a couple oil paintings, and few pastels. Much of this work is on scrap paper, notebooks, ledgers, and decaying construction paper.

# BLACK SUNDAY DUST STORM, APRIL 14, 1935

As if owning a farm on the Great Plains during the Great Depression was not hard enough, then the rain stopped. With banks foreclosing on bone dry farms, large areas of Oklahoma and Texas, where the conditions were the worst, lay barren. These dry conditions, coupled with poor soil conservation, produced relentless dust storms, known at the time as dirt storms, sand storms, black blizzards, or simply "dusters." Then, on April 14th, 1935 ("Black Sunday") a mountain of blackness swept across the High Plains, turning a warm, sunny day into the darkest of nights. What appeared like a land-based tsunami began with a strong wind in the panhandle of Oklahoma around 4 PM. By 7 o'clock, the wall of dust had reached Amarillo, Texas. Winds reached upwards of 60 MPH, and by some accounts, the darkness was so complete that one could not see one's own hand in front of one's face. The following day, the first references to the area as the "Dust Bowl" appeared in local papers, labeling the place and era ever since.



Woody Guthrie's Song "So Long, It's Been Good to Know Yuh" may be directly inspired by the events of "Black Sunday."



Dust Storm in Goodwell, Oklahoma

## PHOTOS OF DUST BOWL MIGRANTS



***Migrant Mother.***  
California, 1936. Dorothea Lange



***Resettled farm child. From Taos Junction to Bosque Farms project, New Mexico.***  
December, 1935. Dorothea Lange



***"Drought refugees from Abilene, Texas, following the crops of California as migratory workers. Said the father: 'The finest people in this world live in Texas but I just can't seem to accomplish nothin' there. Two year drought, then a crop, then two years drought and so on. I got two brothers still trying to make it back there.'"***  
August, 1936. Dorothea Lange

# PEOPLE OF *WOODY SEZ*



## **Will Geer:**

(1902 – 1978)

An actor and social activist, best known for his portrayal of Grampa Zebulon Tyler Walter on *The Waltons*.

## **The Corncob Trio:**

Woody's first musical group formed with soon to be brother-in-law Matt Jennings and friend Cluster Baker. Pictured: Matt Jennings, Woody Guthrie, and unidentified boy.



## **Lead Belly, or Huddie William Ledbetter:**

(1888 – 1949)

An American Folk and Blues musician, known for playing multiple instruments, but especially for his strong vocals and virtuosity on the twelve-string guitar.



## **Ella Reeve “Mother” Bloor:**

(1862 – 1951)

A labor organizer and activist in the socialist and communist movements. A founding member of the Social Democratic Party, Bloor also fought for women's suffrage and is best known as one of the top-ranking female functionaries of the Communist Party USA.



## **William Z Foster:**

(1881-1961)

A radical labor organizer. A Marxist politician, Foster was a member for a time of the Socialist Party of America and the Industrial Workers of the World. He also led the Communist Party USA as General Secretary for 12 years. Pictured: Foster's official campaign photo while representing the Workers (Communist) Party for President in 1928.

## **Elizabeth Gurley Flynn:**

(1890 – 1964)

A labor organizer, activist, and feminist. One of the founding members of the American Civil Liberties Union, Flynn was an outspoken proponent of women's rights, birth control, and women's suffrage. She was also a member of the Communist Party USA and became its chairwoman in 1961.



# WOODY'S LEGACY

Many have argued that music as we know it could not exist without Woody Guthrie. Besides those he directly influenced like Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger, Woody's influences are being renewed consistently by each generation. Below you will find a list of the artists who have recorded Woody's songs.

## FOLK

Joan Baez  
Dan Bern  
Burns Sisters  
Judy Collins  
Ani DiFranco  
Bob Dylan  
Alejandro Escovedo  
Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer  
Country Joe McDonald  
Eliza Gilkyson  
Arlo Guthrie  
Sarah Lee Guthrie & Johnny Irion  
John Wesley Harding  
Janis Ian  
Indigo Girls  
Richie Havens  
John McCutcheon  
Paul Metsa  
Odetta  
Ellis Paul  
Tom Paxton  
Joel Rafael  
Ramblin' Jack Elliott  
Earl Robinson  
Pete Seeger  
Syd Straw  
James Talley  
Vanaver Caravan

## POP/ROCK

Jonatha Brooke  
Buck 65  
Jorma Kaukonen  
Nellie McKay  
John Mellencamp  
Natalie Merchant  
Joe Perry (Aerosmith)  
Dave Pirner (Soul Asylum)  
Lou Reed  
Bruce Springsteen

## PUNK

Anti-Flag  
Blackfire  
Billy Bragg  
Dropkick Murphys  
Z-Jo

## COUNTRY

Beth Nielsen Chapman  
Guy Clark  
Slaid Cleaves  
Jay Farrar (Son Volt)  
The Flatlanders (Joe Ely, Jimmy Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock)  
Nancy Griffith  
Ray Wylie Hubbard  
Jimmy LaFave  
Red Dirt Rangers

John Stirratt  
Marty Stuart  
Wilco

## BLUEGRASS

Allison Krauss & Union Station  
Old Crow Medicine Show  
Peter Rowan & Tim O'Brien  
Tony Trischka

## BLUES / JAZZ

Corey Harris  
Cissy Houston  
Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings  
Taj Mahal  
Rob Wasserman  
Chris Whitley  
Kim Wilson

## RAP

DJ Logic  
Studs Terkel  
Michael Franti

## WORLD

Lila Downs  
The Klezmatics  
Susan McKeown  
Wenzel

## FEATURED ARTIST

### LAURA WENDT, STAGE MANAGER

Laura began her professional career as a stage manager at The Rep eight seasons ago. Starting out as an intern, she has continued to move through the ranks until working most recently on her largest production to date – the acclaimed *Ragtime*. As a stage manager, she is in rehearsals from the beginning through technical rehearsals. She sets schedules, tracks props and costumes, and communicates with other departments among other things. During the performances, she and her team make sure everything runs smoothly. Usually, she can be found at the back of the house communicating with the crew and calling lighting, sound, and automation cues. Laura is enjoying the change of pace from her recent productions, and she is "...very excited to be listening to some awesome music for a few weeks."



Laura Wendt

# VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center, downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.



Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Stackner Cabaret is located on the second level and can be accessed via the escalator or elevator.

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- Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at The Rep is accessible to all;
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