

MARCH 5 - 31, 2019 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

A JOHN (JACK) D. LEWIS NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PRODUCTION

THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE

By **Andrew Bovell** | Directed by **Mark Clements**

Executive Producers: **Judy Hansen,
Christine & Pat Keyes**

Associate Producers: **Suzy B. Ettinger Foundation
Phoebe Lewis, Catherine & Buddy Robinson**

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By **Andrew Bovell** | Directed by **Mark Clements**

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BRIEF summary

Things I Know To Be True follows a Midwestern family through a year of their lives. Both the parents, Bob and Fran, and their children, experience their own struggles throughout that year, and must navigate what that means for them as individuals and as members of the family. As Bob and Fran and their grown children negotiate changes in their lives, they grapple with truths and emotions that make this a powerful and poignant tale.

creative team



Mark Clements
Director



Andrew Bovell
Playwright

Julia Rhoads
Stage Movement Director

Scott Davis
Scenic Designer

Jesse Klug
Lighting Designer

Brent Hazelton
Dramaturg

Dale Brown Casting
New York Casting

Rebekah Heusel
Stage Manager

Kira Neighbors
Stage Management Resident

Rachel Laritz
Costume Designer

Joe Cerqua
Original Music & Sound Design

Eva Breneman
Voice & Text Coach

Frank Honts
Casting Director

Ada Karamanyan
NY Casting Associate

Rebecca Lindsey
Assistant Stage Manager

Jose Galvan
Assistant Director

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Things I Know To Be True premiered in Adelaide, Australia in May 2016 and was produced by the State Theatre Company of South Australia and Frantic Assembly, a U.K. based physical theater troupe. The show also toured the U.K. The Rep's production is the American Premiere of the play and the World Premiere of this incarnation of the script which was adapted for Midwestern audiences.

U.K. Production of *Things I Know To Be True*. Photo Credit: London Theatre Co. UK.

CHARACTERS

BOB: "It wasn't supposed to be like this. I thought they'd be like us. But better than us. Better versions of us."



Jordan Baker

Fran - A senior nurse.



Bill Geisslinger

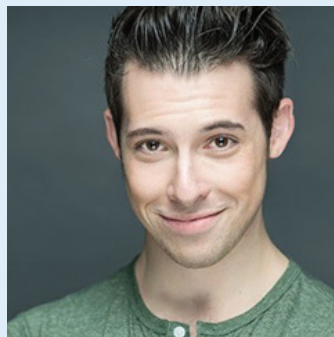
Bob - A retired auto factory worker.

THEIR CHILDREN



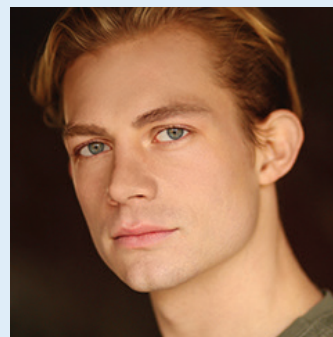
Kelley Faulkner

Pip - An Education Department bureaucrat.



Kevin Kantor

Mia - An IT specialist.



Zach Fifer

Ben - A financial services worker.



Aubyn Heglie

Rosie - The baby of the family, who at 19, doesn't know who she is or what she wants to be yet.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Playwright Andrew Bovell and Milwaukee Rep Artistic Director and Director of *Things I Know To Be True*, Mark Clements, have a long-standing relationship that began almost twenty years ago when Clements directed Bovell's play *Speaking in Tongues* in England and then at Roundabout Theatre Company in New York (The Rep produced the show in 2011). Their friendship has continued over the years, and Clements was greatly impacted by his first reading of a draft of *Things I Know To Be True*. He knew that he needed to bring the piece to Milwaukee Rep.

Bovell is one of Australia's premiere playwrights with an extensive catalogue of work including *After Dinner* (1988), *Scenes from a Separation* (1995), *Speaking in Tongues* (1996), *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* (1998), *Ship of Fools* (1999), *Holy Day* (2001), *When the Rain Stops Falling* (2008), *The Secret River* (2013) and *Things I Know to Be True* (2016). Bovell's plays have been produced extensively in Australia and the U.K. as well as productions in the United States and Asia. Bovell has won multiple Lucille Lortell awards, and *When the Rain Stops Falling* was named Play of the Year by Time Magazine.

Bovell is also a prolific screenwriter having won many awards in Australia and at various film festivals for his writing. Writing for the screen includes: *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), *The Fisherman's Wake* (1996), *Head On* (1998), *Lantana* (2001), *The Book of Revelation* (2006), *Blessed* (2009), *Edge of Darkness* (2010), *A Most Wanted Man* (2014), *In the Shadow of Iris* (2016), and *Stoner* (2017).

ADAPTING THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE FOR REP AUDIENCES

➤➤➤ In May of 2018, playwright Andrew Bovell came to Milwaukee to meet with Rep Artistic staff and to workshop the script of *Things I Know To Be True*. During his time in Milwaukee, the team worked together to adapt the play from its original Australian context to one more relatable for our Midwestern audience.



Dramaturg Brent Hazelton shares Milwaukee area neighborhoods with Playwright Andrew Bovell.

Before coming to Milwaukee, Bovell made changes to the play based on feedback from the Artistic team at Milwaukee Rep. Bovell had several goals for his visit: hear the script from the mouths of American actors, have a better understanding of the location in which the new script would potentially be set, and incorporate these ideas into a revised script for an American audience.

The first of the goals was achieved by a multi-day workshop at Milwaukee Rep. A company of actors was selected to do readings of the script for the team and give feedback. As the workshop progressed, Bovell was able to not only hear his words, but to think about additional changes that might be needed to adapt the piece for a Milwaukee audience. Both the Artistic team and acting company gave feedback throughout the process, helping to make the play work within a Midwestern context.

The second goal was achieved by a day-long tour of Milwaukee and several of its suburban areas. Associate Artistic Director and Dramaturg, Brent Hazelton, and Literary Associate, Deanie Vallone, took Bovell around Milwaukee and gave him insight into demographics, geography, and cultural norms in different areas of Milwaukee county. These visits helped Bovell visualize the world of the play that he would adapt for Milwaukee Rep audiences.

After this visit, Bovell made changes to the script. While many of the changes are subtle, they reflect a more specific reality for our audiences and a world that is more familiar.



Playwright Andrew Bovell, Director Mark Clements, and Arizona Theatre Company Artistic Director David Ivers at *Things I Know To Be True* Workshop.



Dramaturg Brent Hazelton, Playwright Andrew Bovell, and Director Mark Clements during *Things I Know To Be True* workshop.

AUSTRALIAN SCRIPT

She caught us, me and Penny McCrea and Stella Bouzakis with a bottle of sweet wine. We were in year nine and we snuck off from school at lunchtime. Penny had stolen it from her parents' drinks cabinet. We came back here and made a party of it, smoking those long coloured cocktail cigarettes as well. Thinking we were totally it. And suddenly Mum's standing at the back door. She was meant to be at work. She never came home for lunch. Never. But that day, when we're wagging school and drinking sweet wine in the back yard she decides to come home. Stella got such a scare she started to vomit. Mum stuck her face in the compost pit and said "Vomit there you silly girl." I was grounded for the rest of Year Nine and never drank sweet wine again.

AMERICAN SCRIPT

She caught us, me and Penny McCrea and Stella Ziolkowski with a bottle of sweet wine. We were freshman straight out of junior high and had skipped school. Penny had stolen it from her parents' liquor cabinet. We came back here and had a party, smoking those long colored cocktail cigarettes, thinking we were totally it and suddenly Mom's standing at the back door. She was supposed to be at work. She never came home for lunch. Never. But that day, when we're playing hooky and drinking sweet wine she decides to come home. Stella got such a fright she started to vomit. Mom stuck her head in the compost pit and said "Vomit there you silly girl." I was grounded for the rest of the year and never drank sweet wine again.

Movement with Meaning: Our Partnership with Julia Rhoads

Things I Know To Be True is at its heart a family drama, but the presentation of that story is heightened with the incorporation of physical theater techniques. Our partner in this pursuit of innovation is the founding Artistic Director of Lucky Plush Productions, Julia Rhoads.

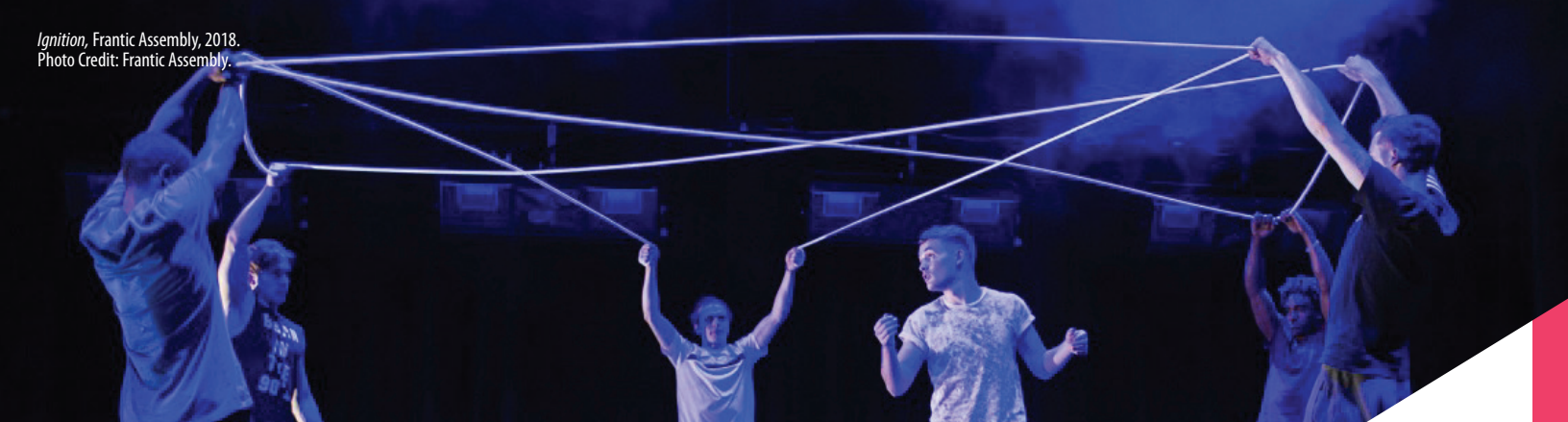
Rhoads is known for her innovative work as a creator and collaborator with her own ensemble and as a choreographer with many theaters in Chicago. Along with her theater company, Rhoads has created over 25 new works that have toured the United States and the world.

In partnering with Rhoads, The Rep has explored how movement and story connect in a way unlike anything we have ever done before. Milwaukee Rep Artistic Director Mark Clements first saw the work of Rhoad's ensemble while participating in the Door County Kinetic Arts Festival and was "riveted" by their ability to take improvised stories and create new physical theater-dance pieces from the ideas. It was there that he first proposed a collaboration to Rhoads, who shared his excitement at the prospect of working together.

Clements feels that he and Rhoads are good artistic partners due to their own strengths and similarities: "We are not afraid to try anything and we are not afraid to say if something does not work and discard it . . . She is not precious about anything; she's very direct." These qualities allowed the team the chance to explore through rehearsal new ways of storytelling and physicality without being mired down by expectations. The results are a new and exciting production that will impact audiences through its beauty, power, and heart.

Top: Lucky Plush Artistic Director Julia Rhoads
Middle: Kelley Faulkner, Kevin Kantor, Movement Director Julia Rhoads and Jordan Baker in rehearsal.
Bottom: Bill Geisslinger, Kelley Faulkner, Zach Fifer and Aubyn Heglie in rehearsal.





What is **Physical Theater**?

Physical theater uses movement to augment text or a story that may or may not be spoken.

With *Things I Know To Be True*, we are using many techniques employed in physical theater in harmony with Andrew Bovell's beautiful text. Simply put, physical theater puts the human body at the center of the storytelling. It can incorporate dance, pantomime, or a whole myriad of different styles of movement. It is often abstract in form and powerful in impact.

Julia Rhoads leads one such ensemble that uses the body as the means for storytelling: Lucky Plush. Other notable physical theater companies include Frantic Assembly (which originated the Australian/U.K. production of *Things I Know To Be True*), DV8, PUSH, and Theatre de L'Ange Fou, to name a few. Each company uses many different techniques to tell stories, but the ideas of movement and innovation are always at the core of the work. Physical theater often explores complex topics and asks the audience to look at these issues in new ways. Movement is often stylized and performers straddle the line between multiple types of performing arts, bringing the audience along on a unique journey.



Red Ball, PUSH Physical Theatre. Photo Credit: PUSH Physical Theatre.



John, DV8 Physical Theatre, 2014. Photo Credit: Whatsonstage.com.

Kelley Faulkner & Scott Greer in *Of Mice and Men*, 2015/16 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Martin L'Herault, Steve Sheridan & Jeff Steitzer in *Five Presidents*, 2014/15 Season. Photo by Tim Fuller.



Lee E. Ernst & Jenny McKnight in *Clybourne Park*, 2012/13 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



What is a Co-Production?

Co-productions like *Things I Know To Be True* allow regional theater companies the opportunity to collaborate in different ways while fostering already existing or new relationships.

Milwaukee Rep has shared several co-productions with Arizona Theatre Company over the past several years, including *Of Mice and Men*, *Five Presidents*, and *Clybourne Park*. When theaters work together, they can highlight the talents of their artists while creating a production that may not be possible otherwise. Co-productions often introduce actors to audiences that may not be familiar with them, allowing the actors more opportunities to work in different theaters.

This arrangement also helps new work, such as *Things I Know To Be True*, to reach wider audiences in different geographic locations. When developing new work, this arrangement often allows the theaters and playwrights more resources and time to develop the scripts and productions, creating meaningful and beneficial development of the play. In sharing resources, theaters not only help make more theatrical magic happen, but can also highlight each theater's specific strengths and provide the opportunity for a company's national reputation to grow.

Theater companies try to find partners that have similar spaces, artistic quality, and budget expectations. The show is usually built at the first theater to produce the play, but that is not always the case as it can also depend on specific artistic needs, artists, and production capabilities. Decisions are made by production teams at both theaters, and the adaptations that need to be made for each space are taken into account.

Co-productions are a wonderful way for regional theaters such as Milwaukee Rep to share their stories with larger audiences, while also fostering relationships that strengthen the power of the arts to change lives.

THE JOHN (JACK) D. LEWIS NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Things I Know To Be True is part of the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program. The support of this program allowed for extensive workshopping and development of the play for American audiences (for more on this process, see page 6 of this guide).

Producing entertaining, thought-provoking, accessible, adventurous, and compelling world premiere plays, musicals, and theater events provides the strongest possible way to reflect our core values and advance our mission in service of our community.

Established in 2015, the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program [NPD] works to fulfill Milwaukee Rep's mission to ignite positive change. We charge artists reflective of Milwaukee's rich diversity with creating a program of innovative, excellent, locally focused, and nationally resonant theatrical platforms for robust, inclusive conversations about current culture. Recent Milwaukee Rep world premieres include (pictured in order from the top right) *Liberace!*, *after all the terrible things I do*, *Five Presidents*, *Back Home Again*, *American Song*, *Sirens of Song*, *A Christmas Carol*, last season's *One House Over*, and this season's *Mark Twain's River of Song*.

Under the umbrella of new plays, we include world premiere productions (*Mark Twain's River of Song*), second productions of plays that have already had a world premiere but would benefit from continued development (*The Chinese Lady*), and American premieres of plays originally produced outside of the United States (*Things I Know To Be True*).

As part of the active development of new work, the NPD program hosts on-site workshops and readings of plays-in-development. This allows us to nurture commissions and other plays toward their world premieres, giving playwrights space, time, and support to shape their work while also building relationships with our theater and our community.

We have a responsibility to stand at the forefront of current cultural conversations that impact each of our lives. We seek to tell stories for now—that keep theater vibrant in the present and alive for the future, that instill civic pride and community interconnection, and that allow us to export our culture, thereby putting Milwaukee's stamp on the country and the world.

PHOTO CREDITS (TOP TO BOTTOM): Jack Forbes Wilson in *Liberace!*, 2010/11 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Mark Juneck in *after all the terrible things I do*, 2014/15 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Mark Jacoby & Brit Whittle in *Five Presidents*, 2014/15 Season. Photo by Tim Fuller. Katie Deal & David M. Lutken in *Back Home Again: On The Road With John Denver*, 2015/16 Season. Photo by Tony Duvall. James DeVita in *American Song*, 2015/16 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Maiesha McQueen & Amelia Cormack in *Sirens of Song*, 2015/16 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Jonathan Smoots and Jonathan Wainwright in *A Christmas Carol*, 2016/17 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Zoë Sophia Garcia in *One House Over*, 2017/18 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow. Spiff Weigand & Harvy Blanks in *Mark Twain's River of Song*, 2018/19 Season. Photo by Michael Brosilow.





FEATURED ARTIST INTERVIEW

As the scenic designer for *Things I Know To Be True*, Scott Davis' job is to decide and design what the world of the play will look like. Davis says the job of a scenic designer is to "[work] from the script, and in close collaboration with the director, [to] envision the world that the story inhabits. [W]e generate the ideas behind the physical production."

He originally went to college to study painting and sculpture, but while he was there he was "inspired by the collaborative nature of creating art in the form of theater... [T]he magic of the storytelling [was] so inspiring." He landed a job as an assistant for a project in Washington, D.C. from Daniel Conway. Conway has been a mentor to Davis ever since and has also been a scenic designer for Milwaukee Rep (*American Song* and *The Invisible Hand* in the 15/16 season).

Davis himself is no stranger to designing at the Milwaukee Rep. Over the past five years, he has designed multiple shows at The Rep each season. In addition to *Things I Know To Be True*, he also designed *Guards at the Taj* this season and always finds working here to be an enjoyable experience. "Mark Clements and Brent Hazelton are two of my favorite collaborators and I have had the pleasure of continued relationships with them on the Milwaukee Rep stage." He is glad to be a part of telling this story because "it is a conversation of our time. What this show discusses is in our everyday discussion."

His previous experience at The Rep has definitely been an asset when designing this show on our Quadracci Powerhouse stage "because of the extent that the audience wraps the sides of the stage it makes for challenging sightlines." He uses this arrangement to his advantage and to grow as an artist. This space allows for "exciting and new solutions [for] shows and scenery." Davis thinks the space is



SCOTT DAVIS, *SCENIC DESIGNER*

“exciting...to be in and feel the [energy] of the audience. Because the audience is a major visual element, bringing them into the visual world is exciting.”

There are no rules to adhere to or steps to follow when designing a show, because every show is a unique process depending on the needs of the script, which Davis finds to be “the amazing part of this job.... Every day and every project is different. It is ever exciting.” He always does a large amount of research, “because everything we do relates to external ideas and places, this part of the process is what allows us to key into the heartbeat of a piece.”

One part of the process he looks forward to the most is the final week of rehearsals, when all of the actors get to rehearse in the performance space and incorporate the technical elements, including costumes, lights, sound, and set. Davis loves “getting into tech and integrating what we have been working on for months with the characters and the story on its feet.”

Davis describes the script of *Things I Know To Be True* as “fluid, emotional, [and] poetic.” These are feelings that heavily influenced his design for the production. “It feels in some ways like a continuous brush stroke. ... I wanted the set to match that feel.” One of the things that makes this show particularly unique is the incorporation of movement, and “the juxtaposition of the gritty drama and the lyrical dance,” which Davis particularly loved and strove to incorporate into his design. Davis’ innovative design created a demanding build process for our shops. However, The Rep technical staff was ready for the challenge. Davis describes the staff at Milwaukee Rep as “some of the best artisans in the country. It is always a pleasure seeing their work on stage.” He wants audiences to take special note of the tree he designed in this production, as it is a vital part of the world of the play and “should be a very cool and integrated element.”

Andrew Bovell

- <https://www.hlamgt.com.au/client/andrew-bovell/>

Original Production/Teacher Materials

- <https://franticassembly.co.uk/resources/552/things-i-know-to-be-true-resource-pack.pdf>
- <http://statetheatrecompany.com.au/content/uploads/2017/02/Things-I-Know-to-be-True-Study-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

Physical Theater

- <https://www.luckyplush.com/about-lucky-plush>
- <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/ztfk6sg/revision/1>
- <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/innovative-physical-theater-companies-10279/>
- <http://www.pushtheatre.org/srinfo.html>



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.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the Mezzanine and can be accessed via escalator or elevator.

THE REP VALUES YOUR SUPPORT

Financial support enables The Rep to:

- ★ Advance the art of theater with productions that inspire individuals and create community dialogue;
- ★ Provide a richer theater experience by hosting Rep-in-Depth, TalkBacks, and creating PlayGuides to better inform our audiences about our productions;
- ★ Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom programs such as Reading Residencies;
- ★ 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;
- ★ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our EPR Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

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