

THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
PRESENTS THE UNITED STATES PREMIERE OF

BLACK MOUNTAIN

BY BRAD BIRCH



Directed by
TODD QUICK

OCTOBER 7-10, 2021
FUSION THEATRE



Monmouth
COLLEGE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I came across the script for *Black Mountain* in 2018 while working at the University of Idaho. It was a brand new play and it was being proposed for the upcoming season there. When I read the play, I was immediately hooked. Never before had I read a play script that actually gave me chills. I didn't know that was possible. I instantly wanted to direct this show, to see if that feeling would translate to the audience. If a play could really be a thriller. Additionally, I was excited about the idea of directing a play that would be the American premiere of a new work. When the University of Idaho decided not to produce the play, I was secretly relieved and added it to my shortlist for a future production.

When I arrived at Monmouth College and saw the Fusion Theatre, I knew that this was the perfect venue for the production. The Fusion is an experimental venue, allowing each new production to reimagine the relationship between the actors and the audience, and to design a theatre space that caters to the specific production. In the opening notes of the script, playwright Brad Birch describes a play with essentially no set, and almost no props. He calls for a "world created by light and sound." What better place to experience that kind of play than our intimate blackbox theatre, with the audience packed in around the actors on three sides.

As we prepare to say goodbye to the Fusion Theatre as a performance venue for the Monmouth College Theatre Department, it seems fitting that this new play—a premiere, and a bit of an experiment—is the final show to grace its stage. Hopefully, this play, and the theater it plays in, will impact you as much as it has me.

Thank you for supporting the arts at Monmouth College. Enjoy the show.



— TODD QUICK

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF THEATRE

THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
PRESENTS

BLACK MOUNTAIN

BY BRAD BIRCH

Directed by Todd Quick

October 7-10, 2021

Thursday-Saturday 7:30 P.M. | Sunday 2 P.M.

Fusion Theatre

Please silence all electronics.

Photography and recording of any kind is prohibited.

Restrooms are located in the lobby.



Monmouth
COLLEGE

Time: Five days, in October. The present.

Place: A cabin, in the forest, in the mountains. Up north.

Black Mountain will run approximately 85 minutes, with no intermission.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

REBECCA Kaitlyn Fisher
PAUL Elijah Lind
HELEN Allie Bryan
REBECCA (UNDERSTUDY) Celeste Lythgoe
HELEN (UNDERSTUDY) Gwenavier Schultz

CREATIVE TEAM

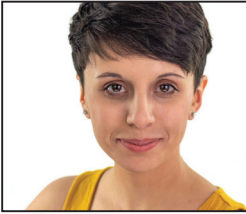
Director Todd Quick
Technical Director Doug Rankin
Assistant Director Gabriela Madu
Stage Manager Bekkah Gebe
Assistant Stage Manager Gwenavier Schultz
Costume Designer Celeste Lythgoe
Costume Shop Manager Rebecca Bean
Scenic and Lighting Director Doug Rankin
Assistant Lighting Designer Emma Wohlstadter
Sound Designer Gabriela Madu
Stage Crew Reese Hill, Molly White
Wardrobe Crew Cassidy Wolf
Box Office Staff ... Meghan Bird, Catie Bozarth, Brooke McCormick, Diamond Rideout
Poster Illustration and Design Stella Narkiewicz

This production of *Black Mountain* marks the U.S. premiere of the play.

Warning: This production will use theatrical haze effects, cigarette smoke and strobe lighting.

Content Warning: This production features adult themes and strong language.

THE CAST



ALLIE BRYAN (Helen) is a senior theatre major from Abingdon, Illinois. Previous Monmouth College credits include Beth in *Little Women*, Dead Body in *The Real Inspector Hound*, Bet in *Oliver!*, Brenda in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, #11 in *The Wolves* and Villian in *Almost, Maine*. Other Monmouth College activities include Chorale and APO. Allie would like

to thank their parents for attending the performance and to Todd for letting them be a part of the experience.



KAITLYN FISHER (Rebecca) is a senior psychology major and music minor from Monmouth. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Milkmaid in *Oliver!*, Aunt Nellie in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, Ejlif in *An Enemy of the People* and Kayleen in *Gruesome Playground Injuries*. Other Monmouth College activities include Chorale and Chamber Choir.



ELIJAH LIND (Paul) is a junior economics major from Walnut, Illinois. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Murgatroyd in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, Roderick in *Little Women* and Billing in *An Enemy of the People*. Other Monmouth College activities include Sigma Phi Epsilon, Chamber Choir and Chorale.

THE DIRECTOR

TODD QUICK is an assistant professor of theatre, currently in his fourth year of teaching at Monmouth College. Previous directing credits with Monmouth College Theatre include *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. When not at Monmouth College, Todd is a member of the acting faculty at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. Outside of teaching, Todd is a professional actor and member of the Actor's Equity Association, as well as a professional headshot photographer. Todd has an MFA in acting from Purdue University, and a BA in theatre performance from SUNY Geneseo. www.toddquick.com.



THE COMPANY



Melanie Delbridge (Dramaturg) is a senior theatre major from Metamora, Illinois. Previous Monmouth College theatre credits include writing plays and directing for *Fusion Fest* and playing The Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker*, Mrs. Drudge in *The Real Inspector Hound*, Aunt Hannah in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, Mrs. Gottlieb in *Deadman's Cell Phone* and Aunt March in *Little Women*. Other Monmouth College activities include writing for *Coil* and *The Courier* and being a member of Mortar Board. Melanie would like to thank her parents for teaching her to love art in all its forms.



Rebekkah Gebe (Stage Manager) is a senior history major from Sandwich, Illinois. Previous Monmouth College credits include Sandrine in *Almost, Maine*, stage manager for *Oliver!*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and *The Real Inspector Hound* and assistant light designer for *The Wolves*. She was also in the ensemble and a dramaturg for *Little Women*. Gebe is also a work-study student in the theatre. She is also involved in the college's jazz band.

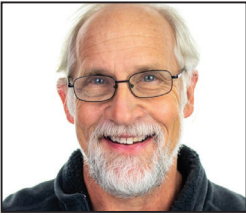


Celeste "Zesty" Lythgoe (Rebecca Understudy/ Costume Designer) is a second-year secondary education major and theater minor from Lafayette, Colorado. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Mrs. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, and ensemble in *Little Women*. Other Monmouth College activities include SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance). Celeste would like to thank her mom, Amy, and her two siblings, Corinne and Calista, for always supporting her ambitions.



Gabriela "Gabbay" Madu (Asst. Director/Sound Designer) is a junior computer science and theatre double major from Montego Bay, Jamaica. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Moon in *The Real Inspector Hound*, Meg in *Little Women*, Hermia in *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, and Aunt Elieri in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. She has also stage managed and assistant directed for *Gruesome Playground Injuries* and sound designed for *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. Other Monmouth College activities include Residential Life, CVOP, International Club, Chorale, Chamber Choir and Scots Student Senate. She would like to thank her

professors for pushing her to achieve her full potential and her friends Nyasaina, Eddie, Carlos and Chris for supporting her throughout her Monmouth career.



Doug Rankin (Scenic and Lighting Designer/ Technical Director) is a Monmouth native and a 1979 Monmouth graduate. A longtime professor of theatre at Monmouth, he received his MFA in theatre design from Northwestern University. He has designed scenery, lighting and costumes for hundreds of productions throughout the Midwest. His scenery designs include two designs for Tony Award-winning director Frank Galati.



Gwenavier Schultz (Helen Understudy/Assistant Stage Manager) is a sophomore theatre education major from Kankakee. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Narrator in *An Enemy of the People* and Hag in *Little Women*. Other Monmouth College activities include band and choir.



Emma Wohlstadter (Assistant Lighting Designer) is a junior theatre and international business double major from Macomb, Illinois. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Narrator/Stage Manager in *An Enemy of the People*, *Fusion Fest VI* and Kayleen in *Gruesome Playground Injuries*. Other Monmouth College activities include cross country, track and field, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Stockdale Fellows, Alpha Lamda Delta and Order of Omega. Emma would like to thank her family for always supporting her and her professors here at Monmouth College for allowing her to gain new experiences within the theatre.

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

In his foreword for *Birch Plays: 1*, Brad Birch describes *Black Mountain* as a play "about the drift, disconnect and disintegration of human experiences in times of dissonance." He further explains "[the characters cannot] forget what they have learnt—that things in their world are not as they seem, the rules have been broken. Once one brick is dislodged, the whole building falls. They try to find sense and new meaning in this shifting landscape." An up-and-coming playwright, Birch employs theatre as the medium for exploring "this shifting landscape" of relationships in *Black Mountain* and his other works.

The Playwright

Birch was born in 1989 in Llandrindod Wells, near the border of Wales and England, which he described in the *Birch Plays: 1* foreword as affecting his writing with "a sense of periphery." Leaving school at 15, Birch worked a series of "terrible jobs" before studying writing in the Royal Court Young Writers Programme in 2010. Since that time, Birch has written several award winning plays and adaptations, including his adaptation of *En Folkenfiende* or *An Enemy of the People* by Ibsen which was produced by Minnesota's Guthrie Theatre in 2018. Birch is currently still writing and lives with partner, Zoe, and son, Woody.

The Play

In an interview with Steve Stratford for his blog "Steve Stratford Reviews" on June 20, 2017, Brad Birch describes *Black Mountain* stating, "I don't want to give too much away, but it's enough to say that Paul has done something which jeopardised his relationship with Rebecca, and the two try to work through it by getting away from the familiarity of home. But as the play develops we discover that perhaps they each have different motives for being there." Birch further elaborates, "I wanted to write a play that was about something, and *Black Mountain* is about guilt and forgiveness and redemption. I set it in a cabin in the woods to give it a very particular setting and atmosphere. I kept returning to the films *Antichrist* [Lars von Trier's 2009 horror film set in a cabin in the woods] and *Don't Look Now* [Nicholas Roeg's 1973 thriller about a couple who try to move on from a tragedy by moving to Venice] and tried to take elements of them and match their aesthetic to my ideas about guilt and betrayal."

The Symbolism

Birch utilizes symbolism in order to further a psychological thriller atmosphere. Some notable symbols employed are the crow or raven, which may reference the Greek myth of Apollo and Coronis or may bring to mind horror literature such as Poe's poem "The Raven" or further references to modern films such as *Fatal Attraction*. Birch uses insects, a common horror film symbol, perhaps referencing the common idiom of being eaten by guilt or in reference to another mythological example of the cost of infidelity in the story of Io and the gadfly which Hera has sent as punishment. In true "cabin in the woods" form, the trees themselves are used as a symbol for the relationships of *Black Mountain*, and the isolation of the participants of the relationship.

—Melanie Delbridge



COVID-19 PROTOCOL

*THE COLLEGE'S COVID OPERATIONS GROUP HAS GRANTED
PERMISSION FOR THE ACTORS TO PERFORM WITHOUT MASKS.*

*THE FULL CREATIVE TEAM IS FULLY VACCINATED AND HAS
ENGAGED IN WEEKLY TESTING THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS TO
ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES ALIKE.*

*AUDIENCE MEMBERS MUST WEAR MASKS TO COVER THE MOUTH
AND NOSE AT ALL TIMES. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.*

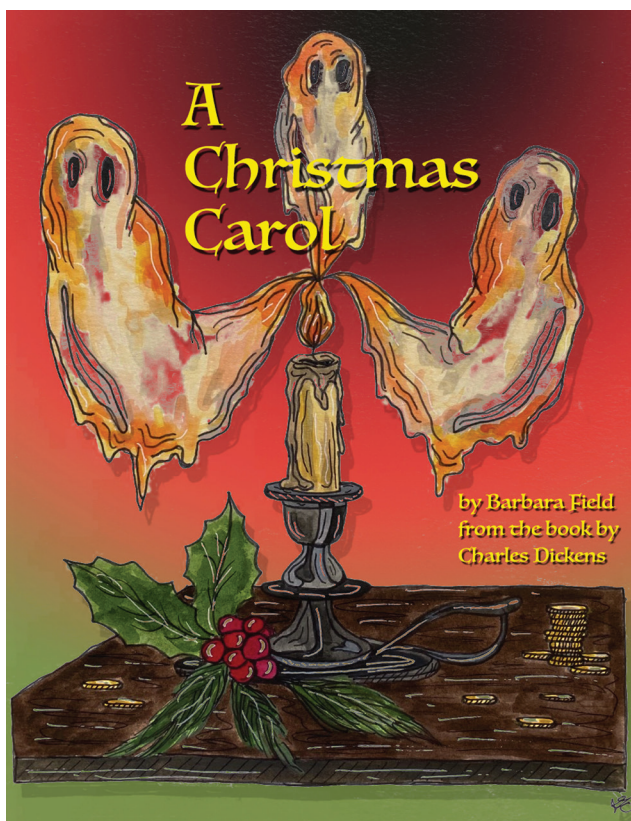
SPECIAL THANKS

President Clarence R. Wyatt and First Lady Lobie Stone

Professor Doug Rankin

Dr. Vanessa Campagna

Emma Quick



The Holiday Tradition Returns!

November 18-21, 2021

Wells Theater

Once again, the Department of Theatre teams up with The Buchanan Center for the Arts to present a large-scale community production of Dickens' timeless holiday classic.

Directed by Senior Theatre Major Melanie Delbridge

Purchase tickets now at monmouthcollege.edu/box-office