

## Buffalo Theatre Ensemble Presents



**May. 2 - Jun. 2 | Thu-Sat, 8p • Sun, 3p**

By the creator and executive producer of the Amazon series *Outer Range*, BTE's production is the world premiere!

Pre-Show Discussion with Director and Designers: Thursday, May 2 at 6:45p

Post-Show Discussion with Director, Cast, and Crew: Friday, May 10

Granddad is gone. No elegies. No dirges. No dowries. It all goes in the grave. But three sisters can't forget what's buried when an impossible discovery upends their notions of loss, and gets the women asking: who among us has been digging? *Contains adult themes and language.*



ASL Performance on Thursday, May 23, 2024.

## **Time, Place and Characters**

**ACT 1 - 1999**

**ACT 2 - Seven years later.**

**ACT 3 - Seven years after that.**

**...all at the end of September**

**A quaint cabin home, far outside a small town, somewhere high in the mountains, a terrain dictated by altitude and seasons, beautiful until it beats you down.**

**Grandad - Someone whose presence is always there.**

**May Carver - Youngest sister. Absorbs death.**

**Carly Carver - Middle sister. Fights death.**

**Quinn Carver - Eldest sister. Flees death.**

**Jim Elbert - A neighbor and a shepherd.**

### **Director's Note:**

In 2017, I attended a reunion at The Juilliard School. While I was there, some of the writers in the playwriting program did readings of short scenes from their shows. One scene had three women playing sisters. It was funny, moved fast, had heart, was mysterious, and the scene really stuck with me. A few weeks later I called the school and asked if I could read a copy of the entire play. It was *Into The Earth With You* by Brian Watkins. I was immediately taken by it... The mystery, the conflict, the comedy, the myriad surprises and the difficult but truthful relationship these three sisters shared, made it impossible for me to put it down.

Fast-forward a couple years and one pandemic, and here we are. I'm so excited to bring together such a talented group of actors and designers to show you BTE's world premiere of this thrilling play. I hope you love it as much as I do.

~KN

## Playwright

<https://newdramatists.org/brian-watkins>

Playwright Brian Watkins 'most recent play *Epiphany* premiered at Lincoln Center Theater where it received five Lucille Lortel Nominations and an Outer Critics Circle nomination for Best New Play. Beginning this May, the second season of his television series *Outer Range* can be seen on Amazon Prime Video. Other plays include *Wyoming*, *Evergreens*, *My Daughter Keeps Our Hammer* (upcoming: Teatro dei Fabbri in Trieste, Italy), and *High Plains* among others. His plays have been produced internationally by Druid Theatre at the Galway International Arts Festival under the direction of Garry Hynes, at The Flea Theatre and Lesser America under the direction of Danya Taymor, as well as at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Juilliard School, Campania Teatro Festival in Italy, Edinburgh Fringe, Creede Repertory, and more. He is under commission from Lincoln Center Theater and the Denver Center Theatre Company. A 2016 O'Neil Finalist, Watkins is a former Juilliard Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellow and a current New Dramatists resident playwright. Currently, Watkins is writing original screenplays for Warner Bros and Steven Spielberg's Amblin.



### Interview with the playwright

<https://aszym.blogspot.com/2013/10/i-interview-playwrights-part-610-brian.html>

Q: Tell me, if you will, a story from your childhood that explains who you are as a writer or as a person.

A: A lot of my family lives in the Northwest. Every Fourth of July, we'd all get together and ferry out to this island where there was some strange cabin on a clearing in the middle of the woods. My grandfather would gather everyone around and make us watch him leap over blazing fireworks, wearing very short shorts, while he bellowed lyrics from *The Music Man*.

Q: Who are or were your theatrical heroes?

A: Plasticene Theatre in Chicago, Sam Shepard, Beckett, Harold Pinter, Caryl Churchill, Eugene O'Neill, Will Eno, Yeats, Conor McPherson. And then there's those non-theatre theatrical heroes like Bruce Nauman, Flannery O'Connor, and Cormac McCarthy. I could go on and on... so I'll stop.

Q: What kind of theater excites you?

A: Theatre that travels long dramatic distances, that is constantly arriving at unexpected places. Bold and risky stuff, written from the gut, that teeters on the edge of falling on its face. It seems this brand of theatre is typically thought of as "visceral" or "sweaty" or "loud" but I think it can also include quiet or contemplative work. For examples, see above list.

Q: What advice do you have for playwrights just starting out?

A: Pursue playwriting for the love of the craft and the community, not for what the craft and community can give you. Take a posture of ambitious selflessness. This means being a zealous listener. It also means writing every day. Taking risks and failing. Reading. Seeing as much theatre as possible. And sacrificing a whole lot of immediate comfort in exchange for slow, meaningful growth. As every writer knows, turning off the neurotic bullshit in our heads is half the battle. Ironically, I think the practice of focusing outward – of upholding something other than one's individuality – can garner, in spades, the very things that writers typically strive to self-generate yet can't sustain: inspiration, higher craftsmanship, a unique voice. You can find some true gems in the theatre community that practice this. When you find one, spend as much time with them as possible.

# Buffalo Theatre Ensemble's *Into The Earth With You* Model and Rendering by Set Designer Sarah Lewis



## Natural burial

For a video on human composting look here: [Let's Visit the Human Composting Facility!](#)

For more info: <https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/greenburialdefined.html>

<https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/natural-burial.htm>

In the show, Natural Burial is discussed, which is essentially laying a deceased person's body in the earth in a way that doesn't impede decomposition, allowing the body to naturally return to the environment. It's an alternative to the more conventional Western burial methods and modern funeral customs.

With Natural Burial, the body isn't treated with chemical preservatives or disinfectants like embalming fluid, which are meant to slow down decomposition. Instead, it can be placed in a biodegradable coffin, casket, or shroud. There's no burial vault or outer container to separate the body from the soil, allowing it to interact naturally with the earth. The grave is typically shallow enough to encourage microbial activity, similar to composting.

These natural burial grounds have been around for ages and are used in various countries throughout history.

## What is complex PTSD?

Reprinted from <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd-and-complex-ptsd/complex-ptsd/#:~:text=Complex%20post-traumatic%20stress%20disorder%20>

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder (complex PTSD, sometimes abbreviated to c-PTSD or CPTSD) is a condition where you experience some symptoms of PTSD along with some additional symptoms, such as:

- difficulty controlling your emotions
- feeling very angry or distrustful towards the world
- constant feelings of emptiness or hopelessness
- feeling as if you are permanently damaged or worthless
- feeling as if you are completely different to other people
- feeling like nobody can understand what happened to you
- avoiding friendships and relationships, or finding them very difficult
- often experiencing dissociative symptoms such as depersonalisation or derealisation
- physical symptoms, such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains and stomach aches
- Regular suicidal feelings.

## **Complex PTSD and emotional flashbacks**

If you have complex PTSD you may be particularly likely to experience what some people call an 'emotional flashback', in which you have intense feelings that you originally felt during the trauma, such as fear, shame, sadness or despair. You might react to events in the present as if they are causing these feelings, without realizing that you are having a flashback.

## **What causes CPTSD?**

The types of traumatic events that can cause complex PTSD include:

- childhood abuse, neglect or abandonment
- ongoing domestic violence or abuse
- repeatedly witnessing violence or abuse
- being forced or manipulated into prostitution (trading sex)

- torture, kidnapping or slavery
- being a prisoner of war.

You are more likely to develop complex PTSD if:

- you experienced trauma at an early age
- the trauma lasted for a long time
- escape or rescue were unlikely or impossible
- you have experienced multiple traumas
- you were harmed by someone close to you.

In the play, Grandad was a winner of a National book award.

<https://www.nationalbook.org/national-book-awards/how-works/>

The **National Book Awards** were established in 1950 to celebrate the best writing in the United States. Since 1989, the Awards have been overseen by the National Book Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to celebrate the best literature published in the United States, expand its audience, and ensure that books have a prominent place in our culture. Although other categories have been recognized in the past, the Awards currently honors the best Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Translated Literature, and Young People's Literature published each year.

A panel of judges selects a Longlist of ten titles per category, which is then narrowed to five Finalists, and a Winner is announced at the Awards Ceremony in the fall. The Awards Ceremony is one of the most anticipated events for writers, publishers, and readers eager to celebrate the best books of the year.



## Decimation of the Aspens



*James Solomon, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org*

Within the last scene of the play, the characters talk about all of the Aspens dying from a “bug” or “beetle”. What they’re talking about is Sudden Aspen Decline, or SAD, which is the widespread rapid and severe deterioration in tree health. Researchers observed this decline across Colorado nearly two decades ago, and it hasn’t let up. SAD differs from regular aspen decline because SAD happens more rapidly.

Dr. Julie Korb, a professor of Biology at Fort Lewis College tells WesternSlopeNow signs of sudden aspen decline include an orange, almost iridescent, hue to the bark. A pathogen called cytospora canker is behind the decline, separating bark from the cambium and changing its color from white to brown or black, or causing crown loss.

The poplar borer, *Saperda calcarata*, is a wood-boring beetle that lays eggs on the bark of aspen trees, causing the larvae to tunnel and weaken the wood.

## ALCOHOLISM

Sources include: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohols-effects-body>, Alcoholics Anonymous 4th edition 2001, AA World Services, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/274603/9789241565639-eng.pdf?ua=1>

Alcoholism is the continued drinking of alcohol despite it causing serious problems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 283 million individuals worldwide were estimated to have alcohol use disorders by 2016. Although the term "alcoholism" was coined as early as 1852, contemporary clinical nomenclature, such as "alcohol use disorder" or "alcohol dependence," is preferred to mitigate stigma and foster treatment-seeking behavior.

Alcohol, renowned for its addictive properties, exacts a toll on various bodily systems, prominently impacting the brain, heart, liver, pancreas, and immune function. Prolonged and heavy alcohol consumption can lead to an array of health and social complications, including cognitive impairment, organ damage, and heightened susceptibility to diseases such as cancer and severe withdrawal symptoms if stopped suddenly. Moreover, the deleterious effects of alcohol extend to societal domains, contributing to increased risks of traffic accidents, violent crime, and mortality.

These health effects can reduce life expectancy by 10 years. Drinking during pregnancy may harm the child's health, and drunk driving increases the risk of traffic accidents. Alcoholism is also associated with increases in violent and non-violent crime. While alcoholism directly resulted in 139,000 deaths worldwide in 2013, in 2012 3.3 million deaths may be attributable globally to alcohol.

The origin or cause of alcoholism is multifaceted, attributable to both genetic predispositions and environmental factors. Individuals may resort to alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism for stress or anxiety, thus escalating into alcohol dependency. While familial history significantly heightens the likelihood of developing alcohol use disorders, external influences, such as socio-cultural norms and accessibility, also play pivotal roles in shaping drinking behaviors.

Recognized as a dual physical and mental illness, the diagnosis of alcoholism typically involves the administration of standardized questionnaires and comprehensive assessments to confirm the presence of symptoms and gauge severity. This scholarly exploration underscores the intricate interplay of biological and environmental determinants in shaping alcohol use behaviors and emphasizes the imperative of comprehensive interventions to address this pervasive public health concern.



**Amethyst** is known as the "sobriety stone" because it is said to help with addiction recovery and keep cravings at bay. The Greek word for amethyst translates to "not drunk", and in ancient times it was believed that you could drink all night and remain sober if you had an amethyst in your mouth or on your person.

### **Things to think about prior to the performance:**

- What does the word "trauma" mean to you?
- Since each act of the play takes place seven years apart, how might a playwright, actor or designer show the passage of time onstage?
- In what ways is a theatrical experience different from a real life experience? How is theater different from film?
- How did the design of the set make you feel before the show began?

### **Things to watch for in performance:**

- What was most surprising and/or interesting about the designs for this production?
- How do the lights, sound and set make you feel?
- How did your feelings about the set change from your initial response when you entered?
- What are some of the secrets the characters in this play have?

## Things to think about after the performance:

- There is a saying, “you’re only as sick as your secrets”. How do the secrets of the folks in this play affect them and their relationships?
- How does showing this play in seven year increments help to advance the ideas of the play?

## Other Analysis Tools:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, what happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is ‘about?’ In a nutshell, how does the playwright drive their point(s) home?
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwright decide that this was the most quintessential title for his work, do you think?

The running time for this production is approximately 2 hours long, including a 15 minute intermission.

Please join us for a pre-show discussion Thursday, May 2nd at 6:45p.m. in MAC 140 preceding the preview performance. Note that pre-show discussions will include the director and designers and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

There will be a post-show discussion following the Friday, May 10th performance. The post-show will be with the director, cast and crew, and we will be fielding questions from the audience.

There will be an ASL interpreted performance on Thursday, May 23rd.

Please join us!