

WINNER! FRINGE FIRST AWARD, 2013 *Edinburgh Festival Fringe*



Mercy Killers

a one-man play written & performed by Michael Milligan

☆☆☆☆☆ - **THE SCOTSMAN**

"This searing one man show manages to make politics personal, largely thanks to a heart-breaking performance from leading man and Broadway actor Michael Milligan."

- **THE LIST**

"This is a wonderfully executed piece of political theatre, focusing not on those in power, but choosing instead to shine a light on the reality of the people who are suffering and dying through lack of care. It highlights the flaws in a system which is only useful for those who can afford its privileges. This is one man theatre at its very best and is something the fringe should embrace with gusto. If you love to be challenged by the theatre you're watching and leave the theatre willing to ask the questions that make a difference, then Mercy Killers is a shining example of provocative theatre and production you don't want to miss out on."

- **BROADWAY BABY (FOUR STARS)**

"At the centre of Michael Milligan's one man show is not just a searing indictment of the US healthcare system but also a surprisingly tender love story. It is a combination perfectly judged to affect the audience, to break through prejudices and politics straight to the core of a very real problem. Mercy Killers also stands out, however, as some of the best theatre at the Fringe."

- **TV BOMB (FOUR STARS)**

PERFORMANCE DETAILS



THE STORY:

Joe loves apple pie, Rush Limbaugh, the 4th of July and his wife, Jane. He is blue-collar, corn-fed, made in the USA and proud, but when his uninsured wife is diagnosed with cancer, his patriotic feelings and passion for the ethos of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are turned upside down. In **Mercy Killers**, a new one-man play, Joe struggles with the uniquely American experience of losing your health in the land of plenty.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

"This play is a love story—the context just happens to be a couple struggling with the healthcare system. It provides context for a much larger conversation: How are we going to take care of ourselves? How are we going to take care of each other? Live theatre offers a welcoming environment to dive into challenging issues, it gives audience members a chance to step back and see the bigger picture without getting mired in personal politics. We're used to being protected from having to empathize with other people, but theatre is a safe place to confront our emotions. A shared conversation between performer and audience member can be a kind of inoculation. We all have to deal with these things eventually. If we begin by dealing with them in the abstract, it builds our resilience."

- Michael Milligan

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Running Time:** 55 minutes
- Setting:** interrogation room, police station
- Set Requirements:** small table; one chair (industrial/generic)
NB: the ideal playing space is approximately 11' wide X 8' deep
- Pre-show & Curtain Call:** music by Woody Guthrie & The Grand Slambovians (licensed)
[will be provided]
- Sound Cues:** one [will be provided]
- Lighting:** simple, stark lighting to create sense of isolation
NB: The initial view of "Joe" is dark, shadowy. Around 5 minutes in, a slow fade can begin to soften the light as "Joe" begins to open up. Even with this softening, the lighting scheme should remain in the spectrum of shadowy, dark, and gloomy.

Optional: red & blue lights can create the illusion of police or ambulance sirens

*"Michael Milligan's breathtaking performance of a shattered man in the throws of a healthcare nightmare, made only worse by the twists and turns of insurance companies, truly humanizes the vast inequities of America's for-profit health insurance system. You will be talking about **Mercy Killers** long after the curtain draws."*

- Josh Starcher, HEALTHCARE-NOW! NYC

REVIEWS & TESTIMONIALS

"There's a marvelous and mysterious kind of alchemy at work in author and actor Michael Milligan's mesmerizing, harrowing indictment of US healthcare. Not only is it theatre distilled to its most basic essentials — one ordinary individual telling his story, as if to an invisible interrogator, his only props a table and chair — but it's unambiguously specific in its objectives to attack a system responsible for more than 60 percent of US personal bankruptcies ... It's also fuelled by profound outrage, and yet all these elements are so skillfully and meticulously controlled, in both the writing and performance, so thoroughly transmuted in service of storytelling, drama, and characterization, that the effect is gripping first and foremost on a painfully human level, even as Milligan simultaneously delves beneath the foreground issues to the personal and national philosophies underlying the debate Stateside ... Despite flashes of righteous anger, too, among the myriad emotions at work in Milligan's superbly nuanced portrayal, it's perhaps most heartbreaking of all that Joe's adherence to the traditional US credo of self-reliance leads him ultimately to blame himself."

- THE SCOTSMAN (FIVE STARS)

"Raw, emotional and devastatingly honest. When Joe's wife is diagnosed with cancer and the health insurance company refuses to pay, his life and his beliefs begin to fall apart. Broadway actor Michael Milligan's solo show gives an insight into the destructive personal impact of the American health care system. It makes public the private stories of thousands of Americans and shows an urgent need for change in a system failing so many. His performance is incredibly powerful and passionate, sweeping the audience up in Joe's story; making them laugh sometimes and bringing them to the edge of tears at others. Milligan has written a beautifully moving and thought-provoking piece that will leave you feeling a mixture of thankful, angered and saddened."

- THREE WEEKS (FIVE STARS)

"The backbone of Michael Milligan's shattering monologue concerns the tenuous security and quality of life of working class people in the US ... As performer, Milligan invests the character with a solid reality that lets us fill in all the gaps — we don't have to be told where he shops or what he listens to on the radio — and convinces us that the story is about much more than a faulty health system."

- THE STAGE

*"Michael Milligan's **Mercy Killers** is a powerful play that illustrates the urgency of replacing our dysfunctional health insurance system. In this painfully accurate portrayal of the personal struggles of one couple, Milligan makes public the suffering that thousands of American families experience in private. I was inspired by the performance, and energized to move our state from health insurance for some, to health care for all."*

- John Marty, Minnesota State Senator

*"Michael Milligan's play **Mercy Killers** is a powerful indictment of our failed healthcare system and its cruelty. Caring citizens should protect and empower each other. We can fix the healthcare system by covering everyone under an improved and expanded Medicare for all, and Michael's play should inspire us all to fight even harder for healthcare justice."*

- Jonathan Ross, M.D., MPH, Former President of Physicians for a National Health Program

*"Michael Milligan's **Mercy Killers** is a powerful teaching tool to deliver the emotional impact of how our healthcare system chews up and spits out so many Americans. This masterfully written and performed play displays the agonizing, dehumanizing suffering needlessly imposed on decent people by a system that turns healthcare into a market commodity instead of a basic human right. **Mercy Killers** poignantly demonstrates how rugged individualism can't compete with diseases and expenses that can strike down anyone."*

- Buddy Robinson, Co-Coordinator, Greater Minnesota Health Care Coalition

ARTIST BIO

Michael Milligan is a performer who has been writing and acting for the theater for almost two decades. Milligan has appeared on the Broadway stage as Little Charles in *August: Osage County*, De Bries in *La Bete*, and as a 'raver' and understudy on *Jerusalem*. No stranger to the one man show, Milligan performed Will Eno's title role of Thom Pain in the original New York run, taking over from James Urbaniak and T. Ryder Smith at the DR2. Other New York credits include *The Golem* with Robert Prosky, the world premiere of *The Empty Ocean* with Harold Clurman Theater Lab, and *Nightlands* with New Georges.

Milligan received 4 Stars for his performance of Lanford Wilson's one man show, *Poster of the Cosmos* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival -- a performance which also earned him 'Best Actor' nods in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. Milligan's other produced plays include *Heroine*; *Urgent: Aliens*; and a musical adaptation of Aesop's Fables for Circle in the Square with composer/rocker Joziah Longo of Gandalf Murphy and the Slambovian Circus of Dreams.

A reading of Milligan's verse play, *Phaeton* was presented by the Harold Clurman Theater Lab featuring Mark Rylance, David Hyde Pierce, and Joanna Lumley. The play was later presented by conservatory students at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting and as a part of the NYU graduate acting program's 'Studio Tisch' featuring Elizabeth Zins and Dakin Mathews. His adaptation of Jack London's *The Sea Wolf* has undergone several workshops and readings featuring Jay O. Sanders as the enigmatic Wolf Larsen. Milligan got his start writing stories for his mother, who is a professional storyteller in Central Ohio.

Milligan received his training from Juilliard where he won the John Houseman Prize for excellence in classical drama. His love of Shakespeare has taken him around the world performing the bard for the Shakespeare Theater, Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare and Company, Cincinatti Playhouse, St. Louis Rep, the Utah, Alabama, Illinois, Colorado Shakespeare Festivals, Milwaukee Shakes, Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, and New Jersey Shakespeare in roles as diverse as Hamlet, Mercutio, Romeo, Angelo, Cassio, Dromio, Lucentio, Antipholus, Mark Antony, Edgar, Orlando, as well as many spear carriers and various shrubbery movers.

He has also appeared at many of the nation's top regional theaters including the Guthrie, Westport Country Playhouse, Charlotte Rep, The McCarter Theater, and Folger Theatre in Washington D.C.

Milligan is an adjunct instructor of Shakespeare at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting.



PERFORMANCE HISTORY

~ 2013 ~

Lucille Lortel Theatre, NYC

Town Hall, Wigtown, Scotland

The Millenium Center, Stranraer, Scotland

Assembly Hall, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Scotland

Chester Theater, Berkshires, Massachusetts

59e59 Theaters, East to Edinburgh Festival, NYC

Minnesota House of Representatives, hosted by State Senator John Marty
special performance for Minnesota State Legislature and Staff

Health Care for All Minnesota's 2013 Single Payer Summer Celebration

Goonie's in Rochester, hosted by the Mayo student chapter of PNHP

The Grand in New Ulm, with PNHP

The Duluth Underground, Minnesota

Mankato, Ostrander auditorium, Minnesota State University, with PNHP

soloNOVA Festival presented by terraNOVA Collective, NYC

Health Care-NOW!, Philadelphia

Art of Acting Studio, Los Angeles

Residential Salon presented by Dr. John Ross, Toledo, Ohio

Shaker Heights Community Center, Cleveland, Ohio

Wright State University, Ohio

Democratic Party Meeting Hall, Dayton, Ohio

Arts West, Athens, Ohio

The Allen Theater, Playhouse Square, Cleveland, Ohio

(in collaboration with SPAN OHIO and Cleveland State University)

Van Fleet Theater, Columbus, Ohio

Center for the Arts, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Brooklyn Arts Exchange, 'From Obama to Occupy' Festival

Minnesota Nurses Association State Convention

Revolution Books, NYC

Hell's Kitchen, Minneapolis (benefit for Health Care for All Minnesota)

The Duluth Playhouse (in collaboration with HCAM and the Greater Minnesota Health Care Coalition)

~ 2012 ~

Guthrie Theater (reading)

University of Minnesota

Harold Clurman Lab Theater, NYC (in collaboration with Healthcare-NOW! NYC)

Beth Israel Hospital, NYC (benefit for Physicians for a National Health Program)

BOOKING INFORMATION

Mercy Killers is a high-impact, low-tech solo performance running approximately 55 minutes, followed by an optional 30-45 minutes talkback and discussion. Additional workshops and training sessions are also available (see below).

Theatrical performance fees vary according to venue size, number of performances, and other factors; please contact us for details.

The Artist provides:

- post-show talk-back or discussion (if desired)
- publicity and marketing support (via the Mercy Killers website and social media channels)
- templates for flyers, posters, and postcards
- quotes, reviews, and professional photographs

WORKSHOPS & DISCUSSIONS

Workshops and discussions can be a great addition to the performance and a unique way to further engage your audience. All programs are easily tailored to suit a wide variety of participants, issues, and situations. For details and fee schedules, please email info@mercykillerstheplay.com. Workshops currently on offer include:

Theatre for Social Change

Storytelling for Social Change

Storytelling for Personal Transformation

Master Class: Movement

Master Class: Shakespeare

Community-Building for Arts Organizations

Additional services include:

Production

Consulting

Professional Training

| for more details, please contact

| info@mercykillerstheplay.com or 917 882 9458