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**A COMEDIC +
GRIPPING BATTLE**

**OVER THE ETHICS
OF JOURNALISM**

The
Lifespan
of a

FACT

written by
**JEREMY KAREKEN,
DAVID MURRELL,
GORDON FARRELL**

directed by **LINDA BAKER**

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Lifespan of a Fact
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The play...

In 2002, sixteen-year-old Levi Presley tragically took his own life by jumping off the Stratosphere Hotel in Las Vegas. In the ensuing year essayist John D'Agata wrote a piece for the bimonthly magazine *The Believer*, in which Presley's death was discussed against the bigger backdrop of suicides in Sin City as a whole, not only reporting on the facts but also making a salient point of how human worth can be cruelly swept aside by relentless consumerism.

Only D'Agata didn't initially report the facts, or at least not all of them. Levi Presley's fall only lasted eight seconds, for instance, not nine as initially stated. But as D'Agata would tell you, nine has more symbolic significance. Does such a small deviation from the facts really matter when the biggest story beats are intact? According to Jim Fingal, D'Agata's one-time editor fresh out of Harvard, the answer is yes. Absolutely. And who's to say who is wrong and who is right?

We live in a world where society has never been more connected, but for every like-minded individual we find there seems to be another one that strongly, vehemently, and sometimes even violently, disagrees with everything we stand for and believe. Polarization and tribalism are the two most horrific legacies of the Internet, the democratization of information, to paraphrase Isaac Asimov, ensuring that people falsely believe that their ignorance is just as good as someone else's knowledge. With all the information at our fingertips we have a tendency to pick and choose our own facts, and the world I live in

may be very different than the world you live in. In the words of John D'Agata, "There's a world of facts to choose from. The wrong facts get in the way of the story." But as Jim Fingal incredulously responds to this assertion, "How can you even for a moment claim that facts are negotiable?"

This dichotomy is at the forefront of *The Lifespan of a Fact*, a book written by D'Agata and Fingal that consists of the former's aforementioned essay, "What Happens There," as well as the latter's annotations and fact checking. What results is a fascinating discussion of what truly matters in creative writing—facts or the greater truth. It is an argument between two virtuous pursuits that should be synonymous with one another but aren't, the bigger picture and the minutia that sometimes does not support it but is no less important. This back-and-forth between D'Agata and Fingal, which went on for a full seven years before "What Happens There" was finally published in its final form in *The Believer*, is faithfully recreated in the 2018 stage version of *The Lifespan of a Fact* by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell. Or at least the greater truths are, and isn't that the most important part? Maybe. That is something the audience will have to decide for themselves. All we know for sure is that Levi Presley lived, Levi Presley died, and that Levi Presley mattered. In that, at least, fact and truth can agree.

Jordan Reid
Dramaturge

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Cast

Jim Fingal.....Andrew Bednarz
Emily Penrose.....Pamela Bilderbeck
John D'Agata.....Jay Gipson-King

The Crew

Director.....Linda Baker
Stage Manager.....Rebekah Nielson
Producer.....Jennifer Johnson
Technical Director.....Nathaniel J. Pierce
Set Design.....Nathaniel J. Pierce
Light Design.....Nathaniel J. Pierce
Set Construction/Painting.....Shilah Tibbits,
Shaleen Reid-Holbrook
Jeremy Clubb
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Cast Biographies



Jay Gipson-King (John D'Agata or *Dr. Jay to his students*) has had the theatre bug since the fourth grade but has not performed in a scripted play in a long time. His primary roles over the last few years have been as a director, improviser, and educator. His most recent directorial production was *TRAP* at North Salem High School, preceded by *365 Plays/365 Days* at Chemeketa Community College, and *Hearts Like Fists* at Keizer Homegrown Theatre. His most recent performance was as Orgon in a Zoom production of *Tartuffe* through the Majestic Theatre, and before that he spent three years performing and directing with Salem Playback Theatre. Jay has a PhD in Theatre Studies from Florida State University and a Master of Teaching from Western Oregon University. He currently teaches theatre and English at North Salem High School.



Pamela Bilderbeck (Emily Penrose) has been involved in local theater since 1980 (homegrown!). She has performed at Pentacle Theatre, Albany Civic Theatre and The Verona Studio and is thrilled to be in her first show at Keizer Homegrown Theatre. When not on stage she can be found in the garden admiring bumblebees. Pamela wants to thank Robynn for calling her up in November and saying, “You should audition for this play.”



Andy Bednarz (Jim Fingal) is excited to be returning to the stage for *Lifespan of a Fact*, their second production with KHT. Andy grew up in Salem, attending CET, and was involved in South Salem High School drama. Their return to the greater Salem area for KHT's *The Book of Will* last summer marked a return to the stage after almost a decade away, a time period they've spent living in Portland. Andy has found the commute south worth the opportunity to test their theater skills and be a part of an amazing community. Much like their character, Jim, Andy has a background in computer science as well as an arts-related degree—in their case, German studies instead of journalism—and is currently working as a product manager at a tech company in Tigard. Andy enjoys spending their free time attending other local theaters and Broadway shows on tour at the Keller Auditorium in Portland, crafting, cuddling cats, connecting with excellent friends (hopefully while playing board games), and has been known to get involved in local conventions and LGBTQ+ events.

