



Wind

by Cullen Elijah McGrail

February 12/13/14

undercurrents festival!

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Inspired by true events.

When Will returns home to his family's farm after graduating from university, he feels like an outsider. His neighbours don't really remember him, his dad doesn't know what to do with him, and he can't find a job. When he notices his neighbours up in arms over the recent wind farm development in the area, he jumps at the chance to join in the conversation and get to know his neighbours better. ...And maybe write his first big play while he's at it. The deeper he digs, however, the more he realizes that his neighbours are falling for dangerous conspiracies and his own dad may be slipping out into the fringes with them.

Cast & Creative Team

Jon Dickey.....WILL, CHRIS
Geoff McBride.....BILL, JOHN, PATRICK
Cara Pantalone.....MARGARET, JUDY, DENISE, SARAH

Cullen Elijah McGrail.....Playwright, Stage Manager, Costume Designer
Nicholas Leno.....Director, Dramaturge
Alain Richer.....Set Designer
Laura Wheeler.....Lighting Designer
Anne Hamels.....Sound Designer

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Playwright's Note

Fear is a crazy thing. It can make you scream, make you jump, even make you afraid to admit that you were scared in the first place. But fear can also spark movements. When people feel threatened, they organize, they stand up, they fight back. But what if those people vote differently from us? Do we condemn them? Do we ignore them? Or do we find common ground?

Through this play, I've developed a deep love and admiration for the place I grew up. For the families who've surrounded mine for generations. For the land and livelihood that allowed me to be a professional artist. This play is documentary-*adjacent*. The character of Will is essentially me, and while I stayed as true to the facts of the story as possible, all the other characters you'll soon meet are works of fiction. Their stories, however, are not.

There may not be a "Judy", but there is a Marilyn. There's no "Denise", but there is a David. There's no "Bill", but there is a Kevin. And all of these people have families who love them and are loved by them. Each has things that make them laugh. Each has something that scares them. It can be easy (and even tempting) to judge a person based on where they come from or how they likely vote, but in writing *Wind*, I learned that sometimes the bravest thing we can do is listen. Thanks for being here.

Cullen Elijah McGrail

Director's Note

I grew up in Grey county, which is about 3.5 hours away from Chatham-Kent where the events of *Wind* take place. Despite this distance, *Wind's* story has always felt familiar to me. Like the play's protagonist, I remember witnessing a general uneasiness in my neighbours when wind turbines started to pop up in fields throughout the countryside. I heard about them in line at Tim Hortons, and saw petitions on grocery store cork boards. To me, this sense of unrest never felt like it was about the turbines themselves, rather a general mistrust of the forces that were putting them there.

Wind is set ten years ago during the latter half of Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government. The notion of being 'radicalized' online was still a relatively new phenomenon then. *Wind* shows us how alienation and fear lead people towards extreme views. And the play reminds us that these symptoms existed long before QAnon, Donald Trump, or the Freedom Convoy.

While the play does tackle some complicated themes, it also tries not to take itself too seriously. I've had a lot of fun leaning into the self-referential nature of this piece, and haven't held back teasing our urban, artistically inclined audience. Enjoy!

Nicholas Leno

Cullen Elijah McGrail is a queer, disabled, award-winning playwright, designer, and arts leader originally from rural Southwestern Ontario, now based in Ottawa. Most recently, he presented *The City Aquarium is Proud to Present: The Marvelous Mermaids of Merriment™* (Ottawa Fringe Festival 2024; Queered: A Mini-Fest 2024; Fresh Meat Fest 2022), which won the inaugural Queer Jury's Choice Award at the 2024 Ottawa Fringe Festival and earned 9 Prix Rideau Award nominations, winning 4, including Outstanding New Creation. Cullen is also the festival director and producer of Fresh Meat Fest.

Nicholas Leno is a theatre director and producer, who grew up in 'middle of nowhere' rural Southwestern Ontario and now splits his time between Ottawa and the west coast of Newfoundland. From 2018 to 2023 Nicholas was the Artistic Director of a Company of Fools, where he executed the biggest outdoor theatre tour in Canada: an eight week Shakespeare in the Park tour that travels to 40 venues across Eastern Ontario. From 2018 to 2022 he ran Ottawa's Fresh Meat Fest. As a freelance director, Nicholas has worked on independent productions that have been programmed at Undercurrents Festival, TACTICS, the National Arts Centre's Canada Scene, In the Soil Arts Festival, and the Kick and Push Festival. If he isn't in a theatre, Nicholas can be found canoeing or backcountry camping.

Jon Dickey is an actor and educator who currently resides in Ottawa. He studied Theatre and Acting at the University of Ottawa and has appeared on stage in Ottawa for a variety of theatre companies including: a Company of Fools, Trip the Light Theatre Collective, Theatre 4.669, and Dead Unicorn Ink. It's been a dream to work on the debut production of *Wind* with such an incredible collection of artists!

Geoff McBride is a theatre creator who lives and works in the Unceded Anishinaabe Territory of Ottawa. He has been working in theatre for over 30 years in various capacities, as an actor, director, producer, technician, and writer. Geoff trained at Dalhousie University and apprenticed at The Stratford Festival. He has appeared in shows at Neptune Theatre, Two Planks and a Passion, The Grand Theatre, Magnus Theatre, a Company of Fools and GCTC. He has also created original work with Alive Theatre (*Shakespeare Robs a Bank*), THUNK!theatre (*bread*) and the PS Theatre Collective (*The Persistent Stain*).

Recently Geoff has focused on direction, helming several shows including *Henry V* (a Company of Fools), *The City Aquarium is Proud to Present: The Marvelous Mermaids of Merriment™* (Ottawa Fringe Festival & Prix Rideau Award for Best Direction 2024), *The Anger In Ernest and Ernestine* (GCTC), and *As You Like It* (GCTC-Lawyer Play Fundraiser).

Cara Pantalone is a local professional actor, singer, teacher, writer and creator. Her new musical *R&J&Joni* will make its premiere at SLTF summer 2026. Ottawa audiences may recognize Cara from *Cabaret* and *Into the Woods* with Ovation Productions or the annual Panto with Ottawa Musicals. She teaches with Ottawa Children's theatre and has been in theatre education for over 20 years. Favourite credits outside Ottawa include - *The 39 Steps* (STF) *She Stoops to Conquer* (SLSF), *The Tempest* (a Company of Fools, SLSF) , *The Full Monty* (STC), *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (STC, KoOgle Theatre), *Shorelines* (Tactics Theatre- world premiere, PRA winner). @carapants

Alain Richer (he/him) is a bilingual stage and screen artist whose work centres on lighting, set, and production design, alongside directing and producing. For nearly a decade, Alain served as Artistic Director of Mainstage Theatre Company, where he helped shape the company into a leading space for youth musical theatre training, while continuing to design and direct for productions within the company. His design work spans both stage and screen. Alain has worked in production design for Groupe Média TFO, where he contributed to the development of real-time virtual design and broadcast technology, and designed sets for television series including *FLIP*, *BRBR*, *Camp Kazoo*, and *Minivers*. In theatre, Alain has created lighting and set designs for Théâtre Français de Toronto, with credits including *Le malade imaginaire*, *Espoir/Espwa*, and *Le Placard*. In 2021, Alain relocated to Ottawa to become Executive and Artistic Director of the Ottawa Fringe Festival, where he remains closely connected to the local arts community in both official languages, while continuing his practice as a designer.

Laura Wheeler is the Technical Director for the Ottawa Dance Directive (ODD) and has been a local theatre technician, designer and stage manager since 2012. Her lighting designs appear across Ottawa within

theatre, dance, and rock n' roll. She's worked with various production companies including Pellegrini Opera, Eddie May Murder Mysteries, Skeleton Key Theatre, Parry Riposte Productions, Plosive Theatre, Black Sheep Theatre, SevenThirty Productions, Counterpoint Players, and many more. In conjunction with the NAC outreach program Wheeler designed and taught a technical theatre course at Canterbury high school in 2024.

Anne Hamels is an emerging theatre artist established in Ottawa. They recently graduated from the University of Ottawa's acting Conservatory (2022) and have been working bilingually as an actor, director and creator since. Anne has a particular interest in installation and sensory based theatre. This is Anne's debut sound design and they are looking forward to sharing the sonic world of *Wind* with you. In their practice, Anne is intrigued by the movements of bodies through space, and the stories those bodies carry. They use theatre as a playground in which to explore and better understand the world we create.