

Theatre troupe with a Toole County tie to bring original Montana farm drama "The Harvest" to Off-Broadway stage in Manhattan



The Montana Actors' Theatre (MAT), based in Havre, is preparing to take a major step onto the national stage this fall with its production of *The Harvest*, an original play by MAT co-founder Jay Pyette. The production of *The Harvest* will be staged in downtown Manhattan as part of the prestigious Manhattan Repertory Theatre's (MRT) Off-Broadway season, marking a major milestone for the rural Montana theatre company.

Pam (Puckett) Veis, who plays the matriarch in the production, is a 1981 graduate of North Toole County High School. Her father, Gordon Puckett, was a teacher and administrator in several rural Toole County schools until settling in Sunburst in the early 70's. After his retirement from education, Gordon and his wife, Judy, started the Puckett Insurance Agency which is now KW Insurance, Inc., operated by Corey and Wendy Fauque. "My Dad was the person who introduced me to theatre and I know he'd be thrilled that I'm a part of bringing an authentic Montana farm story to the Big Apple," said Veis.

The Harvest tells the story of six adult siblings who reunite on their family's small Montana wheat farm after their father becomes too ill to run the harvest. As they work the fields, deep-rooted tensions, shifting family dynamics, and the realities of a changing agricultural landscape

unfold. The play explores themes of family, tradition, and the uncertain future of rural life.

Originally premiering in Havre in March 2022, *The Harvest* has since been performed in Anaconda by the Anaconda Ensemble Theatre and in Missoula by Rooted Theatre Company. Pyette then submitted the script to the Manhattan Repertory Theatre, which accepts fewer than 2% of submissions - MRT then contacted Pyette and started discussing the logistics of bringing it to Manhattan. The upcoming New York production represents the most ambitious staging yet, as it'll be the first time that MAT has taken a full-scale production to an Off-Broadway venue.

"There is a great deal of interest in rural America right now," Pyette said. "We believe this is the perfect story to tell at this moment - not only because it's compelling theatre, but because it gives voice to people whose stories are rarely told with authenticity." The production helps elevate rural Montana, identity beyond stereotypes, reminding audiences that agriculture is not just an economic engine - it is a cultural and emotional cornerstone of the state. Farmers, ranchers, and rural families will see reflections of themselves in the characters, while urban audiences will gain insight into the complex, deeply human world behind the

food they eat.

The production is receiving strong support from the community and agricultural industry, with early funding from AgWest Farm Credit, Frontline Ag Solutions, Mountain View Co-op, and many individuals. However, the overall budget is projected at \$90,000, with costs covering set construction, transportation, travel, and housing in New York City. "So far, we've raised just over half of our overall budget," Pyette noted. "We're reaching out to large ag companies and foundations across the state, and we're inviting anyone with a connection to rural Montana or an interest in the arts to support this effort. Really, anyone who wants to help us tell the real story of Montana on a national stage."

Pyette and MAT's supporters hope the production will not only shine a national spotlight on Montana's agricultural communities but also open doors for the script and its actors to reach wider audiences. "This is a story that resonates far beyond the state," Pyette said. "But at its core, it's about us - about Montana, our land, our families, and our future."

For more information or to donate to the project, please contact: Jay Pyette, Executive Director, Montana Actors' Theatre, jay@mtactors.com, www.mtactors.com, 406-945-0272.