



We Are Blood

by Ryan Bernsten

Directed by John Burkhart

Cast:

Kathleen Deanna Walz

Raymond Ian McKercher

Nance Kristine Kapustka

Lydia Lindsay Masin

Sound Design - Dale Hayes Jr.



***We Are Blood* is presented by special arrangement with the playwright.**

Synopsis:

Is family forever? In this horror/thriller, a recently widowed New Yorker and her son return to rural Missouri to evict her estranged sister from their childhood home. Discovering the house in disrepair and the inhabitants experimenting with occult magic, the family is forced to exorcize demons from their past.

About the Playwright:

Ryan received his Master's in Dramatic Writing from the University of Oxford, where he graduated with honors. Onstage, ATLANTIC — a collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and his alma mater Northwestern University — won critical acclaim at Edinburgh Fringe and DREAM TICKET (Players Theatre, off-Broadway) won the NY Fringe Excellence Award and was recommended by The Huffington Post and TimeOut. Other credits include WE ARE BLOOD (Kansas City Public Theatre; Ashland New Play Festival, Semifinalist; Austin Film Festival, Semifinalist), THE NEW ORDER (Corkscrew Theatre Festival; Oxford University Dramatic Society Best Play for Voices; The Living Room Theatre's Horror Play Festival), NOVEL (Charlotte Street Foundation, Kansas City Scratch Night), and BAD PRESS (Cherry Lane Theatre). Ryan's podcast 50 States of Mind was part of Spotify's New Podcast Incubation Program and won the Kings Hall Grant. His upcoming book 50 STATES OF MIND: A JOURNEY TO REDISCOVER AMERICAN DEMOCRACY will be published in February of 2023 by Bite-Sized Books in the U.K. Ryan is also a Slytherin contestant on the quiz show HARRY POTTER: TOURNAMENT OF HOUSES hosted by Helen Mirren on TBS, Cartoon Network, and HBOMax. Ryan is currently the Senior Managing Editor at The Trevor Project, overseeing editorial strategy to end suicide among LGBTQ young people.

Dramaturgical Notes:

Are you forever defined and inexorably linked to the circumstances of your birth? Can you escape the orbit of your family? This seems to be the central question in Ryan Bernsten's taut, suspenseful, family history exploration, *We Are Blood*. And, while the title speaks to a clear connection to and among members of a family, the plot brings this connection and its implications into question. *We Are Blood* is less a family drama than a mining of family perspectives based on a shared, but divergent history.



ATC's Salon Reading Series this year explores the central idea of home under the theme "Should I Stay or Should I Go." But, that notion of home – coming home, leaving home, even defining home, is a difficult concept to grasp, particularly in a diverse community. These plays (and our subsequent discussions) provide a deeper exploration of what it means to call a place home, and how it defines our lives. And, as we explore the concept surrounding home, we exercise our empathy in creating a home for others in our own community. The theater's most important role is as a community voice—a reflection of our aspirations and our challenges. We strive to create theater where conversation happens.

We Are Blood is admittedly a creepy and unorthodox example of a family in crisis. However, it taps into a family struggle that is all too real. Despite a common upbringing, when do values and beliefs diverge enough to create a chasm that cannot be crossed? Kathleen and Nance each believe they overcame the gravitational pull of family, either through acceptance and death, or by escape. However, both are ill-prepared to thrive in their adopted circumstances. And, when life challenges bring them back together, they must reconcile themselves to a new reality and a new set of circumstances. Bernsten adeptly tests their past and their relationship with one another again to see if a family can survive, or not. Can blood overcome a foundational divergence in world view?

At the end of the day, Bernsten delivers what we want to see in a well-wrought drama—a play that is more than the sum of its parts and provides insight into this condition of being human. This is a family struggling to move forward while they also struggle to (re)connect with one another outside of their differences. Reunions are not always welcome, nor mutual. But they can bring insight and provide us with a new perspective that leads to a new choice to be made. That is something we can all relate to.



While our readings are free to the public, we appreciate goodwill donations in support of the Angels Theatre Company and the Salon Reading Series. Thank you for your contribution!

Special Thanks to Turbine Flats for hosting the Salon Reading Series, the Angels Theatre Company Board of Directors, John Burkhart, Ryan Bernsten, and the cast of *We Are Blood* for their work. Special thanks to Dale Hayes Jr. for his expertise.

Thank you for supporting ATC and the 2023-23 Salon Reading Series
See you next time, Sunday, November 5, 2023, at 2:00 PM
for *Eminent Domain* by Laura Leninger-Cambell!

