

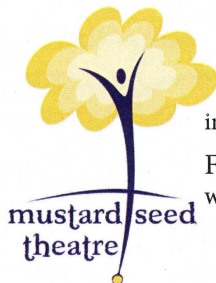


photo by Stephen Katz

# THE PURPOSE PROJECT: THAO'S LIBRARY

written & performed by  
**ELIZABETH VAN METER**

**September 5 - 15, 2013**



in residence at

Fontbonne University

[www.mustardseedtheatre.com](http://www.mustardseedtheatre.com)

# About the Show

Elizabeth is coping with a life-altering tragedy that has left her feeling hopeless, until one day she comes upon a photograph of Thao, a 25 year old Vietnamese woman born with life-threatening birth defects as a result of Agent Orange. Thao appears to have almost no legs and is sitting in her wheelchair outside of her family's storage structure which houses pig feed, fertilizer and books. Despite her crippling physical deformities, Thao has created a library for the children of her village from found and donated materials. When the photographer who captured the image of Thao asks her, "If you could have anything in the world what would it be?", Thao replies, "Three hundred dollars, so I can buy more books for the library." Elizabeth is haunted by the photograph along with Thao's simple request and commits to fulfilling her humble wish. Armed with a suitcase filled with books exceeding Thao's three hundred dollar request and searching for a way to reach Thao, with no phone number, email, or address, Elizabeth and Thao soon find themselves face to face in Trung Lap Thuong Commune, outside of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Elizabeth discovers a village where children who are first generation readers rush to explore the written word at Thao's small library. There, too, is Thao's family whose love outshines the poverty surrounding them. Through Thao's simple request, these two unlikely friends have been brought together, forging a bond that eventually will change both of their lives forever. This work premiered as a full-length production at the All For One Festival in 2012.

# The Purpose Project: Thao's Library

written & performed by  
**ELIZABETH VAN METER**

photographs by  
STEPHEN KATZ

video edited by  
GREG SLAGLE

video content by  
STEPHEN KATZ  
ELIZABETH VAN METER  
CHRIS TYREE  
KYLE MCKEVENY

executive producer  
JEFFREY CHRZCZON

production supervisor  
DANNY MALY

directed by  
JOE RICCI

## St. Louis Crew:

stage manager  
MJ KAMBAL\*

assistant stage manager  
TRACI CLAPPER

lighting design  
MICHAEL SULLIVAN

sound and projection operator  
EMMA BRUNTRAGER

light board operator  
MORGAN FISHER

with generous support from:



# Biographies

**ELIZABETH VAN METER** (Writer/ Performer/ Video) is a documentary filmmaker, producer, actor, and founder of *The Purpose Project*. She premiered *The Purpose Project: Thao's Library* at the Cherry Lane Theater in NYC last fall as part of the All For One Theater Festival. Versions of this production have also appeared in other NYC theater venues such as Theater 80 and the Playroom. Ms. Van Meter is the founder of The Purpose Project, an organization dedicated to searching out effective, dynamic individuals here and abroad that are bringing forth positive change in their communities, helping these individuals achieve a dream and share their stories with a wider audience. She directed and produced 40 short films for Gorgeous Entertainment documenting the lives of Japanese Americans living in NYC along with Japanese culture in the United States. Those films were screened at a major cultural event in the United States, Japan Day@Central Park for audiences of over 50,000 people. Ms. Van Meter was selected as a 5 x 5 emerging filmmaker for VisionFest and her short film *DAVID* screened at Tribeca Cinemas closing night of the festival. She also served as associate producer on the rock musical *Deep Cover* debuting at the New York Musical Theatre Festival. As an actress, selected theater credits include: *The Dinner Party* (Lincoln Center Institute), *10 Billionth Baby* (9Thirty Theater), *The Infliction of Cruelty* (NY Fringe Festival Winner). Selected Film: *The Institution, Three Women, Particles of Truth, Deep Six, Passing Stones* (IFC, Domani Vision Best Actress Award Winner). Her voice can be heard in several popular video games and her face has been seen on billboards and ads throughout the US. She served as director/cinematographer of a campaign in Peru to raise funds for a future health clinic for the Q'ero people living in remote areas of the Andes Mountains. She has been a guest speaker at various venues across the country. Ms. Van Meter is in postproduction for her first feature length documentary, *The Purpose Project: Thao's Library*. She is a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts. For my family.

# Biographies

**JOE RICCI** (Director) Joe Ricci is excited to continue his involvement with Eliabeth Van Meter and *The Purpose Project*. Joe's love affair with the solo form began when he directed the solo dance show *Dining Alone*, performed by Tricia Brouk. Since then, Joe also directed *You want me to do what?*, a true coming-of-age solo musical about a stage struck young girl who gets pushed by her movie biz father into nursing. *The Panic Diaries*, written and performed by four-time National Monologue Slam Champion Katie Northlich: This multi-character tour-de-force was presented at the Cherry Lane as part of the NYC Fringe Festival, where it received rave reviews and was named best solo show of the Fringe by Mateo Moreno. *Hardware Dreams* at Theatre for the New City: A solo play filled with music and dance as it follows a young woman from modern day New York to her childhood in Santurce Puerto Rico. Joe also just directed *I Love You, You're Perfect Now Change* at WST in Westchester, NY and he will be directing *Whiskeyland*, an epic new musical beginning in November. [www.joericci.net](http://www.joericci.net)

**STEPHEN KATZ** (photographer/video) was named Newspaper Photographer of the Year by Pictures of the Year International in March of 2008. He is currently a staff photographer for The Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, VA where he has worked since March of 2004. Katz's work, shot throughout the United States and nearly 50 countries - including two war zones - has been published in several magazines and books and has been extensively exhibited. He has received numerous national and international photography awards, including top honors from the National Press Photographers Association's Northern Short Course, Southern Short Course, The Associated Press and Society of Newspaper Design. In 2008, Katz placed third overall in NPPA's international Best of Photojournalism competition. He is the co-founder of the popular, on-line photo project [ShootForGood.org](http://ShootForGood.org) and Director of Photography for *The Purpose Project*. Capitalizing on his extensive experience covering global health issues, Katz was responsible for taking the Truth With A Camera workshop international, pairing up-and-coming photographers with local NGO's in developing countries.

# Biographies

**CHRIS TYREE** (video) is an award-winning documentary photographer, filmmaker and writer with more than 18 years of experience covering assignments on nearly every continent for a variety of publications and agencies. His photography and editing have been recognized nationally and internationally, earning him numerous awards from esteemed competitions including, Pictures of the Year International, National Press Photographers Association, The Society for News Design, and the Associated Press. Christopher's photographs have been displayed in exhibitions across the country and are held in several private collections. His work has also been published in many major newspapers and magazines including Time, Newsweek, and Mother Jones.

**KYLE MCKEVENY** (video) is a filmmaker, music supervisor, and freelance media producer. He has worked with Gorgeous Entertainment for over 5 years on projects such as *Japan Day @ Central Park* and *YOU THINK YOU REALLY KNOW ME: The Gary Wilson Story*. He travelled to Vietnam last year to assist in the filming of Elizabeth Van Meter's *The Purpose Project* which premiered in its theatrical incarnation at the All For One Theater Festival. He has shot and produced a number of documentary and music driven projects, as well as narrative works. His documentary film *The Legend of Masty Huba* will be released theatrically and on DVD this month.

**GREG SLAGLE** (editor) is co-founder and creative director of Kinetiscope, an award-winning production company that specializes in directorial, animation/design and editorial. Greg created theatrical projections for the Off-Broadway musical *Ministry of Progress* where he received rave reviews. Most recently he worked with famed Colombian director, Javier Gutierrez, creating all theatrical projections for *See What I Wanna See*, in Seoul Korea. His films have been screened in many festivals such as Toronto, San Francisco, ResFest and Big Apple. His film *The Projectionist* won 2nd prize for best comedy at BIFF. Selected commercial work includes Sony, Amex, AMC, Chevy, A&E and most recently HBO's *How to Make it in America* and NBC's *Triple Crown*. Music videos include *Los Amigos Invisibles*, *Death Cab for Cutie*, *Anthony David* and *Sage Francis*. Greg's film, *The Windermere Guest*, is currently traveling the festival circuit

# Biographies

**DANNY MALY** (production supervisor) Off-Broadway: *The Explorers Club* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Falling* (Minetta Lane). New York: The Purpose Project: Thao's Library, Rise, Fringe, various readings/workshops. Regional: Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis. Production management; corporate and commercial events. Saint Louis University grad.

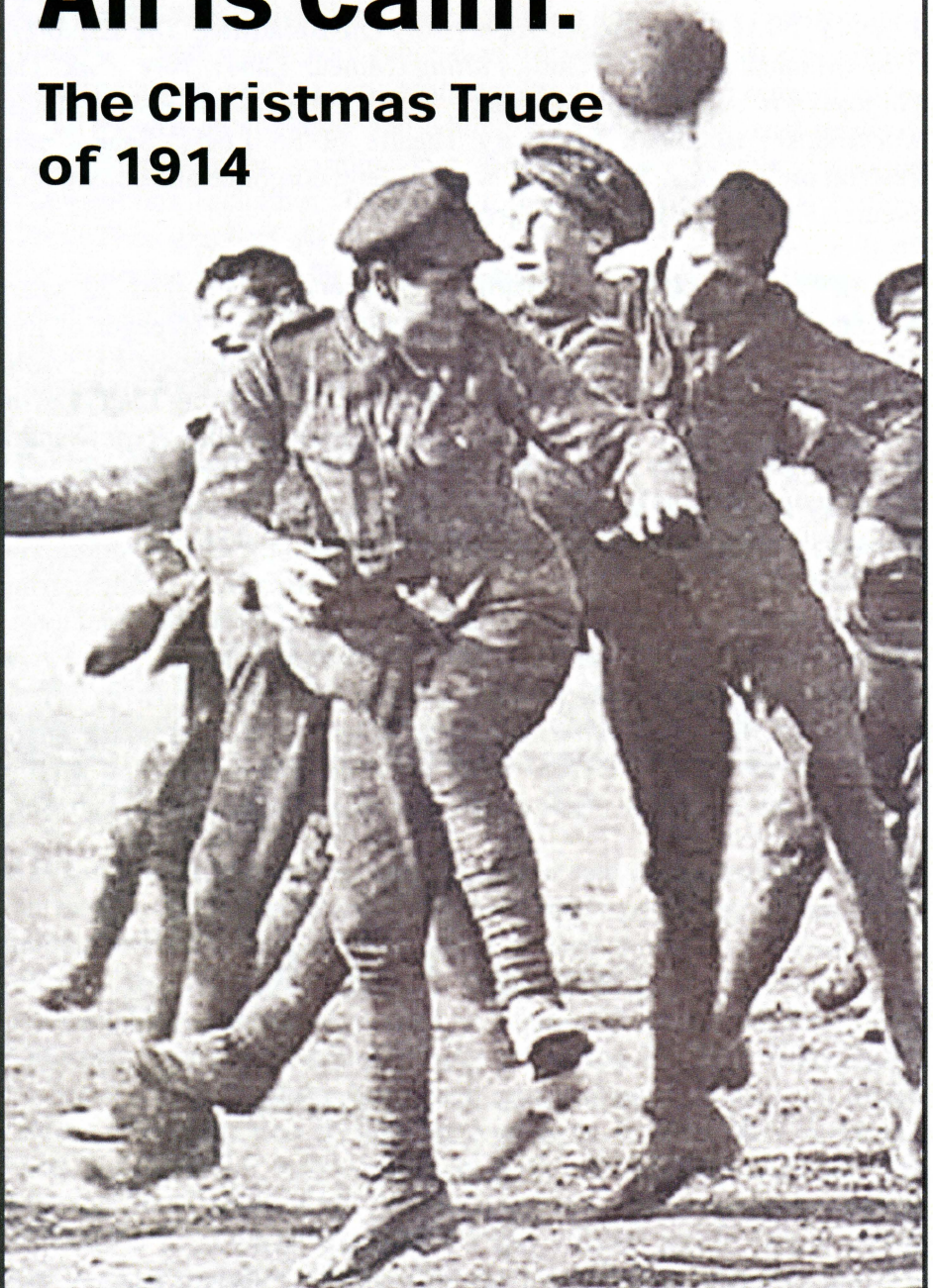
**JEFFREY CHRZCZON** (executive producer) has enjoyed 22 years working as Producer, General Manager and Company Manager of live theatrical and concert productions. Broadway credits: *Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth* directed by Spike Lee, *The Lyons* starring Linda Lavin, *Kathy Griffin Wants a Tony*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, Sandra Bernhard's "I'm Still Here Damn it!", *Patti Labelle on Broadway*, *The Kentucky Cycle*, and *Solitary Confinement* starring Stacey Keach. Off-Broadway: *Falling* (Drama Desk Award Nomination), *Manipulation*, The Irish Repertory Theatre, TeatroStageFest, *The Marijuana-Logues* starring Tommy Chong, *RFK*, *Dr. Sex*, and *Ministry Of Progress*. National tours: *Damn Yankees*, *Spider-Man Live! stunt spectacular*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* starring Ann-Margret, *Evita*, *Selena the Musical*, *Man of La Mancha* starring Robert Goulet, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *A Chorus Line*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* starring Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *She Loves Me*, and *Hair*.

# Special Thanks

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Mark Douglas  
Mark Wilson

# **All is Calm:**

**The Christmas Truce  
of 1914**



**November 8 - 24, 2013**