

A Walk With Joy

A WALKING PLAY
AND MORTON ARBORETUM CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



Photo Credit: Allegra Imaging

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Written and Directed by Lara Filip

Commissioned by The Morton Arboretum

Costume and Prop Design by Lara Filip

Costume Assistance by Christina Leinicke

Intimacy Coordination by Courtney Abbott

Graphic Design by Dominic Rescigno

Produced by Inkwell Arts and Learning

www.inkwellartsandlearning.com



Special Thanks

Many thanks to Silvia Alvarez-Claire, Jenelle Metcalf, Dana Rotz, Rita Hassert, Ragan Hughes, Lisa Green, Corrine Neal, and Madison Street Theatre

A Note from the Inkwell

Every time we do a show, one of the critical questions in the process is: “Why THIS show NOW?” Well, the purpose of A WALK WITH JOY, seemed pretty obvious, on the surface. It’s the Centennial of The Morton Arboretum! It’s the perfect time to tell the story of the founder, Joy Morton.

But, if I’m being completely honest, creating a show centered around a... well... a figure who could easily be painted as a “colonizing, capitalistic, patriarch” felt... Ummm. Well. You know.

As a white-passing woman of a “certain age”, I very quickly realized that the reason I wanted to tell this story now was more as a form of listening than of telling. Perspective can give you a clearer vision than you may be able to find in the moment. By having Joy fall into a dream, where he is led through time by a young woman and meets other inspiring women along the way, he is given a unique opportunity to do some listening and learning of his own, even about his own past. And while we, as an audience, get to learn about some of Joy’s history, I wanted to lean away from the obvious facts that are known about him and into the lesser-known details of his life. What we find through this perspective is a man who experienced love, loss and great instability...but also great adventures. He was a man who was forced to remain a solid root in his family tree, even as the other branches often whipped around him, through the chaos of time.

(Continued on next page)



A Note from the Inkwell (Continued)

Eventually, as we arrive in the present-day, we meet a character largely inspired by the actual current Director of Global Tree Conservation; a woman of color, leading with passion, empathy and truly progressive brilliance. I'm so grateful that I was able to hear her story and weave it into this piece.

The script itself is based on pure fact. Every scene portrays actual people and many events that really took place (even if some of the actors portraying the characters may not look exactly like they may have in real life.) There are many words that were spoken and written verbatim, embedded within a fanciful imagining of what Joy might find, if he could see his past from a new perspective and visit his creation today.

Joy becomes an observer, a listener, just as much as the audience. My hope is that we, (cast, audience, volunteers and passersby alike) share a collective experience where we learn, laugh and realize that all people have dreams and challenges...and far more that brings us together than divides us.

That seems a very good message to hear right now.



Fact vs. Fiction

One of the most intriguing parts of seeing a show based on real people and events, is sorting through what actually happened and what might have been altered to (as Luna might say) give it a little more “Oomph”. Here are a few particulars to watch out for during the show:

Fact: The words our Joy Morton speaks, in scene one, as he practices his speech are the actual words, verbatim, that were said on the day of the Arboretum’s opening.

Fiction: We’ve set the date for that opening sometime in the summer because the ACTUAL date, December 14th, didn’t seem fit for an outdoor Walking Play!

Fact: The Morton Salt Girl really was “Idea number 13”. After going through all of the 12 main ideas during the pitch meeting at N.W. Ayer and Son, someone suggested the “back up” idea of the little girl. And the rest...is history.

Fact: Joy’s parents really were pioneers of the early days of Nebraska. Caroline Joy French Morton really was an avid gardener and J. Sterling really did launch Arbor Day, with all the details mentioned. Even some of J. Sterling’s words are verbatim what he said about his hopes for creating his special day to celebrate trees.

Fiction: Less a fiction than a detail you may notice; the year 1909 is correct in the scene between Edwin and Joy but you’ll notice the actors look quite a bit younger than the real people would have looked. In fact, you’ll notice that in many places, actors look differently than the people would have in real life. Rather than a re-enactment, this is still a “fictorical” theatrical event, so some liberties were taken with ages and appearances.

Fact: Maria is based on the actual current Director of Global Tree Conservation! Many of the lines she speaks came straight from the source. We’re very grateful for Silvia Alvarez-Clare’s generous contributions to this script! Check out all of her conservation work via the Arboretum’s website and social media platforms.

Fiction: Maria and Luna’s names are fictional. They were inspired by a mother and daughter, dear friends of the playwright, one of whom passed a couple weeks before finishing the first draft of the script.

Fact: A lot of what you hear about the Quercus Brandegeei project is very true!

Fiction: That is not how she met her husband! (You’ll know it when you hear it.)

There is a wealth of information in the two books about Joy Morton and the Arboretum history, located in the gift shop; *A Man of Salt and Trees* and *A Magnificent Garden of Trees*. The internet also contains many, many fascinating articles about Joy, his family, business ventures and the Arboretum. It’s also well worth a visit to the Sterling Morton Library, where the collections there are plentiful. If you do stop by, say “hi” to the Morton Arboretum’s wonderful librarian and historian, Rita Hassert. She was invaluable in creating and fact-checking this script!



Jacquelyn Haas (she/her) – JEAN/DON/
CAROLINE/MARIA. Jacquelyn Haas is thrilled to be a part of her first ever outdoor production! She is a classically trained actress with a BFA in Performance, and holds 20 prior stage credits as well as an independent Sci - Fi film role in *The Becomers*. Jacquelyn would like to thank her husband Travis and the rest of her loved ones for their constant support. Enjoy the show!!!!



Sheamus Hopkins (he/him) CLARENCE/JAY/
EDWIN. Shea is a recent graduate of North Central College credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Mrs. Bumbrake) *Sweeney Todd* (Anthony) and *Spring Awakening* (Otto)! Shea is very honored to be a part of the Arboretum Centennial and for it to be his first play since his move to the Illinois area! Shea would like to thank his family and friends for all their love and support they have given him!



Lily Martens (she/her) - SUZETTE/BOB/LUNA. Lily is very excited to perform in her second *Walking Play* at the Morton Arboretum. She played Ellie in the 2021 *Walking Play - The Legacy of Sherwood Forest*. Some of her other musical theater credits include *The King and I* at the Lyric Opera and *The Land of Forgotten Toys* at the Greenhouse Theater in Chicago. She studies musical theater at Ovation Academy for the Performing Arts in Oak Park. She loves playing the violin, guitar, piano, and eating cheese. She would

like to thank her family for all their love and support.



Skylar McClure (she/her) – “MSG”. Skylar is ecstatic to be back performing at the arboretum in the walking play! Some of her favorite past roles include Polly (*The Johnny Appleseed Folk Society*), Girl (*Check Please*), Ms. Scarlett (*Clue*). She is excited to be continuing her performing arts journey at the Chicago College of Performing Arts working towards a BFA in Musical Theatre. Thanks to her wonderful directors and cast for a fantastic experience, as well as to you, for coming on this journey with us and supporting the fine arts!



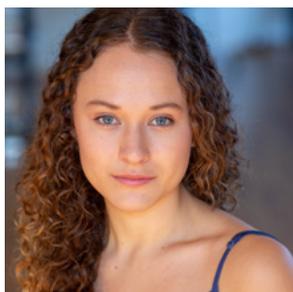
Chris Toft – (he/him) JOY MORTON. Chris is delighted to be combining his love for philanthropy and theatre by appearing in *A Walk with Joy*, during Morton Arboretum's centennial. Chris is a resident artist with Edge of the Wood Theatre in Chicago, and his favorite roles include, Editor Webb in *Our Town*, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, the Chairman in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and Mr. Bennet in *Pride & Prejudice*. This fall he will direct Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* at Edge of the Wood. Chris is Vice President

of Advancement at Adler University, a non-profit graduate school of psychology and leadership studies based in Chicago and Vancouver, BC. He attended Kenyon College, is a past trustee and a current member of the leadership committee for the school's bicentennial campaign. Chris is a grateful husband to Nicole and proud father of Jane and Lucy. If you enjoy today's production, please consider making a special gift to the Arboretum in honor of the director and cast.



Dakotah Brown (he/him) WALK LEADER/
SWING. Dakotah Brown recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point with his B.F.A. in Acting. He is new to Chicago and recently performed in *The Tempest* at Oak Park Festival Theatre and *The Book of Will* at Edge of the Wood Theatre. Dakotah is excited to be a part of such a great cast and would love to thank both his Wife, for always being supportive, and Lara Filip, for giving him a chance to be a part of such a fantastic show. If you

would like to learn more about his prior work, visit www.dakotahbrownactor.com. Enjoy the show!



Isabelle Muthiah (she/her/anything respectful)
WALK LEADER/SWING. Isabelle is originally from Pasadena, California. She is an alumna of the British American Drama Academy in association with the Yale School of Drama and a 2020 BFA Graduate from The Theater School at DePaul University. She was last seen in *Mr. Dickens Hat* at Northlight Theater and as Mae in *The Legacy of Sherwood Forest* here at The Morton Arboretum, with Inkwell Arts & Learning. While at DePaul, she appeared in *Come Back Little Sheba*,

Jeff and the Dead Girl, *She Kills Monsters*, *Under Milkwood*, and *Like it*. Isabelle is represented by Gray Talent Group. She hopes everyone enjoys the play and leaves eager to save trees!



Harry Belden – (he/him) SWING. Harry Belden is a Chicago native, and is thrilled to be part of this fantastic show in the gorgeous Morton Arboretum. Harry has been an actor in Chicago for the past five years, and this is his first time working at the arboretum in Lisle. Harry has previously worked with the director and playwright, Lara Filip, on *The Brothers' Grimm* a modern retelling of the classic fairy tales. Harry can usually be found outside enjoying nature, or inside reading books or comics, shunning all

things outdoors. There is no in between.



Michael Lomenick – (he/him) JOY MORTON U.S. Michael last appeared in *The Caucasian Inner Circle* as an ensemble member of *The Conspirators*. John Heminges in *Edge of the Wood's* production of *Book of Will*. In 2021 he was in an independent SAG film, *Runner*, a *Pegasus Production*, and appeared in *Artemisia Theater's* podcast production, *Close the Book*. An ensemble member with *The Conspirators*. Michael studied at *The University of Oklahoma*, *The Theater School*, *DePaul*, *iO Chicago* and received his

MFA in performance from *Roosevelt University*.



Lya Nabwangu (she/her) SUZETTE/BOB/LUNA U.S. Lya is excited to be part of the cast of *A Walk with Joy*. She lives in *Oak Park, IL*. And studies musical theatre, voice and dance at the *Ovation Academy for the Performing Arts*. Her favorite role so far was *Donkey* in *Shrek, Jr*. She enjoys tap, gymnastics and playing music. In her free time, she also likes to write original plays.



Caleb Swick (he/him) STERLING, YOUNG JOY, THOMAS. Caleb is a Chicago based actor. While studying at *North Central College*, he was in productions such as *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Spring Awakening*, *Vinegar Tom*, and *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. You have also seen him involved in our production of *Hans Christian Andersen* here at the *Morton Arboretum*. Caleb is represented by *NV Talent*. I hope you enjoy the show!!



Courtney Abbott (she/they) – INTIMACY CONSULTANT. Chicago credits include: In Every Generation (Victory Gardens); Wife of a Salesman (Writers Theatre); Solaris (Griffin); The Jigsaw Bride (First Folio); Picasso at the Lapin Agile (Citadel); and Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo (NU). Proud alum of Northwestern and Ohio University. Current: Choir Boy (Steppenwolf); Hurricane Diane (Theater Wit). Next up: Little Shop of Horrors (Citadel).



Lara Filip (she/her) PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER. Lara is thrilled to be celebrating her 20th year of producing events at the Morton Arboretum. She has performed on nearly every stage in the Chicago area, most recently at The Paramount Theatre in Aurora, as Emily Hobbs in *Elf! The Musical*. She travels Artist's Lounge Live tribute shows and has Directed shows for Boho Theatre Company and many others. She is a proud member of Actor's Equity and a graduate of the Chicago Academy for the Arts. Her

album of original music, *Stop Time*, is available wherever you buy or stream music.



Christina Leinicke (she/her) COSTUME ASSISTANT. Off Broadway: *Othello: the Remix* (Westside Theater) Regional Credits: *Bayard*, *Freedom Riders*, *Legendary*, *Walt & Roy* (Allen & Gray Musical Festival), *Dressing the Part* (Shakespeare Festival St. Louis), *Big Fish*, *A Little Night Music*, *Cyrano* (BoHo Theatre), *Proxy*, *Haymarket*, *Wife Material* (Underscore), *Birds of a Feather*, *Machinal* (Greenhouse Theatre Center), *Long Way Home* (CCC), *Shakespeare in Love*, *I Heart Juliet*, *Q-Gents* (ISF), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor*

Dreamcoat, *Deathtrap* (Palace Theatre), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (ASC), *Star Girl* (FSM), Educational Tours: *Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* (USF). Costume Shop and Design Associate, Paramount Theatre, Aurora. MFA University of Alabama. www.christinaleinicke.com



Ben F. Locke (he/she/they) – CASTING ASSOCIATE. Ben is a Chicago actor, director, writer and casting director. They have worked with theatres such as Steppenwolf, Court, Drury Lane, Music Theatre Works, House Theatre and more. You can find Ben's plays at The New Play Exchange.



Christopher Pazdernik (any) - CASTING ASSOCIATE. Casting: Sex Tips for Straight Women from a Gay Man (Chicago Premiere), Miracle (World Premiere; Royal George), The Nutcracker (add'l Casting; The House), CPA Theatricals & four seasons at Porchlight Music Theatre. Director: Godspell (Theo Ubique), Who's Holiday (Theatre Wit), Colors of My Life (CCPA/Roosevelt University), Wonder Women (Chicago Musical Theatre Fest), Big River (Round Barn), Carrie (Ohio Northern University), former Artistic Director of Refuge Theatre Project (Jeff Awards, Best Director & Best Production, High Fidelity), & multiple Porchlight Revisits. Currently: Managing & Casting Director for Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre.

Why Hire an Intimacy Specialist for G-rated Plays in the Woods?

by Courtney Abbott

Intimacy work takes the guesswork out of physical storytelling. With guided exercises to practice establishing and honoring one another's boundaries, and a shared language to use around moments of contact, actors can experiment in rehearsal with confidence.

As an audience member, we hope you experience everything happening onstage as a believably spontaneous act. In order to achieve that illusion, we rehearse and dissect and practice practice practice. For ages theatre makers have been relying on the talent & courage of individual actors to manifest believable and meaningful moments of physical intimacy, often with no effort to draw a dividing line between what is real and what is artifice. This approach leads to, at worst, deeply damaging abuses of power, and, at best, vague storytelling with unpredictable or unrepeatable acting moments.

In this process, I guided the devising artists through exercises to demystify and destigmatize consent and boundaries. Ultimately, these actors will take any new discoveries they've made about Intimacy into their next show, and the next, creating a more consensual theatrical culture far & wide.

The Experience

A walking play at The Morton Arboretum is like nothing you've ever experienced!
Here's what to expect.

Each show begins on the **West Side**, right off **Parking Lot 21**, at **Thornhill Shelter**.

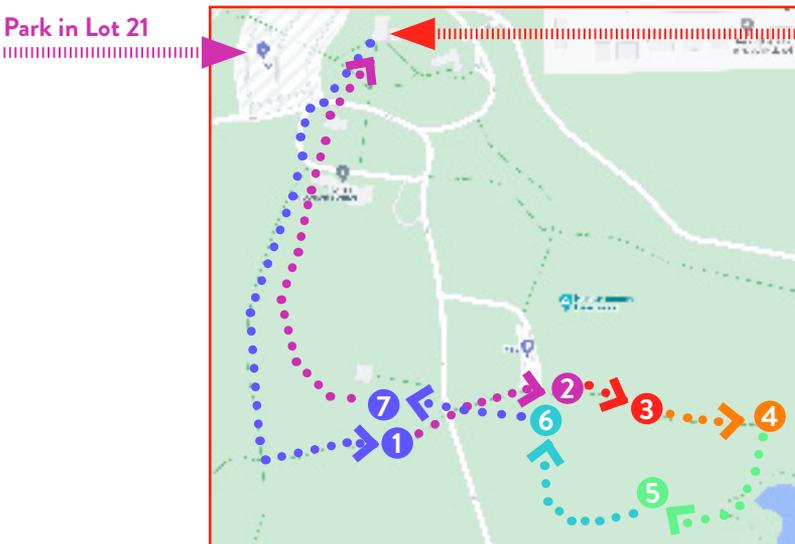
We've got some open sunny spots and some shady woodland spots, so bring sunscreen and bug spray! Some people choose to sit on blankets on the ground, some bring a portable chair and some like to stand. The Walk Leaders will help make sure everyone can see and hear everything.

Today, we will fittingly make our way down Joy Path, to begin on the Main Trail Loop. From there, we will circle around the Trees of Europe and end near the Morton Family Cemetery. There are 7 locations, covering just about a mile and a quarter, "door-to-door" from Thornhill Shelter.

On rainy or extreme heat days, and on our accessible walk days, we'll stay close to the Thornhill Shelter, still with 7 lovely spots for each scene. That walk only covers about a quarter mile in total, with no inclines and mostly using paved sidewalks.

As always, our trusty Morton Arboretum volunteers will be on hand to help guide our way. We hope you enjoy the journey! For a closer look at the usual route, here is a map that shows you where the locations are for each scene. The shows will typically take about an hour and forty-five minutes, including your walks to and from the first location.

Park in Lot 21



Meet at
Thornhill Shelter

Coming in October 2022
to The Morton Arboretum



Winnie the Pooh
Based on the Book by A.A. Milne!

