



boston playwrights'  
theatre presents

MR.

PARENT

"honest,  
hilarious,  
devastating"  
-joyce's choices

BY MELINDA LOPEZ WITH  
MAURICE EMMANUEL PARENT

oct.  
10-22

CONCEIVED WITH AND  
DIRECTED BY MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN  
TICKETS: [WWW.BOSTONPLAYWRIGHTS.ORG](http://WWW.BOSTONPLAYWRIGHTS.ORG)

Boston University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences  
Playwriting

BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY

Photo by Mark S. Howard/Courtesy of Lyric Stage Boston

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# A WELCOME FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to Boston Playwrights' Theatre and to *Mr. Parent* by Melinda Lopez with Maurice Emmanuel Parent, conceived with and directed by...me!

To be perfectly honest, that is not a sentence I thought I'd be writing. When I stepped into the role of Artistic Director of BPT one year ago, I was very clear about one rule: I wouldn't be directing any work on BPT's stages. I wanted to focus on the voices and visions of playwrights, on nurturing artists as they address the vital questions of our time, and—especially—on supporting artists to move their work to the next stage after its time at BPT.

Then the opportunity came along to produce a play.

It was about one of the most pressing issues in our civic conversation: the state of public education.

It was written by one of our most beloved and brilliant BU alums, in collaboration with one of Boston's most celebrated and virtuosic performers.

It needed a second production to refine the script before moving on to a run at a much larger theater.

It checked all the boxes of what I most care about.

The only problem? I was the director.

In romance and in theater-making, a good rule is to be willing to throw all your rules out the window when the right thing comes along.

It's a strange, scary time—in our country, in the theater field, in public education. It isn't lost on me that the big questions of the play—'how do I care for my community and myself?,' 'where can I be my full self?,' 'what do I do when the work I love feels like it's slowly killing me?,'—feel as relevant to theater-making or running an organization as they are to teaching. These questions will persist as long as the systems that shape our civic and cultural lives persist in their current inequitable form. But *Mr. Parent* also reminds us of the radical, hopeful premise of the public school system—that all of us are worth investing in, that all of us deserve the space, time, nurturing, and instruction to become the best versions of ourselves.

I am so proud and grateful that this amazing piece is the first play I get to program as Artistic Director. And I feel so exhilarated as an artist getting to work on it here at BPT. Thank you for being in the audience.

All my best,



Megan Sandberg-Zakian  
Artistic Director, Boston Playwrights' Theatre

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# MR. PARENT

BY MELINDA LOPEZ WITH MAURICE EMMANUEL PARENT

CONCEIVED WITH AND DIRECTED BY MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN\*\*

Scenic Designer	Cristina Todesco***
Lighting Designer	Karen Perlow***
Original Music and Sound Designer	Arshan Gailus***
Costume Designer	Yao Chen***
Production Stage Manager	Jenna Worden*
Stage Manager October 20-22	Marsha Smith*
Assistant Scenic Designer	Tessa Barry
Assistant Lighting Designer	Eduardo M. Ramirez Kortright
Assistant Sound Designer	Gage Baker
Voice/Text Coach	Christine Hamel
Public Education Consultant	Neema Avashia
Production Assistant	Leela Sonal Munsiff
Lead Electrician	Jack Culton
Electricians	Celeste Delgadillo, Jesús Marrero Suárez
Set Construction	Matt Leal, Carly Stegall
Painters	Sarah Lloyd, Peyton Tavares
House Manager	Megan Schy Gleeson
Front of House Staff	Jonas Leiato, Lydia Myers

## CAST

Mr. Parent     Maurice Emmanuel Parent\*

***Mr. Parent* runs approximately 85 minutes with no intermission.**

\*Appearing through an Agreement between Boston Playwrights' Theatre and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

\*\*Member, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

\*\*\*Member, United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

*Mr. Parent* is produced by special arrangement with the Playwright and Harden Curtis Kirsten Riley Agency, attn. Mary Harden, 214 W 29th Street, Suite 1203 New York, NY 10001.

*Mr. Parent* was developed through the Breaking Ground Festival supported by the Stanford Calderwood Fund for New American Plays at The Huntington in Boston in April 2019, received a developmental virtual production with TheaterWorks Hartford in March 2021, and had its world premiere at the Lyric Stage Company in Boston in January 2022.

Selections from *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner, *Boo! Candy* by Robert O'Hara, and *Snow Queen* by Kirsten Brandt, Haddon Kime, and Rick Lombardo used by permission from each of the incredible playwrights.

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## CAST & CREW

**NEEMA AVASHIA (Public Education Consultant)** is a longtime educator in the Boston Public Schools, but was born and raised in southern West Virginia. She's offered her insights on public education in the context of the development of both The Huntington's production of *Common Ground, Revisited* (2022), and The Lyric Stage and BPT's productions of *Mr. Parent*. Neema is also the author of the essay collection, *Another Appalachia: Coming up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*, which was a Book Riot's best LGBTQ Memoir of 2022, a New York Public Library Best Book of 2022, and a 2023 Lambda Literary Award finalist. She lives in Jamaica Plain with her partner Laura, and her daughter, Kahani.

**GAGE BAKER (Assistant Sound Designer)** is a sound designer and engineer currently pursuing an MFA in Sound Design at Boston University. Design credits include Catastrophic Theatre (*Innominate*), Rec Room (*The Moonlit Princess, The Children, Dance Nation*, Sound Scripts Series). Production credits include Alley Theatre (*Quixote Nuevo, Alley All New*), Hangar Theatre (*Cabaret*), The Huntington (*Fat Ham*), and Stages Repertory Theatre (*The Fantasticks*). Upcoming designs include *The Turn of the Screw* in Houston, and *Driving in Circles* at Boston Playwrights' Theatre. He currently mixes the Boston company of *Blue Man Group*. [www.gagebaker.com](http://www.gagebaker.com)

**YAO CHEN\*\*\* (Costume Designer)** works extensively internationally and domestically. Her recent projects are executive costume designer for *Mozart l'opera rock* produced by Seven Ages, Ltd., Beijing China; *Mid-Winter Nights Dream* at Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey; and *Folks at Home* at Indiana Repertory Theatre. She has been active collaborator with Seattle Children's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Berkshire Theatre Group, Trinity Repertory Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Orlando Repertory Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, TheatreSquared, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, and Espresso Theatre in San Jose, Costa Rica. USA 829. [www.yao-chen.com](http://www.yao-chen.com)

**ARSHAN GAILUS\*\*\* (Original Music and Sound Designer)** is an interdisciplinary artist who has worked extensively creating soundscapes and original music for the theater. Arshan has worked with many theater companies including Shakespeare & Company, ArtsEmerson, California Shakespeare Theater, The Huntington, Capital Repertory Theatre, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Plays in Place, A.R.T. Institute, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Company One, and many more. In addition to their theater design work, Arshan creates works combining performance art, storytelling, video, music, and written and spoken words, exploring and reimagining questions of identity, alienation, belonging, and culture. Arshan previously taught theatrical sound design for Emerson College. They hold a BS in Music from MIT and are currently a candidate for an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts at Goddard College.

**CHRISTINE HAMEL (Voice/Text Coach)** is thrilled to return to this production of *Mr. Parent*. She has worked on and Off-Broadway and regionally, for produc-

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tions at the Cort Theatre, The Huntington, PTP/NYC, Olney Theatre Center, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, SpeakEasy Stage Company, and others, coaching more than 95 professional productions. Her research is on the social, political, and ethical aspects of voice, and she is co-author of *Sounding Bodies: Identity, Injustice, and the Voice* (Bloomsbury/Methuen). Christine is on the faculty of Boston University School of Theatre and was recently named a Granada Artist-in-Residence at University of California, Davis.

**EDUARDO M. RAMIREZ KORTRIGHT (Lighting Designer)** is a Boston University MFA student in lighting design. He has designed *Once* (Boston University), *Patterns of Wind* (Boston University), *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Boston University), *Revitalized* (Teatro Chelsea), *Romeo and Juliet* (Loyola University New Orleans), and *Everybody* (Southern Rep Theatre). Some other credits include Technical Director for Southern Rep Theatre, Director for Theatre for One projects at Loyola University New Orleans, and Southern Rep Theatre One-Act Plays. [www.emramirez.com](http://www.emramirez.com)

**MELINDA LOPEZ (Playwright)** is an actor and playwright based in Boston. She is thrilled to be partnering with dear friends and colleagues Maurice and Megan to bring this joyful powerful story to the stage. Her work includes *Mala*, an adaptation of *Yerma*, *Back the Night*, *Becoming Cuba*, *Orchids to Octopi*, *Sonia Flew*, the audio series *Dream Boston*, and coming to the Old Globe in San Diego this spring, adapted from her Elliot Norton Award-winning Zoom play *Black Beans Project*.

**LEELA SONAL MUNSIFF (Production Assistant)** is excited to join Boston Playwrights' Theatre for her first professional production. She has enjoyed opportunities to act and direct in Boston University's Stage Troupe, among other student organizations. Favorite shows she has directed include *On The Verge: or the Geography of Yearning*, *First Mates*, and *The Wolves*, which she also performed in as Soccer Mom. She is an alumna of Geva Theatre Summer Academy (Classes of '17 and '19) and finds *Mr. Parent* close to her heart. Thank you to all at BPT and Geva for making dreams come true!

**MAURICE EMMANUEL PARENT\* (Mr. Parent, Playwright)** Central Square Theater: *The Mountaintop*, *The Convert*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Angels in America* Parts 1 and 2, Director – *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Other credits (select): Directing – *Choir Boy* (SpeakEasy Stage Company), *Breath and Imagination* (The Lyric Stage Company of Boston). Acting – Actors' Shakespeare Project (resident company member), Barrington Stage Company, Boston Theatre Works, Cape Playhouse, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Fulton Opera House, Greater Boston Stage Company, The Huntington, Music Theatre of Wichita, New Repertory Theatre, Northern Stage, Off the Grid Theatre Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Wheelock Family Theatre. Television: *Castle Rock*, *Kevin Can F\*\*\* Himself*. Winner of three Elliot Norton Awards (most recently the 2023 Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Director, Midsize Theatre for *Seven Guitars* for Actors' Shakespeare Project), and three Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE) Awards. Currently he is a Professor of the Practice in the Tufts University

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Department of Theatre Dance and Performance Studies and the Co-Founder/ Co-Producing Artistic Director of The Front Porch Arts Collective, a Black theater company committed to advancing racial equity through art. First incubated at Central Square Theater, “The Porch” is currently the theatre in residence at The Huntington.

**KAREN PERLOW\*\*\* (Lighting Designer)** has been based in Boston for more than 30 years, and has designed the lighting for over 200 productions. Her work has been seen at Boston Symphony Orchestra, Merrimack Repertory Theater, SpeakEasy Stage Company, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Actors’ Shakespeare Project, Central Square Theater, New Repertory Theatre, Boston Mid-summer Opera, and Shakespeare & Company. Karen has taught lighting design at MIT and Northeastern University, and has been a guest designer at Boston Conservatory, Boston College, Brandeis University, Suffolk University, and Emerson College. She is proud to serve as the treasurer of the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund and is a member of the United Scenic Artists’ Union 829. She is the recipient of several IRNE Awards for Best Lighting Design, and the NYC SOLO Fest. She’s happy to return to BPT, having previously designed Walt McGough’s *The Farm* many moons ago. Karen has also been teaching ESOL to new Bostonians for 10 years.

**MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN\*\* (Director)** is a theater director, author, and facilitator with a passion for the development of vital new American plays for the stage and the ear. Across all facets of her work, she focuses on holding space for difficult conversations, facilitating engagements that can accommodate multiple complex truths and allow buried narratives to emerge. She is currently the Artistic Director of Boston Playwrights’ Theatre, an award-winning professional theater dedicated to new work for the stage located on the campus of Boston University. Favorite recent directing projects include *Nat Turner in Jerusalem* (New York Theatre Workshop), *House of Joy* (California Shakespeare Theatre), *Skeleton Crew* (The Huntington), *The High Ground* (Arena Stage), and Audible Originals *Rapture Season* and *Evil Eye* (Audie Award for Best Original Work; Gracie Award for Original Online Programming). Megan is a graduate of Brown University and holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College. She is a recipient of the Princess Grace Theater Award and the TCG Future Leaders fellowship, an alumna of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, and a proud member of SDC, the union for professional stage directors and choreographers. Her book, *There Must Be Happy Endings: On a Theater of Optimism and Honesty* is available from The 3rd Thing Press. She lives in Jamaica Plain with her wife Candice. [Megansz.com](http://Megansz.com)

**CRISTINA TODESCO\*\*\* (Scenic Designer)** returns to Boston Playwrights’ Theatre where she previously designed Walt McGough’s *Brawler*, Richard Schotter’s *The Sussman Variations*, and Dan Hunter’s *Legally Dead*. Theaters include Actors’ Shakespeare Project, Boston Conservatory, Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood and Symphony Hall, Capital Rep, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, The Huntington, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Merrimack Rep-

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erty Theatre, New England Conservatory, Shakespeare & Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Trinity Repertory Company, Williamstown Theater Festival, among many more. She's a four-time recipient of the Elliot Norton Award and an IRNE for Best Design. She is on the faculty at Boston University's School of Theater Arts and a member of USA 829.

**JENNA WORDEN\* (Production Stage Manager)** is a stage manager, producer, and director with a passion for storytelling, education, and access to the arts. Regional credits include Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, SpeakEasy Stage, The Gamm, New Rep Theatre, Gloucester Stage Company, Central Square Theater, Phoenix Theatre, and Childsplay. She has been the artistic director and producer of Brian O'Donovan's *A Celtic Sojourn, Live* since 2020. She earned both her BA in Theatre Studies and BSEd in History from Northern Arizona University and is constantly looking for new ways to teach and be in conversation with the past. Proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

## SPECIAL THANKS

*Mr. Parent* was developed with support from the Mellon Foundation and the National Playwrights Residency Program. Thanks to the Actors' Shakespeare Project, The Huntington, TheatreWorks Hartford, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, and Kevin J. P. Hanley for invaluable support in the development of this work. Special thanks to Thabiti Brown. And an extra special thanks from Mr. Maurice Parent to all the students, educators, and parents whose stories and experiences live in his heart every day. And to his heavenly inspiration, Johnny Lee Davenport.

Additional special thanks to Ryan Bates and Lauren Corcuera.

**Curtain call song: "Intervention,"** by K-Murdock and Candice A. Crawford-Zaki-an, performed by The Ebony Bed



\*Actors' Equity Association (AEA) was founded in 1913 as the first of the American actor unions. Equity's mission is to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Today, Equity represents more than 49,000 actors, singers, dancers and stage managers working in hundreds of theatres across the United States.



\*\*Stage Directors and Choreographers Society's mission is to foster a national community of professional stage Directors and Choreographers by protecting the rights, health and livelihoods of all our Members. To facilitate the exchange of ideas, information and opportunities, while educating the current and future generations about the role of Directors and Choreographers and providing effective administration, negotiations and contractual support.



\*\*\*United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829, is a labor union and professional association of Designers, Artists and Craftspeople, many who are world famous, organized to protect craft standards, working conditions and wages for the entertainment and decorative arts industries.





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# Trouble in Mind

"I WANT TO BE AN ACTRESS... HELL, I'M GONNA BE ONE."

BY ALICE CHILDRESS DIRECTOR DAWN M. SIMMONS

## RESOURCES

Want to read (or listen to) more? Take a look at [the resource guide](#) created by *Mr. Parent* Public School Consultant Neema Avashia.

## FIND US ONLINE



<http://www.twitter.com/playwrightsbpt>



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## LISTEN TO TYPECAST

Listen to **Typecast: Boston's New Play Podcast**, about the process of bringing a new play into the world. Season one, Episode four features Melinda Lopez, Maurice Emmanuel Parent, and Megan Sandberg-Zakian in conversation about *Mr. Parent*!

Listen: <https://www.bu.edu/bpt/community/typecast/>

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# JACK WELCH PLAYWRIGHTS' FUND

*We are grateful to our friends for their support of our mission—to provide a home for new works for the stage.*

*If you are interested in making a donation to Boston Playwrights' Theatre, please contact Managing Director Darren Evans at (617) 353-5899 or visit our online donation form at [www.BostonPlaywrights.org](http://www.BostonPlaywrights.org).*

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 **Boston PLAYWRIGHTS' Theatre**

Boston Playwrights' Theatre is an award-winning professional theatre dedicated to new works. Founded in 1981 by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott and located on the campus of Boston University, BPT produces a season of new work, an annual "marathon" of 10-minute plays, and a festival of new plays by teenage writers. At the core of all of our work is our partnership with BU's renowned English Department, in close collaboration with BU's School of Theatre, as we educate and nurture the writers of the MFA Playwriting Program. The Program's alumni have had their work produced in regional and New York houses as well as in London's West End, and have garnered national, regional and local awards.

From class workshops to our Season of New Plays, BPT employs the best of New England's professional actors, directors, and designers to bring each playwright's vision to its first audiences.

Each spring we produce a festival of student-written ten-minute plays, New Noises, the culminating event of the Massachusetts Young Playwrights' Project. In this program, area high schools work with professional playwrights, directors, and actors to see student works on stage for the first time.

Fifty local theatre companies join us annually for the Boston Theater Marathon, a showcase of new ten-minute plays by New England playwrights chosen each year from hundreds of entrants. Each selected play is produced by a different New England theatre company in a single ten-hour event with all proceeds going to charity.

When we are not producing our own plays, we continue BPT's mission by making theatre space available at deeply subsidized rates to other New England theatre companies and playwrights for new-play related events including readings, classes, auditions, rehearsals, conferences, and full productions.

*Megan Sandberg-Zakian, Artistic Director*  
*Darren Evans, Managing Director*  
*K. Alexa Mavromatis, Marketing Coordinator*  
*Alec Haklar, Technical Director*

*Nathan Alan Davis, Associate Professor of the Practice of Playwriting*  
*Melinda Lopez, Adjunct Assistant Professor*  
*Ronán Noone, Adjunct Assistant Professor*

*Derek Walcott, Founder*  
*Kate Snodgrass, Professor Emerita of the Practice of Playwriting*

**We are proud of our mission.**  
**To get involved, visit [BostonPlaywrights.org](http://BostonPlaywrights.org).**