Acrobuffos: Air Play
Randolph W. Bromery Center for the Arts
Frederick C. Tillis Performance Hall

Saturday, December 4, 2021 6 p.m.
Land acknowledgement

In a year-long consultative and deeply collaborative process with respected advisors from local Tribal Nations, the UMass Native Advisory Council co-developed this campus Land Acknowledgement. This Acknowledgement affirms our campus connection and relationship to the land the campus is built upon and our continued connection to the Nations who were the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land. The University of Massachusetts Amherst acknowledges that it was founded and built on the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation on the land of the Norrwutuck community.

We begin with gratitude for nearby waters and lands, including the Kwinitekw – the southern portion of what’s now called the Connecticut River. We recognize these lands and waters as important Relations with which we are all interconnected and depend on to sustain life and wellbeing.

The Norrwutuck community was one of many Pocumtuc Indian towns, including the Tribal seat at Pocumtuc (in present day Deerfield), Agawam (Springfield), and Woronoco (Westfield) to name just a few. The Pocumtuc, who had connections with these lands for millennia, are part of a vast expanse of Algonquian relations. Over 400 years of colonization, Pocumtuc Peoples were displaced. Many joined their Algonquian relatives to the east, south, west and north—extant communities of Wampanoag, including Aquinnah, Herring Pond, and Mashpee, Massachusetts; the Nipmuc with a reservation at Grafton/Hassanamisco, Massachusetts; the Narragansett in Kingstown, Rhode Island; Schaghticoke, Mohegan and Pequot Peoples in Connecticut; the Abenaki and other Nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy extending northward into Canada; and the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican of New York and Massachusetts, who were removed to Wisconsin in the 19th century. Over hundreds of years of removal, members of Southern New England Tribes would make the journey home to tend important places and renew their connections to their ancestral lands. Such care and connection to land and waters continues to the present day.

Today, Indigenous Nations in southern New England continue to employ diverse strategies to resist ongoing colonization, genocide, and erasure begun by the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese and other European Nations, and that continued when Tribal homelands became part of the United States. Native Americans from Tribal Nations across the U.S. and Indigenous peoples from around the world also travel into these Pocumtuc homelands to live and work. This land has always been and always will be, Native Land.

We also acknowledge that the University of Massachusetts Amherst is a Land Grant University. As part of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, Tribal lands from 84 Native Nations west of the Mississippi were sold to provide the resources to found and build this university.

This Land Acknowledgement is the first step in the university’s commitment to practice intellectual humility whilst working with Tribal Nations toward a better shared future on Turtle Island. We aim to foster understanding, deep respect, and honor for sovereign Tribal Nations; to develop relationships of reciprocity; and to be inclusive of Native perspectives and thriving Native Nations far into the future. Members of Massachusetts-based Tribal Nations who are kin to the historic Pocumtuc contributed their insights in composing this acknowledgement – namely Tribal representatives from Mashpee, Aquinnah, and Stockbridge Munsee. As an active first step toward decolonization, we encourage you to learn more about the Indigenous peoples on whose homelands UMass Amherst now resides on and the Indigenous homelands on which you live and work.
**About the Performance**

*Air Play* magically combines comedy, live sculpture, circus, and theatre. With flying umbrellas, soaring fabrics, swirling snow, and gales of laughter, this visual poetic performance has wowed audiences worldwide.

Since 2005, the creative team of Seth Bloom and Christina Gelsone have performed in more than 20 countries and in multiple theatrical spaces. They teach extensively to all age groups. Christina is a physical theater professor. Seth has lectured at Harvard on post-war social circus projects. They lead residencies for at-risk and special needs youth and teach in foreign countries without the aid of language.

“*Air Play* holds the whole audience in the palm of its outstretched hand. A winning combination of visually stunning sculptures and cheeky but heartfelt storytelling that keeps both adults and children enthralled.”
– *British Theatre Guide*

**About the Air Play Team**

**Seth Bloom**
Seth Bloom spent his childhood in Kenya, India, and Sri Lanka. His college years were interrupted multiple times with national tours as a juggler and silent comedian. He worked extensively in Afghanistan with the Mobile Mini Circus for Children. Seth received his MFA in London for Lecoq theatre technique, and co-founded Split Knuckle Theatre, a 5-star physical theater company. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University, Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Clown College, Dell’Arte School of Physical Theatre, and LISPA (MFA). He has performed in 30 countries and 49 states.

**Christina Gelsone**
Christina grew up in Texas and has worked in 40 countries as a non-verbal clown, stilt walker, mask performer, juggler, puppeteer and acrobat. Previously a ballet dancer, she majored in Shakespeare at Princeton University and studied corporeal mime at the Dell’Arte School of Physical Theatre. For many years, she worked with New York City-based Bond Street Theater in multiple post-war zones. Other professional adventures include starting a social circus program in Egypt, creating curriculum-based comedy and teaching at universities.

**Daniel Wurtzel** has worked in multiple mediums since 1989. In 2009, his airflow piece *Magic Carpet* went viral with millions of views. Since then, his work has been seen around the world, including pieces with Cirque du Soleil, Julie Taymor, Robert Lepage, Diane Paulus, Franco Dragone, and the Sochi Winter Olympics. He exhibits in museums all over the world, and creates new work in his studio in Brooklyn.

**West Hyler** is a theater director equally at home in the circus or on Broadway. He recently directed for Cirque du Soleil and has twice directed Big Apple Circus. As the associate director of *Jersey Boys*, he staged productions on five continents.

**Jeanne Koenig** has worked with light for more than twenty years. Her work as associate lighting designer for *The Lion King* has taken her world-wide for 18 years, more than 20 companies, and 14 countries. Other associate works include Broadway productions of *Side Show*, *Leap of Faith*, *Come Fly Away*, *Ragtime*, *The Times They Are A-Changin’*, *All Shook Up*, *Movin’ Out*, and *Bells Are Ringing*. 
Todd Alan Little has production managed more than 40 musicals for the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut. He assisted in the creation of renowned Japanese Kabuki shows for western audiences. Adept at comedy improvisation, he occasionally plays fiddle in a honky-tonk band and creates new work.

Flora Vassar has stage managed extensively in New York and Philadelphia, specializing in devised theater and prop creation.

Air Play is conceived and created by Seth Bloom and Christina Gelsone
Performed by Seth Bloom and Christina Gelsone
Air sculptures in collaboration with Daniel Wurtzel
Directed by West Hyler
Technical director: Todd Alan Little
Stage manager: Flora Vassar
Lighting design: Jeanne Koenig

Upcoming Events:

Nobunto
Tuesday, February 8, 2022 - 7:30 p.m.
Randolph W. Bromery Center for the Arts
Fred C. Tillis Performance Hall

Cirque Flip Fabrique: Six°
Wednesday, February 16, 2022 - 7:30 p.m.
Randolph W. Bromery Center for the Arts
Fred C. Tillis Performance Hall

For more information on all Fine Arts Center events and for tickets please visit:
fineartscenter.com