

Contact Information:
Mary Swander
mary.swander@yahoo.com
http://www.maryswander.com
319-683-2613
515-232-5235
319-936-0187

Touring Production of Map of my Kingdom:

Full Description of MAP OF MY KINGDOM:

"These stories are moving and engaging and remind us that we all share responsibility for the health of the land while we are here. Easy to mount, accessible and timely, Swander's play is a catalyst to help audience members address issues of land transfer productively. This is art serving its purpose in a meaningful way."

- Susan Wolverton – Professor of Theatre, Coe College

Who's going to get the farm? And what are they going to do with it? Will your future plans for your land create harmony or strife for your family? Or have you even started to think that far ahead? *Map of My Kingdom*, a play commissioned by Practical Farmers of Iowa and written by Iowa's Poet Laureate Mary Swander, tackles the critical issue of land transition. In the drama, Angela Martin, a lawyer and mediator in land transition disputes, shares stories of how farmers and landowners she has worked with over the years approached their land successions. Some families almost came to

blows, struggling to resolve the sale or transfer of their land, dissolving relationships. Others found peacefully rational solutions that focused not only on the viability of the family, but also of the land.

Land is the thread that binds all of the stories together. "For most farmers I know, owning land means everything," Angela Martin says. *Map of My Kingdom* will resonate with those who have been through or are working through challenging land transfer issues that include division of the land among siblings, to selling out to a neighbor, to attempts to preserve the land's integrity against urban sprawl. The drama will inspire the hesitant and the fearful to start the conversation that cannot wait.

Today, a vast amount of land in the United States is owned by those over 65 years old. Some have made their wishes clear for the future of their property. Others are courting family upheaval by not planning in concrete ways. An age old problem, evident in literature from the Bible to King Lear to Willa Cather, land transition asks hard questions: Who really owns the land? And what is the role of the steward of a property? Can "fair" become "unfair" to one's children?

Map of My Kingdom is directed by Matt Foss, Acting and Theatre history professor at The University of Idaho. Elizabeth Thompson will be the actor.

Performance Time:

The play runs 1 hour. The talkback post performance discussion runs about 20 minutes to a half hour.

Trailer: http://www.maryswander.com

Press:
http://practicalfarmers.org/news-events/newsroom/news-release-archive/13403/

http://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/local/2014/06/19/play-highlight-challenge-aging-farmer-population/11006123/

http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/entertainment/arts/arts-in-iowa/2014/07/12/mary-swander-map-kingdom-west-branch/12548783/

http://www.agrinews.com/news/iowa_news/play-looks-at-difficult-issues-of-farmland-transfer/article_555ed070-d801-572a-8acc-4ee3be6587c7.html

More press at http://www.maryswander.com/media-appearances/

Artist Bios:

Mary Swander (Playwright):

Mary Swander is the Poet Laureate of the State of Iowa. She has published over thirteen books of poetry and non-fiction, in addition to plays, radio and television scripts and magazine articles. She has appeared in such places as *The New York Times Magazine*, *National Public Radio*, *The New Yorker*, and *Poetry Magazine*. Swander's plays *Driving the Body Back*, *Vang*, and *Farmscape* have toured the U.S. including a performance for Secretary Tom Vilsack and his staff at the U.S.D.A. Swander lives and raises most of her own food on a small acreage in the Amish settlement near Kalona, Iowa. She has experienced three generations of land transition within her own family.

Cora Vander Broek-Brumlow (Angela)
Cora Vander Broek-Brumlow is excited to be collaborating with Mary Swander and Matt Foss on *Map of My Kingdom: Or Who's Going to Get the Farm?* and *VANG: A Drama about Recent Immigrant Farmers*. Cora is an Illinois-based actor who has worked extensively in theaters in Chicago and throughout the country. Recent Chicago credits: *The Mousetrap* (Northlight Theatre); *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* (American Blues Theatre); *Luck of the Irish* and *Madagascar* (Next Theatre); *All My Sons* (TimeLine Theatre); *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Dead End* (Griffin Theatre, Jeff Citation Nominee - Actress in a Supporting Role); *Book of Days* (After Dark Award - Actress in A Principal Role) and *The Seagull* at Raven Theatre. Recent regional credits: *In the Next Room or The Vibrator Play* (Actors Theatre at Louisville and Milwaukee Repertory); *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, Doubt,* and *A Christmas Carol* (Indiana Repertory); *Heartbreak House* (Montana Shakespeare in the

Parks). Recent TV: *Chicago Fire.* Recent Film: *Where We Started; Of Minor Prophets; Blur Circle.* Cora is proud graduate of Northwestern College in Iowa and The School of Steppenwolf in Chicago. She is represented by Big Mouth Talent.

Elizabeth Thompson (Angela)**:**

Elizabeth Thompson is an actor who lives in central Iowa and a graduate of Iowa State University. She was a Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Irene Ryan Acting Award Finalist in 2014 and a member of The Lonely Many ensemble who were named Iowa Artists by the Des Moines Art Center in 2013. Recent credits include *Hamlet* and *Love's Labor's Lost* with The Lonely Many, *Streetcar Named Desire, Romeo and Juliet* and *Rent* at Iowa State University and work with the Actor's Gymnasium and Circus School in Chicago, IL. Elizabeth recently played Nan in the premiere of *My Grandparents in the War*, a new play about Alzheimer's and the generation of men and women who served during World War Two.

Matt Foss (Director):

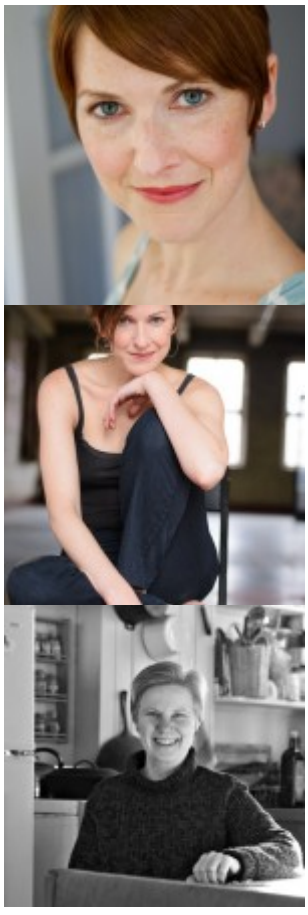
Matt Foss' production of *Six Characters* received 5 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Awards in 2012 including: National Outstanding Production of a Play, Outstanding Director, Outstanding Lighting Design, 3 Distinguished Performance Awards, and Distinguished Production and Performance Ensemble Award. Foss studied theatre at Roosevelt University in Chicago and in Moscow. He received his Ph.D. from Wayne State University in 2013. Currently, he is an assistant professor at the University of Idaho.

Sample Press Release:

Premiere: Map of My Kingdom – July 12, in West Branch

The play by Mary Swander addresses the issue of farmland transition

For Release: May 28, 2014



SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



West Branch, Iowa — Practical Farmers of Iowa will premiere a play tackling the critical issue of farmland ownership transfer on Saturday, July 12, at Scattergood Friends School near West Branch. The play, *Map of My Kingdom,* was commissioned by Practical Farmers of Iowa and written by Mary Swander, Iowa's poet laureate.

In the play, character Angela Martin, a lawyer and mediator in land transition disputes, shares stories of how farmers and landowners have approached their land transitions. Some families struggled to resolve the sale or transfer of their land, dissolving relationships. Others found peacefully rational solutions that focused on keeping the land – and the family – together.

"Land is the thread that binds all the stories together," says Teresa Opheim, executive director of Practical Farmers. "*Map of My Kingdom* will resonate with those who have been or are working through challenging land transfer issues. We also hope it helps others start those critical conversations."

According to Dan Wilson, president of Practical Farmers and a member of the group's Farm Transfer Committee, "the play is a good way at getting at a tremendous farmland transition that is about to take place in Iowa, as elderly landlords begin to pass on. Many farmers will lose farmland – their source of livelihood – during this transition, unless we tackle these issues."

Fifty-six percent of Iowa farmland is owned by people over the age of 65, according to a report by retired Iowa State University economist Mike Duffy, "Farmland Ownership and Tenure Report in Iowa 2012". Thirty percent of Iowa farmland is owned by those more than 75 years old.

Map of My Kingdom will be directed by Matt Foss, professor of acting and theatre history at Iowa State, and performed by Cora Brumlow, a professional actor based in Chicago. Cora played the lead female role in Mary Swander and Dennis Chamberlin's play, *Vang*, about recent immigrant farmers.

The premiere will be performed at Scattergood Friends School, a small Quaker boarding school, on **Saturday, July 12 in West Branch**. A light supper will be provided at 6 p.m. and the play will begin at 7 p.m. A discussion will follow the performance. Please RSVP to Lauren Zastrow by **Wednesday, July 9** at lauren@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661. Admission is $10.

Map of My Kingdom is sponsored by: The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, New Bo Books in Cedar Rapids, the Lucas County Arts Council, Principal Financial Group and Sustainable Farm Partners, LLP.

###

Founded in 1985, Practical Farmers of Iowa is an open, supportive and diverse organization of farmers and friends of farmers, advancing profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to

agriculture through farmer-to-farmer networking, farmer-led investigation and information sharing. Farmers in our network produce corn, soybeans, beef cattle, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. For additional information, call (515) 232-5661 or visit www.practicalfarmers.org.

Contact:

Teresa Opheim | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | teresa@practicalfarmers.org

Tamsyn Jones | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org



Photo of Elizabeth Thompson in Map of my Kingdom