



# AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE

WRITTEN BY TRAVIS RUSS / MUSIC & LYRICS BY PRISCILLA HOLBROOK





# THE PLAY

During the fall of 2015, members of LIFE JACKET travelled to southern Florida to interview the residents of Miracle Village, a rural community for sex offenders buried deep in the sugarcane fields.

The team spent the next two years transforming their interview transcripts into a play that "is a deceptively gentle look at redemption, faith, and what makes a community."

## THE NEW YORKER

Interweaving spoken text (shaped by TRAVIS RUSS) with Methodist hymns and original songs (composed by PRISCILLA HOLBROOK), this play is "an investigation of transgression, redemption and the limits of compassion."

## THE NEW YORK TIMES

*David Spadora & Gareth Tidball (photo by Em Watson)*





# THE RESEARCH

The research team, led by TRAVIS RUSS, conducted 400+ hours of interviews, unearthed 300+ pages of archival documents, and recorded 500+ pages of field notes. Over three years, the team transformed thousands of pages of research materials into a genre-defying theatrical show.

"Making documentary theatre takes great discipline and a touch of innovative genius. With [this] new work LIFE JACKET THEATRE COMPANY has proven itself to be a strong new practitioner in this genre."

**EXEUNT MAGAZINE**



*John Carlin (photo by Em Watson)*



# THE MUSIC

PRISCILLA HOLBROOK, from the band SUSAN JANE, has composed an intricate collection of original songs based on the company's verbatim transcripts.

Every word in this beautiful collection of songs was said by a real person. Further, these original songs cross multiple genres including pop, indie, and folk.

Priscilla has also woven a number of traditional Methodist hymns into the narrative of this play. These hymns unlock a deeper, more complex and nuanced understanding of faith and humanity when positioned alongside the themes of this play.



*David Spadora, Ken Barnett, John Carlin, Joyce Cohen, Gareth Tidball (photo by T. Charles Erickson)*



# UNCOMFORTABLE

“Paying homage to Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*, Mr. Russ presents *Miracle Village* as an ordinary American town, except in the ways it isn’t... A smart and troubling new piece of documentary theater... [This play] takes a hard, uncomfortable look at forgiveness and what it means to put it into action.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES



*Amy Gaither Hayes & Ken Barnett (photos by T. Charles Erickson)*



# POWERFUL

“Hands down, it's the bravest show currently playing in New York... Powerful performances electrify an already supercharged script.”

**THEATERMANIA**



*David Spadora (photo by Em Watson)*



# COMPLICATED

"This play introduces us to a strange community that could only be American... Dodging prurience and judgement, the piece is a deceptively gentle look at redemption, faith, and what makes a community... A heartbreaking, complicated portrait of people adrift."

**THE NEW YORKER**



-- SUGARCANE FIELDS --

*Ken Barnett (photo by Travis Russ)*





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