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At the mercy of Mercy Killers

One-man play about health care and the American dream comes to the Very Little Theatre

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by [Anna Grace](#)

Joe, the blue-collar mechanic at the center of VLT's Mercy Killers, considers himself the ultimate all-American — a red-state, Rush Limbaugh-listening son of the American dream.

All that changes when Joe's wife is diagnosed with cancer and he falls through the rabbit hole into a world of exorbitant medical costs and unyielding insurance networks. Out-of-pocket costs are demanded from "pockets that just aren't that deep." A man who has staked his life in the value of hard work now stands to lose everything to a health care system that seems not to care at all.

Written and performed by Michael Milligan, directed and produced by Tom Oppenheim, Mercy Killers has been staged anywhere and everywhere, to mostly strong reviews. This one-man show has been called "beautiful and heartbreaking" (American Theatre Magazine), "a deeply affecting love story" (Revolution Books) as well as "one-man theatre at its very best" (UK's Broadway Baby).

This one-night performance of Mercy Killers at the Very Little Theatre (the show played Sept. 20 at Springfield's Wildish Theater) is part of a national tour sponsored by Health Care for All Oregon and Physicians For A National Health Care System. With love and politics at its center, Mercy Killers is billed as "a story as American as apple pie." And one slice is likely to evoke some excellent conversation.

Mercy Killers plays 7 pm Thursday, Sept. 24, at City Lights Cinema in Florence and 7:30 pm Friday, Sept. 25, at the Very Little Theatre; \$15, tickets at tickettomato.com.

About the Author



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Anna studied theater and history at the University of Portland. She writes and teaches in Eugene.