

It's All About Love

by Tanya Trimborn

Organ and tissue donation is central to our next play, *THE TIN WOMAN*. Main character Joy receives a heart transplant before the play begins, and throughout the story, we watch her grapple with having a second chance at life. Her saving grace is only possible thanks to someone else's ultimate sacrifice and a family's loss. Playwright Sean Grennan based the play on real events, and for some perspective, we sat down to talk with Tanya Trimborn, a real-life donor family member whose son gave the gift of life.

Q: What's your connection to organ and tissue donation?

A: My son, Cai Benavides, was 22 years old when he became an organ donor. When he was little, I would take him everywhere with me. I was a single mother and I did my best to raise him.

We went to the DMV when he was like 7 or 8 – I had to renew my license. He said, “Mom, what’s that orange dot? Let me see,” and snatched the license right out of my hand! I told him that the orange dot signals to somebody that if something should happen to me and I cannot live anymore, I want them to use what I can’t take with me—my organs—and give them to someone else who needs them. So they can live a longer and happier life with their family. Cai just seemed to get things quicker than other kids, and he said, “that’s a really good thing that you’re doing, Mom,” and that was that.



When he was a young adult, he had a very difficult time, and by the age of 18, he struggled with drug addiction. He was such an incredible kid, and it was sad to see that drugs took him down a different path. However, in the fall of 2017, Cai had completed a rehab program, he was in a sober living facility, attending NA meetings and doing all the little things he needed to do to put his life back together. That meant we could spend more time together as a family.

He and I had a chance to sit and chat one day and he went, “look what I did!” He pulls out his wallet and he shows me his ID and I saw the orange donor dot. I was like, “dang Cai, I’m so proud of you. You’re thinking of other people, it’s incredible that you’re doing that.”

In February of 2018, I got the call that he was in the ICU. He had no brain activity because of a drug overdose and was on life support. On February 12, they proclaimed him brain dead, and on February 14 – Valentine’s Day and National Organ Donor Day – my son became an organ donor himself. He donated both of his kidneys and his liver. I always say his addiction does not define who he was: his love, his kindness, his tenderness carries through that.

Q: How did you become a volunteer and speaker about organ and tissue donation?

A: I withdrew into myself, as one would do when you lose your only child. I was very critical of myself and felt like I had failed somehow. But I was always very proud that Cai was an organ donor. At his memorial, I had contacted Versiti [a non-profit that facilitates organ and tissue donations, as well as blood donations and research] to have “Donate Life” pins and stickers for people to take as a memento and a reminder of Cai’s legacy.

I knew that I had to participate to celebrate his legacy and the love I had for my son. At first I couldn’t speak about it – I was going into the Versiti office and helping stuff kits and envelopes. Or I would sit at a table, participating

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in conversation and being around people who had been affected by organ donation. Eventually, I started to feel comfortable enough to share.

For me, my healing and my path has been going through small moments of volunteering with Versiti, taking part in events and sharing Cai's story. It was also doing artwork. I created an ofrenda for Cai. It really, really helped me – I had to think about things that I hadn't thought about in a long time or that I hadn't allowed myself to think about. *[An ofrenda is the offering placed in a home altar during the annual Mexican Día de Muertos celebration. Cai's ofrenda includes marigolds, pictures of him, locks of hair and other items with meaning.]*

Versiti, as an organization, has really assisted in allowing me the space to heal. I have never felt stifled, they have given me the space to participate in the things I want to participate in. They have helped me find my voice to speak. They have given me the strength to speak up about Cai and my loss. As an organization, they're just great.

Q: Reading the script, what stood out to you about *THE TIN WOMAN*?

A: There was a little something in every character that I connected with. The lead character, Joy – her withdrawing into herself, I connected with that. How do you take something when you know someone else has sacrificed? When that someone has sacrificed the ultimate thing and they can't be with their family? The way she has internalized it and pushed people away, I could see and understand that.

The hippy-dippy sister who sees signs in everything and who wants to please and make everybody happy, that's me. It was hard to realize that I couldn't make everybody happy after Cai passed away. I was constantly looking for those moments to show that Cai was still with me.

I connected with the nurse because of the nurses who were in the ICU with Cai. Through all the trauma that was happening on a daily basis, they were still there for our family – I saw what incredible people they were.

The mom allowing her husband the space to grieve the way he needs to, is so important. And the dad – I really identified with him. If the last conversation you have with someone is difficult, it can cause a ton of pain and guilt after they have gone. One of my last conversations with Cai I told him, "I know you think you can handle this, but one day your body may not be able to." I understand EXACTLY where the father is, what he's going through, because those words have repeated often in my mind after Cai died. The pain I felt was unbearable.

This play touched every single part of how I feel about going through organ donation with my son.

Q: What do you hope people come away with?

A: It's all about love. It's all about connection and interacting with other people. It's about communication. I can't take [my organs] with me, and I want to give them to other people – that's a kind thing to do. It's a loving thing to do. Organ donation is just a moment of love, and it makes the world better.



As an employee of Print-n-Press, Tanya Trimbora has printed countless items for Next Act – including this very newsletter! Tanya is also a volunteer with Versiti, sharing the story of her son's organ donation. Among other appearances, she was the Donor Family Speaker for the 2022 Gift of Life Ceremony at the Wisconsin Governor's Residence.



Whenever I'm working on something new, particularly something with a science element to it like *THE TIN WOMAN*, I always do research and talk to as many people as I can before going near my keyboard. That was particularly true this time. Like

everyone, I'm aware of transplant procedures, but also like nearly everyone, it hasn't really touched my life yet.

The play is based on the true story of a woman who receives a heart transplant and then subsequently meets the family of the donor. (My sister gave me a newspaper clipping about it over Indian food some years back. She said, "Write this and make it not suck.") At face value, it seems like a straightforward "feel good" show. But the more I dug into the subject matter, the more I realized that there were other possible avenues to run down.

In the course of this show's life, I've been very privileged to meet and spend time with heart transplant recipients and donor families. Most of the recipients are grateful for their second chance and are living their "best life" now, cherishing the extra days they've been given. However, there is a

kind of subset of them who aren't sure if they were deserving of the gift. This is commonly called "survivor's guilt," and it's seen in other walks of life, as when people have survived disasters that have taken others and might decide to not go on.

On the other side of the exchange, the families of donors are largely glad to be able to help others at a very difficult time. But nonetheless, they are still grieving, and grief manifests differently in all of us. So exploring that, seeing if people could heal each other, seemed a more interesting way to go with the play.

I will say that survivors and donor families have been very positive about seeing that side of things. They've also been glad that, because of the "heavy" nature of the piece, I decided that some humor was an absolute necessity! I never want to put two hours of homework on stage. I always feel that life is all of it - the laughter, the tears, the absurdity - and that we're all looking for better understanding of our time here and our relationships. It's so short, a blink.

I hope that you take some of that away from the show.

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, December 11, 2022 • 6-9PM • Next Act Theatre



It's time for a little R & R: The Retirement Roast of David Cecsarini!

Join us in celebrating departing Artistic Director, David Cecsarini's tenure at Next Act Theatre with a good old Celebrity Roast with many Next Act favorites. More details to come!

Tickets are \$32.50 (in honor of David's 32½ years of service).

All proceeds benefit Next Act Theatre's Tribute Campaign - a special initiative to help with a smooth transition and ensure we continue bringing you great live theatre experiences for another few decades!

Visit nextact.org or call (414) 278-0765 for tickets.

On Saturday, October 1, 2022, Next Act Theatre hosted Wisconsin's first-ever Black Out Night performance, a performance reserved exclusively for Black or Black-identifying audience members. The evening performance of *KILL MOVE PARADISE* sold out, meaning the biggest audience of the show's run came for a reception beforehand, a performance of the show and a post-show Spirit Talk.

Overall, the experience was electric – this performance was a small slice of what I aspire for theatre to be. Among the Black community, everyone was represented: a big mix of ages, genders and backgrounds. There were two little boys, maybe no more than 10 years old, who I helped get some soda before the play. I watched them during the show and they were so engaged. These are young Black men – they don't go to plays often. Having them there meant they got to see themselves represented on stage and grapple with the reality of their experiences just like [the character] Ti ny.

I met a subscriber who changed her seat to make sure she attended on Black Out Night. I saw Kristin E. Ellis, who played Nya in *PIPELINE* last season. I even saw a DoorDash driver who had delivered me food earlier in the week and had asked about the play! So many people from different places came together that the event had an energy of sharing – we were sharing the culture and sharing the night with each other.

During the performance, all the jokes landed. All the actors' questions went answered. Marti Gobel, our director, called it a “family reunion.”

More than anything, this was a healing experience. The show and the talk afterwards were both healing. A lot of people told me, “I'm still processing what the show did to me, what it showed me.” Black Out Night is proof that plays that engage the community with a moving story matter to everyone. Even with more white audiences, this story resonated because it was important. And especially on Black Out Night, we followed the rules of *KILL MOVE PARADISE* and made a house a home.

OUR COMMUNITY PROJECT

by Malaina Moore, Community Liaison

Every year, Next Act creates a community project centered on one show that helps bring members of the community together in closer conversation about our work. This season, *KILL MOVE PARADISE* director Marti Gobel curated a workshop on movement and ritual that she and I took into schools before and after the student matinee.

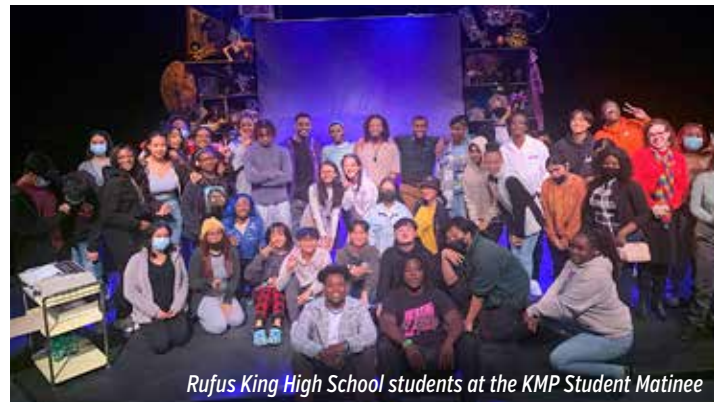
Marti and I ran workshops at Golda Meir School, Ronald Reagan High School and Rufus King High School. Our workshops before the student matinee explored six basic emotions and how the characters in the play experience them. We then talked about rituals – what are the steps of a ritual, what order do they go in, what are the rules? Students created tableaux with their bodies depicting a range of rituals from brushing your teeth to a funeral. Finally, we read through a scene from *KILL MOVE PARADISE*.

On October 12, 2022, more than 100 students from these three schools attended a matinee. The performance was electric, and not just because of the tornado warnings that went off during the show (which the actors handled perfectly). The students loved the audience interaction and moments that rang true in their own lives.

This was clear when we returned for our second set of workshops after the matinee. We asked

the students to make their own list of rules for the “afterlife” based on the rules of *KILL MOVE PARADISE* in the play: “Remember. Take care. Boogie Oogie Oogie. Make a house a home.” They didn't have to think long – in less than a minute, students suggested “Go home,” “Be at peace,” “Decide to watch over,” “Sulk” and even “Dance” [“When I dance, that is when I feel like myself and like nothing in the world matters.”]

Giving these students an understanding of the text and of ritual allowed them to be vulnerable, to see themselves in the production and made room for an emotional response. It was great to see them innately understand and relate to the story of *KILL MOVE PARADISE*.



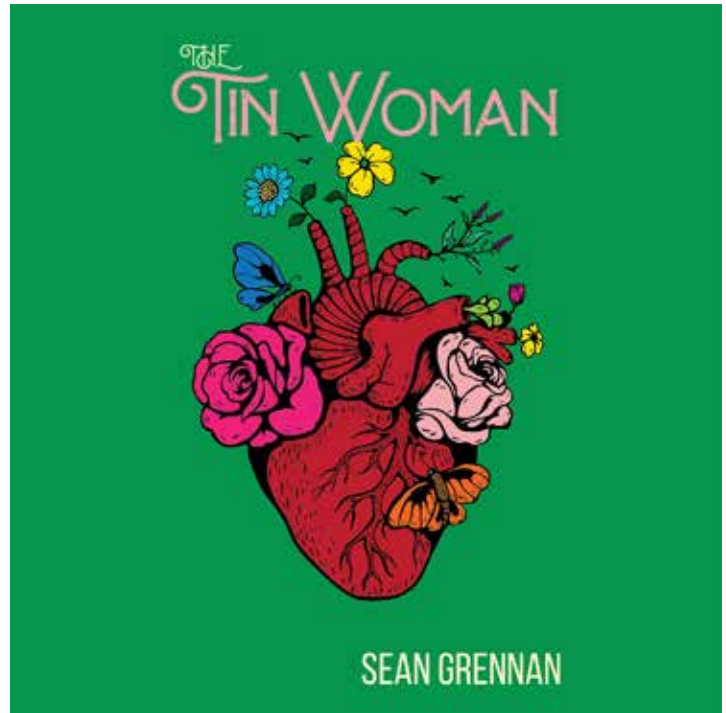
SO, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? I KNOW! I KNOW!

In the past few months, you've attended the first show of our 32nd season. We hope *KILL MOVE PARADISE* touched and enlightened you – perhaps walking away with a deeper understanding of the violence that shapes the lives of Black men, women and children on a daily basis. Maybe going a step further and learning more about what you can do to help.



Joseph Brown Jr., Ibraheem Farmer, Marques Causey & Dimonte Henning in *KILL MOVE PARADISE*.

If you were inspired to take action but don't know where to start, consider reaching out to Nurturing Diversity Partners. Co-Founder Reggie Jackson was present at many of our Personal Previews and Talk-backs – maybe you saw him! Nurturing Diversity Partners helps foster conversations and connections between different communities.



We know you're getting ready for the next show, *THE TIN WOMAN* by Sean Grennan, that will be here before you know it – just like the holidays!

And we know many of you have been hard at work helping us bring to life our artistic and educational programming by your generous and thoughtful contributions. From giving a little extra when you buy a ticket, to our extraordinary show sponsors and everything in between, we thank you. We truly appreciate your investment in our work

MEET PIA RUSSO

by Pia Russo, Education Manager



At the end of this past summer, former Education Manager Grace DeWolff departed Next Act for a full-time teaching position at Golda Meir School. We're excited to welcome our new Education Manager, Pia Russo! Let her introduce herself in her own words:

"Hello! I'm Pia, proud newest member of the Next Act family. I graduated just last year from Marquette University with degrees in Theatre Arts and Secondary Education, as well as a minor in History. Most of my previous theatre experience is from Marquette, where I had a hand in *GIDION'S KNOT* and *DOUBT: A PARABLE* [directing], *PETER AND THE STARCATCHER* and *MAMMA MIA!* [assistant stage managing] and *ANTIGONE* [stage managing]. I also spent last summer interning at

Door Shakespeare, where I [mostly] overcame a fear of bugs. It was during *ANTIGONE* that I met my predecessor, Grace DeWolff, who introduced me to Next Actors as a Teaching Assistant and soon passed me the torch as Education Manager. I am also currently finishing up the practicum of my Secondary Education degree at Pius XI High School, where I am student teaching theatre and government through January 2023.

My teaching philosophy revolves heavily around bringing equal opportunities to communities hurt by inequity, creating a democratic classroom and using youth art as a medium for authentic expression. I am so excited to bring that to my work at Next Act. When not at Next Act or teaching at Pius, I can be found playing board games, chilling with my roommate and cat [ideally together] and yelling about how much I love my students to anyone who will listen."



Did you see us at the Harbor District?

On September 25, 2022, Next Act took part in Harbor Fest 2022! We had a great (if blustery) day sharing our season and chatting with folks in our up-and-coming neighborhood.

Thanks to the Harbor District, BID #51, for making it happen!

Cost of Living

by Martyna Majok

People are hard.

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Editors A.J. Magoon & David Cecsarini Layout Rose Delaney



At first I was stumped to find an artist to complement the production of *THE TIN WOMAN* by Sean Grennan, whose work would literally and/or figuratively capture the theme of a heart transplant's journey into a renewed life. As I thought about it more, I kept remembering seeing a group at art and craft fairs whose apparel designs were based on anatomically correct illustrations of human organs combined with positive messages about life and living. A perfect match – if only I could find them! Well, a quick Google search using a few key words and boom! Artery Ink topped the list of results!

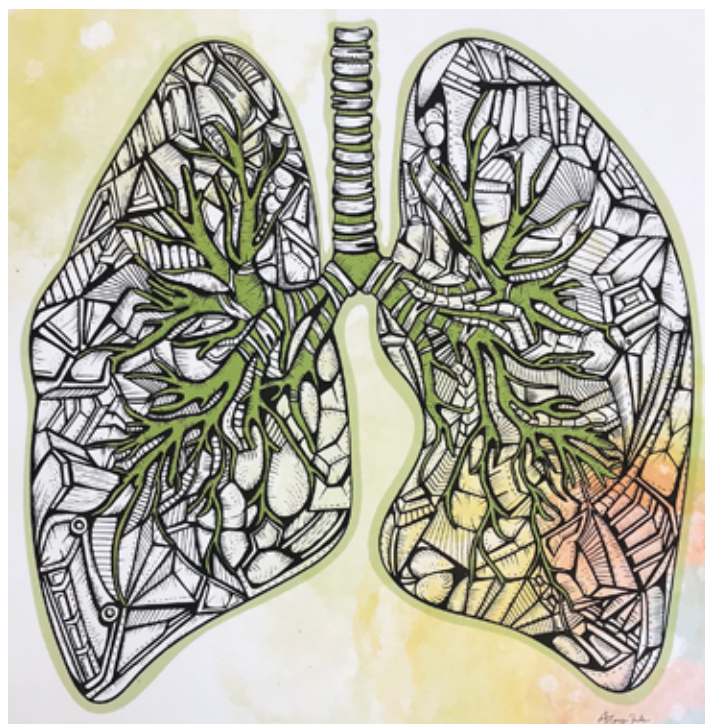
Here is their story in their own words:

ARTERY INK! ART + WELLNESS

**Building COMMUNITY and INSPIRING YOU
to learn more about the body you live in!**

Our names are Mara Natkin & Gloria Ramirez and together we are the creators and artists behind Artery Ink! Through our artwork we want to encourage you to eat healthier, take better care of your body, learn more about it and ultimately, become happier. We came up with the concept for Artery Ink when we decided to eat healthier ourselves and learn more about how our bodies work. In changing what we ate and appreciating and understanding our bodies more, everything else in our lives changed too. It was so inspiring we thought, "how can we share this with the world!?"

All of our artwork is unique and done collaboratively. It's a mix of traditional pen drawings and digital design. We hope you enjoy it, learn from it, and share it with your family and friends!



I'm thrilled to be able to share Mara and Gloria's unique designs with the Next Act Theatre community. Their love of life touches all our hearts, original or transplanted.

To learn more about them and all they offer at their Bay View-based company, please visit their website arteryink.com or find them via your favorite social media links:



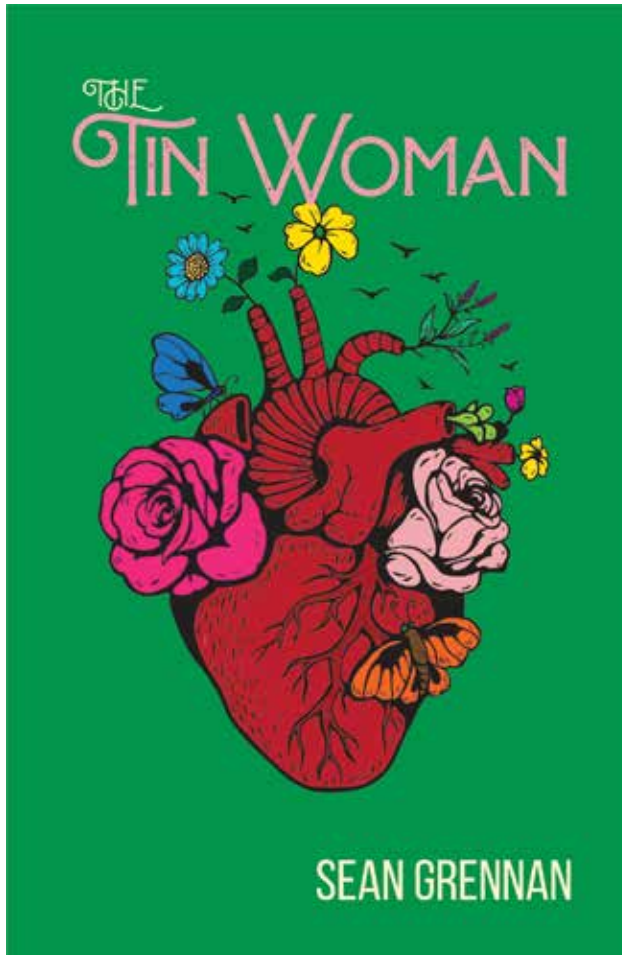


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Receiving a heart transplant gives Joy a new lease on life. Her second chance, however, comes with questions: "why me?" and "how to make the most of this gift?" A complex web of laughter and grief entangles Joy and the family of her transplant donor as they grapple with what comes next. Based on a true story, *THE TIN WOMAN* is a heartfelt, humorous look at the importance of family and what it means to live fully.

"Full of laughter and light even in the darkest moments." – Door County Advocate

NOVEMBER 23 – DECEMBER 18, 2022						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			23 Preview 7:30	Thanksgiving	25 Opening 7:30	26 4:30 8:00 P
27 T 2:00			30 1:30 7:30 P	1 7:30 T	2 7:30	3 4:30 8:00
4 2:00 P T			7 1:30 7:30	8 7:30 P T	9 7:30	10 4:30 8:00
11 2:00 P T	12 7:30 S		14 7:30	15 7:30 T	16 7:30 P	17 4:30 8:00
18 2:00 P T	P Personal Preview (Begins 30 minutes prior to curtain) T Talkback S Sunday Night Insights S Pay What You Can					

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