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5 x 15: Five World Premiere 15-Minute Musicals
**Tenth Collaboration of Baldwin Wallace University Music Theatre Program and
Beck Center for the Arts**

Lakewood, OH—[Beck Center for the Arts](#) proudly announces its tenth collaboration with [Baldwin Wallace University Music Theatre Program](#), in the form of virtual world premieres of five fifteen-minute brand new musicals, chosen by [National Alliance for Musical Theatre](#).

[National Alliance for Musical Theatre](#) (NAMT) created the “15-Minute Musical Challenge” to celebrate the power of musical theatre during the spring of 2020. Executive Director, Betsy King Militello shares: “In all times, but especially challenging times, we believe that musical theatre has the power to elevate the human experience and uplift each other. The 15-Minute Musical Challenge, inspired and supported by the Alhadaff Family Charitable Foundation, was developed to inspire creativity during the early days of social distancing. We are thrilled to see five of the winning musicals see further development with Beck Center for the Arts and Baldwin Wallace University.”

[Scott Spence](#), now in his 30th season as artistic director of Beck Center for the Arts shares, “Pandemic or no, we were determined that this 10th anniversary of the Beck Center/Baldwin Wallace collaboration *must* go on. With the addition of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre as a partner, we could not be more excited to offer the World Premieres of five brand new musicals. Composers and lyricists from around the country have been working with us since August 2020 and it’s thrilling to put all of this collaboration to work on a national level.”

Beck Center continues its proud collaboration with [Baldwin Wallace University Music Theatre Program](#) (BWMT) with [Victoria Bussert](#) leading the program. Also a director of one of the winning pieces, *Perpetual Sunshine and the Ghost Girls*, Victoria says, “I was very honored to be asked to read a large number of the 15-minute musicals for NAMT and to serve on the final selection committee. The creativity of these pieces is truly inspiring; it’s thrilling for our BWMT students to have the unique opportunity to work with our guest directors and these fantastic writing teams.”

The creative teams behind the music, lyrics, and performances of these virtual productions are award-winning, talented, and diverse individuals. *Perpetual Sunshine and the Ghost Girls*, musical director [Matthew Webb](#), musical director and technologist for this fifteen-minute

musical also serves as musical coordinator and video technologist for the whole of the *5x15* project. Matthew is Music Director of Music Theatre at Baldwin Wallace University where he recently music directed the academic premiere of *Kinky Boots*. He is also resident music director at Great Lakes Theater, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival. He most recently worked with Beck Center as musical director of *The Scottsboro Boys*, in collaboration with BWMT. Music by [Lynne Shankel](#) and words by [Sara Cooper](#), this short musical is an all-woman+ through-composed musical theatre piece about the capitalist exploitation of workers' bodies and rights in the face of a national public health crisis. The show is based on the true story of the women who fought United States Radium Corporation in the 1920s for knowingly poisoning them and subsequently changed United States labor laws forever. This is the first 15 minutes of the full length piece-in-progress. Lynne was the musical supervisor/arranger/orchestrator of *Allegiance*, and the first woman to solely orchestrate a new musical on Broadway. Sara Cooper is a playwright-lyricist who has received the Jonathan Larson Grant, Overall Excellence Award in Playwriting, and *Time Out NY* Critic's Pick.

Holo, set in 2189 in a holograph museum, the curator and holographic Kyle enter into a unique relationship which recounts the year 2020 and the pandemic that came with it on an ever repeating loop. Book, music, and lyrics by [Nico Juber](#), an 18-year survivor of cancer and mother of two children. She has previously written a 90-minute musical called *Millennials Are Killing Musicals*. Matthew Webb serves as musical director resource/technologist. [Ciara Renee](#) directs. As an actress, Ciara most recently starred as "Elsa" in *FROZEN* (on Broadway). She originated "The Witch" in *BIG FISH* (Broadway), appeared as "The Leading Player" in *PIPPIN* (Broadway), and originated "Esmeralda" in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at the Paper Mill Playhouse. She is also known for her work as "Peggy/Maria" in the final lab of *Hamilton*.

Rodeo Clowns is a queer, western epic about two eccentric outcasts who save the heart of their disintegrating town. This whip crack comedy act features a colorful musical-country score. [Dale Sampson](#) is the book writer and half the brains of "bits," a street clown duo. *Sam's Room* was featured in NAMT's Festival of New Musicals, Red Mountain Theatre Company's first Human Rights New Works Festival, was the inaugural recipient of New York Theatre Barn's IMPACT Award and played an extended developmental production at the Cell Theatre, starring Sampson. A member of Actor's Equity, he's performed with Gallery Players (*Rent*, *Evita*), the American Pops Orchestra (*Cinderella*), New York Musical Theatre Festival (*Propaganda!*) and the regional premiere of *The View Upstairs*. [Marc Campbell](#) wrote the music. Marc is also known as a member of indie rock band MisterWives, dubbed by MTV as "the golden children of pop." They currently have over 250 million streams and counting on Spotify and their first single was certified gold. The band recently played a sold-out show at Madison Square Garden playing with Brendon Uri (Panic! at the Disco). Marc has made numerous television performances, including *Jimmy Kimmel*, *James Corden*, *Seth Meyers*, *MTV*, *Good Morning America* and *The Today Show*.

[Sara Bruner](#) directs. Sara is Associate Artistic Director of Great Lakes Theater and Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and recipient of the 2018 Princess Grace Award, Directing. Musical direction is by Matthew Webb.

Monster on the Lawn is directed by [Jon Martinez](#), who directed the BWMT and Beck Center collaboration of *The Scottsboro Boys*. He was the Cleveland director and choreographer of the regional premiere of *Be More Chill* at Playhouse Square in association with Baldwin Wallace! He has worked extensively in Chicago IL. This fifteen-minute musical centers around Ricky, a six-year-old boy with a growing imagination, wakes up to see a whale-like creature laying on his front lawn. When an incoming hurricane threatens to separate Ricky from his family and his home, he seeks comfort in the presence of this strange and seemingly-quiet monster. Obed De La Cruz wrote book, music and lyrics. Obed is an arts student at Stanford University, focusing on a BA in Theater & Performance Studies. Musical direction is by Lindsay Miller, a senior in the Baldwin Wallace Music Theatre Program.

[Eric Jones](#) wrote book and lyrics for *White Man's Burden*, music by [Joshua S. Davis](#). Eric won Best Screenplay Short at 2020 National Black Film Festival for *The Knowledge Men* and his *Musical Liberators* was accepted into the 2018 Chicago Musical Theater Festival. This irreverently funny and powerful mini-rock musical, *White Man's Burden*, takes place inside of the world of sideshow "freaks" who have been killed because of the color of their skin. They are led by an emcee who is part ringmaster/part infomercial host. He spotlights the oppression and suffering of African Americans during 400 years through a musical kaleidoscope of songs. When asked about composing for this musical challenge he said his inspiration, "Came to me as simply watching my morning news and seeing an African American man named George Floyd for 8 minutes and 46 seconds get lynched in front of the whole world. I was shocked, I was angry and I was saddened. This was my wake up call to create meaningful art that will combat this ugly sin called racism. Hence, the musical *White Man's Burden* was born." Joshua has many musical talents, as a composer, songwriter, and singer from Detroit, MI, he also teaches music. Directed by [Nathan Henry](#). Nathan is the recipient of the 2018 Cleveland Scene Theatre Award for Best Director for Karamu House's critically acclaimed production of *Passing Strange*. He directed the Cleveland Public Theatre production of *Ya Mama!*, written and performed by Nina Domingue which appeared at the Hollywood Fringe Festival. He is an alum of Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music. [Ed Ridley](#) Jr, serves as musical director for *White Man's Burden*. Ed serves as music director for the Christian Fellowship Center Church and is also on the music faculty at Cuyahoga Community College. His versatility and talent as a performer have allowed him to accompany such great artists as Aretha Franklin, Lauryn Hill, Walter Hawkins, Jon Hendricks, and Clark Terry. His most recent work with Beck Center was as musical director for *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*.

This limited virtual engagement runs February 12 to February 28, 2021 on any device in the comfort of your home, as part of Beck Center for the Arts' 87th Professional Theater Season. For more information on this world premiere musical theater project please visit beckcenter.org. Tickets, priced at \$20 for one viewer, and \$30 for two or more viewers, and

\$40 for arts lovers who want to support Beck Center can be purchased at <https://www.showtix4u.com/event-details/44593>.

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Beck Center for the Arts is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that offers professional theater productions on two stages, arts education programming in dance, music, theater, visual arts, early childhood, creative arts therapies for individuals with disabilities, free gallery exhibits year-round, and outreach education programming.

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