

**"FIRST RATE. AUTHORITATIVE.
RECOMMENDED!"**

THE WASHINGTON POST

**"A SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL
CALL FOR CHANGE."**

NEW CITY STAGE, CHICAGO

"RIVETING."

THE CHICAGO READER

**"A VERITABLE GRAPES OF
WRATH OF THE 21ST CENTURY."**

*THE CRACKED SHAMROCK,
EDINBURGH FRINGE*

★★★★
"MARVELOUS, PROFOUND."

*THE SCOTSMAN,
EDINBURGH FRINGE*

**"PACKS A PUNCH
THEATRE FOR ALL."**

*DC METRO
THEATER ARTS*

**"PUTS A HUMAN FACE ON THE
HEALTHCARE DEBATE."**

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

**"RAW...TOPICAL:
RECOMMENDED."**

STAR TRIBUNE, MINNEAPOLIS

**"RAW, IMMEDIATE...
MILLIGAN PULLS IT OFF:
RECOMMENDED!"**

PIONEER PRESS, TWIN CITIES

**"BEAUTIFUL AND
HEARTBREAKING."**

AMERICAN THEATRE MAGAZINE

★★★★
"BEAUTIFULLY MOVING."

*THREE WEEKS,
EDINBURGH TRIBUNE*

**"FELT LIKE THE BLAST OF A
FURNACE. RECOMMENDED."**

TRUTH DIG

**"THE PLAY OBAMACARE
NEEDS. RECOMMENDED."**

THE DAILY BEAST



Mercy Killers

An auto mechanic in middle America discovers the lengths he must go to when his wife loses her health insurance. A tender story of love and loss in the land of plenty.

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY
MICHAEL MILLIGAN

DIRECTED BY
TOM OPPENHEIM

**POOR BOX
THEATER**

THE MEDICINE OF ART TAKES ON THE ART OF MEDICINE



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THE MEDICINE OF ART TAKES ON THE ART OF MEDICINE

The Play Obamacare Needs. *Daily Beast*

I think the two-fold gifts of education and empathy that a piece like this can impart are more vital than ever. It's fitting that **MERCY KILLERS** is being presented in the nation's capital, where the fight for the future of healthcare is taking place—hopefully audiences on both side of the political divide will use this as an opportunity to remember the real lives hanging very much in the balance. *D.C. Theatre Scene*

Mesmerizing. Five stars. *The Scotsman*

First rate. **ENGAGING**. Authoritative. *Washington Post*

This is one-man theatre at its very best.
Broadway Baby

RIVETING. Recommended. *The Chicago Reader*

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Poor Box Theater presents Michael Milligan's
Mercy Killers: Healing the heart of American healthcare

Mercy Killers

Mercy Killers follows in the tradition of American playwrights including Arthur Miller, Clifford Odets, Tony Kushner and Anna Deavere Smith by capturing political and social reality in powerful narratives and unforgettable character.

When his wife is diagnosed with cancer and loses her health insurance, a blue-collar, auto mechanic grapples with the stark divide between his personal values and a new reality. Pushed to the breaking point by debt and a broken system, he battles the odds to save his wife. *Mercy Killers* is both a tender love story and an unblinking look at those who the American health care system leaves behind.

"Michael Milligan (<https://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Michael-Milligan/>) is one of those rare theatre artists who can combine his craft, intellect and activism in a perfect storm of unapologetically political performance," comments Greenhouse Theater Center's Artistic Director, Jacob Harvey. "These pieces and the issues they explore are increasingly important in our political moment, but what truly sets them apart is their unwillingness to simplify. Milligan's pieces are bipartisan and in their splendid, terrifying honesty put compelling faces to the statistics and figures we so easily grow numb to."

Since winning the prestigious Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, *Mercy Killers* has toured non-stop including productions Off-Broadway, in regional theaters, performing arts centers, universities, medical schools, church sanctuaries, and the floors of state legislatures.

Post-show discussions and forums representing varying perspectives on healthcare help foster needed dialogue and often inspire audiences to share their experiences with one another. Milligan points out, "In our polarized culture we tend to vilify one another or, rather, we accept too easily the vilification served by the beneficiaries of a divided populous. My experience acting and interacting with audiences around the country has taught me that when you get beyond the ideology and into the heart of healthcare- we share many of the same core values. Art offers an essential reminder of our shared humanity."

BIOGRAPHIES

Mercy Killers



MICHAEL MILLIGAN (*Playwright and Performer*) has appeared on Broadway: *August: Osage County*, *La Bete*, *Jerusalem*. Off Broadway: *Thom Pain*, *Mercy Killers*. *The Golem*. Chicago: *Iago* in *Othello* and *Tug of War: Civil Strife* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. *Mercy Killers* at American Theater Company. Michael will appear in the Goodman's upcoming world premiere, *Blind Date*. Michael has performed Shakespeare hither and yon with groups like the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Shakespeare Theater in DC. Alabama, Utah, Colorado, New Jersey, Milwaukee, and Illinois Shakespeare festivals, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and Shakespeare and Company. Regionally, Michael has played at the Guthrie, Westport Playhouse, The McCarter Theater, St. Louis Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse and more. Michael received the 2013 Fringe First award in Edinburgh for *Mercy Killers* which he has performed 100s of times around the country at professional theaters, universities, medical schools, libraries, union halls, community centers, and the

House of Representatives in St. Paul, Minnesota. Michael's other plays include *Phaeton* (Helen Hayes Nomination), *Heroin*, *Urgent: Aliens*, *The Sea Wolf*, and a musical adaptation of *Aesop's Fables* commissioned by Circle in the Square in NYC. Television credits include: *Law and Order*, *Person of Interest*, *The Knick*, *Chicago Justice*, and *APB*. Michael is a graduate of the Juilliard Drama Division where he received the John Houseman Prize. When not acting and writing, Michael is director of PR and Marketing for his brother's knife company, New West Knifeworks. New West has been featured in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Bon Appetit*, *Saveur*, *Fine Cooking*, *Wine Spectator*, *Forbes Life*, *Cooking Light*, *Food and Wine* and *New York Magazine* among others. Michael is also the founding artistic director of the Poor Box Theater. www.poorboxtheater.com www.newwestknifeworks.com Michael lives in Chicago.

TOM OPPENHEIM (*Director*) In his position as artistic director and president of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting for over 15 years, he has articulated a mission, engaged top faculty, structured a world-class training program and created a cultural center. He originated the Harold Clurman Laboratory Theater Company in 2002 which has since presented over twenty productions including 11 world premieres. In addition to producing all of the Lab's plays, he also directed "As You Like It" by William Shakespeare (with Steve Cook). "Songs and Statues," by Peter Nickowitz (world premiere), "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder, "What Shall I Give My Children?" by Don K. Williams (world premiere) and others. He created MAD (the Harold Clurman Center for New works in Movement and Dance Theater) a dance theater company that has presented over 30 new works, the majority of which were commissioned world premieres, and which includes Marie Gillis, Bill T. Jones and Mikhail Baryshnikov on the advisory board. He spearheaded the creation of the Harold Clurman Art Series which has presented artists including Harold Bloom, Edward Albee, John Ashbery, Julianne Moore and Harold Mabern in events that are free and open to the public. Under Oppenheim's leadership, the Stella Adler Outreach Division, a program designed to educate urban youth, was created. Since 2004, the division has provided free theater training to over 2,000 low income New York City public school students. In addition, the Stella Adler Studio of Acting trains over 500 actors per year. Oppenheim studied acting at the National Shakespeare Conservatory and with his grandmother, Stella Adler. Acting credits include the title role in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" as well as Michael in Buzz McLaughlin's "Sister Calling My Name," both with the Harold Clurman Theater Company.

First-rate... Milligan is an engaging, canny actor with a gift for natural behavior and the tics of everyday speech. He vividly shows the deep reluctance of his characters to complain while also building steam around the pressures that drive them to snap. And boy do they snap... We all know that politics is more important than theater, right? But the talk is frequently deeper and better in theater, where you have to sit, listen and think for an hour or two. Check it out, and reckon with these haggard men before deciding what we out to do next.

The Washington Post

Mercy Killers is a raw, topical piece that shows the collision of ideals and reality in a system where health and well-being go up against profits. It is a show that is very much of the zeitgeist.

Minneapolis Star Tribune

The play Obamacare needs.

The Daily Beast

Milligan is both John Steinbeck and Tom Joad, for Mercy Killers is a veritable *Grapes of Wrath* of the 21st century for ordinary American who find themselves bankrupted by forces beyond their control.

The Cracked Shamrock

BEAUTIFUL AND HEARTBREAKING

Teresa Eyring, American Theatre Magazine

Milligan's high-octant performance is raw with grief, rage and incomprehension. The stark set — a chair, a bright light and a table — highlights Joe's loneliness, inadequacy and abandonment. And by the end of the play, a for-profit health care system that is responsible for more than 60 percent of all U.S. bankruptcies is no longer just a matter of statistics. Its reality is felt like the blast of a furnace.

Chris Hedges, Truthdig

Milligan is riveting, conveying a fascinating mix of decency, heartbreak and impotent fury.

The Chicago Reader

In Mercy Killers, Michael Milligan tells profound truths about the inhuman US health care system. Weaving a gripping personal story into a powerful portrayal of working class suffering during the Great Recession, Milligan reveals the painful impacts of profit-driven health insurance.

Michael Lighty, Public Policy Director, National Nurses United

Mercy Killers is a provocative and raw emotional account of the consequences of a medical catastrophe in a family: loss of insurance and home; divorcing a loved one to benefit from indigent care; loss of dignity and moral compass; and most importantly, loss of a precious life. This fictional account is in fact the daily reality in our cancer clinics: patients losing their insurance coverage for technicalities, losing their homes because of inability to pay for mortgages, considering divorcing spouses to be eligible for indigent care, doing anything possible to save their lives, and often dying from lack of ideal care when one already exists but is not affordable to many.

Hagop Kantarjian, Chairman, MD Anderson Cancer Center

A pre-Obamacare study from 2009 found that a large percentage of Americans are one serious illness away from financial ruin. This gripping hour-long monologue by writer-performer Michael Milligan details precisely how it might happen... Milligan is riveting, conveying a fascinating mix of decency, heartbreak, and impotent fury.

Chicago Reader

There's a marvelous and mysterious kind of alchemy at work in author and actor Michael Milligan's mesmerizing, harrowing indictment of US health-care. Not only is it theatre distilled to its most basic essentials- one ordinary individual telling his story, as if to an invisible interrogator, his only props a table and chair- but it's unambiguously specific in its objectives to attack a system responsible for more than 60 percent of US personal bankruptcies.... It's also fueled by profound outrage, and yet all these elements are so skillfully and meticulously controlled, in both the writing and performance, so thoroughly transmuted in service of storytelling, drama, and characterization, that the effect is gripping first and foremost on a painfully human level, even as Milligan simultaneously delves beneath the foreground issues to the personal and national philosophies underlying the debate stateside.... Despite flashes of righteous anger, too, among the myriad emotions at work in Milligan's superbly nuanced portrayal, it's perhaps most heartbreaking of all that Joe's adherence to the traditional US credo of self-reliance leads him ultimately to blame himself.

The Scotsman, Five Stars and Fringe First Award

PROVOCATIVE AND RAW

Milligan does not so much play the role of Joe as he becomes Joe. This complete transformation changes our relationship to the action on stage in some extreme, intangible ways... the intensity of both the acting and the play's themes packs a serious punch into a short amount of time. As the self-made man is confronted by a merciless sociocultural machine, the political message is strong and timely — but the human implications are what knock us off our feet.

Aisle Say, Twin Cities