**FORT SALEM THEATER HOSTS**

**WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL**

SALEM, NY — Fort Salem Theater hosts a World Premiere Musical, *Happy If—Happy When,* written by Kimerer LaMothe, whose website defines her as a “Dancer, Philosopher, and Scholar of Religion.” Add to that, July 21-23, author of the book, music and lyrics of an original musical about a suburban family that learns to adjust to living life on a farm. Orchestrations and additional music will be provided by Geoffrey Gee.

LaMothe is the author of numerous articles and five books, including *Nietzsche’s Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Revaluation of Christian Values* (Palgrave), *Between Dancing and Writing: The Practice of Religious Studies* (Fordham), and her latest, *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming* (Columbia). She earned a PhD from Harvard University; taught at Brown and Harvard Universities; and has received fellowships for her work in dance and religion from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and the Center for the Study of World Religions, both of Harvard University.

In 2005, she and her musician life partner, husband Geoffrey Gee, moved from a comfortable home in the suburbs of Boston to a farm in the Washington County town of Hebron. Within several years, the family of five became a family of seven. For *Happy If,* Kimerer has condensed time and fictionalized the story of her family’s journey from Boston and period of adjustment to farm life. Along the way in 2011, among her other writings, the *Psychology Today* blogger penned a volume entitled, *Family Planting.*

LaMothe explains her departure from more familiar literary forms to writing a musical in her blog, “Why Write a Musical?” Frustrated by the direction of a conversation with her husband about the future early in their relationship, she found they were talking “as if everything that could make us happy were somewhere else, somewhere if and when. I did not always want to be waiting! [Happiness](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness), I cried, is not *if* or *when*. It is only and ever *now*. The phrase stuck. It guided us as we followed our dream of making art in the country, and moved with our children to this farm. Happiness … is now—always now. It is the song and dance waiting to erupt in the moment, as an affirmation of what is, if only we will let it come.”

The cast for the musical was a no-brainer: LaMothe, her husband Geoffrey, who will also musical direct and play piano onstage as part of the action, and their five children, Jordan, Jessica, Kyra, Kai, and Leif, ages twenty-one to eight. Their names have been changed as part of the negotiation for them to appear with their parents. The talented family has performed together extensively in the region, all leading to this fictionalized telling of their story. Each of the LaMothe-Gee progeny has also excelled on his/her own, including the oldest, Jordan, a 2017 graduate of Williams College who won $10,000 on a May 16, 2017, episode on the History Channel’s competition series, *Forged in Fire*.

When LaMothe decided to embark upon this project, she looked first to Fort Salem Theater, where she and the family have performed since the venue opened under new management. With a stage available, she applied for a grant administered by Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council, made possible with funds from the Decentralization Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

“We’re very excited about this show,” says the Fort’s artistic director, Jay Kerr. “The family, six of them at that point, played the Crachits in our opening show, *A Christmas Carol: The Musical.* We’ve watched the kids grow up and the whole family mature as performers. It’s been an amazing process to observe a professor take her sometimes heady philosophy and put it in tangible terms that even I can understand. The show reflects the multitude of strong values that makes this a truly remarkable family.”

The LaMothe-Gee website, [vitalartsmedia.com](http://vitalartsmedia.com), gives a full picture of the varied talents within the family, and LaMothe’s blog, at [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com), covers a multitude of interesting topics.

*Happy If — Happy When* plays for three performances, Friday and Saturday, July 21 and 22, at 8 PM, and Sunday, July 23 at 2 PM. For more information, go on the theater’s website ([fortsalemtheater.com](http://fortsalemtheater.com)) or call the box office at (518) 854-9200.