Celebrating 10 years of shedding light on mental health issues through theatre
A Note From the Founder/Artistic Director

Can you believe it's been 10 years?

When I founded this company in 2005, I loved someone dearly who was affected by mental illness and through that relationship, I became painfully aware of my own lack of knowledge, misconceptions, and limited ability to help. As I began to open up to others, I realized how many people had similar stories. So I began to dream. I dreamt of a healing space where people could openly and honestly share their experiences. I dreamt of using the power of theatre to spark richer awareness of what it means to be affected by these issues. And I dreamt of connecting people to vital resources so they wouldn’t have to face it all alone. Those dreams became Erasing the Distance.

We’ve now grown to include the consistent efforts and energy of over 30 people who make this dream a reality week in and out. From our Board of Directors, to our company of artists, from our many volunteers to our tireless staff, I am continually moved by all of the women and men who are passionate about and committed to this organization. Together we are changing the conversation about mental health!

It is because of that energized participation and commitment by so many that I can now, after over a decade as the Founder of Erasing the Distance, personally make time for the next stage in my own life, and confidently pass the torch to our next generation of leaders.

One of these leaders is Diana Clegg, our Executive Director, who has been with us now for over 5 years - half of our history! (see next page). I am also eager to bring on Erasing the Distance’s next Artistic Director who will work alongside Diana and our company of artists to ensure that we reach our next 55,000 people and beyond!

I stand in gratitude for each and every one of you and look forward to all that the future holds.

Warmly,

Brighid O’Shaughnessy
ETD Founder/Artistic Director

Who We Are:

Founded in 2005 and now seen by over 55,000 people, Erasing the Distance is a non-profit arts organization that uses the power of performance to disarm stigma, spark dialogue, educate, and promote healing surrounding issues of mental health.

Company
Angela Alise
Brenda Barrie
Heather Bodie
Jared Fernley
Katie Genualdi
Millicent Hurley
Maura Kidwell
Jennifer Mathews
Steve O’Connell
Brighid O’Shaughnessy
Wannapa Pimtong-Eubanks
Adam Poss
Ron E. Rains
Jana Ross
Craig C. Thompson
Nikki Zaleski

Staff
Diana Clegg
Executive Director
Oriana Fowler
Communications Manager
Scott Letscher
Operations Manager
Brighid O’Shaughnessy
Founder/Artistic Director
Jana Ross
Touring Manager

Mental Health Advisors
Mihaela Campion, MA, LCPC
Caren Friedman, LCSW
Rebecca Fritz, LCSW
Grady L. Garner, Jr., PhD
Jamie Pekarek Krohn, LCPC
Erin Mason, PhD
April Porter, LCSW
Jill Wolf, LCSW

Board of Directors
Daniel Griffin
President
Anthony House
Secretary
Terence O’Shaughnessy
Treasurer
Romecia Andrews-Nixon
Harry Leider
Ritu Malhotra
David Strauss

Professional photographs courtesy of: Cory Dewald, Oriana Fowler, Gabriel Horatiu Hadarean, Gretchen Kelley, John LaVere, Marc Morgan, Charlotte Shuber, and Cole Simon.

Pictured: Some of our friends & company gather to support ETD. Left to right: Anji White, Angela Alise, Jennifer Mathews, Chris Weise, Brighid O’Shaughnessy, Meredith Siemsen, Jenni Shine, Craig C. Thompson, Brenda Barrie, Trinity Murdock, Heather Bodie, David Hornreich, Adam Poss, and Jason Economus.
ETD is only possible because of the breadth of consistent and ongoing support from so many - whether you're a partner, donor, artist, or volunteer - it's the people that make it possible. While we all play different roles, together we illuminate our mission to disarm stigma and shed light on mental health issues.

People

**Angela Alise**

**ACTOR, COMPANY MEMBER**

Angela has been performing with the company since 2009. "I first found out about Erasing the Distance through an audition notice, and thought it sounded like a really cool opportunity to be part of something larger," says Angela. She was soon cast in ETD’s first high school touring show, What’s Behind Our Eyes directed by Larry Grimm, and has since performed in numerous productions. When asked about favorite moments with ETD, Angela shared the power of when the original storyteller has the opportunity to come and see their true story performed. “It’s so beautiful getting to hear someone say ‘Thank you for portraying this accurately and giving me a voice. Now I can walk into the world and share my story proudly, because I know I’m not alone.’ This work helps people to feel more freedom and erase the stigma, and I’m super thankful to be part of it.” When she is not acting with Erasing the Distance, Angela may be found on stage in Chicago, working as the Artistic Director of Prologue Theater, or as a lead singer in the band Chi-Town Soul.

**Matthew Ramir**

**STORYTELLER**

Matthew found out about Erasing the Distance after seeing a performance in college. He got in contact about sharing his own experience. After being interviewed, his words were carefully and respectfully shaped for the stage. Eventually Matthew was able to attend an ETD event where his own story was performed by a professional ETD actor alongside other true stories. "Jason Economus just did such a good job portraying me, from my body movements to how I talk, it felt very real to watch him, it felt like I was watching myself." Since then Matthew has become an advocate for Erasing the Distance. He says, "Sharing my story definitely helped me to heal. It helped to understand what I was going through and to frame it in a different way. Definitely a great experience. If you are thinking of sharing your story, definitely do. Erasing the Distance does amazing work."

Hear more from Matthew and others as part of the Vocalo Storytellers Workshop radio feature on Erasing the Distance, online at http://erasingthedistance.org/in-the-news/

**Diana Clegg**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Diana is a steadfast presence at Erasing the Distance, having been in a leadership position for over 5 years. During this time she has brought in significant grant funding, including a 3-year grant from the Chicago Community Trust; grown our infrastructure to a dynamic staff of 5 people; and led an exciting strategic planning initiative to prepare us for a long and sustainable future. Diana’s previous experience as Manager of the YWCA RISE Children’s Center and as Director of Advocacy Services at Rape Victim Advocates, plus her M.S. in Human Services Administration, provide her a deep grounding in nonprofit management with a particular focus on mental health issues.

When asked about one of her favorite moments with ETD, Diana says "I love that moment of silence at the beginning of the talkback discussion after every show, as people gather their responsive thoughts and emotions—and the consistently amazing ways people describe how moved they are by ETD performances."

Diana brings thoughtful leadership to Erasing the Distance, and we joyfully anticipate where she will take us next, heading forward alongside the company’s next Artistic Director!
Public Performances

In 2015, our 10th anniversary year, Erasing the Distance produced a robust Artistic Season, with four fully staged productions each performed in a different neighborhood of Chicago. We included expanded and more in-depth versions of previously performed stories, as well as new world premieres. Thanks to positive reviews and the support of our audiences, the 10th anniversary season was incredible! Over 50% of our audiences were new to Erasing the Distance - thank you for spreading the word! We hope you are able to join us for an upcoming production - mark your calendar now for the 2016 PopUp Series!

Will You Stand Up?
MARCH 2015 AT CENTER ON HALSTED

“I’m learning what peace is for me, ’cause it ain’t the same thing for everybody,” says KOKUMO, one of the storytellers in Will You Stand Up? In this production, we witness five men and women find their voices, confront their pasts, and challenge their communities to action in this visceral production about the various effects of violence on mental health. WYSU has been a longstanding signature production with ETD, having been mounted 2 other times and brought back to life due to its incredible impact and power. Directed by ETD Founder/Artistic Director, Brighid O’Shaughnessy.

Featuring company members Brenda Barrie and Craig C. Thompson, alongside Bryan Bosque, Ronnel Taylor and Penelope Walker

Stage Manager: Kit Ryan
Lighting Design: Becca Jeffords

“Five powerful monologues... obviously shaped with care, both as individual pieces, and in their arrangement into a single work. Tremendously effective.”
—Edge Chicago

Veterans Voices
MAY 2015 AT RIVENDELL THEATRE

Veterans Voices brings the stories of real veterans and their family members to the stage, and sheds light on the difficulties so many have when our servicemen and women return home from war.

Originally created in 2013 by Erasing the Distance in partnership with students from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TSCPP), the expanded 2015 version of Veterans Voices was directed by company member Heather Bodie.

Featuring Amy J. Carle, Alice da Cunha, Jaclyn Hennell, Tom McElroy, and Charles Stransky

Stage Manager: Genevieve Garcia
Lighting Design: Diane D. Fairchild
Sound Design: Nick Selesky

“Top-shelf... graceful, passionate actors... resulting in performances that are both thought-provoking and emotionally harrowing.”
—Chicago Reader
**Coming Home**

**AUGUST 2015 AT THE HISTORIC SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ART CENTER**

The world premiere of *Coming Home* featured 5 African-American stories of homelessness, addiction, self-injury, depression, and other mental health challenges - and the actions the storytellers take to find peace in their lives. Directed by company member Ron E. Rains.

**Featuring Company Member** Angela Alise, alongside Greg Geffrard, Tiffany Renee Johnson, TayLar, and Ronnel Taylor

**Stage Manager:** Kit Ryan

““What an amazing performance! The whole experience including the discussion afterward was so meaningful. You are raising awareness and giving people a voice. Thank you.””

—Audience Member

**Tell Me What You Remember**

**NOVEMBER 2015 AT FILAMENT THEATRE**

*Tell Me What You Remember* tells the true story of one family’s life-altering battle with depression across generations, using their distinct journey to illustrate universal truths. This was a remount of the production that was initially the culmination of ETD’s year-long Depression in Families Project in 2014, co-commissioned by Rebecca’s Dream and led by the creative team of Producer Brighid O’Shaughnessy, Director/ETD Company Member Nikki Zaleski, and adapted by Gedalya Chinn.

**Featuring Company Member** Jennifer Mathews, alongside Dana Black, Don Bender, Tom Dacey Carr and Eileen Vorbach

**Stage Manager:** Rachel Staelens

**Scenic Design:** Jacob Watson

**Lighting Design:** Diane D. Fairchild

**Sound Design:** Matthew Chapman

**Audio Engineering:** Nick Selesky

**Video Design:** Liviu Pasare

““Finely acted and evocatively staged...asks some of the hard questions we encounter in the course of growing up and growing old.””

—Chicago Reader

**Get Connected**

**Web:** Visit us at www.erasingthedistance.org

**Facebook:** “Like” us at www.facebook.com/erasingthedistance

**Twitter:** Follow us at twitter.com/erasedistance

**YouTube:** www.youtube.com/ErasingTheDistance
**Touring**

Since 2005, Erasing the Distance has toured to over 100 different private & community locations, bringing our mission to people at conferences, colleges and universities, high schools, hospitals, faith groups and more.

*REPEAT CLIENTS*
1st Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn®
1st United Methodist Church at Chicago Temple®
2nd Annual School Mental Health Conference
8th Annual School Based Health Center Conference
Access Living
Adler School of Professional Psychology®
Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital
Al Raby High School®
Alexian Brothers Hospital®
Art of Recovery Conference
Ashwaubenon High School
Asian American Suicide Prevention Initiative®
Association House®
B’nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim
Bethany Methodist Hospital®
Butte College, Chico, CA
Cathedral Counseling Center
Chicago High School for the Arts
Chicago Mindful Psychotherapy
Church of the Brethren
Clemente Academy®
College of Lake County
Community Counseling Centers of Chicago
Conferences in Schools of Chicago®
Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center®
Congregation Rodfei Zedek
Darwin Elementary
DCFS Latino Family Institute Conference
DePaul University®
Dominican University®
Eastern Illinois University®
Elgin Mental Health Center®
Elk Grove Village High School
Elmhurst College
Family Shelter Service
First Christian Church of Gurnee
First United Methodist Church at Chicago Temple®
Flourish Studios
Glenbrook South High School
Greater Humboldt Park’s Community of Wellness
Behavioral Health Forum
Grimes School®
Hanover Township Cook County Board
Harold Washington College®
Harper College®
Harry S Truman College®
Haymarket Treatment Center
Hebrew Theological College
Highland Park High School®
IL Children’s Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP) & Illinois Afterschool Network (IAN) Conference
Illinois Institute of Technology
Illinois School Social Workers Conference®
Illinois United for Youth (DHS)
Indiana Association of Behavioral Health Consultants Annual Conference
Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture
John Hersey High School
John Hope Community Academy
Josselyn Center
Kennedy-King College®
Kinder Giving
Lake County Center for Independent Living®
Lake-McHenry Veterans and Family Services®
Lake Forest High School®
Latin School of Chicago
Loyola Academy®
Loyola University®
Lubavitch Girls High School
Marce Society Postpartum Depression Conference
Marquette Elementary School
Marsh Elementary School
McHenry County Mental Health Board
Mental Health America of Illinois
Mercy Housing®
Meyer Theater
NAMI Metro Suburban
NAMI National Convention
NAMI of Greater Chicago
Naomi Roth Cohen Institute’s Community Mental Health Conference
National Museum of Mexican Art
New Life Covenant Church®
Next Steps, nfp
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
North Central College®
North Lawndale College Prep High School®
North Park University and Seminary
Northside College Preparatory High School®
Norwegian American Hospital®
Oak Park River Forest High School®
Oakton Community College®
OCD Chicago
Ohio Wesleyan University
Olive Harvey College®
Proviso West High School
Rebecca’s Dream®
Regina Dominican High School®
Response Center - JCF&S Program®
Richard J Daley College®
Rolling Meadows High School®
Roosevelt High School
Rush Presbyterian Hospital
Schüler Scholars
Skokie Public Library
Sonia Shankman School of Orthogenics
Stevenson High School
St. Gregory High School
St. Patrick’s High School®
Takeda Pharmaceuticals®
Temple Chai
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology®
Therapy Space, LLC
Thresholds
Thrive’s Annual Gala
Trinity, Inc®
Trinity High School®
Turning Point®
United Methodist Church of Libertyville
Unity Church of Chicago
University of Chicago Laboratory High School
University of Chicago®
University of Illinois at Chicago®
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
VW Credit, Inc
Whitney Young High School®
Wilbur Wright College®

10 Years of impact using the power of performance to disarm stigma and promote healing surrounding issues of mental health. Here’s to 10 more years!
Education

After seeing one of our productions, many people are curious to learn more about what we do. Our process of collecting, transcribing, and shaping true stories for the stage is unique and can be an exciting and relevant process for many groups looking to deepen their understanding of documentary theater, build their skills as future clinicians, or become mental health advocates in their communities.

Al Raby High School

Throughout three years of partnership, students at this high school located on Chicago’s West Side had a chance to learn more about mental health, share and perform their own stories in front of family members and peers as well as spark needed dialogue in their communities about issues such as depression and trauma.

University of Illinois at Chicago, Asian American Studies Program

Through a semester long partnership on campus, students ultimately collected and shaped stories for the stage from individuals of Asian, Indian and Middle Eastern descent. The final result: the world premiere of The Small, Dark Room which was performed for public audiences as well as the UIC community!

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

Over the course of three years, students and future clinicians learned our methodology of story collection and shaping mental health stories for the stage. The work resulted in three world premiere productions: Finding Peace in this House, In Less than A Day, and Veterans Voices, as well as strengthened students’ capacity to work with people experiencing mental health issues.

St. Patrick’s High School

Throughout 2014 – 2015, students in Theatre and Communication classes had the chance to share and perform their own stories about mental health with one another. This deepened their own understanding of the power of documentary theater, which they are studying in school, and also built and strengthened connections among the young men themselves.
IGNITE 2016
A Benefit for Erasing the Distance

April 24, 2016 from 5:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Irish American Heritage Center

All proceeds will directly support ETD’s work as a 501c3 non-profit.

2016 PopUp Series
Unexpected Performances in Unexpected Places

FEBRUARY - LOVE
Produced by Nikki Zaleski

MAY - FORGIVENESS
Produced by Jana Ross

AUGUST - ADDICTION
Produced by Wannapa Pimtong-Eubanks and Heather Bodie

NOVEMBER - MASCULINITY
Produced by Jared Fernley