

Ripples

from the Community Circle Players at Riverwalk Theatre

Season 31 • Number 3
October, 2019

228 Museum Dr. • PO Box 12249 • Lansing, MI 48901 • 517-482-5700 • Office Hours: Tues.-Fri. 10 am to 5:30 pm • e-mail: RWT@riverwalktheatre.com • web site: RiverwalkTheatre.com

The story of Reading, Pennsylvania at the turn of the 21st century is by now a familiar one: workers fighting for their jobs as the mills and factories that supported them falter.

The story of Reading and its people – their unions, their hopes, dreams and fears – is told in *Sweat*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama by Lynn Nottage which comes to Riverwalk

Theatre October 3-6 and 10-13.

“It’s a play about people they don’t write plays about,” said George Popovich, who directs *Sweat* at Riverwalk. “It’s gritty; it’s real.”

Popovich spent part of his childhood in Youngstown, Ohio, which also rose to 20th century prosperity as a steel town, where there was always a smell of burning coal in the air and his grandfather carried a black lunch pail to work at the mill.

“That’s kind of what got me into this,” he said of directing *Sweat*. But multiple themes examined in the play give it a broad appeal, including economic struggles, racial tension, the changing of the middle class and the opioid crisis – heavy topics made human through the characters.



Maureen Sawdon (L) amuses Rose Jangmi Cooper as Scott Pohl looks on (and Madeline Nash sleeps through)

PHOTO BY WWW.ARNIKO.COM

The show is rated R for violence, adult language, adult humor and content.

Don’t expect a downer, though. “There’s a lot of humor,” Popovich said.

He doesn’t think that *Sweat* comes off as either pro-union or anti-union. “You’ve got both sides,” he said.

Reading’s population has dwindled since steel-related employment disappeared, and its geography doesn’t help attempts

to create new prosperity. Tucked between mountains, it’s surrounded by miles of forest and peaks before you get to another city of any size. “It communicates a feeling of being trapped,” Popovich said. “You’ve got to drive for a couple of hours to get somewhere.”

The cast includes Lekeathon Wilson as Chris, Maureen Sawdon as Tracey, Rose Jangmi Cooper as Cynthia, Connor Kelly as Jason, Scott Pohl as Stan, Madeline Nash as Jessie, Edward (Eddie) Heldt as Oscar and Julian Van Dyke as Evan and Brucie.

Popovich can’t say enough about the cast. “This is one of the best energies I’ve ever had in the rehearsal room,” he said. “I really love to go to rehearsals and I can’t say I’ve always said that.”

Kathleen Lavey

WHAT’S ON AT RIVERWALK

October 3-6 & 10-13 **SWEAT** - Pulitzer Prize-Winning drama - Director: George Popovich

Oct. 24-27 & Oct. 31-Nov. 3 - **A PIECE OF MY HEART** - true drama, Director: Diane Cooke

Nov. 9 - 7pm - **SLIP AND FALL** - comedy by Roger Rochowiak - **staged reading** - Free of charge; donations accepted.

November 29-December 1 & 5-8 - **YOU’RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN** - family musical - Director: Jean Burk

December 8 and 9, Sun/Mon, 7 pm, **AUDITIONS for A Hotel on Marvin Gardens**, Director: Mary K. Hodges-Mees (performs March 12-22, 2020)

December 15 and 16, Sun/Mon, 7 pm, **AUDITIONS for Unnecessary Farce** - Director: Jeff Magnuson (performs February 6-16, 2020)

December 20-22 - **HOLIDAY CHEER** musical variety - Director: Meghan Eldred-Woolsey

January 16-19 & 23-26, **BOY GETS GIRL** - sexual politics thriller - Director: Brian Farnham

PLAYS: 7 pm Thurs.; 8 pm Fri. & Sat.; 2 pm Sun. Fri./Sat./Sun. \$15 (\$12 sr/student/military) **Bargain Thursdays \$10/\$8**

MUSICALS: 7 pm Thursdays; 8 pm Fri./Sat.; 2 pm Sundays \$24 (\$20 sr/student/military) (\$12 age 12 & under)

BLACK BOX SHOWS: 7 pm Thursdays; 8 pm Fridays & Saturdays; 2 pm Sundays \$12 (\$10 sr/student/military) **Bargain Thursdays \$10/\$8**

AUDITIONS - more info at <https://www.riverwalktheatre.com/auditions.html>

SPECIAL EVENT: see website

Arts Academy Students Visit RWT

Almost 300 students from the Lansing Public Schools’ Dwight Rich School of the Arts visited Riverwalk on September 4 and 5 and learned how to



A student wrestles with a cobra in the Prop Loft

use their talents to take advantage of opportunities in community theatre. Students spent the visit exploring the many onstage and backstage roles available to them at RWT.

Under the guid-

ance of Janell Hall (the school’s theatre teacher, and award winning RWT actress) and Joni Starr (Arts Integration Consultant), 4th, 6th and 7th grade classes learned about performance, design and backstage production from RWT volunteers.

Students explored Set and Lighting Design, Properties Organi-

—continued on page 2



A student discovers a gruesome treasure in the Prop Loft

Arts Academy continued from page 1

zation, Performance and Set Building. Adam Carlson and Joni Starr led tours of the Rehearsal Hall, Furniture Storage, Scene Shop, Green Room and Prop Loft and discussed how each area supports play production.

LeRoy Cupp and Leon Green were in the Scene Shop to answer questions about

set building. Students met Sandy Norton and Carol Ferris in the Prop Loft and saw the wide-ranging RWT collection. With the *Pippin* set on the Rotary Main Stage as a backdrop, Tom Ferris, with Danny Ferris' and Sue Chmurynsky's assistance, demonstrated how sets are designed and how stage lighting focuses attention and changes character, mood and time of day.

Janell Hall led the students in stage movement and vocal variety on the Black Box Stage. Althea Phillips and Lee Helder helped guide students to each session during the day.

The RWT volunteers emphasized that there are roles for everyone at RWT and encouraged the students to work hard at their school to develop their talents.

Tom Ferris

REVIEW

Pippin breaks the Fourth Wall in Style

Riverwalk Theatre opened its season this year similar to last year with a dark and macabre trip through the murkier parts of the human condition. *Pippin* was a show with many layers. On the first layer was a circus atmosphere. This was evident once you walked in and took your seat. In addition to normal house lights, there was drapery and soft lighting strung throughout the theater, giving it the feel of a circus tent.

Beneath this layer was the story of Charlemagne, a ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, and his family. While this show was funny, it also could get quite dark. This was done by the actors not so much leaning on the fourth wall, as taking a large hammer and smashing their way through said wall, figuratively gripping the audience by their arms, and yanking them into the atmosphere of this circus act.

That being said, the performers in this show were fantastic. With an amazing stage presence and impressive voice, Rachel Cupples had the role of the "Leading Player," sort of a circus ringmaster/narrator/adversary for both the audience, and Pippin. The titular character was played Adam Woolsey, who once again demonstrated his astounding vocal range and impeccable theatrical timing skills. Pippin was the son of Charlemagne, who was played hilariously by Drew Doman. Other members of this royal "family" were Pippin's "average ordinary" (not) housewife stepmother Fastrada played by Tricia Rogers, and her lunkheaded narcissistic son, played by Robert Mueller. In a featured scene, we also were treated to Oralya Garza playing



Adam Woolsey as Pippin inspired by Rachael Cupples as The Leading Player

PHOTO BY WWW.ARINIKO.COM

Pippin's lively grandmother Berthe. Wonderful voices and acting all around for the royal family. Rounding out the leads in the production were Sarah Hayner as Catherine, mother to Theo (Camryn Cardwell), a single mother and stubborn hilarious son that played an important part in Pippin's development.

The ensemble for this show, made up of a group of "players" really stood out to this reviewer. Wyatt Anthony, Erin Biel, Alaina Brenner, Zack Freeman, Mandy Fuller, Jackson Hall, Kelly Lofton, Alexis Loy-Alberta, Kathryn Mulcahy, Kristin Pagels, and Gabe Pitman really brought their all to every number, with delightfully diverse costuming (Kris Maier and Chris Kennedy), hauntingly interesting makeup (Laura Croff),

and hairstyles by Lori Bailey Smith to match.

The choreography by Amanda Tollstam really played into the surreal macabre theming behind the show. It was mildly suggestive in some spots, and in no way did this show ever try to hide that it was for mature audiences only.

John Dale Smith's music direction, delivered in tandem with Leon Green's sound mixing, was powerful and really helped keep the audience immersed in the show.

The set and lighting really brought the audience into the atmosphere. James Brunk III once again displayed his command of light and shadow to create a compelling lighting design, all placed on a minimalist but very clever set designed by Aja Jenks. The scenography (Eric Chatfield) was particularly pretty to look at.

Special mention goes to Deb Keller and her silk-artist aerialists; Michelle Danag, Maria McCarthy and Keeley Robinson. These ladies displayed their talents before each act briefly, and in some numbers during the show. They were worth the price of admission alone.

Director Meghan Eldred-Woolsey should be extremely proud of the cast and crew she assembled in this endeavor. *Pippin* is an extremely entertaining and thought-provoking show. This reviewer was still piecing together his thoughts on it a day later. Riverwalk's season opener really set the bar for what is sure to be a great season of theater. See you at the next one!

Cody Skalmowski

A U D I T I O N S



Due to work conflicts with our original director, Bob Purosky has heroically taken over direction of *Charlie Brown*. He did a great job taking over the hit musical *Spamalot* last year, when health issues removed its original director — so we know Bob can save the day on this show, too! We're also pleased to have accomplished musician Jeff English back at Riverwalk as Music Director.

We know this is a change from the original audition calendar. If you planned on those original dates and cannot make any of the new dates, please contact the director, Bob Purosky, at bpurosky@abem.org or call/text 517-290-4930. There is a video option, though in-person auditions will have obvious advantages.

NEW Audition dates: NEXT THURSDAY & FRIDAY 9/26-27 @7pm with callbacks on 9/29 @2pm

Production dates: 11/29-12/1 and 12/5-8, 2019

Please prepare a vocal number around 32 measures in similar musical style. Jeff English will provide accompaniment. Wear clothes for movement and be prepared to learn a dance combo. Line readings at callbacks only.

Charlie Brown: Male, Lead, Baritone
Lucy Van Pelt: Female, Lead, Mezzo-Soprano
Linus Van Pelt: Male, Supporting, Baritone
Schroeder: Male, Supporting, Tenor
Sally Brown: Female, Supporting, Soprano
Snoopy: Gender?, Supporting, Tenor

These are all adult roles, though Snoopy has more flexibility. He/she could be any age/gender, but is the wildest, most physical character.

Production Team:
 Director: Bob Purosky
 Music Director: Jeff English
 Choreographer: Amanda Tollstam
 AD/Stage Manager: Michele Booher-Purosky
 Asst. Stage Manager: Patty Wieber

PERUSAL SCRIPTS for all shows are available at the Riverwalk office, Tuesday - Friday, 10 am - 5:30 pm. Call 517-482-5700 to check availability: rwt@RiverwalkTheatre.com audition forms are available online at www.riverwalktheatre.com/auditions.html

Mary Jobin and Daphne Louise Prescott - Lobby Artists



MARY JOBIN - Growing up in a large family in Williamston and loving the outdoors gave Mary Jobin the time to be creative. At a very young age, she would be drawing or sketching with anything she could find. Back then, the sidewalk was her canvas! Over the years, she's experimented with a variety

of media and found oil paint to be her favorite. She enjoys painting from life/on location or from photos using the "ala prima" technique which is, wet paint into wet paint. Mary gets her inspiration from the beauty of the places she finds while hiking, the beautiful architecture of Europe, and the challenge of capturing the expressions of people or animals. Mary tries to express the uniqueness of each subject and to capture the atmosphere of the place to invite the viewer into the painting. This is her passion!



DAPHNE LOUISE PRESCOTT - Over the course of her childhood and early adult life, Daphne has always had an interest in various media and forms of Art. Her grandmother was an artist with a studio in Manchester, Vermont and her mother also enjoyed experimenting with

various mediums. After many years of college, marriage, teaching and raising her two sons, she finally decided to follow her passion and begin to paint with watercolors. She especially loves watercolor painting because she loves its fresh, luminous and transparent qualities. Watercolor offers her endless opportunities to blend both spontaneity and control. She paints the things she loves including flowers, landscapes, birds and nature, with influences from the Asian and European background that she had growing up.

Have you EXPIRED?

RWT membership runs July - June.

Revenue from membership funds at least a quarter of our show budgets as well as general operations. Keep Riverwalk thriving for years to come!

Actor — \$15-24, Ripples, voting on board members & Members Choice favorite show award.

Technician — \$25-49, Ripples, voting, program listing

Stage Manager — \$50-99, Ripples, voting, program listing, and one comp ticket

Director — \$100-249, Ripples, voting, program listing, two comp tickets

Producer — \$250-499, Ripples, voting, program listing, four comp tickets

Star — \$500-999, Ripples, voting, program listing, six comps, name on theatre seat

Angel — \$1000+, Ripples, voting, program listing, 12 comp tickets, name on a theatre seat and on the donor board in the lobby

IT'S EASY TO JOIN OR RENEW:

Go to riverwalktheatre.com. Click "more" then "get involved" to join online. Or just mail/give a check to Mike at the office, P.O. Box 12249, Lansing 48901. We're 501c3 tax deductible.

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Riverwalk Theatre

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Direct a Play? Submission Deadline **October 15**

Submit no more than four scripts, total, and indicate, for each, whether it is being submitted for the Black Box or the Main Stage.

NEW THIS YEAR - Black box directors will be expected to hold auditions.

Original scripts are not typically selected as full productions. We plan a staged reading series that includes original or previously unproduced works.

The Season Selection Committee suggests the following scripts that it believes would be successful. A script from this list it will be counted separately from your four-script limit.

Fences - Available through Samuel French

Once On This Island - Available through Music Theatre International

Murder on the Orient Express - Available through Samuel French

Sweeney Todd - Available through Music Theatre International

Jesus Christ Superstar - Available through The Musical Company

1. Download and to fill out the submission form available at <https://www.riverwalktheatre.com/submit-a-play.html>
2. Include a resume of your theatre experience.
3. Include a copy of the script.

Send us a perusal script with your paper work, if you need help with this, Mike in our box office is happy to help. (517-482-5700)

Email your paperwork and script to RWT@RiverwalkTheatre.com - OR - Deliver to the box office, 228 Museum Drive during our hours of operation - OR Mail to Riverwalk Theatre P.O. Box 12249, Lansing MI 48901

You will be contacted to arrange for a brief interview concerning your proposal. Interviews will be held October 26, 2019.

Rita Deibler and Matt Ottinger
 Season Selection Committee Chairs

PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING DRAMA

by Lynn Nottage

OCTOBER 3-6 AND 10-13, 2019

Generously underwritten by
 Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives

SWEAT

Rated R
 for violence, adult
 language, adult
 humor and content.



On our
 Rotary
 Main Stage

Tickets:

Adult: \$15

Military/Senior/Student: \$12

Bargain Thursdays: \$10/8

Thursdays: 7pm

Fri/Saturdays: 8pm

Sundays: 2pm

Directed by George Popovich

For tickets call 517.482.5700

or visit

www.RiverwalkTheatre.com



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