

Ripples

from the Community Circle Players at Riverwalk Theatre

Season 30 • Number 9

April, 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



Carmichael has been on a quest for years to find his severed left hand – and now the quest brings him to a room in a seedy hotel to meet with a man and woman who say they can help.

This is the setup of the black comedy *A Behanding in Spokane*, which takes the stage in Riverwalk Theatre's Black Box March 28-31 and April 4-7, directed by Heath Sartorius.

Playwright Martin McDonagh is known for other theater work, including two trilogies set in County Galway, Ireland; those plays include *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. *A Behanding in Spokane* is his first play set in the United States. He also wrote and directed the Oscar-nominated *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* and won an Oscar in 2006 for the short live-action film *Six Shooter*.

Sartorius first saw *A Behanding in Spokane* in 2015 at Western Michigan University.

"It's really edgy humor, really dark humor, which I enjoy," he said. "The setup is kind of like a drug deal in a hotel gone bad, except instead of drugs, they're trading hands. It's just off the wall."

John Lerma plays Carmichael, the man searching for his hand. Ndegwa McCloud and Rebecca MacCreery play Toby and Marilyn, who claim they have Carmichael's missing body part. Hunter Folleth plays Mervyn, the nosy hotel receptionist, who many critics agree has the show's best monologue.

Sartorius warns that the language in *Behanding* is raw, with swear words and racial slurs. There's also an open flame onstage.

"There's a lot of dark language," he said. "There is a lot of tension that gets released."

The show is a Riverwalk swan song for Sartorius, who grew up in Okemos and studied in Lansing Community College's theater program, as he heads for New York City after the production ends.

He said he appreciates the opportunities Riverwalk has given him.

"It has given me a community where I've gotten good work and good roles and I've gotten to play everything," including a turn as Jesus in *The A-Train Plays*, Riverwalk's Black Box production in February. We wish Heath well in his journey!

Kathleen Lavey

WHAT'S ON AT RIVERWALK

■ March 28-31 & April 4-7 - **A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE** - black comedy; adult language - Director: Heath Sartorius

📅 April 26 - May 5 - 7 pm Fridays; 2 & 7 pm Saturdays; 3pm Sundays - **THE WIZARD OF OZ**

Director: Tom Ferris; music director: James Geer; with All-of-us Express Children's Theatre; performed at E.L. Hannah Community Center 819 Abbot Rd

■ May 9-12 & 16-19 - **FREUD'S LAST SESSION** - intriguing debate with C.S. Lewis - Director: Rob Roznowski

🎵 June 6-9 & 13-16 - **HAIRSPRAY**, musical comedy - Director: Sarah Hayner; Music: Angie Schwab

★ Saturday, June 22, 1 pm **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

★ Tuesday, June 25, 7 pm **ANNUAL BARNEY AWARDS** with show and reception

🎟️ **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)

📅 **FAMILY SHOW:** adults \$12 age 18+, children \$10; for tickets, call (517) 333-2580, ext. 0 or go to www.showtix4u.com Tickets \$10/12, call (517) 333-2580, ext. 0 or at www.showtix4u.com

■ **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 RiverwalkTheatre.com

★ **SPECIAL EVENT:** see website



The Elephant Man is a well written and engaging play that is thought-provoking and cathartic. It provides us with an opportunity to explore our own “John Merrick” qualities and makes us think them through to a place where we can comfortably learn to live with them, or change them.

Cellist Molly Rebeck maintained an undercurrent to the production that assured the difficult moments had a soft landing place. This was a wonderful addition to the production and an excellent choice by Director Amy Rickett – one of many solid choices. The set orchestrated by Leroy Cupp and Bob Nees supported the production without being overwhelming, assuring that only those items that were needed to create the appropriate picture were in place, and used appropriately.

There were standouts among the cast. There always are. But though I enjoyed everyone in the show, for me the “stealer” scenes were the Pinheads. I am always pleased to see Laura Croff on stage, but am even more pleased when seeing her play multiple roles that are so completely different from each other. I had the opportunity to bring a friend to the show (who knows Laura) and he didn’t even realize it was her in the multiple roles until he saw the photo board in the lobby at intermission. That’s good acting! Eve Davidson has been a pleasure to watch for years, and I am glad to see her in this production. It’s as if the presence of a veteran helps to elevate the entire production, and makes any “bumpy” parts

more forgivable. The chemistry and comfort between the two was completely convincing and interesting to watch.

James Houska as Dr. Treves was creative in the choices he made, displayed a broad acting spectrum, and was spot on in his delivery. Here’s another actor that I would love to see more of, in meaty roles with lots of depth. He deserves it, and so do we.

Steve Ledyard is always fun to watch. He takes great care to assure his characters are very different from each other – a skill this entire cast modeled well! And who can make a better pompous arrogant priest face than Steve? I think he’s cornered that market! I enjoyed his change in dialects between characters. His Portrayal of Ross was big and dynamic and I loved to hate him.

Joe Clark and Alexander Smith delivered solid performances throughout the production. Filling in those areas that needed filling, to assure that the audience didn’t miss any significant event in John Merrick’s life. These are not the parts that people usually seek out for their lack of shiny-potential notoriety, but if they weren’t there, the play would suffer greatly. Multiple roles seems to be a strength and talent of this cast, providing the audience with an opportunity to witness a true ensemble create magic within their element.

This brings me to Merrick himself. Quite honestly, I had doubts. Not about the skill level of Mr. Magnuson, we’ve all witnessed the strength of his acting ability. Doubts like, will he fit the character? I’ve always seen this part portrayed by someone smaller, more meek, less threatening. I wondered how Jeff would compensate for that. Then...there is the question of a wife having the ability to direct

her husband. It never worked for me, but maybe she’s got skills I don’t have! None of my business. But walking into the theatre, I’ll admit I did wonder about it. Would I witness the struggle between visions that had nothing to do with the play? Was it a stretch or a favor or a...something...crafted out of convenience rather than meeting the needs of the play?

But from the moment Mr. Magnuson stood in front of us as Dr. Treves recited the description of Mr. Merrick’s condition, I was once and completely sold. All of that external noise in my head was drowned out by watching him slowly transform as layer after layer of John Merrick covered and consumed Jeff Magnuson. I’ve seen this show. I’ve read this show. Yet I heard lines delivered by Merrick that I have never heard or read before – not that I haven’t – just that the way they were delivered, the thought behind them brought my experience to a different place. How can you hear words a hundred times, and never really have heard them until they are said through the right instrument?

I don’t want to say this show was “good” or that you should have seen it, (dare I say it) in support of your local community theatre. That’s not what this show is for. You should have seen it because it would have made you think. It would have made you feel something – it would have reminded you of a perspective which has been softly playing in the background, or real things, real people, real stories that need to be shared.

When I walked out of the door – after having watched two full acts – I felt better than when I came in. I had trouble sleeping because I was thinking about various elements – the way the light hit the model of the church; the efficiency of Michelle Smith, Tracy Smith, Kaelyn Smith and Taylor Smith, all in black, moving as if choreographed from one task to the next with precision; Leon Green’s gentle touch as sound of the Cello rose from the darkness; the fading of Richard Chapman and Cambray Sampson’s lights as they ushered us from one memory to the next; the teacups chosen by Sandy Norton to rest on John Merrick’s tray; Amanda Macomber’s careful variation between Mrs. Kendal’s dress and the Countess and the Duchess, adding a different element to all of the characters. An ensemble. Guided with the light hand of Amy Rickett and Marcus Fields, who seemed to know exactly when to allow the ponies to run, and when to guide them back into step. This is the kind of theatre I like to see.

Oralya Garza

A Serenade to Membership-

I joined Community Circle Players back in 1972 when we were at the Okemos Barn. Dear departed backstage stalwart Marcia Voigt (yes, the name on the Rehearsal Hall door) worked with me at The John Henry Company. She told me about *Sweet Charity* auditions, and I was hooked.

To be honest, I was hooked before that — on theatre as a “way of life.” I wrote and staged scripts in our basement as a kid. I got through a not-pretty-enough-to-be-a-cheerleader adolescence with the help of Kalamazoo Junior Civic Theatre and Kalamazoo Community Youth Theatre.

Many of you know I’m “The G.L.U.T. Lady” (Greater Lansing Ubiquitous Theatre) seeing way too many shows and emailing reviews and theatre news. (www.greaterlansingtheatre.net; email jzussman@gmail.com to be added to the list.) I love all the theatres, and I am a member/contributor to a few others... but hey, this is Riverwalk we’re talking about. So why, *particularly*, am I a member here?

Of course no theatre is “perfect” but I feel like this one is my best investment — in both membership dues and volunteer time and effort. It’s a good balance of stability, accessibility, and excellence.

It struggles, financially, as all theatres do, and thus requires more than ticket-sale revenue to survive — but it’s well established enough that it *will* survive, even if a few “indispensible” people are lost.

Thanks to the faith and hard work of “Godparents” Bill Helder, Tom Ferris, Bob Mellor and Leonor Reizen, and many other members, we renovated and then purchased our warehouse/theatre home after being booted from the Barn by benevolent landowners, Delta Dental. (The charm and tenacity of the godparents assured that Delta was one of our initial donors to the Capital Campaign to create Riverwalk.)

Bottom line is, it’s not just “my show” that’s important to me. Membership in Riverwalk supports the institution of community theatre where participants and audience can share that “live theatre” experience. Thank goodness for this place where a wi-i-i-ide variety of appearances, ages, types, skills (backstage and onstage) can come together in service of the same goal: the show must go on!

Jane Shipley Zussman

Why are YOU a member of Riverwalk Theatre?

Share your story on the Riverwalk Facebook page and you can also email it to: JSZussman@gmail.com to get it printed in *Ripples*. (Send a photo, too! ... or I can steal one from Facebook.)

Riverwalk depends on membership for over a quarter of our revenue. Be a part of the foundation that ensures we will be here for actors, back-stagers and audiences for many years to come.



YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, 2014
PHOTO BY LUKEANTHONYPHOTO.COM

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to BECOME A
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Each Riverwalk MEMBER is a part of the FOUNDATION that supports Riverwalk for the benefit of all theatre lovers! Revenue from membership funds at least a quarter of our show budgets as well as general operations. Keep Riverwalk thriving for years to come! The Membership fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30:

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

Technician — \$25-49,
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Director — \$100-249, Ripples, voting, program listing, two comp tickets

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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

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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**ADULT language,
 themes, and
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Martin McDonagh's

A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE

March 28-31 & April 4-7, 2019

A comedy dark as pitch.
 Directed by Heath Sartorius



Thursdays: 7pm
 Fri/Saturdays: 8pm
 Sundays: 2pm

Tickets:
 Adult: \$12
 Military/Senior/Student: \$10

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