

Ripples

from the Community Circle Players at Riverwalk Theatre

Season 35 • Number 8

May, 2024

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

James & the Giant Peach Rolls Into RWT

Director Linda Widener has “done it all” since playing Kate Keller in *The Miracle Worker* in 1983 back when Community Circle Players were at the Okemos Barn. She’s served as actor, producer, lighting technician, scene shop worker, set painter, director and more—as well as being a longtime member of the Riverwalk Board.

She submitted to direct *Shrek*, which fell victim to the Covid season, and the next year went on tour, so rights were not available this season. She reports, “I wanted a show that had similar themes and *James and the Giant Peach* fit the bill.”

When James is sent by his conniving aunts to chop down their old peach tree, a magic potion results in a supersized peach and supersized new insect friends—and a journey of enormous proportions. This family musical will delight all ages with magic, adventure, and a heartfelt look at what makes a family and a home.

Wow Factors include: the giant peach set created with fortitude and creativity by Leroy Cupp, Bob Nees and Tom Ferris; a wonderful array of fabulous puppets by the uber-creative Adam Carlson; creature costumes (Morgan Pohl) and makeup to match (Lane Soupal) promise to round out the magic.

The cast features the incredible vocal talents of Luka Pawsek (Ladahlord), Brian Farnham (Grasshopper), Ava Taube (Ladybug), Sophia Charles-Bernard (Spider), Garrett Manor (Centipede) and Riley Hirai (Earthworm). Joyce Kramer (Spiker) and Holly Kay Cannon (Sponge) are a hoot, clearly relishing their roles as the atrocious aunts!

Linda feels fortunate to have Nicholas Pasko (James) along with Miles McEvoy (James understudy). It’s inspiring to watch these young actors (12 and 11) meet the challenges of this very demanding lead role.

The ensemble is made up of 19 wonderful players in multiple roles. They are all funny, engaging and tapping into the emotions needed to convey the ac-



tion. Linda says, “Working with such a large cast with such a wide age range has been challenging and I have been impressed by the level of commitment each has given to this show.”

Some cast members’ additional talents have been tapped to assist in special ways: Sophia Charles-Bernard (Spider) and Sarah Lehman (Ensemble) have each volunteered to work with other cast members with the challenging music. And it will be exciting to see the art work of Caleb Liggett (Ensemble) projected during the show!

Linda has worked with many of the production team before. Fran Ludington (choreographer) choreographed *A Year with Frog and Toad*, which Linda co-directed with Tom Ferris. Linda previously worked with A.D. Mike Sobocinski on a number of occasions with Mid-Michigan Family Theater. She welcomes back Ted Daniel (lighting design) and Leon Green (sound).

New recruits came well recommended: “Elisha Smith (scenographer/stage manager), was my first choice after seeing her amazing scenography on other shows. I met Morgan Pohl (costume design) on *Christmas Belles* as a fellow cast member. Learning that costumes are Morgan’s passion, I happily asked her to join our team. She has come up with some unique designs for our insects and others.”

Aaron Wittbrott (props) has assembled a talented team to gather and create the essentials. Linda sends a special shout out to Angie Schwab who volunteered to continue to work with the main cast on the music.

“This show has been very challenging. The special commitment shown by Fran, Tom, Elisha, Mike, Morgan, Ted, Leon, Leroy, Bob, Aaron, Adam—and the entire cast—have made this production possible.”

NOTE: shows begin at 7pm, not the usual 8, with the usual 2pm Sundays. (May 19 matinee tickets must be purchased from RIF - See page 2.) Reserved seat tickets at www.riverwalktheatre.com or call 517-482-5700.

WHAT'S ON AT RIVERWALK

🎵 May 16-19 & 23-26 - **JAMES & THE GIANT PEACH**, Music/ lyrics by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul, book by Timothy Allen McDonald, Directed by Linda Widener **NOTE: Thu-Fri-Sat 7PM.; 2 pm Sun. - main stage**

★ June 21, Friday, 9am-8pm **HUGE INDOOR RUMMAGE SALE** - Start sorting through your STUFF to donate! (See page 3)

★ June 22, Saturday, 1pm **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** - all are welcome.

★ June 26, Wed., 6pm **ANNUAL BARNEY AWARDS** free reception and awards show for all RWT casts/crews.

A 7 pm, Sun/Mon, June 16, 17- **AUDITIONS for ANGELS IN AMERICA** - Director: Bob Robinson (see p. 3)

🎭 Aug. 15-18 & 22-25 - **ANGELS IN AMERICA: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES** by Tony Kushner; Director: Bob Robinson

🎭 Sept. 26-29 & Oct. 3-6 - **PICKLEBALL** by Jeff Daniels; Director: Amy Jo Brown

🕒 **SHOWS:** 7 pm Thurs.; 8 pm Fri. & Sat.; 2 pm Sun. (Peach only: 7pm & 2 pm Sun.)

🎭 **PLAYS:** \$15 adult \$12 sr/student/military

🎵 **MUSICALS:** \$24 adult \$20 sr/student/military \$12 children under 13

A AUDITIONS - more info at riverwalktheatre.com/auditions

★ **SPECIAL EVENT:** More info at RiverwalkTheatre.com

Moonglow Shimmers with Emotion



L to R: Director: Emily Clark, Lighting: Ted Daniel, Greg: Frank Boston, Assistant Director & Choreographer: Kathy Green Banghart, Benita: Filonna Thomas, Diane: Erin Hoffman, Stage Manager: Marcus Fields, Joe: Doak Bloss, The Sailor: Connor Kelly, Props: Bernie Lucas, The Girl: Storm Hawthorn, Costumer: Kristine Maier, Maxine: Barbara Seaman Stauffer • PHOTO BY WWW.ARNIKO.COM

Riverwalk's Black Box was full on this opening night — in many ways. First with an almost-sold-out audience, and also with a full spectrum of emotions, from laughter to tears and a lot in between, frustration, devotion, regret, anger, love...

Moonglow was Michigan playwright Kim Carney's beautiful "dramedy" of two families' experience with "the emotional roller coaster of Alzheimer's disease" as director Emily Clark explains in her note. The program also included contact information for the Alzheimer's Association Michigan Chapter at all.org/gmc email helplinegmc@alzorg and a 24/7 Helpline" 800-272-3900.

Though the subject sounds dark, the production was funny and entertaining, too — with "dance numbers" and laugh-out-loud jokes on the quirks of humanity and the complicated relationships families create — which become even more complicated when memory and present-day reality merge.

Erin Hoffman displayed a heartfelt combination of frustration and devotion as she installed her very unwilling mother (Barb Stauffer) into a nursing facility. There she met Joe, another resident who shared her love of dancing. Their hazy memories overlapped and grew into a love affair with each other as stand-ins for their respective past spouses. Barb's

transitions from anger to childlike neediness to romantic girlfriend were unsettling but intriguing to watch.

Doak Bloss's Joe also drifted between being a dismissive father who didn't remember his son's name, to a being charming, flirtatious boyfriend. His son Greg (Frank Boston) tried to connect and do the right thing, to no avail. Filonna Thomas, nursing home administrator, did her best to steady the rocky boat with her patients and their children. Her expression after discovering her patients' affair was priceless.

Emerging from the darkness and blending in and out of this reality were Storm Hawthorne and Connor Kelly as the past identities of the nursing home pair. Storm's giddy jitterbugger overlapped and blended into Barb's stubborn, cranky present-day combatant. Connor's dashing sailor did the same with Doak. Their presence and spirit filled out our pictures of the two elders as they drifted in and out of the "nowhere" background of this furniture-only set, over a beautiful, abstract "moon-y" floor (scenography Ric Sadler) while Ted Daniel's lighting focused our attention on either the present or past.

Thank you, Director Emily and your *Moonglow* team, for a beautiful, heartfelt show that lingers in memory.

Jane Zussman



**Special
Peach
shows
for great
causes!**

Riverwalk's upcoming family musical offers performances in support of two great causes:

RIF - MAY 19

Lansing Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) has worked in the Lansing School District since 1975, providing nearly three million books of their choice to generations of Lansing students. RIF serves students in all grades and is entirely community-funded.

RIF show Sunday, May 19 at 2pm - Tickets for that performance only will be available by contacting the RIF office, 517-755-4966. Payments by cash or check only (made out to Lansing School District RIF). Each child 18 and under in the audience will be able to choose a RIF book to take home. **Child 12 and under \$5; adult \$10.**

CASA - MAY 22

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate providing volunteer advocacy within the court system and the community on behalf of children in the foster care system who have experienced abuse and neglect, serving every child, regardless of race, background, or identity, because every child deserves a safe, supportive, and permanent home where they can thrive.

CASA show Wed., May 22 at 7pm

Two ticket types:

- 1. General Admission: Adult \$30, Child \$15**
- 2. VIP Tickets:** Limited to 47 tickets and includes a **5:30 pm VIP reception** with peach beverages. **Adult \$50, Child \$20**

CASA is also offering all 247 tickets to children they work with (and their families) free of charge for a private show — and is happily taking support/donations on the event page where you can buy tickets for yourself for May 22, as well as donating tickets for a CASA child (\$15) or a family (\$75) to see the private show.

For more info and to purchase CASA performance tickets, go to:

<https://casaforkidsinc.networkforgood.com/events/67483-james-and-the-giant-peach-fundraiser-for-kids>

REGULAR RWT PERFORMANCES

James & the Giant Peach - May 16-26

7pm Thu/Fri/Sat; 2pm Sun;

Adults \$24; Senior/Student \$20;

Child 12 & under \$12

www.riverwalktheatre.com

517-482-5700

RIVERWALK

2023-2024 Officers

President.....Brian Farnham
Admin. VP Kate Clark
Production VPShannon Bowen
Treasurer Michele Boohar-Puroskey
Secretary..... Elisha Smith

2023-2024 Board of Directors

Frank Boston	Scott Mandel
Laura Clark-Roumpz	Lauren Mudry
Darrin Fowler	Scott Pohl
Leon Green	Ayden Soupal
Alan Greenberg	Julian Van Dyke
Bernie Lucas	Rick Wendorf
Amanda Macomber	Linda Widener
	Aaron Wittbrodt
	Liane Zimny

Ripples is published by Riverwalk Theatre. Submit info to Editor Jane Zussman (jszussman@gmail.com) or Riverwalk Manager Mike Siracuse (rwt@riverwalk-theatre.com) 517-482-5700 or at RiverwalkTheatre.com



P.O. Box 12249
Lansing MI 48901

Next to Impression 5,
228 Museum Drive, south
off Michigan Avenue,
across from the
Lansing Center



Margo Guillory

You may remember Margo “Aunt Queenie” in Riverwalk’s *Bell Book and Candle* from October ‘22. She is also a multi-media artist born and raised in the mountains of Utah who creates dreamcatchers, wall-hanging art, digital art, and wearable art. This is her heart, soul, and heritage manifested into art, connecting her deeply to her creativity, spirituality, lineage, and history.

“I learned about dreamcatchers from my father... I am reminded of the bond we share, and each time I make one, I feel closer to him and our ancestors... there are more cultures and ethnicities in me than I can explain to you.”

Though her dreamcatchers may look somewhat different from those of her ancestors, she is proud to carry on this tradition with her own unique pieces.

“This collection represents the coming of spring and the changing of seasons. It represents some of the phases I’ve been through, some of the places I’ve been, and some of the parts of this earth that have made me and shaped me, from the mountains to the sea.”

Margo Guillory

Bare Bones Improv



Ever wanted to try improv comedy? Are you an actor who wants to hone their skills — or even someone who has never tried acting? All 18 and older are invited join Bare Bones Improv!

- No experience necessary to join!
- Welcome to all skill levels!
- Opportunity to learn from our talented improv leader (@JT Tosolt) in a relaxed, low pressure environment!

We meet every Tuesday from 7-9pm at the Riverwalk Theatre. Drop in occasionally, or come every week!

Your first rehearsal is totally FREE. No strings attached. If you love it and want to come back, we ask for an annual membership donation to the Riverwalk Theatre, \$15 or more, if you’d like!).

For more information, reach out to us on social media @bareboneslansing or email us at bareboneslansing@gmail.com. You can reach the producer, Katrina Robinson, at (517) 939-9082 for help as well.

RIVERWALK THEATRE

Roald Dahl's
James and the Giant Peach

Music by Justin Paul
Lyrics by Benj Pasek
Book by Timothy Allen McDonald
Based on the book written by Roald Dahl

Directed by Linda Widener

A little magic can take you a long way.

MAY 16-19 & 23-26, 2024

Supported in part by MICHIGAN ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL • NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS • COMMUNITY FOUNDATION • ARTS COUNCIL OF GREATER LANSING

