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The Season Ticket, Spring 2004

Columbia College Chicago

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A Bee Hive of Humanity

When asked what Stage Door is about, director David Cromer offers a myriad of explanations. Right off the bat David acknowledges that what Stage Door, Columbia Theater Department's fifth main stage production in the 2003-2004 season, is essentially about is "up to the individual." However, although he admits to the inevitable diversity of each audience member's experience of Stage Door, David does state he "knows what happens in it." And a lot happens in a tale inhabited by the lives of 31 characters.

Stage Door, set amidst the American Depression in 1936 in New York, is a play David knows involves "20-year-olds going to a big city to be actors played by 20-year-olds going to a big city to be actors." He knows that "if we can get the truth out of the actors who are on the stage, Stage Door will be an exciting and immediate piece of theater." And David contends that the fact that Stage Door will forever contain the helpful irony of "young actors playing young actors" is an inevitable step towards achieving the truth of the play... truth that David actually tasted when he was a Columbia Theater student.

20 years ago when Columbia presented Stage Door David played Adolph Gretzl, the big time producer described by Ferber and Kaufman as one who "carries himself with great authority in order to make up for his lack of stature." Gretzl auditions young actress Terry Randall at the end of Stage Door.

David recalls Columbia Theater Department's first production of Stage Door, directed by faculty members Caroline Latta and Susan Osborne-Mott, as "being romantic" and "a celebration of life on the stage." Looking back, David admits to his initial struggle with finding his "way in," 20 years later, to this particular production of Stage Door. However, late last semester David found his "way in" to Stage Door, ironically, in an elevator.



Student set designer Brandon Lewis suggested the idea of slicing the Footlights Club, where Stage Door takes place, in half.

Why?

By slicing the set in half, the audience will not only be able to experience life on the first floor of this club for girls of the stage, but on the second floor as well. Hence, audience members will be offered a bee hive of activity to live in,

laugh at, and learn from while David is offered a new "way in" to Stage Door via collaboration. Costume designer Rebecca Britner contributes her keen sense of "all the accoutrements women put into daily life" while lighting designer Jesse Klug and sound designer John Zuiker collaborate to give the eye and ear a true 1936 New York City experience.

Be a part of the collaboration and collective humanity within Stage Door, beginning March 18th in the Getz Theater!

Directed by David Cromer
 Assistant Director: Rachel Kline
 Set Design: Brandon Lewis
 Costume Design: Rebecca Britner
 Light Design: Jesse Klug
 Sound Design: John Zuiker
 Fight Choreographer: David Woolley
 Stage Manager: Cari Snodgrass
 Assistant Stage Manager: Frank Cermak

Performance Schedule:
 Getz Theater
 Thursday, Mar. 18, 6:30 p.m.
 Friday, Mar. 19, 7:30 p.m.
 student matinee 10 a.m.
 Saturday, Mar. 20, 7 p.m. (opening)
 Sunday, Mar. 21, 3 p.m.
 Wednesday, Mar. 24, 11 a.m.
 Thursday, Mar. 25**, 4 p.m.
 student matinee 10 a.m.
 Friday, Mar. 26, 7:30 p.m.
 Saturday, Mar. 27, 7:30 p.m.
 Sunday, Mar. 28, 3 p.m.
 **There will be a post-show discussion after this performance moderated by a Chicago theater artist.

Tickets: \$10-14

Beauty Without Spectacle

"I dreamed a dream in time gone by
 When hope was high
 And life worth living..."

Unlike Fantine, the passionate, driven mother of Cosette, who unleashes these lyrics, Columbia Theater students are not dreaming about the past, but preparing in the moment for the much anticipated future. In one month, Victor Hugo's 19th-century-France embraces Columbia's Getz Theater via the powerful instruments that are the voices of 28 individuals in this class project. Guided by director Estelle Spector, musical director and performance pianist Jonathon Mastro, vocal coach Bill Williams, and rehearsal and performance pianist Phillip Caldwell, the dynamically diverse patter songs, arias, duets, and chorus numbers in the musical Les Miserables ground Columbia's upcoming concert staging. Arguably a landmark in the history of musical theater,

Les Miserables, by Alain Boubil and Claude-Michel Schonberg, dives into the "economic and social inequalities which foster discontent and lead to, in this case, revolutions," states Estelle. Although the revolutions in Les Miserables take place in the world of early 19th-century-France, the musical tackles the universal themes of passion, war, vengeance, redemption, death, dreams, disappointment, deceit, and, above all, love. For, "if we don't have love, nothing works," says Estelle. And in the structure of a concert staging where staging and lighting are "less than minimal," where there are no sets or costumes and two pianos replace the orchestra, the divine power of the music in Les Miserables has no spectacle to compete with. Soar alongside this raw body of music starting April 12th!

Performances: Tuesday, Apr. 6-Saturday, Apr. 10 at 7:30 p.m. and Monday, Apr. 12 and Tuesday, Apr. 13 at 8 p.m. in the Getz Theater.
ADMISSION IS FREE!

Othello Grounded By Columbia Talent

Susan Padveen is quick to state that she has a cast of 22 "intelligent, thoughtful, and crazy people," that will collaborate with a dynamic artistic team in order to manifest life in Shakespeare's tragic Othello. She is also quick to state her desire to peel the onion that is William Shakespeare's tale of love and betrayal via "exploring what is evil, what we forgive," and the consequences involved in unfamiliarity between people. However, with a smile, Susan is careful to state the specifics of her approach to Columbia's sixth 2003-2004 main stage production. After centuries full of varying interpretations, Susan alludes to the power in some mystery lingering about Columbia Theater Department's Othello during pre-production. However, here is what we know.

Like Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello examines the transition between the "traditional structured world and another world where things happen differently," states Susan. "Nothing is preset" at the beginning of the play and the "sense of being transported" lives within the first image of the play as Desdemona goes to marry Othello. Othello and Desdemona are of different races, but "once the play starts, it is less simply about the race issue than it is about two people who are strangers to each other who do not have the information to stay afloat safely." And through set and light design, the artistic team plans to situate the audience at the heart of the 16th century, Spanish influenced old and new worlds within Othello, although Susan admits that her concept of Othello is not in the time period, and rather in the essence of the locations, Venice and Cyprus. Keeping her cast and crew in the same figurative location is also essential to Susan.

When asked what challenges lie ahead for the production of Othello, Susan explains that telling the story clearly and powerfully, scheduling, and keeping the cast and the artistic team "on the same page," will be consistent priorities during

the rehearsal process. On the flip side, the amount of people involved in Othello only makes the tapestry of Shakespeare's tragedy "wider and that much richer with the breadth of the many experiences" of all involved. Developing the stamina and energy for the demands of the language is also a challenge that will be confronted by several Shakespeare workshops, exploring the technique of First Folio, and a Vocal Workshop given by fellow faculty members Tom Mula and Jeff Ginsberg.

Othello is a "tragedy of both personal and epic proportions" grounded by the ambitious talent of a student body equipped to showcase such playwrights as Shakespeare. Don't miss this event at Columbia Theater!

Directed by Susan Padveen
Assistant Director: Kyle Kratky
Set Design: Grant Sabin
Costume Design: Pam Batista
Light Design: Margaret Nelson
Composer: Joel Everett
Fight Choreographer: David Woolley
Dance Choreographer: Wilfredo Rivera
Stage Manager: Mary Patchell
Assistant Stage Manager:
Christina Bernacci
Performance Schedule:
New Studio Theater
Wednesday, Apr. 21, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Apr. 22, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, Apr. 23, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Apr. 24, 7 p.m. (opening)
Sunday, Apr. 25, 3 p.m.
Monday, Apr. 26, 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Apr. 28, 2 p.m.
Thursday, Apr. 29**, 4 p.m.
student matinee 10 a.m.
Friday, Apr. 30, 7:30 p.m.
student matinee 10 a.m.
Saturday, May 1, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 2, 3 p.m.
**There will be a post-show discussion after this performance moderated by Bob Mason of Chicago Shakespeare Company.
Tickets: \$5



A Spiritual Lifestyle

Kristine Thatcher is a playwright, an actor, a director, and a teacher whose most current project consists of working with her 12-year-old daughter on a model ship of the Griffin, a ghost ship lost in Lake Michigan on August 7, 1679. And she believes that being a mother and working in the theater are two very "spiritual ways to spend her life."

Born and raised in Lansing, Michigan, Kristine has made Chicago her home for 19 years now and is currently in her second semester of teaching an oral communications class, Speaking Out, at Columbia. By "providing a really safe atmosphere," in which her students can "ground themselves in their own beliefs," Kristine guides her students through the dynamics of various kinds of speeches. Using particular speech styles, like the informative speech or the persuasive speech, Kristine focuses her Speaking Out class on "giving [her students] polish so they can stand in front of a group and talk about anything." She also finds that her focus in the class also helps her "verbalize what she does" in her life as a teacher and theater artist.

Kristine says that the reason she entered the theater is different than the reason she has stayed. Initially, theater "smacked [Kristine] in the head" at age sixteen and she "didn't know how to do anything else" when she became an ensemble member of Michigan's Boarshead Theater Company. Years later, Kristine admits that she stays in the theater for a less practical reason now. Theater is a spiritual lifestyle for Kristine. From teaching playwriting at DePaul University, tap dancing at Lansing Community College, and acting at Case Western Reserve University to playing the title role in her play Niedecker and Hannah Jarvis in the Goodman Theatre's production of Arcadia to currently adapting a Chekhov short story for the stage, Kristine Thatcher has never looked back and for that Columbia College is grateful.

FINDING WORTH

John McFarland is a very quotable guy and refuses to pick favorites. Whether it be his favorite weapon to use on-stage or his favorite quirky violence-on-stage story or his favorite sound to make via stage combat, John seeks and finds great value in all of his theater experiences.

John McFarland has a 17-page "resume" so to speak that includes his education history, his teaching philosophy, the career development workshops and certificates he has completed, his teaching experience with voice, movement, and acting, his acting experience, his fight direction experience, his directing, dramaturgy, and stage managing experience, his administrative experience, his professional affiliations and awards, and his current endeavors. It is a sight to see, no doubt.

Yet, when asked what is something people wouldn't guess about him, John replies that "I'm much less tough and more sensitive." This sensitivity along with his passion for theater and teaching and his ability to uncover worth in all avenues of his work are just some of the tools John utilizes in order to "inspire, guide, watch, and cultivate students so that they may have the tools to be the doers." And John does this daily in his Stage Combat classes at the Theater Department of Columbia College. Furthermore, John loves the idea that he is "helping to train artists" at Columbia "who then in turn, express themselves as they not only reflect the world but do their part to change it." Columbia College, no doubt, loves this idea too.

Columbia Theater Faculty Update!

Paul Amandes directed Brian Friel's Lovers for Open Door Repertory Theatre of Oak Park running through March. This summer, he will play the role of Capulet and compose music for Oak Park Festival Theatre's Romeo and Juliet.

Mary McDonald Badger designed the lighting for Free Man of Color at Victory Garden Theater. The play by Charles Smith was commissioned by Ohio University for its bicentennial and Mary traveled to Ohio University to present the production to the school. She also designed the lights for the Cerqua/Rivera Art Experience Spring Dance concert.

Caroline Dodge Latta will attend a Carnegie teaching colloquium in San Diego in early April and will also serve as a North Central Association reaccreditation team member at the Denver Theater Center on April 19-21.

Anne Libera's book The Second City Almanac of Improvisation is being released by Northwestern University Press this Spring. Among the contributors to the book is Columbia Theater Department Chair, Sheldon Patinkin.

Scott Olson directed Aaron Sorkin's Hidden in This Picture at Act One Studios this past February.

Cecilie O'Reilly is currently the accent coach for Milwaukee Repertory Theatre's production of The Cripple of Inishmaan by Martin McDonough, opening April 9. Cecilie works regularly as an accent/dialect coach with Steppenwolf and Milwaukee Repertory specializing in Irish and British accents. The Cripple of Inishmaan is set on the rural west coast of Ireland where the accent is rich in the lilt and timbre often associated with the Irish language.

Sheldon Patinkin is directing Jungle Rot by Seth Greenland for the Noble Fool Theater Company which opens April 12th.

Brian Shaw will be performing a new Plasticene show titled Blank Slate at the PAC/edge Festival in March and April. He will also be working with Columbia Dance Department faculty members Jan Erkert and Angie Hauser on a piece to be presented at the Dance Faculty Showcase in May. Brian is especially pleased that his wife, teacher Stephanie Shaw will be writing text for the piece.

Nana Shineflug is currently involved in Chicago Moving Company's Spring Season at Harold Washington Library. In April she will be part of "Glass Layers," an Interdisciplinary Performance Festival at Links Hall as well as Links' Hall Interdisciplinary Performance Festival "Fieldtrips" in May.

Foolish or Full Proof ?

Are you superstitious
when it comes to the theater?

Check out these common theater taboos and rate your foolish vs. full proof rationale!

The "Scottish Curse"

If you say "Macbeth" or quote the play in a theater, disaster will supposedly strike. In actuality, Stanislavski, Orson Welles, and Charlton Heston all experienced some calamity during or after a production of Macbeth. The night before he was assassinated, Abe Lincoln read Macbeth. And in 1849, rioting erupted during a performance of the play and over 30 New Yorkers were killed. One of the common antidotes to the Scottish Curse involves going outside of the theater, turning around three times, spitting over your shoulder, and swearing loudly three times.

Don't Turn Off the Ghost Light

Realistically present in order to guide the first and last person into and out of the theater, the "ghost light" is a light that some believe is a protection device against spirits. If the theater were ever to be completely dark, supposedly ghosts would realize that everyone had gone and would advance to mischief making.

"Break a Leg!" Rather Than "Good Luck!"

The origin of wishing that someone "break a leg" on stage could have evolved from the recognition that fate can many times give us what we do not want. Thus, why not trick destiny by wishing for the opposite of what we desire? Others believe that in Shakespeare's time, "to break" was "to bend" and hence, "break a leg" really means "bend your leg," i.e. take a lot of bows.

No Whistling!

Years ago stage hands were supposedly out-of-work sailors who communicated in the theater with complex whistles. The theater and ships both use an abundance of ropes, so if you whistle onstage you could accidentally call down a sandbag onto your head.

QUOTE OF THE SEMESTER

*"Snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting
is the great magic trick of human existence."*

Tennessee Williams, 20th century playwright

Season Ticket Staff

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