

Backstage Pass

January 2011

Minnesota State Mankato
Theatre & Dance

A new year starts off quickly

Clayton Rutschow an acting Finalist

Minnesota State University, Mankato presented its production of *The Odyssey* to the almost 1,500 registrants of the Region V KCACTF gathering at Iowa State University during festival week, Jan. 16-22, 2011.

This production won more Certificates of Merit than any other of the almost 200 involved from over 78 colleges and universities from the seven state region (including Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Missouri). They included one for the entire cast for Ensemble Acting, to Tom Bliese (Faculty Emeritus) for Set Design, Steve Smith (Faculty) for Lighting Design, Mike Crowell (Guest Artist) for Sound Design, David McCarl (Faculty) for Mask Design, Matthew A. Gilbertson (senior BFA Design/Tech from Lino Lakes) for Stage Management and to Paul J. Hustoles (Faculty) for Direction.

The production was subsequently "Held for Consideration" by the National Selection Team for possible inclusion in the National Festival in Washington, DC, in April at the Kennedy Center.

Clayton Rutschow (senior, BFA Acting, Red Wing) placed as 1st Alternate in the prestigious Region V Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship

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Harry Brock (David Wasyluk) tries to figure out from his mistress, Billie Dawn (Morgan Mallory) just why she's spending her time reading books in a scene from *Born Yesterday*, playing Jan. 27-Feb. 6 in the Andreas Theatre. It is sponsored by Community Bank Mankato.

Born Yesterday takes to the Andreas Theatre stage next

The Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of Theatre & Dance will present Garson Kanin's *Born Yesterday* at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 27-29 and Feb. 2-5, and 2 p.m. Jan. 29 & 30 and Feb. 5 & 6. It is sponsored by Community Bank Mankato.

Several performances are already sold out, so please check availability before coming up. You can do so by visiting the online box office at our web site, MSUTheatre.com

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Iktomi visiting schools with Lakota stories

The Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of Theatre & Dance has a long tradition of sending a children's theatre production on the road January-March each year. This year, *Iktomi* joins that history, following most recent productions of *Rikkie Recycle & the Eko-Kidz*, *Abiyoyo*, *The Rainbow Fish*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Rising Sun/Rising Moon*.

This year, like last two, the production is an original one. It is written and directed by third-year



Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department of Theatre & Dance

by Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha, second-year MFA Acting candidate.

The show is cast early in the fall and open only

MFA Musical Theatre candidate Deanne McDonald, with musical direction by second-year MFA Musical Theatre candidate Lauren Parsons. Scene design is by Laura Thaisen, senior Theatre Generalist, and costumes are



Iktomi cast members are (left to right): Joshua Hopkins, Tylinn Fahrni, Sam Stoll, Hannah Maslinski, Jake McInerney, Marshall Sonstebly and Callie Syver-son.

to first-year students (freshmen or transfer students), offering them the chance to get fully involved in a department full of students who are better known to their faculty directors.

As a reward for their hard work—and getting up for morning and afternoon performances on Tuesdays and Thursdays—these students earn spots on the department's annual spring break trip to New York City.

As an added benefit, the students gain a group of close friends who will be there to help them during their remaining years in the department.

In total, the show will be performed nearly 35 times for more than 8,000 elementary school kids. In addition to school performances, there will be a public performance of *Iktomi* at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, in the Andreas Theatre. Tickets are just \$5 each.

Broadway Jukebox tour targets high schools

The Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of Theatre & Dance is proud to announce a new touring outreach opportunity available to high schools: *Broadway Jukebox*.

A survey of high schools told us that many drama programs were eager to expose their students to musical theatre productions that they could not do, either due to content

or production requirements. Thus *Broadway Jukebox* was born.

We have selected four of our very best Musical Theatre BFA candidates to be a part of this show and have prepared them to perform 15-minute medleys from six of Broadway's biggest musicals: *Wicked*, *Chicago*, *Avenue Q*, *Hairspray*, *Spring Awakening* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Cast in this first production are Aaron Alan and J. Alexander Coe for the men, and Megan Volkman-Wilson and Kim Steffen for the women.

Students at the school decide from which three of those six productions they will perform. That's where the "jukebox" comes in!

The tour's first performance is Feb. 11, with four more to follow.

Thirteen competed for Irene Ryans

Twelfth Night



Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha & J. Alexander Coe

On the Razzle



Anthony DePoto & David Wasyluk

42nd Street



Kim Steffen & Megan Volkman-Wilson



Silver stars:

Semi-Finalists Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha, J. Alexander Coe, Anthony DePoto, Dustin Jackson & Joseph B. Crook.

Gold star: Finalist Clayton Rutschow.

Chicago



Aaron Alan & Laura Otremba



... Virginia Woolf?



Clayton Rutschow & Robb Krueger



The Odyssey



Joseph B. Crook, Dustin Guy Jackson & Deanne McDonald



KCACTF Minnesota State Mankato successful (from page 1)

competition, ably partnered by recent BFA Acting alumnae Meredith Larson. In essence, this is third place from over 400 students eligible to compete. He portrayed Odysseus in the Minnesota State production of *The Odyssey*.

In addition to Rutschow, five students advanced to the Semifinal round (MSU had more Semifinalists than any other school) including: Anthony DePoto (2nd Year MFA Acting, Danbury, CT) partnered by Natalie Schleusner (senior BFA Musical Theatre, Rock Rapids, IA); Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha (2nd Year MFA Acting, LaBolt, SD) partnered by Tim Gagne (senior BS Generalist/Mass Communications double major, Roseville); Joseph B. Crook (senior BFA Actor, Delano) partnered by Emily Jansen (sophomore BFA Musical Theatre, St. Peter); Dustin Jackson (junior BFA Acting, Sioux Falls, SD) partnered by Emma Ottoson (junior BFA Musical Theatre, Vadnais Heights); J. Alexander Coe (senior BFA Musical Theatre, St. Paul)

partnered by Lauren Mikeal Parsons (2nd Year MFA Musical Theatre, Waco, TX), who also won Best Partner in the Semifinal Round.

A total of 13 Minnesota State Mankato students competed in the Ryan competition, tied for the highest number in the region and one of the highest in the nation.

Matthew A. Gilbertson (mentioned above) also won the National Stage Management Fellowship for Region V and will now go to the National Festival in Washington, DC. Kaija Pellinen (senior BA Theatre Generalist, Virginia) took 1st place in Theatre Dramaturgy for *Woyzeck*.

Costumes by faculty member David McCarl for *Chicago* were invited to participate in the annual Costume Parade.

In addition to the seven commendations for *The Odyssey* listed above, MSU captured two commendations from KCACTF for previous work, including: Achievement in Costume

Design for *42nd Street* to David McCarl and to Megan Gredesky (MFA Directing alumnae, Fargo, ND) for Assistant Direction and Dramaturgy for *Twelfth Night*.

During the past year, faculty members Paul Finocchiaro and Heather Hamilton have served as Region V Respondents. Faculty member John Paul responded to many productions, served on the Region V Selection Committee and is the Region V Chair of Design, Technologies and Management.

Finocchiaro served as an Irene Ryan Preliminary Round Judge and he presented workshops along with faculty member George Grubb. Finocchiaro was also acclaimed as the Region V National Teaching Artist Grant Nominee for Performance.

Paul J. Hustoles, in addition to directing *The Odyssey*, continues his service to Region V by being on the Regional Advisory Board and served as the Festival Registrar for his twelfth time.

Minnesota State Mankato Department of Theatre & Dance

Alum Peterman continues to see her star rising

Melissa Peterman, a 1994 BS Theatre Arts graduate from Minnesota State Mankato, continues to find a home on cable network CMT. She follows a role in Reba McIntyre's self-titled series and hosting duties on "The Singing Bee" with her own series, co-starring Ed Asner.

Best known for playing Barbra Jean on the hit series Reba, now stars in her own sitcom, "Working Class." She portrays Carli Mitchell, a single mom of three kids who moves them to upscale suburbia to give them a better life.

Peterman is a longtime member of the CMT family, having hosted CMT's No. 1 rated series "The Singing Bee" and CMT's "Comedy Stage." Her first televised comedy special, "Melissa Peterman: Am I the Only One?," also aired on CMT earlier this year, and she was most recently seen hosting the 2010 CMT Music Awards Red Carpet.

Peterman made her feature film debut in the 1996 Coen Brothers' Oscar-winning film "Fargo" as Hooker #2 and has appeared in many television shows, including "Surviving Suburbia," "Rita Rocks" and "Just Shoot Me." She has also done voiceovers for "The Pitts" and "American Dad."

Peterman starred in the independent comedy feature, "Dirty Politics,"



Melissa Peterman, BS, 1994

and stars in "Dusty Peacock," the new online series created for Crackle.com, Sony Pictures Entertainment's online video network.

Peterman signed to Big Machine Records to release her first comedy album in January 2011 and is currently on tour with Reba, George Strait and Lee Ann Womack. She also hosts the annual Hollywood Bowl The Sound of Music Sing-a-long.

Originally from Minneapolis, Peter-

man graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato with a theater major and was cast in a production of *Tony and Tina's Wedding*, where she did over 600 performances. Peterman perfected her comedy skills at the Brave New Workshop, an improvisational theater, as well as the Chicago Improv Festival and the Big Stink Comedy Festival in Austin, Texas.

She is committed to many charities, including Muhammad Ali's Celebrity Fight Night, Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross and the non-profit Buzzworks Theater Company. She currently lives in Los Angeles with her husband and son.

(Biography from CMT.com)



Peterman and Asner on the set for "Working Class," now playing on CMT.

Born Yesterday an old-fashioned comedic play (from page 1)

Many of the cast members are fresh off of last week's Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in Ames, IA, where they performed in a performance of *The Odyssey* before a crowd of about 1,000 people on Wednesday evening. Under the direction of faculty member Paul Finocchiaro, they're ready to take on this comedy that launched the career of Judy Holliday.

The cast includes first-year MFA Actor Morgan Mallory as Billie Dawn, the showgirl mistress of Harry Brock, played by David Wasyluk. Paul Verrall, the newspaperman hired to help make Billie more presentable, is played by senior Ryan Thorsen. Other leads are Robb Krueger (George

from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) as Ed Devery, Joey West and Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha as Sen. Norval and Mrs. Hedges and Adam Moen as Eddie Brock.

Ticklets for *Born Yesterday* are \$14.50 regular, \$13 discounted (seniors, youth and groups of 15 or more) and \$10 for current Minnesota State Mankato students. They are on sale at MSUTheatre.com or by calling or stopping by the Theatre & Dance Box Office from 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday. Call 507-389-6661.

In addition, we're still selling Second Chance Subscriptions—one ticket for each of the three Mainstage shows for \$44—and Semester Student Tickets, also \$44.