

Backstage Pass

Minnesota State Mankato
Theatre
& Dance

November 2008

Harvey Comes to Mainstage Nov. 6



Despite their concerns for his sanity, Elwood P. Dowd (Micah J. L. Kronlokken, right) keeps the staff of Chumley's Rest transfixed with his stories. They are (left to right): Duane Wilson (Joe Crook), Dr. Sanderson (Clayton Rutschow) and Nurse Kelly (JoNae Villeneuve).

Blethen, Gage & Krause Continues Sponsorship

The Department of Theatre & Dance welcomes Blethen, Gage & Krause, LLP back for its fourth sponsored show. Previously, the firm sponsored *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (2005), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (2006) and *Bus Stop* (2007).

Harvey is the story of the Elwood P. Dowd, a gentle man whose sanity is suspect as he tells everyone, especially his sister, Veta Louise Simmons, about his 6-foot-and-a-half tall Harvey. Ultimately, he ends up at Chumley's Rest where he charms the staff and where Veta causes concerns

about her own sanity.

Harvey is directed by Paul Finocchiaro, with scene design by senior BFA Design/Tech candidate Amanda Rozmiarek. See story inside, Lighting design is by Steven Smith, costume design by David McCarl and sound design by George Grubb.

Amanda Rozmiarek:

Still Behind the Scenes, But They're HER Scenes

Amanda Rozmiarek is used to working behind the scenes. She's done it a lot during her time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Most recently she's done it as the department's most trusted Production Stage Manager. After working as professional PSM for all of the shows in Highland Summer Theatre 2008, the senior BFA Design/Tech candidate took very little time off before taking the management reins for this season's Mainstage opener, *Miss Saigon*.

She took even less time—none—between *Miss Saigon* and *Harvey*, for which she serves as Scenic Designer. It's an honor rarely bestowed on a student, and is almost never awarded to an undergraduate. A few undergraduates have designed lights and costumes, but none since Allen Wright Shannon (now a third-year MFA candidate) designed *A Comedy of Errors* has done scenic design.

Amanda lent her painting skills to many shows, most recently last season's *Dancing at Lughnasa* where she got to, literally, build a mountain. In this case, however, the entire design was hers, with inspiration and assistance from director Paul Finocchiaro, technical director Randy York and faculty member John David Paul, among others.

Her initial concept was to use a full-stage “revolve” to literally turn the set 180 degrees between scenes in the offices at Chumley's Rest and Elwood P. Dowd's home parlor. When challenges there couldn't be resolved, she altered her plans to feature several “wagons” that revolve portions of the sets independent of each other but with the same result.

These pieces must come together to create not just one but TWO separate sets. She leaves it to the show's audience to determine how effective she was.

Production Stage Managers are often the hardest-working members of a production team, though rarely is their work recognized ... unless something goes wrong. Because of this, reaching the highest ranks takes time. First, students are assigned as an Assistant Stage Manager for a Studio show so they can learn the ins and outs while assisting the PSM. From there they move to being an ASM for a Mainstage production, then PSM for a Studio production and, finally, PSM for a Mainstage production. Even at the Mainstage level, they may be assigned a non-musical or two before being trusted with one of the more complex musicals.

As an incoming freshman, Amanda auditioned for the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) program but was turned down, being invited to audition again in the spring of her first year. Instead of being frustrated by this, she took the invitation as incentive to prove her value. The result was crew assignments, a House Manager job and other involvement that made it hard to say “no” a second time.

Following *Harvey*, Amanda plans to concentrate on her class work as she prepares for life after college. She has one more PSM assignment (the Spring Dance Concert), and anyone who sees the department's touring production of *Abiyoyo* will see her costume designs.

Sometimes, it seems, you've gotta bring your work out from behind the scenes.

Catching Up with Alums

Name: Sheila Tabaka

Degree: MFA in Technical Theatre

Graduation Date: June 1998

Comments: I am still in Marshall, MN, teaching at Southwest Minnesota State University. I am in my tenth year here and have had the joy of being both the costumer and also a director. Our production of *To Kill A Mockingbird* received a Meritorious Award for Ensemble Acting at KCACTF, thanks to John Paul. My husband Jim (MSU '99) and I have five children: Eukariah, Sally, Margaret, Lillian and Jedidiah Finn.

Name: Greg Johnson

Degree: B.S. in Theatre

Dates Here: 1997-2001

Education Since MSU: Bachelor of Applied Science in Mortuary Science

Comments: After pursuing theatre in the Chicago area for 2 years, I went back to school to become a mortician. Along the way, I got married to my wonderful wife Holly. We currently live in Greenfield, IN (right outside of Indianapolis), own 3 homes, 2 dogs and have a baby on the way. I've been working as a funeral director about 3 years and I like it. Recently, I was featured in our hometown newspaper as one of the “20 under 30” business people in our community. I am involved in the local Rotary club, and am currently obsessed with politics.

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See What I Wanna See in Studio Season

Playwright LaChiusa welcomed as Andreas Guest Artist

See What I Wanna See is the first musical to be performed in the Minnesota State Mankato Department of Theatre and Dance's Studio Season since the Andreas Theatre opened in 2000. With book, music and lyrics by Tony nominee Michael John LaChiusa, it brings the new contemporary edge of musical theatre to southern Minnesota on Nov. 20-23 at 7:30 p.m.

See What I Wanna See is a non-linear musical telling of three different stories in three different worlds: Medieval Japan (the first story, *Kesa & Morito*), New York City in the 1950s (the second, *R Shomon*), and post-9/11 Central Park (the final story, *Gloryday*). It is based on the short stories of Ryunosuke Akutagawa, paying homage to its Japanese roots with its Asian-infused jazz musical style. Throughout the course of the action, one certainty prevails: people are now and always have been searching for universal truth...and end up creating their own version of it.

Michael John LaChiusa himself will be attending *See What I Wanna See* and teaching a master class to the students of the department as an Andreas Guest Artist. LaChiusa is one of the most prolific musical composers of the new millennium. Best known for his complex and musically challenging scores in the "post-modern" school of Broadway, he has been nominated for five Tony awards for the book and scores of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Marie Christine* and *The Wild Party*. His works also include *Hello Again*, *Little Fish*, *The First Lady Suite*, *The Highest Yellow*, *Bernarda Alba* and *Giant*, which will be premiering in 2009. He is an adjunct professor in the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU.

Hosting LaChiusa is an incredible honor and opportunity for the students, made possible by the Lowell and David Andreas Endowment to the College of Arts and Humanities.

It is the same fund that brought in professional guest actress Fiona Hui to play Kim in *Miss Saigon*.

See What I Wanna See has undergraduate students Jared Oxborough, Mathias Becker, Liz Dowd and Claire Wellin, as well as Jerry Jay Cranford, an MFA Directing candidate. The design team is composed of all MFA candidates: Ben Inniger (set and sound design), Nicole Pullaro (costume design), Jake Yenish (lighting design) and Megan Gredesky (props master).

We invite you all to join us in the Andreas Theatre Nov. 20-23 to witness this exciting collaboration of students, a new brand of musical theatre and a guest Broadway composer!

—Nikki Swoboda, director
2008-09 Andreas Teaching Assistant



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