

Backstage Pass

September 2011

Do you have your *Rent* tickets?

Tickets on sale now

Tickets for *Rent*, sponsored by HickoryTech Corporation, are on sale now at MSUTheatre.com or by calling or stopping by the Theatre & Dance Box Office from 4-6 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Performances are 7:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Sept. 29-Oct. 1 & Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 6-8, with 2 p.m. matinees on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 8 & 9. Please don't assume anything is sold out; check online or give us a call inquiring about availability.



Adam Moen is Roger and Larissa Schmitz is Mimi.

Musical as relevant today as it was 15 years ago

Minnesota State University, Mankato Theatre alum Rick Anderson, who was working in management in New York City in the 1990s after hanging up his dancing shoes, finds it curious. The ground-breaking show he worked in the box office for is being revived on Broadway. Opening Off-Broadway in 1993 and on Broadway in 1996, he doesn't feel the show is THAT old.

Minnesota State Mankato director/choreographer refers to what became one of the longest-running musicals ever as "a period piece." And others use words like "nostalgic" and "sentimental" to describe a show that shocked when it opened because of its portrayal of a lifestyle that seemed to glorify drugs and same-sex relationships.

Obviously, it's not the show that has changed but the cultural landscape in which it's presented. The drug "cocktails" taken by the characters in *Rent* have been replaced with treatment plans that allow those stricken with HIV/AIDS to live longer, fuller lives. The idea of same-sex relationships has reached a level of acceptance where many states now sanction marriages and equality in

insurance coverage for same-sex partners. And Broadway now regularly presents similar rock concert-like musicals featuring fornicating puppets, soaring spider-like heroes and, well, rock concerts.

Today, a true-to-life story like *Rent* has once again found an audience in the times. In 1996, *Rent* received 10 Tony Award nominations, winning four: Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical and Best Original Score for Jonathan Larson, and Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical: Wilson Jermaine Heredia. It also won that year's Pulitzer Prize for Drama plus six Drama Desk Awards.

The reason it endures, Finocchiaro hypothesizes, is because at its core *Rent* is a story about friends-as-family joining together to find their way in a world that doesn't appear to want them as members. But instead of turning their backs on this world, these friends stand up and insist on being seen, heard and appreciated for who they are and what they can contribute. And isn't that what we all try to do?

What you're missing on Facebook

One of the great things about Facebook is that you're able to share a LOT of interesting stuff with a LOT of interesting people for little or no money. Because of that, we love to share everything we can about what our students are up to. Here's a sampling from the last month.



Anthony DePoto (right), a third-year MFA Acting candidate, coordinated two performances of the student improvisation group ToeFu Panda at Family Weekend on Sept. 17 in the Elias J. Halling Recital Hall. About 300 students and their family members attended the two performances, and many returned for the evening performance of *The Shape of Things* in the Andreas Theatre.



In order to give them more prominence, we've split off a Dance area web site from the Department of Theatre & Dance page. You can access it from MSUTheatre.com, or find it directly by simply typing in MSUDance.com



Recent graduates Kaija Pellinen and Rudolph Searles III, seen here on the set of the Chanhasen Dinner Theatre's production of *Hairspray*, have been getting strong reviews for their performance. It runs through January. Kaija is appearing as Tracy Turnblad's best friend, Penny Pingleton.

Video postings can take you inside the minds of those you see on stage

- Director/choreographer Paul Finocchiaro gives insight into the preparation for our opener, *Rent*. The video you'll see was taken by him on two separate trips.
- 1988 graduate Rick Anderson was one of the most powerful people on Broadway, in charge of the 88 house seats for each performance of the original *Rent* production.
- Director Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha and lead Amanda Forman took you inside the Studio opener, *The Shape of Things*.
- A taste of "Seasons of Love."

Wait Until Dark *coming to the Andreas Theatre*

Frederick Knott's thriller, *Wait Until Dark*, is the story of Susy Hendrix, a recently blinded housewife who unwittingly possesses a doll filled with illicit drugs. Harry Roat, a brutal and sophisticated criminal, coerces two small-time thugs into helping him con Susy into giving up the doll. A battle of wits ensues as Susy and the young girl

upstairs launch a counter-plot against the thieves. The drama plays on the themes of darkness and light as Susy navigates through her sightless world, and the crooks signal each other with light through the Venetian blinds.

Minnesota State Mankato presented *Wait Until Dark* in the summer 1984 and in 1997. Tickets are on sale now!



Adam Moen is Roger



Larissa Schmitz is Mimi



Laura Otreмба is Maureen



Lindsay Odegaard is Joanne



Maxwell Thao is Angel



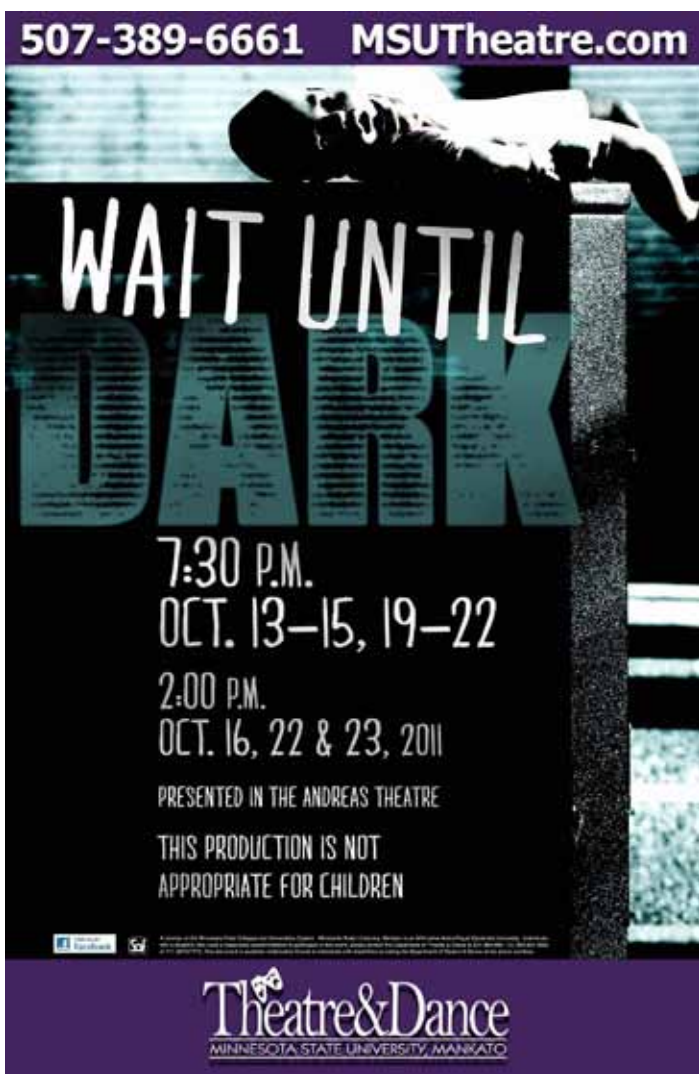
Reginald D. Haney is Benny



Rodney Fair is Tom



Sam Stoll is Mark



The poster for *Wait Until Dark* was designed by Art major Anna Beehler.