



Thursday,
August 30, 2012

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Arts & Culture

MSO prepares
for three-city
'From the Heart' tour

MARKETPLACE INSIDE

Jobs, rentals & wheels

THE SIDEBAR

Merely Players

Volunteers needed for 2012-13 season

Merely Players Community Theater is looking for volunteers for the 2012/13 season.

Specifically, the organization is looking for help in the following areas:

■ **"Helen's Inner Circle"** — stage manager and props;

■ **"The Absence**

of a Cello" —

director, assistant

director, stage

manager, props,

set design/con-

struction, costumes,

lights/sound;

■ **"James and the**

Giant Peach" —

stage manager, costumes/make-up,

props, set design/construction,

lights/sound;

■ **"The Taffetas"** — director, assis-

tant director, stage manager, chore-

ographer, musical director, musi-

cians, props, set design/construction,

costumes/make-Up, lights/sound.

For more information on each

position and show, please visit the

Merely Players website at

www.merelyplayers.com. Interested

candidates should call or email

Noelle Lawton, theatre manager, at

noelle_lawton@hotmail.com or 708-

703-7326.



Carnegie schedules annual meeting

The annual meeting of Mankato's Carnegie Art Center will be held 7-9

p.m. Sept. 6 at the

Carnegie, 120 S.

Broad St. in

Mankato.

All current

Carnegie members

are invited to attend.

For more informa-

tion, call 625-2730.



Don't miss this ...

Coffee Hag hosting photo exhibit through September

The Coffee Hag is hosting an exhibit of Ron Goblirsch's photography through the month of September.

Goblirsch is

a Redwood

Falls native

who graduated

from Minnesota

State University before relocating to

Biloxi, Miss. His work includes pic-

tures of water scenes and sunscapes

from Biloxi as well as photographs of

nature, wildlife and people.

Goblirsch, however, will not be

able to attend the exhibit as his travel

plans were interrupted by the hur-

ricane affecting the southern United

States.

The exhibit will include more than

a dozen photos, including some

large-scale examples. Photographs

will be hung on Saturday and remain

on display until the end of the

month.



SHORT PLAYS. TALL LINEUP.



Two-day Minnesota Shorts Play Festival opens Sept. 6 with growing reputation, plenty of talent

By Tanner Kent

tkent@mankatofreepress.com

MANKATO — The Minnesota Shorts Play Festival drew about 50 submissions its first year.

Last year, organizers received 123 short play submissions. This year, more than 400 submissions came in from around the country, Australia and Israel.

Among the selected playwrights are Mark Harvey Levine — a well-known writer who has some 800 productions to his credit — and Jamie Pachino, a Los Angeles writer for the TV show "Barely Legal." There's popular local playwrights like Tom Barna, Greg Abbott and Mitch DeDeyn as well as unknown names like St. Paul's Ellie Schmidt, who wrote a play about the history of cubicles.

The short play festival will be held Sept. 6-7 at Mankato West High School.

Local, state voices

As organizer and North Mankato playwright Greg Abbott noted, the festival includes 17 plays — all 15 minutes or less — from writers both local and national.

Included are plays from well-known Minnesota entities like Adam Sharp, the co-founder of Twin Cities-based Box Wine Theatre; and Katherine Glover, whose 2012 Fringe Festival submission earned spectacular reviews. Event organizer Greg Abbott called Glover's "The Party" — about a socially awkward youth who throws a party after his parent's urging to have friends over — one of the "real gems" of the festival.



"Captain Corporate Personhood" was written by Adam Sharp, co-founder of Box Wine Theatre in the Twin Cities. The play is about a superhero who defends the so-called 1 percent.



Submitted photos

Katherine Glover's drama "The Party" stars (from left): Erik J. Nelson, Adam Guss and Julie Peck. Glover has appeared on Minnesota Public Radio and her 2012 submission to the Fringe Festival — a drama about a woman who begins to believe she sent the wrong man to prison years after her brutal assault — won rave reviews.

If You Go

What

Minnesota Shorts Play Festival

When

7:30 p.m. on Sept. 6 and 7

Where

Mankato West High School Theatre

Cost

Advance tickets are \$9 per day, or \$14

for a two-day pass. Advance ticket

sales end at noon on Sept. 6. After

that, tickets at the door are \$10, and

\$9 for seniors and students. For info or

tickets, visit www.mnshorts.com.

Note

At the end of each night, the audience

will select a Best of the Festival play

that wins an additional \$100.



"Now It's Judy's Turn to Cry" was written by Tom Barna of Eagle Lake and stars Maria Meyer and Kevin Mock.

"These are the first leading roles for both of them," said Tim Berry, who is directing DeDeyn's piece. "They've both been delightful to work with."

Abbott noted that many of the plays feature actors and directors pulled from local colleges and performance groups.

"That's what I really like," he said.

"MSU, Bethany (Lutheran College), Merely Players Community Theater, Mankato Mosaic — we can bring all these theatre groups together to showcase our own talent."

National attraction

Mark Harvey Levine is a seemingly prodigious Los Angeles-based playwright who has been a regular participant in the

There are also a handful of local playwrights who are participating, including Abbott, whose play, "Vultures," is based on the Pulitzer-winning photograph taken by Kevin Carter that depicts a Sudanese toddler crumpled outside a feeding station with a vulture lurking nearby. Carter committed suicide a year later. The play has been produced on the East Coast, but never in Minnesota.

Eagle Lake's Tom Barna, who publishes under the name [tdbarna](http://tdbarna.com), submitted "Now It's Judy's Turn to Cry," a drama on body image that stars high school junior Cynthia Riebesell as director and a middle-aged man (Kevin Mock) in the lead female role.

And Minnesota State University graduate Mitch DeDeyn's play "First Date Frappe," about a mixed-race blind date punctuated with awkward boasts and awkward pauses, stars Tracy Stokes and Free Press staff photographer Pat Christman in lead roles.

Please see PLAYS, Page D2

PLAYS: Allure is discovering new talent

Continued from Page D1

four-year history of the play festival.

Though Mankato might seem an out-of-the-way destination for national playwrights, Paul Hustoles said the contrary is true. The chair of the Minnesota State University Department of Theatre and Dance is directing Levine's submission for the third straight year and said the festival has already gained coast-to-coast recognition.

"There's not that many play festivals in the country," said Hustoles, who is also directing a second play from Rich Orloff, who is also a nationally known playwright with roughly as many production credits as Levine. "This one does have a national reputation."

Levine's "Misfortune" concerns a date between a man and woman at a Chinese restaurant. One receives consistently good fortunes; the other, all negative. The seeming simplicity of the plot, Levine said in an email, belies the density of a 10- or 15-minute play.

"It's freeing in the sense that since it's just 10 minutes, you can afford to experiment. You can have the characters be insects or crayons. You can have them speak in verse. You can kill off everyone," he wrote. "And it's limiting — but in a good way. Writing a 10-minute play forces you to be concise. There's no room for padding. Every word



Submitted photo

Pat Christman and Tracy Stokes are making their debuts in lead roles for "First Date Frappe," written by MSU graduate Mitch DeDeyn.

counts. You have to get right to it."

New to the festival this year is Jamie Pachino, a writer for the USA Network TV series "Fairly Legal." Though she began her career as a dancer and actress, she discovered writing was more appealing. She's written several full-length episodes of "Fairly Legal" as well as a smattering of TV movies and plays. Her submission, a comedy titled "Status Update," opens with a couple in bed, the woman preparing to change her Facebook status to "in a relationship."

Pachino said her piece is a lighthearted take on this generation's equivalent of getting pinned, or going steady.

"I want to know what the conversation was beforehand," said Pachino, who learned about Mankato's

play festival online. "I'm absolutely thrilled to be included."

The unknown quantity

Part of the allure of such a play festival — both for participants and attendants — is discovering new talent.

One participant that might fit that mold is Ellie Schmidt, a St. Paul writer who is having her first-ever production in the festival.

"The Creation of the Cubicle" is a fictionalized retelling of the factual circumstances that led to the invention of the cubicle. Before writing the play, Schmidt researched the history and then boiled it down to an interaction between two office workers — one ambitious, the other lackadaisical — who are trying to find an idea for an office furniture expo.

"People always say, 'Write what you know,'" said Schmidt, who held a variety of jobs before settling on freelance writer. "I guess I've had one too many jobs in a cubicle."



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