



Theater and Broadway with an added Christian perspective.

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2010

Theater Review: Wonder of the World



From Left: Bryn Boice, Kate Benson, Michael Poignand, Katharine McLeod, Aaron Blakely (photo credit: Dustin Drankoski)

Zany Lindsay-Abair Comedy Marks Theater Company's Off-Broadway Debut

By Lauren Yarger

An effervescent leading lady, a couple of good comedic turns and attention to detail from director Brian Gillespie, not to mention a revival of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright David Lindsay-Abair's delightful play *Wonder of the World*, combine to make an entertaining night at the theater and a solid debut for Pull Together Productions' first Off-Broadway show.

Katharine McLeod is the effervescent one, starring as Cass (the role created by Sarah Jessica Parker when the play premiered at Manhattan Theatre Club in 2001), who heads to Niagara Falls on a journey of self discovery following a betrayal by her husband, Kip (Aaron Blakely). As she checks off a list of more than 200 things she always wanted to do before saying "I do" to Kip, she meets Lois, an alcoholic bent on getting revenge on the husband who abandoned her by throwing herself over the falls in a barrel -- a pickle barrel that she carries around with her -- which makes the revenge more sweet because her husband loves pickles. An unexpected friendship springs up between the two women.

Along the way, Cass has an affair with Captain Mike (Michael Poignand), who pilots one of the Maid of the Mist tour boats on the river, and meets up with two inept, bumbling private detectives, Karla and Glen (Evangeline Johns and Tom Logon), who need some marriage counseling themselves. Turns out Kip hired them to find Cass, because he wants another chance. Blakely is a master of comedy as the phobia-driven husband afraid of clowns, among other things, who pines away for his missing wife while watching videos of their wedding and hearing "their song" on the radio.

The whole crowd eventually ends up in Cass and Lois' motel room. Enter Janie (Bryn Boice), Karla and Glen's marriage therapist, who comes over in a clown costume (much to Kip's horror) to conduct a session of the "The Newlywed Game" to help this bunch of looneys figure out what they really need and want. Boice also shines comedically as a helicopter pilot, a woman Cass and Lois meet at the falls and as waitresses in three different tourist-trap restaurants.

Gillespie keeps the pace quick and uses fun gimmicks like toy boats and helicopters to lend to the zany mood of the play. As a song appropriate to the action plays in between scenes, cracker-jack stage crew members quickly change a platform, a railing and a few pieces of furniture into designer Emily Lippolis' clever renditions of various settings (loved the triple-threat wooden hoop that serves as a dressing-table mirror, a ship's wheel and a car steering wheel).

Gillespie needs to rein in Benson, however, who expresses most of her emotions by shouting them. It's catching, as other actors in the scenes begin shouting their lines too. In fact, the scene where everyone is shouting over the noise of the falls (nicely created by sound designer Andy Leviss) doesn't seem all that different from some of the others. Lindsay-Abair's terrific dialogue doesn't need amplification; his intertwining of events in the lives of these over-the-top characters is skilled playwrighting with precision. When Benson did deliver a couple of lines in a softer tone, they were very funny and far more effective.

Wonder of the World runs through June 26 at the Shell Theater on the fourth floor of the Times Square Arts Center, 300 West 43rd St., NYC. Performances are Thursday through Saturday at 8 pm with a Wednesday, June 16 performance at 8 and a Sunday evening performance on June 20 at 7. Tickets can be purchased through SmartTix at <http://www.smarttix.com/> or by calling 212-868-4444. For more information about the company, visit <http://www.pulltogetherproductions.org/>.

Christians might also like to know:

- Language
- Sex outside of marriage
- God's name taken in vain
- Sexual dialogue. I don't want to give anything away, but Kip's betrayal of Cass involves a rather nasty sexual practice.

Posted by LaurenYarger at 4:04 PM

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Our reviews are professional reviews written without a religious bias. At the end of them, you can find a listing of language, content or theological issues that Christians might want to know about when deciding which shows to see.

** Mature indicates that the show has posted an advisory because of content. Usually this means I would recommend no one under the age of 16 attend.

THEATER CRITIC LAUREN YARGER



MY BIO

Lauren Yarger has written, directed and produced numerous shows and special events for both secular and Christian audiences. She co-wrote a Christian musical version of "A Christmas Carol" which played to sold-out audiences of over 3,000 in Vermont and was awarded the Vermont Bessie (theater and film awards) for "People's Choice for Theatre." She also has written two other dinner theaters, sketches for church services and devotions for Christian artists. Her play concept, "From Reel to Real: The Jennifer O'Neill Story" was presented as part of the League of professional Theatre Women's Julia's reading Room Series in New York in February 2018.

Yarger trained for three years in the Broadway League's Producer Development Program, completed the Commercial Theater Institute's Producing Three-Day Intensive and other training and produced a one-woman musical about Mary Magdalene that toured nationally and closed with an off-Broadway run.

She was a Fellow at the National Critics Institute at the O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT. She writes reviews of Broadway and off-Broadway theater (the only ones you can find in the US with an added Christian perspective) at <http://reflectionsinthelight.blogspot.com/>.

She is editor of The Connecticut Arts Connection (<http://ctarts.blogspot.com>), an award-winning website featuring theater and arts news for the state. She is a contributing editor for BroadwayWorld.com. She previously served as theater reviewer for the Manchester Journal-Inquirer, Connecticut editor for CurtainUp.com and as Connecticut and New York reviewer for American Theater Editor.

She is a Co-Founder of the Connecticut Chapter of the League of Professional Theatre Women. She is a former vice present and voting member of The Drama Desk.

She is a freelance writer and playwright (member Dramatists Guild of America). She is a member of the The Outer Critics Circle (event manager for the annual awards ceremony), The American Theater Critics Association, The League of Professional Theatre Women and the Drama League. She served as a judge for the SDX Awards presented by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Yarger is a book reviewer for Publishers Weekly and freelances for other sites. She is a member of the National Book Critics Circle.

She also is a member of the Episcopal Actors' Guild, the NY Public Library for the Performing Arts and The O'Neill Theatre Center..

A former newspaper editor and graduate of the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, Yarger also worked in arts management for the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and served for nine years as the Executive Director of Masterwork Productions, Inc. She lives with her husband in West Granby, CT. They have two adult children.

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SEARCH

KEY TO CONTENT NOTES:

God's name taken in vain -- means God or Jesus is used in dialogue without speaking directly to or about them.

Language -- means some curse words are used. "Minor" usually means the words are not too strong or that it only occurs once or twice throughout the show.

Strong Language -- means some of the more heavy duty curse words are used.

Nudity -- means a man or woman's backside, a man's lower front or a woman's front are revealed.

Scantly clad -- means actors' private areas are technically covered, but I can see a lot of them.

Sexual Language -- means the dialogue contains sexually explicit language but there's no action.

Sexual Activity -- means a man and woman are performing sexual acts.

Adultery -- Means a married man or woman is involved sexually with someone besides their spouse. If this is depicted with sexual acts on stage, the list would include "sexual activity" as well.

Sex Outside of Marriage -- means a man and woman are involved sexually without being married. If this is depicted sexually on stage, the list would include "sexual activity" as well.

Homosexuality -- means this is in the show, but not physically depicted.

Homosexual activity -- means two persons of the same sex are embracing/kissing. If they do more than that, the list would include "sexual activity" as well.

Cross Dresser -- Means someone is dressing as the opposite sex. If they do more than that on stage the listing would include the corresponding "sexual activity" and/or "homosexual activity" as well.

Cross Gender -- A man is playing a female part or a woman is playing a man's part.

Suggestive Dancing -- means dancing contains sexually suggestive moves.

Derogatory (category added Fall 2012) Language or circumstances where women are referred to or treated in a negative and demeaning manner.

Other content matters such as torture, suicide or rape will be noted, with details revealed only as necessary in the review itself.

The term "throughout" added to any of the above means it happens many times throughout the show.

REVIEWING POLICY

I receive free seats to Broadway and Off-Broadway shows made available to all voting members of the Outer Critics Circle and The Drama Desk, the two professional critics organizations with journalists covering NY theater. Journalistically, I provide an unbiased review and am under no obligation to make positive statements. Sometimes shows do not make tickets available to reviewers. If these are shows my readers want to know about (I review all Broadway shows and pertinent Off-Broadway shows), I will purchase a ticket. If a personal friend is involved in a production, I'll let you know, but it won't influence a review. If I feel there is a conflict, I won't review their portion of the production.

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- Because of Winn Dixie (Goodspeed)
- Betrayal
- Broadway Bound Hunter
- Moulin Rouge
- When it Happens to You

2018-2019 REVIEWS

- A Man for All Seasons (FPA)
- A Number/ 'Night Mother
- All Our Children
- American Son
- Be More Chill
- Beetlejuice
- Benny and Joon
- Fiddler on the Roof (in Yiddish)
- God Shows Up
- Hadestown
- Ink
- Mother of the Maid
- The Convent
- The Ferryman
- The Other Josh Cohen
- The Peculiar Patriot
- The Waverly Gallery
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- Tootsie
- Williston

TOP PICKS

- Come From Away
- Hamilton
- Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Parts 1 and 2

SEARCH THIS BLOG

2017-2018 REVIEWS

- 1984
- Admissions
- As You Like It
- Babette's Feast
- Bella:An American Tall Tale
- Carousel with Joshua Henry, Jessie Mueller, Renee Fleming
- Children of a Lesser God
- Curvy Widow
- Escape to Margaritaville
- Farinelli and the King
- Frozen
- Harry Clarke
- Home for the Holidays
- Honeymooners, The
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- If Only
- Julius Caesar -- Shakespeare in the Park
- Junk
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- Meteor Shower with Amy Schumer
- Midsummer Night's Dream, A
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- Milima's Tale
- My Fair Lady
- On the Shore of the Wide World
- Once on This Island
- Parisian Woman, The with Uma Thurman
- Party Face with Hayley Mills
- Pipeline
- Prince of Broadway
- Rocktopia
- Saint Joan
- Shadowlands
- SpongeBob SquarePants
- Summer with LaChanze
- The Band's Visit
- The Portuguese Kid
- The Treasurer
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- This Flat Earth
- Three Tall Women
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- What We're Up Against

2016-2017 REVIEWS

- A Bronx Tale
- A Day By the Sea
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- All the Ways to Say I Love You
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- Anastasia
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- Bandstand
- CATS
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- Cherry Orchard, The
- Church and State
- Come from Away
- Dead Poet's Society
- Falsettos
- Finian's Rainbow
- Front Page, The
- Glass Menagerie, The
- Groundhog Day
- Heisenberg
- Hello, Dolly!
- Holiday Inn
- Implications of Cohabitation, The
- In Transit
- Jitney
- Joan of Arc: Into the Fire
- Les Liaisons Dangereuses
- Light Years, The
- Little Foxes, The
- Love, Love, Love
- Man From Nebraska
- Marie and Rosetta
- Miss Saigon
- Natasha, Pierre and the great Comet of 1812
- Oh, Hello
- Oslo
- Out of the Mouths of Babes
- Paramour
- Penitent, The
- Play That Goes Wrong, The
- The Present Laughter
- Shining City
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- Sweat
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- The Most Reluctant Convert
- The Present with Cate Blanchett
- The Price
- The Profane
- Wakey, Wakey
- War Paint

NEXT REVIEWS COMING:

2018-2019 season starts soon!

REFLECTIONS IN THE LIGHT



Lauren Yarger, Editor. Member of The Drama Desk, The Outer Critics Circle and The American Theater Critics Association. She also is a member of the League of Professional Theatre Women, and The Episcopal Actors' Guild.

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- 39 Steps, The
- 101 Dalmatians
- A Christmas Story
- Aladdin
- Amazing Grace
- An American in Paris
- Annie
- Beautiful
- Billy Elliott
- Blue Man Group
- The Body Guard
- Bridges of Madison County, The
- Bright Star
- Burn the Floor
- A Bronx Tale
- Chicago
- Cirque du Soleil's OVO
- Cirque Dreams Illumination
- Color Purple, The
- The Dear Evan Hansen
- Elf the musical
- Ella
- End of the Rainbow
- Evita
- Fiddler on the Roof
- Finding Neverland
- Freud's Last Session
- Godspell
- Hair
- Hamilton
- Hello, Dolly!
- Honeymoon in Vegas
- Humans, The
- The Illusionists: Witness the Impossible
- In the Heights
- Irving Berlin's White Christmas
- Jersey Boys
- King and I, The
- Legally Blonde
- Les Mis 25th Anniversary
- Light in the Piazza
- Lion King
- Little House on the Prairie
- Lord of the Dance
- Love Never Dies
- Mama Mia
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- Matilda
- Memphis
- Messiah Rocks
- Miss Saigon
- Monty Python's Spamalot
- Next to Normal
- Normal Heart, The
- On Your Feet
- Peter & the Starcatcher
- Phantom of the Opera
- Pippin
- Radio City Christmas Spectacular
- Rain A Tribute to the Beatles
- Rent
- Riverdance
- Rock of Ages
- School of Rock
- The Screwtape Letters
- Shrek
- Sister Act
- Something Rotten!
- South Pacific
- Spring Awakening
- Stick Fly
- Stomp
- The Aluminum Show
- The Two and Only
- Traces
- Voca People
- Waitress
- West Side Story
- Wicked
- Xanadu
- Young Frankenstein

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