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THE MORNING LINE

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PAGES: 20, *including this page.*

March 22, 2015

Sony Will Make ‘Beautiful: The Carole King Musical’ Into a Film

By Brooks Barnes

Sony Pictures Entertainment on Sunday said that it had closed a deal to bring “Beautiful: The Carole King Musical” to the big screen.

Sony’s decision to bring “Beautiful” to multiplexes is not entirely unexpected. The studio’s corporate sibling, Sony/ATV owns most of the music rights, and “Beautiful” has been a breakout success on Broadway. Featured songs include “The Locomotion,” “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” and “So Far Away.”

But musicals — even ones based on stage smash hits — are among Hollywood’s riskiest propositions. Disney’s “Into the Woods” succeeded in finding an audience last year, but recent adaptations of “Jersey Boys” and “Rock of Ages” have fallen flat. Sony was pleased with the performance of “Annie,” released last Christmas, but box-office analysts were unimpressed.

The film version of “Beautiful” will be produced by Tom Hanks; Gary Goetzman, a producer whose movie credits include “Mamma Mia!” in 2008; and Paul Blake, the lead producer of “Beautiful” on Broadway. Douglas McGrath, who wrote the book for the stage production, will work on the screenplay.

No casting decisions were announced. “Beautiful” is now in its second year on Broadway. A London production opened last month, and a North American touring production is slated to begin in the fall.

“Audiences both on Broadway and in the West End have responded to ‘Beautiful’ not only to relive Carole King’s timeless classics, but to experience the ways they illustrate her triumphant and joyful life story,” Michael De Luca, a senior Sony movie executive, said in a statement.

The New York Times



March 20, 2015

Paula Vogel's 'Indecent' Will Have Its Debut at Yale Rep

By Scott Heller

A new play with music by Pulitzer Prize winner Paula Vogel, about a controversial moment in Jewish cultural history, and two other world premieres by up-and-coming women playwrights will be part of Yale Repertory Theater's 2015-16 season.

Ms. Vogel's "Indecent," created with Rebecca Taichman, who will also direct, looks at the fallout from the 1923 Broadway production of Sholem Asch's 1907 melodrama "God of Vengeance," for which the entire cast was arrested on obscenity charges. A coproduction with La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, it will run in New Haven in October and then move west.

Also in the Yale Rep season: Jiehae Park's "peerless," about twin sisters who go to great lengths to get into the right college; and "The Moors," by Jen Silverman, a contemporary riff on gothic romances and their authors.

A production of "Cymbeline" directed by Evan Yionoulis, and Dianne Wiest in Samuel Beckett's "Happy Days," directed by James Bundy, round out the Yale Rep season.

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Arts & Leisure

The New York Times

MARCH 22, 2015

Juggling Five Towns And Now Broadway

The playwright Lisa D'Amour is busy all over the country.

By MELENA RYZIK

Lisa D'Amour could not resist the Wobble. It's a dance anthem set to Southern rap, made Internet-famous by a sure-footed New Orleans detective during a Mardi Gras parade last year. When Ms. D'Amour set out to write a play about New Orleans, her beloved hometown, she knew the Wobble would have to figure in. So a few weeks ago, she had it blasting in a rehearsal room, her big cast two-stepping along.

Meanwhile, Ms. D'Amour sat quietly with her laptop, revising a scene for the

A Cultural Leap

Street art meets high art.

play, "Airline Highway," which represents her Broadway debut. Taking a line dance from "the streets of Nola" to the center of the theatrical world, she said, is "bringing it all together, all down to earth."

"What a dreamy way to work," she added.

When "Airline Highway" begins performances April 1 at the Samuel J. Friedman Theater, it will be the culmination of an eventful, dreamy few years for Ms. D'Amour, 45. She had honed her two-decade career mostly on downtown and site-specific work, then had a 2012 Off Broadway hit with "Detroit," a Pulitzer Prize finalist that explored social fraying amid the economic downturn.

"Airline Highway," a boisterous dark comedy with a cast of 16 about a reunion in a run-down motel, was commissioned by the Steppenwolf Theater Company in Chicago and is hotly awaited on Broadway, where American plays about American



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At the Samuel J. Friedman Theater.

subjects are rare this season. It will also make Ms. D'Amour the first woman with a new play there in two years.

Simultaneously, for the group PearlDAmour she was co-creating "Milton," a project equal in scope, about a different corner of American life.

She and her longtime collaborator Katie Pearl had visited five towns across the country named Milton, interviewed the residents and compiled their tales into a play, eventually to be presented in each Milton — social outreach and theater rolled into one.

Ms. D'Amour — thoughtful, unguarded, seemingly most at home in her cowboy boots — has long shimmied across cultural fault lines. "Most often I feel like two different Lisas living in parallel performance

worlds," she said.

The connecting thread is work about people and issues that don't normally get a dramatic spotlight. "One of the great strengths is her ear," said Martha Lavey, artistic director of Steppenwolf. "She's bearing witness, and I think she does it without judgment, and in a way that's poetic and compassionate."

Growing up as a fifth-generation resident of New Orleans, Ms. D'Amour was introduced early to the charms of idiosyncrasy. "The way that you can mix and mingle with many different kinds of people has been important to my work, and my worldview," she explained.

She's been especially peripatetic lately. She gave up her home base in Brooklyn in September and has been bouncing among New Orleans, where she and her husband, Brendan Connelly, a composer and sound designer, own a house; New York; Chicago; Washington, D.C., where the Woolly Mammoth Theater Company recently produced her play "Cherokee"; several Miltons; and Durham, N.C., where she taught for a semester at Duke University.

Here are a few stops along her trail, as she prepared performances in towns with no theaters, and planned her first Broadway opening night.

JULY 28, 2014, 4 P.M. 'MILTON' FINAL REHEARSAL, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

In a sweaty loft space in Dumbo, Ms. D'Amour and Ms. Pearl watched as actors performed for an invited audience of theater friends.

In lieu of a set, five screens would broadcast video of the skies over Milton, N.C., population 196; Milton, Mass., 27,000; Milton, La., 303; Milton, Wis., 5,550; and Milton-Freewater, Ore., 7,050.

PearlDAmour selected Milton simply by Googling the most commonly named towns ("It just spoke to us; it sounded like

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a person," Ms. D'Amour said), but they chose their locales with an eye toward geographic, economic and racial diversity.

In two years, traveling to the Miltons over and over — nine visits to North Carolina alone — they interviewed more than 130 people, collecting dozens of hours of commentary.

Then the real work began.

Ms. D'Amour called it "the most terrifying" writing experience she had ever had — "because it was endless," she said, and, Ms. Pearl added, "a big responsibility." They finally hit upon a format in which the professional actors convey townspeople's stories around themes like work, religion and family.

The cast also shares snapshots and mementos from each Milton, sitting down with the audience to talk one-on-one. Presented in the round, it's an intimate experience, especially for crowds hearing their own tales.

To help prepare locals for the arrival of PearlDamour, the women hired a community engagement expert, Ashley Sparks, who spread word of their mission and helped open doors.

Folks in North Carolina needed little convincing.

"The town really took to us right away," Ms. D'Amour said, one reason they decided to have the premiere there.

AUG. 8, 2014, 7 P.M. 'MILTON' OPENING NIGHT, MILTON, N.C.

"Play About Milton," read the flashing highway sign on the main drag here, home to a pizza place, a few antiques shops and the Tire and Grill, a combination diner and car repair. It is a single-stoplight hamlet, and there is hardly traffic enough for that, save for the cars speeding to a racetrack just across the border in Virginia.

Among the only cultural attractions is the workshop of the 19th-century cabinetmaker Thomas Day, a prominent free African-American whose house is now a historic site.

A light rain fell on opening night, misting the butter-yellow Episcopal Church, now a local women's club, that served as the theater. Programs were stacked next to a basket of honey bun cakes, made by a parishioner at a Baptist church.

The cast — Helga Davis, Mike Shapiro, Vella Lovell — all wore "Milton" insignia: a necklace, T-shirt, earrings. Instead of a stage, the carpet was crisscrossed with the shapes of each Milton, outlined in tape, and the show ended with a collage of voices from the five towns.

"I had no idea what it was going to be like," Anne Brandon Scott, 66, a Miltonian who works in a bank nearby, said after the show. "But they take nothing and turn it into something wonderful."

Creating the production cost about \$100,000, most of it for rehearsals and bringing the cast and crew to town. PearlDamour cobbled it together from grants, crowdsourcing and good will (Ms.

D'Amour was staying at the mayor's house). She and Ms. Pearl had not paid themselves for their two years of administrative work planning the project. They invited "ambassadors" from other Miltons to see the show, but are still awaiting word on grants that would fund future installations.

Still, the good will extended months after PearlDamour left town: Inspired residents were planning their second annual street fair (PearlDamour had helped organize the first) with a performance to honor Thomas Day. Ms. D'Amour served as a technical consultant for the fairs and as a civic cheerleader.

OCT. 3-7, 2014, WASHINGTON, NEW ORLEANS, CHICAGO

"Travel has been such a huge part of my life for years that it is kind of the norm," Ms. D'Amour wrote by email, describing her merry-go-round of play workshops, meetings with donors, planning trips and brief respites with family.

She and Ms. Pearl have staged multidisciplinary pieces in New York, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Austin, Tex. They met in Austin in 1996, while Ms. D'Amour earned a master's degree in playwriting at the University of Texas. Now they align only to collaborate. (Ms. Pearl, 44, is completing a master's at Brown University.)

Ms. D'Amour supports herself in part by teaching; the semester at Duke hit a sweet spot, because it was with her husband. Otherwise, she wrote, "It's been a while since I have had an office with a door that closes."

In the fall, Ms. D'Amour learned that even before the Chicago opening, Manhattan Theater Club had committed to bringing "Airline Highway" to Broadway. She was "incredibly moved by the trust" in her script, she said. But it meant a lot of time away from her students, so she devoted part of her salary to visiting lecturers.

DEC. 14, 2014, 6 P.M. 'AIRLINE HIGHWAY' OPENING NIGHT, STEPPENWOLF THEATER, CHICAGO

Glitter-strewn and bawdy, "Airline Highway" follows the residents of the Hummingbird Motel (located on the real strip that gives the play its name) as they plan a "living funeral" for Miss Ruby, a bedridden former burlesque queen and den mother to a motley set of hustlers, strippers and bike-riding poet-philosophers.

Ms. D'Amour had been inspired by Tennessee Williams and the interwoven characters of Lanford Wilson's "Hot I Baltimore."

"I wanted to write, like, a big old-fashioned play," she said — a first for her.

Now, at intermission, she was fretting.

"People have not laughed as much, and it's driving me a little crazy," she said. "I know it's funny."

Her jitters were understandable: "Detroit" had its premiere at Steppenwolf, too, but that show had only five characters; "Airline Highway" is much grander and features often overlapping dialogue.

"It's like a musical score," said Joe Mantello, the director. "You have to adhere to the structure and the precision and yet make it completely improvisational, like jazz. It's complicated to pull off."

As a prerequisite to working together, Ms. D'Amour had Mr. Mantello visit New Orleans for the first time. Some cast members, like K. Todd Freeman, a Steppenwolf veteran, were already well versed in the city's culture; he based his character, Sissy Nana, loosely on Big Freedia, the New Orleans bounce star.

For opening night, Ms. D'Amour imported crawfish from Breaux Bridge, La., and made étouffée. She hauled it to the theater in big pots and served it to the cast as well as the visiting New Orleanians who inspired her characters.

At the after-party, Ms. D'Amour reflected on the post-Katrina changes to her hometown, as money and

gentrification have taken root, a sensitive issue explored in the play. The script was not quite where she wanted it to be.

"I want to come back in a month, after my mind is clear, and then we'll figure out what we want to change," she said.

MARCH 11, 2015, 10:30 A.M. DAY 2, 'AIRLINE HIGHWAY' BROADWAY REHEARSAL, NEW YORK

After recharging in New Orleans for Mardi Gras (where she dressed, not incidentally, as a chameleon), Ms. D'Amour stepped into the Friedman Theater for the first time, joined by her brother and frequent collaborator, Todd, who has been cast in the New York production, also his Broadway debut.

They stared at the gilded ceiling in the auditorium and sized up the proscenium stage, exactly what Ms. D'Amour had envisioned for the play.

"It doesn't feel intimidating to me," she announced happily.

The D'Amours wondered, though, whether the cast was big enough to capture the energy of a real New Orleans party. At home, she said, "There's a sense of humor and a sense of spontaneity and a sense of just putting yourself out there." She was eager to translate that to the Broadway stage.

"I do feel a little like a mole or a spy in this world sometimes," she said. "And I'm maybe seeing what I can get away with."

Back in the rehearsal room, with her brother leading his new cast mates in the Wobble, she put down her laptop and joined in.

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Left, Ms. D'Amour and her brother, Todd D'Amour, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theater.



COLBY KATZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Helga Davis in "Milton."

Toggling between shows addressing different corners of American life.

ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

A look at the playwright Lisa D'Amour at work:
nytimes.com/theater



COLBY KATZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

the director Katie Pearl, left, and Ms. D'Amour in Milton, N.C., where they presented their play "Milton."



MICHAEL BROSILOW

From top: from left, K. Todd Freeman, Kate Buddeke, Judith Roberts and Scott Jaek in Lisa D'Amour's "Airline Highway" in Chicago;

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The New York Times

March 22, 2015

Review: ‘I’m Looking for Helen Twelvetrees’ Explores the Life of an Early Talkies Movie Star

By Charles Isherwood

A disorderly life is viewed through an aptly fragmenting (if frustrating) lens in “I’m Looking for Helen Twelvetrees,” a new play written by and starring David Greenspan that opened on Sunday at Abrons Arts Center. Mr. Greenspan’s elliptical drama for three actors explores the life of the title character, a movie star of early talkies played by Brooke Bloom, as her career briefly peaks then heads south, and a tempestuous early marriage withers.

Mr. Greenspan plays Mike, a 16-year-old from Los Angeles who treks across the country by bus in search of his idol. She’s starring as Blanche DuBois in a summer stock production of “A Streetcar Named Desire.” But in an early monologue that sets the play’s disorienting tone, Mr. Greenspan conflates Mike’s story with what appears to be his own.

“I was born in Los Angeles in 1956,” he says. “And I traveled in the summer of 1951 to Sea Cliff, Long Island — at the age of 16.” He then continues: “I was born in 1935. And at the age of 16, in 1972, I was looking out a window opening out on a rolling lawn.”

Mr. Greenspan was in fact born in Los Angeles in 1956, but neither he nor Mike really figures prominently in the story that unfolds, which is, as it happens, enacted on a lush green (fake) lawn spread across the stage. The audience sits on the stage, too, watching the play from a kind of reverse angle, with a view of the empty auditorium as a haunting backdrop.

Skittering back and forth in time, the play jumps from Mike’s arrival in Sea Cliff, where he’s welcomed by locals who invite him to join them for dinner (all the ancillary roles are played by Mr. Greenspan), back to the early romance between Helen Jurgens and Clark Twelvetrees (Keith Nobbs), both aspiring actors, although Clark doesn’t get many roles and makes a living as a stage manager. Then it leaps forward several years, where we find a belligerent Clark, now divorced from Helen, getting into a drunken squabble with his new girlfriend, Ann.

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Suddenly this scene evaporates, or rather zigzags, back into the past, as Helen, married to Clark, prepares to leave New York and the theater for Hollywood, where the new talkies are upending the business and making trouble for foreign-born stars. Then it's back to the future, where Clark confronts Helen's second husband, a sometime actor and real estate developer named Jack Woody, inciting another drunken brawl. Some passages are repeated with variations, like recurring memories, and at times the characters address the audience directly.

Keeping track of who's who and what's what makes for a continual challenge, particularly because Mr. Greenspan takes on so many roles, sometimes portraying two characters addressing each other. The disjointed structure also keeps us from getting intimate glimpses of its central characters, since we rarely witness sustained interaction between them.

Among the more notable dramatic incidents is the apparent suicide attempt made by Clark just as Helen is preparing to head west. He jumped, or perhaps fell — or as scandalmongers suggested, was pushed — out of their seventh-floor window, luckily landing on a window awning (or on the roof of a convertible). This traumatic incident, and Clark's affection for, and onetime seduction of, a gay roommate named Steven are threads woven frequently into the play. (In that drunken fight, Ann intimates that Clark thinks of Steven when she is in bed with him.)

If there's not a whole lot that the director, Leigh Silverman, can do to bring order to the jumbled jigsaw puzzle of the text, she does elicit strong performances.

Mr. Greenspan variegates his voice deftly. He employs his trademark silken croon for narration as well as for some of the female characters, who include the actress playing Eunice in "Streetcar," who tells us that a life-bruised Helen had "the saddest eyes that I'd ever seen." A more gruff tone is used for, say, the fellow who roughs up Clark, ultimately precipitating his death. He's also convincing as the naïve Mike.

Ms. Bloom moves from a bright-eyed ambition in the scenes set during the early days of her career, when Hollywood beckoned, to a more world-weary resignation after her movie roles dry up, and she returns east to work in stock. Nevertheless, her Helen retains a flirtatious sexuality that she uses to charm herself into two more marriages after her divorce from Clark.

And Mr. Nobbs is also excellent as the moody, frustrated Clark. Plagued by persistent alcoholism, he quickly gains the embittered aspect of a man whose life's path took a wrong turn early on, and who unleashed his anger on everyone in his orbit.

The play culminates in a movingly drawn encounter between Helen and Mike, although it apparently takes place in some celestial otherworld because both are looking back on their meeting. And it seems to be Mr. Greenspan himself speaking when he recalls being touched by photos of Helen in the role of Blanche “in this little long-gone, long-ago-forgotten theater.” He continues, “And I wanted to think that despite all the chaos and disappointment, that in this neglected corner of time, you had done something of great beauty.”

This scene has a melancholy lyricism that captivates, but the play’s unwieldy, unmoored structure tends to obscure what Mr. Greenspan intends to illuminate about the life of the title character. The overall effect is of watching a movie with the reels all mixed up.

I’m Looking for Helen Twelvetrees

By David Greenspan; directed by Leigh Silverman; sets by Antje Ellermann; lighting by Jen Schriever; costumes by Theresa Squire; production stage manager, Shelley Miles; production manager, Cynthia Jankowski; assistant director, Elisabeth Frankel; produced by Amanda Feldman; associate producer, Bradley Cherna; technical director, Derek Johnson. Presented by Abrons Arts Center, Jay Wegman, director. At the Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand Street, at Pitt Street, Lower East Side; 212-352-3101, abronsartscenter.org. Through April 4. Running time: 1 hour 5 minutes
WITH: Brooke Bloom (Helen Twelvetrees), Keith Nobbs (Clark Twelvetrees) and David Greenspan (Actor/Playwright).

AP

March 23, 2015

How 3 Broadway novices wrote 'Something Rotten!'



In this Tuesday, March 3, 2015, photo, Karey Kirkpatrick, center, is flanked by his brother, Wayne Kirkpatrick, left, and John O'Farrell outside the St. James Theatre in New York. The three men have written the music and story for the new Broadway musical "Something Rotten!" a comedy set in Shakespeare's England. (AP Photo/Mark Kennedy) *The Associated Press*

NEW YORK (AP) — It began with an intriguing premise for a musical: What would it have been like to be a fledgling playwright making a living at the same time as William Shakespeare?

The result is "Something Rotten!" and all it took to get to Broadway was that original idea plus 40-odd songs, endless rewriting, a brief scare from an Oscar-winning movie, some top-notch actors and some two decades.

"It's easy," joked Karey Kirkpatrick, who co-wrote the songs with his brother, Wayne, and co-wrote the story with John O'Farrell, all of whom are making their Broadway debuts this month. "A piece of cake."

The comedy is set during the Renaissance and portrays Shakespeare as an arrogant, rock star playwright. Two brothers desperate to write a hit show in his shadow stumble on the notion of writing the world's first musical.

Karey and Wayne Kirkpatrick dreamed up the initial idea in the mid-1990s. They'd both adored musical theater growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, before carving out their own careers.

Wayne Kirkpatrick is a Grammy Award-winning songwriter of such tunes as "Change the World" for Eric Clapton and "Wrapped Up In You" by Garth Brooks. His brother is a screenwriter who helped write such films as "Chicken Run," "James and the Giant Peach" and "Over the Hedge."

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A musical set in 1595 England was an idea they kicked around whenever the brothers got together. Some of their original jokes included having playwrights back then represented by William & Morris and the law firm of Rosen, Crantz and Guildenstern.

"We would go, 'That would be funny. We should write that someday,'" said Karey Kirkpatrick. "Then we would go back to our own careers. And then we'd get back together and go, 'Hey, I thought of something else. What if ...'"

"That went on for about 15 years," Wayne Kirkpatrick said.

O'Farrell, a British author and commentator known for the books "The Man Who Forgot His Wife" and "The Best a Man Can Get," joined the effort after he and Karey Kirkpatrick bonded while working on "Chicken Run."

"His books have just the right amount of humor and heart. So I knew the sensibilities would align," said Karey Kirkpatrick. He told his brother: "You'll like John. He's one of us."

Work on the show was fitful and then threatened by the release of "Shakespeare in Love," the 1998 film with Gwyneth Paltrow that portrayed a young Shakespeare stealing many of his best lines. The fledgling musical writers decided to keep going, mindful that any overlap would have to be cut.

In 2010, Karey Kirkpatrick got in touch with an old pal, Kevin McCollum, a Tony-winning producer whose Broadway credits include "The Drowsy Chaperone" and "Rent." (They had both worked at Disneyland years ago). Kirkpatrick wanted to know how to pitch a musical. McCollum told him "Avenue Q," one of his hits, began as just an idea and three songs when it was first introduced.

At a pitch meeting later that year, the brothers, after dinner with McCollum in which they explained their idea, sat down with him in Karey Kirkpatrick's 10-foot-by-10-foot Los Angeles studio and played him five songs and handed him a treatment.

"He went away and read and came back and said, 'I think you've got something here,'" said Karey Kirkpatrick. O'Farrell added: "It happened to be the producer who is the most open to new ideas and the greatest developer of new material. We got incredibly lucky."

Work on the musical began in earnest in February 2011 when all three men spent a week in an apartment in New York hammering out the story.

Things went even faster when McCollum asked Tony-winning director and choreographer Casey Nicholaw to weigh in. He, in turn, reached out to top-notch talent.

"That's what happens when you have Kevin and Casey," said Karey Kirkpatrick. "We'd do a table-read and Casey would say, 'I'm just going to get a few of my friends together and we'll read it.' And you show up and it's 'Tony-winner!' 'Tony-winner!' 'Oh, hi, I've seen you.' 'And I've seen you!'"

That's how "Shrek" and "Next to Normal" star Brian d'Arcy James, Tony-winner Christian Borle ("Peter and the Starcatcher" and Tony-nominees John Cariani and Brooks Ashmanskas came aboard.

"Everyone's the A-Team except us," said O'Farrell.

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A workshop version of "Something Rotten!" was shown in New York last fall, which went so well that a planned stop in Seattle to get the show ready for Broadway was dropped. Only one song has survived from the beginning "Welcome to the Renaissance," which remains the first song.

The Kirkpatrick brothers and O'Farrell have since added three songs, moved one, corrected a lopsided first act, and sliced away at the script. They act on consensus and their guts. They are having a ball, but it's not a stroll in the park.

"I remember we'd see a show and say, 'Yeah, we can do that,'" Karey Kirkpatrick said. "They make it look so easy. And then when you start doing it, then you go, 'This is hard!'"

Online: <http://www.RottenBroadway.com>

The Star-Ledger

MARCH 22, 2015

Giving a new voice to Gershwin on the Great White Way



Ronni Reich

rreich@starledger.com

More than 60 years have passed since Gene Kelly tap-danced

his way around flower stalls and city streets alongside Leslie Caron in the film "An American in Paris."

But it was just last winter that a stage musical of the same name made its way to the City of Lights.

With a score full of Gershwin classics and choreography and direction

IF YOU GO An American in Paris

Where: Palace Theatre, 1564 Broadway, New York

When: In previews; opens April 12. Show times vary.

How much: \$57-\$147, call 877-250-2929 or visit ticketmaster.com

by ballet fixture Christopher Wheeldon, the new production of "An American in Paris" made its debut at the Théâtre du Châtelet last year, and now is about to bow on Broadway.

Since its first reading in 2013, West Orange native Brandon Uranowitz has been along for the ride. All he had when he signed on was a treatment by book writer Craig Lucas (of "The Light in

the Piazza" and "Reckless") imagining a basic framework, complete with ideas for ballets that would rise out of orchestral pieces.

His first reaction, he says, was "This is brilliant story-telling. This is unlike anything I've ever seen, and I haven't even read a script yet."

Now, Uranowitz appears as the composer and pianist Adam Hochberg. He shares the stage with New York City Ballet's Robert Fairchild as struggling artist Jerry Mulligan, dancer Leanne Cope as the charming French woman Lise Dassin, Jill Paice as art patron Milo Davenport, Veanne Cox as Madame Baurel, and Max von Essen as Henri Baurel.

As a character, Adam has been substantially fleshed out since the movie was written. For one, he serves as the story's narrator.

"It makes it fun for me to play, fun for the audience to have this insight into the story," says Uranowitz.

"What they've also done is now it's me, Adam, Henri and Jerry who are all in love with Lise, the lead girl, so it's added more conflict there — in a fun way."

Uranowitz has plenty of experience breaking the fourth wall and moving stories along through narration.

He recently did so as Arnold in "Torch Song Trilogy" at The Studio Theatre, earning a Helen Hayes nomination. He also appeared as Eugene in Neil Simon's "Brighton Beach Memoirs" and "Broadway Bound" at The Old Globe.

His first job out of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts was understudying Anthony Rapp as Mark in "Rent" on the



From left, Brandon Uranowitz, a West Orange native, Robert Fairchild and Max Von Essen with the company of "An American in Paris," which opens next month at the Palace Theatre.

Broadway National Tour.

On the Main Stem, audiences have also seen him in "Baby It's You."

But "An American in Paris" is a chance to show off more of what he can do, from his acting skills to his facility with the Great American Songbook and even a little bit of tap dancing.

It's also an opportunity to be part of a production that puts a fresh spin on musical chestnuts.

"The big difference is that the movie was part of that golden age of Hollywood, the early 1950s splashy movie musical era," Uranowitz says. "It takes place in Paris in the early '50s, very soon after the occupation and understandably they don't really acknowledge it. ... Now that we're 60 years past that, we've had time to process it."

The new musical acknowledges the history that

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West Orange native Brandon Uranowitz, right, with fellow cast members of "An American in Paris," from left, Leanne Cope, Jill Paice, Robert Fairchild and Max Von Essen. (PHOTO BY ANGELA STERLING)

grounds the story by setting it five years earlier, so that the consequences of war are more immediate.

"Our show opens with them tearing down a Nazi flag and putting up a French flag," Uranowitz says. "It has a lot of darker elements. Having those as part of the story really highlights the lighter elements and the romance."

He adds, quoting Lucas, "It's about finding hope in the ashes."

In this version of the story, Adam has a war injury and limps, which colors his every movement. But there is a fantasy sequence where he gets to take part in the show's prominent dancing.

Of Wheeldon, Uranowitz says, "He thinks in a totally different way."

"He thinks in pictures and he thinks in angles and movement, but he's got such a keen eye ... it's been really fascinating building a story that can't exist without the words but also can't exist without the movement."

"When people talk about musicals, they talk about how people sing because they can't do anything but sing in that moment (because) it's raised to another level, and he's done that with dance."

The show is Wheeldon's Broadway debut, and no one knew quite what to expect at first.

"He's such a ballet staple,



Uranowitz has been part of "An American in Paris" since its inception and will be part of the originating Broadway cast.

but our producers really saw something in him," Uranowitz says. "What's happening on that stage I don't think anyone else could really do. His movement is so specific and so emotional, whether it's exuberance or despair it's so on point that you know exactly what's happening."

Now 28 years old and living

in Brooklyn Heights, Uranowitz honed his passion for the stage from early childhood in West Orange. His family used to visit New York almost weekly, and he still remembers seeing "Peter Pan" at age three: "pure magic."

He took classes at Performers Theatre Workshop in Livingston from the time he

was six through high school graduation. In 1995, he earned a spot in the children's ensemble of "Evita" at the Paper Mill Playhouse, and he and his family realized that his interest could be serious.

Next came "A Christmas Carol" at Madison Square Garden and an appearance in the original company of "Ragtime" in Toronto before the show hit Broadway. His mother and sister moved to Canada with him for eight months.

Much as he enjoyed life on the road as a child actor, Uranowitz missed his school life. He returned to New Jersey, attended PTW three times a week, and then, as a student at Montclair Kimberley Academy, discovered straight plays.

He focused on acting at NYU, with a particular emphasis on the classics.

"If I had a career just doing Shakespeare for the rest of my life I'd be plum happy," he says. "I got to play Richard III when I was 20, which was life-changing, and I would love to be able to go back to that."

For now, he's focused on a different kind of timeless tradition as "An American in Paris" nears opening night.

Uranowitz grew up listening to Gershwin, and even saw "Crazy for You" six times. Now, he gets to sing the American composer's songs, such as "But Not For

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Me.”

“When it comes to Gershwin, it’s got a quality that everyone wants to be beautiful, and it should be,” he says. “But there are also lyrics involved that are telling some pretty deep, meaningful things.

“I want to be able to make these songs really human and accessible, and I want to really bring to the stage what the songs are really saying,” he adds.

“I would love for people to come and hear these songs in a new, relatable way, not just sit back and bask in the beauty of Gershwin’s music but be engaged and leaning in to hear what’s being said.”

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BOWWOWS ON BROADWAY

Even rescue dogs can get into the act

BY JOE DZIEMIANOWICZ
THEATER CRITIC

SOME DOGS get treats for performing cool tricks — others get smooches from Helen Mirren. Meet Broadway corgis Mimi and Marco, cuddly stubby-legged furballs that have been scoring snacks and kisses from the Oscar winner as she readies to go on as Queen Elizabeth in "The Audience" at the Schoenfeld Theatre.

They're not the only pooches putting on a show.

Say hi to Trixie, the well-groomed auburn Pomeranian constantly nuzzled by opera superstar Renee Fleming in the screwball comedy "Living on Love," beginning April 1 at the Longacre Theatre. And at Radio City Music

Hall, a pack of 11 dogs get adorable alongside the Rockettes in the "New York Spring Spectacular," now in previews and opening Thursday.

That's a lot of animal appeal. Ask British actor Richard McCabe, who plays prime minister Harold Wilson in "The Audience," and shares a scene at Balmoral Castle with Mirren and the canines that make the most of their brief time on stage.

"People have asked why the corgis are not used more in the show," says McCabe, who stands onstage so the pups can run between his feet. "The answer is very simple. When they are onstage the audience doesn't look at anything else. Upstaged by a pair of 10-year-old rescue dogs."

Broadway animal trainer Bill Berloni found the showpups through Corgi Rescue of New Jersey.



Renee Fleming in "Living on Love" with Trixie, also shown at left.



"The Audience" corgis. Mimi is on the left, Marco on the right.

The pair had been given up by owners in Massachusetts. Mimi and Marco now live in a cozy apartment in Washington Heights with their handler, Jacqui Wyatt. Her corgi Maya

understudies the dogs — and she's already put dibs on Mimi and Marco when "The Audience" ends its run.

Trixie — who lives with Berloni when she's not in a show — is another roommate at Wyatt's dog pad while she's working. She's also been seen in "Bullets Over Broadway" as Mr. Woofles. Trixie is bending gender again. Her character's name is Puccini in "Living on Love."

Fleming carries Puccini for most scenes in the show. But Berloni has added a new cue in which Puccini runs to Fleming. "The butler picks up the dog," says Berloni. "The diva never bends down."

But there's no diva act from Trixie, even if she has more pictures outside the theater than Fleming. "Trixie is very composed, a total pro," says Fleming. "She

doesn't squirm, and, more important, she doesn't howl."

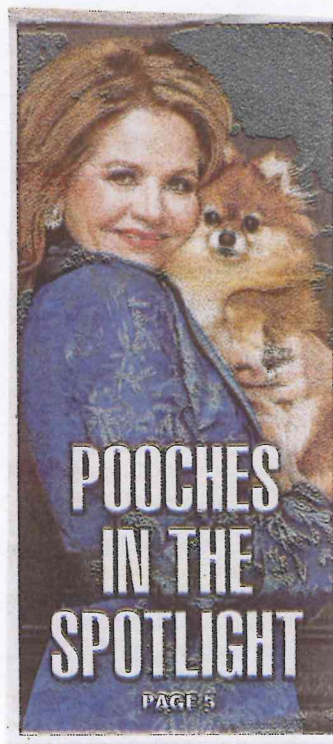
Fleming, a soprano who's sung everything from Mozart and Massenet to jazz and the national anthem, recalls a Russian wolfhound that did exactly that during her pivotal aria at the Metropolitan Opera in "Manon."

"I'd like to think he was inspired by my performance — not commenting on it," she says. "That incident was actually the basis for a children's book called 'The Dog Who Sang at the Opera.'"

At the Radio City Spring Spectacular, the eclectic pack of pooches — from a huge spotted Great Dane to a tiny wiry-coated terrier — appear in a Central Park scene in which roller skaters and joggers enjoy the city's splendor.

The dogs, like the others, get a curtain call. And why not, says McCabe, who argues that humans and canines are the same. Each, he says, "is entirely motivated by the promise of tasty treats."

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THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 30, 2015

THE THEATRE

NOW PLAYING

Posterity

Doug Wright, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright behind "I Am My Own Wife," has a great love of nostalgia, specifically as it applies to pockets of European history that are not so much obscure as underappreciated—or so he believes. In his latest play, the skillful scenarist tells the story, based on real events, of Henrik Ibsen's relationship to Gustav Vigeland (Hamish Linklater), a sculptor who endeavored to make a likeness of the artist who changed the world stage. Of course, a series of occurrences both large and small prevent the bust from being completed, but that's not Wright's point; the real story is about how artists who spend their lives in relative isolation come together in love, admiration, and, sometimes, distrust. As Ibsen, John Noble huffs and puffs, but it's all a defense against his essential sensitivity and loneliness. Wright directs Linklater well by calming him down; he displays a greater degree of nuance here than usual, replacing his jack-in-the-box energy and cuteness for something more internal. Dale Soules, as Greta Bergstrom, a nurturing servant, is a welcome addition to the proceedings; it's always a pleasure to listen to her voice, deepened by life experience. (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111.)

Total Weekly Circulation – 1,055,542
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AND READ.

MARCH 25-APRIL 8

CABARET

23. **Hear** Lena Hall

Out of drag.

Café Carlyle, April 7 through 18.

On Broadway, Lena Hall shone (and won a Tony) as *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*'s Yitzhak; she'll bring that punky charisma up close and personal at this rock-and-blues-tinged show.

Total Weekly Circulation – 408,000
Monthly Online Readership – 3,213,000

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