



AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE

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American Players Theatre Releases 2009 Attendance, Announces 2010 Lineup

SPRING GREEN, WIS: American Players Theatre (APT) concluded its landmark 30th Season on October 4 up the Hill and October 17 in the new Touchstone Theatre, which staged its first show in July of this year. 101,083 patrons helped celebrate the Theatre's 30th year beneath the sun, moon and stars (and for the first time, beneath a more conventional ceiling as well).

Of the patrons, 10,072 of them were students from Wisconsin and around the Midwest attending one of APT's school day matinee performances. The Student Matinee Series is an education program created specifically to bring the classics to a new generation of theater lovers.

In 2009, APT presented a total of 172 performances on two stages – 110 up the Hill and 62 in Touchstone (33 of which were sold out). Though the number of patrons attending APT performances was down slightly from 2008, the decrease in attendance was both expected and planned-for based on a slumping economy. This approach allowed the Theatre to meet projected goals and increase ticket income by about 1% despite a slightly smaller audience. And, remarkably, allowed APT to open a new theater in a time of economic decline.

According to Producing Artistic Director David Frank, "APT's success in these difficult times was, above all, made possible by two very special groups of people. Every member of our company joined wholeheartedly in a glorious effort to cut expenses while fiercely protecting the quality of the work. And as the troubles persisted, our patrons and donors kept the faith magnificently. We cannot thank them enough."

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APT's 2010 Season Season

In 2010, APT will produce five plays in the outdoor theater up the Hill (two Shakespearean comedies, another George Bernard Shaw masterpiece and the works of two playwrights who've never before been produced at APT) and three shows in the 200-seat Touchstone Theatre. Detailed casting information will be available in March.

Up the Hill

As You Like It by William Shakespeare

Directed by Tim Ocel

Scheming and treachery lead to love, atonement and more than a little cross-dressing in Shakespeare's pastoral comedy. When scheming Duke Frederick banishes the rightful Duke Senior (his brother), he allows Senior's daughter Rosalind to remain in the court to attend to his own daughter, Celia. At least for a while. In the meantime, young Orlando's brother Oliver plots to have him killed during a wrestling match. But Orlando defeats the mighty wrestler, derailing Oliver's plans and winning Rosalind's heart in the process. Eventually, all of them end up in the Forest of Arden, where true feelings and true identities are hidden from view until the time when all is inevitably revealed.

Picnic by William Inge

Directed by William Brown

A small Kansas town is shaken up when an attractive young drifter finds work next door to a single mother and her two daughters. Flo's plans for her girls are thrown into turmoil when they both fall for their neighbor's hired hand, even though the younger girl is bound for college and the older is engaged to another man. Tensions come to a head during a neighborhood party, and a community is forced to rethink their priorities finding that in the end, it's not necessarily love that conquers all.

All's Well That Ends Well by William Shakespeare

Directed by John Langs

After the death of her husband, Countess of Rossillion sends her son Bertram off to make his way at court, where the King struggles with an incurable disease. Remaining in her custody is the poor, orphaned Helena whose father was a famous physician. Helena is secretly in love with Count Bertram, despite the great difference in their stations. To win his love, she uses the medical knowledge she learned from her father to cure the King, who then upholds her wish to marry Bertram. Bertram, however, has other ideas and flees to fight the war in Italy. To win his love, Helena also travels to Italy, hatching another plan. But all won't be well until the travelers return home – to the Countess's estate and another funeral.

The Circle by W. Somerset Maugham

Directed by James Bohnen

The Circle is the story of two triangles, each of a husband, wife, and lover. Thirty years before the start of the play, Lady Kitty ran off to Italy with Lord Porteous, leaving her husband and five-year-old son Arnold to their own devices. The play opens with the return of this now aged couple to England and a family reunion negotiated by Arnold's curious wife. To complicate matters, the earlier abandoned husband Clive intrudes upon the visiting couple.

The second triangle, one of young people, consists of the now-grown Arnold, his lively but bored wife, Elizabeth and their affable house guest Teddie. Bringing matters full circle, Elizabeth and Teddie have fallen for each other. Will they bolt like the lovers of thirty years ago? Maugham's hall of mirrors action wittily calls to mind the famous question: Do people learn anything from the past, or is the only lesson the past has to offer that people have never learned anything from it?

Major Barbara by George Bernard Shaw

Directed by David Frank

Major Barbara Undershaft becomes disillusioned when the Salvation Army accepts money from an armaments manufacturer (her father, who is essentially trying to buy her affection) and a whiskey distiller. So much so, in fact, that she leaves her post there. Eventually, Barbara must decide for herself what path leads to her own personal fulfillment, and the greatest benefits to the people she wants to help. With Shaw, charity and money are always complicated, and you never know where the chips will fall until the last scene is played to its satisfying conclusion.

In the Touchstone Theater

***The Syringa Tree* by Pamela Gien**

Directed by C. Michael Wright

Set in Johannesburg, South Africa during the height of apartheid, *The Syringa Tree* reveals the horrors of racism through the filter of a six-year-old girl. Though Elizabeth understands that she's privileged in many ways, she struggles to sort through her confusion as to why her Xhosa nanny Salamina and her family is treated differently than Elizabeth's own white family. Her understanding, her bravery and her fear continue to develop through the story until its inspiring and heartbreaking conclusion, with all 24 characters played by the remarkable Colleen Madden.

***Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett**

Directed by Kenneth Albers

Vladimir and Estragon wait by a tree for a man named Godot (take from the name what you will). Over the course of the day, people stumble in and out of their resting spot as their intended guest grows ever tardier. And time becomes ever harder to define. Speculation about the meaning behind this play run rampant, leading playwright Samuel Beckett to once ponder "Why people have to complicate a thing so simple I can't make out."

***Exits and Entrances* by Athol Fugard**

Directed by Kate Buckley

Exits and Entrances begins with the rebirth of South Africa, and the death of the Afrikaners actor André Huguenet. Over the course of the two-character show, the Playwright reflects on the time he spent with Huguenet. Through his recollections, the two compare their lives and upbringing against the backdrop of South Africa, and contemplate the plans the gods have for them. Based on Fugard's real-life mentor relationship with the larger-than-life Huguenet,

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