

Spring 2004

Theatre in the Kensington Area — Something for Everyone

by Sara Phang

The Kensington-Bethesda area's theatre companies provide exciting drama and performance for all ages and every taste. They also offer opportunities for actors, singers, and stagehands at all levels—from community-level amateurs to professionals seeking to launch a national career. Area theatre companies include Kensington Arts Theatre, Heritage Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, and Cedar Lane Stage.

Kensington Arts Theatre

The Kensington Arts Theatre (KAT) occupies the Kensington Town Hall (3710 Mitchell Street), the picturesque brick castle-like old Armory Building in Old Town Kensington. Only a few years old, the Kensington Arts Theatre stresses musical drama and cabaret. As outreach to a younger audience and their parents, in February 2004 the KAT offered "Stop & Think," a musical drama emphasizing values.

For grown-ups, the KAT offers "Into the Woods," the musical satire of well-known fairy tales by Stephen Sondheim, through March 27, 2004. "Into the Woods" shows Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., with a Sunday matinee on March 21 at 3 p.m.

From April 30 to May 22, 2004, KAT will perform the musical "tick, tick, BOOM," a humorous musical drama about the dilemmas of Jonathan, an aspiring musical playwright in downtown New York City, amusingly frustrated by his girlfriend's nesting ambitions and his yuppie best friend's materialism. Call (301) 547-7101. You can make reservations on-line, at <http://creativedojo.com/KAT/>.

The KAT is a member of the Washington Area Theatre Community Honors (WATCH) organization of community theatre groups and has been nominated for WATCH awards. KAT was also honored in the Ruby Griffith Awards for its debut performance "Side Show."

The Kensington Arts Theatre's founder and director, Craig Pettinati, emphasizes the KAT's close relationship with the Kensington community and welcomes the contributions of community members. In his words, the KAT is "searching for people seeking truths to contribute, skills, visions, opinions." KAT welcomes volunteers.

Heritage Theatre Company

The Heritage Theatre Company is dedicated to performing the finest classic modern (18th to 20th century) and Shakespearean drama. The Heritage Theatre Company is located in Harlow Hall at the rear of the North Chevy Chase Church at 8814 Kensington Parkway, Chevy Chase. Its mailing address is PO Box 844, Rockville, MD 20848 and its web site is www.theheritagetheatre.org/

The Heritage Theatre Company is also dedicated to advancing the careers of stage professionals at all levels. The HTC has a core of highly trained and experienced resident actors, the Heritage Stage Company. Aspiring young actors may apply for internships and apprenticeships at the HTC in stage management, publicity, and set and lighting design.

Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, "Long Day's Journey into Night," will be performed by the HTC on Fridays and Saturdays at 7 p.m., and Sundays at 4 p.m. through April 3, 2004. "Long Day's Journey," recently revived on Broadway, won multiple Tony Awards. Tickets: regular \$24, seniors \$20, students \$18, phone

(301) 770-9080.

In addition, the Heritage Summer Theatre is an opportunity for actors, designers, and techs to try their wings. Also, the Heritage Showcase Theatre launches Washington D.C. actors' and designers' careers big-time.

The HTC emphasizes outreach to the community via the American Educational Theatre company, which performs drama for in-school audiences as an extension of the regular curriculum. The Theatre Benefits group performs shows for our men and women in uniform who are based in the Washington, D.C. area.

Round House Theatre

Round House Theatre, based in Bethesda (at the corner of East-West Highway and Waverly Street) and Silver Spring, offers traditional and musical drama, plus many educational and outreach opportunities.

The current production is "Fences" by August Wilson, from March 31 through May 2, 2004. This Broadway hit drama (premiered in 1987) features the story of Troy Maxson, a former Negro League Baseball player, and his struggle to challenge the Major League color bar in the age of the civil rights movement. For ticket information call 240-644-1100 or go to online sales at <www.roundhousetheatre.org>.

A long-term staple of the Round House Theatre is the New Voices Play Reading Series, in which local playwrights present professionally staged readings of works in progress, constructively critiqued by the audience. Another staple is the Cabaret Series, highlighting American musical theater.

For 34 years the Round House Theatre has also offered summer programs in acting. The In-School Touring Company presents curriculum-relevant drama to students. The Hey Day Players are an all-volunteer company of seniors who stage scripts dealing with aging issues and tour senior centers. The Sarah Play is a unique mentorship program that assists budding student drama specialists in the process of producing a play.

Cedar Lane Stage

More traditional dramatic performance is also offered at the Cedar Lane Stage, located at the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church at 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, near Rock Creek Park. One of the oldest community theaters in this area, the Cedar Lane Stage has offered performances since 1958-59, opening with "The Late Christopher Bean."

CLS has a forty-year tradition of performance of classic modern drama, including the less well-known works of famous dramatists and overlooked minor "masterpieces." Recent performances included Arthur Miller's "View from the Bridge," Tina Howe's "Museums," and Shakespeare's "Macbeth." Its next productions include the Summer Sampler of One-Act Plays plus a fall production. For information, visit the web site at www.cedarlanestage.org.