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COVER PHOTO: Cover of the play TRAPS by Caryl Churchill, featured in Mike Fischer's story.



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From The Publisher

Since creating Footlights, I have been attending theater for over 30 years and feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to see so much incredible work done both on stage and off by talented local women artists such as Ruth Schudson, Flora Coker, Marti Gobel, Deborah Staples, Laura Gordon, and Mary McDonald Kerr, and so many more. I am further inspired by the many young and new faces rising up to follow in their footsteps.

However, when you read Mike Fischer's article, you'll see that Wisconsin is still behind the national average in producing plays by women. Mike's last article discussed the need for diverse stories to be told by diverse voices, and the same is true for the art and stories of women. That statistic, like many others, will change as we realize the need for more equality and inclusion. Like most issues, awareness is the first step toward healing and recovery. I think with the help of the wonderful female artists in our community, we're making great strides for the present and the future of the arts. Plays on Broadway written by women sell better than plays by men. Many more arts patrons themselves are women. It's a no-brainer!! Perhaps there is a disconnect between the box office statistics and the Artistic Directors that requires some tending to, and perhaps this issue of ArtsScene can help lead that conversation.

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Steve Marcus,
Publisher

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Escaping the Trap: From History to He

By Mike Fischer

I.

When the lights come up on British playwright Caryl Churchill's rarely performed *Traps* (1977), the first thing we see is a woman named Syl, "walking up and down with a baby on her shoulder, getting it to sleep." After the play's first line of dialogue, Syl gently takes the baby offstage; we never see it again.

As wildly experimental as every Churchill play, *Traps* then presents a series of scenarios – think of them as parallel universes, unfolding simultaneously – in which the six characters live multiple versions of themselves.

But while we learn that Syl dreams of being a professional dancer, she is instead consistently tethered by those around her to the idea of a baby – even when living in alternative universes where she doesn't actually have a baby, and even though she laments early on that raising a child is tying her down.

Churchill, here, is challenging her audience as well as her onstage characters: Having first seen and associated Syl with a baby, can they – can we – work free of that image? Can this woman – can any woman – ever escape the expectation that her purpose in life is to have and then raise children?

II.

Could a man have written this play? If you answer "yes," here's a follow-up question: Would a man have written this play?

To invoke Churchill's title, even these questions are traps. "Women are expected to write about women," playwright Jenny Lyn Bader noted in a 2017 essay. When they don't, their plays are less likely to be produced. And when they do, their plays are still less likely to be produced, since issues involving hearth and home as well as mother and child are viewed as less important – as feminine rather than universal.

Women are damned if they do, and damned if they don't.

erstory



Playwright Caryl Churchill

III.

"I was fed up with the situation I found myself in in the 1960s," Churchill acknowledged, in a rare interview about her own life, as a married woman who'd had three sons. "I didn't like being a barrister's wife and going out to dinner with other professional people and dealing with middle class life. It seemed claustrophobic."

"Their husbands wouldn't put their artistic careers on the shelf, but the women did," notes American playwright Suzan-Lori Parks, discussing female artists she's known who had kids (as did Parks herself, well into her forties). "And I was watching that and going, 'Wow. My artist-call is so strong. How can I do both?'"

IV.

While her work is consistently informed by feminism, the prolific Churchill customarily frames any exploration of domestic life in a context that also tackles climate change and creeping totalitarianism, the perversion of science and the plight of the working class.

Consistent with what Jenny Lyn Bader suggests, might Churchill's wide-ranging subject matter help explain why she is so infrequently staged, in relation to her prodigious talent?

Might this also explain why, in Wisconsin, we have seen so few productions featuring playwrights like Annie Baker and Julia Cho, Lydia Diamond and María Irene Fornés, Debbie Tucker Green and Adrienne Kennedy, Dominique Morisseau and Lynn Nottage and Parks herself?

None of these playwrights are new; each of them has created a strong and substantial body of work, spanning many years. We should be seeing far more of it.

V.

One can make the case – I would – that Churchill is the greatest living playwright in the English-speaking world. In her 2018 speech honoring Churchill's receipt of the Writers Guild of Great Britain's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Writing, playwright Lucy Kirkwood (similarly wide-ranging, similarly underproduced) said:

"To anyone working in the theater today, the outstanding contribution of Caryl Churchill is beyond question . . . Her invention is ceaseless. Her influence is profound. In the course of a writing life that spans sixty years, she's changed the dramatic landscape of two centuries, and evolved more than any other British playwright our conception of what a play even is. She's even changed the way we write them down."

VI.

Like many of the female playwrights I mentioned above, Churchill consistently interrogates the notion of a single, monolithic narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.

I'm writing this essay in fragments to honor how much she has done to make me similarly wary of the male-inflected will to power baked into our blithe acceptance of all-encompassing totality, which claims to contain multitudes while consistently leaving marginalized others out in the cold.

"Woman un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield," writes French feminist Hélène Cixous, in her groundbreaking *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976).

Publishing her essay in the same year that Churchill was writing *Traps*, Cixous maintains that women's writing is intrinsically "heterogeneous" and "several." "Woman," insists French feminist Luce Irigaray in *This sex which is not one* (1977), are always "multiple," scaling confining boundaries trying to limit who they are and what they might become.

VII.

Speaking of being left out in the cold: This March issue of ArtsScene aligns with our country's designation of March as Women's History Month. Women's History Month grew out of Women's History Week, which began under President Carter. Women's History Week was built around International Women's Day.

The Russian Revolution began on and in conjunction with International Women's Day, when women marching for bread were joined by striking female textile workers in the streets of Petrograd. One week later, Czar Nicholas II abdicated.

Yes: the Russian Revolution was launched by women, on a day designed to celebrate women. It's another of those countless facts that are customarily erased in the writing of history. And in how the men who write it instruct us to read and remember it.

VIII.

Churchill has written more than fifty plays, going back to radio plays created in the 1950s. Excepting *Top Girls* (1982) – staged by the Milwaukee Rep 35 years ago and by Renaissance Theaterworks in 2018 – none of those plays has been professionally produced by a currently operating Milwaukee theater company (three now-defunct Milwaukee companies each staged one Churchill play) or by an Equity company in Madison (including the late Madison Rep).

American Players Theatre has similarly not staged a single Churchill play, despite producing three plays by Churchill's fellow Brit and near exact contemporary, Tom Stoppard (they were born 14 months apart). APT had also planned on mounting a fourth Stoppard play in its cancelled 2020 season.

IX.

Shortly before his untimely death in 1940, German philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote: "Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."

X.

Parks is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and was the first Black woman to win the Pulitzer for Drama, for her play *Topdog/Underdog* (2001). In the 2018 New York Times list of the best 25 American plays from the past 25 years, *Topdog/Underdog* was #1.

Topdog/Underdog was staged at Madison Rep (2005) and Renaissance Theaterworks (2007). I'm aware of no other play in Parks' substantial body of work having been produced by any Equity theater company in Madison, Milwaukee, or Spring Green.

XI.

In deconstructing outmoded notions of totality, French feminists like Cixous simultaneously interrogate what we even mean by words like "woman" and "female." "The very dichotomy man/woman," writes Julia Kristeva in *Women's time* (1981), "belongs to metaphysics." However we identify ourselves, philosophers like Kristeva suggest, all of us are always both (and simultaneously neither!) male and/or female. Kristeva insists these terms are fictions.

So stipulated; gender, like race, is a social construct. And we must, as casting director Victor Vazquez notes in a widely circulating February 2021 conversation with director Lavinia Jadhvani, insist in theater and life on "making space for the messiness and chaos and complexity of identity."

But in the here and now, such myths have real-world consequences for people defined and limited by them; as the past four years have made clear, big lies have power to hurt real people. Regardless of whether they accept or reject the label, those humans whom society identifies as “women” face different expectations, resulting in different experiences. As Churchill’s title suggests, her character named “Syl” truly is trapped.

Even if “woman” is a philosophical construct, contends Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), “it still remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women.”

XII.

How does that oppression manifest itself in the world of theater?

Less than 30 percent of the plays staged in the United States are written by women. That dismal percentage actually represents an improvement on numbers from as recent as 2015, when 79 percent of plays staged in this country were written by men – prompting playwright Marsha Norman to quip that “if life worked the way the theater does, four out of every five things you heard would be said by men.”

Meanwhile, studies consistently demonstrate that more than two-thirds of theater patrons are women. Nearly 70 percent of college degrees in English literature and 60 percent of college degrees in the performing arts are awarded to women. On Broadway, plays by women sell an average of 3,538 more seats than plays by men.

XIII.

“Simply put,” Lucy Kirkwood continued, in her speech honoring Churchill, “she is the only person writing today who says something new in both form and content every time she puts pen to paper.”

So why aren’t we seeing much more of her work in Wisconsin?

XIV.

The numbers involving what gets staged in Milwaukee are actually worse than the national numbers.

Between 2000 and 2020, less than 21 percent of the plays produced by Milwaukee’s six Equity companies were written by women; even in the most recent five-year period, only one quarter of the plays produced by these companies were written by women.

Only Renaissance Theaterworks – founded and run by women to give women in theater more opportunities – came close to achieving parity (49.3 percent of its produced plays in this 20-year period were written by women; nearly 85 percent of the plays staged by Renaissance between 2015 and 2020 were written by women).



XV.

Producing plays that more fully represent all of us isn't just a number-crunching academic exercise. It's about what future we choose to inhabit on that big stage we call the world.

"The hierarchizing of men's stories over ours can be downright dangerous," insisted playwright Rebecca Gilman in a 2019 essay. "If women's stories aren't given equal weight in popular culture, then women's stories in, say, a Senate confirmation hearing, are too easily dismissed as dubious, minor, inconsequential, confused."

"Theater is a generative medium," Bader pointed out in the above-referenced 2017 essay. "Ideas that begin there reverberate beyond to other stages, and to other media such as film and TV. They can travel great distances."

What we stage determines how we see and who we are.

XVI.

What sort of journey do we want to take, in the arts and in our communities? Will we move toward a more inclusive future, embracing a more expansive vision of all we can be, together? Or will we travel in circles and continue writing the same old histories, refusing to learn from our mistakes and therefore condemning ourselves to repeat them?



A photograph from Renaissance Theaterworks' production of TOP GIRLS.

XVII.

Churchill's own metaphor for how *Traps* unfolds is an Escher drawing, in which one has the illusion of moving forward without ever actually making progress.

But in her play's final scene, she offers a glimmer of hope, courtesy of a tin tub in which each of the characters successively bathes, rinsing free of who they've been so that they might begin anew.

When Syl emerges from this baptism, she's still a mother. But she's now also the dancer she always wanted to be; while she dances, two of the men handle the childcare. Much like Churchill herself, Syl's art allows her to move forward, in a world where childrearing is shared. Syl no longer needs to choose between being a mother and being a dancer.

Churchill has instead shown us how Syl could be both – and, by extension, how each of us can escape the traps that imprison us within limiting definitions of who we are and might yet be. As the curtain comes down on *Traps*, the characters are sharing a meal, “increasingly happy so that gradually, each separately, they start to smile.”

XVIII.

Reading Churchill's play while trapped at home during this seemingly endless plague year, how can one not imagine that her hopeful ending augurs a new beginning? We ourselves set the traps that imprison us. Might not greater exposure on our stages to playwrights like Churchill help us learn again how to fly free? And give us the courage to try?

Women's “writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours,” writes Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa*. “To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible.”

N

H

B

A Milwaukee-based writer and dramaturg, Mike Fischer is a member of the Advisory Company of Artists for Forward Theater Company in Madison. On behalf of Forward, he co-hosts a bimonthly podcast and writes a weekly visual arts guide. You can reach him directly at mjfischer1985@gmail.com

CARYL CHURCHILL

TRAPS



SHE'S IN CHARGE: A Look at Female Leadership in Community Theatre

By Ryan Albrechtson

The article you are about to read can be easily summed up into one sentence. A simple quote from the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg:

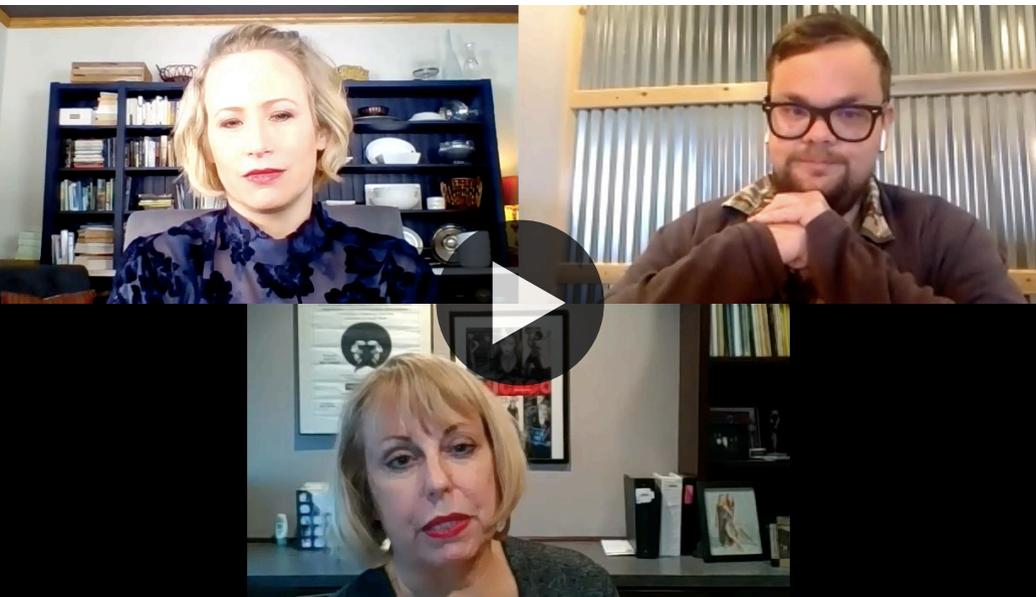
“Women belong in all places where decisions are being made.”

It's not a secret that across the board, leadership roles in American theatre are typically held by men. Why aren't there more women in positions of power in the arts? And, when those opportunities are held by women, what kind of inspiring things do they bring to the table?

In Southeastern Wisconsin, our community theatre scene answers these questions better than most. Our two largest community theatres, Waukesha Civic Theatre in Waukesha and Sunset Playhouse in Elm Grove, currently have some incredible women steering the ship.

Nancy Visintainer-Armstrong began her theatrical career mainly as a choreographer and director. Long before taking the reigns as Artistic Director of Sunset Playhouse, she spent 20 years in the drama department at Longfellow Middle School, producing two musicals per year. Her background and education in both theatre and business, with a Bachelor's degree in business from Carroll University and a Master's degree in theatre from Marquette University, has made her the perfect candidate for such a demanding role. Visintainer-Armstrong first became involved with Sunset Playhouse as a member of their Advisory Committee. When their previous Artistic Director left, Sunset's Board President knew she was the right woman for the job.

Waukesha Civic Theatre's Executive Director Rhonda Marie Schmidt also began her journey in education. After studying performance and working in Milwaukee and New York, she spent seven years building the drama program at University Lake School. “I knew that teaching and arts management was in my wheelhouse,” said



Ryan talks with Nancy and Rhonda Marie over Zoom – click to watch!

Schmidt. From there, Schmidt went on to teach at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School until the position at Waukesha Civic Theatre opened up.

“I had done work at Waukesha Civic Theatre as a director,” said Schmidt. “I loved the theatre and I thought to myself ‘Let’s do this.’ Little did I know getting the job would be followed by a global pandemic.”

Leading a theatrical organization is already no small job in “normal” times. Throw in the year 2020, and these leaders have had their work cut out for them. “When this first started in March, we had just closed NOISES OFF,” said Visintainer-Armstrong. “We thought ‘Oh, we’ll just cancel a couple shows. We never in a million years expected we would cancel so much. We kept thinking we would be able to continue.” After a lot of discussion and option-weighting, Visintainer-Armstrong and her board decided to hold off a while longer and come back with a splash start this coming fall.

“During this down time we’ve done a lot of improvements around the building,” said Visintainer-Armstrong. “It been a very positive time... overall we’re getting through it. And quite well, I think.”

While Sunset had just closed their production of NOISES OFF at the start of the pandemic, timing at Waukesha Civic Theatre played out differently. “We had opened BIG FISH: THE MUSICAL... and closed the same night,” said

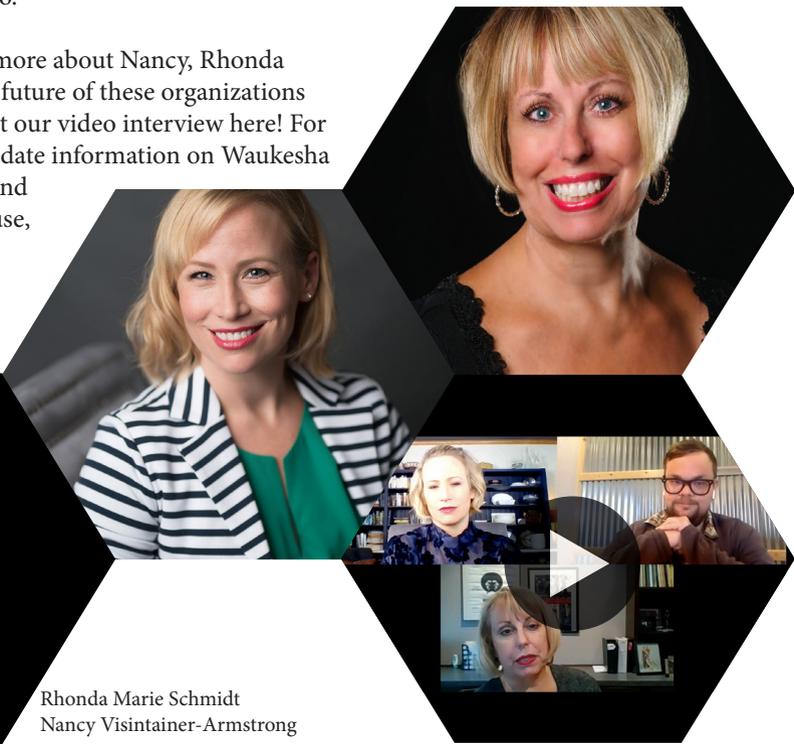
Schmidt. “We thought, we’ll delay it a month and then we’ll bring it back.” When it became more and more clear that wouldn’t happen, Civic looked to lead the way for community theatre entertainment in 2020. This began with a virtual remount of their musical, one of the first fully staged, live streamed productions in Southeastern Wisconsin. Since then, Schmidt and her team have been at the forefront of virtual performances and in person productions with strict safety and health regulations.

“I’ve been so impressed with all of the community theatres,” said Schmidt. “Taking this time to refresh, to improve, to clean... so that when everybody comes back they have a beautiful theatre waiting for them.”

As the heads of these organizations, Nancy and Rhonda Marie aren’t just leading the way through the pandemic. They are also paving a road for the next generation of female artists to find their way to positions of power. “I think one of the most important things is to have a strong business background,” said Visintainer-Armstrong. “It can’t just be about the art. You have to know about the profits and planning so that you can continue to do what you want to do.”

“We work with several interns each season,” said Schmidt. “As a woman, I try to model being decisive with them. To make decisions. To be confident that you aren’t always going to make everyone happy and knowing that it’s impossible to try. And so instead teaching them to try to move forward each day with integrity and do the best they can do.”

You can learn more about Nancy, Rhonda Marie, and the future of these organizations by checking out our video interview here! For the most up to date information on Waukesha Civic Theatre and Sunset Playhouse, make sure to check out their websites.



Rhonda Marie Schmidt
Nancy Visintainer-Armstrong



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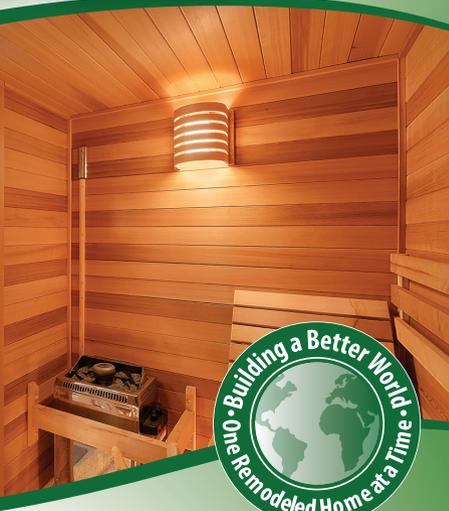


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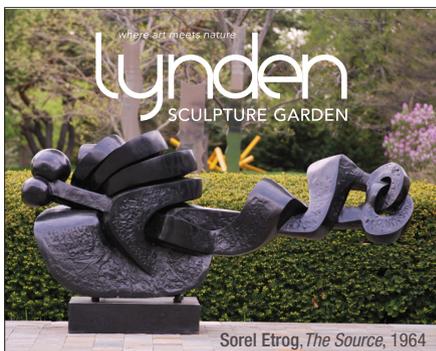
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BALANCE:

The Story of Renaissance Theaterworks

By Ryan Albrechtson

The original founders of Renaissance Theaterworks, an organization founded in 1993 to further gender parity in the arts.



“Classrooms are where the magic happens.”

renaissance

THEATERWORKS

Theater By Women
For Everyone



This quote can be applied in many places – such as all of the magic happening worldwide in virtual and in person classrooms by hardworking teachers in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Artistic Director Suzan Fete and Managing Director Lisa Rasmussen in front of Next Act Theatre, the new home for RTW performances.

NEXT THEATRE

It also applied back in 1993, in a Milwaukee acting class taught by C. Michael Wright. This class would bring together some incredible women, including Suzan Fete, Marie Kohler, Raeleen McMillion, Jennifer Rupp and Michele Traband. From the class this group of artists would create some magic of their own: a little company called Renaissance Theaterworks.

“It just was starting to kind of dawn on all of us at the same time that there weren’t a lot of opportunities for women in the theatre,” said Fete, who serves as Renaissance’s Artistic Director. “There weren’t a lot of plays written by women that were being produced in our community... we were really young and thought ‘Well, we could do that.’”

Renaissance Theaterworks’ initial vision was interested in providing more roles for women that “went beyond the ingenue or the mom.” From that mission the company was born, whose mission is to “create moving theater that connects with our shared sense of being human.” Renaissance is dedicated to artistic excellence and to promoting the work of women onstage and off, and takes pride in their accomplishments towards improving gender parity in Milwaukee theater.

What exactly is gender parity, and what does it have to do with the arts?

“Parity is kind of a funny word, because it’s not used as much as ‘disparity,’” said Lisa Rasmussen, who became Renaissance’s Managing Director after over 10 years as Development Director. “There’s so much disparity in the field of the arts. It seems surprising because there are so many women actors. 70% of the ticket buyers are women. It seems like it should be overbalanced toward women... but only 20% of plays produced in the US are written by women. And when the plays aren’t written by women, it follows through that the



stories aren't women centered and the roles for women aren't as well fleshed out."

"The natural choices men make of what speaks to them and what they want to put on their stages relates to their own experience. That's human nature," said Rasmussen. "Renaissance is interested in raising the stories told by women up to 50%, because we're 50% of the population."

In 1993, the group had their work cut out for them. "At that time in Milwaukee, I think less than 10% of the plays that were produced in our area were written by women," said Fete. "There were no female producers, no female Artistic Directors, and very few roles for women in general."

Fighting for equality and representation in a male dominated field wasn't easy. "It was so ridiculous," said Fete. "At first, we were the 'lesbian theatre company.' And people saying nasty stuff, like 'Well, you don't want to exclude men!' The fact that someone could say that with a straight face when at every other theatre company in town all of the work was written by men and acted by men and directed by men and produced by men... no one batted an eye about that."

"Something that happens if you're lucky to live long enough is that you start to see change," said Fete. "Where I've seen it the most is in the younger people that are on staff now... I was telling some of the younger women the same things, and they were so shocked. 'People really said that to you?' On a daily basis, my friend. 'I can't believe that!' And I realized, that's true for them. And I'd love to think that maybe we were a tiny part of that."

“Balance should be the goal, no matter what,” said Rasmussen. “We shouldn’t have to defend that we want to get toward balance.”

The current season has brought its own set of challenges, finding work that aligned with Renaissance Theaterworks’ mission while staying safe and responsible in the midst of the pandemic. Although it is no easy feat, Fete has come up with a great solution, and it’s pretty “neat.”

NEAT is a magical, often humorous, coming-of-age story. Based in the oral traditions of the African Diaspora, award-winning playwright, Charlayne Woodard is a modern-day griot. NEAT is based on the playwright’s lived experience. As an infant, Woodard’s beloved Aunt Beneatha (Neat), is denied treatment at the local “white” hospital, leaving her with permanent brain damage. But Neat possesses an enormous heart. With love and simplicity, Neat teaches young Charlayne to embrace black pride and cherish life through the turbulent 1960s and 1970s.

“In NEAT, Woodard is a magnificent storyteller who spins her own exquisite real-life remembrances of love and resilience. I’m so excited to bring NEAT back to Milwaukee. A sell-out hit for Renaissance Theaterworks in 2012 followed by a successful South African tour in 2013, NEAT is an inspiring story that reminds us all of what really matters, especially at times when we need it most,” said Fete.

The show, once again starring Marti Gobel in the tour-de-force role, will stream to audiences March 19-April 11. [Click here for more information and to purchase your streaming tickets.](#) You can also learn more about the history of Renaissance Theaterworks and their journey with NEAT in our video interview!





Bravo!

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LunART shines a light on women in the arts

By Shari Gasper



Dr. Iva Ugrčić



After three decades, Dr. Iva Ugrčić is still madly in love with her flute. She spends 2-4 hours each day practicing her instrument.

She describes the flute as her passion, her vocation, not a job or hobby. If you have had the pleasure of hearing her play, you will agree it is what she is meant to do.

Ugrčić of Madison is a professional flutist who has been featured as a solo artist as well as a chamber and orchestral musician at numerous music festivals and concerts, performing throughout Europe and North America.

“Music feeds my soul,” she said. “I love being on stage, playing music, being in the middle of a creation.”

For the past year during the pandemic, Ugrčić shares simple and beautiful solo flute etudes on YouTube every Monday morning, hoping to bring a little light to people around the world.

She recently participated in the Wisconsin Sound Series, a livestreamed event by Wisconsin Union Theater, with pianist Satoko Hayami, and served as a guest speaker, discussing



outside-the-box music careers, for Paracademia, Inc. in New York. This month, Ugrčić presents Artpreneurship, sharing how to start an arts nonprofit or business, at Texas A&M University's Piano Celebration Week, March 25-31.

Juggling her practicing, performances and speaking engagements is a large part of her life, yet only a fraction of what she does each day. Ugrčić is also the CEO/artistic director of LunART and holds the board liaison and strategic initiatives role at Overture Center for the Arts.

She founded LunART Festival in 2018 to support, inspire, promote and celebrate women in the arts.

Giving women a platform

Pursuing a career as a professional musician, Ugrčić, from the Ex-Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, experienced the troubles of being a female artist as she performed and studied throughout Europe. The gender inequities nearly stopped her from following her dreams.

Coming to the US in 2014 to pursue a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the UW-Madison, Ugrčić felt she could more freely express herself.

The intent of her dissertation “Doina Rotaru – The Voice of Romania” was to introduce this Romanian woman composer to the US. The positive responses Ugrčić received validated her belief that there are many women artists who have much to say but have not had the opportunity to share their voices with the world. This was the catalyst for the creation of the LunART Festival.

Upon graduation, Ugrčić spent the next nine months putting LunART's first season together, finding sponsors, raising funds, securing lecturers and performers.

The festival grew from three days and 60 artists in 2018 to six days and over 100 artists in 2019. All kinds of art are represented at the festival, including visual art, poetry, monologues, comedy, singing, songwriting and musical performances.

In 2020, LunART presented the virtual Human Family Festival, celebrating Black women in art, two weekends in October.

This past year, Ugrčić and her LunART team have added a Women of the World blog, showcasing women's contributions to culture, and LunART Live, a monthly exploration of women in the arts with guest speakers and live online Q&A. LunART Live presents Seraph Brass on Friday, March 26 at noon.

“Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive,” noted Ugrčić. “It feels like the women artists in our community have all been waiting for something like this.”

The festival helped LunART establish itself as a thought-leader in the community. More individuals and organizations are reaching out to LunART to connect with female artists and to partner in equity work.

“I’m excited about where we are headed,” said Ugrčić.

Creating valuable connections

Visual artist Kelly Parks Snider, Madison, featured her artwork in the 2019 LunART Festival. Parks Snider’s artwork explores contemporary social, political and cultural issues.

“Art transforms the way we think and see the world,” she said. “It brings people together, creating an environment to explore highly charged topics.”

Parks Snider’s exhibitions include “Rural Women Voice and Spirit” about the lives and issues of contemporary Wisconsin farm women, “Commercial Land/Project Girl,” an award-winning program that combines art, media literacy and girl-led activism, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” exploring ideas concerning the often-invisible truths about power, privilege and inequality,

“You’ve Come a Long Way Baby,” the story of American women over a century, and “Women Against Hate United by Love,” a coordinated effort to dismantle hate and policies rooted in oppression.

“I encourage my audience to embrace the tension, the unease and the struggle that art generates. The tension can transform,” she said. “I also encourage them to



stay open and think like an artist. Thinking openly is a radical way to be. It seems that we live in a time when we look past our basic values. My work is about this.”

Parks Snider has met many amazing, talented women through LunART.

“LunART has created this community of women who champions each other’s work,” she explained.

She says this collaboration is effective because they can learn from one another and work together to create awareness and change.





Fabu Phillis Carter

Recognizing women's creativity

One of the women Snider has recently connected with is Madison poet Fabu Phillis Carter.

Carter is admired for her workshops, storytelling and poetry readings and for her guest columns in *The Capital Times* and *The Capital City Hues*. She enjoys sharing her unique perspective about the African American experience with the world.

Carter attended LunART Festival in its first years, curious to learn about other women artists.

"LunART showcases the different things women are doing in the arts," she said. "It's important to listen and be exposed to a variety of people and art forms."

In 2020, Carter was invited to share her poetry at the virtual festival.

A December 2020 PhD graduate of the University of Nairobi's African Women's Centre, Carter shared poetry about Mary Lou Williams, an American female Black jazz pianist, arranger and composer, the subject of her dissertation.



“It was wonderful to celebrate Mary Lou Williams’ work with other female artists,” said Carter. “Once you hear her work, you become a forever fan.”

Two years ago, Carter created Hidden Voices, a group for African American writers in Wisconsin and a means for their voices to be heard with two other women writers.

“We have a history and legacy of African American writers in Wisconsin—novelist and playwright Catrina Sparkman, celebrated writer and playwright Lorraine Hansberry, who is best known for ‘A Raisin in the Sun,’ author and motivational speaker Sherry Lucille, and celebrated poet and novelist Jean Toomer—who are barely acknowledged,” said Carter.

Carter and the Hidden Voices team have toured more than a dozen Wisconsin libraries, giving presentations on these and other writers.

“I appreciate how LunART is promoting women in the arts,” said Carter. “It’s important that the creativity, work and heart that women put into their work is not forgotten.”

From other festival presenters, Carter learned about African American composers unfamiliar to her, and since then, she has shared these composers’ work with others.

This “passing along” of art, artists and ideas is valued by the leaders and followers of LunART.

Expanding their impact

“Thanks to LunART, women are connecting with art leaders and organizations throughout the area,” said Ugrčić.

Ugrčić’s goal is to bring women in interdisciplinary arts together to share their voices in a welcoming space. Great friendships and projects have formed through LunART.

LunART recently hosted a Youth Celebration, inviting female artists in grades 2-12 to share two-dimensional art exploring the theme of family and celebrating human connection. The group received 52 submissions, which will soon be presented in a virtual exhibit on the website.

In addition, Ugrčić teamed up with Parks Snider and Carter, along with New York-based actor, singer, writer Jamie Dawson, to present a series of virtual workshops called Students Against Hate to more than 100 fifth graders from Kromrey and Glacier Creek Middle Schools in the Middleton-Cross Plains School District. The series explores the roles of art and activism.

In April and May, students will learn how to use their artistic voices to discuss love, delving into themes of justice and human rights through poetry, storytelling and visual art.

“They’ll be creating a portrait of themselves with messaging they think the world needs to hear right now,” said Parks Snider.

Students Against Hate will culminate in an outdoor livestreamed art exhibit on Friday, May 21 from 5-7 p.m.

Ugrčić says these joint projects are rewarding and empowering.

“There are many talented women artists here, making Madison’s art scene rich and beautiful,” said Ugrčić. “At LunART, we will continue to celebrate these women and their artwork.”

Ugrčić’s career in music continues to thrive, and she has found her true purpose in LunART. As she moves forward with plans for LunART Festival 2021, she advises other women in the arts to “love what you do and don’t be afraid to share your voice.”

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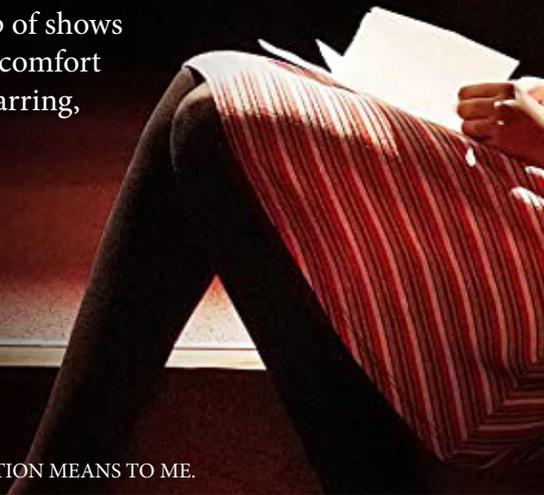
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15 Shows to Celebrate Women's History Month

By: Amanda Finn

A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, it might be a year since you've seen live theater. With theaters all over the world publishing some of their best online, and companies pivoting to digital work, there is plenty to keep theater buffs entertained. To celebrate Women's History Month here is a roundup of shows to enjoy at your leisure from the comfort and safety of home written by, starring, or directed (sometimes a mix of these) by women.



The Broadway production of *WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME*.

What the Constitution Means to Me

Straight from Broadway comes the story of Heidi Schreck who earned her college tuition through Constitutional debate competitions when she was a teenager. Schreck uses her personal experience to explore the Constitution and how that document shaped the lives of four generations of women. 1 hour 44 minutes



Until the Flood

Dael Orlandersmith's critically acclaimed account of Ferguson following the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown. This one-woman show, based on interviews conducted by Orlandersmith, highlights a community pushing for change in the midst of great injustice. 1 hour

Women without Men (February 22 - March 21)

Set in the 1930s, this workplace drama explores the lives of a group of unmarried teachers at an Irish girls' boarding school. This play was never published or revived after its 1938 premiere until Mint Theater produced it in 2016. 2 hours

Offensive to Some (March 3 - 10)

This one-woman show by PerSISTence Theatre starring Miranda MacDonald shines a light on violence against women. MacDonald plays 'the Woman' who is in prison for killing her abusive husband. See her journey through her roles as wife, mother, daughter, and person.

Bechdel Fest 8: Realign (Through March 26)

Each play in Bechdel Fest passes the Bechdel Test meaning the stories feature femme, female, non-binary, trans, and genderqueer actors discussing things other than men.

Each play is available online for one week after its premiere.

Friday, March 5 – A Mid-Pandemic Night's Stream

Friday, March 12 – going green

Friday, March 19 – WINDFALL

Girls Night In (Every Tuesday live at 7 p.m. CST)

This LIVE, interactive show is a comedy delight right to your own living room. Enjoy games, improv, comedy, musical guests and more every week.

Silent Sky (until April 18)

This historically inspired play by Lauren Gunderson centers Henrietta Leavitt who discovered how to measure the distance between stars. Leavitt's journey as a pioneer for women in the sciences will inspire you to admire the stars a little bit more. 2 hours

A Brimful of Asha (March 9 - 22)

Written by mother and son Asha and Ravi Jain, comes a true story of generational and cultural clashes. After Ravi takes a trip to India, his parents decide it's time for him to meet his potential bride. As Asha explains to her son, "You don't get to choose your family, why should you choose your wife?" 80 minutes

School Girls: Or, the African Mean Girls Play (through March 14)

Paulina is the queen bee of Ghana's most exclusive boarding school and new student Ericka's arrival could dash Paulina's dream of being Miss Global Universe. This comedy is a cultural phenomenon. 75 minutes

To the Moon (March 5 - April 11)

Beth Kander returns with this new play based on over 200 surveys and 20 in-person interviews with domestic abuse survivors. This play lifts up their stories because "statistics are not the most powerful way to change someone's mind. Stories are."

Power in Pride

Developed by About Face Theatre's education and outreach program, this show brings humorous and brave stories to the forefront of the conversation of gender and sexuality. Written and performed by artists of color about their true life experiences.



The Pink Unicorn (March 5 - 11)

Trisha considered herself to be open-minded and accepted until her teenager Jo comes out as genderqueer. Suddenly her conservative, comfortable life in Texas comes under attack by her church, the school, and her family.



Production photo from SHEILA'S DAY.

Sheila's Day (March 2 - 23)

This joyous musical celebrates and honors women and their perseverance. A devised work co-created by American and South African women telling stories of their mothers and the mothers of the equality and justice movements.

Stage Door (March 12-14)

Take a peek into the lives of aspiring, young actresses in 1936. They share a boarding house, dreams, and passion for the theater. This tender play is a love letter to contemporary, American theater.

Euripides' Medea (March 12 - April 4)

Medea gave up everything to marry her Jason whose wandering eye landed on a younger potential bride. In her jealous rage, Medea sets to making Jason pay dearly for betraying her after everything she sacrificed.

SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2021 AND BEYOND



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“Sea the World”



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Allison Calteux



“Deflection”

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“Purgatory”

Gail Juszczak



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“Pete”

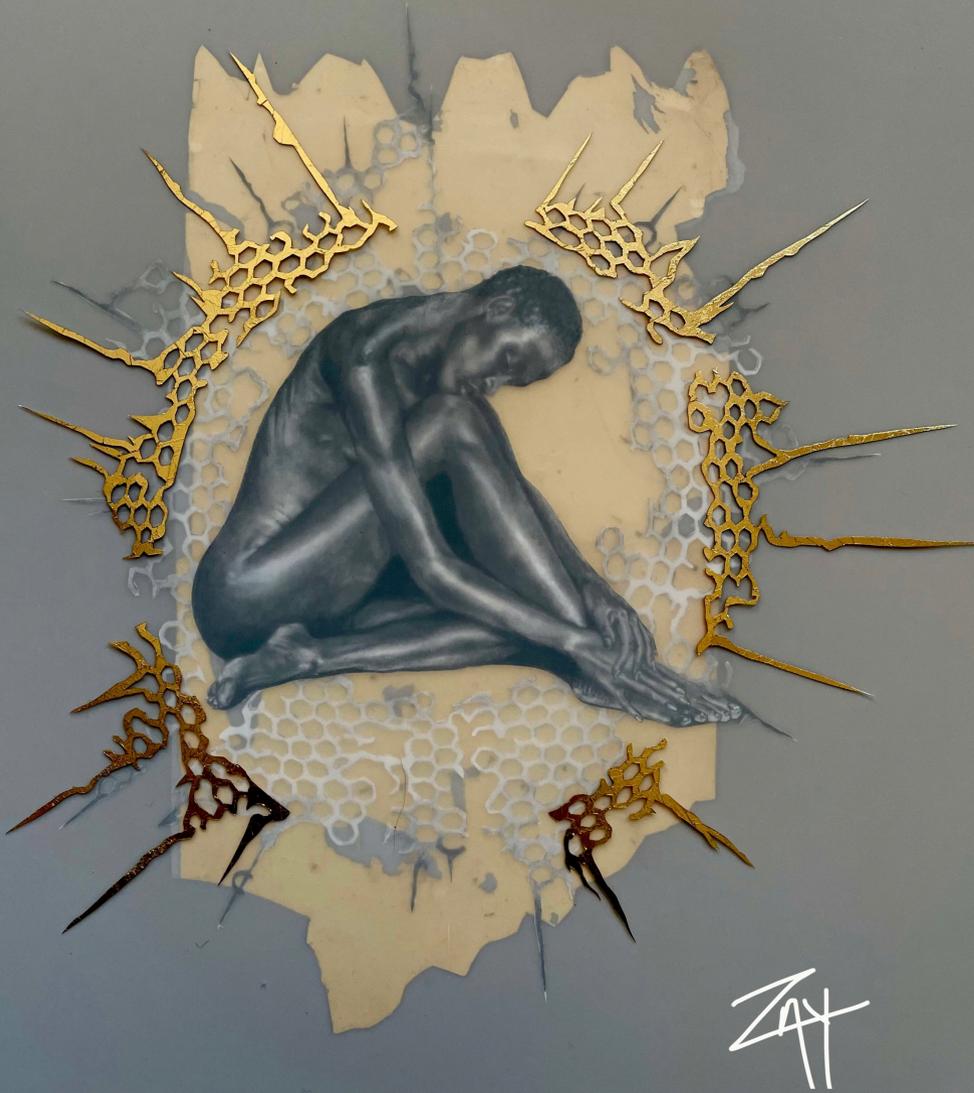


Zay Olsen



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Something More



Written by
Shaniqua "Nikko" Murphy and
Autumn Maria Reed

Performed by Shaniqua
"Nikko" Murphy as Viola Davis

In this song, Davis reflects on growing up poor and listening to the voice inside her heart that told her she could become an actress and achieve her dreams.

Hold on Hawai'i



Lyrics by Kailea Saplan

Music by Meghan Rose

Performed by Kailea Saplan as
Princess Ka'iulani

This song is from the perspective of Princess Ka'iulani of Hawai'i, the last monarch of the country while it was still an independent nation. In this moment, Ka'iulani has just received word, while she is overseas, that her country has been annexed by US officials.

Homework



Music and Lyrics by
Erica Berman and
Mark Wurzelbacher

Performed by
Grace Halverson as
Greta Thunberg

This song spans the first moments that climate change activist Greta Thunberg began her protests in front of Swedish parliament, and the journey to more confidence as people join in her crusade.

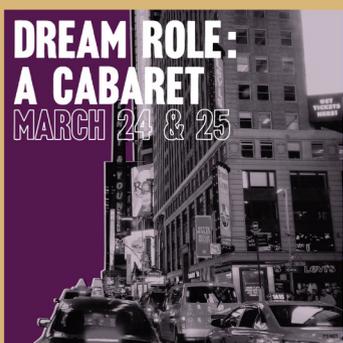
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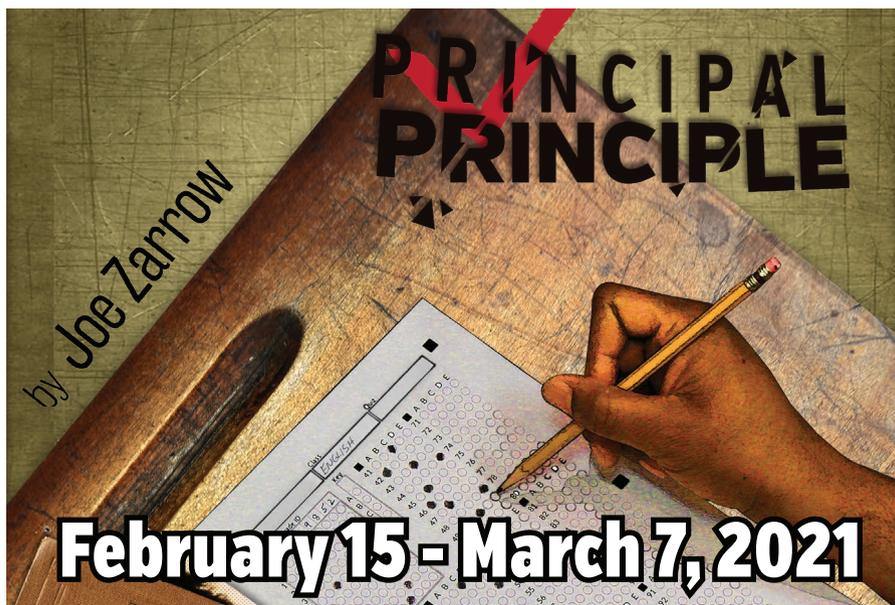
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Through March 31

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Museum of Wisconsin Art
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Saint Kate Arts Hotel
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Through May 9

To celebrate the Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg, The Everyday Feminist invites you to join our community, near and far, in writing letters to archive our thoughts, feelings, and memories of our dearly departed Notorious RBG.

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In a notorious maximum-security political prison, two longtime cellmates toil at brutal hard labor by day and by night rehearse Sophocles' ANTIGONE for prison entertainment.

RADIO ROSIES

Schauer Arts Center
Hartford, WI
March 6

Allow yourself to be drawn back in time as the pure, sweet harmonies of The Radio Rosies recall the nostalgia and enchantment of jazz, boogie-woogie, and swing.

WAUKESHA ART CRAWL

Waukesha, WI
March 6

175 artisans at 20 galleries and showplaces are featured at this seasonal event, walk the downtown streets to discover your next artistic treasure, shop the boutiques, listen to live music or indulge in food and drink.

IVAN PECCEL – COMEDY JUGGLER

Fireside Dinner Theatre
Fort Atkinson, WI
March 6

As funny as a stand-up comic and as skilled as a Chinese acrobat, there is no comedy juggler like Ivan Pecel.

AT HOME ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION

Celtic MKE
Virtual Event
March 6

Celebrate the greenest season of the year with our free, at home St. Patrick's celebration!

SONG AND DANCE

Festival City Symphony
Brookfield, WI
March 7

In person or via live stream, join Festival City Symphony for Song and Dance! Music Director Carter Simmons and the orchestra return to the Wilson Center to perform a rousing and varied concert.

POP DIVA TRIBUTE

Fireside Dinner Theatre
Fort Atkinson, WI
March 7

In Katy Setterfield's award-winning, high-energy, one-woman show she impersonates some of the greatest Pop Divas of all time including Dusty Springfield, Cher, Tina Turner, Annie Lennox, Bette Midler, Janis Joplin, and more!

CANCIONES DEL ALMA: CELEBRATING THE LATINX VOICE THROUGH MUSIC & SONG

Latino Arts, Inc.
Virtual Concert Experience
March 11-April 11

Virtual Concert Experience highlighting female Latinx artists! We are kicking off Women's History Month with an exclusive concert experience.

FOUR OLD BROADS

Memories Dinner Theatre
Port Washington, WI
March 12-21

Retired burlesque queen Beatrice Shelton desperately needs a vacation -- and NOT another trip up to Helen, Georgia to see that "precious little German village for the umpteenth time."

THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE

Waukesha Civic Theatre

Waukesha, WI

March 12-28

George is consumed with the preserving and documenting of dying languages from far-flung cultures. At home, however, his own language is failing him.

KOHL'S FAMILY SUNDAYS: NEEDLE AND THREAD

Milwaukee Art Museum

Virtual Event

March 14-28

Enjoy a special online version of the Milwaukee Art Museum's popular family event: Kohl's Family Sundays.

LATINX WOMEN IN ART: FROM SELF-EXPRESSIONISM TO ACTIVISM A LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

Latino Arts, Inc.

Virtual Event

March 19

The LUNA Collective of Milwaukee (Latinas Unidas en Las Artes) will share their thoughts on the power of art to inspire not only self-expressionism but to motivate activism in the community on a variety of issues important to the artists in the community.

NEAT

Renaissance Theaterworks

Virtual Event

March 19-April 11

With her enormous love, Neat teaches Charlayne to cherish life through the turbulent 1960s and 1970s.

BRAVO – NOW WE'RE COOKIN'!

Next Act Theatre

Virtual Event

March 13

You're the key ingredient at this culinary-themed event, benefitting Next Act Theatre's artistic and educational programming. Admission is free and attendees are encouraged to bring their family and friends!

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT SPRING CRAFT FAIR

Brookfield Conference Center

Brookfield, WI

March 13

Enjoy over 100+ crafters and artists' handmade creations at this event. Featuring the best in decor, clothing, jewelry, seasonal items, furniture and so much more!

CITY OF FESTIVALS VIRTUAL TOUR: EXPLORING MILWAUKEE'S IMMIGRANT HISTORY

Milwaukee Food & City Tours

Virtual Event

March 13

Nicknamed The City of Festivals, hear the stories of Milwaukee's immigrants that came to the city, plus meet the makers carrying on their many food traditions, during this live, interactive 1.5 hour virtual event.

VIRTUAL SPEAKEASY MURDER MYSTERY

Susan G. Komen

Virtual Event

March 13

Get dolled up in your best 1920's style outfits and get ready to solve a speakeasy murder mystery in this "fun"draiser for Susan G. Komen.

GARTH TRIBUTE LIVE

Fireside Dinner Theatre
Fort Atkinson, WI

March 13-14

GARTH LIVE! Is a stunning tribute to the music of Garth Brooks featuring Drew Baloh.

PINTO CON TINTO Y CONCIERTO: CARNIVAL MASKS & CONCERT VIEWING

Latino Arts, Inc.
Milwaukee, WI

March 18

Carnival in Rio is all about the Boas Vibrações, which means Good Vibes in Portuguese. Join Latino Arts for this socially distanced, in-person event to unleash your inner artist and learn more about the cultural history behind the Carnival masks and the colorful Brazilian Celebration!

TOUR THE TOWN ART WALK – GALLERY NIGHT

Gallery & Frame Shop
Fond du Lac, WI

March 19

Fond du Lac's Gallery Night is a fun and free way to explore the arts. Most of the galleries participating are within walking distance of each other.

SPOTLIGHT ARTIST VIRTUAL CABARET

Bombshell Theatre Co.
Elm Grove, WI

March 19

Our first, virtual, cabaret will delight audiences from young to old as we shine a spotlight on performers here in the Milwaukee community with classic Broadway showtunes.

REAR VIEW MEMORIES EXHIBIT

Ubuntu Art Space
Fond du Lac, WI

March 19-May 28

"My body of artwork is made up of a wide array of materials I have been salvaging and collecting since I was a child."

DALLAS STRING QUARTET

Schauer Arts Center
Hartford, WI

March 20

DSQ Electric is an international music sensation. A fusion of classical and contemporary music on both traditional and electric strings.

CUDAHY FAMILY LIBRARY CRAFT & VENDOR FAIR

Cudahy Family Library
Cudahy, WI

March 20

A free craft and vendor fair for all to enjoy.

SPRING IN YOUR SPIRIT

**South Milwaukee Performing Arts
Center**

Milwaukee, WI

March 20

South Milwaukee Performing Arts Center presents Spring in Your Spirit featuring local Celtic Bluegrass and Gospel band Paddygrass with a special appearance by the Milwaukee Irish Dance Company.

NOT FADE AWAY

Fireside Dinner Theatre
Fort Atkinson, WI

March 20-21

Not only will you be twirling down memory lane to the unforgettable sounds of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper, you'll be taken to a world of legends with hits by Bill Haley, The Beach Boys, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis, The Beatles, and more!

WISCONSIN SOUND SERIES: JOHANNES WALLMANN QUINTET

Wisconsin Union Theater

Madison, WI

March 21

Johannes Wallmann is a pianist and composer, recording artist on Fresh Sound New Talent Records and Shifting Paradigm Records, and the Director of Jazz Studies at the UW-Madison.

DREAM ROLE: A CABARET

Waukesha Civic Theatre

Waukesha, WI

March 24-25

Local performers team up with Ami Majeskie and Kiera Matthews to play their dream roles in this entertaining cabaret.

RAM 12TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL PEEPS ART COMPETITION

Racine Art Museum

Racine, WI

March 25-April 10

This popular, untraditional exhibition showcases fluffy, sugar-coated marshmallow PEEPS® created by hundreds of artists from around the country.

OUT WITH THE COLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Present Music

Virtual Event

March 26

From chilly sounds to warm radiance to music that pulses with life, this intimate chamber program welcomes the season we've all been wishing for.

SERAPH BRASS

LunArt

Virtual Event

March 26

Join us for a friendly conversation with Seraph Brass, a dynamic ensemble drawing from a roster of America's top female brass players.

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

St. Ambrose Academy

Virtual Event

March 26-28

Don and Lina have been cast repeatedly as a romantic couple, but when their latest film is remade into a musical, only Don has the voice for the new singing part.

WINTER CHAMBER SERIES CONCERT III

Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

Virtual Event

March 26-29

Two women composers are featured on this program, including Alyssa Morris and Jessie Montgomery.

VIRTUAL MAKERS MARKET

Nō Studios

Virtual Event

March 27

The Nō Studios Virtual Makers Market is an online expo and hybrid experience designed for makers to showcase their crafts while educating and inspiring new audiences.

CLICK HERE
to submit your events

BROADWAY BRACKETS: Leading Ladies



Idina Menzel
"Let It Go"

Kristin Chenoweth
"Glitter and Be Gay"



Angela Lansbury
"Worst Pies"

Jennifer Holliday
"I Am Telling You"



Julie Andrews
"Le Jazz Hot"

Barbra Streisand
"My Man"



Chita Rivera
"America/All That Jazz"

Audra McDonald
"Summertime"

YOUR LEAD

Who is your ultimate Broadway Leading Lady?

Check out our bracket of some of our all-time favorite Broadway superstars!

Pick your top and let us know who won by tagging us on Facebook with the hashtag

#ArtsSceneBroadwayBrackets!

ING LADY!



Sutton Foster
"Anything Goes"

Patti LuPone
"Ladies Who Lunch"



Bernadette Peters
"Send in the Clowns"

Betty Buckley
"Memory"



Ethel Merman
"No Business"

Liza Minnelli
"Cabaret"



Carol Channing
"Hello Dolly"

Bette Midler
"Coming Up"

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