

WHAT'S NEW

» AUTHORS & AUDIENCES



'Poison Study' writer featured at Dover event

Meet New York Times best-selling author Maria V. Snyder and more than 25 local authors 1 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Third Annual Authors and Audiences Day at the Kent County Public Library in Dover.

At 2 p.m., Snyder will speak and follow her presentation with a signing. The Philadelphia native switched careers from meteorologist to novelist when she began writing the New York Times best-selling Study Series – "Poison Study," "Magic Study" and "Fire Study" – about a young woman who becomes a poison taster.

There will also be a raffle and snacks. kent.de.us.

» FAREWELL CONCERT



Serafin String Quartet says farewell to Schwarz

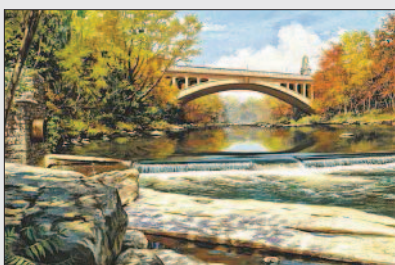
The Serafins bid a fond farewell to their longtime violinist Timothy Schwarz at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Trinity Episcopal Church. Schwarz has been with the group since 2005 and is leaving to pursue other professional goals and projects.

The quartet will be joined by University of Delaware piano faculty artist Julie Nishimura. The program features "Song of Palestine Variations" and "Estampe" from Lou Harrison's "String Quartet Set;" Mozart's "Piano Quartet in G minor," and Schumann's "String Quartet a minor Op. 41 No. 1."

Schwarz will be replaced by Lisa Vaupel, who begins working with the quartet in May. Her first public appearances will be in September 2013.

Free, but donations are welcomed. The church is at 1108 N. Adams St., Wilmington.

» GROUP EXHIBIT



Chadds Ford 'Rendezvous' features five artists

Opening tonight is "Rendezvous," a Chadds Ford Gallery show featuring five artists: Jacalyn Beam, Robert Dionne, Shawn Faust, Ron Orlando and Timothy Wadsworth. The artists will be celebrated from 5 to 8 p.m. at the gallery, 1609 Baltimore Pike, Building 400, Chadds Ford. The exhibit ends May 5. www.awyethgallery.com; (610) 388-2412.

Orlando's work features nature and wildlife; Faust focuses on humans portraits, landscapes and horses; Dionne now works with murals; Beam enjoys plein air painting; and Wadsworth's detail realism indulges the senses.

REP THEATER



University of Delaware Resident Ensemble Players Michael Gotch and Carine Montbertrand appear in a scene from "Fever." The play begins with Gotch and Montbertrand on a date, which ends in an angry confrontation that involves flying french fries, but sets up the battle-of-the-sexes plot. COURTESY OF REP/NADINE HOWATT

PLAGUE, ZOMBIES, GENDER POLITICS

Theresa Rebeck's 'Fever' for UD explores the way men, women clash, but need each other to survive

By Betsy Price
The News Journal

More than french fries fly in the University of Delaware's production of "Fever," a new battle-of-the-sexes comedy written specifically for the school's troupe of professional actors.

From the pen of Theresa Rebeck, who returns after writing 2011's much-noted "O Beautiful" for UD, "Fever" starts with an animated date in a gorgeous old bar. It heats up as patrons who don't know the couple speculate about who they were and what was really going on, and the social mercury starts soaring.

Because Rebeck, who created NBC's "Smash" and wrote "Seminar" starring Katie Holmes for Broadway since last being in Newark, came to know UD's eight Repertory Ensemble Players, she could tailor characters to the actors' strengths. She and REP Producing Artistic Director Sanford Robbins say the arrangement harks back to the days of playwrights such as Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen and Chekhov, who all wrote for a specific group of actors.

"History will tell us that when playwrights are writing for particular actors, it brings out their best work," Robbins says.

"I've always been intrigued by this," Rebeck says. "I've tried it in New York. It's much more challenging. ... You can't hold on to the people."

Rebeck agreed to write the play

See REBECK, Page B7



Theresa Rebeck gives notes after a recent rehearsal of "Fever." She wrote 2011's much-noted "O Beautiful" for UD. COURTESY OF REP/NADINE HOWATT

IF YOU GO

WHAT: "Fever," a new comedy by Theresa Rebeck, directed by Sanford Robbins
WHERE: University of Delaware, Roselle Center for the Arts, 110 Orchard Road, Newark
WHEN: 7:30 tonight, Saturday, April 25, 26 and 27, and May 1, 2 and 3; 2 p.m. Sunday, April 27 and 28, and May 4
TICKETS: \$21-\$27; 831-2204; www.rep.udel.edu
BONUS EVENTS: After the play April 25, cast talk-back; 1:40 p.m. April 27, REP Prolouge, an informal talk about the show.

COMMON WEALTH AWARDS

Versatile Alan Alda among celebrities to be feted Saturday

By Margie Fishman
The News Journal

In that characteristic rich baritone, Alan Alda – award-winning actor, writer, director and occasional translator for obtuse scientists – explains why he doesn't relish making headlines.

One time, while being interviewed in London during a grueling press junket, a reporter asked Alda, "How long would you like to live?"

Impressed by the writer's ingenuity, he replied: "I want to live to 106 if I can still make love."

The next day, the story ran under the banner: "Watch Out, Girls."
[When I informed Mr. Alda that I

would be titling this piece along the lines of "From Hot Lips to Hitler" – two topics that came up during our conversation – he laughed graciously].

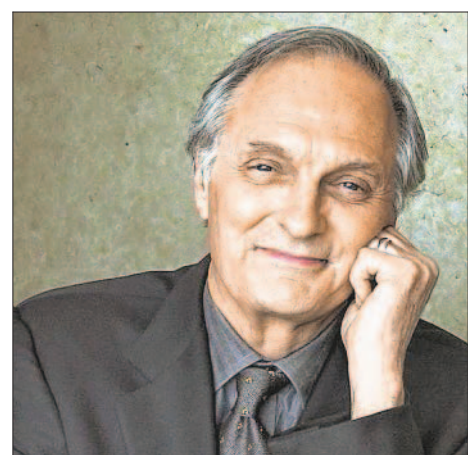
Best known for playing Hawkeye Pierce in the hit television series "M*A*S*H," Alda hasn't strayed far from the spotlight over a 40-year career. On Saturday, he will receive a Common Wealth Award in Dramatic Arts at a private ceremony held at the Hotel du Pont.

In their 34th year, the awards recognize people "who have produced work of substantial influence and enduring relevance," according to PNC Regional President Nick Marsini.

PNC serves as trustee and adminis-

trator of the Common Wealth Trust, which will distribute a total of \$300,000 this year to Alda and his co-honorees. They are historian David McCullough, journalist Jane Pauley and actor/activist Martin Sheen. Previous recipients have included human rights leader Archbishop Desmond Tutu, primatologist Jane Goodall and actor and director Sidney Poitier.

Alda has "proven himself as one of the best and brightest artists in show business," Marsini said. The actor has won seven Emmys, six Golden Globes and three Directors Guild of America Awards.



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COURTESY OF ROYCE CARLTON

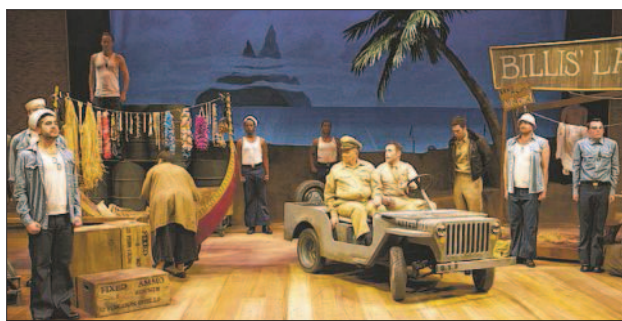
DTC keeps epic splendor of 'South Pacific'

By Holly Quinn
STAGE Magazine

The Delaware Theatre Company's production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific," the passionate wartime musical that has been entertaining audiences for more than 60 years, marks a new and exciting turn for the professional theater by the waterfront.

If you've ever thought of DTC as Wilmington's Broadway, this large-scale production confirms it – for the first time, the stage hosts a 14-piece orchestra and a cast of 26, including several Broadway veterans making their DTC debuts.

In the capable hands of director Bud Martin, who is also DTC's executive director, with a stunning set



While "South Pacific" seems nostalgic on its surface, its themes of love, war and prejudice still ring true today. COURTESY OF MATT URBAN

by Dirk Durosette, the emotional, heart-rending, and sometimes extremely funny show features incredible talent, with the Broadway veterans performing seamlessly with regional actors and local children.

Central to the story are Ensign Nellie Forbush, played by Sarah Litzsin-

ger (some might recognize her as the longest-running Belle in Disney's "Beauty and the Beast"), and French planter Emile de Becque, played with perfection by Michael Sharon.

Other big-timers include Christopher deProphetis as the Princeton-schooled Lt. Cable, who

falls for Tonkinese girl Liat (played by Stephanie N. Walters); she is the daughter of scene-stealer Bloody Mary, the Tonkinese merchant with a big personality played by Amy Jo Phillips; and there is John Plumpis, as the comedic sailor Luther Billis.

The regional cast has no problem keeping up. As Capt. Brackett and Cmdr. Harbison, the island's top officers, Jerry Carrier and Will Dennis, respectively, bring personality to the roles, and the ensemble of sailors and nurses look and sound amazing.

The local children, who rotate to play the roles of Emile's son and daughter Ngana and Jerome, are charming. As an extra challenge, the children speak only French. They

IF YOU GO

WHAT: "South Pacific"
WHERE: Delaware Theatre Company, 200 Water St., Wilmington
WHEN: Through May 5. 2 p.m. Wednesdays; 7 p.m. Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.
TICKETS: \$35-\$49; tickets. delawaretheatre.org.
FOR MORE INFO: 594-1100; www.delawaretheatre.org

include Michael Sharon as Emile DeBecque, Angelica Relacion as Ngana, Brendan Smith as Jerome and Sarah Litzsinger as Nellie Forbush.

Visually, "South Pacific" transports you to the war-torn island paradise, from Emile's palatial estate to the military camp, with unforgettable details

such as a jeep that drives around the stage, a working shower and a recreated World War II plane. The set design isn't overdone – even with the atmospheric set and fun details, it's the actors and music that are the center of attention.

The musical's themes of love, war and prejudice speak to audiences today as much as they ever have. This is far from an old musical that serves as a piece of nostalgia only.

DTC has shown that it can pull off a big production with a live orchestra with wild success – it's a milestone in the theater's recent history that should not be missed.

Holly Quinn is a Wilmington freelance writer. She wrote this for www.stagemagazine.org.

Rebeck: Visited Newark 3 or 4 times for readings

Continued from Page B4

during a May 2012 lunch in Houston, where Robbins was directing one play of hers, and another was opening at a different theater. He mentioned he could not find a play with eight characters for his actors.

She mentioned she'd enjoyed working with UD for "O Beautiful," which focused on modern issues such as the Tea Party, cyberbullying and gun control, and offered to write him another play. For less. Ultimately, she agreed to accept a check in the amount of the royalties the theater would pay to produce an already written play, a much lower rate than she normally would command.

Robbins was thrilled. "Anything that Theresa takes on will be both entertaining and thought-provoking," he says. "She really has this capacity to take on big things in a way that's very provocative and very entertaining. A lot of people can write plays about things that make good policy points, but are not good plays."

In addition to getting to write for people she knew, Rebeck was able to write an eight-character

play – almost a rarity in today's economy-oriented two- or three-character productions.

She chose the topic of gender politics because it had been on her mind. She'd just finished working in a situation in which the gay men socialized only with the gay men, the straight men socialized only with straight men and women were left out, at least at the top levels. It was nearly tribal, she says. But the farther down the chain, she said, the less anyone cared.

"You know the dynamic of these things is that you agree to do a play this way, and, OK, I'm going to write for those eight actors," she says. "Then Sandy says, what's the name of the play and can you describe it. And I'm like, I have no idea. I had to make some arbitrary choices."

"I was thinking about how gender politics are still killer in this country, and I thought it would be fun to do a 'Roshomon' like thing."

That is Akira Kurasawa's 1950 movie made from a short story, and eventually turned into a Broadway play. In it, a rape and murder has occurred, but the audi-



REP actors Elizabeth Heflin and Stephen Pelinski play wife and husband in "Fever." He wants to dismantle and sell her family bar. She wants to stay put. COURTESY OF REP/NADINE HOWATT

ence doesn't witness it. They only hear four witnesses' versions of what they saw, leaving the audience to decide the truth.

"What if I did this," she asked her husband, and he started laughing, which settled it for her.

Rebeck decided to set the play in a bar, just because she'd always wanted to write a bar play. In this case, a husband and wife own a bar with spectacular woodwork. But the antsy husband wants to sell off the bar, which has been in his wife's family for three generations, piece by piece and go do something else. His wife wants to stay there, connected

to the community and her family.

Talk about the sale unleashes the characters' angst, throwing their values and reason into relief as much as the carving on the bar.

"It's not like you go, 'This is it. The play I've been waiting for,' she says. "But maybe I'll end up doing that." She and Robbins are talking about her writing for the group again after "Fever" completes its run May 4.

For a professional company like UD's Resident Ensemble Players, having shows written specifically for them allows them to originate characters based on their own strengths rather

than reinterpreting roles that often have been done over and over.

"Almost everything you do is a play that's been done before," Robbins says. "In this one, they're it. Whoever comes next to do this play, and I think it will be done a lot, will know that this group of people created these parts." And that it was done at the University of Delaware.

Rebeck has been in Newark three or four times for readings before the play actually went to the stage. Trying to balance the roles and give everyone their due was an entertaining problem, especially when all eight characters are on stage in Act II for about 30 minutes – and having a doozie of an argument.

Plays with small numbers of characters can end up being about those characters and their quirks, she says.

"But when you're writing about a lot of people, on some level, that play is always about society and the world because you have crowd scenes, you have battle scenes, you have town halls," she says. "I feel like the theater has kind of shunned its ability to discuss American culture by

shrinking the number of people we're allowed to use."

Rebeck has squeezed the play into a schedule that includes just finishing a novel; writing an episode of "Copper," the BBC series that focuses on an Irish cop in 1860s New York; a screenplay for a Fox movie; an introduction to an anniversary edition of Erica Jong's "Fear of Flying;" and talks about other plays and movie scripts.

She finds that all that busyness and all those projects work to inform each other, in essence keeping her mental instrument finely tuned.

She compares it to watching her 18-year-old son, a musician, practice piano. When he practices, he gets better, she says, but he's got to focus on mastering techniques.

"My kid, you watch him play jazz piano and you know he's not making every choice every second. His body of knowledge is making those choices," she says. "I think that's true for writers. Shakespeare didn't sit there and stew over very word. That stuff was pouring out."

Contact Betsy Price at bprice@delawareonline.com or 324-2884.

Alda: Actor puts agenda aside in favor of flexibility

Continued from Page B4

"After I did 'M*A*S*H,' I got many offers to be on shows," Alda said in a phone interview this week. "It just astonished me how stupid all of them were."

"M*A*S*H's" series finale in 1983 held the distinction as the most-watched single television episode in the U.S. until 2010, when Super Bowl XLIV unseated it.

Speaking of "M*A*S*H," what was it like kissing "Hot Lips" Houlihan, played by Loretta Swit?

"It was a little like kissing Meryl Streep," Alda says. "When you kiss somebody on camera, it's pretty much the same for everybody."

A diplomatic answer from the man who has been married to the same woman, Arlene, for 57 years. The couple has three children.

Alda, Hot Lips and the rest of the living members of the "M*A*S*H" cast stay connected by email and get together once a year to "make each other laugh and make fun of each other," Alda says. Harry Morgan, who played Col. Sherman T. Potter on the show, died in 2011.

Born to a burlesque performer and a former pageant queen who would travel the country together, Alda recalls spending a summer with his two aunts in Wilmington when he was 3 years old.

"Every time [my par-

ents] would pass by Wilmington, they'd come with another little outfit for me to wear," he says.

Before hitting it big in Hollywood, Alda drove a cab, opened doors for people who could afford it and was that clown who jumps around in front of gas stations.

Now living in New York, Alda was a long-time resident of New Jersey, where he is on the short list this year to be inducted into the New Jersey Hall of Fame. In 1996, "TV Guide" named him one of the 50 Greatest Television Stars of All Time.

In 2005, Alda published his first memoir, "Never Have Your Dog Stuffed: and Other Things I've Learned," in which he recalls a near-death experience after an intestinal blockage in Chile. That same year, he was nominated for the trifecta: An Oscar, a Tony and an Emmy.

In his second memoir, "Things I Overheard While Talking to Myself," Alda speaks candidly about his agnosticism.

A third memoir is not in the works: "I have to live another life first," he says.

For a dozen years, Alda hosted "Scientific American Frontiers" for PBS, speaking with hundreds of scientists across the world. That encouraged him to develop a program to help train scientists to communicate with a mainstream audience and even politicians without relying on

technical jargon. His is now a visiting professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook School of Journalism, working with the Center for Communicative Science.

The center challenges budding scientists through theatrical improvisational exercises to speak extemporaneously about their work.

The program is trying to extend its reach through affiliate programs around the coun-

try, Alda says.

Once dubbed "the quintessential Honorary Woman" by The Boston Globe for his support of feminist causes, Alda briefly considered running for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in New Jersey. Instead, he played Republican U.S. senator and presidential candidate Arnold Vinick in "The West Wing," for which he won an Emmy. He played another conservative senator in the Academy

Award-winning film "The Aviator."

Vinick was a "sincere person trying to do the right thing," Alda says. "It didn't accomplish what it might have – to calm down the rhetoric that disallows the conversation between two points of view in this country."

More recently, Alda has appeared on the television show "30 Rock" and in the movies "Tower Heist" and "Wanderlust." No acting projects are on

the immediate horizon.

At one point, Alda says in all seriousness, he would've liked to have played Hitler to explore the depths of such a horrifying character.

"I'm too old to play Hitler now," he acknowledges.

When it comes to roles, "it's useless for an actor to have an agenda," he continues. "You have to be flexible."

Contact Margie Fishman at 324-2882 or mfishman@delawareonline.com.

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