

Cherry and Spoon

theatrical musings in Minnesota and beyond

[Home](#)[About Me](#)[Theaters](#)[Venues](#)[Past Shows](#)[Past Concerts](#)[Broadway World](#)

Sunday, April 10, 2016

"The Fantasticks" at Nautilus Music-Theater

It may be spring (almost) outside, but inside Nautilus Music-Theater's tiny studio space in Lowertown St. Paul, it's most definitely September. The kind of September "where grass is green and grain is yellow," and "no one weeps except the willow." A lovely hopeful youthful September that slowly fades into a wiser, darker, and nostalgic December. While Nautilus is primarily dedicated to developing new works of music-theater, with their newest full production (which are few and far between, [their last one was almost three years ago](#)), they are presenting a new take on [the longest running musical in the world](#). 56 years ago, *The Fantasticks* was just the kind of piece that Nautilus would have developed, supported, and produced - an inventive piece of music-theater storytelling that pushes the envelope of what the genre can do. While that glow of newness and inventiveness has somewhat faded over the years, Nautilus is bringing it back in a new way with age-conscious and gender-conscious casting, and by presenting the piece as it originally was - in an intimate small-scale setting that allows the simple beauty and humor of the piece to shine. With limited seating and only 12 performances, [make plans soon for this rare opportunity](#) to see this classic musical performed by some of the Twin Cities



Follow on Social Media



Photo Credit: Soul Photography and Media

[Goldstar Ticket Deals](#)

best theater artists up close and personal.

The Fantasticks is comprised of two distinct acts. In the first act, we see young (more on that later) love blossom and grow between a 16-year-old girl and a 20-year-old boy who are neighbors and children of seemingly rivalrous men (more on that later too). But what they don't know is that their fathers are scheming to get the two wed, using a bit of reverse psychology and hiring the bandit El Gallo to create a ruckus in which the boy comes out the hero. All is well under the moonlight and happy endings are achieved. But that's only Act I, and with Act II comes the harsh glare of the sun, like reality settling in after a honeymoon. The boy and girl go their separate ways and follow their dreams of seeing the wide world, only to come back together with a new appreciation for each other. For "without a hurt the heart is hollow."

This story of love, parent-child relationships, time, youth, wisdom, world weariness, and nostalgia is seen with fresh eyes due to the ingenious casting. The young lovers are played by two beloved veterans of Twin Cities stages, Wendy Lehr and Gary Briggie, who are **over 60** and have been **married (to each other) for 33 years**. Wendy is able to play the hopeful and silly girlishness of the dreamy Luisa in a way that makes you believe in her youth and naivete, at the same time appreciating the wisdom gained in the life she's lived. In the same way Gary is believable as the brash and confident young man, with an even more realistic transformation in the second act to the world-weary man who's seen too much. The real-life love between the two of them is evident and a beautiful to witness in the lovely romantic songs "Metaphor (You Are Love)," "They Were You," and "Soon It's Gonna Rain."

While the casting of Wendy and Gary brings a new perspective to the themes of youth, wisdom, and the passage of time, the casting of the fabulous Baldwin sisters as their



Gary Briggie and Wendy Lehr
(photo courtesy of Nautilus Music-Theater)



Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: A High-Flying...

Irondale Theater

\$10



Darkly Comic Corporate Suspense Thriller ...

The Gremlin Theatre

COMP - \$14

goldstar

Contact Me

Have you seen a great show recently that you think I should see? I'd love to hear about it, email me at cherryandspoon@gmail.com.

Upcoming Shows

- **Ken Ludwig's Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery** (Park Square, St. Paul)
- **French Twist** (Flying Foot Forum at Park Square, St. Paul)
- **Ideation** (Gremlin, St. Paul)
- **Not Every Mountain** (Rude Mechs at the Guthrie, Mpls)

fathers brings a new perspective to the theme of parenthood. The words written for two fathers work just as well for mothers, because after all, a parent is a parent regardless of gender. Jennifer Baldwin Peden and Christina Baldwin both have young children of their own, bringing a poignancy to "Never Say No" and "Plant a Radish," yet they're singing about fully grown adults who are older than they are, hinting at the role reversal that happens when parents age. In addition to all these layers, it's always a good idea to cast as many Baldwins as you can in a show. Two Baldwin sisters are better than the sum of their parts; they're never more relaxed, natural, and funny than when performing together. And their individually gorgeous voices blend like a dream, like one person singing harmony with herself.

Completing the perfection of this six-person cast, directed by Nautilus Artistic Director Ben Krywosz, are William Gilness as El Gallo and Brian Sostek as "the actor who dies." A lot. And hysterically, as he uses his dancer's grace to flaunt and flail all over the stage dying in numerous ways, stealing every scene he's in. William is simply spellbinding as El Gallo (a role created by Broadway, film, and TV legend [Jerry Orbach](#)) when he recites the poignant and lyrical dialogue, and especially when singing the most famous song from the show that bookends the story, "Try to Remember" (the one I've been quoting throughout this post).

Nautilus' studio space has been transformed into a thrust stage with just a few rows of seating on three sides of the tiny turf-covered square that is the stage. The two large wooden posts in the space could be a hindrance, but are incorporated well into the set, serving as ladders that the actors climb on when height is needed. A simple bench, two moveable boxes, and a rope lowered from the ceiling to represent the wall are the only set pieces (set design by Victoria Petrovich). The two-piece orchestra consisting of Music Director Jerry Rubino on piano and Andrea Stern on harp is positioned on an elevated platform behind and above the seats on one side of the thrust (getting those massive instruments up there must have been a difficult task!). This sparse orchestration provides just the right level of accompaniment for this lovely and whimsical score. And there's nothing better in the world than hearing talented vocalists such as this unmiked in a small space, nothing to get in the way of their voice in your ears.

The Fantasticks is the little Off-Broadway musical that could, and was once the future of music-theater. Now 56 years later it's more than just a charming relic from the past. In Nautilus' hands with thoughtful casting of some of the Twin Cities top talent in roles they probably thought they'd never play (again), and intimate sparse staging, it's fresh and utterly delightful storytelling, tinged with nostalgia and poignancy. Continuing through April 19 - [get your tickets now before they're gone!](#)

- [Carmen](#) (Mill City Summer Opera at Mill City Museum, Mpls)
- [Guys and Dolls](#) (Lyric Arts, Anoka)
- [Great River Shakespeare Festival](#) (Winona)
- [NEXT](#) (new works by Theater Latte Da at the Ritz, Mpls)
- [Hand to God](#) (Jungle, Mpls)
- [Mamma Mia](#) (Ordway, St. Paul)
- [The Legend of Georgia McBride](#) (Guthrie, Mpls)
- [Legally Blonde](#) (Artistry, Bloomington)

Twin Cities Theater Bloggers



- [Artfully Engaging](#)
- [Coffee Talk With Brett](#)
- [Compendium](#)
- [Girl Meets Broadway](#)
- [Life in Revue](#)
- [Minnesota Theater Love](#)
- [No Filter Reviews](#)
- [One Girl, Two Cities](#)
- [PhenoMNa! Twin Cities](#)
- [Play off the Page](#)
- [Single White Fringe Geek](#)
- [Talkin' Broadway](#)
- [The Room Where It Happens](#)
- [Twin Cities Stages](#)
- [What Stirs Your Soul](#)

This article also appears on Broadway World Minneapolis.



Labels: [Andrea Stern](#), [Ben Krywosz](#), [Brian Sostek](#), [Christina Baldwin](#), [Gary Briggie](#), [Jennifer Baldwin Peden](#), [Jerry Rubino](#), [Nautilus Music-Theater](#), [The Fantasticks](#), [Victoria Petrovich](#), [Wendy Lehr](#), [William Gilness](#)

No comments:

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

Search This Blog

Follow by Email

Most Popular Posts in Last 30 Days



"The Velocity of Autumn" at Old Log Theatre

Last spring, I was lucky enough to see Eric Coble's smart, funny, poignant, relevant new play about aging and family, The Velocity o...



"Into the Woods" by Shoot the Glass Theatre at the Crane Theater

I've seen Into the Woods twice in the last six weeks, and six times in the last seven years (not counting the recent movie adaptatio...



"Caucasian-Aggressive Pandas and Other Mulatto Tales" by Chameleon Theatre Circle and

Fearless Comedy Productions at Bloomington Center for the Arts
Duck Washington's funny, engaging, personal, and very honest sketch comedy show about being biracial in America has traveled a long ro...

"Steel Magnolias" at Lyric Arts

If you've only ever seen the movie version of Steel Magnolias , you



might be surprised when you see the play on which it was based. Un...



"TART: A Modern Adaptation of Moliere's Tartuffe" by The BAND Group at Bryant Lake Bowl

Working towards a world B eyond A cceptance with N o D iscrimination, The BAND Group debuts with a delightfully modern adaptation of Mol...

2018 Concerts

- Leslie Odom, Jr.

2018 Shows

- Ain't It a Grand and Glorious Feeling
- Alive & Kickin's Flashback
- Angels in America (NYC)
- Apples in Winter
- As One
- Assassins
- Ball: A Musical Tribute To My Lost Testicle
- Band's Visit (NYC)
- bandaged place
- Basset Table
- Bull
- Cardboard Piano
- Carousel (NYC)
- Caucasian-Aggressive Pandas and Other Mulatto Tales
- Chicago

- Collected Stories
- Crack in the Sky
- Dance 'Til You Drop
- Dancing with Giants
- Dat Black Mermaid Man Lady / The Show
- Delgadina (reading)
- Enemy of the People
- Equivocation
- Familiar
- Fellow Travelers
- Five Points
- Five-Fifths of The Matrix
- Follies
- Good Person of Szechwan
- Great Divide II: Plays on the Politics of Truth
- Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
- High Fidelity
- How the Ghost of You Clings: The Anna May Wong Story (reading)
- Humans
- Imaginary Invalid
- Indecent
- Into the Woods (Lakeshore Players Theatre)
- Into the Woods (Shoot the Glass Theater)
- Ishmael
- Jersey Boys
- Kind of Funny but Also a Little Sad
- Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill
- Last Five Years
- Lorax
- Lord Gordon Gordon
- Luna Gale
- Maids

- Make Believe Neighborhood
- Marisol
- Measure for Measure
- Melancholy Play
- Mermaid Hour: Remixed
- Minotaur Or: Amelia Earhart
- Musical Mondays, April
- Musical Mondays, January
- My Barking Dog
- My Mother Has 4 Noses
- Natasha and the Coat
- Newsies
- Noises Off
- Not for Sale (reading)
- Off Book
- Our House: The Capitol Play Project
- Park and Lake
- Pink Unicorn
- Pirates of Penzance
- Prescription: Murder
- Rhinoceros
- Rocket Man
- Romeo and Juliet
- Room with Closets
- Royale
- Ruthless!
- School of Rock
- She Loves Me (DalekoArts)
- She Loves Me (Lyric Arts)
- Skriker
- Something Rotten!
- Spy Musical (reading)
- Starved (reading)
- Steady Rain
- Steel Magnolias
- Still Dance the Stars

- [Sub/prime](#)
- [Superior Donuts](#)
- [Sweeney Todd \(NYC\)](#)
- [Taking Shakespeare](#)
- [TART: A Modern Adaptation of Moliere's Tartuffe](#)
- [This Bitter Earth](#)
- [Thomas Tallis](#)
- [Three Quarter Inches of Sky \(reading\)](#)
- [Three Tall Women \(NYC\)](#)
- [Two Mile Hollow](#)
- [Under this Roof](#)
- [Underneath the Lintel](#)
- [West Side Story](#)
- [Wiz](#)
- [Wolves](#)
- [You Can't Take It With You](#)

Disclosure

I receive complementary tickets to shows that I see in exchange for writing about them.

Cherry and Spoon on youtube

- [View my concert videos here](#)

Blog Archive

- ▶ [2018](#) (101)
- ▶ [2017](#) (256)
- ▼ [2016](#) (259)
 - ▶ [December](#) (14)
 - ▶ [November](#) (19)
 - ▶ [October](#) (25)
 - ▶ [September](#) (14)

► August (65)

► July (15)

► June (14)

► May (20)

▼ April (19)

"Every Sentence is For the
Birds" by the Moving Co...

"Anatomy of Gray" at Lyric Arts

"Charm" at Mixed Blood
Theatre

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The
Musical" at Children's ...

"Six Characters in Search of an
Author" at Park Sq...

"Fiddler on the Roof" at
Artistry

"Harvey" at the Guthrie
Theater

"Show X" at HUGE Theater

"Constellations" at the Jungle
Theater

"Sunset Baby" at Penumbra
Theatre

"Violet" at Yellow Tree Theatre

"Bullets Over Broadway" on
tour at the Ordway Cent...

"The Fantasticks" at Nautilus
Music-Theater

"We Gotta Cheer Up Gary" by
Four Humors at the Sou...

"Rodgers and Hammerstein at
the Movies" at Orchest...

"Buyer and Cellar" presented
by Hennepin Theatre T...

"Musical Mondays" at Hell's
Kitchen, April 2016

"C." by Theater Latte Da at the
Ritz Theater

"Coriolanus" by New Epic
Theater at the Lab
Theate...

- ▶ March (18)
- ▶ February (19)
- ▶ January (17)
- ▶ 2015 (228)
- ▶ 2014 (212)
- ▶ 2013 (170)
- ▶ 2012 (133)
- ▶ 2011 (103)
- ▶ 2010 (38)



Photo credit: Soul Photography and Media

Cherry and Spoon

The sculpture "Spoonbridge and Cherry" was created by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen in 1988 for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden at the Walker Art Center, original site of the Guthrie Theater. I chose "Cherry and Spoon" as the name of this blog because it seems a fitting

and recognizable symbol of the Minnesota cultural scene.

Copyright © 2010 Jill Schafer. All rights reserved. Simple theme. Powered by [Blogger](#).