

Salem Theatre Company celebrates new space with 3-weekend festival

By Wendy Killeen | February 14, 2010

GRAND OPENING IN SALEM: To celebrate the opening of its new downtown performance space, the Salem Theatre Company is presenting a three-weekend festival of comedy, theater, and music beginning this weekend.

The “New Space Showcase” replaces the main stage production of “Loot” originally scheduled for February.

“Moving the company to a permanent theater at 90 Lafayette St. is a game-changing move for us, so we needed to change our plan and adapt season seven to best suit our new performance space,” said **John Fogle**, the company’s artistic director.

Salem Theatre Company has never had its own space, traveling to different locations for each production. Now it has leased the space for a 60-seat theater.

In addition to presenting its own productions, the company hopes the theater is used for readings, music, and collaborations with other groups.

A \$50,000 capital campaign is underway to support the project.

The showcase presents comedy 7:30 p.m. Friday nights, one-act theater performances 7:30 p.m. Saturday nights, and live acoustic music 3 p.m. Sunday afternoons, through Feb. 28.

“This is an exciting and unique way for us to illustrate the myriad uses and possibilities that exist for the Salem Theatre Company and the entire Salem arts community with this new venue,” said **Gary LaParl**, the company’s executive director.

Today’s performance is a progressive pop multimedia project by Machine 475.

The upcoming lineup includes Comedie du Jour, Friday; “Bedroom or Biohazard: Life with Your Teen,” by storyteller **Judith Black**, Saturday; The Dejas, next Sunday; comedy with **Erik Rodenhiser** and **Mark Scalia**, Feb. 26; “Thirteen Things About Ed Carpolotti,” with **Georgette Beck**, Feb. 27; and guitarist **Raymond Gonzalez**, Feb. 28.

Tickets are \$10 in advance; \$15 at the door. Visit www.salemtheatre.com.

ALL THAT JAZZ: The Essex Jazz Ensemble performs original compositions and standards next Sunday at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill.

The ensemble features **Tom McKinley**, pianist, classical composer, and former faculty member at the New England Conservatory; **Bruce Gertz**, bassist and faculty member at Berklee College of Music; **Bob Kaufman**, drummer and faculty member at Berklee; and **Michael Finegold**, flutist, artistic director of the Essex Chamber Music Players, and professor emeritus at Northern Essex.

The performance begins at 2:30 p.m. in the Technology Center on the college’s Haverhill campus. Tickets are \$10; \$5 for children; free for Northern Essex students with a college identification.

Tickets can be purchased at www.mvarts.info or at the door.

AUTHOR’S CORNER: **Irene Smalls**, a historian, storyteller, and children’s book author, presents a program celebrating Black History Month at 10 a.m. Wednesday in the Medford Public Library. During “Let’s Get the Rhythm of the Feet,” children can play a street game from 1950s Harlem, take a walk in the city with Jonathan and his mommy, shuck corn, and dance. . . . A reading of “The Wander Theater,” a play by **JoAnne Brasil**, takes place at the Peabody Institute Library in Peabody at 7 p.m. Tuesday. A one-woman drama with slides, the presentation follows the life, love, and career of Hildegard Zander, who was raised in a prominent Jewish family in Dresden, Germany, and acted in a traveling theater company.

IN LOCAL GALLERIES: The Merrimack Valley Camera Club, based in North Andover, has simultaneous exhibits at three locations during February: Haverhill Public Library, North Andover Senior Center, and RiverBank in North Andover. On display are photographs taken by many of the club’s nearly 200 members. . . . **James Ryan** of Peabody presents an oil painting demonstration hosted by the Lynnfield Art Guild at the Lynnfield Senior Center at 7 p.m. Thursday. Ryan’s paintings are often of New England landscapes, seascapes, and the fishing industry. He also is a specialist in historical military paintings. People are invited to bring easels and paint along with Ryan during the demonstration.

Items can be sent to wdkilleen@gmail.com. ■