

▶ THE DISH: ROLLING IN THE CLOVER ▶ ONE-DAY GETAWAY: EQUUS RUN VINEYARDS

# extra

YOUR WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Friday, June 17, 2005 [courier-journal.com](http://courier-journal.com)

**GOING BATTY**  
WHY DO WE LOVE BATMAN?  
BECAUSE HE'S CRAZY

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BOURBON BAR

**'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST'**

BE THEIR GUEST AT THE IROQUOIS AMPHITHEATER





Music Theatre Louisville's "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" features, from left, Jamie Shuler as the wardrobe, Marissa Ghavami as Belle and Tracey Zavadi as Mrs. Potts (the teapot). The production opens tonight at the Iroquois Amphitheater.

By David Lutman, Special to The Courier-Journal

## Young actors lead 'Beauty'

By Judith Egerton  
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The Courier-Journal

If the forecast is correct, tonight's weather should make for a fairy-tale opening for "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" at Iroquois Amphitheater.

Music Theatre Louisville, now in its 25th season, will present "Beauty," one of the most-popular musicals of stage and screen. Leading the cast of experienced actors are two young Louisville singers with powerful voices.

Marissa Ghavami, 15, a vocal major at the Youth Performing Arts School who dreams of starring on Broadway, is playing the beauty named Belle. Ross Lekites, 20, a Trinity High School graduate and winner of last year's Coca-Cola talent competition at the Kentucky State Fair, will perform opposite her as the enchanted beast.

Despite their youth, both performers are poised on stage, said MTL executive director Peter Holloway. Marissa "has a much more mature voice than her years would lead you to expect." And

Ross, a junior majoring in musical theater at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, "has a beautiful, lyrical tenor voice."

Marissa has studied acting at Walden Theatre since she was 7. She has appeared in more than two dozen plays and musicals at theaters, including the Apollo in New York City, Stage One in Louisville and Derby Dinner Playhouse in Clarksville, Ind.

Is she nervous about performing at the historic 2,400-seat amphitheater in south Louisville? Not at all.

"I'm really excited about it. I'm more nervous about completing the costume changes and the other backstage tech things."

Ross confessed that his chief worry isn't singing but flying. He's afraid of heights. So being attached to two wires and a harness in order to flip and fly during the beast's transformation scene has triggered some anxiety.

What is it like to play the Beast? "I'm used to being corrected about my posture — to straighten up on stage. Now, it's the opposite."

Marissa predicted that the

dancing scenes between Belle and the Beast will thrill the little girls in the audience. "I'll be wearing a big gold dress. It's going to be beautiful," she said.

The romantic musical with magical objects began as a 1991 Disney animated movie featuring music and lyrics by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman. The movie won Academy Awards for best song ("Beauty and the Beast") and best score. It also was the first animated film ever to be nominated for a best-picture Oscar. Adapted into a Broadway musical, it was an instant hit and garnered nine Tony Award nominations in 1994.

The story, which has its roots in a French fairy tale, involves an angry prince who is transformed into a hybrid creature with the mane of a lion, the head of a buffalo, the tusks of a wild boar, the thick body of a bear and wolf-like legs and tail. When Beauty, an eccentric villager's daughter, sees the goodness within the lonely and homely beast, she falls in love with him and the spell is broken.

Disney's animators created unique characters — enchanted servants who were caught under

the same spell as the Beast. The motherly cook, Mrs. Potts, was turned into a teapot. The stalwart butler, Cogsworth, became a clock and the loyal valet, Lumiere, was changed into a candelabra. These characters comfort Belle when she takes her father's place as a prisoner in the Beast's castle.

For the MTL production, local sculptor and designer Guy Tedesco created the costumes for the 39-member cast, including the servants' transformative ones. The show's director is Mirla Criste, who directed and choreographed last year's "Peter Pan." Criste, an original cast member of Broadway's "Miss Saigon," teaches acting, voice and movement at the University of Georgia.

MTL also will have several "Tea with Belle" parties. Those who attend will get a glimpse of backstage activities, meet Belle and other members of the cast and be treated to desserts, drinks and a souvenir rose.

Marissa said she looks forward to meeting youngsters at the tea parties. "It's so flattering to play a character that children look up to."

### IF YOU GO

#### 'Disney's Beauty and the Beast'

When: Opens at 8 tonight and runs through June 26

Where: Iroquois Amphitheater near New Cut Road and Kenwood Drive.

Tickets: \$16-\$21, depending on performance day. Senior citizens, children and students receive discounts. Tickets may be purchased at the amphitheater box office, the Broadway in Louisville office at 611 W. Main St., online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) or by calling (502) 361-3000.

#### 'Tea With Belle'

6:45-7:30 p.m. tomorrow, Wednesday and next Friday. The cost is \$20 for one child and a chaperone and does not include a ticket to the show. To reserve a seat, call MTL at (502) 589-4060.

#### Directions to the amphitheater

**From eastern Jefferson County:** Take the Watterson Expressway west to the Southern Parkway exit. Turn left at second light onto Southern Parkway and follow it to where it ends at Iroquois Park. Turn left onto New Cut Road and go about two blocks; the amphitheater will be on the right.

**From western Jefferson County:** Take the Watterson Expressway east to Taylor Boulevard. Exit and turn right. Follow Taylor Boulevard south to the amphitheater.