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theatre notes

MAGIC 8-BALL SAYS...

These are exciting days for community theatre in Athens as the current season comes to a close and the schedules for the new year begin to pop up. According to my Magic 8-Ball, it looks like we're in for some really great stagecraft in the months ahead. No, really. It says that in the little window...

Athens' newest theatrical outfit, **Circle Ensemble Theatre Company**, kicks off its new season with Mary Zimmerman's 1996 adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, directed by Mirla Criste, with original music for this production. This looks ambitious, not only because the play is being done in period costume—and how weird is it that we've come to be surprised when someone stages a play *as written*?—but also because it's being done around *and in* the pool at Ashford Manor.

For those unfamiliar with *Metamorphosis*, the original is the poet Ovid's epic telling of what we now call Greek mythology. Ovid was Shakespeare's bible for mythology, and most of the myths we read now, from Bulfinch to Edith Hamilton, come from this source. Zimmerman's adaptation is a series of vignettes depicting various myths—the creation of the world, Midas, Eros and Psyche, Narcissus—and, like those myths, her play is tragic and comic all at once. The cast, made up of a nice mix of veterans and newcomers, looks strong, and the venue for this play, Ashford's lawn and its pool, could not be more appropriate. This looks really, really good.

The show runs Thursday through Saturday, July 21–23, at Ashford Manor Bed and Breakfast in Watkinsville. Showtimes are at 8:30 p.m., but come early for best seating. Tickets are \$15/\$10 for students. Call (706) 362-2175 for details or visit www.circleensembletheatre.com.

Circle Ensemble has also released its schedule for the upcoming season: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* for fall 2011, *The Diary of Anne Frank* in winter 2012, an original play TBA for spring, and *Steel Magnolias* next summer. Obviously, Circle doesn't mess around.

The **Town & Gown Players** will finish their Main Stage season with Oscar Wilde's classic 1893 play of secrets, lies and relentless wit, *An Ideal Husband*, Aug. 5–7 & 11–14 at the Athens Community Theatre. Written at the height of Wilde's fame and success, the play involves a successful politician, a blackmail plot, a series of betrayals and the question of how to reconcile the bright public image with the darker private truth. In other words, Wilde's play is as relevant today as it was in the late-19th century. Directed by the always-good Marisa Castengera, the play features a strong cast and Wilde's signature cutting cleverness. Showtimes will be at 8 p.m. for Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows, 2 p.m. for Sunday shows. Tickets are \$15 Friday and Saturday, \$12 Thursday and Sunday, and \$12 at all shows for students and seniors. Call (706) 208-TOWN (8696) for reservations.

The following weekend T&G presents its production of Frank Wedekind's controversial 1891 play *The Awakening of Spring*, adapted and directed by Eric Kumsomboone. This play, about young people discovering their sexuality amid the pressures of school and family,

promises to deliver the edgy excellence that marks T&G's Second Stage series. The show runs Friday and Saturday, Aug. 19 & 20, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Aug. 21, at 2 p.m. at the Athens Community Theatre. All shows are \$5 at the door, no reservations.

Town & Gown will announce the 2011–2012 season's offering after its annual banquet in August, but auditions for the first show, Steven Dietz's 1996 adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* directed by Steven Carroll, have been posted for Aug. 8 & 9 at the Athens Community Theatre. The show will run



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in October, including two midnight shows and a preview performance to benefit the Boybutante AIDS Foundation. Dietz's adaptation is faithful to Stoker but a lot more streamlined and sexy than the classic play by Hamilton Deane. This is going to be a great show.

The **Rose of Athens Theatre's** new slate is up, and it looks to be another great year of family-friendly performances. In October, Rose will present an adaptation of *Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn* that will run the 5th through the 8th at the Seney-Stovall Chapel and then tour through February. Following that will be a production of *James and the Giant Peach*, from the classic children's book by Roald Dahl, in late February and March, and then 2012's Shakespeare on the Lawn offering: *The Comedy of Errors*.

The **UGA Performing Arts Center** has just announced its 2011–2012 season. As a music venue, most of its featured acts fall outside the purview of this column (although The Chieftains and Yo-Yo Ma are coming, which is definitely of interest to this columnist), but among the performances on the schedule are the upcoming shows: *100 Years of Broadway* (Feb. 6), *The Capitol Steps* (Feb. 10), *The Second City Company* (Mar. 2 & 3—insert "squee" and multiple exclamation points here), *Garrison Keillor: An Evening of Story Telling* (Apr. 23), the *Reduced Shakespeare Company* (Sept. 20) and *Civil War Stories* (Oct. 12).

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