

afOs Mighty Season

By Kathleen Christian

We're moving into the season of entertainment, and as theater companies all over town are dusting off their togas and 16th century bloomers, all for One Productions has dug up some classic and original shows that will delight many theater-goers for the first time.

The season begins with *A Mighty Fortress*, a one man, one-act play about the life of Martin Luther, written by all for One's artistic director, Lauren Nichols. Intrigued

by the challenge of writing a one-act play, she penned the part for her husband, Dennis, who would later perform it around the country during afO's early touring days.

"We're putting it now, for the first time ever, on a legitimate stage with a set and lighting and new sound design and a new actor," Nichols said. "This has been a lot of fun for me to refresh and rethink the show in a lot of ways."

An afO regular and stunningly talented actor, Jeff Salisbury will play the part of Luther in *A Mighty Fortress*. He will portray the period of Luther's life in which he was hiding in Wartburg Castle, disguised as a knight. Throughout the show, Luther reflects on the moments and paths that brought him to where he is, while his room in the castle becomes the scene of various confrontations and interactions with invisible characters along his journey.

"You really have to picture the details going all the way back to his earliest life where he felt [a] conviction to become a monk, and the great parental disapproval," Nichols said. "His early days, the all-consuming guilt he constantly felt – he never felt he measured up to God's standard."

Despite its heavy content, Nichols says there are moments of humor to be found in the story. There's also an educational component to the show, important for a theater company that exists to entertain as well as enlighten.

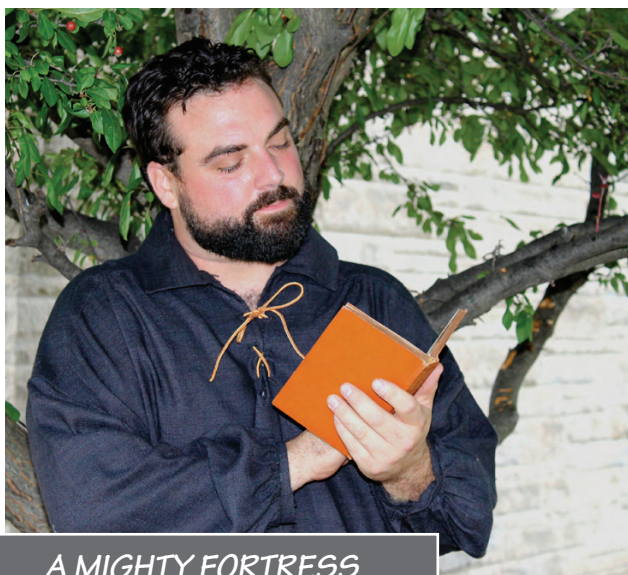
"Everyone knows vaguely that there's a Lutheran Church that was founded, supposedly, by Martin Luther; but why, when and what were the circumstances, and what does it mean for the church today?" Nichols asked. "We'll be providing a synopsis of events for people to look at. In everything

we do, we want the audience to understand why we think it's important."

Since *A Mighty Fortress* is around an hour long, it will be preceded by *Prisoner of Joy*, a one-act dramatization of the book of Philippians. Nichols described the show as a contemporary take on a small, persecuted church and its correspondence with its imprisoned pastor.

Prisoner of Joy will be directed under Nichols' supervision by her apprentice, Kayla Reed.

"I'm excited to have an apprentice di-



A MIGHTY FORTRESS
ALL FOR ONE PRODUCTIONS
Friday-Saturday, Sept. 6-7 • 8 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 8 • 2:30 p.m.
ACPL Auditorium
900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne
Tix: \$10-\$18, 260-622-4610

rector working alongside me for the season," Nichols said. "Our apprentice program is new, and we also have a technical apprentice working

alongside Jeff Salisbury, who is our technical director."

Moving into the fall and spring, afO will take a turn for the family with *The Family That Nobody Wanted* and *The Princess and the Goblin*, two heartwarming plays the family will love. These shows have also shared obscurity the past few years.

"[*The Family That Nobody Wanted*] was a play that came along in the 50s but had the feeling of one of those great Kaufman and Hart comedies from the 30s and 40s," Nichols said. "This is that old, three-act comedic format which feels very much like *You Can't Take it With You*. It's a delightful show in its own right, though."

The play turns reality into drama. It portrays the real-life story of Helen and Carl Doss, who adopted 12 children from various ethnic backgrounds in the 40s, a time when adopting children who matched their adoptive parents' racial and religious background was considered the only way to establish a stable family. The Dosses turned trends, so-

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Feature • The Flattering Word

Community Theater

By Jennifer Poiry-Prough

Sometimes in theatre, art imitates life. And sometimes life imitates art. And every once in a while life imitates art while imitating life imitating art.

Such is the case with First Presbyterian Theater's upcoming benefit production of *The Flattering Word* by George Kelly.

The one-act comedy is about an Ohio minister and his wife. The young minister is virulently opposed to theater, believing it to be evil. They are visited by an old friend of his wife's – a famous traveling actor, who invites his friend to see him perform. She says that her husband would never al-

low it, but the actor says he will just ply him with the "flattering word": that is, "the one compliment that has never failed. Tell any man, woman or child that he should be on the stage – and you'll find him quite as susceptible as a cat is to catnip."

Hofrichter became familiar with the play as a student at Marquette and has been trying to find a place for it in the regular theater season, but the timing never seemed right. However, when a young minister and his wife (Jeff and Arianne Lehn) came to First Presbyterian Church, he knew the time had come.

"I asked them, 'Have you ever performed on stage?'" Hofrichter says. "They said, 'No.' I said, 'Wouldja like to?'"

The play also features Nancy Kartholl as the church busybody, Mrs. Zooker.

"The actor, played by Christopher J. Murphy, hits Mrs. Zooker with the flattering word," says Hofrichter. "Her daughter [played by Emma Grimes] has done some performing. Everyone is running around performing for the famous actor."

Hofrichter says that although they may lack the theatrical experience of the rest of the cast, "they're perfect for the roles. It's meta-theatrical in nature. Theater comment-

ing on theater."

Consider it the 1916 version of the sitcom *Community*.

"During the early 20th century when the play was written, a lot of churches were campaigning against theater," Hofrichter says. "The church made them feel like low-down sinners if they attended theater. They equated it to strip clubs or burlesque."

He says Kelly wrote the play as a "response to the sanctimonious righteous who condemned theater. He was saying, 'Don't be boneheads. There's nothing inherently evil about theater.'"

Besides being a funny, energetic comedy that will appeal to all ages, says the director,

"there are lots of obligatory speeches about how wonderful theater is. It also speaks precisely to why First Presbyterian Church has a theater in the first place: the power it has to open the

mind of a single person, alone in the dark."

Rather than pairing it with another one-act play, as had been his intention all these years, Hofrichter chose it as the centerpiece of First Presbyterian Theater's upcoming fundraiser, which also includes a light supper, silent auction and demonstration of the new lighting system that proceeds from the event will help pay for.

"People feel cheated [by a pair of one-acts versus a single, full-length play]," he says, "which I don't understand. You're getting two plays for one."

A light supper, catered by Booker's Catering, will be served upstairs from 6 to 7 p.m.

"We call it a light supper," says Hofrichter, "but with Kevin Booker, nothing is ever really light."

A silent auction will also begin during supper. Afterward, at 7 p.m., the 40-minute play will be performed downstairs in the theater, followed by a 10-minute demonstra-

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