



Monday, March 17, 2003

MBT presents the thriller 'Wait Until Dark'

A blind heroine seems like easy prey, but playwright Frederick Knott turns the tables and makes her world of darkness a lethal weapon in his thrilling drama, "Wait Until Dark." The production opens Wednesday, March 19, and runs through April 13 at **Meadow Brook Theatre** (MBT), Michigan's largest professional theatre company, on Oakland University's campus.

"Wait Until Dark" tells the story of a beautiful, intrepid blind woman, Susy Hendricks, who is stalked by evil when her new husband becomes an unwitting accomplice to drug smugglers. The innocence of the young woman is pitted against the malice of desperate men who make it clear they will stop at nothing to retrieve what is theirs. In her startling self-defense, the young newlywed calls upon all her skills and resources.

"Wait Until Dark" follows in the tradition of thrilling dramas centered on the life of a remarkable character who happens to be blind. Their challenge inevitably defines them and leads them to find their inner strengths. From Patty Duke in "The Miracle Worker" to Ben Affleck in the new release, "Daredevil," audiences are fascinated by characters who must experience the world from an almost unimaginable viewpoint.

"While her attackers see Susy Hendricks as easy prey, she uses her physical liabilities as assets," said Edward Smith, director of the MBT production. "When a person loses a sense, the others become heightened. And as we lose our assumptions about what it means to be blind, we discover that she actually is stronger than her foe. The result is a story that is dramatic and exciting to the last minute."

Last season, Smith directed MBT's "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." He is the former associate professor of theatre in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts at Wayne State University in Detroit. As head of WSU's Black Theatre Program, he gained recognition for his acclaimed work with the Detroit Repertory Theatre and Hillberry Theatre.

Audiences will recognize several cast members of "Wait Until Dark" from the national stage and cinema. Three members of the cast also are veterans of the MBT stage.

Julie Marie Paparella plays Susy Hendricks. A graduate of Point Park College in Pittsburgh, Paparella continued her studies at the British American Drama Academy. She has performed a variety of roles in classic stage productions with companies such as Shaw Chicago, Shakespeare Repertory and Chicago Shakespeare Company.

Wayne David Parker plays one of modern theatre's greatest bad guys, the villainous Harry Roat. He is known for his work with the Purple Rose companies, both on stage at the Purple Rose Theatre and in the film version of "Escanaba in da Moonlight" and the recent release, "Super Sucker." He was last at MBT in "Comedy of Errors."

David Regal returns to the stage after directing MBT's comedy "The Foreigner." He has performed numerous starring roles on the MBT stage, including last season's Big Daddy in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." For his performance, he earned a Free Press Theatre Award nomination for Best Actor.

Joey Bybee returns to the MBT stage for his fourth production this season, including, most recently, "The Foreigner." He is a graduate of Oakland University and first appeared at MBT last season in "Godspell."

Thomas Gebbia appears for the first time at MBT. A graduate of The Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre, Gebbia has played various stages throughout Chicago, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

C. W. Gilbert appeared in the 1981 MBT production of "Wait Until Dark." He is a graduate of Wayne State University and received the 2002 Detroit Free Press James Kiscki Award for Excellence.

Lauracindy Plague has appeared at MBT in the productions "A Christmas Carol" and "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Travis Walter will appear in every play this season at MBT, with the exception of "Candida" and the season-ending "Meshuggah-Nuns! "

A special performance for the hearing impaired, offering American Sign Language interpretation, will be given at the 8 p.m., Wednesday, April 2, performance. For the visually impaired, the 2 p.m., Saturday, March 29, performance will be audio-described.

Tickets for "Wait Until Dark" and Meadow Brook Theatre's 2002–2003 season are on sale at the MBT box office or by calling (248) 377-3300. Group tickets are available at (248) 370-3316. For more information, visit the **Meadow Brook Theatre** Web site.

SUMMARY

Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "Wait Until Dark" features a beautiful, intrepid blind woman who is stalked by evil when her new husband becomes an unwitting accomplice to drug smugglers. "Wait Until Dark" follows in the tradition of thrilling dramas centered on the life of a remarkable character who happens to be blind.

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