

# Theatre Collective Presents Playfest

By Erin Mahon

This weekend, the Wolf's Mouth Theatre Collective kicks off its sixth annual Ten-Minute Playfest. The festival will premiere eight short plays highlighting some of Ithaca's own talented playwrights.

Why the short-play format? According to collective founder George Sapio, "Ten-minute plays are all the rage these days because they are easier to produce, somewhat easier to write, you can package eight or 10 of them in one shot, giving the audience a varied presentation. And of course, if one is really terrible, it's over before you know it, and you have seven more to keep you interested."

Sapio, who says he keeps his boredom at bay through the rush of theater, explains that Wolf's Mouth has grown to a membership of about 40 people of varying levels of involvement. The theater community in Ithaca is a kinetic group; its members move fluidly in and out of the different companies and groups that share a love of creating an escape for the rest of us through the magic of writing, directing, acting and design, he adds.

Several members of the collective also perform with the Ithaca Shakespeare Company, while others are students or graduates of the Actor's Workshop of Ithaca. Ross Haarstad, founder of Theatre Incognita, is a regular member. "Ithaca fairly swells with theatrical talent. This is obvious from attending any of the shows that feature local actors and directors. So this is a way for all of us to get together and do what we do best," says



Photo provided

George Sapio, Wolf's Mouth Theatre Collective founder.

Sapio.

Sapio has produced "found space" theater for years, getting involved with groups that performed in coffee shops and the library—basically transforming any available empty space into a stage. The Wolf's Mouth Playfest was fueled from this growing need for the players to create and perform, and to fill the niche of "theater on the cheap," he says.

The first playfest was held in 2008, with plays being performed in various combinations throughout the Ithaca Festival and featuring all 11 plays that were submitted. Says Sapio, "We lost money on that, not too much, but the thrill was enough to keep us going." The theater festival has evolved since that first year and now calls the Fall Creek

Studios space its yearly home.

Over the years the submission process has also become more streamlined and selective; members submit plays online and then the plays are democratically voted on by other members. Previous festivals held playwrights to a theme for their submissions. This year the no-theme restrictions were set.

Positive feedback and questions about what and when they'll be performing next have strengthened Wolf's Mouth's drive to expand even further. "Our plans are to produce two shows a year," says Sapio. "One will, of course, be the annual short playfest. The other is still to be determined, but we're leaning toward longer works, or a single longer work."

So far, the festival has been funded solely by box office receipts. The growing success has prompted Sapio to consider revamping this financial approach. "Our needs have been small up till now," he says, "but since we are now concentrating more on being a regular producing theater company, we will start expanding our resources."

The plays that will premiere at this year's festival include "It" by David Guaspari, which explores the etiquette of a men's room. The play is directed by George Sapio and features actors David Romm, Peter Shuman, David Guaspari and Dan Taylor. Guaspari will also premiere "Speed Mating," a play that asks the question, "What would you do if your life span was 20 minutes?" Sue Perlgut directs this play, which stars Matt Winberg, Melanie Uhler, Deanalis Restro and Mark Whitmore.

Belinda Howell contributes two works to the festival this year. "The Great Wall of China" is directed by David Kossack (who also plays a role) and stars Asia Kate Dillon. This story chronicles an apartment dweller as she becomes accustomed to the "quirks" of her new home. Howell will also premiere "What Do You Know?" Kossack directs this one as well, which features Asia Kate Dillon, David Romm and Melanie Uhler, and takes inspiration from the phrase "Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans."

"Rasputin's Organ" and "Little Faith" are both works by Kit Wainer. The self-directed "Rasputin's Organ" stars Camilla Schade, Carolina Osorio Gil and Judith Andrew and revolves around an anatomic anomaly. "Little Faith" is directed by Rachel Hockett and stars Arthur Bicknell, Judith Andrew and Tim Perry.

"Get Out of the House," written by Kathryn Russell, is a look at the invention of a new order. Russell directs, along with Wainer. Both Russell and Wainer also act in this short play, joined by Bob Asta. "The Kiss" stars Abel McSurely Bradshaw, Melanie Uhler, Kyle Schantz-Hilton and is directed by Haarstad.

The Wolf's Mouth Theatre Collective's 2012 Ten-Minute Playfest will be held at Fall Creek Studios, 1201 N. Tioga St., Ithaca. Performances are Friday and Saturday, Sept. 21 and 22, and Sept. 28 and 29. All shows begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 at the door or through Ticket Center Ithaca, 171 The Commons, 273-4497.



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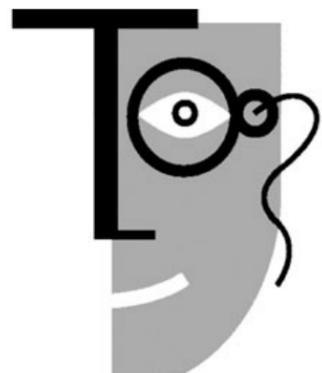
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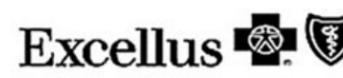
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