


Pit & Balcony Community Theatre
presents

Judge Dough Fruity



Tuesday, August 28, 2007
3 p.m.

Middle schoolers produce 'Fruity' parody

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Here comes da Judge — "Judge Dough Fruity," that is.

At 3 p.m. Tuesday, some middle school thespians will close six weeks of study with their own production at Pit and Balcony Community Theatre, 805 N. Hamilton, Saginaw.

In "Judge Dough Fruity," a magistrate with an insatiable craving for doughnuts hears the case of a schizophrenic boy who is suing himself.

The youngsters used acting, design and writing skills they learned from director Amanda Ruediger, artist Kara Harris and playwright Jenny Rogers at Pit and Balcony, the Saginaw Art Museum and the Andersen Enrichment Center to come up with their own parody of television's "Judge Joe Brown" and "Judge Judy."

In "Judge Dough Fruity," a magistrate with an insatiable craving for doughnuts hears the case of a schizophrenic boy who is suing himself. The students did everything themselves, from writing the script to building the set and producing the play.

A reception, hosted by Tim Horton's restaurants, will follow the 30-minute production, which is free and open to the public. ❖

PRODUCE, DIRECT, WRITE

Instruct and mentor youth through summer theatre program at Pit & Balcony Theatre for two summers. Helped students with playwriting both summers, directed in the second summer and assisted with production duties; directed independently during the Summer 2009 season.

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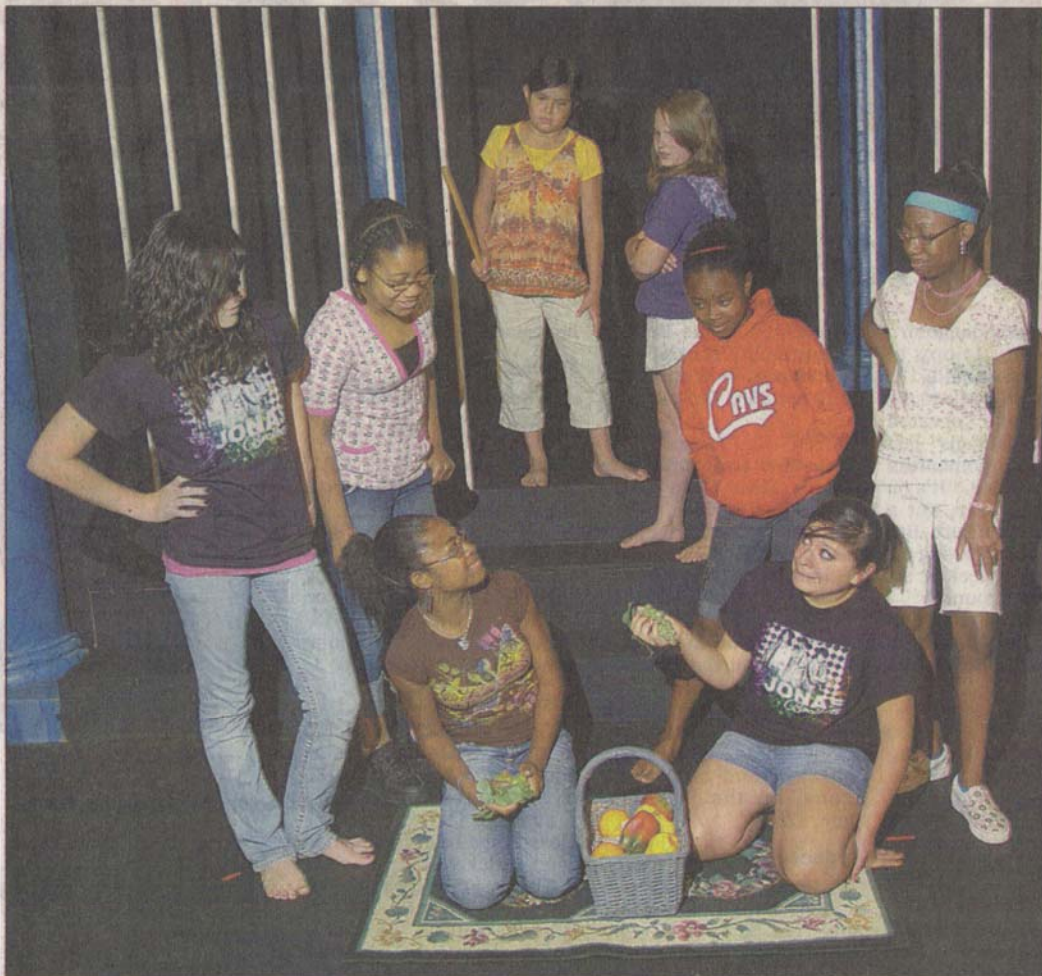
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DAVID A. SOMMERS/THE SAGINAW NEWS

A group of middle school students penned scripts, created sets and props, and are now in rehearsal for plays based on "The Nick Adams Stories" by Ernest Hemingway. Among the students are, standing from left, Elizabeth Austerberry, Cierra Bardell, Kayleigh Doyen, Alexa Wright, Jeanee Daniel and Tierrea Billings. Kneeling are Jordan Daniel, left, and Mariah Espinoza.

Ernest spirit

The words of Ernest Hemingway inspire a young theater troupe.

JANET I. MARTINEAU
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Earlier this week, 15 middle school students were sent home with marching orders.

ON STAGE

■ "The Nick Adams Stories"

WHERE: Pit and Balcony Community Theatre, 805 N. Hamilton
WHEN: 1 p.m. Saturday
HOW MUCH: Free

"They got their props and costumes list and were told to pester their parents to see what they can come up with in their attics," says Lee-Perry Belleau, the executive director of Pit and Balcony Community Theatre, 805 N. Hamilton.

Enrolled in an intensive two-week summer theater workshop at Pit, the students have adapted five of Ernest Hemingway's "The Nick Adams Stories" — set in northern Michigan and based in part on the Pulitzer-winning author's growing-up years in the early 1900s when his family vacationed there.

PLEASE SEE ERNEST, PAGE 3 ▶

COVER

Ernest Middle school students can relate to 'The Nick Adams Stories'

The students, ages 11 to 15, penned the scripts, worked on set and tech design and construction, and are now in rehearsal as they head to a 1 p.m. performance Saturday.

Belleau says the young thespians hail from Saginaw, Saginaw Township, Frankenmuth and Freeland.

"The first five stories in Hemingway's book cover the time period in Nick's life that is the age of the participants," says Belleau, "so we picked those because they are more relevant to these kids."

Adds Jenny Rogers, who helped the students write the script and is now directing their acting: "They deal with issues like growing up, manhood, independence, a first love.

"'Three Shots' is about young Nick left alone in the woods of northern Michigan as his father and grandfather are out on a lake fishing and his deepening and untold fear as the campfire dies," says Rogers.

"Eventually he fires three emergency shots to get the adults to return and then he makes up a lie why he signaled them — that he was shooting at attacking animals."

"The Nick Adams Stories" was chosen by the Michigan Humanities Council as part of a yearlong Great Michigan Read project.

Pit received funding from the council, the Harvey Randall Wickes Foundation and the Jury Foundation for the summer workshop as a part of that statewide reading initiative.

Rogers says the stories the students

adapted also deal with Indian camps and the fact young Nick's father is a doctor who visits homes to deliver babies.

"His dad takes him with him everywhere, so young Nick views his own life through his father and is struggling to see how does he fit in."

And Hemingway, she says, wrote them journal style from Nick's perspective, as little snippets from the pages of a life, so she also has her students each day writing in journals about their experiences and the characters they are bringing to life.

"At the end they'll each get a journaling kit from us, to continue writing. And we'll give them a list of other books like this one they can read."

Adds Belleau, "We've also sent them off to do research for some of the skits — to make this a total experience, not just one where they jump up on stage and act."

Rogers, who teaches theater at the Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy, also framed the 40-minute adaptation as a play within a play.

"It's set in contemporary time with this group of students, on the last day of school, getting an assignment over the summer to pick a book to read from a list their teacher gives them and to write a skit from it," says Rogers.

The classmates range from survival Girl Scouts to Goth girls with attitudes to stage techies, she says, and they collectively settle on "The Nick Adams Stories."

"They meet in a theater that is not

used in the summer, and there are all these props and costumes, so the stories they are reading come to life."

Rogers made reading the book a real assignment, too, improv skits followed and then the serious writing of a script. Kara Brown, the curator of education at the Saginaw Art Museum, worked with the participants on set design.

"We hope they'll realize, like the students in the play, reading is not so bad and writing can be fun and let's go to Barnes & Noble and see what else we can read," says Rogers.

One of the adaptations, says Rogers, is told via text messages, and another finds an American Indian grandmother narrating a story pantomimed by the other cast members — both cutting down on the line memorization for such a short rehearsal time.

Cassandra Z. Shavrnock, 13, of Frankenmuth portrays that grandmother.

"I wrote her dialogue," says the eighth-grader at the Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy, "and I am telling the story through her eyes. I've written things before so I was comfortable with that. But the design class was about color and I'm bad at that.

"This workshop has been fun. It's been a good experience for me. Last week was more mellow, but this week we are scrambling to pull it all together by Saturday."

The daughter of James Shavrnock and Renee Martinez says she enjoyed reading "The Nick Adams Stories" and wants to read more Hemingway. ♦

The Nick Adams Stories

*a presentation of Ernest Hemingway's work
for the Great Michigan Read*

by

*The 2008 Pit and Balcony Community Theatre
Summer Youth Workshop Students*

directed by

Jenny Rogers-Belleau

instructors

Jenny Rogers-Belleau

Kara Brown

Ellen Alexandrou

theatre staff

Lee-Perry Belleau, Executive Director
Jennifer McDonald, Director of Operations
Marc Beaudin, Designer/Technical Director
Patty Ezsop, Box Office Manager



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The Michigan Humanities Council
The Jury Foundation
The Harvey Randall Wickes Foundation