

# Trinity Rep Season Ends with hit 'Boeing, Boeing'

It's always important for a theater season to end on a high note, ensuring that audiences will eagerly anticipate the following year. After a mixed year, with more hits than misses, Trinity Repertory Company ends on a high note with their production of the uproarious comedy, *Boeing, Boeing*, directed by company member Fred Sullivan, Jr. With this breezy play that flies by like a 747, Sullivan and his perfect cast keep audiences laughing riotously from takeoff to landing.



Bernard, an American living in Paris, has devised a way to have three fiancés at the same time. They are all stewardesses, flying for different airlines on different flight schedules, and by keeping close track of their departures and arrivals, he juggles them with precision. An old friend from school, Robert, arrives to visit and things soon begin to fall apart, as each lady of the sky drops in unexpectedly.

Company member Joe Wilson, Jr. plays the lothario Bernard and it's his best performance of the season. While his style is often too-stiff and overly serious, it works in his favor this time around. This is due to how much fun it is watching him play opposite to that, seeing him completely unravel as his stiffness gives way to panic attacks, freaking out and completely losing his cool.

Bernard's "international harem" of fiancés includes three women, each with a different nationality and a name beginning with "G." First, my least favorite is Gloria, the American. Actress Rebecca Gibel is a lot of fun to watch but the character is little more than a stereotype, a loud, obnoxious, brassy and promiscuous American blonde.

Second is the French Gabriella, played by Liz Morgan. Morgan is given a little more to do, as Gabriella gets to have some emotions and is a more fleshed out character. She's still a little one-note, as "violent tempered" is her major, if not only, personality trait. Still, Morgan is delightful and hilarious in the role.

Finally, easily my favorite of the three is Gretchen, the German. She's the most like a real person and the least like a caricature or stereotype. She's also played perfectly by Amanda Dolan, who gives Gretchen some real life and real emotions, ranging from joy to devastation to sadness to love. Of the three, she lights up the stage the brightest.

Bernard is supported by his French maid, Bertha. Not like the other French maids you've seen, Bertha is older, world-weary, bitter and jaded. Her caustic and sarcastic sense of humor hysterical as she tries

to hold herself together while she's caught up in the whirlwind. Actress Nance Williamson gets a lot of laugh lines in the role and hits almost every one perfectly.

Truly, the show belongs to Trinity company member Stephen Thorne as Robert. He has shined in supporting roles all season and it's great to see him given something that allows him to really show off what he can do. Like a young Dick Van Dyke, he has impressive control of his body and ability to use it for physical comedy. At the same time, he's an immensely talented actor who takes the pilot's chair in this production and propels it into the stratosphere. Everyone should buckle their seat belts and join him for the ride.

Boeing-Boeing, Trinity Rep, 201 Washington St, Providence. [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com) Runs thru May 13

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## **SBRI Presents Spring 'Tour De Ballet' at RIC**

This Mother's Day weekend why not take mom on a trip around the world to see how various cultures celebrate their heritage through dance. To do so, you will not have to use any SkyMiles, just set your GPS for Roberts Hall at RI College where The State Ballet of RI will present Tour de Ballet.

As SBRI Artistic Director Herci Marsden reaches back into the company's repertoire, prepare for stops in Ireland for traditional Celtic dance, France for a saucy "Can-Can," Italy for the breathless "Tarantella," Spain for the fiery and romantic pas de deux from Don Quixote, Vienna for some waltzes and East Slavic for the powerful "Polovtsian Dances" from Borodin's Prince Igor.

But first the production will open with the world premiere of SAFARI choreographed by former SBRI principal dancer and resident choreographer Mia Godbout; emerging local composer Christy Isles was commissioned to create the musical score for this ballet, which will be performed by a live musical ensemble. According to SBRI Executive Director Ana Marsden Fox, this is the first time since the 1960's that music was "created just for State Ballet."

SAFARI certainly fits the program's travel motif especially, as Godbout explains, since each letter represents certain styles of dance: S for Spanish; A for American, F for French, R for Russian; and I for Irish. Godbout adds, "It is a nice introduction for the rest of Tour de Ballet as the countries referenced in my piece are represented throughout the show. It is also a great stand-alone piece if we ever decide to present it at other venues around RI."

And while Godbout has choreographed other ballets, the twenty-one minute SAFARI represents her most ambitious effort to date. "This is my biggest project to date," she affirms, "I worked on several shorter pieces for SBRI and choreographed many pieces for local area dance schools. In college, I won an informal competition for a piece I choreographed that SBRI ended up performing at studio performances and demonstrations. A few years ago, I collaborated with [SBRI dancers] Mark Marsden and Shana Fox in "Gracefully Gershwin" which was also a one-act ballet. Most recently, I collaborated with author David Ira Rottenberg and created a short ballet set to a live reading of his book Gwendolyn

the Graceful Pig. But, this is my first one-act ballet on my own for a large-scale show!”

Godbout also explains how working directly with the composer has helped the creative process, “Generally, choreographers have to suit their steps to the music as it is. Yet, I have been able to ask Christy for sections to be lengthened or cut back if needed or the addition of instruments to enhance the steps.” Godbout concludes, “I think I have definitely been spoiled as a choreographer during this process! Christy has attended almost all rehearsals, watched the choreography and took notes so we would all be working together when it is performed live. She herself is playing in each movement, either on the cello or piano.”

As for future plans, Godbout observes, “This season has been incredible! I have had many exciting opportunities, with this show at the top of that list! But, I definitely need a bit of a break! My poor family has seen me trying out steps to Christy’s music in every room of our house...even outside! I have put in long hours at the studio, so a bit of a rest is in order starting May 13!”

Tour de Ballet, featuring over 40 local dancers, runs May 11th and 12th at Roberts Hall at 8:00PM and 2:30PM. For tickets visit: [www.stateballet.com](http://www.stateballet.com).

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## Trinity Rep Performers Show Great Chemistry

One of the exciting things about theater in rep is experiencing both the differences and similarities between the shows. Trinity Repertory Company’s Three By Three offers area audiences this unique opportunity. The first two shows, Sparrow Grass and Mourner’s Bench, certainly have some sharply contrasting elements, but they deal with many of the same issues. They deal with the ties of family and how those ties can be strained, broken, healed or severed forever.



The “bench” of the Mourner’s Bench is a piano bench. A specific bench at a piano in a particular room, a bench and a room where an unspeakable tragedy once occurred. Through three acts, the audience experiences how that tragedy impacts the lives of people who are connected to the bench, and the house, in different ways. While they have different kinds of connections to it, they are touched very

deeply by the memories the room holds for them as well as what the room provides for them in the present.

Playwright George Brant does mine some familiar territory here, that a particular object or place can have profound meaning for people. It might a room in a house, such as the well-known play *The Dining Room*, to the house as a whole, as in *Clybourne Park*, which Trinity presented earlier in the season. Still, Brant finds new ways to connect these characters to this place. Some of the relationships are surprising, some of the memories, emotions and responses are shocking.

Along the way, Brant offers much to think about. Themes running through these interconnected stories include love, forgiveness, redemption, justice, revenge, mortality, faith and hope. All heavy stuff but the playwright handles them well, as does Director Michael Perlman and his cast. They trust the writing and each other as they allow the play to move at its own pace, letting them happen naturally.

The cast, all resident acting company members, work nicely together as their characters struggle to face the tragedy they share, whether they all realize it or not. Each of the three acts features just two actors and the pairs have magnificent chemistry during their time together.

Act one features the wonderful Angela Brazil and Mauro Hantman, giving his best performance of the season, as a brother and sister. They experienced the horrible event most directly and it's a powerful scene as they try to deal with still-lingering repercussions. The second act deals with two aunts of that brother-sister pair, as they try to handle the post-tragedy logistics, such as who will raise the children. Janice Duclos and Phyllis Kay are fabulous together as two more siblings with some serious issues. It's especially fun to watch Kay play such a different role from one she's performing at the same time in *Sparrow Grass*. Finally, act three highlights the couple who purchased the house after the tragedy happened. The power of the place deeply affects them as well in a scene played impeccably by Anne Scurria and Timothy Crowe.

Knowing that many involved with the play are also doing two other shows at the same time makes the whole thing even more impressive. The quality of the production, the play itself and the performances, is sure to bring audiences back for the third and final production of *Three By Three* in rep.

*The Mourners' Bench*, Trinity Rep. 201 Washington St, Providence. Runs thru May 24

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## Collision Shines Bright in 'August Osage Country'



## August Osage County

“This is the way the world ends, This is the way the world ends, This is the way the world ends,” and so ends Tracy Letts’ *August: Osage County* running through April 1 at Warren’s 2nd Story Theatre. Some may recognize those final utterings from the final stanza of T.S. Eliot’s poem “The Hollow Men,” with the title, many believe, serving as a subtle allusion to the character of Kurtz from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* referred to as “hollow at the core.”

Likewise, many of the characters who populate Letts’ over-the-top look at a dysfunctional family living in the wastelands of Pawhuska, Oklahoma, possess a Kurtz-like hollowness. The men are all impotent and the women are damaged beyond repair. The play itself is part comedy, part tragedy but thoroughly depressing!

Much of the action centers around the relationships between a pill-popping, mean-spirited and foul-mouthed mother, Violet, and her three daughters: Barbara, the oldest and outwardly the most competent but inwardly very damaged; Ivy, the most fragile of the three who never worked up the courage to leave home and resents everybody for it; and Karen, so eager for a meaningful relationship that she ignores her fiancé’s sleazy and perverted behavior.

The denouement occurs when the girls return home for their father’s (Beverly) funeral following his suicide. Fatherless and soulless, the family airs all its dirty laundry during a meal commemorating Beverly’s passing, presided over, ironically enough, by Johnna, a Native American he hired as a caretaker for Violet shortly before his disappearance. Proud of her own family heritage, Johnna wears a necklace that contains pieces of her umbilical cord, thus preserving her lineage and her soul, in contrast to the family she looks after whose souls, after death, are condemned to “walk the earth looking for where [they] belong.”

The Act II family dinner, which Violet refers to as “truth telling time” while verbally attacking all present, loudly serves as the play’s highlight. Following some extremely powerful exchanges between Violet and Barbara, with Barbara literally trying to pry the pills from her mother’s hands: “Try to get ‘em away from me and I’ll eat you alive ... I’ll eat you alive girl,” the audience sits in a stunned silence as the lights rise for the second of two short intermissions.

The production features a very capable cast, but Lynne Collinson’s portrayal of Violet is marvelously gut-wrenching. Whether stumbling across the stage in a drug induced stupor or lamenting with her daughters during brief moments of lucidity, Collinson makes many of the unbelievable things occurring in this play somewhat believable. As Barbara, Joanne Fayan also has some very fine moments with the unenviable tasking of having to match Collinson’s pitch and power.

And while Letts’ *August: Osage County* presents a powerful and compelling look at a family’s crimpling dysfunctions, his continually pushing the envelope, just when you think things have hit bottom, the bottom gives way once again, seems to be asking a bit too much from the audience. But, I recall a writing professor who once confided in me that he no longer felt comfortable determining whether or not his students’ writing was believable or plausible. After a brief pause, he concludes, “look at the world we live in.”

*August: Osage County*, 2nd Story Theatre, 28 Market St. Warren. Runs thru April 1.

[www.2ndstorytheatre.com](http://www.2ndstorytheatre.com)

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# Tartuffe

There are likely hundreds of colleges and universities with theater programs in the United States. One has to wonder if locally, University of Rhode Island is at a slight disadvantage. It's nestled in the woods of South County. It doesn't have the connection to a professional theater. It's a University better known for sciences, engineering and the like. Still, while all that may be true, the theater department at URI consistently puts together excellent productions of a very high quality.



Case in point is the current wonderful production of Moliere's play Tartuffe. Written in 1664, it revolves around the title character, an imposter and hypocrite who pretends to be a pious religious man so he can deceive a wealthy man, robbing him of his house and money. While the head of the household believes Tartuffe's lies, his family conspires to reveal the truth.

Like any good fast-paced, bawdy, slapstick comedy, it's all in the timing. Director Tom Gleadow has gotten the timing down right. The physical comedy really works well and as far as I could tell, no opportunity for a comic bit was left unfulfilled. He keeps things moving from beginning to end, the pace never lags and the time flies by.

Gleadow is assisted in this by an ensemble that was clicking on all cylinders at the performance I attended. Watching college actors is always a joy. They are young, enthusiastic and full of energy. They also know each other very well, spending so much time together in rehearsals, classes, other activities, in their dorms and around campus. One could argue that they know and trust each other better than other casts would.

Miles Boucher is among those who get the most stage time, as Orgon, the head of the household who is for a while duped by Tartuffe. He's a charismatic and impressive actor who can also handle physical comedy with skill. Elmire, his wife who is the object of Tartuffe's desire, is also excellent at the slapstick comedy while showcasing her acting talent. As the sleazy, smarmy Tartuffe himself, Birk Wozniak does a great job of being creepy and devious, and I mean that as a compliment.

Orgon's daughter, Mariane, is played by Emily Foster, an actress who sort of typifies the cast. In a word, she is game. Up for whatever the role calls for, and doing it with both energy and a sense of fun. As a whole, the entire group seems to be having a lot of fun, which makes it even more entertaining for the audience.

Technically speaking, the show is not as much fun and doesn't really live up to the show's other elements. Costume design is serviceable, save for a few unfortunate wigs and ugly pairs of shoes. Thankfully, the lighting design is unobtrusive, but does have a few neat tricks up its sleeve. As for the set design, the show's low point for me, it can only be described as lazy.

Still, these young performers bring Moliere's play, still relevant today in many ways, to exuberant life. One can only hope that they will maintain that exuberance, passion and enthusiasm throughout their future lives and careers, theatrical or otherwise. And that URI will continue to provide them with the opportunity to create great performances like this one.

Tartuffe runs through March 4 at University of Rhode Island.

Visit [www.uri.edu/theatre](http://www.uri.edu/theatre)

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## A Few Good Men

It is perhaps one of the most familiar movie catchphrases in recent history. Jack Nicholson, in full military regalia, sitting in a courtroom, shouting at Tom Cruise. "You can't handle the truth," he says. The truth is, the well-known movie A Few Good Men was a stage play first. And it's back on an area stage at Little Theater of Fall River.

Director Kathy Castro notes that she fell in love with the story when the movie came out. "I thought the story was sensational and so relevant; and the acting was great! It would be difficult to say how many times I've seen it since. Twenty-plus, easily, and each time, I learn something new. It is a masterful piece of writing, and Aaron Sorkin is a masterful storyteller."



A few years ago, Castro learned of the play version and right away wanted to direct it, putting it before the play selection committee in 2010. She notes that the play comes with great name-recognition, partly due to that already-mentioned catchphrase. The playwright also has something to do with it. Castro notes, "In these ensuing 20 years since the film, Aaron Sorkin has also become quite famous through his work on the TV series, The West Wing and his many Academy-Award nominations and wins for film screenplays. Last year he won for Social Network, and this year he was nominated again for Moneyball."

Having spent more than a year researching in preparation, Castro says she has read everything she could find on the original production of the play in 1988. She's also done a lot of research on military protocol. She says, "Sorkin started to write *A Few Good Men* on the back of cocktail napkins when he worked as a bartender in the Broadway district of NYC in the 1980's. His sister, who was a member of the Navy JAG Corps stationed at Guantanamo, told him a story about a hazing incident on the base, and that became the basis for the play."

"Be it the military or any other large organization, there is a need for constant vigilance about how "business" is done," Castro says. "It's very easy for situations to get out of hand because people get out of hand and lose sight of what they should be doing - and why...That's the real lesson of *A Few Good Men*: they challenged the wrong, against big obstacles, and they won!"

In terms of what is morally right and wrong, Castro says there should be no difference in or outside the military. "When people break the law, and justify that their actions are ok - that's wrong - military included."

Castro calls her cast and crew a "dream to work with," including the nineteen actors and one actress. "We've been rehearsing twice per week, often for three hours, and that has worked. We did a military Training Day in January to learn how to stand, salute, march, drill, etc. We have some members of the cast who have served in the Armed Services, and they were very helpful."

"The show is written like a movie, with very fast scene changes, so that has been a challenge," Castro says, "But everyone is helping, making suggestions, working as team. What director could ask for more?"

*A Few Good Men* runs March 8 through March 11

at Little Theatre of Fall River

Visit [www.littletheatre.net](http://www.littletheatre.net)

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## Sparrow Grass

Trinity Repertory Company has a penchant for thinking outside of the box, for trying things that are new or unexpected. The folks at Trinity seem to like to shake things up a bit, often with success and audience approval. This season, they are presenting a "theatrical event" called *Three by Three*, with three original plays performed in rotating repertory on the Dowling stage.





Sparrow Grass, which just opened, is the first of these world premieres. Sitting through it, though, you may feel that you are watching all three plays at once, crammed into one. In fact, there are about five or six different plays fighting for supremacy of this one script.

Simply put, it's the story of a family who, under a façade of civility and perfection, are really, really screwed up. At play's opening, Paula, her maid Isabelle and daughter Teddie are awaiting the arrival of the "Colonel," Paula's husband who has been serving in a war. At the same time, the prodigal son, Nate, unexpectedly reappears on the scene. The feeling that things are not going to go well is prophetic as the you-know-what slowly and spectacularly hits the fan.

Playwright Curt Columbus throws so much at the fan that it ends up a big mess. Is it a son-father revenge play? A family drama? An anti-war play? A steamy potboiler featuring lots of incest? Is it about the ravages of war? Loss of identity? The darkness underneath the "perfect" family? Likely, it's all of the above. According to the director notes, it's a modern retelling of the Phaedra myth, about a mother's forbidden passion for her stepson. With so much else going on, and so much that is more interesting, the mother-stepson romance just seems superfluous. There are more nuanced and effective ways than this to comment on the state of the family in our society.

Eventually, by the time things got loud and violent, I had stopped caring. And stopped wondering what would, in the end, happen to these people. It's hard to discern who to root for or to know whose story this really is we're watching. It's not helped by the fact that the play is schizophrenic, bouncing back and forth between stories and plotlines, leaving lots of dangling threads unexplained.

Truly, the stellar cast deserved better. Having never seen him in a lead role before, Richard Donnelly was impressive as Ralph, the "Colonel," who I kept wishing the play was really about. The story of a war veteran, coming home to face what he's done, dealing with the loss of identity and perhaps the loss of his own mind, would have been a far better play. Phyllis Kay, as Paula, was equally brilliant. Her scenes with Donnelly are great, they have wonderful chemistry together.

Unfortunately, the rest of the cast are mostly wasted. Barbara Meek and Jaime Rosenstein play the stereotypical sassy black maid and angst-ridden teenager, respectively. Tyler Lansing Weaks spends the bulk of the play with no shirt on, most of the time for no reason. His character, Nate, is either maniacal and devious, or he's completely insane. Like many aspects of these characters, we never get to really understand what's going on deep down inside, underneath the surface. That, like much of the play, is an unfortunate missed opportunity.

Sparrow Grass runs through May 13 at Trinity Repertory Company.

Visit [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com)

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## Avenue Q



To say that puppetry as a theatrical art has a long history would be an understatement. An ancient art form, it is believed to have its origins some 30,000 years ago in Egypt. Puppetry was utilized in many cultures and civilizations, including ancient China, as well as Greece and Rome. In our own country, puppets have been a hugely popular part of our culture, from Howdy Doody to Sesame Street and The Muppet Show. They have been used to entertain and educate, making audiences laugh, learn cheer for many years. Now, Courthouse Center for the Arts is bringing to its stage some puppets who bring a very modern take to the puppet genre.

In 2003, puppets took the New York City theater scene by storm when the smash hit Avenue Q opened off Broadway at the Vineyard Theatre. Well reviewed, it was extended multiple times, winning a Lucille Lortel Award for Best New Musical. Later that year, it opened on Broadway, where it ran until 2009, then moving back off-Broadway and spawning a number of national touring productions. During the show's Broadway tenure, it won the Tony Award for Best Musical, Best Score and Best Book, the Tony "triple crown."

Avenue Q at the Courthouse will be the show's first Rhode Island production. It's story centers on a recent college graduate named Princeton who moves to New York City, where he is only able to find an apartment on the street of the title. There, he meets a colorful assortment of characters, including Kate, the girl next door, Rod, the Republican, Trekkie, the internet addict, Nicky, the slacker roommate, Brian, the aspiring comedian, and others.

The characters, some of whom are human and some of whom are puppets, sing about many of the problems they face. They are songs about familiar problems, which every audience member has either experienced or knows somebody who has experienced it. Titles include "It Sucks to Be Me," "My Girlfriend, Who Lives in Canada," "The Internet is for Porn," "Everyone's A Little Bit Racist," and "For now."

Puppets and humans alike examine these issues and others with wit, sarcasm and more than a little snark. Not appropriate for young children, the show has been critically acclaimed and beloved by adult audiences everywhere. It's also been described as "an ingenious combination of The Real World and Sesame Street" and "...how Friends might be if it had Fozzie Bear and Miss Piggy arguing about their one-night stand, but with more angst, expletives and full-on puppet sex."

Courthouse's production is directed by Richard Ericson, Director of the Courthouse Center for the Arts. Puppets for the show will be designed and made by local puppet master Nora Eschenheimer, while Jon Paul Rainville will be the assistant director and choreographer and the musical director will be Lila Kane. In addition to the production of Avenue Q, there will be kid-friendly puppet programs during the run of this adult "puppet show". The downstairs galleries will display the marionette and puppet stage collection of Dan Butterworth throughout Avenue Q's run.

Avenue Q runs through March 11

at the Courthouse Center for the Arts

Visit [www.courthousearts.org](http://www.courthousearts.org)

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## **TRIST provides belly laughs with weekend performances of Twelfth Night**

If you're looking for a little comical pre-game in your weekend romp downtown, allow us to suggest Twelfth Night, produced by the The Rhode Island Shakespeare Theater (TRIST). Directed by Bob Colonna, the play runs at the Roots Cafe on Westminister Street and play features an excellent cast of capable actors. There's plenty of opportunity for knee slapping in this fast-paced telling of the classic tale of pursued love and gender-bending.

The play capitalizes the phenomenon of overlooked and unrequited love. The principal characters find themselves yearning for those who do not share their feelings. An intricate web of simmering affection is weaved amid a myriad of subplots which all provide audience members with rich and well-developed characters. In essence, from a plot standpoint, it's a classic Shakespeare comedy.

And yet there is much new that many will find appealing in this production. Light sabers have been traded for swords (vocal sound effects and all), backwards baseball caps, gold chains and sagging jeans revealing boxer shorts are adorned with modern cheekiness. (No pun intended.) Colonna has provided modern audiences with the rousing levels of accessibility. What's best, you won't feel pandered to. None of the slapstick routines or larger-than-life character portrayals feel like gimmicks. If anything, the quick pace of the show and the smart use of the space make them feel appreciated.

While most of the cast leans on the younger side of life, there is a comic maturity set forth which any audience member will appreciate. Patrick Keeffe can hardly be older than twenty-years-old, yet he displays firm command of the Olivia (Bonnie Griffin) obsessed Duke Orsino. Expect to see great things

out of Keeffe, should he continue to nurture his talent. The same is true for Bonnie Griffin. Displaying perfect control over her character, Griffin earns some of the biggest laughs of the evening. The intimacy of the venue also lends itself to a literal front row view of Griffin's expressions, as well. You'll be able to see up close, in ways not often afforded an audience member, the amount of mental work put in by Griffin.

Of course, what's a good piece of local theater without some good-natured humor regarding 'Lil Rhodey. Enter Mike Daniels as the supporting Antonio. Daniels nails down his character with an old school, Federal Hill Italian mobster accent. His performance is truly unbelievable, one on par with those featured on Saturday Night Live. It is only after the lights have come on and the actors leave through the same doors as patrons that you hear the speaking voice of Daniels- one that bears no resemblance to the quick-witted impersonation delivered moments prior.

Like any piece of community theater, audience members must wade through the obligatory robotic renditions of people like Kathleen Bebeau. Do not fret, potential theater goer, as there is a silver lining, and her name is Meryn. Playing Feste, Meryn Flynn is out-of-this world amazing. The set of pipes on this young lady are showstoppers, and Colonna lets her showcase them. After seeing this production of Twelfth Night, you will wonder who else could possibly play the role of fool with such authority and command of character. In a way, seeing Meryn shine in this role almost sets you up for disappointment for future productions. She truly comes across as that unbelievable.

All told, the benefits of spending your early evening soaking up a few good laughs before hitting the bars are countless. Be sure to pen this in on your weekend to-do list.

Twelfth Night runs through March 10

at the Roots Cafe.

Visit [www.rootscafeprovidence.com](http://www.rootscafeprovidence.com)

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## **New Works Debut at Up Close on Hope**



As Festival Ballet Providence continues to make unprecedented strides since its amazing season opening fundraising gala "Together We Dance," where dancers from some of the top ballet companies around the world donated their talents, Artistic Director Mihailo Djuric has planned a very busy second

act for their 2011-2012 Season.

During February, the dance troupe presents the second installment of the award winning Up Close On Hope, along with a world premiere of "Mother Goose Goes to Hollywood" for the popular chatterBOXtheatre, a dance series designed for children - young and old.

Billed as "dance so close you can touch it," Up Close features a collection of unrelated dance vignettes ranging from contemporary to modern to classical in style. Set in the company's intimate Black Box Theatre, audiences gush about these performances where "you can even hear the dancers breathing and see them sweat," proving that despite how effortless they make dance look, they are working pretty darn hard.

The centerpiece for this installment will be resident choreographer Viktor Plotnikov's "Short Stories for a Small Magazine." Plotnikov first premiered this piece in 2004 for Boston Ballet's highly regarded Raw Dance series. Since 2002, he has been staging world premiers for FBP often drawing international acclaim and awards for his efforts.

Inspired by the Jean Paul Belmondo film, *Le Magnifique*, "Short Stories" consists of six stories exploring family, hardship during war, addiction, labor strife, machines and childhood and love. With themes that are for more topical than some of Plotnikov's current offerings, which tend to be far more metaphysical in nature, the dancing too seems a departure. The movements are bigger, raw and edgy versus the compact, rigid and eclectic style that has become his trademark.

The program also includes yet another world premiere by company dancer and popular Up Close choreographer Mark Harootian. Set to the music of Lady Gaga, rearranged by the Vitamin String Quartet, this piece utilizes six company dancers. As with most Harootian works, what he does with the music generally proves to be just as intriguing as his choreography.

Another company dancer, Leticia Guerrero, presents her second work for Up Close on Hope also a world premiere. The program features a total of four world premieres. Using three couples, this piece looks at relationships, "how they connect us and set us apart."

Festival Ballet also proudly introduces George Birkadze, he will debut two world premieres: "RJ," "a duet about first steps, first experiences and something forbidden," and "My Sorrow" with five dancers depicting experiences with frustration.

Rounding out the program will be two classics: Petipa's exhilarating "Don Quixote" pas de deux and Vaganova's version of Petipa's "Diana and Acteon." Both pieces will give company dancers an opportunity to showcase their superior skills and athleticism.

And while Up Close will be occupying the spotlight on evenings in February, Boston Ballet's Boyko Dossev, a frequent Up Close contributor, will present his world premiere production of "Mother Goose Goes to Hollywood" for chatterBOXtheatre prior to the evening performances.

This charming and wholly original work promises to delight all - young and old. Watch as a father and his daughter create a series of heartfelt stories and then successfully sell them to Hollywood, culminating in a true Hollywood ending complete with a wedding.

Festival Ballet Providence, 825 Hope St, Providence presents Up Close on Hope Feb 17-18, 24-25; March 2-3 at

Visit [www.festivalballet.com](http://www.festivalballet.com)