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Fall Arts 2007: Theater

Directors set stage for searing drama season

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Directors of The Denver Post's "10 most intriguing plays to watch" list for fall 2007. At far left is the Buntport Theatre collective ("Vote for Uncle Marty"); from top down is Erik Edborg, Samantha Schmitz, Brian Colonna, Hannah Duggan, Evan Weissman and Erin Rollman. Then, clockwise from left: Brian Freeland (Countdown to Zero's "My Name is Rachel Corrie"), Terry Dodd (Modern Muse's "Thom Pain (based on nothing)"); Melissa McCarl (Aurora Fox's "Anna in the Tropics"); Wendy Franz (Paragon's "The Night Heron"); Chip Walton (Curious' "How I Learned to Drive"); Mark Hennessy (Colorado Springs TheatreWorks' "Doubt"); Geoff Kent (Listen Productions' "Macbeth"); Madge Montgomery (Theatre Company of Lafayette's "The Deep Beep-Beep: Eight Short Plays about Sputnik"); and Bev Newcomb Madden, Arvada Center's ("Moonlight and Magnolias"). (Brian Brainerd/The Denver Post)

Though audiences can't wait for the Denver Center to bring us the national touring production of Monty

Python's super-silly "Spamalot" (opening Sept. 18), fall looks to be a season not for big musicals but searing dramas all across Colorado stages.

Two recent Pulitzer winners will be staged for the first time ("Anna in the Tropics" and "Doubt"), while another ("How I Learned to Drive") returns to celebrate Curious Theatre's 10th anniversary. Among the many incendiary regional premieres will be "My Name is Rachel Corrie."

We again offer our list of 10 most intriguing titles to watch - only this time, we focus not on actors but directors. The quotes below are theirs.

As always, Denver Center Theatre Company and touring shows will be advanced separately as their openings approach.

We've also updated our master list of upcoming theater productions. To see the list by company, [click here](#) . To see the list by opening date, [click here](#) .

Shows below are listed by order of opening date:

1. "Vote for Uncle Marty"

Written and Directed by: Buntport Theater collective of Erik Edborg, Samantha Schmitz, Brian Colonna, Hannah Duggan, Evan Weissman and Erin Rollman, left

Most Recent: "Moby Dick Unread" at Buntport

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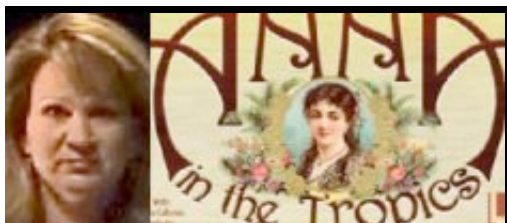
The Story: "This world-premiere comedy is an absurd, twisted social satire that follows five people living in an upside-down house."

The Intrigue: "'Marty' explores how different people cope with the current political and social climate. We've thrown real conversations and observations into a blender with all those places our imaginations take us ... and this is what came out."

Personally: "We're getting a jump on the coming campaign season."

Sept. 7-Oct 13, Buntport Theater, 721 Lipan St., 720-946-1388 or buntport.com

2. "Anna in the Tropics"



Written By: Nilo Cruz

Directed By: Melissa Lucero McCarl, left

Most Recent: Directed "Pure Piaf" for New Denver Civic

The Story: When a lector reads to cigar-rollers in a Cuban factory, a 1929 family discovers parallels

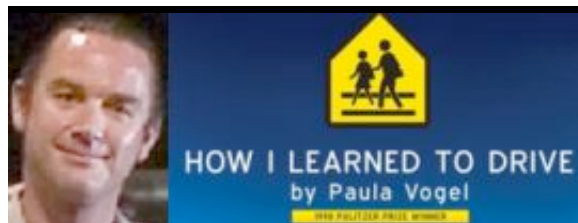
between their existence and the characters in Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina."

The Intrigue: "The characters are all intrinsically lovable and full of pathos. They mull every detail of Anna's story in hope of finding answers to larger questions in their own lives."

Personally: "I heard other theater companies rejected 'Anna' because of the daunting task of finding an entirely ethnic cast locally. It's important we not shy away from works that give us such an enlightened window into another culture."

Sept. 7-Oct. 7, Aurora Fox, 9900 E. Colfax Ave., 303-739-1970 or auroragov.org

3. "How I Learned to Drive"



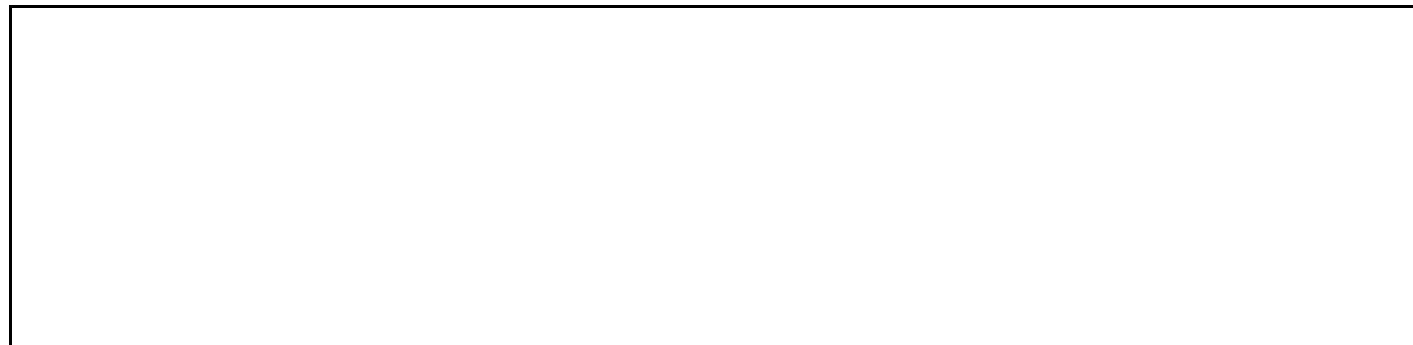
Written By: Paula Vogel

Directed By: Chip Walton, left

Most Recent: Directed "Mall-Mart" for Curious

The Story: "A hilarious, haunting and surprising tale of survival as seen through the troubling relationship between a young girl and an older man."

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The Intrigue: "This Pulitzer winner, written by one of our biggest supporters, was our first production 10 years ago. Most of the original actors and designers (including stars C. Kelly Leo and Paul Borrillo) are returning."

Personally: "It's a wonderful gift to have the opportunity to return to a play 10 years later, with such an incredible group of artists."

Sept. 8- Oct. 20, Curious Theatre, 1080 Acoma St., 303-623-0524 or curioustheatre.org

4. "Moonlight and Magnolias"



Written By: Ron Hutchinson

Directed By: Bev Newcomb-Madden, left

Most Recent: "Almost Maine" for the Aurora Fox

The Story: "It's 1939. David O. Selznick locks author Ben Hecht and director Victor Fleming in his office for five days to rewrite the story of 'Gone With the Wind.' Mayhem ensues."

The Intrigue: "We all know the outcome of the

film, yet it's delightful to see them act out characters as they envision them from the book. And two of them think it's possibly the worst story ever written and will ruin their careers."

Personally: "I am grateful to Rod Lansberry for giving me the opportunity to work with this remarkable cast (led by Jordan Leigh, Leslie O'Carroll and Erik Sandvold), and for having continued faith in my abilities."

Sept. 11-Oct. 7, Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd., 720-898-7200 or arvadacenter.org

5. "My Name is Rachel Corrie"



Edited By: Katharine Viner

Directed By: Brian Freeland, left

Most Recent: Directed "The Anonymous Mr. W" for LIDA Project

The Story: "Activist Rachel Corrie was killed at age 23 while trying to stop an Israeli bulldozer in a Palestinian residential area in 2003. This one-woman play, culled from her journal and e-mails, reveals an idealistic, curious, and passionate young woman exploring her life, and the complexities of Mideast politics."

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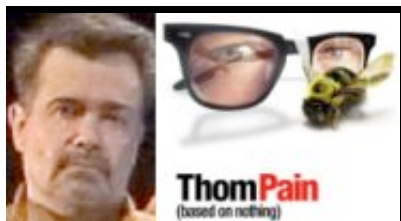
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The Intrigue: "Last year, the acclaimed Royal Court Theatre's New York production was canceled in an act of pure censorship."

Personally: "My reasons for staging this piece are best articulated by Rachel herself: 'I look forward to seeing people willing to resist the direction the world is moving in, a direction where our personal experiences are irrelevant, that we are defective, that our communities are not important, that we are powerless, that our future is determined, and that the highest level of humanity is expressed through what we choose to buy at the mall.'"

Sept. 28-Nov. 17, *Countdown to Zero*, 770 22nd St., 720-221-3821 or countdowntozero.org

6. "Thom Pain (based on nothing)"



Written By: Will Eno

Directed By: Terry Dodd, left

Most Recent: Directed "Three Viewings" for Crossroads at Five Points

The Story: "This one-man play is a surreal meditation on the empty promises life makes, the way experience never lives up to the weird and

awesome fact of being."

The Intrigue: "Erik Tieze is the man. Modern Muse is the company. Will Eno is the writer. The New York Times called the play 'a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation.' I agree. And did I fail to mention, Erik Tieze is the man?"

Personally: "It's a scary world I'm going into. But every now and then, you have to put your hand into the fire."

Sept. 29-Oct. 28, *Modern Muse Theatre*, at the Bug Theatre, 3654 Navajo St., 303-780-7836 or modernmusetheatre.com

7. "The Deep Beep-Beep: Eight Short Plays about Sputnik"



Written By: Eight commissioned playwrights including David McClinton, David Golden and Edith Weiss

Directed By: Collective including Madge Montgomery, left

Most Recent: Directed "Tales from the Great American Roadway" for Theatre Company of Lafayette

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The Story: "These eight short plays mark the 50th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik, the famous Soviet satellite that ushered in the Space Age and shook America to its core."

The Intrigue: "We used to have communists and duck- and-cover. Now we have terrorists and lockdown drills. This production explores how the launch of this basketball-sized orb changed the direction of the 20th century."

Personally: "I love big, messy projects that make the role of theater in our communities more immediate and relevant."

Oct. 12-27, Theatre Company of Lafayette, 300 E. Simpson, 720-209-2154 or tclstage.org

8. "Macbeth"



Written By: William Shakespeare

Directed By: Geoffrey Kent, left

Most Recent: Directed "The Hobbit" for Backstage Theatre in Breckenridge

The Story: "When three mysterious witches tell Macbeth he's destined for his heart's bloodiest

desire, he takes fate into his own hands, leaving a trail of bodies in his wake."

The Intrigue: "This new collective of top Colorado actors, led by Bill Hahn and Karen Slack, set Shakespeare's tale in a Colorado territory mining town in the 1870s. It was a challenging time for women, when power could be grabbed by anyone smart enough (or unscrupulous enough) to act on their basest desires."

Personally: "After acting in dozens of Shakespearean productions, this is my first chance to sit on this side of the table, and I am champing at the bit."

Oct. 20-Nov. 17, Listen Productions, at Buntport Theater, 717 Lipan St., 720-290-1104 or myspace.com/cowboymacbeth

9. "Doubt"

Written By: John Patrick Shanley

Directed By: Mark Hennessy, left

Most Recent: Directed "Night and Her Stars" for Star Bar Players

The Story: "A nun, also the principal of a Catholic school, confronts a priest she believes is molesting a young boy. From that seemingly simple framework, a powerful and moving story emerges that makes clear that nothing is clear."

The Intrigue: "'Doubt' is a marvelously complex and compassionate story about people we think we know,

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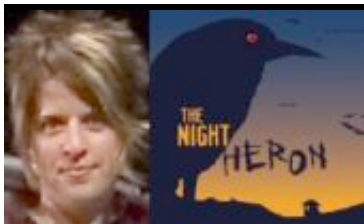
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simply because of what we've seen on the news about this issue."

Personally: "I have had my share of first-hand knowledge of good and bad teachers, good and bad parents, and far too many abused children. What makes this most personal to me, however, is how Shanley creates a world in gray when so much of our culture is geared toward simple black and white."

Nov. 1-18, TheatreWorks, 3955 Cragwood Drive, Colorado Springs, 719-262-3232 or theatreworkscs.org

10. "The Night Heron"



Written By: Jez Butterworth

Directed By: Wendy Franz, left

Most Recent: Directed "How We May Know Him" for Paragon

The Story: "Two fiercely loyal friends, both gardeners recently fired from Cambridge, fight to save one other from starvation and persecution amid allegations of thievery and sexual abuse."

The Intrigue: "This is Jez Butterworth's first play since his brilliant 1995 play, 'Mojo,' and it was worth the wait."

Personally: The first thing that struck me about the main characters was their fierce loyalty. The strength of a friendship to inspire action really resonated with me."

Oct. 13-Nov. 10, Paragon Theatre, at the Phoenix Theatre, 1124 Santa Fe Drive, 303-300-2210 or paragontheatre.com

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