

Joe Watts

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email: joeleewatts@att.net, height: 5'11", weight: 175. hair: dark brown/salt & pepper, eyes: brown/green

Acting roles (partial listing)

"The Eight: Reindeer Monologues"	Theatre New West	Danner
"A Midsummer Night's Dream" (all male)	Diversity Theatre	Bottom
"The Boys in the Band"	Diversity Theatre	Michael
"Private Lives" (all male cast)	Diversity Theatre	Victor
"The Runner Stumbles"	Baytown Little Theatre	Father Rivard
"The "Fantastiks"	Stages Repertory Theatre	Bellamy
"Red Rover, Red Rover"	Stages Repertory Theatre	Joe (lead)
"Fortune and Men's Eyes"	Equinox Theatre	Queenie
"Promenade"	Main Street Theater	Dishwasher
"Steambath"	Reunion Theater	Bieberman
"The Boy Friend"	Theatre Under the Stars	Chorus
"The Lion in Winter"	Theatre Suburbia	Geoffrey
"Under Milkwood"	Channing Players	Six roles

Directing assignments (partial listing)

"Love Letters"	Ozark Drama Club
"Men on the Verge of a Hispanic Breakdown" -	
"Standing on Ceremony: the Gay Marriage Plays" - Cathedral of Hope	
"The Laramie Project"	Theatre New West
"The Timekeepers"	Theatre New West
"Vagina Monologues"	Theatre New West
"The Normal Heart"	Theatre New West
"Bent"	Theatre New West
"The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told"	Theatre New West
"Dirty Little Showtunes"-musical	Theatre New West
"Fairy Tales"- musical	Theatre New West
"End of the World Party"	The Group- Main Street Theater
"Ten Percent Revue"- musical	The Group (Theatre Workshop) Ovation
"Fay and Ray"	The Group- Kuumba House Theatre
"Boesman & Lena"	Kuumba House Repertory Theater
"Billie Holiday: Color of My Soul"	Rockefellers and Theatre New West
(conceived, directed and wrote original dialogue for production)	
"A Dance Against Darkness"-musical	The Group- Main Street Theater
"Dutchman"	Kuumba House
"The Killing of Sister George"	Diversity Theatre
"The Boys in the Band"	Diversity Theatre

Miscellaneous

Producer/director/writer/actor/critic/teacher

Artistic Director-Theatre New West/Ozarks Drama Club

Playwriting -Edward Albee Workshop-University of Houston

Advanced Acting/Directing workshops-Stages Repertory Theatre

Acting class-Shirley Knight, Acting workshop with Eric Morris

Television: actor, writer, associate producer for pilot "The Helping Hand" -I wrote the "back stories" for the three contestants, took photos used in telling the stories, and played one of the three contestants. I have a VHF copy of the pilot.

Radio personality: Joe Watts, Entertainment Editor-KRBE-FM

I reviewed theater, film, some dance, and restaurants. My spots ran 90 seconds and aired about 9 times a day for a week. One of the DJs or production employees helped record the spots. I also did some interviews with people in the theater community. I have a number of cassettes of some of the spots. I have also written a number of short plays that have been produced.

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JANUARY 20, 2017

BILLIE HOLIDAY: Colors of My Soul

(copyright-Joe Watts)

Conceived, Directed and Original Dialogue by Joe Watts

Set: Musicians (piano, bass, drums) USL corner, mic stand off center, small writing table and chair DSR. Open: Pin spot comes up slowly CS on small child's rocking chair, slowly rocking, while bass only, plays about 30 seconds of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child", at the same time we hear a black female voice saying: "Elanora! Elanora! Girl you come down from up there". (Possibly Billie singing just the title phrase "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" with the bass before or after "Elanora" lines), spot comes out, chair is removed and mic stand placed CS, with a recorded voice or one of the band members saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome to the stage Miss Billie Holiday".

Act I

"Them There Eyes"

"Blue Moon/What a Little Moonlight Can Do"

"All of Me"

"I Cried for You"

#1 Shade Mono: (After I Cried for You)

"You know shade ain't just something that you look for when it's hot. It's also a thing that separates people. It don't matter if the color of my skin is two shades darker than a paper bag or a talcum powder with a little dust. That ain't what matters baby. It's the color of my soul that really matters. Now even though my shade can't buy me a ticket where you're sitting, it got me a ticket on this stage. Now ain't that one of life's little mysteries. My life is my music, it's my passion; my lover. I take my music to bed with me at night. It sleeps with me and wakes up in my arms in the morning. So we're both here tonight to share our love affair with you."

"I Got My Love to Keep Me Warm"

"Love for Sale/I Can't Give You Anything But Love"

"Our Love Is Here to Stay"

Mono #2 Next Song/God Damn Business

"The next song I'm gonna do for you takes me back to when I was a little girl. I remember my Momma sending me to work for Miss Florence. Talking about Miss Florence wanting

me to be her maid. Well...honey that ain't what Miss Florence had in mind. Oh I made some beds alright. In fact if you look at some of them headboards, you'll see my foot prints there. Anyway, I remember listening to this old victrola, listing to Bessie and Louie Armstrong, you know you like them don't you? I played this song over and over. And it just reminded me, you know folks is always trying to get in my business, especially those nosy old reports. One came up to me the other day and said, "Miss Holiday the press would like to know is there a man in your life?" I just said "ahuh". "Well...the press would like to know his name." Again I said "ahuh". He said "well what is it Miss Holiday?" I said "Angel". He said "Miss Holiday that is a very strange name for a man. Angel what?" I looked him straight in the eye and said "Angelcha God Damn business! Hit it band."

"Ain't Nobody's Business"

"Crazy He Calls Me"

"Strange Fruit" (acapella)

Mono #3 No Man/Pigs Feet

"You know I don't know no man that don't think that the main reason he was put on this earth was to satisfy women. Hell honey, I've had some sweet and fine satisfying...some L-O-V-E baby. But then I've also had plenty of P-A-I-N! But I suppose they just go together, you know like salt and pepper or a Pigs Foot and a Bottle of Beer. Thing is, those sons of bitches got it all lopsided, yeah, you see they got this notion with motion that most of the real satisfying is just for their groan. Like little boys still playing with toys, struggling to grow up. But you ladies out there know there's a whole lot more to making us happy than that. After their Mommas do all that they can, the chores are turned over to us to wipe their noses."

"I guess I'll spend my whole life trying to figure out if all those short time happies is worth all those long time pains. But then...I know that without some of that pain, my music wouldn't be the blues. Now don't get me wrong now, don't get me wrong. I loves a good man, sometimes I think I gotta have a good man or die. And sometimes when men don't satisfy me you might find me in the arms of another ...ah hell, that's a whole nuther story. But times I think I'd do better sticking just to my music and those Pigs Feet I was talking about."

Gimme Me a Pigs Foot and a Bottle of Beer

Comes Love Nothing Can Be Done

My Man

Mono #4 Billie I'm Sorry

Recorded male voice before "Lover Man".

"Billie you know I...God Dammit Billie you know I love you, but I can't handle all this shit you're into lately. I'm sorry Billie...I'm real sorry."

"Lover Man (Where Can You Be)"

"Don't Explain"

Mono # 5 Nosy Reporter/Had Her!

"Thank you. Thank you. Now you remember that slime bag reporter I told you about

awhile back? Well...that bloodsucker came at me again last week, like a dog chewing on a fresh bone. He said, "Miss Holiday there's a rumor that you have been involved with Tallulah Bankhead, do you know her?" I pushed him aside and walked past, but he kept on trying to corner me like you would a rat. "Do you know her? Do you know her?" Finally I turned on him, looked him straight in the eye and said, "Know her? Had her!"

Black Out

Billie sits at table writing, as she writes a recording in her voice speaks what she is writing.

Letter to Tallulah

Dear Miss Bankhead:

"I thought I was a friend of yours. That's why there was nothing in my book that was unfriendly to you, unkind or libelous. Because I didn't want to drag you. I tried six times last month to talk to you on the damn phone, and tell you about the book just as a matter of courtesy. That bitch you have who impersonates you kept telling me to call back and when I did it was the same deal until I gave up.

But while I was working out of town, you didn't mind talking to Doubleday and suggesting behind my damn back that I had flipped and/or made up those little mentions of you in my book.

Baby, Cliff Allan and Billy Heywood are still around. My maid who was with me at the Strand isn't dead either. There are plenty of others around who remember how you carried on so almost got me fired out of the place. And if you want to get shitty, we can make it a big shitty party. We can all get funky together.

I don't know whether you've got one of those damn lawyers telling you what to do or not. But I'm writing this to give you a chance to answer back quick and apologize to me and to Doubleday. Read my book over again. I understand they sent you a duplicate manuscript. There's nothing in it to hurt you. If you think so, let's talk about it like I wanted to last month. It's going to press right now so there is no time for monkeying around."

"Straighten up and fly right, Banky! Nobody's trying to drag you."

Miss Tallulah Bankhead
Hotel Elysee
60 E. 54th St
New York, NY

Billie Holiday
%Dufty
43 West 93rd St.
Apt. 17

Black out after last line of letter "...drag you". Lites back up for last two songs of Act I

"End of Love Affair" (slow vocal breakdown-a little trouble with lyrics, but does finish song)

"Stormy Weather" (doesn't finish complete song, after "can't go on, ev'ry thing I had is gone...she leaves stage). Band member: "Ladies and Gentlemen Miss Holiday needs a short break, so we'll take an intermission now".

Act II

Open: Pin spot on bar stool CS, with hand cuffs and a needle on stool, spot out with band member, "Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome back to the stage Miss Billie Holiday, and

she's feeling fine and mellow.

"Fine and Mellow"

Mono #6 Granny/God Bless the Child

"You know my sweet Granny always used to say, Billie chile, when you sing the blues it sounds like your singing about your life". I told her that's all I can sing about, I can only sing the truth". She was always pray'in for me, knowing I was shooting dice with the boys and such. All that praying made me think about lil bow legged Evelyn, the preacher's daughter, who had all these high hopes of becoming a ballerina, and she was always praying for me too. I told her not to worry about me. After my albums came out I remember driving up in my white cadl'lak, look'in like a chariot comin for ta carry me home. And there she was, still at home, a Momma, not a ballerina, with six kids, from six daddy's. I bought each of them an ice cream and gave em 50 cents, wanting to spoil them as if they were my own. You know there ain't nuthin as sweet, fragile, or innocent as a child. God didn't bless me with my own. My Mom's high hopes had always been to have her own restaurant, so when I was on top, I gave her money too, to help her open one. But later on when I was low, I went to her needin' money and she wouldn't give me a dime. Before I left, I told her, "God Bless the Child that's got his own."

"God Bless the Child"

"Summertime"

"Traveling Light"

Black Out

Billie sits at table holding a letter, recorded male voice is heard reciting the letter

Walter Winchell Letter

Release from

Capp-Johnson Publicity

545 Fifth Avenue, New York City

From Greer Johnson

Exclusive to Walter Winchell

"For the second time in a month, St. Louis' popular Plantation Club has dealt tolerance and democracy a blow below the belt. This time it involves the great blues singer, Billie Holiday, whom Esquire magazine singled out this very month with a full-page color photograph and a caption lauding her as the outstanding singer of her field. Miss Holiday was scheduled to open at the Plantation last week, following a recent altercation over color in which a member of Benny Carter's band was severely injured by the blow of a pistol butt on the head. When the singer had finished the first show of her opening night, she prepared to leave the club with a white friend. This man had befriended her several years ago when she in the city with Artie Shaw's band. The manager stopped them at the door, delivered several unpleasant remarks, and forcibly threw the white man out. When Miss Holiday returned for her second show, she was told to read the signs which forbid any "mixing". She was then told she needn't go on for the second show. At this writing, she is sitting in a St. Louis hotel, waiting for her manager (Joe Glaser) to arrive and straighten things out. The club has called her to return—but on the old terms of humiliation, scorn, and prejudice. A fine thing, that in the mother city of the river which gave jazz to the world, an outstanding figure of the jazz world should be ridiculed for the

color of her skin!"

Black out after letter, Billie back to CS

"Lady Sings the Blues"

"Billie Blues (Thrill is Gone/Stormy Monday)"

"Good Morning Heartache"

#7 Change Medicine Mono:

You know when you're walking around with a bad hurt ...a man hurt, a hurt from when you were a child, or whatever kinda hurt you're carrying around, and some people want to give you something to make that hurt go away, and sometimes what they gives you ain't exactly the best medicine. Not like the apple that Eve gave Adam, and that medicine can mess you up real bad. But it can make the hurt go way for a time, turn black and white into a rainbow. And it can make you happy for a time, turn a cotton field into a poppy field. But it can mess you up real, real bad. Funny too how a medicine that you take tend to change the people around you as much as it changes you. Your whole world changes, who your friends are changes, how you feel about yourself changes. It's the change medicine.

"Willow Weep for Me"

"Only Have Eyes for You"

Black Out...lites up as she takes bows

Encore: "Don't Worry About Me"

Quick final bow and Billie leaves the stage for the last time, as that happens there is a quick black out and a gardenia is placed on the bar stool with pin spot on gardenia, spot stays on till audience stops applauding, and then at least a 3 count before house lites come up.

The End.

BILLIE HOLIDAY: COLOR OF MY SOUL.

Note: I wrote a bit to possibly use for midway through Act II, when Billie, as an excuse to go back stage to "shoot up", talks about her love for soul food and that it's almost as good as sex. She says she just happens to have some of her red beans and rice backstage. She says to the band something like, "what do you think band should I go get a few small bowls for a few people in the audience"? The band roll their eyes at each other because they know the real reason she wants to go backstage. So she leaves the stage and comes back with a few small bowls for few audience members. If this bit is included a few songs might be cut so that each act only runs about an hour.

Producer/Theaters:

Staging would of course be different depending on the venue, cabaret with table and chairs, intimate stage with just a few tables and chairs, or larger stage. Blocking would be as various as possible with Billie never just standing center. She could stand near and/or lean on the piano. She might deliver a song seated at the small table before or after the Tallulah and Winchell letters, etc. etc. Joe Watts

THEATRE NEW WEST

436 Hawthorne #2
Houston, TX 77006
713-522-2204

HOUSTON PRESS

September 22, 2005

STAGE

HIGHWAY TO HELL

BENT is unblinkingly harsh, immensely moving and ultimately cathartic

by D. L. Groover

"We're in Berlin. It's the end of June 1934. Hung over Max (Steve Bullitt) can't remember the trick he's brought back to the apartment he shares with his lover, Rudy (Brady Alland), a dancer at the drag cabaret. He was coked up and drunk when he propositioned his latest anonymous conquest, Wolf (Christopher Clark), one of the Nazi Brown Shirt thugs in the notorious SA. "Your own little storm trooper," Rudy calls the strapping Wolf. Rudy isn't happy with threesomes or Max's growing enjoyment of sadomasochism, but he'd rather have Max around than not. Opportunistic, selfish and blissfully unaware of the social upheavals occurring in Germany, Max is about to descend into hell. This morning-after will become known as the Night of the Long Knives, when a paranoid Hitler methodically and brutally eliminated the high command of Ernst Roehm's SA. The man knocking on the apartment door isn't the landlord demanding back rent, but the SS looking for Wolf. Wolf is slaughtered, and Max and Rudy flee for their lives.

This shattering beginning to Martin Sherman's BENT is Max's first circle of hell. He and Rudy run to the only shelter they know, Greta's drag club. In silk top hat, platinum bob, fishnet stockings, and man's tux coat, Greta (Chris Pool) is a butch, low-rent version of Marlene Dietrich; as it turns out, he sold out Wolf for a few Reichsmarks. Now the SS wants Max and Rudy for questioning. Near hysterics, Rudy can't comprehend the evils enveloping them. He just wants to go home and water his plants. "But I live here, this is my home," he cries. Greta's club is under suspicion, and he doesn't want any trouble with the Nazis. "You're like Jews - unloved." Greta orders them out. In blinding self-denial, he assumes he'll be safe: He's married with children.

For two years, Max and Rudy live as outcasts in the woods near Cologne, "suffocating in the open air" with others like them. Max has a plan - he always has a plan. Estranged from his immediate family, he contacts his gay uncle Freddie (Taava Mark) for forged passports and documents. Freddie offers Max one ticket to Amsterdam. Max refuses. It's not for love of Rudy, he protests - it's that he feels "responsible" for him. Naive and sweet, Rudy can't handle it alone.

Rudy needs Max. Self-assured to a fault, Max doesn't need anyone. "Love is bullshit," he proclaims proudly. He will soon realize, to his horror, how wrong he is.

Max and Rudy are arrested in the woods. On the train to the concentration camp at Dachau, Rudy is savagely beaten by the sadistic guards. Alland's offstage screams are hideously chilling. In an act of utmost cowardice yet heartless survival, Max denies Rudy's friendship, denies his own gayness and is forced to beat him, also. The blows kill Rudy. At the camp, more horrors await.

It will be Horst (Sean Greene), a fellow prisoner and former nurse, who leads Max away from his self-absorbed abyss. Act II is Max's re-education into humanity. And in the play's most famous scene, the no-sex sex scene, Max and Horst make love standing ten feet away from each other, using the power of words, and their imagination to connect and feel each other.

Uncompromising, highly theatrical and at times fiercely melodramatic, Sherman's 1979 Tony-nominated play is a compendium of the horrors inflicted on gay people by the Nazi regime. History's headlong spiral into degradation and the absolute incomprehension of man's inhumanity to man is not the special province of any one group affected by the Third Reich, but by focusing on the forgotten history of the GLBT community and its abysmal treatment under the Nazis, Sherman clears our gaze and shows us in frightening relief how Max, Rudy, Greta, Horst and Freddie could have been us. **Presented in the quasi-sacred space of Houston's Holocaust Museum, Sherman's emotionally draining drama reverberates with seriousness and power. In the intimate stage space, the wire-tight tension feels physically present.**

Played against expressionistic glimpses of Saul Balagura's painting "Plowing Stones" (seen in its entirety at the harrowing, liberating conclusion), abetted by Pat Padilla's evocative costumes and Jim Wunrow's less-is-more lighting design, each scene inexorably tightens the work's grip around our hearts. Under Joe Watts's forceful and intelligent direction, Bullitt, Greene, Alland, Pool and Mark deliver beautifully shaded performances that bring Sherman's play to life in a way that is unblinkingly harsh, immensely moving and ultimately cathartic. However painful, Theatre New West's production of BENT is a stunning tribute to remembrance and a stirring call to arms."

THEATRE NEW WEST

HOUSTON PRESS

Review: June, 2000

STAGE

"Show (and) Tell) Tunes"

"Theatre New West's riveting Fairy Tales depicts the gay life through song"

FAIRY TALES, music & lyrics by Eric Lane Barnes

reviewed by: Lee Williams

Picture this: Four plastic hand puppets from a kid's meal provide backing vocals to an evangelistic Bible-thumper who whines at the top of her annoyingly squeaky voice that "God hates queers. They stick their willies up each other's rears." If you can't wrap your brain around such an absurdity, then perhaps you need a trip to Artistic Director Joe Watts's Theatre New West, the latest playhouse in Houston's burgeoning gay theater scene. There's just something so right about the idea of tiny toy T-Rex homophobes supporting the real dinosaurs of reactionary right-wind thought, who live to tell the world what God thinks.

Watts's staging-he does double duty as producer and director-of "God Hates Fags" is just one of many perfectly silly moments in Eric Lane Barnes's FIARY TALES, a 90 minute musical revue about gay life, mean-spirited Christians and the sorrows of AIDS.

Take, for instance, "Illinois Fred", **sung by the hugely talented Keith Caldwell**. Clad in black from his swanky shirt to his shit-kicking boots, the mysterious Cowboy Fred saunters in through the swinging doors of a Western-style tavern and proceeds to befuddle a Stetson-wearing local boy who sings that Fred "was the cleanest damned cowboy I'd seen in a week---I never knew cowboys were into antiques."

Even more outrageous, "You're the Bottom," sung by J. Leigh Lucas and Stephen Humble, is nothing more than **a hilarious litany of spit-nasty put-downs**. The withering list includes such slams as "You're a Wal-Mart negligee," "Tom Snyder in a dress," "You're the ears of Ross Perot" and "a song by Megadeth." **But the funniest tune has to be "The Letter Song," sung by Humble, Caldwell and Alex Stutler**. Humble walks onto the stage and stands in a single spotlight. Twinkly, sappy-sounding notes make the moment terribly melodramatic. He reads a few lines of a Dear John letter, something like, "I'm going to find me a new man, honey." Outraged, Humble declares that he's glad the old lover has left because "you use a lot of bad grammar, baby." The humor is all in the timing-and in the sweet-sounding backup Humble receives from Caldwell and Stutler. Goofy and full of sly puns, these songs are charming in spite of some stiff staging that includes Lawrence Welk-like strolls around the boards. **What's truly surprising here, however, is the power these actors find in the more serious tunes**. "The Ballad of Tammy Brown," about a high school lesbian who's shunned by everyone including her best friend, is a seemingly simple song. Its prosaic lyrics tell about a banal moment of school-yard nastiness. **But the lovely Melanie Donihoo finds an urgent depth in the tale, and she fills up the music with the sort of soulful regret that lingers well after the final curtain falls.**

Strong too is Stutler's rendition of "Dear Dad," which depicts one man's decision to come out to his father. Amazingly, Barnes get away with the letter-as-song device twice in the same show. In fact, the repetition underscores, with bitter irony, the seriousness of the second missive/tune. No heterosexual man in love would have to pen this sort of confession.

But the real highlight of the show is Caldwell's performance of "Hummingbird." Lyrical, even majestic in its homely simplicity, the tune captures a quiet moment between two lovers. One is a desperately sick, and the other is desperately avoiding grief. The comforter offers his dying lover a cup of water, a glance out the window, anything at all that maintains the intimacy between them. Such a song tiptoes along the precipice of melodrama; any false move on the singer's part can send it headlong into the black hole of Hallmark ickiness. But Caldwell handles the material with a lush and muscular delicacy. His face and his voice, at once clear and hushed, shine with the sort of heartbreaking hopefulness that can be found only in those lost last moments before the crush of grief bends life and changes its course forever. Such moments on stage are rare and wonderful.

THEATRE NEW WEST

HOUSTON PRESS (Dallas equivalent of Dallas Observer)

Review: December, 2001

"Absolutely Fabulous"

Paul Rudnick turns the Old Testament into a gay old time

by Lee Williams

The houselights go down, and with a cue from the stage manager/God-figure, we're off and romping through the wild gay garden of Paul Rudnick's THE MOST FABULOUS SOTRY EVER TOLD. This is an Eden where Adam falls for Steve, Jane adores Mabel, and straight people (who don't appear for centuries) are kind of well, icky.

Famous for this lacerating wit and dead-on comic timing, Rudnick (whose work includes JEFFREY and I HATE HAMLET) retells the Old Testament through gay eyes before leaping to modern-day New York, where his characters are still arguing over the likelihood of God, the meaning of paradise and, most important, our capacity for tolerating differences.

Joe Watts of Theatre New West brings this charming script to Houston with timing that couldn't be better. **His production is the best dramatic bonbon of the holiday season-thanks in no small part to his pretty and enthusiastic young cast, whose collective chemistry bubbles over with the indulgent joy that can make live theater so much fun.**

Adam Clarke's tall dark and hunky Adam is a politically incorrect stereotype, just the way Rudnick planned it. Dressed in nothing but a teeny white jockstrap, the just-made man stretches himself awake, stands up, innocently glances about, then finally coos, "This garden is fabulous". When macho Steve (Steve Bullitt) struts into Eden, Adam falls into lust. The men grope and suck face until the stage manager/God (Mary Hooper), who's still calling the cues, announces, "Boners Go". The stage lights go black, but not for modesty sake. In fact, at one point Adam and Steve go at it center stage in ablaze of white light. The simulated sex is feverishly funny, with saucer-eyed Adam as surprised by the act as anyone in the audience.

Adam and Steve are amusing, but it's Jane (Natalie Maisel) and Mabel (Jennny Yau) who steal the garden. "Who are these poor ugly women?" murmurs the incredulous Mabel when she first discovers the men. Yau is perfectly lovely as the airy earth-child who explains her female anatomy to the confused men this way, "We have vaginas. They are our friends."

She's the kind of touchy-feely girl who keeps a journal and makes "tea from bark". Maisel's butch Jane, on the other hand, never thinks about such froufrou. She wouldn't even wear clothes if she didn't "need pockets."

The men and women come to accept each other's oddities and all is paradise in Paradise, until Adam (it was a man, after all!) decides he wants to know what it's like outside the garden. Though he's warned of the sorrow and pain to come, he can't resist. So into the worldly maelstrom the four must go. Along the way, they tour Sodom, invent the wheel, hang out with an ark full of randy animals (where they learn about infidelity), meet a queeny pharaoh who calls himself God and encounter a tour group of heterosexuals who inspire Mabel to want a baby. Rudnick balances his whimsical take on ancient history

with questions about God and morality; and **Watts's cast delivers the questions with a truthful sweetness that gives surprising depth to these funny scenes.**

The second act opens on Adam and Steve's present-day New York City apartment, all done up in tinsel and colored lights for the holidays. Adam, who's Jewish, scoots about putting the final decorations on the tree before guests arrive for a "transholiday" bash. Steve, the apostate, broods as he watches his partner; he doesn't approve of Adam's need to find God.

Their eclectic guests are played by Watts's powerhouse of a supporting cast. Tanya Bryan plays Adam's Mormon coworker Peggy, who believes in the power of angels. When curmudgeonly Trey (Taavi Mark) walks in, wearing full Santa regalia from his job at the mall, he curtly informs Peggy that "angels are just Prozac for poor people." A feather-brained go-go dancer named Kevin (Mick Petersen) shows up wearing nothing but his red velvet G-string and an elf hat. And a wheelchair-bound rabbi (Belinda Babinec) tells the hysterical story of her paralysis involving a delivery truck, an air-conditioning unit and a scone. But the biggest surprise comes from Mabel and Jane: It's Jane, the "bull dyke", who's pregnant. The only bright side she can see is that now she'll have someone "to send out for cigarettes."

Underpinning all the jokes are the questions Adam continues to posit about the existence of God and the meaning of life. Steve, who is HIV-positive, won't even discuss it. There is an Oprah-like let's-love-one-another vibe to the party, but Rudnick has the good sense to undermine his own feel-good moment when he puts Jane on stage in a spot of yellow light to curse her way through the birth of her child.

There is something undeniably traditional in this story: Family, rebirth, tolerance, all the conventional morals are here. But the strong characters, sexy bodies and terrific one-liners add enough spice to make the **MOST FABULOUS STORY** much more than just another theatrical greeting card.

THEATRE NEW WEST

"THE NEW CENTURY"

GREAT REVIEWS

DON'T MISS this wildly funny and entertaining production!

FINAL TWO PERFORMANCES

April 2 & 3

CALL NOW FOR RESERVATIONS

713-522-2204

March 30, 2010

STORY LINE:

THE NEW CENTURY is a provocative and outrageous comedy with heart.

It consists of 4 sections: the first PRIDE AND JOY is a monologue given by Helene, a Long Island matron, the self-proclaimed "most loving mother of all time", to her three gay children, followed by MR. CHARLES CURRENTLY OF PALM BEACH, about an aging homosexual who is hounded out of New York by younger gay men, who find his theatrical style a threatening throwback to an earlier, tougher time. Mr. Charles retreats to Palm Beach where he stars in his own cable television show titled "Too Gay." The 3rd piece is CRAFTY, about Barbara Ellen, a Midwestern craftswoman who has lost a son to AIDS (sounds grim but is warm and humorous). The final section, THE NEW CENTURY, all the characters from the first 3 sections collide in a New York City hospital, under surprising and comical circumstances, providing evidence of just where our new century might be headed.

REVIEWS:

"Line up for the happy pills in gay New York Jewish funnyman Rudnick's quotable one-liners in "The New Century", the 90 minute comedy collection that Theatre New West opened Wednesday night. Kudos to director Joe Watts and the quintet of actors who shine throughout the play. Not only is Josephine John amazing as Helene, she's also drop-dead gorgeous...Taavi Mark is gay as a goose as Mr. Charles...Lance Marshall, who defies the shallow pretty-boy image we get with Shane...explodes with infectious energy in the finale...Marshall is a Houston theater treasure... Julie Oliver gifts the role of Barbara Ellen Diggs with a humanity that soars far beyond what's on the page...Rachael Moore's loveliness is crucial to the entire endeavor. "The New Century" was proof positive that laughter can cure heartache without hitting us on the head that love is the answer. Laugh. Cry. It's the new century. Seize it today." Donalevan Maines-OutSmart Magazine

"Theatre New West's Regional Premiere of Paul Rudnick's THE NEW CENTURY is a Laugh Riot! The gorgeous and statuesque Josephine John is the perfect Helene as she humorously and matter of factly discusses her situation with us, Taavi Mark as Mr. Charles is over the top, ostentatiously overblown and divinely decadent. Julie Oliver is hilarious as Barbara Ellen, particularly when describing the amazing crafts she can create with only glue. Handsome, hot, and sexy, Lance Marshall is the perfect boy toy. Rachel Moore is a natural as the perky Joann and could not be better.

Joe Watts has beautifully cast the Theatre New West production and he solidly directs his talented actors with precision and sensitivity. It is a joy seeing Joe, Artistic Director and founder of Theatre New West, doing what he does best...offering excellent theater to the GLBT community. I wouldn't miss this divinely decadent dose of delectable theater if I were you." Buzz Belmont, Houston Chronicle Blog

"Century finds laughs in gay identity, parental response. Theatre New West is presenting the play's Houston premiere..spirited...in it's good-humored performances...Josephine John exudes worldly sophistication , wry sarcasm and steely pride in the role. Taavi Mark cavorts through this gay-capade with an innocently outrageous air. Julie Oliver is warmly funny, sweet and natural as Barbara Ellen, the most down-home soul in Rudnick's mix. Joe Watts has directed the rendition with relaxed rapport and lively pace...

Everett Evans-Houston Chronicle

"As directed by Joe Watts for Theatre New West, the show holds together and is both amusing and tender...the characters are clever...the performers are clearly enjoying themselves and it's impossible not to smile at Rudnick's one-liners."

Lee Williams-Houston Press

"I had previously seen good work from the two male actors (Taavi Mark & Lance Marshall), and they did not disappoint...but the women were brand new to me...and they were amazing...the two older ladies (Josephine John & Julie Oliver) were terrific and well worth the trip."

Roy Hamlin, Associate Artistic Director - Theatre Under the Stars

"is so funny that you need to get X-rayed afterwards for cracked ribs from laughing." Walt Bahn - audience member who says he has to come again because he enjoyed it so much.

Where: SIRROM STUDIO
5570 Wesleyan at Bissonnet
(between Randalls & Walgreens-
plenty of great parking)

Final two performances
Friday & Saturday, April 2 & 3
Curtain: 8:00PM,

Tickets: \$20, Seniors 62 & over and Students with ID \$15, Groups of 15 or more \$15

Reservations and Information: 713-522-2204

Contact: Joe Watts 713-522-2204

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THEATRE NEW WEST

436 Hawthorne #2
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Review: THE NORMAL HEART

Houston Press

September 7-13th, 2006 Issue

by: D. L. Groover

Heart Stopper-Theatre New West presents Larry Kramer's revenge-and his testament

Larry Kramer is no shrinking violet. Screenwriter (Women in Love), AIDS activist/provocateur (he co-founded NYC's Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT-UP) and novelist (Faggots), Kramer always says what he thinks in a take-no-prisoners style that constantly gets him in hot water with politically correct types.

His prescient novel "Faggots", published in 1978, graphically detailed-and railed against-the hedonistic gay scene of NYC during the era, with its soulless, disease-spreading anonymous sex. He received death threats; his best friends turned against him; the nascent gay press condemned him; and NYC's lone gay bookstore banned the book. In response to the government and medical institutions' inaction in the face of the burgeoning deadly calamity of AIDS, especially the administration of New York mayor Ed Koch, Kramer co-founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1982. It was the first service organization to provide health care and necessary information to patients in need. A year later, Kramer was kicked off the GMHC board for his unrelenting quest to close gay bathhouses and his insistence that safer sex-if not outright monogamy-was the answer to the new plague. Later, still butting his head against recalcitrant bureaucrats, Kramer formed ACT-UP, a civil disobedience coalition whose street-theater protests tied up traffic, shouted down pious legislators and successfully browbeat drug manufacturers for cheaper, easily obtainable medicines. Through it all, Kramer was the gay movement's Cassandra, warning of dire consequences if gays didn't shape up and change their behavior. When the AIDS pandemic finally was recognized as the horror it was, Kramer was proved right. People hated him for that, too.

Kramer's unofficial title is "Angriest Gay Man in America," and his semi-auto-biographical play **THE NORMAL HEART**, which premiered in 1985, is his revenge-and his testament. Though not the first in the subgenre of gay theater known as AIDS plays (that would probably be Jeffrey Hagedorn's 1983 one-actor ONE), **"Heart" is certifiably the best.** A primer on the physical and emotional beginnings of AIDS, the story is imbued with paint-blistering condemnation, righteous anger and bitchy humor. Both screed and prayer, it's a

profound tribute to those who died through negligence and bureaucratic inefficiency, as well as a rousing call to action to those left standing. Like some biblical prophet who sees the destructive whirlwind on the horizon, Kramer blows the trumpets, cajoles, beats his breast and rends his hair; he shouts, cries and laughs to get our attention. He's the strict schoolmarm with birch switch ready to punish; the forgiving father eager to embrace his prodigal son; the ardent lover willing to defy the world for a kiss.

Theatre New West's production, under the stylish and prudent direction of Joe Watts, is everything Kramer's drama aims to be, and then some.

In the intimate space of the Bering & James Gallery, the play is right in our faces. The downsizing condenses the heat and focuses the message. With Watts' lower-wattage approach, the anger and frustration, so much an essential element in Kramer, is accumulative; intensity remains, but without resorting to screams and rants. The play builds inexorably, so that the final scene, the quiet hospital-bedside wedding between protagonist Ned (Steve Bullitt) and dying partner Felix (Joseph Zoellers), becomes overwhelming-the distillation of all that's come before. **It has show stopping (and heart stopping) impact.**

A writer on health issues, Ned Weeks (Kramer's alter ego), realizes there's something ominous in the unexpected rise of opportunistic infections, purple lesions and bone-weariness among his gay friends and acquaintances. A new cancer is spreading, and no one has a clue or a cure. Ned's doctor, the wheelchair-bound Emma Brooker (Sage Holli Bara), warns him that sex may hold the answer and advises him to pass the word. Knowing that a "no sex" policy among gay men is "a tiny bit unrealistic," and that contemporary gays unconditionally affirm a "party and fuck" line. Ned struggles against the establishment, family, his friends, the medical profession and with-in himself to wage war against the disease and its insidious effects upon all. Whatever the consequences, he will fight for responsibility within the community.

The production is marvelously cast with an acting dream team.

Bullitt's self-effacing dignity grounds them all. He's not as prickly as the real-life Kramer, and his subtler indignation and frustration give Ned more sympathy. Warm and believable, he's one of us, not a legend descending from on high with holy commandments. When he incants the list of renowned gay men throughout history (the play's most quoted scene): "I belong to a culture that includes Proust, Henry James, Tchaikovsky, Cole Porter, Plato, Socrates," **Bullitt's clenched-jaw reading is as deafening as a thunder clap.**

Everyone else rises to his example: Bara's wise, impatient doctor; Wes Copeland's conflicted brother Ben, torn between a brother's love and uninformed intolerance; Glen Fillmore's former Green Beret; Brett Cullum's middle-of-the-road Mickey; Lance Marshall's zingy queen Tommy; Zoellers Felix, who sees the light before it's too late; and supporting players Ryan Thomas Heitzman and Robert Martinez, who play multiple roles.

Kramer's dramatic roman a clef can be strident, one-sided and full of cold statistics as he eviscerates foes and fair-weather friends, but **his play carries its magnificent crusader's heart on its sleeve. It's a unique work for the theater, like much of Kramer's beneficial life-enhancing work off stage."**

THEATRE NEW WEST

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HOUSTON PRESS (same as the Dallas Observer)

5/22/08

Capsule Stage Review

By: D.L. Groover

"an absolute revelation" and quite a thrill"

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

"When I last saw Eve Ensler's triumphant feminist deification of "down there," a.k.a. "the Bermuda triangle," a.k.a. "cootie snatcher," the few men in the audience slouched in their seats, desperately trying to not be noticed. But theater impresario Joe Watts is just mad enough to upend expectations and put the guys right onstage-now the actors are transgendered (male to female, and female to male) or in drag. Strange as it may seem for a work whose very essence revolves around the very essence of being a woman, this reversal is **an absolute revelation**. This version of Ensler's power play reveals unexpected layers and plunges deeper into the psyche. It's **quite a thrill**. And while all this happens, we completely forget that sexy, glamorous Carmen is really Rafael Aparicio, or that peppy, preppy Stacey Meier only began hormones last year, or that Georges Zemanek, who give a stunning knockout of a monologue about a grisly clitoridectomy, was not born with a beard. Not even Meg Ryan could out-moan Jenifer Rene Pool during her hilarious "big O" routine, and Julia Christine Oliver adds a touch of normalcy to wherever Ensler's edgy anecdotes take her. In the extremely intimate surrounds of the Montrose Counseling Center-an appropriate venue-Ensler's theme and variations have been freshly buffed and brightly burnished. A trace of five o'clock shadow and some lip gloss do wonders for Ensler's old gal."

Joe Watts was strongly involved in Houston's theatrical circle for over forty five years, as producer, director, actor, teacher, writer, and critic. He was Artistic Director of Theatre New West. Joe has produced and directed over 65 productions, and acted in over 75. He has taught privately for over 35 years. Two of his one-act plays have been produced by three theater companies in Houston. Joe has been theater critic for three publications and for KRBE-FM. Several of his productions have been named BEST OF... by the Houston Post and the Houston Press. Many have received superlative reviews and have been held over. He won Best Director of the year for his production of DUTCHMAN, and a Diana Award for his contribution to theater.

What the Critics have said of past productions:

BENT by Martin Sherman- (SOLD OUT run)

"Under Joe Watts's forceful and intelligent direction, Bullitt, Greene, Alland, Pool and Mark deliver beautifully shaded performances that bring Sherman's play to life in a way that is unblinkingly harsh, immensely moving and ultimately cathartic. However painful Theatre New West's production of BENT is a stunning tribute to remembrance and a stirring call to arms". D. L. Groover-Houston Press

THE NORMAL HEART by Larry Kramer

"Theatre New West's production, under the stylish and prudent direction of Joe Watts, is everything Kramer's drama aims to be, and then some. It has show stopping (and heart stopping) impact. The production is marvelously cast with an acting dream team. When he incants the list of renowned gay men throughout history...Bullitt's clenched-jaw reading is as deafening as a thunder clap. Everyone else rises to his example." D. L. Groover-Houston Press

THE MOST FABULOUS STORY EVER TOLD by Paul Rudnick
(HELD OVER run, named "Best Of" by the Houston Press)

"Joe Watts of Theatre New West brings this charming script to Houston with timing that couldn't be better. His production is the best dramatic bonbon of the holiday season-thanks in no small part to his pretty and enthusiastic young cast, whose collective chemistry bubbles over with the indulgent joy that can make live theater so much fun. Watts's cast delivers the questions with a truthful sweetness that gives surprising depth to these funny scenes." Lee Williams-Houston Press

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES by Eve Ensler

"When I last saw Eve Ensler's triumphant feminist deification of "down there," a.k.a. "the Bermuda triangle," a.k.a. "cootie snatcher," the few men in the audience slouched in their seats, desperately trying to not be noticed. But theater impresario Joe Watts is just mad enough to upend expectations and put the guys right onstage-now the actors are transgendered (male to female, and female to male) or in drag. Strange as it may seem for a work whose very essence revolves around the very essence of being a woman, this reversal is an absolute revelation. This version of Ensler's power play reveals unexpected layers and plunges deeper into the psyche. It's quite a thrill. D. L. Groover-Houston Press

THE ONLY THING WORSE YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME by Dan Butler

"This is a show with direction, writing and acting that could not be more perfectly in tune. It leaves the audience eager for more. "The Only Thing Worse You Could Have Told Me" is "don't-miss-it" entertainment. It deserves a long and well-attended Houston run". J, B. Black-Houston Voice

THE TIMEKEEPERS-by Dan Clancy

"It takes a play as smartly crafted as, well, a Swiss watch to make this premise plausible. But Joe Watts' staging of Dan Clancy's The Timekeepers does just that at Holocaust Museum Houston. The production also soars with two heartfelt performances, and arias that punctuate the operatic emotions that bind the horologist and the whore.

"The Timekeepers" is provocative and thought-provoking, and the more one ponders it, the more profound it seems to be. This production is something to be savored and discussed."

MEN ON THE VERGE OF A HIS-PANIC BREAKDOWN by Guillermo Reyes

"Directed by...Joe Watts...with mucho gusto and timely relevance for today's immigration debate. Watts has assembled an engaging cast of four, equally at ease with creating scenic reality or direct audience address. He steers clear of melodrama or tragedy with forthright style, allowing the rare beauty of Guillermo Reyes' script and the reality it evokes to function as honest mirror to life experience, all emotions intact."

Alexandra Bonifield-criticalrant.com

Joe Watts
Artistic Director

1620 S. Elwood Ave. Apt. L21
Tulsa, OK 74119
918-232-8330

Fund Raisers etc.

In Houston, over the years (from 1983 through 2011), first as Diversity Theater, then as The Group (Theatre Workshop), and finally as Theatre New West, I held fund raiser performances of all my productions for virtually all LGBT groups and organizations, and AIDS services organizations, they include:

A female running for City Council whose name I can't remember (1983).
Kathy Whitmire, running for Mayor (around 1986).

Gay Pride Houston, and LGBT Community Center, many years/times.

The first "theater" fund raiser for the newly formed AIDS Foundation Houston. I had the distinction of producing and directing the first play in Houston dealing with AIDS. The production was included in the Top 10 Best productions that year by the Houston Post (1985). The Post later dubbed me the "Father of Gay Theater of Houston", a title I've always carried with a great deal of pride.

Aid for Aids (1986), the Center for Aids (twice), Houston's Buyers Club (twice)

Annise Parker (former lesbian Mayor of Houston), on her first bid for City Council. Annise and I go way back and served together on the original board of the Montrose Activity Center (LGBT Center). I also worked with her on her speaking skills on her first run for Mayor.

Chairman of Major Fund-Raiser of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf by Edward Albee, at the Alley Theatre, raised somewhere in the neighborhood of \$8,000, Mr. Albee was Honorary Co-Chair. An event of the Montrose Activity Center.

In 2010 and 2011 I produced and directed Benefit Staged Readings of "The Normal Heart", 2010 for LGBT Community Center, 2011 the LGBT Youth organization at the University of Houston. I directed another reading of the play at Theatre Three in Dallas in 2013. All of these were presented as events for World AIDS Day.

I also donated lots and lots of tickets for organizational, annual events, for auctions etc. Assist Hers (a lesbian organization), Black Tie, Transgender Society and more, never turned down any group that ask, and usually gave more than they ask for.