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City Guide
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Entertainment News & Notes: Theater companies shuffle performers

Theaters around town have been living proof lately that the show must go on. That vocal strain you may have heard toward the end of opening night at the Broadway touring production of "The Phantom of the Opera" wasn't your imagination. Jason Mills, who plays the phantom, missed performances Thursday through Sunday of opening week because of a throat ailment. Understudy Stephen Tewksbury took his place.

Tewksbury, once a member of the Nebraska Theatre Caravan, normally plays Buquet, a stagehand at the Paris Opera, where the show is set.

Meanwhile, Dave Wingert dropped out of the cast of the musical "Company" at the Omaha Community Playhouse because of a hip ailment. Scott Fowler took his place, having to learn elaborate choreography in addition to his lines in less than two weeks. The show opened Friday.

At the John Beasley Theater, Yvette Coleman left the cast of "Gem of the Ocean," also about two weeks before Friday's sold-out opening night, after her grandmother became ill. TammyRa replaced her in the role of Aunt Ester.

And the city's newest theater company, 3rd Degree Productions, changed two cast members, delaying its opening of "Don't Tell Mother" by a week. It will open Friday.

Museum director gets curating tips

An Omaha art museum director attended an exclusive conference earlier this month. Magdalena Garcia, executive director of El Museo Latino, was one of 30 representatives of small and medium-size art institutions and museums to attend the "Preserving America's Diverse Heritage" forum in Atlanta Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

More than 100 national conservation leaders, government officials and museum, library and archives professionals took part in the forum focusing on culturally diverse American collections.

Sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and organized in cooperation with Heritage Preservation, the event detailed the issues that endanger books, works of art, documents and historically significant materials that can affect black, American Indian and Latino collections.

It was the first of a series of four national forums to be held in 2008 and 2009. The series was designed to raise awareness among museum leaders about the importance of caring for collections and to give them practical information, tools and resources to deal with problems.

Burt to oversee Joslyn's Western art

Sarah L. Burt is the new Richard and Mary Holland curator of American Western Art and curator of American art at the Joslyn Art Museum. She started work in Omaha on Feb. 1.

Burt was the projects manager at the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation in Abiquiu, N.M., for 10 years. She has degrees from the University of Kansas and Wichita State University.

She also worked for seven years as the in-house art historian for William R. Talbot Fine Art, a gallery specializing in the art and history of the West.

She completed in-depth scholarly research in the preparation of catalogs, developing an expertise in the art of the 19th-century American frontier with emphasis on Albert Bierstadt, Karl Bodmer, George Catlin and Thomas Moran. Those artists all are represented in Joslyn's permanent collection.

The Joslyn is planning to release the first of three volumes translating the journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied, who led an expedition on which Karl Bodmer created some of the first renderings of the American Midwest. The Joslyn owns many of those rare watercolor paintings.

Burt will oversee the translation publication project.

New board members for Midwest Theater

The historic Midwest Theater in Scottsbluff, Neb., has named two new board members to its Friends of the Midwest Theater: T.J. Dredla and Sandy Massey.

They join Sandy Schon, Sam Rose and Tammy Viessman on the board, which spearheads support in the restoration and programming of the theater.

Willa Kosman is the theater's volunteer executive director. Theater manager Billy Estes runs daily operations, including programming, calendar and movie schedules. Harriet Aden is bookkeeper.

Bemis hires McGraw from NYC gallery



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The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts has found a new curator.

The Bemis has hired Hesse McGraw, who most recently was associate director of the Max Protetch Gallery in New York City. He also was the founding director of Paragraph, a contemporary art gallery in Kansas City, Mo.

McGraw, who starts work in Omaha on Feb. 19, has a background as an artist, critic and educator. His interdisciplinary work incorporates photography, video, sound, text and technology into installations and published works. He is the former senior editor of Review, a Kansas City-based visual culture magazine. He served as a lecturer in the interdisciplinary department of the Kansas City Art Institute.

McGraw received a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Kansas in 2001 and a master's degree in media and communications from a Swiss institution.

He replaces Jeremy Stern, who recently left Bemis to pursue his own artwork.

The Bemis has also named Jennifer Anderson as its project manager, Elizabeth Epsen and Holly McAdams as administrative assistants and Andrew Hershey as media director.

The Bemis will introduce the new hires during the closing reception for its "State of the Art" exhibit, Feb. 23 at noon.

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Auditions

"Smokey Joe's Cafe," Children's Respite Care Center fundraiser, by appointment 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the center, 2010 N. 88th St. Callbacks Sunday afternoon. Show runs Aug. 21 and 22 at Slowdown, 729 N. 14th St. Information or for an appointment: 895-4000.

"Shakespeare in Hollywood," Omaha Community Playhouse, 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday at the theater, 6915 Cass St. Show runs April 11 to May 4. Information: 553-4890.

"Dragons, Snakes & Stars," young directors project, Teens 'n' Theater at the Rose, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the theater, 2001 Farnam St. Show runs March 20 to 22. Information: 502-4624.

"Alone Together Again," Bellevue Little Theatre, 7 tonight at the theater, 203 W. Mission Ave. in Bellevue. Show runs April 4 to 20. Information: 991-9155.

— *Compiled by Bob Fischbach and Dane Stickney*

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