



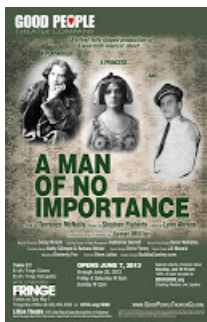
Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Hollywood Fringe Spotlight - Part 3: A Man of No Importance

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

June 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30

Janet Miller is about to launch her new theatre company, aptly named the **Good People Theater Company**, with *A Man of No Importance* at this year's Hollywood Fringe Festival. The musical is a unique choice for an inaugural production and an even more unusual choice to be presented at the Fringe. Why? Because this musical, featuring music by **Stephen Flaherty**, lyrics by **Lynn Ahrens** and a book by **Terrence McNally** isn't new, yet its themes of love and acceptance resonate clearly throughout the piece. And that's definitely Fringe worthy.



The time is Dublin, 1964. Meet Alfie Byrne, a bus conductor with a poet's heart. In the morning he dispenses tickets and Oscar Wilde's best verse to his regulars. After work, St. Imelda's amateur theatricals are his passion. And, much to his sister's distress, he cooks. Foreign things. With parsley on top.

I asked Janet why she chose this show as the first production for GPTC and she said she'd been hoping to do this show for ten years. "I love the music. I love the story. I love what it has to say about being true to yourself, about the importance of finding your authentic self, and



Janet Miller

living that life – the life that’s true to who you are, especially at mid-life.

The lead character, Alfie Byrne, is in his 40s and he’s basically beginning to realize there’s a cost to hiding. There’s a personal cost to him for not living in an authentic way. He decides he’s willing to risk everything – including the love of his family and friends – to come into that truer relationship with himself. And the beautiful thing about the play is the poetical magic that Alfie always had – the thing that drew people to him in

the first place – only grows and becomes freer when he has the courage to simply become himself more fully. It’s powerful watching this character transform from the inside out.”

In addition to Alfie’s transformation, there’s the added layer of it being a show about a community theater group that also resonates for her. “That part of the story always felt like home to me because I’ve done a lot of community theater, and I love it! There’s a stigma about community theater being ‘less than professional,’ but here’s the thing: as a director, you get to work with all sorts of wonderful people for whom acting is not their first job. It’s the thing they do as a second career because they’re compelled to do it, they love it and they make great sacrifices to make it happen. *A Man of No Importance* really honors the dignity and the sincerity of the deep love of theater that comes from community players and the moving way it touches their lives. And I find that very true to life. I was also drawn to its style of storytelling. It’s a memory play, and I like the structure. The scenes are short and they uphold the storytelling that is really taken care of by the musical numbers.”

And as for why she chose to produce it during the Fringe? “The original idea to open our Company’s first show at Fringe came as some friendly advice from [Jeremy Lelliott](#), artistic director of Coeurage Theatre Company,” she says. “He and I were talking about my dream of staging *A Man of No Importance*. He saw how passionate I was about the project and he suggested we do it at Fringe because he felt it was the right kind of umbrella organization to help us get on our feet.

When you’re looking at starting a company and launching the first production, there’s a nearly endless list of questions and decisions that need to be made. Putting our first show into the Fringe Festival immediately gave us some definition, some guidance and key parameters. And that helped us get through that first phase of ‘well, where do we start?’

And I discovered *A Man of No Importance* has been done at other international Fringe festivals, which makes sense because it doesn’t have heavy sets, etc. It was reassuring to see it had played well in the Fringe-type environment before.”

I love musicals.

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“There’s also something to be said for the variety the show will bring to the Fringe mix,” she adds. “Most Fringe shows are experimental and shorter. Ours is a licensed show that hasn’t been done yet in LA with a fully staged production, but people know about the show and are excited to see it here. Fringe tends to feature the work of younger, rising artists and our show’s story is about a group of mostly 40+ characters, so our ensemble skews a little more – how shall I say? – to the mature side! But with that you’re seeing actors who’ve worked on Broadway and are truly masters at their craft, and who are now in our ‘wee Irish musical’ at Fringe.”

As any artist will tell you, an emotional connection to the work is essential. For Janet, that part was easy. “Here I am, in mid-life – just like Alfie – asking those typically mid-life questions, like ‘who am I now and who do I really want to be?’ Alfie is asking the tough questions: is it ok to be true to ourselves and risk losing the approval of our fellow travelers – sometimes friends or loved ones we’ve known for years? I’m right there with him and I’m inspired by how he deeply and authentically accepts himself, regardless of cost.”

In terms of relevance to 2013, what does a bus conductor from 1960s Dublin have to tell us today? “Well, it’s 60 years after Alfie’s moment, as shown in the play, and big parts of the world are still struggling with fundamental questions of personal freedom and the political right to live your own best, individually authentic life. You see it in the Arab Spring movement across the Middle East. You see it in pending Supreme Court decisions we expect to move this summer.

And on a more personal level, I think people are testing the limits of love and friendship all the time around this question of ‘will I still be acceptable to you if I cut loose and really live an outer life that matches my inner life?’

People are going to love seeing some very powerful, professionally skillful storytelling. The show itself is brilliant on the page, of course. But I have the privilege of working with incredibly talented, gifted actors, musicians and production people who are deeply and personally invested in putting this story across, with all the professionalism, heart and nuance it deserves. And because I’m working with a core group of people I’ve done many shows with before – many ‘Good People’ from my past – we’re able to take the storytelling to a deep place and make a lot happen very quickly.

For example: the women who are costuming this show have done 18 shows with me. We get each other and we now work in a kind of short-hand. They understand the kind of storytelling I’m invested in and they effortlessly translate their work into that concept. And the actors are singing beautifully. They are really committed to telling this story in a profoundly thoughtful way. It’s a true team effort and I think it’s going to make for a very powerful evening of theater.”



***30 Minute Musicals:
Independence Day - Celebration
Theatre @ The Hollywood Fringe**

***A Man of No Importance -
Elephant Stages @ The Hollywood
Fringe**

***A Midsummer Saturday Night's
Fever Dream - The Troubies @ The
Falcon Theatre, Toluca Lake**

***An Arctic Tale - North By South
Theatre @ The Parish Church of
St. Mark, Glendale**

***AESOPERA - Fringe Mainstage @
The Hollywood Fringe**

***Catch Me If You Can -
 Segerstrom Center for the Arts,
Costa Mesa**

***CHESS - East West Players,
Downtown**

***The Circus is Coming to Town -
Theatre West, Hollywood**

***Eating Raoul, the Musical,
STAGEstheatre, Fullerton**

***Exorcistic: The Rock Musical
Parody Experiment - Fringe
Mainstage @ The Hollywood
Fringe**

***Falling For Make Believe - Colony
Theatre, Burbank**

***The Fantasticks - Sierra Madre
Playhouse, Sierra Madre**

***The Fantasticks - South Coast
Rep, Costa Mesa**

***Fiddler on the Roof - PCPA
Theatrefest, Santa Maria and
Solvang**

***Flashdance - Segerstrom Center
for the Arts, Costa Mesa**

***Girl Crazy - Musical Theatre
Guild, Glendale & Thousand Oaks**

***Ionescopade - Odyssey Theatre,
West Los Angeles**

***The Little Mermaid - Hudson
Backstage, Hollywood**

***Lonesome Traveler - Rubicon
Theatre, Ventura**

A Man of No Importance, Good People Theater Company, Elephant Stages at the Lillian Theatre, 1076 Lillian Way. Tickets are \$20. [Click Here for tickets and more information.](#)

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Tuesday, May 14, 2013

Hollywood Fringe Spotlight - Part 2: The Pokemusal, [title of show]

Hollywood Fringe coverage continues with a fun look at a musical satire based on the world of pocket monsters and a popular musical about four friends writing a new musical. And in big news, the brand new **Hollywood Fringe Festival App** is now available for free download on both the Apple and Google Play stores. Once you download the mobile app you can purchase tickets on your phone to over two hundred festival productions, as well as browse shows by location, time or category. You can also create a unique profile, manage a list of favorite shows and customize your schedule on-the-go, plus there's a map and navigation for all Fringe venues, access to show reviews and a news feed of the latest Fringe events. Now that's pretty cool.



THE POKEMUSICAL

June 10, 14, 15, 19, 21, 23, 26, 28

The Pokemusal is a 90-minute lovingly satirical exploration of the world of pocket monsters and is the brainchild of two Baldwin Wallace University students. So how did *The*

Pokemusal get started? **Alex Syiek**, bookwriter and lyricist, conceived the show last year and teamed up with composer **Andrew L. Cooper** to present a new side of the Pokémon story – one with song and dance. The satire played its first run in Berea, OH this past spring and will now receive its west coast premiere at the Elephant Space of Theatre Asylum as part of the 2013 Hollywood Fringe Festival. Alex's sister, **Joanna Syiek**, will direct this iteration of *The Pokemusal* and musical direction is by **Jennifer Lin**.

Joanna says, "We felt *The Pokemusal* would be a perfect addition to the Fringe because it features a nostalgic revisiting of the early Pokemon craze,

***Love Songs** - Chromolume Theatre, Los Angeles

***ModROCK** - El Portal Theatre, North Hollywood

***Natalie Portman the Musical** - Lounge Theatre @ The Hollywood Fringe

***Next to Normal** - La Mirada Theatre, La Mirada

***Paint Your Wagon** - Downey Civic Light Opera, Downey

***Parade** - 3D Theatricals, Fullerton

***Peter Pan** - Creating Arts Company, Santa Monica

***The Pokemusal** - Theatre Asylum @ The Hollywood Fringe

***Priscilla Queen of the Desert**, Pantages Theatre, Hollywood

***The Real Housekeepers of Studio City** - Theatre Asylum @ The Hollywood Fringe

***RENT** - Beyond the Stage Prods, Los Angeles

***The Scottsboro Boys** - Ahmanson Theatre, Downtown

***Sleepless in Seattle** - Pasadena Playhouse, Pasadena

***South Pacific** - Glendale Centre Theatre, Glendale

***South Pacific** - The Grove Theatre, Upland

***Spamalot** - Morgan-Wixson Theatre, Santa Monica

***The Time Machine Musical** - Elephant Stages @ The Hollywood Fringe

*[title of show] - Theatre Asylum @ The Hollywood Fringe

