

THEATER AT MASON NEWSLETTER



Published By



September 2014

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Welcome to the School of Theater's 2014-15 school year and new theatrical season. Each year Theater at Mason selects a theme to reflect what it hopes to accomplish, challenging both our students and audiences to something new and different. This year will be the Season of Innovation. As our season brochure says, we hope to "discover unexpected places as well as surprises within the familiar."

The Fall will be an exciting kickoff to our theatrical year. We will present a Tony award winning Broadway musical, two innovative "Mason Fringe" plays in repertory, an Elizabethan tragedy, and a special event.

The Broadway musical, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, is based the final novel written by Charles Dickens, who died before its completion. The play is a bright bawdy comedy set in an English music hall as a play-with-a-play with a unique twist – since Dickens never completed the work, you get to decide the ending. At the end of Act 2 the audience is asked to vote on which character murdered Edwin Drood. The play has been written with multiple endings, so once the evil character with the largest number of votes is determined, the play resumes and the murderer is brought to justice.

The Mason Fringe offering, which will open our season, consists of two episodic plays, presented in repertory – *Almost, Maine* and *The Blue Room*. For those unfamiliar with the term "Fringe" it is a low budget

production style that encourages experimentation and imagination. *Almost, Maine*, a comedy, explores the search for love and connection among a series of eccentric characters in a small New England town. *The Blue Room* explores loneliness, need and lust in a series of brief vignettes.

The third offering will be the Christopher Marlowe classic, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. The play, drawn from Virgil's Aeneid, focuses on Dido's passionate love for Aeneas, the meddling and interference of the gods, the betrayal of Aeneas, and the resultant tragedies.

And, finally, our special event features faculty member David Gaines performing his one-man show *A Little Business at the Big Top*. David is an actor and director who specializes in movement, mask, improvisation, commedia, and clown. Many of us remember his *7 (x1) Samurai* a few seasons ago. This time he creates a compelling story of romance, danger, dramatic thrills and comic relief under the circus big top.

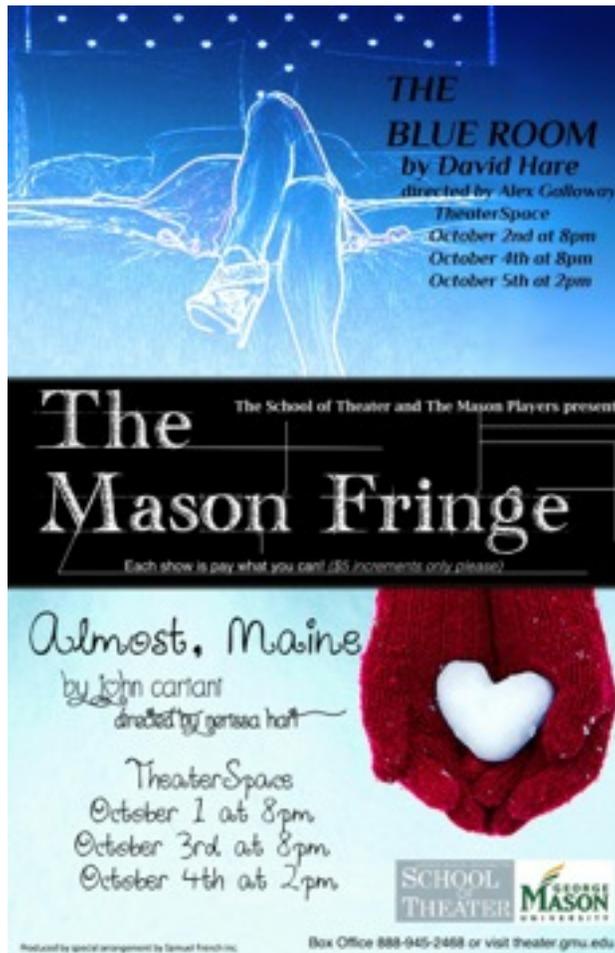
This will be a wonderful year for Theater at Mason. I will report to on the spring offerings later this year. In the meantime, see you at the theater.



Eileen Duggan, President
Friends of Theater at Mason

**THE SCHOOL OF THEATER
AND
MASON PLAYERS PRESENT**

THE MASON FRINGE



THE BLUE ROOM

Written by: David Hare
Directed by: Alex Galloway

Director's Note

David Hare's *The Blue Room* is about the difference between what we want, and what we need. The play explores the intimate lives of ten people, five men and five women, as their relationships intertwine in a daisy chain. Based on Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde*, *The Blue Room* brings Schnitzler's controversial subject matter into the present day.



Alex Galloway is a senior film student from Fairfax, Virginia. He has been involved in several Mason Players productions and is a founding member of the student produced theater company, Peasant Theater.

PERFORMANCES

October 2 at 8 PM

October 4 at 8 PM

October 5 at 2 PM

TheaterSpace

Every Fringe Performance is Pay What You Can!

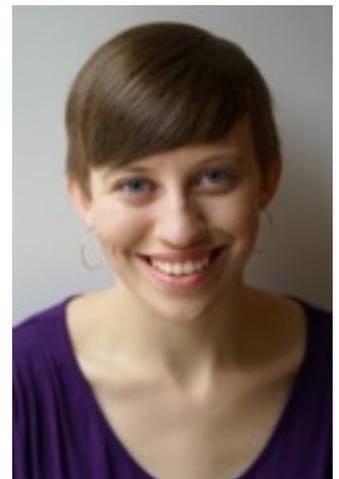
ALMOST, MAINE

Written by: John Cariani

Directed by: Nerissa Hart

Cariani's series of short plays explore the sudden thunderclap of love and the scorched earth that sometimes follows, set in a remote, mythical almost-town called Almost, Maine.

Nerissa Hart is a senior theatre major from Stafford, Virginia. She has appeared on the Mason Players' stage in shows such as *The Rover* as Callis, *The Merchant* as Acanthio, and *See How They Run* as Sergeant Towers. She has also worked on several short films, including *Among Us* directed by Wilfred Rodriguez, *Once Upon a Time In Virginia* directed by Cliff Smircina, and several others. She works for Acting For Young People as a teaching artist throughout the year, teaching children



at elementary schools the basics of acting. Her previous directing experiences include Assistant Directing *The Merchant*, directing the ten minute play *Out of Touch*, and directing a production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* for the music class, Times Square. She is excited to take on this production along with her very talented cast and crew and can't wait to share this wonderful production with the audience.

PERFORMANCES

October 1 at 8 PM

October 3 at 8 PM

October 4 at 2 PM

TheaterSpace

Every Fringe Performance is Pay What You Can!



The casts getting together for their first read.

DEBUTS



In the theater we celebrate debuts. We cherish premieres. Why---because they are special. They may be the launch of something legendary. They might also be the only chance a theater lover has of seeing something before it disappears forever. Either way, celebrating the new is a way of celebrating both the evolution of the art and the ephemeral nature of what we do.

In this Season of Innovation, we are debuting a few exciting things, as you may imagine. We will begin with the Mason Fringe.

Fringe festivals have sprouted across the globe. At heart, the fringe is a way for theater artists to approach work (be it new, experimental, or beloved, big, small, or medium) without huge production costs. While technical support may be limited, theatrical creativity is not. As the development of Fringe work is important in the industry, it is important to us at the School of Theater. Starting this year, the Mason Fringe will lead off our season.

This year, we will be running our Fringe shows in repertory. Another first.

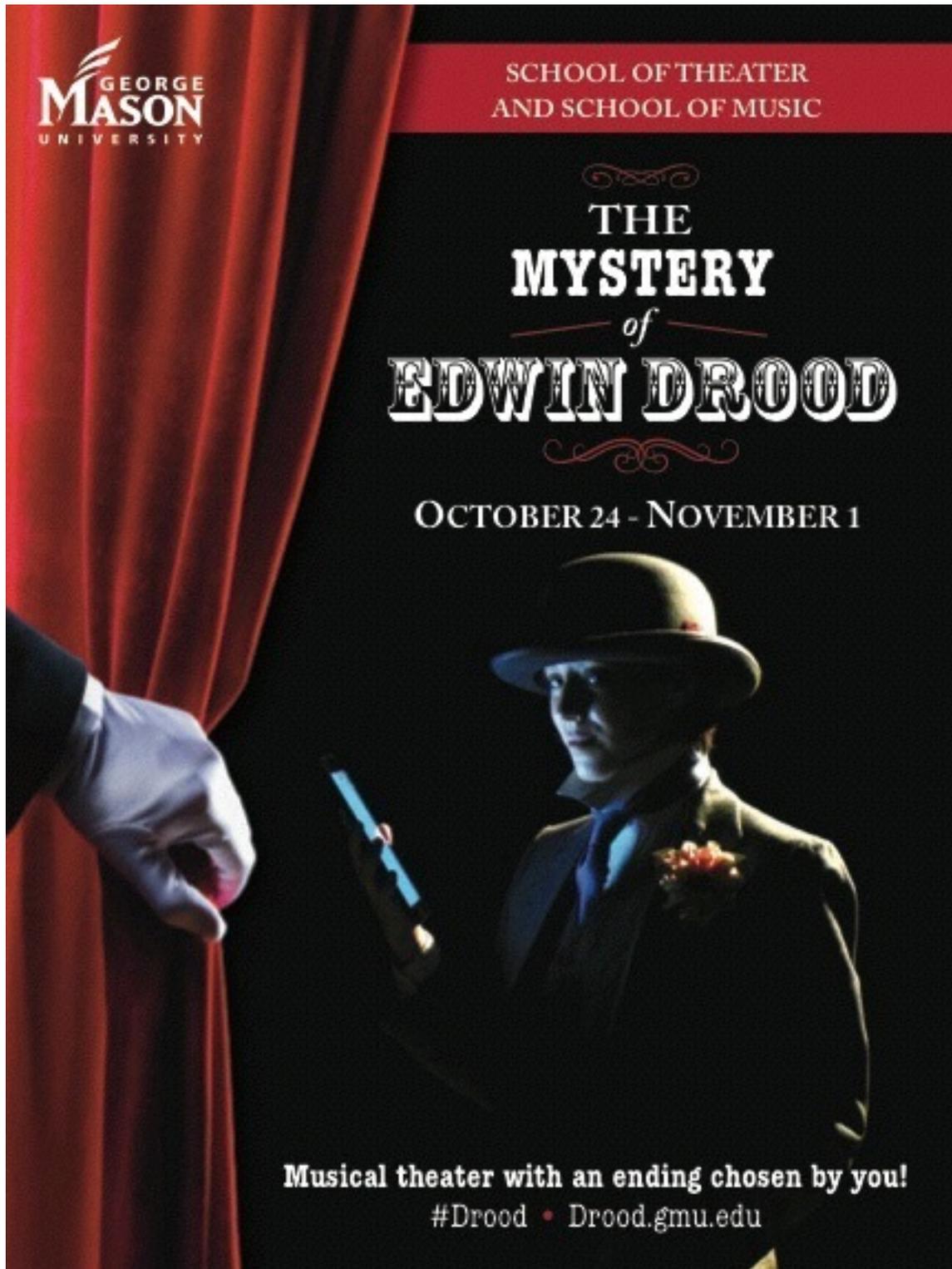
The two 90-minute one acts, *The Blue Room* and *Almost, Maine*, that inaugurate our Fringe shows are full evenings in the theater, so audiences will have the opportunity to see them in rotating rep. One show on Tuesday and the other on Wednesday. We are letting the audience *pay what they can*, to encourage all to see both incredible evenings in the theater.

In yet another first, the cast of *The Blue Room* will act as stage crew for *Almost, Maine*, and vice versa. This is a way to unify these two companies and build *esprit des corps*. It also lets us build a bigger stage crew for our musical theater production of, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. D. [unclear]". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chairman, School of Theater

WHODUNIT? BROADWAY STYLE



GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF THEATER
AND SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THE
MYSTERY
of
EDWIN DROOD

OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 1

Musical theater with an ending chosen by you!
#Drood • Drood.gmu.edu

Everyone's a suspect in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the fall musical presented by Mason's Schools of Theater and Music - and you get to decide whodunit! The hilarious Tony Award-winning play-within-a-play showcases

modern actors portraying Victorian thespians of the Music Hall Royale theater troupe who are presenting a flamboyant rendition of Charles Dickens' unfinished mystery novel. One of the work's most talked-about features is that the audience will get to vote on the outcome of the play using social media and mobile devices. When was the last time you heard "Ladies and Gentlemen, please turn ON your cellphones?" Get to know the characters on social media. (No worries if you don't have a mobile device, you'll still get to vote!)

THE MANY WAYS TO BE PART OF DROOD'S SOCIAL MEDIA

Wish you could learn and converse with the characters before the show?

Sound impossible? Not now! You can be part of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* action by "tuning into" Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Already Have Social Media Accounts?

- Follow @MasonMusical on Twitter and Instagram <https://twitter.com/MasonMusical> (#Drood)
- Like on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MasonMusicalDrood>

Don't Want Social Media Accounts, but wished you could learn and converse with the characters in the musical before the show?

No problem, simply click on the following links from time to time for updates:

- Twitter @MasonMusical: <https://twitter.com/MasonMusical> (If after clicking on the link you get a big box that asks if you want to sign-up and you don't want to, just click on the "x" and the box will disappear. You'll then get to read and see cool tweets!)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MasonMusicalDrood>

Want to Create Social Media Accounts, but don't know how?

The following links can help you set-up accounts in a jiffy!

- Twitter Set-Up: <https://support.twitter.com/groups/50-welcome-to-twitter/topics/204-the-basics/articles/100990-signing-up-with-twitter#>
- Facebook Set Up: <https://www.facebook.com/help/345121355559712>

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WHO ARE THE MASON PLAYERS?



The Mason Players exist in order to create production and performance opportunities in theater for Mason students and to bring live theater to the Mason community. Participation is open to all George Mason University degree seeking students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50. Students must sign a Mason Players Participation Letter of Agreement which promotes a professional and respectful spirit of collaboration

Once a student becomes a Mason Player, he or she is a Mason Player for life. Players are encouraged to attend monthly meetings, volunteer, participate in creative decisions and to participate in all areas of production.

The School of Theater awards Mason Players shirts to each cast and crew at the designer run-through of their show, the magic moment when the casts goes through the entire show with their lines memorized, allowing the designers to see the show and discover needed costume and lighting changes, as well as what sound effects, music and props are needed.

The Players showed off their 2014-2015 shirts at the School of Theater convocation.





The faculty, the director with theater students, Mason Improv and the Mason Fringe directors at the opening convocation.

A STUDENT VIEW OF AUDITIONS **from Mason Players**

Behind the Table
Rebecca Wahls, Director

This is the second year that I have had the opportunity to sit behind the table for the Mason Players' Fall Unified Auditions. This year, as the director of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, I was sure the process would be easier than my first time last year as director of *Woyzeck*. I was, not surprisingly, completely wrong.

It's hard to appreciate how much talent Mason has to offer until you see it all laid out before you over the course of two evenings during the first week of school. You sit there and want to cast or at least call back absolutely everybody... but tough decisions do have to be made. It is important to check in with yourself and think: well, this person is incredibly talented, but do I see them fitting in with this particular play? Can I use this as a chance to stretch this person further?

How can I use this person in a surprising way?

As both an actor and director, I live for callbacks. I love seeing spontaneous discoveries happen between actors who may have met only moments ago. After witnessing callbacks for *Dido*, there was no doubt in my mind about the perfect cast makeup for this production. I cannot wait to continue the journey with them in November!

In Front of the Table Madison Landis, Actor

As a junior theater major, it is not my first time auditioning for the Mason Players. This semester, the Mason Players were casting for *Almost, Maine*, *the Blue Room*, *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage* and the musical, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The wide range of genres within the season was a challenge to myself as an actor in preparing. Each semester I do my best to master a new monologue and push myself to be my best as I audition for my peers. I prepared two monologues, one suited for the plays and one better for the musical, and 32 bars of a musical theater piece.

I was delighted to have received a call back for all of the shows being cast. Though I have an idea of what the show is like beforehand, it is during the callbacks where I get to really see the start of the director's vision. Seeing whom I'm paired with to read, listening to the director's suggestions and notes, and using my instincts to perform cold reads make callbacks one of the most exciting parts of the process. I was cast as Ginette and Marvelyn in *Almost, Maine* and as Anne in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING BADGES

(Our apologies to the movie, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*)

Rather than design a lapel pin similar to the pins used by Friends of the Center for the Arts and Friends of Music, the Friends of Theater board has decided that 'spirit wear' offered our Friends significant advantages over a lapel pin. A quality shirt/blouse embroidered with the Friends of Theater at Mason logo will:

- be more useful than another lapel pin
- more easily identify the wearer as a Friend of Theater at Mason
- advertise GMU's theater program whenever and wherever it is worn.

So we are happy to invite you to order your Friends of Theater at Mason spirit wear as the 2014-2015 season begins and to wear your shirt/blouse to FOTM events.

Friends of Theater shirts are long-sleeved chambray embroidered with our logo. Logo text is dark blue, the tragedy/comedy masks are silver with black outline, the ribbons are GMU green and gold with a black outline. The logo is sized to fit over the left breast.



Shirts and blouses come in men's and women's sizes and are tailored appropriately. They are of high-quality cotton/poly blend for comfort and care. The exact price for each shirt depends on the size of the order— the more we order, the cheaper it is to embroider them. We estimate that each shirt will cost about \$35 and production time will be approximately two weeks after our order is placed.





To facilitate a larger-quantity order, we have decided to order the shirts just once each academic year – in the fall. The deadline for ordering this year is November 15. Complete the order form below and mail it to: Mack Miller, 10847 Split Oak Lane, Burke VA 22015 or email your order to him at cmmiller10847@verizon.net. After our order is produced, we'll announce where and how to pick up your shirt.

Name: _____

Address: _____

(Circle the appropriate size)

Men's shirt Quantity: _____ Size: S M L XL 2XL

Women's shirt Quantity: _____ Size: S M L XL



Great Performances

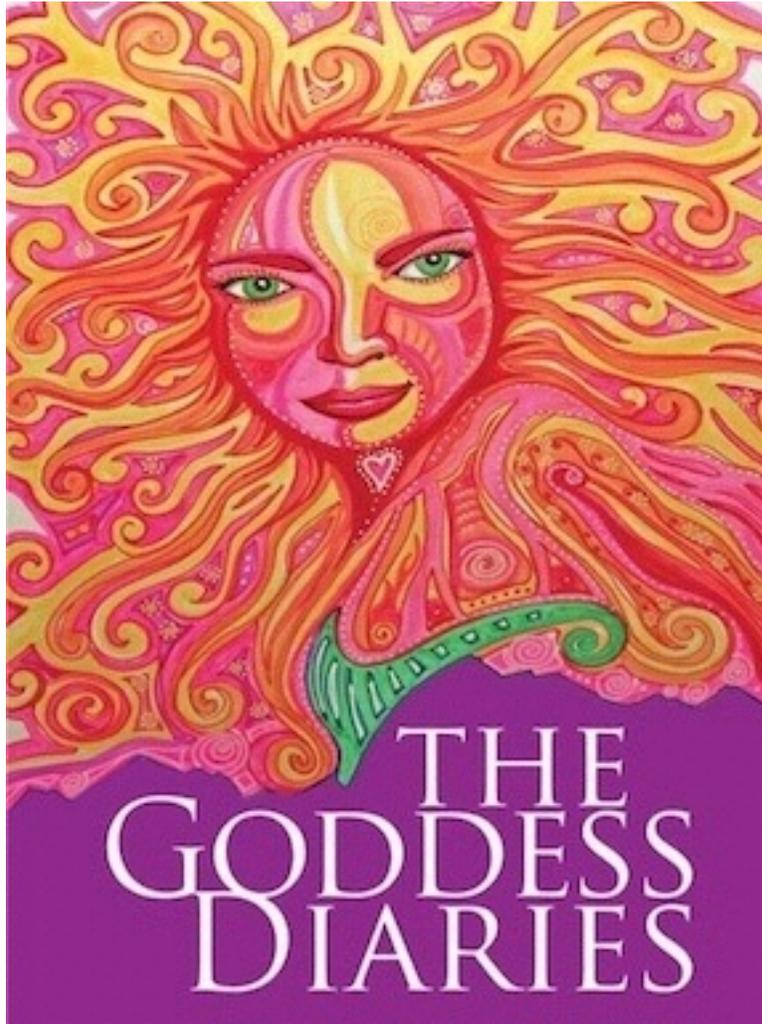
AQUILA THEATRE'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS



This renowned theater company brings a classic of English literature to the stage, featuring one of fiction's most tempestuous romances. Set in a farmhouse on the stormy Yorkshire moors, this epic saga follows the turbulent life-long relationship between Catherine, daughter of Mr. Earnshaw, and Heathcliff, an orphan who is taken in by her benevolent father. The ill-fated pair develops an inseparable bond as children, but Catherine eventually chooses comfort and security over love, and marries a man of high social standing, leaving Heathcliff tormented and vengeful. The sole work of Emily Brontë, this riveting tale of passion, revenge, family, social class, and the supernatural is performed by acclaimed British-American touring company Aquila Theatre.

October 5, 2014
7 PM
Concert Hall

THE GODDESS DIARIES



Raw, Fierce, and Beautiful.

The Goddess Diaries is a play that reveals the stages of a woman's life, and critical issues surrounding women, through a series of individual stories that range from heart-wrenching, to comedic. This will be *The Goddess Diaries'* fifth performance at George Mason University. *The Goddess Diaries* frequently performs at the Capital Fringe Festival where it has been named the "Best of Fringe" three years in a row, including this past summer.

PERFORMANCES
OCTOBER 9 and 10
7:30 PM
TheaterSpace
George Mason University's Fairfax Campus.

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