



> View newspapers dating back to 1815!

Pittsburgh, Pa. Wednesday, April 21, 2004

- Newspaper Search -

- Home
- News
- Sports
- A & E
- Lifestyle
- Classifieds
- Subscribe
- Search
- Co

Arts & Entertainment

- Recipes
- Media Kit
- Per

- A & E
- Previous Articles
 - Movies/Videos
 - TV/Radio
 - Books
 - M 'n' M
 - Crossword
 - Lottery

Stage Preview: Down to the Barebones

Theater company sticks to its stripped mission

Friday, January 16, 2004

By Christopher Rawson, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As theater names go, Public doesn't tell you much, City not much more, and what does Quantum mean? But barebones is spot on -- barebones productions is so barebones it can't even afford capital letters.

Not that barebones' major-domo, Patrick Jordan, is complaining. "You can do theater anywhere," he says: "coffee shop, park, living room."

Last year, barebones debuted in the back room of a Squirrel Hill shop. Now it's in the Modern Formations Gallery in Garfield-Bloomfield, right between Penn Theatre and Garfield Artworks, across the street from the Sprout Fund. (Add the nearby studio of Attack Theatre, and this just might be the nexus of a new alternative arts cluster.)

"We lucked out," Jordan says. Once a restaurant, now run by Jennifer Quinio and Devin Russian, the gallery has been used for bands, poetry and New Yinzers readings, but this is its first play. There's a small stage, open-beamed ceiling, simple lighting and room for 50 chairs - - maybe as many as 70 if the play catches on.

"It's barebones," Jordan puns, gesturing around. "We're not shooting over the rainbow." Nor does "This Is Our Youth," a slice-of-life play set in 1982,

'THIS IS OUR YOUTH'

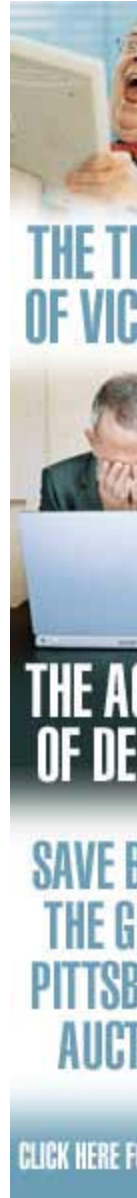
- **Where:** barebones productions at Modern Formations Gallery, 4919 Penn Ave., Garfield-Bloomfield.
- **When:** Through Jan. 31; Thurs.-Sat. 8 p.m.
- **Tickets:** Donation \$7-\$10; 412-363-5847; www.barebonesproductions.com.
- **Post-show bands:** Tonight, Autumn Ayers, Abie Amad, Sarah George, Kate Doblack (acoustic); Sat., Shopping (rock); Jan. 22, Cole Kitz (piano); Jan. 23, Borderless Puzzle (rock/jam); Jan. 24, The Nightrats (rock); Jan. 29, Dave Mansuado (rock); Jan. 30-31, TBA (check Web site).
- **Directed reading:**

TV Q&A
Submit your question
[CLICK HERE](#)

Bride's guide
[Click here](#)

Weather
[CLICK HERE](#)

post-gazette.com
Headlines by E-mail



concerning 48 hours in the lives of two guys and a girl in their early 20s. When staged at London's Garrick Theatre in 2002, it featured a revolving cast including Matt Damon, Casey Affleck, Freddie Prinz Jr., Jake Gyllenhaal, Hayden Christensen and Anna Paquin.

"Lobby Hero," Wed. and Sun. 8 p.m., through Feb. 1.

In keeping with barebones' ambition to be what it calls a "no-frills outlet for new plays, new playwrights and multidisciplinary events with universal themes," it is sweetening the deal by offering musical groups to perform after the two-hour play. "The show fits the audience that will like the bands," Jordan says -- and vice versa. To increase cross-pollination, there is also an exhibit of photos of 18- to 30-year-olds at work and play in contemporary Pittsburgh by David Harris, a prolific street photographer.

Giving the play an edge of anticipation is its playwright, Kenneth Lonergan. Though not yet produced in Pittsburgh, he's been hot in New York City, where "Lobby Hero" was an off-Broadway hit.

As with most of us, Jordan was first attracted to Lonergan through his screenplays, especially "You Can Count on Me." (His others include "Gangs of New York," "Analyze This" and "Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle.") "I just think all Lonergan's characters have heart," Jordan says. So barebones is going one step further, offering directed readings of "Lobby Hero" on Wednesday and Sundays during the run.

Staging Lonergan is a natural sequel to last year, when Jordan and Beth Hersey started barebones with "bash: latterday plays" by Neil LaBute, another hot playwright, also born in 1963 and known for his movies, whether directing ("Nurse Betty) or directing and writing ("Possession"). These exciting playwrights have been available to barebones because they've fallen between the cracks of Pittsburgh's established pro companies.

In its small, unexpected way, "bash" was a hit. "We hoped for audiences of 12 or 15," says Jordan, but they ended up squeezing in more than 70. A \$200 contribution was a godsend. The small bankroll left from "bash" will pay the royalties for "This Is Our Youth"; box office has to do the rest.

Melanie Dreyer, a professor at Pitt, knew Hersey and Jordan's work as students there, and when she saw them in "bash," she said she'd like to work with them some time. Now, she's directing Jordan, Dalla Andracchio and Jason Planitzer in "This Is Our Youth."

"Calling it barebones means no frills -- it's actor-driven," says Jordan. And Jordan-driven, too: He's producer, artistic director, actor, stage manager, props, set, lighting, posters and post cards. "But there's no way I could do it without my friends."

Jordan looks around the jumble of set pieces. "City Theatre loaned things -- there's the refrigerator from 'Hedwig' and a stained mattress from 'Blackbird.'" There's also a Major Matt Mason action figure, bought on eBay -- "our most expensive prop" -- and his grandmother Edith Mansour's Toastmaster toaster, which he knows he'd better treat with care.

Jordan grew up in "the Blawnox-Fox Chapel area," went to Quaker Valley High School and started college at Edinboro, "when I thought I was going to play football." He had done some acting in a Mario Melodia summer arts camp his sports friends never knew about. But in college, "some girl filled out my schedule for me and got me into an acting class -- I wish I remembered her name!"

He finished his degree at Pitt in 2001. In the last few years he's acted for Prime Stage, Apple Hill, South Park, Jewish Theatre, Starlight, Bricolage, Timespace, Provoke, Immersion and the New Works Festival. When the Lonergan plays finish, he goes right into City's Young Playwrights' Festival; then he'll be in Sam Shepard's "The Late Henry Moss" for Saints and Poets Theater, performing at a scrap yard in Point Breeze.

"I love theater," Jordan says. "And I love Pittsburgh because this is our second show and here you are doing an interview."

Drama editor Christopher Rawson can be reached at 412-263-1666 or crawson@post-gazette.com

E-mail this story  Print this story 

[Search](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Advertise](#) | [About Us](#) | [Help](#) | [Corrections](#)
Copyright ©1997-2004 PG Publishing Co., Inc. All Rights Reserved.