

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

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Region's working at fever pitch

By Jackie Demaline
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The next two weeks include almost 200 performances of more than 20 plays and musicals. This is just some of what it takes to give Cincinnati a theater scene:

The entire cast of "High School Musical 2" at Children's Theatre is learning to use spotlights on stage and work from catwalks to make the show a "rock concert for kids."

They're also learning rhythmic dancing - like "Stomp" - with pots and pans, as well as choreography with baseball bats.

Tri-County Players moved into the newly renovated Sharonville Fine Arts Center this weekend with "Dearly Beloved."

At Ensemble Theatre, nearly 130 people "have, are, or will be spending their time to create and execute our regional premiere of 'Gem of the Ocean,'" says producing artistic director Lynn Meyers.

Northern Kentucky University's 150 theater majors are working on student-produced work, including "The Pillowman"; prepping for the Y.E.S. Festival of New Plays; opening "Working" this week; and taking comedy improv, musical theatre, Broadway chorus, dance and dance for fitness tour troupes to schools and businesses.

Ray Persing is readying the Drama Workshop production of "The Movie Game," opening at the end of the month, by building what may be the tallest set in the community theater's history, a 23-foot theater façade will be on stage at Westwood Town Hall.

Community theater is a way for families to play together. This month, "1776" has two sets of fathers and sons, Jerry and David Wiesenhahn and Charlie and Chuck Ingram, and two husband-wife teams, Ed Cohen and Dee Ann Bryll and Mark and Amy Waldfogle.

"Movie Game" has newlyweds Michael and Anne-Marie Ireland playing brother and sister in their first show together.

At Beechmont Players, Charlie Russell is directing his father, Steve; his mother, Barb; and his wife, Stephanie, as well as brothers Dan and Dave Cooley and sisters Jill and Pam Blessing in "The Pirates of Penzance." The multitasking family of Mike and Donna Surber, son Jeff Surber and daughter Rebecca Wiessmann will all be working onstage, backstage or in front of the house in a company that numbers more than 100, including a construction and running crew of 45 and a 14-piece orchestra.

With regional premiere "Dead City," a 21st-century spin on James Joyce's "Ulysses," completing its first weekend of performances, artistic director Alan Patrick Kenny is taking this weekend to "decompress," before "Bent" rehearsals start later this week.



Rebecca Wiesman (from left), brother Jeff Surber, mother Donna Surber and father Mike Surber play roles on and off the stage for Beechmont Players.

At UC's College-Conservatory of Music, 48 students are at work on the debuting "Transmigration" in spaces around CCM. "Nearly every CCM drama major plays a role," says drama chair Richard Hess.

Another 100 CCM students are working on "Two Gentlemen of Verona." The show clocks in 250 student hours per week (for eight weeks) to build the set. That's a total of 2,000 person-hours of set construction. Bearing in mind that the average person works 2,000 hours per year, that's one year of labor to build this one production.

This week add 400 person-hours to install the set into the theater in one 15-hour work day by 26 students.

While Covedale Center opens "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" this week, "we'll be deep in rehearsals for 'Peter Pan,' says producing artistic director Tim Perrino.

Brooke Rucidlo as Peter and Shawn Michael Starks as Captain Hook are learning their fight choreography and ZFX Flying Systems ("Cathy Rigby's company from the national tour") will come to town to rig the show for safety.

When he's not directing, Perrino is finalizing plans and looking over bids for the Covedale's expansion, looking to a groundbreaking ceremony in late April and a completion by late summer.

As Falcon Theater in Newport heads into final rehearsals leading to Friday's opening of "Hamlet," they'll be working on one of their biggest challenges.

"Backstage space is very limited at the Monmouth," says artistic director Ted Weil, "so keeping traffic patterns clear and making sure facilities and dressing space are always available to those who need them will be a big part of our tech week."

Falcon also invites local bloggers to dress rehearsal and, says Weil, "we're doing everything to make sure they see a complete and finished production."

In Playhouse in the Park's design shop, the crew is hard at work on "The Foreigner," opening in mid-March.

Charge Scenic Artist Lisa Molyneux and her team of three artists are painting a forest backdrop and fake wood to create heavily textured lumber for the cabin where the action is set and are distressing props to make them look old and rustic, while costume shop manager Gordon DeVinney and his team of six begin fittings and constructing costumes.

Properties manager Anna Goller and her team of three will be sourcing props by visiting antique shops, thrift stores and flea markets. They will also be attending tech rehearsals for "Blackbird" this weekend, to ensure props are in their proper place and assessing any issues. They're also working on school tour "Theory of Mind."

Five Playhouse carpenters are building the set for "Last Train to Nibroc," opening at the end of March. On Sunday, 16 carpenters, electricians and temporary workers will be strike the set of "Travels of Angelica."

Visit <http://www.CinStages.com> **target="_new">CinStages.com** for Cincinnati theater news and reviews, or find more from the <http://cincyshakes.com/> **target="_new">Cincinnati Shakespeare Company.**

Go behind the scenes to sample a day in

<http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Dato=20090215&Kategori=ENT&Lopenr=902150334&Ref=AR> **target="_new">Daniel Hines' busy life.**

Find out what <http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20090215/ENT/302160086/1176> **target="_new">the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company has been doing lately.**

Additional Facts

If you go

Here's a look at upcoming shows:

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," Feb. 19-March 8, Covedale Center for Performing Arts, 513-241-6550

"Bent," March 12-April 5, New Stage Collective, 513-621-3700

"Blackbird," through March 8, Playhouse in the Park, 513-421-3888

"Dead City," through Feb. 22, New Stage Collective, 513-621-3700

"Dearly Beloved," Feb. 20-21, Tri-County Players, 513-471-2030

"Eurydice," March 7-28, Know Theatre of Cincinnati, 513-300-5669

"The Foreigner," March 10-April 10, Playhouse in the Park, 513-421-3888

"Gem of the Ocean," through Feb. 22, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, 513-421-3555

"Hamlet," Feb. 20-March 7, Falcon Theater, 513-481-9042

"High School Musical 2," Feb. 20-March 1, Children's Theatre of Cincinnati, 513.569.8080, ext. 10

"I Love You Because," through Feb. 21, Know Theatre of Cincinnati, 513-300-5669

"The Movie Game," Feb. 27-March 7, The Drama Workshop, 513-598-8303

"Peter Pan," March 26-April 11, Covedale Center for Performing Arts, 513-241-6550

"The Pillowman," Feb. 23-26, Northern Kentucky University 307 Acting Studio Student Productions. (Part of a semester of shows produced, directed, acted and sometimes written by students, presented at noontime, open to public but limited seating. No reservations.)

"The Pirates of Penzance," Feb. 27-March 7, Beechmont Players, 513-233-2468

"1776," through Feb. 21, Footlighters, 859-291-7464

"Timon of Athens," Feb. 27-March 22, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, 513-381-2288

"Transmigration," Feb. 19-21, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music drama department, 513-556-4183

"Two Gentlemen of Verona," Feb. 26-March 1, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music musical theater department, 513-556-4183

"Working," Feb. 19-March 1, Northern Kentucky University, 859-572-5464

"Y.E.S. Festival of New Plays," April 16-26, Northern Kentucky University, 859-572-5464

For information, visit www.CinStages.com