

Why BLOOMSDAY?

David Cecsarini

On the road during July of 1969, in Pennsylvania, vacationing in our 1966 Dodge Monaco, we pulled in to a Howard Johnson's motel for our overnight stay. Mom and Dad were always partial to HoJo's, and we kids forever hoped for the ice cream. Besides the travel, it had been an extra-interesting day in the car: the radio had been tuned to monitor the progress of the Apollo XI lunar mission as it approached its landing.



July 20th: at around 4 in the afternoon, Neil Armstrong had radioed his message of success: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." It would be another 6-7 tense hours until Armstrong and Gene Cernan emerged from their lunar lander to become the first humans to set boots on the moon, taking that "one giant leap" for us all.

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Just like the other half-billion people who watched that event worldwide, the five Cecsarini's were glued to our B&W motel room set for the whole thing, trying to comprehend that it was really happening.



MAD ABOUT IT

Life has a way of turning unexpected corners. Back in my early days, I was mad for space, crazy for flying. Perhaps my fascination had been fed by that exciting 60s "space race." Maybe it came from the fumes of Testor's model cement down in the basement, wafting up from my Revell models of Mustangs, Thunderbolts, Geminis, Phantom IIs or the USS Forrestal? Or was it the paper airplanes?

To this day, my eyes are inevitably drawn to anything that flies, especially if it's up there: an airliner, a vintage war bird, even an orbiting satellite. But, along with my look to the sky invariably comes a thought of What If. What if I hadn't had that car accident on my way to ground school at Mitchell Field? What if I had accepted the Naval

Academy appointment and earned my wings? What would a flying career have looked like?

What if I hadn't done *GUYS AND DOLLS* in high school? — and hadn't received praise? — and hadn't had so much fun?

From flying, to theatre, in one fell swoop*.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Well, the transition took a little longer than that, but much to my daddy's temporary disappointment, the theatre won out. Forty-four years later, live theatre has not let me down and I'm grateful for that good fortune. But I do have to admit to wondering what I may have left behind those many years ago.

Although life turns corners, it proceeds in only one direction. That's time.

Playwright Steven Dietz loves to play with time. He also enjoys breaking the rules. And in *BLOOMSDAY*, he does both, winding back the clock for a second run at the past. Or, at least, a second look. Big difference.



Continued, page 2

**fell swoop* = Shakespearean term for a terrible, perilous, vengeful swoop, as when a hawk swoops down upon its prey



BRAVO, NEXT ACT! 2017
is your destination for merriment, fun and frolic!

Celebrate the close of another season at the theatre you rely on to spark conversations about issues that hit close to home.

Bravo, Next Act! is our biggest benefit event of the year. All proceeds support Next Act Theatre's intimate, powerful productions and educational programming.

Join the festivities on the evening of Thursday, June 1st, and you'll have memories to last all summer long!

*Left: A delighted James Alioto enjoys his **Bravo, Next Act!** escort – Board member (and wife) Terri Alioto and Board Vice President Cathy Jakicic.*

WHY BLOOMSDAY? (continued)

FIRST BLOOM

In Dietz's story, thirty five years in the past a young American kid named Robbie latches onto a Bloomsday tour (see History, page 3) in Dublin's historical core, and becomes smitten with Caitheleen, the fetching Irish lass in charge. Dietz then overlays the present as we meet Robert, now an American literature professor who has made contact with Cait and has arranged to meet her in Dublin to catch up on the old times they never knew. Thus, our author has set up an ingenious time travel adventure to re-discover what was left behind those 35 years ago.

We can re-live moments we've had, good or bad. We can even re-live moments that never were. But once the die has been cast and life's course has progressed some decades onward, it becomes very difficult to reverse direction. "Life" often gets in our way and change becomes daunting at best, and more often, just not possible.

I wonder if Steven Dietz is asking, "Should we just accept that there's no turning back?" "Who says there's a statute of limitations on starting over?" "What do we need to know, to see, to feel, to make our happiest life-decisions?" Or, "Is the past merely a romantic illusion, filtered by clouds of time, age and discontent?"

IN GOOD HANDS



Teacher about Evolution) and intriguing newcomer Jordan Watson will infuse Robbie and Caitheleen with the prerequisite and perhaps dangerous impetuosity of youth. This is going to be fun.

For all these meandering thoughts above, and for many more, Steven Dietz's *BLOOMSDAY* has captured my fancy and we're delighted to bring it to the Next Act stage. We hope it will capture yours as well.

See you at the theatre.
 David C.

With long-time Milwaukee Rep artistic director Joseph Hanreddy in the director's chair, we are in for an Irish-American treat. Joe's an old hand at Irish plays; to him, it's another labor of love. The splendid Carrie Hitchcock and her multi-talented husband Norman Moses will bring gracious wisdom to Cait and Robert; Kyle Curry (last seen in Next Act's *TEN QUESTIONS to Ask your Biology*

Meet Larry and Patty Compton: Local heroes to many a good cause, Larry and Patty have championed the Next Act mission as patrons and donors for over 20 years. With regular appearances on our Production Sponsors list, these two generous friends of the arts are rounding out the 2016-17 season as sponsors of *BLOOMSDAY*. Larry and Patty, we are ever grateful for your generous support of Next Act, and your kind words too! Here's what Patty had to say:

For decades, Next Act has enriched our lives and the lives of our family. We exposed our four children to the magic of theatre when they were young. Next Generation Theatre's family-focused productions, staged in Centennial Hall were special occasions, happily remembered.

Next Generation experienced a metamorphosis that set us on an unanticipated course in theatre. Jill Heavenrich (lifetime theatre advocate and friend) recruited Larry to what ultimately became the Next Act Board. Larry helped guide the non-profit theatre to financial stability; Next Act (especially David Ceccarini and Charles Kakuk) in turn, introduced Larry to unique views and unorthodox methods to measure quality and value experience. It was an unfamiliar perspective that continues to positively enhance our lives and inform our judgment to this day.

We regularly introduce this particular theatre to friends and relatives with pride. Next Act's plays not only entertain and engage us; they often challenge our intellect. We've enjoyed



many lively conversations and discussions over wine and dinner following a Next Act production. For us, Next Act has been a great way to "get the party started." We like to use Next Act as a vehicle to introduce friends from different contexts to one another – arranging to meet in the lobby, enjoy the theatre experience and reconvene in our home to become better acquainted while sharing company over a meal. The play naturally provides plenty of subject matter to keep conversation stimulated. We appreciate Next Act's high standards; it's an invaluable community asset enriching lives through performance art. WE LOVE NEXT ACT! It has a permanent "reserved" place in our hearts.

– Patty Compton

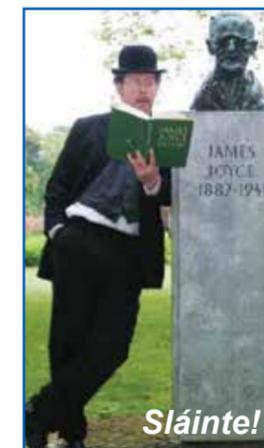
SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: DAVID AND PATRICIA ANDERSON

We also extend our thanks to David and Patricia Anderson for co-sponsoring *BLOOMSDAY*. Next Act is fortunate to have enjoyed years of loyalty and support from Dave and Pat in many forms; as season ticket holders, generous donors, regulars at Bravo, Next Act! and as volunteers. Dave is currently serving a second year as President of the Next Act Board of Directors. His prudent leadership and accomplishments have helped strengthen the organization and we are tremendously grateful. Thank you ever so much Dave and Pat!

HISTORY OF BLOOMSDAY

James Joyce's *Ulysses* has been called the most important novel of the 20th century. The novel follows the lives and thoughts of Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly, and a host of other characters, on June 16, 1904. In a Milwaukee Journal article, "From Dublin to Milwaukee, fans marking 'Ulysses' anniversary," Joanne Weintraub describes James Joyce's *Ulysses* as "stubbornly original, soaring and earthy, recording its characters' most mundane habits and intimate thoughts in a spectacular variety of literary styles."

She goes on to say, "**It is also — as befits a book in which eating, drinking, music and lovemaking...**



are rarely more than a few pages away — a grand excuse for a party."

Celebrations across the globe feature revelers in Edwardian dress – some impersonating characters from the book – attending readings, performances and tours, such as the one depicted in *BLOOMSDAY*.

The first major celebration of Bloomsday came in 1929, but it was not celebrated in Ireland until 1954. Since 1994, The James Joyce Centre in Dublin has organized the Bloomsday Festival, a weeklong event that includes various tours, a pub crawl and a breakfast, among other festivities.

The 2017-18 season will arrive amidst ongoing change; it's impossible to predict events in the coming year. However, you can be certain of this: Next Act will be here to deliver the stirring and thought-provoking theatre adventures you have come to expect from us. Here's what's coming up.

SILENT SKY by Lauren Gunderson
September 28 – October 22, 2017

MILWAUKEE PREMIERE



Approaching autumn, we will cast our eyes toward the stars and enjoy another Lauren Gunderson play which covers very different ground from this year's political foray, *THE TAMING*. Gunderson pays deserved and loving tribute to the group of uniquely talented and hard working women who toiled behind the scenes of early 20th century astronomy.

Our story: Harvard Observatory in the early 1900s: grave men peer

through their giant telescope. Behind the scenes, Henrietta Leavitt and her female "computer" partners map the distant stars in galaxies beyond our own. Brilliant and determined, Henrietta's work paves the way for modern astronomy, but she struggles for recognition in a man's world. In this magical story of science, history, family and love, a passionate young woman maps her own passage through a society determined to keep her in her place.

"Sheer magic. Smart, infectious humor" – *San Francisco Chronicle*

This wonderfully poetic story offers the perfect opportunity to invite back **the fabulous Deborah Staples** to our stage. Along with three other strong character actresses, *SILENT SKY* makes a solid statement in favor of gender equality. Henrietta's struggle of discovery lasts many years; there is a certain epic quality to her adventure and an enduring sense of accomplishment.

Watch the mail for your 2017-18 season ticket renewal packet! Season tickets on sale now. For more information call 414-278-7780.

THE SECRET MASK by Rick Chafe
November 16 – December 10, 2017

U.S. PREMIERE



Next, we look north, to Canadian playwright Rick Chafe. *THE SECRET MASK* will be a United States premiere, after playing to acclaim in Canada since 2011. This time of year is when we're most attuned to family, and the idea that no matter our differences, what binds us together is more powerful. In his quirky and subtle story, author Chafe takes us inside the shifting dynamics of one such family.

Our story: Almost forty years after Ernie walked out on the family, his son George is contacted to help the old man cope with the aftermath of a stroke. As Ernie struggles to regain language and memory, George works to overcome his hurt and resentment, caring for a father he never knew. Each man tries to make sense of the past while preparing for their uncertain, newly-entwined future – a moving parable of prodigal fathers.

"Engaging, heartbreaking, tragic-comically funny... a universal – and moving – story about a child connecting with a parent." – *CBC Winnipeg*

This is a quiet tale, rich with humanity, personal challenge and intimate victories. Along the way, Ernie's battle to regain language makes for some humorous moments, and some which resonate deeply. As son George learns to understand Ernie's regrets, it becomes a moving parable of prodigal fathers. Milwaukee veteran and treasure-on-stage **James Pickering** will bring imperfect but lovable Ernie to brilliant life on the Next Act stage, assisted by long-time friend and guest director **Edward Morgan**.

EQUIVOCATION by Bill Cain
February 1 – 25, 2018

MILWAUKEE PREMIERE



The middle of winter is the time to heat things up with something different and *EQUIVOCATION*, by Bill Cain, fills that bill. **Michael Cotey**, a young, smart and ambitious director, brought the play to my attention last year as he mounted his very theatrical version at Northwestern University. Michael will again work his magic with this amazing piece, and Next Act patrons will receive the special treat of visiting William Shake-

speare in his times, as he wrestles with creation, coercion and the challenges of producing good theatre in Elizabethan England.

The story: Playwright William Shagspeare is commissioned by Robert Cecil, the most powerful man in England, to write the true historical account of a failed terrorist attempt to kill King James I. But as Shag and his renowned theatrical troupe rehearse the so-called Gunpowder Plot play, they suspect the King's version might be a cover-up. Now Shagspeare, the greatest writer of his, or of any age, must decide whether to write a lie and lose his soul, or speak the truth and risk losing his head.

"... one of the most bracingly intelligent, sizzingly theatrical American plays in a decade..." – *Variety*

This quote from *Variety* says it all. In addition to Shagspeare and his daughter, four other actors play multiple roles, making lightning-quick transformations to unwrap this multi-layered mystery. The language is wonderfully literate without being stuffy and the political intrigue remarkably contemporary. The play offers a great opportunity for many veteran Milwaukee actors to shine – **James Ridge** and **Jonathan Smoots** for starters – and even **David Ceccarini** will join in the fray. This will be fun.

You keep telling us, it's the plays that get you talking.

For 27 seasons, Next Act has generated lively conversation about a huge variety of ideas, topics and happenings. Again this next season, we're bringing you a unique selection of premieres that will entertain you in the theatre and have you thinking and talking as you leave.

We invite you to remain engaged in the conversation.

-David C.

I AND YOU
April 5 – 29, 2018

MILWAUKEE PREMIERE



I AND YOU is a brilliant gem that focuses upon two young people seeking connection. It is charming, witty and when you least expect it, it hits home with clarifying insight into the lives of teens. The revelation in the final minutes of this play will make your heart sing, and break, all at once.

The story: Anthony arrives at his schoolmate Caroline's door bearing waffle fries, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and an urgent homework assignment. Caroline is sick and hasn't been to school in months. She is as quick and sarcastic as Anthony is quiet and steadfast; both are smart as whips. As these two let down their guard, their seemingly mundane poetry project reveals a much deeper, more profound mystery that has brought them together. *I AND YOU* is an ode to youth, life, love, and the strange beauty of human connectedness.

"... sharp and funny ... Gunderson taps into a buoyant spirit." – *Washington Post*

Lauren Gunderson continues on her quest to be one of the most produced contemporary American playwrights again this year. This will be our second Gunderson play of our season. Yet, her story and setting are so very different from *SILENT SKY*, and the destination so utterly unique, the juxtaposition of the two plays serves to demonstrate Lauren's versatility, if not her virtuosity.

As part of our community mission, Next Act offers the theatre space for rent. Each producer is solely responsible for the content and quality of their performances. Here's what they have to say about their upcoming productions.



Milwaukee Opera Theatre presents **THE MIKADO • March 16 – 26**

We're reuniting the original cast for a revival of our mad-cap, smash-hit, 2015 production. Now with even more cowbell! Join us in the town of Titipu for a MIKADO like no other! Tickets are \$18 - \$28.

Wild Space Dance Company presents **WILD AT 30 • May 4 – 6**



Travel through the past, present and future of Wild Space, moving from the Next Act main stage to the lobby, hallways and rehearsal rooms for site-based vignettes.

New work by Artistic Director Debra Loewen goes beyond the footlights as dancers create a wild space between the seats and stage. Founding company members Jennifer Goetzinger and David Figueroa reunite for a 1987 duet reset by choreographer Cate Deicher, while cameos for returning company alumni and choreography for current members merge past and present eras of Wild Space. A look to the future features work by UWM intern Nicole Spence, and affiliate artists Dan Schuchart and Mauriah Kraker!

Milwaukee Metro Voices presents **TOWN HALL STORIES • May 12 – 21**



What begins as a more-or-less conventional town hall meeting becomes a cornucopia of monologues, stories and songs from a disparate variety of unique and colorful characters. Discussions become heated, passions are ignited, and emotions flow freely, in this music/story cycle that incorporates a range of surprising ideas, unconventional attitudes and unexpected points of view. The second of Jason Powell's commissioned work for Milwaukee Metro Voices.

Tickets are \$25

For more information on these events and other upcoming rentals, visit www.nextact.org. Purchase tickets online at www.nextact.org, over the phone at 414-278-0765 or in person at 255 S. Water Street.

Need a space for your business meeting, retreat, or seminar? Rent Next Act: 414-278-7780

Creating events for the downtown Milwaukee area since 1997. We are proud sponsors of Next Act Theatre!



Contact Ernie or Robin for your next corporate or personal breakfast, lunch, dinner or appetizer event.

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WHAT'S NEXT

is a quarterly publication of Next Act Theatre

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Eleanór a Rún / Elanor of the Secrets

Calligraphic paintings in watercolor, of figures drifting in and out of poetry,

Weaving olden dances, mingling hands and mingling glances,
Flirting between reality and ancient, traditional Celtic art.

Hand written words, flowing across paper, telling tales with imagination and originality

And with a full but soft emotion like the swell of summer's ocean,
Where the love of poems and a need for art merge.

Layers of vivid and intense colors overlapping with symbolism and humor

Where the moon never sleeps without bringing me dreams

About the lingering passion of place, images and visits to Ireland,
and the nature of Wisconsin.

JULIE SAN FELIPE of New Berlin, WI • Watercolor and Oil Paintings



Cití na gCumann / Loveable Kitty

ANNOUNCING: Brand New Addition to the Next Act Theatre Board of Directors



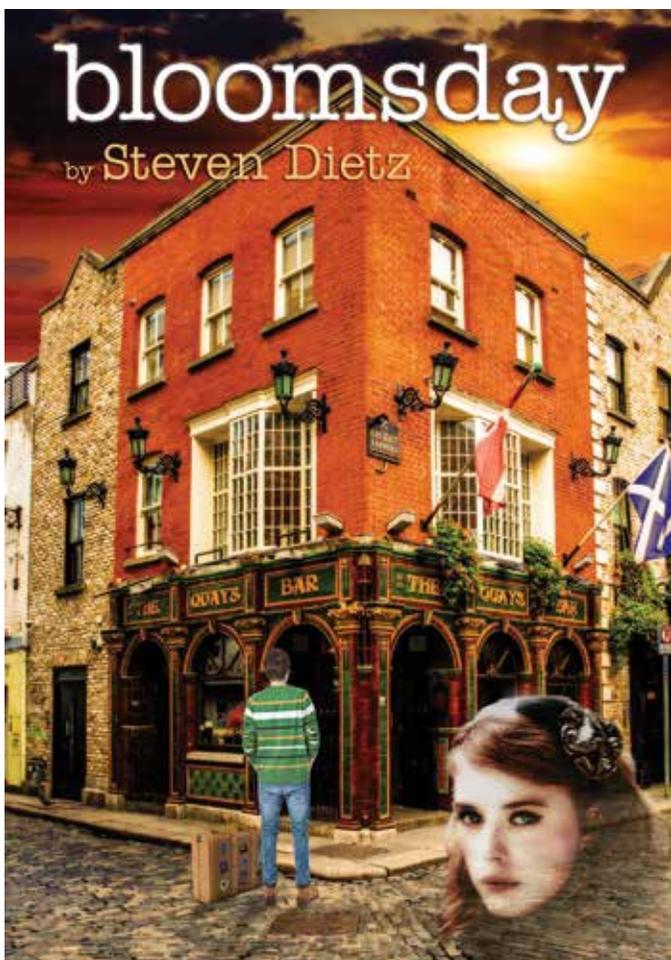
The vote was unanimous! **Ernie Wunsch**, Founder/Owner/CEO of Skyline Catering, accepted an invitation to join the Board of Directors after members voted in favor of adding him to the roster. Along with a genuine passion for the performing arts, Ernie brings the savvy of a successful entrepreneur, a collection of fresh ideas and a drive to give back to the community with even more impact than he was able to before, when the demands on his time were greater. **Welcome, Ernie! We're very pleased to have you on our Board.**



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Robert returns to Dublin to reunite with Cait, the woman who captured his heart during a James Joyce *Bloomsday* literary tour 35 years ago. Dancing backwards through time, the older couple retrace their steps to discover their younger selves. Through young Robbie and Caitheleen, they relive the unlikely, inevitable events that brought them - only briefly - together. This Irish time travel love story blends wit, humor and heartache into a buoyant, moving appeal for making the most of the present before it is past.

The one-that-got-away, revisited.

April 6 - 30, 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				Preview 7:30	6 Opening 7:30	7 8 4:30 8:00
9 2:00 7:00			12 1:30 7:30	13 7:30	14 7:30	15 4:30 8:00
16 2:00			19 1:30 7:30	20 7:30	21 7:30	22 4:30 8:00
23 2:00	24 7:30		26 7:30	27 7:30	28 7:30	29 4:30 8:00
30 2:00	Personal Preview (Begins 45 minutes prior to curtain)					
	Talkback		Pay What You Can			

Directed by Joseph Hanreddy
Featuring Kyle Curry, Carrie Hitchcock,
Norman Moses, Jordan Watson

BLOOMSDAY is made possible by the generosity of
Larry & Patty Compton, Arthur & Nancy Laskin, and David & Patricia Anderson