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Summer Circle Theatre brings free plays for all ages to MSU

By Thor Mallgren

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The cast of the Summer Circle Theater's production of Mount Olympus Junior High raise their rings on June 9, 2016 at the Summer Circle Courtyard. The show depicts young gods experiencing the struggles and awkwardness of middle school.

Emmett McConnell (<http://statenews.com/staff/emmett-mcconnell>) | The State News

Theater for all ages is coming to MSU's outdoor stage this summer, free of charge.

The plays range from "A Grand Night for Singing," a collection of famous Rodgers & Hammerstein musical numbers, to "Mr. Marmalade," an adults-only tale of a girl and her imaginary friend.

The plays take place outdoors at the east end of the MSU Auditorium, at the now one year old stage named Summer Circle Theatre (<http://theatre.msu.edu/productions/summer-circle-theatre/>).

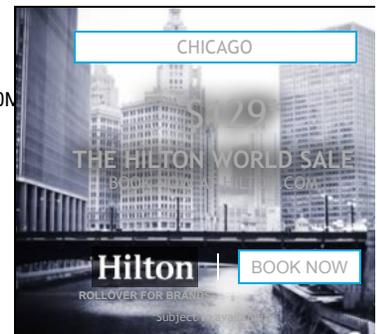
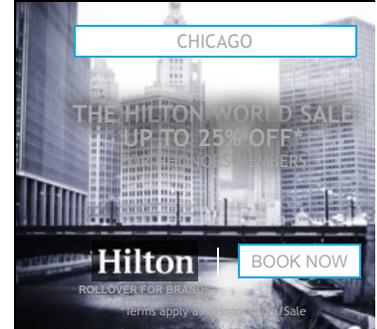
"It's a really beautiful community atmosphere," Rob Roznowski, director of Summer Circle Theatre, said. "Lots of people that have met there— lots of people that bring their kids back now."

One of the plays, "Mount Olympus Junior High," was written by Roznowski himself and will premier at Summer Circle Theater.

"It tells the story of the young gods of Mount Olympus when they're in junior high, dealing with a lot of the same stuff that the rest of us deal with when we're in junior high," Deric McNish, associate professor of theater at MSU and director of the play, said.

One of the main draws of the show, according to director of choreography Lana Grasser, is the involvement of young audience members throughout the piece.

"(The actors) come out into the crowd quite a few times. And they'll be grabbing the kids, getting them on their feet and getting them to dance along," Grasser said.



Actor Jacob Covert, who plays Poseidon in "Mount Olympus," said, "It's gonna be so much fun for the kids when they come see this. The set is so vibrant and alive, it'll be a lot of fun."

The plays vary in target audience, from family centric pieces such as "Mount Olympus Junior High" to the adults-only play "Mr. Marmalade," which will only be shown late at night.

"It's pretty adult content only," Roznowski said. "It's about a young girl's imaginary friend and it's pretty gross. It's awesome."

Due to the changes in tone, Roznowski says the atmosphere changes throughout the evening.

"You have like a kid's show at 6:30 and then a regular show at 8 o'clock and then an adult show at 10 o'clock. So the crowds keep shifting and the demographic keeps shifting throughout the evening," the director said.

In addition to free plays throughout the month of June, the theater is also offering a free summer camp for 1st through 6th graders.

The four-day camp verses 60 young students in acting, design, music and dance. The camp itself is taught by a collection of MSU Department of Theater faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students.

The camp was in such high demand it filled all of its 60 slots within the first 48 hours, according to Roznowski.

"It's pretty rare to get a free summer camp," the director said.

With every employee being paid for the work they do, from set design to acting, Summer Circle forms its own professional company.

"We are all paid for our work, which is pretty nice. It's always nice to get paid to do what you like," Joe Lancour, an assistant set designer for the play "Fallen Angels," said.

The theater relies entirely on donations to support its proposition, garnering funding from the university, the community and corporate sponsors.

Summer Circle Theatre will be celebrating its 56th year running. The show times are listed below:

A Grand Night for Singing
(<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/full-repertoire/2016-season/grand-night-singing/>)

June 8-11 at 8 p.m.

(For all ages)

The Groundling (<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/full-repertoire/2016-season/groundling/>)

June 15-18 at 8 p.m.

(Ages 12+)

Fallen Angels (<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/full-repertoire/2016-season/fallen-angels/>)

June 22-25 at 8 p.m.

(Ages 8+)

Mount Olympus Junior High
(<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/full-repertoire/2016-season/mt-olympus/>)

June 10-11 & 17-18 at 6:30 p.m.

(For all ages)

Mr. Marmalade (<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/full-repertoire/2016-season/mr-marmalade/>)

June 17-18 & 24-25 at 10 p.m.

(Adults only)

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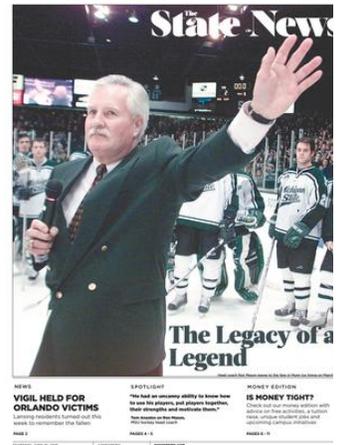
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