

MetroSpective

VOL. XX NO. 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF METRO THEATER COMPANY

Fall 2011

METRO THEATER COMPANY PROUDLY EMBRACES 39TH SEASON

WITH A NEW PLAY, A PLAY NEW TO ST. LOUIS AND A PROVEN FAVORITE

Metro Theater Company is 39 and holding—but we're certainly not holding anything back when it comes to producing provocative plays guaranteed to engage and move audiences of all ages.

"How astonishing to be on the tipping point of the company's fourth decade," says Carol North, artistic director. "This is an exciting time!" Here are details about the new season:

- *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle* is a brand new play from José Cruz González
- *Battledrum*, by Doug Cooney, ties into an exhibit at the Missouri History Museum
- Wesley Middleton's *Tomato Plant Girl* looks at bullying from a garden-fresh angle

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

Battledrum by Doug Cooney with music by Lee Ahlin will be presented in partnership with the Missouri History Museum as part of "The Civil War in Missouri," a new exhibit that opens Nov. 11 and runs through March 16, 2013.

Full of lively action, rich music, evocative costumes, and just the right amount of humor, *Battledrum* offers young people a point of entry into the complexities of the war that divided our nation. (For more on the play, see Page 3.) This is its second production in the country. North will direct.

Also, we will offer two public performances in November of our popular touring production of *Tomato Plant Girl*. For details, see the schedule on this page.

TOURING PRODUCTIONS

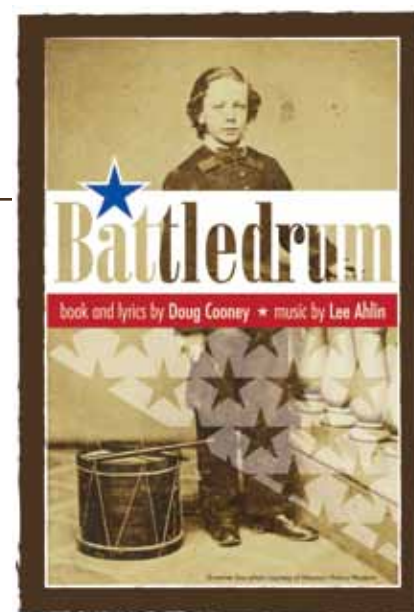
Both touring plays—*Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle* and *Tomato Plant Girl*—are "incredibly

timely" in their themes and issues, says North.

The world premiere of *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle* is the result of a two-year collaboration with González. "José has a gift for crafting deceptively simple stories that are in fact very complex. That is an indication of the trust he has in his audience." (For a conversation with González, see Page 3.) North will direct the play.

Tomato Plant Girl tells a cautionary tale about Little Girl, a newcomer, who looks for guidance from Bossy Best Friend—up to a point. The production has been warmly received by thousands of young playgoers at schools, libraries and community centers throughout Missouri and Illinois.

North sums up: "Whether you think of 39 years as young or old, our 2011-12 season promises to be exciting. We hope to see you soon!"



JANUARY 10-29, 2012

at Missouri History Museum in Forest Park
TICKETS: 314.361.9017 or www.mohistory.org

Presented by



NOVEMBER 19-20, 2011

at Clayton High School Auditorium
TICKETS: www.brownpapertickets.com or 1.800.838.3006



**Super Cowgirl and
Mighty Miracle**

by José Cruz González

TOURING THROUGH APRIL 7, 2012

To book your performance call 314.997.6777
or e-mail nancy@metrotheatercompany.org

OUR MISSION: Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community, and nurture meaningful learning through the arts.

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WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?



Jack Benny, the droll comedian who was a familiar TV presence in our home when I was a kid, claimed to be 39 years old... for years. Obviously, turning 40 was more than he could bear.

A beloved grandfather in our family had quite the opposite view of age. When he was 79, he'd boast, "I'm in my 80th year and looking forward to my 81st!"

Metro Theater Company is 39 this year, and we're positively kicking up our heels! Why not? Just look at all that we have to celebrate:

- A world premiere of another brilliant play by José Cruz González
- An invitation to take *Tomato Plant Girl* to the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts in Florida for a week of performances and workshops

- A rich partnership with the Missouri History Museum to present *Battledrum*
- Several exciting original works in the pipeline for development
- Plans in the works for our 40th season and our next partnership with Edison Theatre
- Expanded service to the community with talented new education staff
- Deepening relationships with collaborative partners and new potential partners on the horizon

At 39, we are thriving, growing, creating, connecting, stretching, learning, imagining, and insisting on visionary planning even as we manage our organization carefully. And always—always—we are reaching out to the community we serve.

So what does it mean to be in our 39th season? Hey, we're in our 39th, looking forward to our 40th and to the decades beyond!



Carol North, Artistic Director

GAMBLE TO LEAD BOARD, 7 NEW MEMBERS NAMED

Susan Z. Gamble has been named to lead the Board of Directors, and seven new members were recently approved. Their respective expertise and varied skills will provide superlative leadership.

Gamble is an attorney with Summers Compton Wells in Ladue, where her areas of concentration are commercial transactions, mergers and acquisitions, securities, real estate, and general business counsel.

"The spark and the sparkle are what drew me to Metro Theater Company 35 years ago when I was an elementary school teacher," says Gamble. "The spark is still there in the energy that fills the room every time I listen to Carol North talk about MTC's opportunities and projects, and the sparkle is still in the eyes of audience members who experience MTC's work. I am excited to lead this magical Metro Theater Company into its 39th and 40th seasons."

The new board members are **Gary Feder**, partner, Husch Blackwell; **Kavitha Lakshmanan**, licensed clinical social worker, Care and Counseling; **Antonio Maldonado**, owner, Puckett Floor Covering; **Jan Paul Miller**, partner,



Susan Z. Gamble

Thompson Coburn; **Brett Moorehouse**, vice president and chief operating officer, Ranken Jordan; **Mary Tonkin**, senior counsel, Monsanto Company; and **Stephanie Tucker**, director of secondary metals export, Kataman Metals.

The following directors were approved for re-election to a second three-year term on the board: **Susan W. Nall**, professor emerita, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville; and **Don Senti**, executive director, Cooperating School Districts. Also, **Camille Greenwald**, director, Forest Park Medical Clinic/MEDEX, has been named to the emeritus board.

A SUPER PLAYWRIGHT RIDES INTO TOWN



Costume renderings by designer Lou Bird.



MARCHING TO THE MUSIC OF *BATTLEDRUM*

Three youngsters—one from the North, one from the South and one who lost his way on the Underground Railroad—find themselves working as drummer boys on the front lines of the Civil War.

What were their lives like?

The answer is in *Battledrum*, a new Metro Theater Company production that ties in with the Missouri History Museum's exhibit "The Civil War in Missouri." (See www.mohistory.org) "Troops in the Civil War used drummer boys to communicate battle commands to soldiers, and this play is infused with the stirring music of those drums," says Carol North, artistic director.

Playwright Doug Cooney admits that *Battledrum* was something of a leap of faith. "This was not an unchallenging show to do for young people," he says. "In fact, it was kind of audacious."

Cooney did it, on commission for the Eckerd Theater Company in Clearwater, Florida. Cooney is a screenwriter, playwright, novelist, lyricist, and educator based in Los Angeles. He is now working on a novel adaptation of *Battledrum*, and he hopes to be in the opening-night audience with his six-year-old son.

Elizabeth Pickard, assistant director of community education and events at the History Museum, expressed excitement about the collaboration with Metro Theater Company. "*Battledrum* is a lovely play, one that will bring in students to see what the Civil War meant to children who were their age," Pickard says. "The play will provide a visceral, personal connection."

Cooney suggests that after seeing *Battledrum*, students will better understand the meaning of the artifacts on display.

José Cruz González, who wrote the inspiring and funny *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle*, has written 30 plays and seen half of them produced. But even for "super" playwrights, new plays do not spring full-blown onto the stage, ready for actors to inhabit the roles.

In his most recent collaboration with Metro Theater Company, González penned five drafts over more than two years before heading into production. He savors that process and also has high praise for Metro Theater Company. "The company is so innovative and forward thinking, so committed to telling stories relevant to the community. It is an honor to work with them."

At the heart of the new play, presented by PNC Arts Alive, is an African-American grandma on a set income and her 6-year-old, mixed heritage granddaughter who needs a place to stay. "They both are stubborn and must figure out how to live with one another," González says.



José Cruz González gathers with cast and crew at rehearsal for *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle*.

Their neighborhood is full of "For Sale" signs, lots of weeds and homeless dogs. "The girl embraces a dog that later destroys her grandmother's favorite church hat," says González. "The play is about how they all come together to survive."

González also has written for PAZ, the Emmy Award-nominated television series produced by Discovery Kids for The Learning Channel. He teaches theater at California State University Los Angeles and is a member of the prestigious College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



José Cruz González talks with children at St. Cecilia School about how discovering the power of his imagination led to his becoming a playwright.

ALONG THE 'PATHWAY' TO AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT

Metro Theater Company is one of only three major arts organizations in St. Louis invited to participate in a "New Pathways for the Arts" initiative under the direction of EmcArts, a not-for-profit organization based in New York.

Organizations were asked to identify a specific challenge that adversely affects their vitality, and then devise an innovative strategy to address that challenge. The Contemporary Art Museum and the Shakespeare Festival St. Louis are also taking part. The EmcArts New Pathways Program is funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis. (More information is available at www.metrotheatercompany.org.)



A student at ArtsINTERsection discovers that innovation begins with a new perspective.

THANK YOU!

METRO THEATER COMPANY GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS, AGENCIES, FOUNDATIONS, AND CORPORATIONS FOR THEIR CRITICAL SUPPORT

This listing represents support from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. We apologize if we have inadvertently omitted anyone who should have been included or have spelled any names incorrectly. Please let us know so we can correct future listings.

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"Addresses timely issues pertinent to children's lives by being fun yet academically innovative."

JoAnn Hejna, Executive Director,
The Saigh Foundation

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Elizabeth Green, Civic Leader

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Anyone can be a philanthropist. A gift of any size can create a bequest of great theater, inclusive community and meaningful learning through the arts for years to come.

Your legacy gift can ensure that Metro Theater Company continues to be a dynamic and critical component in learning and creative discovery for children across the metropolitan St. Louis area. Planning a bequest to Metro Theater Company may also provide tax benefits for your estate. No matter your stage in life or what role you play, you can make plans that will impact the future of our community. Begin planning your legacy to Metro Theater Company now.

With YOUR help the show will go on!

Contact David Warren, Development Director, for further information:
314-997-6777 or david@metrotheatercompany.org.

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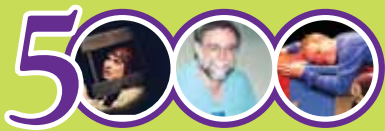
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Carol North and Nicholas Kryah

In honor of David Warren
Ariel Lyons-Warren

In memory of Dr. Lionel G. Warren
Sally E. Barker
Pearl and Albert Daube
Amy Lyons and Adam Cohen
Susan and Jim Gamble
Ira Lyons
Carol North and Nicholas Kryah
Margaret O'Brien
Roberta Stolz
Esther and Walter Stone
Nancy Tonkins and Laurie Whelan
Rita R. Warren

In honor of Lisa Orden Zarin
Flint W. Fowler and June McAllister Fowler
Susan and Jim Gamble
Debbie and John Greenberg
Camille and James Greenwald
Karleen and Tom Hoerr
Anne and Jeff Lowell
Candace O'Connor
and Bob Wiltenburg
Sue and Jerry Schlichter

In memory of Ruth Zatskis
Rita R. Warren



REMEMBERING SUSAN "SUZI" SARGEANT MCDONALD

Our good friend Suzi McDonald made certain that young people in central Illinois experienced first-rate, professional theater. Founder of the Youth Series at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois/ Urbana-Champaign, Suzi presented many of Metro Theater Company's productions there over the years. Her death in 2004 came much too soon.

A memorial fund in Suzi's name has been established to ensure that young people have continued access to Metro Theater Company's artistic programs.

METRO THEATER COMPANY INVESTS IN EDUCATION

In addition to performing at schools throughout the region much of the year, Metro Theater Company works in schools, integrating theater arts into curriculum. "We definitely are investing in education programs," says Carol North, artistic director.

"Metro Theater Company's education programs are in such demand that the only way to meet that demand is to grow our offerings—and our department." (See related story on this page.)

Three key programs—two of them new—enhance Metro's relationships with local schools. They are:

- Building Community Through Drama
- Step Inside The Story
- Create Your Own Adventure!

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH DRAMA is now in its sixth year. In this five-session classroom residency, teaching artists use non-competitive drama games and improvisation to help students build a safe, welcoming classroom. Improvisational scenarios examine teasing, exclusion, name-calling and bullying, and help students create positive strategies to deal with such problems in a safe environment.

STEP INSIDE THE STORY is our new program for students in grades K-5. They experience imaginative fun and creative play while building curricular skills through the use of story. In 60-minute sessions, our teaching artists bring stories to life through drama and creative



Teaching artists Andrea Purnell (above) and Roxane McWilliams (below) make learning fun with area children.

movement while reinforcing important literacy skills such as comprehension, vocabulary building and visualization.

CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE! is our new program for students in third grade and older. Our teaching artists work with students in 60-minute sessions to experience a high-energy voyage through history, literature or science, using improvisation, role-playing and creative problem solving.



MEET METRO'S NEW EDUCATION TEAM

Metro Theater Company begins our 39th season with an all-new education team. We welcome Karen Weberman, our new education director; Ariana Moses, our resident teaching artist; and Meredyth Pederson, our teaching artist fellow.

Weberman comes to Metro from Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, where she designed and facilitated arts-based residencies and workshops in schools and organizations throughout Chicago and environs. She has taught with Northlight Theatre, Emerald City Theatre

Company, Orlando Repertory Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, UCP of Central Florida and ArtsBridge America.

"I am thrilled to join the incredibly warm, intelligent, and creative team at Metro Theater Company," says Weberman. "It is my goal to develop meaningful relationships with current community partners, and continue to seek out areas of need for new education programs."

Moses has worked with the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis and the Papermill Touring Children's Theatre in Lincoln, New Hampshire. Pederson, our 2011-2012 teaching artist fellow, has taught creative drama and theater arts at the Lexington Children's Theatre in Lexington, Kentucky.



Karen Weberman



Ariana Moses



Meredyth Pederson

MetroSpective

Metro Theater Company

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Metro Theater Company is professional theater for young people and families. It is a member of Missouri Citizens for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group, Inc. (the national service organization for non-profit professional theaters), and Theatre for Young Audiences/USA. Metro Theater Company receives financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis; the Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis; numerous corporations; foundations; and individuals.

TIME GROWS SHORT TO PICK TOMATO PLANT GIRL

Wesley Middleton's timeless play *Tomato Plant Girl* offers sharp dialogue, physical action and playful, high-energy conflict as it explores the themes of bullying, true friendship, peer pressure and self-esteem. This play will delight audiences age 4 and up.



ONE WEEKEND ONLY!

November 19th and 20th at 3 p.m.

at the newly renovated

Clayton High School Auditorium

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www.brownpapertickets.com

STAY AND PLAY!

Yes, after the play we're hosting a family fun event with hands-on activities in the beautiful, open space commons area. Stay with us and enjoy the fun!

Now is the time to invite a friend to a Metro Theater Company production!



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- ▶ Meet the Education Team
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT www.metrotheatercompany.org

JOIN US NOW ON



HELP US GO GREEN

Send us your email address at community@metrotheatercompany.org and we'll send you our next newsletter electronically!