

celebrating all good things

Songs from the heart

A new work by an up-and-coming playwright kicks off the mainstage Powerhouse season. *by Kristine Coulter*

"We Are Here"

June 29-July 11
Powerhouse Theater
Vassar College
124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie
(845) 437-5599
powerhouse.vassar.edu

"We Are Here" is the first mainstage production of the 2010 Powerhouse Theater season. Opening June 29 in the Powerhouse Theater on the Vassar College campus in Poughkeepsie, performances will run through July 11.

"I started to think about when something terrible happens," said Tracy Thorne. Thorne wrote "We Are Here" in 2009, even though, she said she had been thinking about the idea for the play years ago.

Thorne said she wanted to look through the lens of a 'happy family' and how they would react if something terrible happened in their lives.

"I started to write about the behavior. Then behavior got to be philosophical," explained Thorne. She shifted focus over to "the strange thing, 'What is it that keeps us going?'"

"They can't just talk about being happy; I got stuck," said Thorne. She went on to explain how she went to a concert at Lincoln Center. At the concert, Thorne remarked, she noticed husbands and wives were happy.

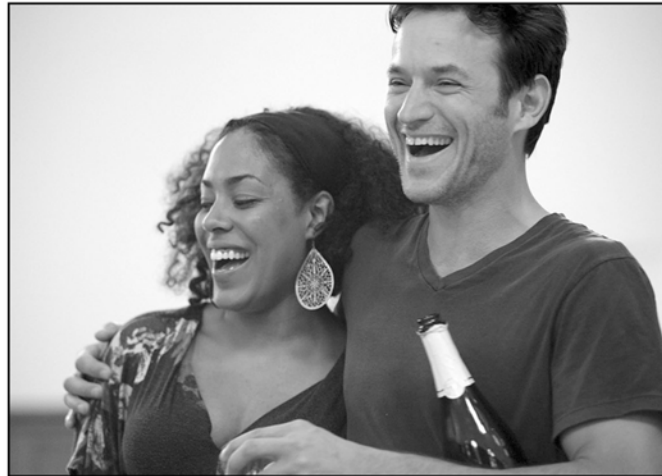
"It was music that made their happiness quite interesting," said Thorne.

And so, the characters in "We Are Here" sing to each other when words will not suffice.

Some of the one-act plays written by Thorne are: "Be Careful What You Wish For You Just Might Get It," "Building Big Buildings" and "Miss St. Hilda's Junior Kindergarten." "Quick Bright Things," "Forgivable" and "Lush Life" are full-length plays written by Thorne.

Actor Adam Rothenberg portrays the young father Hal, who marries into the Nash family.

Rothenberg has starred in the CBS



A rehearsal image from "We Are Here" by Tracy Thorne: (From left) de'Adre Aziza appears as Billie and Adam Rothenberg appears as Hal. Photo © Vassar College / Buck Lewis Photography; Below: Playwright Tracy Thorne. Photo submitted

comedy "The Ex-List," the WB's "Misconceptions." Other television roles have included appearances on "House" and "Law & Order." Rothenberg played the lead role in "Coyote Beach," which won the 21st Century Filmmaker Award for Best American Short in the Avignon/New York Film Festival. He starred in the film "Tennessee" opposite Mariah Carey and "Mad Money" opposite Katie Holmes, Diane Keaton and Queen Latifah. Rothenberg portrayed the role of Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire" at the Kennedy Center.

This is the third season Rothenberg is participating in Powerhouse.

"Hal is a little more at home with the idea that, maybe, he's got a very different world view from the Nashes," stated Rothenberg. Unhappiness, Hal thinks, is something one works with rather than overcomes.

"There's a scene with Shawn [played by Uzo Aduba], my new sister-in-law, which takes place on the night of my son's birth," said Rothenberg about one of his favorite scenes to play.

At the end of the play, said

Rothenberg, "Hal becomes a force in his own right."

de'Adre Aziza, 2008 Tony nominee for "Passing Strange," plays the part of Billie Nash, Hal's wife.

"She [Billie] grew up in a very loving household," said Aziza. Even though she grew up privileged, Billie is not shallow, stated Aziza.

There are things in Billie's life that she had to deal with, and she had always known how to deal with, until one day the Nash family is struck by a tragedy.

Billie, explained Aziza, has to create her own way to deal with the loss.

"That way she is able to handle it," Aziza said, adding a person has to deal with and work out certain things themselves.

Aziza will star in "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" on Broadway later this year.

Thorne said the title "We Are Here" came to her one afternoon.

"What keeps us going on. We're still here," said Thorne. "That's the thing: We're not dead."

Thorne said she really learned about her humanity from going to the theater

and watching the stories.

Thorne hopes those who see "We Are Here" are able to learn more about being human.

The Powerhouse season runs June 25-Aug. 1 and includes two Readings Festivals, musicals, repertory productions featuring the Powerhouse Apprentice Company and more. Visit powerhouse.vassar.edu for the complete schedule.

The Powerhouse organization is wonderful, said Rothenberg.

"They stay true to its mission statement. I think it's the best," said Rothenberg about the Powerhouse Theater program, a collaboration between Vassar College and New York Stage and Film that provides a nurturing, non-critical environment for theater professionals and apprentices to develop new works.

"I'm just having a really good time with these people," said Rothenberg.

The cast of "We Are Here" also includes Uzo Aduba ("Coram Boy") as Shawn, Tony Winner Adriane Lenox ("Doubt," "Caroline or Change," "Chicago") as Vera, Larry Pine ("The Seagull," "End of the World") as Everett and Michael Cummings ("Joe Turner's Come and Gone").

"We Are Here" is directed by Tony nominee Sheryl Kaller.

For tickets and additional information, call the Box Office at (845) 437-5599 or visit the Web site.



Summer celebration to benefit Wilderstein

To celebrate its 30th anniversary as a historic site open to the public, Wilderstein has been hosting a number of events this year. On Saturday, July 3, there will be a benefit from 5 to 8 p.m. on the Wilderstein South Lawn with hors d'oeuvres featuring the bounty of the Hudson Valley, cocktails, house

tours, a new exhibition, silent auction and more. Tickets are \$100 per person; reservations are requested by June 25.

Wilderstein is at 330 Morton Road in Rhinebeck. The event will be held rain or shine. Call (845) 876-4818 or e-mail to wilderstein@wilderstein.org for more information.

June 24 deadline for arts awards nominations

The Dutchess County Arts Council (DCAC) requests nominations from Dutchess County residents and businesses for the Dutchess County Executive's Arts Awards in eight categories. Residents of Dutchess County and businesses or corporations

that are based in Dutchess County are eligible to receive an award. Nominations must be received by Thursday, June 24, at 1 p.m. This is a new early deadline, changed from previous years. Visit www.artsmidhudson.org for information.