

Director's Note for "Playboy of the Western World"
by John Millington Synge in new adaptation by Roddy Doyle and Bisi Adigun
Solas Nua Theatre, US Premiere
Directed by Shanara Gabrielle

It's thrilling to join Solas Nua in staging this classic Irish play, boldly reimagined by Roddy Doyle and Bisi Adigun. The tension of the play's main question is palpable in our society today: do we create our own identities, through the stories we tell about ourselves, or is our community responsible for who we become? Christy, a stranger to this Irish town, is trapped not only by the story he tells about himself, but also by the expectations and assumptions of a community that is all too ready to see him as "other." In the brilliant reimagining of Christy as a Black man, Doyle and Adigun show us how this white community projects their preconceived notions on an outsider.

The original 1907 production of "The Playboy of the Western World" caused riots when it was first performed in Dublin, and it's easy to see why. The play contains a wide spectrum of human behavior - both heroic and contemptible, often embodied in the same characters: the absurd, the despicable, the tender, the shocking, the mundane. It's often laugh-out-loud funny - but we might suddenly ask ourselves why we're laughing! But this is what makes the play true to the roots of human experience; perhaps it's vital to be left at the end with more questions than answers.

This production doesn't pull any punches, and neither does this group of brave theatre artists who have collaborated to bring the story to life. Laugh with us, gasp with us, and join us in this head-snapping, roller-coaster-ride - because everybody loves a good story!

Director's Note for "A Christmas Carol"
by Dickens, in new adaptation by Laura Rocklyn
Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, premiere production
Directed by Shanara Gabrielle

We are so glad you've joined us for this full-hearted retelling of Dickens's classic tale for the holiday season. Now that you're here, we have a request: Will you do your part to help bring this story to life? You could've stayed at home on the couch watching one of the many filmed versions of this tale, but here you are - with your fellow man, in the theatre. So now that you are here, we ask you to join in by engaging your imagination. We won't show you every detail: we ask that you imagine a board as a bed, a rope as a shipyard, a beam of light as a spirit, and a ghost as a real live possibility. We ask that you fill each of Dickens' humanly sketched characters with those in your own lives - Who is your Fezziwig? Who is your Mrs. Dilber? Who is the Scrooge in your life? Is it you? You can join in on the street scenes, sing along with the carols, and gasp, laugh, and jump with each of the characters on Scrooge's wild ride.

Reimagining the classics is a particular passion of mine, and this one has virtuosic storytelling, joyfulness, and Baltimore lore infusing one of the best ghost stories ever told. But the enduring question of Dickens' A Christmas Carol stays front and center as we ask ourselves what it means to live a life well-spent. Do we put Charity, Mercy, and Benevolence at the forefront? Do we remember that Mankind, our fellow man - neighbors, strangers, friends, foes are our most important business in this world? Do we realize that a well-spent life takes the whole community, and that we are all responsible for each other? With a fresh perspective and a diverse cast and creative team, we hope you will hear Dickens' beautiful language as if for the first time, and together we'll be reminded that joy, generosity, and love can transform the human spirit - maybe even your own.

Director's Note for "Man Covets Bird" By Finegan Kruckemeyer
Spooky Action Theatre
Directed by Shanara Gabrielle

We're so glad you've joined us for this wandering jaunt through our devised world of MAN COVETS BIRD. I've always been driven by tales of imagination, and Finegan Kruckemeyer's story is just that: a whimsical tale of transformation, connection, and the voyage of life. The performance you are about to share in has been entirely created by this extraordinary artistic team - though the words are on the page, the brilliance of this play is that it leaves everything else up to the artists' imaginations: from deciding which actors say which words, to building the "how" of the physical world, to composing every bit of original music for the piece! The interplay of collaborative design, devised performance, and multi-hyphenate storytelling is alive and well here in our little nest. Welcome!

Director's Note for "The Heart of Robin Hood" By David Farr
Door County Shakespeare
Directed by Shanara Gabrielle

In this classic tale of feisty adventure, David Farr's THE HEART OF ROBIN HOOD, is a fresh re-telling that rings as true today as ever. It's as if we got to cherry pick the very best of our favorite tales from Sherwood Forest, throw in a contemporary sensibility, add a sprinkle of social justice, a dash of female heroics, and neatly wrap it in a ribbon of romance. But what I most fell in love with about this play is that it brings our theatre work back to the simple art of telling a delightful and adventurous story. I hope you'll join us on this romping adventure. Maybe you'll be transformed, maybe you'll be reminded to fight the good fight, or maybe you'll be emboldened to risk all for what is right. Stories can inspire that. "And now I lift the curtain that hangs between here and No-man's-land. Will you come with me?"