

# THE MINIATURE THEATRE OF CHESTER

Dear Principal:

I am writing to tell you about an exciting cultural program that will be available this spring.

**The Miniature Theatre of Chester** has recently formed **The Gateway Acting Company**, a one-year training and performance program for residents of western Massachusetts who are committed to developing a professional career in theater. This Acting Company will be touring high schools with a play that has been commissioned for MTC. The performance will run approximately forty-five minutes in length, and is written specifically for high school audiences. Through a series of scenes and monologues, the performance will address issues that are relevant to all high-school students, including hazing, loneliness, pressure from parents and peers, pressure to achieve and pressure to belong.

In conjunction with a performance, there will be an opportunity to have our theater professionals conduct a post-performance discussion. This session will provide the opportunity for students to discuss any range of subjects, from characterization and conflict to social issues raised by the play. Our actors will also be available to speak about their experience pursuing a career in theatre, and the process of rehearsing and performing a new play.

This program was presented by MTC to the Western Massachusetts School Superintendent Organization at their monthly meeting in April, and was met with a great deal of interest. Therefore, all superintendents in Western MA will have already received information on this program through the listserv.

We will be touring a various times during the 2005-6 school year. To cover costs associated with this programming, we are requesting a donation of \$1000 per performance. We are well aware that funding for cultural programming is scarce, and are willing to explore joint fundraising opportunities with interested schools. If you would like to have the Gateway Acting Company come to your school, please call Ingrid Flory at 413-354-7770 to discuss dates and details.

We will call you in the near future to answer any questions you may have, and to explore the possibility of a performance at your school. Alternately, you can reach me at 413-354-7770 or [Ingrid@miniaturetheatre.org](mailto:Ingrid@miniaturetheatre.org) or Peter Curro, MTC Board Member and Principal of Gateway Middle School in Huntington at 413-685-1204 or [pcurro@grsd.org](mailto:pcurro@grsd.org).

Sincerely,



Ingrid Flory  
Managing Director



Peter Curro  
Principal, Gateway Middle School

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## About the Theatre

MTC was founded in 1990 by Vincent Dowling. In its early years, MTC earned a reputation for language-rich, thought-provoking plays and for new works. This tradition has blossomed under the artistic direction of Byam Stevens, an accomplished actor, director, teacher, and dramaturg. Productions originating at MTC have played Off Broadway, and have toured regionally, nationally, and internationally.

MTC's commitment to uncommon summer fare has attracted the talents of such established artists as: Michael Allinson, David Birney, Robert Elliott, Rita Gam, Polly Holliday, Kim Hunter, David Kelly, Dan O'Herlihy, Lois Nettleton, and Kenneth Tigar. Our commitment to the highest standard of acting has been in place since our founding — MTC has been an Actors' Equity Association company since its inception.

In recent seasons, MTC has delivered a string of successes. *Nixon's Nixon* took a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival, prior to engagements in London, Dublin, and Boston. *I am of Ireland* played an engagement at Elms College in Chicopee, MA, as did *The Double Bass* prior to moving to an Off Broadway run at New York's Mint Theatre. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was in residence at Westfield State College following its MTC run. *Valley Song* was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts grant to underwrite its transfer to Springfield's CityStage.

The 2004 Season proved to be MTC's most successful yet, toppling box office records and earning the highest critical acclaim. *Tea For Three*, starring Elaine Bromka, was a sell out, and has played dates across the country prior to opening CityStage's 2005 Season. *Skylight* was strongly represented in The Berkshire Eagle's Ten Best of 2004 List taking the Best Actress award (Francesca Faridany) and a number of design awards, with Honorable Mentions in acting to Elaine Bromka and Bairbre Dowling.

In a region noted for its nationally acclaimed theater companies, MTC productions have won top honors among the very best of the Berkshires. *The Boston Globe* hailed this record of artistic achievement: "MTC has produced a record that can rival the best the area has to offer."

MTC performs at the Chester Town Hall, located just east of Jacob's Pillow in Chester, MA. For more information call 413.354.7770 or email [mtc@miniaturetheatre.org](mailto:mtc@miniaturetheatre.org).

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## About the Play

The play is titled RANDOM ACTS.

Random Acts was written specifically for a tour to high school students of Western Massachusetts. The ideas in the play were culled from private conversations between the playwright and local students, and the playwright's experience working with teens-at-risk in Berkshire County as Education Director at Barrington Stage Company.

RANDOM ACTS takes us through 2 days at a fictional high school. We primarily follow 3 students, but we also see teachers and parents and several other students.

The play examines not the brutal violence and bullying that make headline news, but rather the more subtle versions of this behavior such as name-calling and threats. This behavior is also extremely damaging and, when ignored, can lead to greater violence.

This is the thrust of the play, but, along the way, the story touches on many other issues, including: falling in love, being plagued by stress, and the loneliness of feeling ostracized.

Dowling's play never tries to force statistics or a "lesson" on the audience. Instead, the play simply tells a compelling story with humor and heart. Students will then draw their own conclusions and discuss the characters and the issues they face.

## A Teacher's Response to *Random Acts*:

11/10/2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Ware High School recently hosted a production by The Miniature Theatre of Chester. "Random Acts" was a right-on look at experiences high school students face every day, and our high school students responded to the reality of the message and the talent of the young actors with genuine enthusiasm. Although the subject matter- the various kinds of pressure kids feel in and out of school- was intense, no one in the audience could take offense at the dialogue or narration: the scenes were presented in good taste, yet the messages were clear.

As a teacher who's worked with high school students for 31 years, and the mother of two college students, I was struck by my first reaction to "Random Acts" as it unfolded onstage: these actors must have been in my classrooms and in my home at one time. Their interpretation of the pressures teachers and parents (and kids themselves) apply consciously and unconsciously was uncanny.

Administrators: book this presentation for your school, and maybe for the parents in your district. Your students will get more from this hour than they could from a number of counseling sessions. "Random Acts" ends unpredictably, and the message the conclusion delivers will stay with students for a long time. Our students are still talking about this group. They enjoyed the question and answer session at the end, too. The Miniature Theater did a great job with a difficult topic. Bravo!

Sincerely,

Tina Higney  
Teacher  
Ware High School