

DOWNTOWN MONITOR

Detroit's Tree Lighting Ceremony in Campus Martius



For the 13th consecutive year, the Detroit 300 Conservancy continues the annual holiday tradition of the *Detroit Tree Lighting Ceremony* in **Campus Martius Park**, presented by the DTE Energy Foundation. The 60 ft. tall Michigan-grown Norway Spruce will be lit on Friday, November 18, with the free-to-the-public event beginning at 5 p.m.

Aaron Neville, of the legendary *Neville Brothers*, will perform and hometown Olympic Gold Medalist skaters *Meryl Davis* and *Charlie White* will also help start the ice skating season at the Campus Martius rink.

Featured entertainment will include the electro-pop violin band *Nuclassica*, operatic soprano *Kisma Jordan*, inspirational music from *The Gospel Truth* vocal ensemble, *Michigan Opera Theatre Children's Chorus* and, *Wyatt*, a 14-year-old trombone player and Make-A-Wish Kid.

Detroit's prominent skating clubs will also be showcased. Skating on the **Campus Martius Rink** will be young members of the *Fraser Figure Skating Club*, the *Detroit Skating Club* and the *Arctic Figure Skating Club*. The *Dearborn Figure Skating Club's* nationally recognized synchronized skating team, the *Crystallettes*; and U-M's award-winning Synchronized Skating Team will also perform on the ice.

Festivities beginning at 5 p.m. will also include The Salvation Army Family Fun Tent, photos with Santa, horse-drawn carriage rides, free cinnamon rolls from IKEA in the Warming (Warming) Tent, free hot chocolate from DTE Energy Foundation, McDonald's giveaways and more. The Salvation Army will light its giant Red Kettle at 6 p.m. and entertainment starts at 6:15 p.m.

Detroit's Christmas Tree—wrapped in more than 19,000 energy-efficient, multi-colored LED lights provided by DTE Energy, and decorated with sparkling red and silver ornaments, will be lit just before 8 p.m.

The Rink Opening Party, with Channel 955, opens the rink to skaters for the season with a live music mix from 9 p.m. - midnight.

The spectacular *Detroit Tree Lighting Ceremony*, presented by DTE Energy Foundation, also celebrates the birthday of Campus Martius Park and the beginning of the *Detroit Holiday Season*, which includes public skating at the **Rink** and the **Quicken Loans Season of Winter Magic**.

For more information, see campusmartiuspark.com. Campus Martius Park is located at the intersections of Woodward, Michigan, Lafayette and Gratiot Avenues, in the heart of Downtown Detroit.

SHOWINGS

'Impermanent Vacation' Exhibit at Inner State

Friday, November 11, the Eastern Market neighborhood's Inner State Gallery, presents artist Mike Giant, as he unveils *Impermanent Vacation* — an entirely new body of work which includes his largest piece to date. The Colorado-based artist, illustrator and counter-culture icon, will showcase new works on vintage paper, letterheads and other fibrous surfaces for his first ever Detroit exhibition.

Joining Giant at Inner State, will be Detroit artist Jesse Kassel, who will exhibit a new collection of mixed media pieces entitled *Bandos & Stolos* highlighting abandoned and stolen cars frozen in time. Both shows are free and open to the public from 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. on Friday, November 11.

"I see my life as a human being as an 'Impermanent Vacation.' It is our nature to grow old and die. It doesn't last. As a gentle reminder of my own mortality, I have the same words tattooed on my hands. The tattoos are a reminder to have fun with life, to keep a positive mental attitude, to treat it like a vacation.

Equally lauded in the worlds of graffiti, tattoo and skate culture, Giant's immediately recognizable style has been shown around the world.

"This will be my first solo show in Detroit, and my first time visiting The Motor City... As usual, all the works were rendered with Sharpie markers, my tool of choice since high school," Giant added.

Bringing new work of his own, Detroit's own Jesse Kassel presents *Bandos* (typically used to describe abandoned homes but in this case also vehicles) and *Stolos* (stolen cars), two elements that are embedded in the Detroit landscape of empty lots and vacant buildings.

"The skeleton of a 1940 Buick Roadmaster rusting in an overgrown field next to a group of stripped and torched 2015 Ford trucks. A building full of prized classic cars being crushed by a collapsing roof. For me experiencing these visions first hand is essential to fully appreciating the sense of beauty and story behind how such places have become what they are. However, for this body of work I have interpreted these scenes pulling from the texture, colors and compositions that dominate them," Kassel said in his southwest Detroit studio.

"My goal is to create a sense of movement that isn't going anywhere, as these cars and buildings have been sitting in the same place for months, or years, but they are constantly being altered by nature and humans. I like to visualize the cars as if I

were able to see their evolution through time lapse footage. From the point they were dropped there and have been stripped, burned, rusted, overgrown with vegetation or whatever and the painting is where the film has stopped," Kassel added.

The opening artists' reception is Friday, November 11, from 7-10 p.m., with both artists in attendance. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, see info@innerstategallery.com or call (313) 744-6505.

Inner State Gallery is located at 1410 Gratiot Avenue, in Detroit's Eastern Market neighborhood.



Works Rendered in Sharpie Marker by Mike Giant



A Stolen Car from Jesse Kassel's *Bandos & Stolos*



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SHOWINGS

Pewabic's Holiday Showcase



The historic Pewabic Pottery studios will hold its annual *Holiday Showcase Opening Reception*—at its historic location on E. Jefferson in Detroit—on Thursday, November 10 from 5 to 8 p.m. A full array of traditional Pewabic wares and ceramic art, created by over 80 artists from around North America will be offered for sale. Light refreshments, adult beverages with a featured cocktail created by McClary Bros. and Two James Spirits, coffee by Red Hook Detroit, unique chocolate creations by Detroit Chocolat, and live music will also be on hand at Pewabic's annual festive shopping experience.

Attendance is free with plenty of secure parking available. "When it comes to Detroit tradition, there is nothing like purchasing a gift from Pewabic," says Pewabic's Executive Director Steve McBride. "We do believe this is the gift that delights everyone who considers themselves a Detroit enthusiast and this special *Holiday Showcase Opening Reception* is a real celebration of Detroit - its artistic heritage and great future."



See *Pewabic's Holiday Gift Guide* at pewabic.org/www.pewabic.org. Call (313) 626-2000 for more information. Pewabic is located at 10125 E. Jefferson in Detroit, 5 minutes west of Grosse Pointe and 1 mile east of Belle Isle Park.

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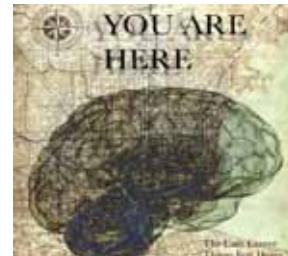
Opera Modo: *The Old Man and the Thief*



Detroit's homegrown and daring *Opera Modo* presents this fast-paced and melodramatic one-act comic opera by Gian Carlo Menotti, which exposes the gossips and secrets of a seemingly quiet town while telling a twisted tale of morals and evil womanly power.

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Exhibition: *You Are Here*



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SYMPHONIC NEWS



Ruth's Music Notes...

Ruth Crystal-Zaromp

This coming weekend promises to be the busiest we have seen this year as far as excellent musical events are concerned. The downside is that we can only attend one event at any time (until the arrival of new technology, which is unlikely to happen during my lifetime), so it is necessary to choose one out of the numerous that are taking place concurrently. Some events that have taken place in this past week foreshadow the coming events of this weekend.

The **Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra** has grown greatly in quality during the past number of years that Arie Lipsky has been its Artistic Director. Last Monday the JCC chamber recital allowed us to become acquainted with the orchestra's principal clarinetist, Chad Burrow, a musician of international reputation. His performance blended and excelled within the two clarinet trios by Beethoven and Brahms, performed together with Arie Lipsky cello, and Amy I-Lin Cheng, piano. The next chamber event of this delightful series will take place on November 21.

The program for the **A2SO** this coming Friday, November 11, 8 p.m. at the Michigan Theatre includes Michael Daugherty's *Strut*, Shostakovich *Violin Concerto* with Principal violinist Aaron Berofsky as guest soloist, and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6 'Pathétique.'* Daugherty is a prominent Michigan composer whose work *Tales of Hemmingway* has been performed here recently by the DSO. *Strut* is a short work for string orchestra, commissioned in 1989 by the New York State School Music Association.

The **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** is presenting Louis Langree as guest conductor. Langree is certainly one of the most distinguished conductors of today. The program includes two compositions – Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mezzo soprano Kelley O'Connor and tenor Russell Thomas will be solo-



ists in the Mahler. The program will be taking place at 8 p.m. on this coming Friday and Saturday (November 11 and 12).

Also on Friday, November 11, Pianist Pauline Martin will be performing the Mendelssohn *Piano Concerto No. 1* and Chopin's *Andante Spianato* and *Grand Polonaise* at 7:30 p.m. at the **Congregational Church of Birmingham**. Kevin Fitzgerald will be conducting the Spectrum Orchestra. In addition to the above, the orchestra will be performing *Leonora's Overture No. 3* by Beethoven. Tickets are \$10.

Yet another event on the same date: **Opera Modo** will be performing Menotti's opera *The Old Maid and the Thief* at the **Carr Center (pictured, above)** at 7:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$25.

Saturday, November 12, is opening night at the **Michigan Opera Theatre** for *Silent Night*. The music is by Kevin Puts and the story is about an unusual "cease fire" on Christmas Eve during WWI. This is an event that occurred and was commemorated in a movie.

The **Scarab Club** provided a program *Music from the Trenches* this past Friday (November 4) and Sunday (November 6), by composers who wrote during WWI. Two pieces by Kevin Puts were included and were well received by the audience. For further information on *Silent Night* check www.MichiganOpera.org.

The **Vivace Series at Birmingham Temple** is presenting an evening with pianists Ralph Votapek and his wife Albertine on Saturday, November 12, at 8 p.m. The couple will be presenting a program for piano four hands of pieces by Mozart, Schubert, Debussy, and Gershwin.

The **Berlin Philharmonic will be at the Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor** on Saturday, November 12, 8 p.m., and Sunday, November 13, 4 p.m. Simon Rattle is conducting. The programs include pieces by Boulez, Mahler (*Symphony 7*) on Saturday, and Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, and Brahms on Sunday. For further information, check www.UMS.org.

Finally, the **Chamber Music Society of Detroit** is presenting Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, in a recital with pianist Kevin Murphy, Sunday, November 13, at 3 p.m. at Oakland University's Varner Recital Hall in Rochester. The program includes songs and arias by Schumann, Debussy, Strauss, Puccini, Copland and Obradors.

Tickets may be purchased by phone at (248) 855-6070 or online at www.CMSDetroit.org.

Indeed, there are hard choices to make. By the time this is printed, some choices of a different kind will have taken place on Tuesday, with results that might please some, but not all. Be it as it may – we are assured of life with good music.

DOWNTOWN MONITOR

Downtown Monitor is now in its 53rd year of continuous publication, and is circulated free throughout Downtown, and to all points of Greater Detroit.

Paul Arlon — Editor & Publisher
Roger Smith — Advertising Director

Columnists
George Eichorn Laydell Harper Ruth Crystal-Zaromp
Marian Sakalauskas Donald N. Campbell

Phone and Email:	Mailing Address:
(248) 439-1863	DOWNTOWN MONITOR
TheNewMonitor@gmail.com	P.O. Box 888
DetroitMonitor@gmail.com	Hazel Park, MI 48030



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The Great Lakes Memorial Service, November 13, 2016

8:30 a.m. - The Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. – The Great Lakes Memorial Service w/ Holy Communion

The First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 2016

8:30 a.m. - The Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. – Annual Festival of Lessons and Music for Advent

Thursdays in Advent, Dec. 1, 8, 15

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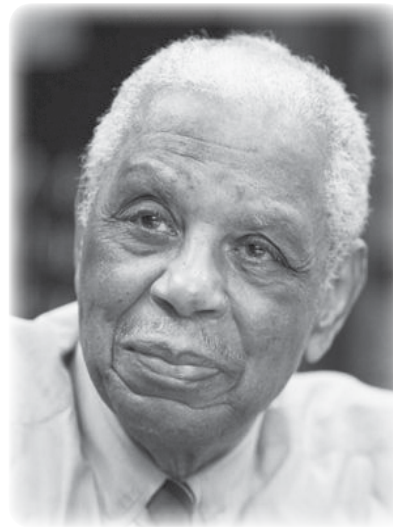
Laydell Harper

Every year we all watch with delight as the magic of the holiday season is captured along Woodward Avenue with America's Thanksgiving Parade. The Honorable Damon J. Keith (pictured), United States District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, will serve as Co-Grand Marshal for the 90th America's Thanksgiving Parade presented by Art Van. It's exciting, meaningful and makes perfect sense, since Judge Keith admits to being around almost as long as the parade. This year's theme is "90 Years Together," which could not be more fitting – marking a major milestone for the storied parade that is broadcast in more than 160 cities across the country and having Judge Keith as Co-Grand Marshal.

"As we embark upon our 90th year of America's Thanksgiving Parade presented by Art Van, we could not think of a finer person than Judge Damon Keith to serve as Co-Grand Marshal," said Tony Michaels, President & CEO of The Parade Company. "He is a great gift to our city and celebrating his accomplishments on Woodward Avenue on Thanksgiving morning will be a magical moment for all Detroiters and the millions of people who watch the Parade across the country."

Judge Keith joins a long list of extraordinary Michiganders that have had the honor of serving as parade Grand Marshals including; Golden Globe-winning actor Tim Allen, Olympic gold medalist ice dancers, Meryl Davis and Charlie White, former Detroit Tiger's manager Jim Leyland, Congressman and Congresswoman John and Debbie Dingell, Bill and Lisa Ford, Art Van Elslander, Paul W. Smith, and many others.

"I am extremely honored and humbled to have been selected as the Co-Grand Marshal for the 90th America's Thanksgiv-



ing Parade. It is good that the country will share in the greatness of our city on this important occasion," comments Judge Keith.

Judge Keith is our very own hometown hero, born and raised in Detroit; he has a long and proud history with the judicial system. Since 1977 he has been a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Court. He has also served as Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and recently been named Senior Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Court. His bio reads like a "How To" text book on "How to be the best in the Law Profession;" he has consistently stood as a courageous defender of the constitutional and civil rights for all people, a common thread that is prominent throughout his career.

"As a native Detroit I have many happy memories of being camped out on Woodward Avenue early on Thanksgiving morning (in record-cold temperatures during some years), peeking through the massive crowds to marvel in excitement at the beautiful floats," said the Honorable Judge Damon J. Keith. "For almost as many years as the parade has been in existence, I have had the privilege of witnessing this national pastime, first as a young child with my parents,

and then seeing that same amazement on the faces of my own children years later. Our Thanksgiving parade holds a very special place in my heart, and I am extremely honored and humbled to have been chosen as a Co-Grand Marshal for this year's 90th America's Thanksgiving Parade presented by Art Van."

Joining Judge Keith as Co-Grand Marshal will be Keegan-Michael Key, native Detroit and Emmy-winning comedian. This year Parade-goers will enjoy a close look at U.S. Olympic athletes, performers and stars including:

Allison Schmitt – Eight-time Olympic medalist in swimming including 4 gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals (2008, 2012 & 2016); Aly Raisman – Two-time team captain of gold medal winning U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Teams; and April Ross – Two-time medal winning Olympic volleyball player.

A number of musicians, including Mike Posner – American singer, songwriter, record producer and Michigan native, known for his songs Cooler Than Me and Please Don't Go; Martha Reeves, of Martha and the Vandellas, whose hits include Dancing in the Street and others; Motown the Musical – Cast members from the Tony-nominated musical will open this year's parade with a live performance.

Yankee Air Museum Rosie the Riveter Tribute Corps – Women including two original riveters, Iva Davie and Laura Eglsdoerfer, representing Rosie the Riveter, the World War II American poster icon. And, Santa's grand arrival.

The Parade Company will host its annual Hob Nobble Gobble® presented by Ford Motor Company on Friday, November 18 at Ford Field. Guests will enjoy a star-studded black tie evening with a performance by award winning hip-hop artist Flo Rida, courtesy of 98.7 AMP Radio and The Parade Company. He'll be performing his chart topping songs My House, Wild Ones and Good Feeling. For more information, visit theparade.org.

November Shipwrecks Remembered at Dossin



The Doomed Daniel J. Morrell Lies in Lake Huron

The Detroit Historical Society will host their annual Lost Mariners Remembrance ceremony at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Thursday, November 10 from 6 to 8 p.m. A lantern vigil at the Edmund Fitzgerald anchor begins the night, followed by a performance by Lee Murdock, Great Lakes balladeer, and an Honor Guard escort of the memorial wreath to the Detroit River for receipt by the Honor Flotilla of Great Lakes vessels.

This year's event commemorates Lake Erie's Perfect Storm on October 20, 1916, when four commercial vessels were sent to watery graves through the course of the day and night. Carrie Sowden, Archaeological Director of the National Museum of the Great Lakes, will discuss the histories of the D.L Filer, James B Colgate, Merida and Marshall Butters and what happened as they went down, taking more than 50 sailors with them. This, the 100th anniversary of the deadly storm and losses, will honor the sailors and their vessels.

Admission is \$5 for Detroit Historical Society members, \$10 for guests, and \$25 for families of up to six. Advance registration is required as this event is expected to sell out.

Call (313) 833-1801 or see <http://detroithistorical.org/dossin-great-lakes-museum/events-calendar/events-listing/lost-mariners-remembrance-2> for tickets. Please note that

tickets are not expected to be available at the door, but the public is welcome to watch the flotilla from the riverbank adjacent to the museum at no charge.

On Sunday, November 13, the 50th anniversary of the sinking of the freighter Daniel J. Morrell will be remembered from 12 - 4 p.m. Explore the loss with never-

before-told stories about the wreck, the sole survivor's experience and the discovery of the vessel's underwater resting place. A number of Morrell artifacts will be on display and Dennis Hales' book, Sole Survivor and paintings and illustrations by Robert McGreevy will be available for purchase.

See <http://detroithistorical.org/dossin-great-lakes-museum/events-calendar/events-listing/morrell-untold-stories> or call 313.833.1801 for additional information about the program and to purchase tickets, which are \$5 for members and \$10 for guests.

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is located at 100 Strand Drive on Belle Isle. For information, call the Museum at (313) 833-5538 or see detroithistorical.org.

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LIVE THEATRE



Detroit Premier of '100 Saints You Should Know'

By Marian Sakalauskas



Christian Plonka as Garrett and Bridget Smith as Abby

Kate Fodor's new play *100 Saints You Should Know* makes its Detroit Premier at the Theatre Company of U of D Mercy. The play deals with the human need to find relevance and connection in a universe that seems determined to get the best of us.

Father Matthew (Greg Grobis) is a Catholic priest who is struggling to come to terms with his own humanity and feelings of loneliness as a celibate priest. He is clearly experiencing the Dark Night of the Soul and longs to experience a "surge of the heart, a cry of recognition." Matthew explains that beauty is God's goodness made visible and he is very drawn to beauty. But he laments that as a priest he is set apart, set aside, which leads to his loneliness.

Theresa (Linda Rabin Hammell) is a cleaning lady whose job is to clean the rectory. She, too, has been searching to find meaning in her life, although her path has been very different from Matthew's. Her path led her to a teen-aged pregnancy, a period as a DeadHead, a free, wild life.

Although she doesn't seem to believe in God, she finds herself wanting to know how to pray and seeks out Father Matthew to help her.

Theresa's daughter, Abby (Bridget Smith), is an angst-filled sixteen-year-old who thinks of herself as a bad kid. She is angry, hostile, defiant. As Theresa says of her, "your own daughter turns out to be not what you expected." She is mean and manipulative, but below this façade we see a desire to be different, to be good.

Enter Colleen (Pricia Hickok), Matthew's mother. Colleen is the stereotypical mother of the priest, complete with Irish accent. A widow with just the one child, she clearly is living her life through her son's accomplishments. She is inordinately proud that he has become a priest and cannot fathom why he should be struggling with the position. She is a strong believer in rules and doing what is expected. "People get up to all sorts of things; that's why there have to be rules." When Matthew confesses that he is afraid that God's love isn't enough

for him, Colleen all but disowns him.

The final character in this play is Garrett (Christian Plonka), the teenaged son of the grocer who delivers Colleen's grocery order to her each week. Garrett is naïve and vulnerable, anxious to talk to Father Matthew about his questions of his sexual identity. When he meets Abby, he is quite out of his depth.

The Theatre Company makes a point of producing thought-provoking, edgy pieces and this play certainly qualifies. We see five flawed characters struggle to find a path to peace and happiness. It is not an unfamiliar struggle.

Playwright Kate Fodor is a 2013 Guggenheim fellow in playwriting. Since 2008 she has been a resident playwright at New Dramatists and has been named one of the "Eight to Watch" by the New York Times.

My biggest problem with the script of this play is that, like many modern plays, it seems to have been written for TV or the movies rather than for the stage. The action goes from scene to scene to scene, involving much scurrying around to rearrange furniture and props to change the scene. Given the small venue, the company does a good job of quick change and the audience is not left sitting in the dark for long periods of time.

100 Saints You Should Know is produced by the Theatre Company in the Marlene Boll Theatre at the Boll Family YMCA at 1404 Broadway, Detroit.

For tickets and information, call (313) 993-3269 or TheTheatreCo.com.

CINEMA CULTURE

Museum's Film Features Made in Detroit Favorites



The Detroit Historical Society's November Film Series features *Detroit: Remember When, Made in the Motor City* at 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 12 and Sunday, November 13 at the Detroit Historical Museum.

Before the screening on Saturday, November 12 from noon - 3 p.m., the Museum will be showcasing books on beloved Detroit-made products, including:

- **Better Made in Michigan: The Salty Story of Detroit's Best Chip by Karen Dybis**
- **Detroit Beer: A History of Brewing in the Motor City by Stephen C. Johnson**
- **Iconic Restaurants of Ann Arbor by Jon Milan and Gail Offen**
- **Lost Restaurants of Detroit by Paul Vachon**
- **Vernor's Ginger Ale by Keith Wunderlich**

Before the movie, meet the authors and get your books signed! All books will be available for purchase in the museum gift shop.

More about the film:

Detroit: Remember When, Made in the Motor City: Better Made Potato Chips, Sanders Fudge, Velvet Peanut Butter and Gratiot Auto Supply are among the brands, landmarks and people that played a major role in defining Detroit and Detroiters' identity to the rest of the country. Narrated by broadcast legend Erik Smith, this documentary takes viewers cruising through the Woodward-Gratiot automotive corridor, dining at American Coney Island and Buddy's Pizza, while listening to the voices of famous Detroit personalities such as Jo-Jo Shutty MacGregor and Ken Calvert.

The film also includes interviews with the likes of Brian Jefferson, the CEO of Sanders Fudge and Keith Wunderlich, the author of *Vernor's Ginger Ale*.

Filmmaker Bill Kubota will lead a Q&A session after the Saturday, November 12, 3 p.m. screening. The movie, shown at the Detroit Historical Museum is free and open to the public. Admission to the Museum is free to everyone, all the time. Parking in the Museum's lot is \$7 at all times. For more information, call (313) 833-1805 or see detroithistorical.org.

The Detroit Historical Museum, located at 5401 Woodward Ave. (NW corner of Kirby) in Midtown Detroit.

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"This is our largest cast of the season", explains Travis Walter, MBT's artistic director. "It's great for the kids that are in the cast, for them to get a taste of acting professionally."

The Meadow Brook Theatre adaptation was written and originally staged by Charles Nolte. MBT Associate Director Terry W. Carpenter directs this season's production, with original choreography by Jan Puffer. Scenic design is by Peter Hicks, lighting by Reid G. Johnson, costumes by Mary Pettinato and sound design by Mike Duncan.

Tickets range from \$20 to \$42 and are available by calling the MBT box office at (248) 377-3300 or at www.ticketmaster.com. Groups of eight or more can call (248) 370-3316 for group discounts. There are quite a few chances for families to get discounted tickets early in the run and for the November 18-20 shows, children 5 to 12 are half price.

For more information visit mbtheatre.com. Meadow Brook Theatre is located at 207 Wilson Blvd., in Rochester Hills.



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"Megan's show embodies the essence of cabaret, art, intimacy and storytelling. You should leave feeling as though you've spent the evening with a new friend," said C313 Co-Founder and President Sandi Reitelman.

The performance, which caps the Thanksgiving weekend and kicks off the holiday season, features some of the songs and stories representing Hilty's rise to stardom that has taken her from understudy to "princess of Broadway" (Time Magazine) over the past decade.

Doors open at 7:15 p.m. for *An Evening with Megan Hilty*. Tickets are \$195 for premium cabaret seating, \$125 for "Preferred" cabaret seating and \$60 for general stadium seating. Limited tickets are available for \$25 for ages 40 and under. Valet parking will be available.

For tickets and more information call (313) 405-5061 or see cabaret313.org. The Marjorie S. & Max M. Fisher Music Center is located at 3711 Woodward, just north of Mack in Midtown Detroit.



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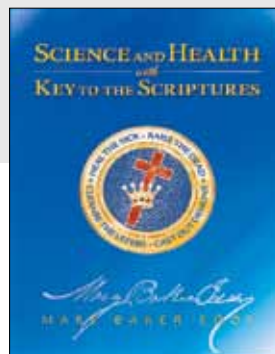


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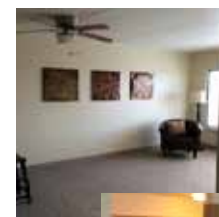
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Doctor Strange

By Paul Arlon

Why there's such a huge female fanbase for Benedict Cumberbatch is seriously beyond me. Granted, I have zero attraction to my own gender anyway, but, even still, what's the big deal with this guy? He has a name that sounds as if he's a character out of a Dr. Seuss novel. He looks to me, unexceptional and ordinary – kind of like somebody that hung around at college bashes, but was neither a wallflower nor the life of the party. The kind of brown-haired guy that showed up, and everybody knew him, but nobody would have missed him if he wasn't there.

The other label being plastered across him is 'cool.' Benedict Cumberbatch is 'cool.'

Oh, my. Maybe he's *Millennial Cool*, but, that's because there's a generation of filmgoers that haven't watched enough Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, Steve McQueen, or 1970's Clint Eastwood. Millennials have the stifling mentality that believes that the world somehow didn't exist before they got here. It's that amazing disregard for history that has caused our current culture to live their lives as if not 'nothing' but, instead, 'everything,' is new under the sun.

For cryin' out loud, even Dutch Leonard's fictional characters Chili Palmer (John Travolta) and Jack Foley (George Clooney) are more 'cool' than the metro-sexual Cumberbatch.

In my book, he's a distinctly meager presence on-screen. But, perhaps that's the way things are nowadays. There aren't a lot of choices within the current Hollywood system for a naturally organic 'cool' man...so we get a me-

dia-manufactured-public-relations kind of 'cool' – we get Benedict Cumberbatch.

And, so it is. Cumberbatch plays the newest hero in the movie Marvel Universe, the comic book character whose story I've really been looking forward to seeing on the big screen – *Doctor Strange*. This is one of the most thoroughly unique creations by Marvel's venerable wordsmith Stan Lee. Of his catalogue of great original characters, *Doctor Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts*, was a true first.

The story is thus: Egotistical neurosurgeon Dr. Stephen Strange, is at the top of his profession, working miracles on the operating table, and looking down on his peers with a haughty air of superiority. And, that's the way he acts towards others, until he drives his Aston Martin off a cliff and his surgeon's hands are reduced to smashed and quivering stems of flesh. Inconsolable, Dr. Strange uses whatever money he's saved to seek out a medical fix for his damaged hands. Now, nearly

destitute, he gets word about a man who has regained the use of his legs using his mind instead of medicine. Told that he can train his brain to make himself whole again, Dr. Strange makes a desperate decision – he abandons his once-privileged lifestyle, his on-again-off-again doctor girlfriend Christine (Rachel McAdams), and, heads to a far-flung village in the Himalayan country of Nepal.

Once there, after he's beaten, robbed and left in tatters, Dr. Strange encounters the people that he's been looking for – the mystical school of the Sorceress Supreme, the Ancient One (a bald Tilda Swinton).

Here, the Ancient One teaches worthy students the ways of real magic. Dr. Strange, when first meeting the Ancient One, naturally assumes that he will be allowed to learn at her side. Because he's so much better than everyone else. After finding himself booted to the curb, with nothing but his arrogance to sustain him, Dr. Strange realizes that the Ancient One is for real, and as hard as it is

for him to do, he swallows his ego and submits to a power greater than himself.

After training with the Ancient One, Dr. Strange learns much about the mystic arts, and also, that a former student, Kaecilius (Mads Mikkelsen) has stolen a very powerful spell from the school's library – one that could plunge the entire earth into the realm of the Dark Sorcerer, Dormammu. Of course, that would be bad, very, very bad.

But, that's what happens... Kaecilius wreaks havoc on the planet, and Dr. Strange, along with the Ancient One, her other top student Mordo (Chiwetel Ejiofor), and the school's humorless librarian, Wong (Benedict Wong...yup, another Benedict, only he's Chinese), take on the Dark Sorcerer's agents, and the magic battles ensue.

And, these magic battles are truly impressive. Superior, spectacular Special Effects and CGI. When the end credits roll, (and, you need to stay until the screen turns blue for this one, as there's more than one stinger...) there are

maybe a thousand digital artists listed, across a number of countries. This is an expensive movie, and a great deal of the budget is right up there on screen. I heartily suggest seeing this on an IMAX screen, or at the very least, in 3D.

Okay, I can live with Cumberbatch as Dr. Strange. He doesn't offend my long-held image of the character, and he's been given enough decent dialogue for me to forgive the popular culture references throughout the movie.

Being a comic book fan since I was a kid, I've read the 1968-era comic books, and, for a change, Hollywood didn't wallop an origin story with their own arrogantly revised version. Sometimes the first really is the best. Directed by Scott Derrickson and written by Derrickson, Jon Spaihts, and C. Robert Cargill, with great homage given to Marvel's head writer Steve Ditko, this Doctor Stephen Strange, as played by Benedict Cumberbatch, is, well, (dare I say it?) pretty 'cool.' ★★1/2 THREE AND HALF STARS.





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