

Omaha World-Herald

Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska)

May 20, 2009 Wednesday
Iowa; Metro; Nebraska; Sunrise Editions

PLAY HAS CAST IN STITCHES Actors in 'Loose Knit' at Great Plains Theatre
Conference gain skill with needles 'Loose Knit'

BYLINE: Bob Fischbach, WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 01A

LENGTH: 536 words

The play is "Loose Knit," but the cast should be close-knit.

Director M. Michele Phillips' solution: Let's all take a knitting lesson together.

Her cast of seven, including two men, gathered around a wooden table for an evening lesson recently with knitting store owner Anne Ginn.

Even stage manager Patrick O'Malley made a show of solidarity. The burly Creighton University sophomore is majoring in stagecraft, but he seemed content enough to have knitting needles instead of a hammer in his hands, at least for one gentle spring evening. In fact, he took a little needling when he turned out to be one of Ginn's best students.

Ginn said several men are part of her regular classes at String of Purls, in Countryside Village near 86th and Pacific Streets.

The lesson wasn't entirely a lark. "Loose Knit," by Theresa Rebeck, will be presented May 29 at Creighton as part of Metropolitan Community College's Great Plains Theatre Conference. Rebeck, the conference's honored playwright this year, will attend.

Her play calls for all the women, and one of the men, to knit onstage.

Lesson one: casting on. Ginn broke down the process in vivid terms. Point the needle like you're going to stab yourself. Grab the yarn around thumb and forefinger, making mouse ears.

"Don't hold the needle like a pencil," she advised. "Hold it overhand, like a handle. But, really, knitting is very individual. Whatever works for you."

Cast members helped one another as Ginn patiently made her way around the table with advice and comfort. Some worked their tongues along with the needles, crying out in triumph or tragedy at what their knotty efforts produced.

The women in the play form a knitting group in New York City. Two are sisters. Two more are their college friends. One is new to the group. And one is having an affair with another's husband, played by Matt Allen. Allen said his character joins the knitting circle as a ploy to get closer to some of the women.

"The good news is, I don't have to knit that much in the show," he said. "When you see someone in the middle of doing a sweater, it looks really intimidating, don't you think? But I'm pretty much up for anything, and the way Anne broke it down, it's not all that difficult."

On the other hand, he said, saying your lines and moving as directed while knitting can be "like patting your head and rubbing your belly at the same time."

Will Allen keep knitting when the play is over?

"I dunno," he said. "But I'll at least finish the scarf I've got started. Gotta make something."

The play, which includes political undertones about what it means to be American, presents knitting as a metaphor for the characters' lives, Phillips said.

"Things come together, then they unravel, then they come together again."

'Loose Knit'

What: Stage play, part of Metropolitan Community College's Great Plains Theatre Conference

Where: Creighton University, Lied Education Center for the Arts main stage, 2500 California Plaza

When: 8 p.m. May 29

Tickets: \$15

Information: 553-0800 (Omaha Community Playhouse box office) for reservations. For more information on the theater conference, call 457-2618, or visit the Web at www.mccneb.edu/theatreconference

Contact the writer

444-1269, bob.fischbach@owh.com

Copyright ©2009 Omaha World-Herald®. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, displayed or redistributed for any purpose without permission from the Omaha World-Herald.

Printer Friendly Version Page 2 of 2