

Principia College to Premiere New Play Conceived by Students

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ELSAH - The Principia College Theatre Department will present a new play conceived and created by the students for their Fall 2023 production.

“Stories From Home: A Devised Play” will premiere at 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 9, 10 and 11 and 2 p.m. on Nov. 11, 2023. The students and directors combined folklore from around the world to build their own stories and write a completely new script that directors have considered submitting for publication.

“It is absolutely generated and rooted in what the students created,” director John O’ Hagan said. “And it has been, for me, one of the most gratifying artistic processes that I

have been engaged in, watching the students understand that not only do they have the capability to create at this level, but that what they offer matters and has an impact.”

O’Hagan explained that over 43% of Principia’s current student body is international students. Along with fellow directors Rebecca Bailey and Jessica Hudson, O’Hagan started thinking about “cultural myths and stories and fairy tales all over the world and how they have certain elements in common that kind of weave together.”

The directors told the cast of 16 students to think about these connections as they completed movement and creative exercises, all of which were videotaped. Students were encouraged to share their ideas and try anything that seemed interesting. The team selected the ideas that “resonated with the whole company,” O’Hagan said, and Hudson wrote the final script.

“It’s a mixed bag of stuff, but it’s a really, really dynamic piece of theater and storytelling,” O’Hagan said. “The cast got so jazzed by it that we’ve actually created an entirely new narrative. We’ve created six brand new fairy tales that blend ideas from a variety of different cultures, and we follow two individuals on a journey as they kind of look for what is the perfect place, what is home.”

Hudson is definitely the writer, he added, but students’ ideas helped shape the story. For directors O’Hagan, Bailey and Hudson, this collaboration is an important part of theater, and they are pleased that students were able to see it for themselves.

“What I really appreciate is that the students walk out of the experience knowing that they have a valid voice to offer the artistic process,” O’Hagan noted. “They have something. They’re not puppets. They’re not waiting to be told what to do. They can generate the work. I think that’s the most important thing that we can offer to them.”

The staging has also been a fun, unique addition to the show. The play will be held at Davis Black Box Theatre on Principia’s campus. The team created a soundscape and found ways to incorporate movement and shadow puppets.

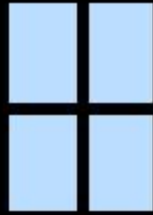
They also decorated the set to include aspects of the four elements — earth, water, fire and air — with an intimate campfire feel. The first row of seats has been removed and replaced with blankets and pillows to enhance the feeling of “gathering around this bright spot of light as a community and hearing stories about who we are, who we were and who we might become,” O’Hagan explained.

“Stories From Home: A Devised Play” premieres this weekend at Principia College. You can [reserve your ticket online](#) at no cost and pay what you want at the door. O’ Hagan added that everyone is invited to attend the show and they hope to see several community members.

“We so desperately want to welcome the rest of the community into the space to see the work, to share and to offer ideas,” he said. “We really want the community — both the college and the surrounding Alton, Elsah, Grafton area — to come and just take a look at it, because I think it’s worth seeing for anybody.”

Learn more about the Principia College Theatre Department, including upcoming productions, at [their official website](#).

The Principia College Theatre Department's
FALL 2023 PRODUCTION



STORIES FROM HOME

A DEVISED PLAY

Conceived & Created by the Ensemble

Written by Jessica Hudson

Co-directed by John O'Hagan,

**Rebecca Bailey,
& Jessica Hudson**

Davis Black Box Theatre

November 9 & 10

7:30pm

November 11

2pm & 7:30pm

Reserve tickets for free on Marketplace



Pay what you will at the door.

