



STARTING LIFE BY LEAVING HOME

Pulitzer-winning play Picnic captures the universal urge to leave your hometown.

2013/2014 Season

Picnic

February 13 – 22, 2014

By William Inge

Unfulfilled dreams and repressed desires come to a head when a charismatic young drifter arrives in town and changes the lives of two sisters.
1953 Pulitzer Prize

Directed by Peter McGuire
Set Designer Jonathan Maxwell
Costume Designer Pauline Stynes
Lighting Designer Allan Stichbury
Sound Designer Colette Habel
Stage Manager Becca Jorgensen

Pre-Show Lecture: February 14 at 7pm
Director Peter McGuire speaks about his love of this play and the joy of directing students.

Picnic performances are as follows:

Public Previews @ 8pm:

February 11 & 12

Evenings @ 8pm:

February 13 (Opening), 14 (Lecture), 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

Matinee @ 2pm:

Saturday, February 22 (with Sign Language)

Single Tickets: \$14 Student /\$20 Senior
\$22 Adult/\$24 Weekends @ 8pm
(Previews \$7.00, available after 5pm)

Phoenix Box Office Opens:

February 4 in person

Or by calling: **(250) 721-8000.**

Unity (1918)

March 13 – 22, 2014

Written & Directed by Kevin Kerr
(Assoc. Professor, Writing Dept.)

As WWI ends and a mysterious flu pandemic nears, the inhabitants of a small Saskatchewan town deal with the trials of life and death.

2002 Governor General's Award

Phoenix Theatre Media Contact:

Adrienne Holierhoek, Marketing & Communications
Department of Theatre

email: aholierh@uvic.ca | 250-721-7992

www.phoenixtheatres.ca | Box Office: 250-721-8000

Growing up in Independence, Kansas, playwright William Inge (1913-1973) understood small towns. And it seems he also understood the urge to leave home and go to a big city to start your life.

The University of Victoria Phoenix Theatre presents William Inge's 1953 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Picnic* from February 13-22, 2014. The play is directed by faculty member Peter McGuire, who brings to the process over 30 years of experience across different areas of theatre, including stage, production and talent management as well as producing and administration.

McGuire can relate to Mr. Inge's need to escape the limiting nature of our roots and seek inspiration elsewhere. He believes that *Picnic* continues to resonate with young people today. "It's the perfect play for our students and it's a play that I feel is right for our time," says McGuire. Much like the 1950 setting of the play, youth today are exposed to all sorts of new ideas – ideas that don't necessarily connect with those of their parents. As televisions were infiltrating living rooms and transforming a new generation then, the same can be said for today with the influence of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. "Mr. Inge has created these fantastic characters, and their desires – to be independent, to get away, to break free from traditions and be who they want to be – speak to every new generation. It is my firm belief that Mr. Inge is still asking provocative questions through these characters."

Picnic illustrates the lives of ordinary Americans in small town Kansas at the end of a scorching hot summer. The arrival of worldly and handsome Hal stirs up the community and the relationships between the Owens sisters (Millie, the smart one, and Madge, the pretty one), their determined mother, Madge's college-bound boyfriend, the watchful neighbour and the spinster schoolteacher who boards at the Owens' house. Hal's strong presence awakens the fierce vitality of youth and the heart's yearning to take the road less travelled.

With a career that took him from his home on the West Coast and an education at UVic (a BFA and later an MFA in Directing) across the country to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Charlottetown Festival, Stratford Festival, and then on to the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco and London's West End, McGuire can relate to wanting to make his mark in the world. Similarly, costume designer Pauline Stynes left Ireland and a career in tailoring to return as a mature student for her dream of becoming a costume designer. With a previous degree in film, student set designer Jonathan Maxwell left Finland to focus on theatre at UVic. His designs transform the traditional, realist back-porch, picket-fence view of this gritty Kansas town into a set that also reflects the very nature of a family that is coming apart. Stynes designs echo the well-worn, pre-50s style of dresses and slacks of a family short on cash, showing us clothes – not costumes. Lighting designer Allan Stichbury beautifully depicts a 24-hour prairie skyline, and third-year student and sound designer Colette Habel gives a voice to rural and natural sounds of small-town Kansas.

Picnic opened on Broadway in 1953 and enjoyed 477 consecutive showings, winning the Pulitzer Prize that year, and adapted into a big Hollywood film in 1956 starring Kim Novak and William Holden. While it was considered quite scandalous when it was first shown, the play has continued to be a favourite and was remounted on Broadway in 2012. With his portraits of small-town life rooted in the American heartland, Mr. Inge became known as the "Playwright of the Midwest". He had a string of memorable Broadway productions, including *Come Back, Little Sheba* which won several Tony Awards, and *Bus Stop*, which was later adapted for the big screen in 1956 featuring Marilyn Monroe. Later in life, he felt the strain of waning critical acclaim and the pressure of living under the shadow of his vastly more popular friend, playwright Tennessee Williams. He committed suicide at the age of 60 and is buried in his hometown.

Join us **Friday, February 14 at 7pm** for a FREE preshow lecture with director Peter McGuire who will share why he loves this play, the many themes and ideas that still make this play relevant to our times, and the joy of working with students. We're pleased to offer Sign Language Interpretation for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing community **on Saturday February 22, at 2pm** with interpretation by Nigel Howard and Jen Ferris.