



## James and the Giant Peach - Delightful



Riverwalk's *James and the Giant Peach* was certainly a fun, feel-good family musical which is something in woefully short supply these days. It was a delightful way to finish up the theater season which, although it was child-friendly, was still sly enough to appeal to adults.

As the show started, James' (Nicholas Pasko) parents were killed by a rhinoceros and he was sent to live with two terrible aunts. He did, however, have a sort of guardian angel in Lada Lord (Luka Pawsek) who gave him a magic potion meant to be taken orally but which got dumped on the old peach tree in the backyard from which a great adventure ensued.

It's worth noting that the pleasantly tuneful score is by the Oscar-winning Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, who a few years later would go to create the scores for the films *La La Land* and *The Greatest Showman*. (The actual "live" music was provided via a recording from the publisher which is often the case these days.)

Young Mr. Pasko (age 12) is excellent as James, and for a magical moment during the song *Middle of a Moment* he "took the stage," showing that he is truly a star in the making. Pawsek complemented him with the right amount of swagger and mystery.

Among the larger-than-life insects who became James' new "family in the second act, Riley Hiraj stood out as the lowly earthworm who rises to heroism, ably assisted by Brian Farnham, Ava Taube, Sophia Bernard and Garrett Manor as other family members.

Last but not least among the principals were Holly Kay-Cannon and Joyce Kramer-Cox as the hilariously awful aunts who left the audience cheering at their demise.

Insect puppets and two-person rhino costume by Adam Carlson were impressive. The costumes (Morgan Pohl and RWT Costume Shop) and choreography (Fran Luddington) were simple and sincere, while the giant, rotating two-story peach (Tom Ferris and Bob Nees) ended up as a very cozy dwelling place for many of the characters we grew to embrace. Director Linda Widener can be very proud of this magical production.

by T.E. Klunzinger



Sophia Bernard as Spider with Eva Taube as Ladybug • PHOTO BY WWW.ARINIKO.COM



Emerging Playwrights  
RIVERWALK THEATRE

### 2024 Competition Winners

Five Area High School Students  
Win \$1000 Playwriting Prizes

Five high school students have been named 2024 Emerging Playwrights winning \$1000 prizes for writing short plays. This is the second year that Riverwalk Theatre has invited high school students in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton Counties to compete in this contest. Students throughout the tri-county area submitted scripts vying for one of the five \$1000 prizes. A panel of judges reviewed the scripts and selected the following students as winners of the competition:

- **Evan Bywater**, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Lansing Eastern HS with the script *Buddy's Pizza*
- **Olivia Quiroga**, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Holt HS with the script *Butterfly Grief* (Olivia Quiroga was also named an Emerging Playwright in 2023.)
- **Ella Reid**, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Dewitt HS with the script *Strangers Like Us*
- **Paulina Rivet**, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Dewitt HS with the script *Roses are Red*
- **Abigail Triantaflos**, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Ovid-Elsie HS with the script *Women at Housework*

In addition to the \$1000 prizes, the playwrights will have their scripts produced as full productions or staged readings at **Riverwalk Theatre's EMERGING PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL on Saturday, August 3 at 7 pm**. The playwrights will have an active role in bringing their scripts to life on Riverwalk Theatre's Black Box stage.

"There is a lot of talent out there in our high schools," said Tom Ferris, member of Riverwalk's Emerging Playwrights committee. "We are excited to give area high school students a chance to show off their work."

More information is available on the Riverwalk Theatre website [www.riverwalktheatre.com/emerging-playwrights](http://www.riverwalktheatre.com/emerging-playwrights)





# A U D I T I O N S



## ANGELS IN AMERICA: Millennium Approaches by Tony Kushner

directed by Bob Robinson

AUDITIONS 7 pm, Sun/Mon,

June 16, 17 • SHOWS: August 15-25

*Angels in America* is centered around a gay man who is abandoned by his lover after he contracts the AIDS virus. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Drama Desk Award, the play is an examination of AIDS and homosexuality in 1980s America. It bluntly and graphically deals with racism, religion, Jews, WASPS and Reagan-era politics, switching between reality and fantasy. *The New York Times* described it as, "A vast miraculous play... provocative, witty and deeply upsetting...."

**Roy M. Cohn**, 45-55. A successful New York attorney and unofficial power broker. Former assistant to Senator Joseph McCarthy during his investigation of suspected communists.

**Joseph Pitt**, 30-35. Chief Clerk for a Federal Court of Appeals judge.

**Harper Pitt**, 25-35. Joe's wife, agoraphobic with a mild Valium addiction, not always living in "reality."

**Louis Ironside**, 30. A word processor working for the Court of Appeals.

**Prior Walter**, 30, Louis's boyfriend.

**Hannah Pitt**, 55-60. Joe's mother, a Mormon living in Salt Lake City.

**Belize**, 30-35, African American. A former drag queen and Prior's former lover

**The Angel**. She is an angel. The actor cast as The Angel must be prepared for a certain degree of "physical" activity.

The actors cast in the above roles will also play the following characters:

**Rabbi Isidor Chemelwitz**, an Orthodox Jewish rabbi.

**Mr. Lies**, Harper's imaginary friend.

**The Man in the Park**.

**Henry**, Roy's doctor.

**Emily**, a nurse.

**Martin Heller**, a Reagan Administration Justice Department hack.

**Sister Stella Chapter**, a Salt Lake City real-estate salesperson.

**Prior I**, ghost of a dead Prior Walter, a thirteenth century medieval English farmer.

**Prior II**, ghost of a dead Prior Walter, a seventeenth century sophisticated Londoner.

**An Eskimo**

**A Homeless Woman**

**Ethel Rosenberg**, a woman convicted of espionage, executed in 1953.

Those who audition should come prepared to read from the script. Perusal scripts are available from the Riverwalk office. *NOTE: this play contains very graphic language, brief male nudity and sexual situations. If you are uncomfortable with adult language and depictions of sexual acts, please do not audition. If you are not otherwise familiar with this play, the director strongly urges you to read the script before auditioning.*



## PICKLEBALL

Comedy by Jeff Daniels

Directed by Amy Jo Brown

AUDITIONS 7 pm, Sun/Mon,

August 4 & 5

SHOWS: September 26-29, October 3-6

Written by Jeff Daniels, PICKLEBALL shows us all the possibilities of middle-aged athleticism and the human spirit. In America's fastest growing game, there are no apologies, there are no excuses, and there is no room for weakness. PERFECT - female, athletic.

BILLIE - female, somewhat athletic.

LARRY - male, not at all athletic.

SHELDON - male, athletic in a former life.

SPIKE - male, fit.

RALPH - older male.

The play takes place in various places in and around a public park in Royal Oak, Michigan. The time is the present.

Auditions will consist of two parts: prepared monologues and scene work. **Please prepare ONE of the monologues** found in the packet for auditions, a link for which can be found at [riverwalktheatre.com/auditions](http://riverwalktheatre.com/auditions).

If you need special accommodations for auditions (i.e. uncomfortable with in-person auditions due to Covid, unable to attend audition dates, disability accommodations, etc.), please contact the **director, Amy Jo Brown** at [ajbrown1063@gmail.com](mailto:ajbrown1063@gmail.com)

Come prepared to read from the script. Perusal scripts are available at the Riverwalk Theatre Office, see below.

**PERUSAL SCRIPTS** for all shows are available at the Riverwalk office, Tuesday - Friday, 10 am - 5:00 pm. Call 517-482-5700 to check availability: [rwt@RiverwalkTheatre.com](mailto:rwt@RiverwalkTheatre.com) audition forms are available online at [www.riverwalktheatre.com/auditions](http://www.riverwalktheatre.com/auditions)

## MEMBERSHIP

funds at least a quarter of show budgets plus general operating expenses to maintain our building and staff.

WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU FOR A SECURE FUTURE!

**Actor** — \$15-24, Ripples, voting on board members and Members Choice favorite show award.

**Technician** — \$25-49, Ripples, voting, program listing

**Stage Manager** — \$50-99, Ripples, voting, program listing, and one comp ticket

**Director** — \$100-249, Ripples, voting, program listing, two comp tickets

**Producer** — \$250-499, Ripples, voting, program listing, four comp tickets

**Star** — \$500-999, Ripples, voting, program listing, six comps, name on theatre seat

**Angel** — \$1000+, Ripples, voting, program listing, 12 comp tickets, name on a theatre seat and on the donor board in the lobby

**THREE WAYS TO JOIN:** go to [riverwalktheatre.com](http://riverwalktheatre.com) - click "more" then "get involved" to join online — OR phone Mike with your credit card info 517-482-5700 — OR just mail a check to Mike at the office, P.O. Box 12249, Lansing 48901. We're 501c3 tax deductible.

# RIVERWALK

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Ripples is published by Riverwalk Theatre. Submit info to Editor Jane Zussman (jszussman@gmail.com) or Riverwalk Manager Mike Siracuse (rwt@riverwalk-theatre.com) 517-482-5700 or at RiverwalkTheatre.com



P.O. Box 12249  
 Lansing MI 48901

Next to Impression 5,  
 228 Museum Drive, south  
 off Michigan Avenue, across  
 from the Lansing Center



**THE ROBERT BUSBY AWARD**  
 honoring extraordinary contributions to local theater went to retiring RWT Manager, **MIKE SIRACUSE**

# News from the Riverwalk Board

## Season Tickets

**Season Tickets are on sale** for a limited time, through the run of *Angels in America*, the first show of Season 36. \$135 for eight fantastic Riverwalk shows, including three musicals and five plays, on both our Rotary Main Stage and our Dart Black Box.

## Office Manager

As longtime Manager Mike Siracuse prepares for retirement, the board has realized he is irreplaceable by only one person — and so voted to **hire two full time employees to replace our current single theater manager position**. One will focus on operations, and the other will focus on business. Both job postings are now on our website [www.riverwalktheatre.com/job-postings.html](http://www.riverwalktheatre.com/job-postings.html) and on our Facebook page.

## ShowTix

We will be using a **new ticketing system** next season! We are working with ShowTix to implement their ticketing system, which will make purchasing tickets much more accessible and easy! We are very excited about this change.

## Membership Meeting

Riverwalk's **Annual Membership Meeting is Saturday, June 22, at 1 p.m.** All are welcome to come learn about Riverwalk business issues. Current members have received an e-mail link to vote for the "Members' Choice" favorite musical and favorite straight play of our past season — to be announced at the Barney Awards celebration — as well as voting for the coming season's board members.

Candidates: Julian VanDyke (re-election), Frank Boston (re-election), Rick Wendorf (re-election), Leon Green (re-election), Lewis Elson (new), Stephanie Wohlfert (new), and Holly Kay-Cannon (new) to fill seven open positions on the board this year.



*He may not be dressed as the famed Grasshopper from James and the Giant Peach, but President Brian Farnham will be there to share RWT biz at the Membership Meeting.*

## Riverwalk Sweeps Thespie Awards

We are proud to praise Riverwalk winners of this annual *Lansing State Journal* theatrical awards, decided by a committee that sees shows all around town!

### FOR MUSICALS

- Best show: *The Rocky Horror Show*
- Director: Shannon Bowen and Erin Hoffman, *Rocky Horror*
- Actor: Nicholas Pasko, *James and the Giant Peach*
- Featured actor: Riley Hirai, *James and the Giant Peach*
- Featured actress: Ny'Kieria Blocker, *Rocky Horror*
- Music director (\*non-professional): Nicole Martin, *Rocky Horror*
- Choreography (\*non-professional): Amanda Tollstam, *Rocky*

### FOR PLAYS

- Best show (\*non-professional): *The Exonerated*
- Director (\*non-professional): Bob Robinson, *Admissions*
- Actress (\*non-professional): Erin Hoffman, *Moonglow*
- Supporting actor: Heath Sartorius, *Admissions*
- Featured actress: Tied: Jane Zussman in *Admissions* and Laura Croff and Lauren Spadafore as the gossipy Venticelli duo in *Amadeus*

### FOR EITHER

- Costumes: Kris Maier, *Amadeus*
- Set dressing (\*non-professional): Ric Sadler, *Admissions*
- Hair and makeup: Rebecca Dahlem, *Amadeus*
- Lighting design (\*non-professional): Joseph Dickson, *Exonerated*
- Sound design (\*non-professional): Joseph Dickson, *Rocky Horror*
- Puppet design: Adam Carlson, *James and the Giant Peach*

### SPECIAL AWARDS

Riverwalk was recognized for a big step up in its full color, complete, printed programs. In a first, the crew members had individual photos. This was a huge contrast with MSU's one-page sheet with basic info and a QR code. Audiences could only see the credits via their phones... which were supposed to be off during the show. (Editor's Note: credit for these exceptional programs should go to designer Kelly Sandula Gruner and the generous donation of color printing from Jackson National.)

The Robert Busby Award honoring extraordinary contributions to local theater went to RWT Manager, Mike Siracuse, who is retiring at the end of this calendar year, after almost 30 years of helping Riverwalk... and, often, helping other theater groups and individuals.

\*When a professional wins in any given category, a nonprofessional winner is also chosen.

Supported in part by MICHIGAN ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL • NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS • COMMUNITY FOUNDATION • ARTS COUNCIL OF GREATER LANSING

