



TangentArts hones theatrical talents in valley

Benjamin Krevolin • February 18, 2010

The Dutchess County Arts Council is always excited to meet new artists and learn about new artistic adventures in our region.

Recently, TangentArts became a member of the arts council. It is setting up shop in Tivoli, joining other cultural assets of that village, including Tivoli Artist Co-op and Kaatsbaan International Dance Center.

The seeds of Tangent were planted in 1989 when Michael Rhodes joined Keith Teller's Poughkeepsie-based theater company, Apple Blossom Productions, for its staging of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot."

Apple Blossom was made up of a small band of actors, writers and directors working together in a converted city courthouse. Over the next several years, they produced plays by Edward Albee, David Mamet and John Cassavetes, among others.

The ambitious members of Apple Blossom Productions eventually dispersed to Chicago, Los Angeles and New York to pursue their respective careers. Michael and Keith, with Andrea Rhodes, wanted to bring the independent spirit they cultivated to New York City, to take creative control and begin producing plays on their own.

Rooted in ensemble-oriented theater, Tangent began in 2000 and continues to produce plays that resonate with company members — examinations that delve into the human experience, that inspire and challenge the group and reach audiences on a gut level.

Whether existential rumination or kitchen-sink drama, observational comedy or a series of interconnected one-acts, Tangent presents stories that center on character and seek deeper truths. Tangent has produced and read a number of contemporary classics and original works over the years, including a 50th anniversary staging of "Waiting for Godot."

While on a trip to Dublin a few years ago, the members of Tangent met with theater troupe AboutFACE, which introduced them to pub theater — staging or reading plays in a pub as a way of keeping costs down and reaching audiences more intimately. They loved the idea and started their successful pub theater series with readings of contemporary classics and original works in New York City, including "The Zoo Story" by Albee and "Doubt" by John Patrick Shanley.

Seeing an opportunity to establish their own corner in the Hudson Valley, Andrea and Michael relocated, excited at the prospect of bringing TangentArts to Dutchess County, where it all began for them nearly 20 years ago.

Thanks to Michael Nickerson at the Black Swan in Tivoli, they recently kicked off with "The Zoo Story" to a highly receptive and enthusiastic audience.

Tangent will host readings all year and produce other works, including a recent award-winning play and an Irish import.

On Sunday, stop in for a pint and a play and meet the folks of TangentArts at a pub reading of "Sight Unseen" by Donald Margulies at 6 p.m. at the Black Swan, 66 Broadway, Tivoli. Admission is free.

For more information about TangentArts or about the event, visit www.tangent-arts.org.