

# stage preview

## Part 1 of a 3-Part Discussion

### CONVERSATIONS WITH

Charlie  
Flynn-McIver

Charlie Flynn-McIver is the Artistic Director of the North Carolina Stage Company in Asheville. Prior to NCSC, Charlie toured with Judith Light in the National Tour of Wit, and was seen at Syracuse Stage, The Hangar Theatre, Theatre Virginia, Vermont Stage Company, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and in New York at the Melting Pot and the Lincoln Center Institute.

**Rapid River Magazine:** How did the concept for NC Stage Company come about, and when did you decide you wanted to open a theater?

**Charlie Flynn-McIver:** My older sister moved to Asheville in 1990 at the same time as I started pursuing my MFA in Acting from UNC Chapel Hill. I helped her move to here and it was really my first experience with this amazingly beautiful part of the country. It just caught my imagination and I visited as often as I could.

I moved to NYC in 1993 after my grad work and worked a lot in regional theatres across the US, but always made sure I had time to visit my sister and her growing family in Asheville. Each time I came back, Asheville seemed to get even better to me. So, somewhere along the line, I started daydreaming about a professional theatre in Asheville. Not necessarily starting one, but thinking, how cool would it be to have an acting job in THIS town.

I'd worked in some great regional theatres, which involves living, rehearsing and performing in the town the theatre's in, but none of the towns really held a candle to Asheville in my mind. The idea grew into creating a professional theatre in Asheville.

Every time I'd mention it to someone I'd met on an acting job, they would almost always have some story about their time in Asheville. It was incredible how many diverse people I'd meet in NYC had had some experience with Asheville. And it always ended up with them saying how they loved Asheville and how they want to get back.

THEN, on our first date, Angie was telling me about her career in theatre in NYC. You know, the usual first date kind of stuff. She's from Charlotte and I'm from Durham but we'd met in NYC a few days after Christmas in 1998. We'd already found some shared experience both being from NC and being in theatre. But then, somewhere in there, she said "I've enjoyed my time in NY but I'm really thinking about moving back to NC and starting a profes-

INTERVIEWED BY DENNIS RAY



Charlie Flynn-McIver, Artistic Director of the North Carolina Stage Company.

sional theatre." I asked "Where?" And she said, "Asheville."

Well, that was it I guess. So it's a shared dream and endeavor with Angie. That really just addresses the place though. The why is a little more complicated.

When this idea started to foment in me, I think was when I noticed a disconnect between the artists and the theatres I was working for. I don't want to overstate that because I was a part of some great productions that brought great joy and value to the communities where those theatres were. But after a while, the work started to feel a little mercenary like.

I longed for an artistic "home" that felt safe and artistically fulfilling and connected to the community it served. The larger theatres I had worked at had become so large (physically and logistically) and I was a visiting artist, so that feeling of immediacy with an audience was hard to achieve.

Everybody seemed to be worried about where their next job was coming from and not how they were going to change the lives of the people in the audience that night. So I wanted to make a place where that relationship between artist and audience was the motivating factor. Local theatre professor and blogger, Scott Walters, wrote a post about NC Stage several years ago which reflects a lot of the things we believe in (see <http://theatreideas.blogspot.com/search?q=flynn-mciver>).

**RRM:** Did you always plan to have the theatre in downtown Asheville? How did the location come about?

**CFM:** We looked about when we first got here and were interested in finding a home for NC Stage. All that was really available were rental relationships. Plus, there was a lot of theatre activity ramping up just as we got here in 2001. We quickly realized that the only way we would thrive was if we had our own space.

Continued on page 6

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# stage preview

NOMAD THEATRICAL COMPANY MAKES ITS ASHEVILLE DEBUT WITH

## The Fool's Lear

BY AMANDA LESLIE

North Carolina Stage Company hosts an acclaimed New York theatre company as part of its Catalyst Series. Nomad Theatrical Company presents *The Fool's Lear*, a world premiere by Randy Neale, inspired by Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*.

This funny and poignant new play tells the tale of King Lear and his Fool, as they leave the pages of William Shakespeare's famed play. Filled with hopeful plans, they enter into a stormy crisis of identity: The Fool desperately tries to hold on to the one power by which he has always defined himself, his ability to make the King laugh; The King abdicates his Kingship, ashamed of the tyrant Father he has become. Who are they after all? A Clown and a King, a Servant and his Master, a Father and his unacknowledged Son, or an Old Man suffering dementia and his reluctant Care Giver?

Since 2004, North Carolina Stage Company's Catalyst Series has played host to a diverse line-up of theatre, dance, comedy, burlesque and performance art. The productions in the Catalyst Series are chosen for their excellence and to complement



the theatre's Mainstage Season of plays.

After a combined 70+ years in the theatre *The Fool's Lear* represents the first full collaboration between brothers Randy Neale (Playwright/Actor) and Grant Neale. Director Grant Neale writes of the play, "As artists we are always struggling with questions of identity; Who am I if I am not

creating? Is it right that I am still playing fools or acting at all? Do I exist if I'm not in a play? And is that enough?"



The *Fool's Lear* runs July 7-10 at North Carolina Stage Company's theatre at 15 Stage

Lane in downtown Asheville. Tickets are \$18. Performances are Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Call (828) 239-0263 or visit [www.ncstage.org](http://www.ncstage.org) for tickets and more information.

Nomad Theatrical Company can be found online at [www.facebook.com/NomadTheatrical](http://www.facebook.com/NomadTheatrical)

'NC Stage' continued from page 4

We met with local architect, Barbara Field, about another location because she had some experience planning performance spaces. When we met with her and she asked us what we wanted, she said she had a space in the Earth Guild building on Haywood. We walked over there right then and found the space to be perfect for what we wanted to do. Already up to code, big enough to do some really interesting stuff, but not too big for a start up theatre.

**RRM:** What originally drew you to owning your own theatre company? (The hours must be horrendous).

**CFM:** If I knew then what I know now... lol! Honestly, I had no idea what it would take time wise and I'm still, 10 years in, trying to manage a work/home balance, but often enough, work and home can become indistinguishable from each other. It's no different from any small business start-up where the owner has to put a lot of sweat equity into the business.

Our second show, I stayed up 36 hours straight, changing the plug ends to new lighting instruments that had just arrived. We just didn't have the people (or the money to pay them) to get a lot of stuff done like that. (For one fundraiser I stayed up 72 hours straight while editing a video for the event, producing *12th Night* for NC Stage and performing in *Smoke On The Mountain* at Flat Rock Playhouse.) But we have a lot more resources now with a great board of directors and a larger staff that is really talented and skilled.

But honestly? I LOOOOVE the response from audiences. I love to sneak in to performances I'm not in and hear the reaction from the audience that night. The sound of laughter, gasps, and absolute silence.

Yes, the sound of silence. You know the whole room is in sync, artists and audience, and there is no performance going on, just an experience of the human story where artist and audience are equal partners. That's worth the effort.

To be continued in the August issue of *Rapid River Magazine*.

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# stage preview

## HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH ROCK ASHEVILLE

BY AMANDA LESLIE

The glam-rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* opens Wednesday, August 24 at NC Stage in downtown Asheville. This cult hit, about the transgendered singer Hedwig, is by John Cameron Mitchell, with music and lyrics by Stephen Trask. It was later turned into a film starring Mitchell.



Photo by Sebastian Collett

In between some of the catchiest songs you'll ever hear, Hedwig tells her life story, from her start as a young boy named Hansel in communist East Berlin, to her botched sex-change operation and marriage to a U.S. serviceman, to her discovery of her musical gifts in a Texas trailer park. She also reveals publicly, for the first time, her scandalous relationship with mega-rock star Tommy Gnosis, the love of her life.

*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* stars Michael Sheldon, better known to Asheville audiences as drag legend Cookie LaRue. He has worked with Betterdays Productions, Asheville Vaudeville, and more drag shows in the Southeast than you can shake a can of Aqua Net at! He currently lives in Philadelphia with his partner Robert, so *Hedwig* is a rare chance for Asheville audiences to see him.

Hedwig is joined by her band the *Angry Inch*, made up of some of Asheville's hardest-working musicians: Aaron Price, Caleb Beissert and Matthew Kinne.

**IF YOU GO:** Tickets are \$17 - \$29, based on the day of the week, with a Pay-What-You-Can Night Wednesday, August 24. Performances are Wednesdays - Fridays at 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays at 7 and 10:30 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Call NC Stage at (828) 239-0263 or visit [www.ncstage.org](http://www.ncstage.org). NC Stage is located at 15 Stage Lane, Asheville NC 28801.

### Part 2 of a 3-Part Discussion

## CONVERSATIONS WITH

Charlie Flynn-McIver

Charlie Flynn-McIver is the Artistic Director of the North Carolina Stage Company in Asheville. In our July issue, Flynn-McIver shared the history of NC Stage Company and a few of his early experiences.

**Rapid River Magazine:** Before you were able to support yourself wholly in the theatre, what kind of jobs did you have?

**Charlie Flynn-McIver:** Oh man. Well, the main day job I had in NY was data entry for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. That was a great day job because they were all theatre people and let you go on auditions and jobs and welcomed you back with open arms. Plus, it was such a great cause. But I've done all sorts of things. Mainly I did temp work in offices around Manhattan. But I've also done teaching work, educational theatre performances for schools.

The weirdest job I had was for a private investigator in NY. I did a lot of surveillance work for him. I'm not at liberty to discuss it in detail...just kidding...it was really mundane stuff. A client would hire the PI trying to prove something in court and the PI would send me out to scope out the situation. One time I had to put on a suit, drive out to NJ, get on a bus, and travel to Wall Street. All the time, writing down information about the bus route.

One time I had to sit in a car for 3 days and write down how many bottles and of what color, were turned in to a recycling center in the Bronx.

**RRM:** You direct, produce, act and write. What is your first love and why not just act or just direct or...?

**CFM:** To be clear, I don't really write. I've helped on a few things but not done the original writing. I think the thing I have the most experience with and am like a fish in water is, is acting. I really love producing though.

Not to be over dramatic, but it really takes it out of me to act. The hours of running the theatre, raising money, managing a staff, planning for future productions, dealing with cash flow and budgets, attending meetings, planning fundraisers, AND rehearsing 36 hours a week and doing 6 shows a week...did I mention that I have 2 kids?...it's just too much sometimes.

There was a stretch last year where I didn't have a day off from work for about 9 months. And there's no getting out of

INTERVIEWED BY DENNIS RAY



Charlie Flynn-McIver in the comedy "What the Butler Saw." Ron Bashford directed a stellar cast: Casey Morris, Rebecca Morris, Graham Smith, Matt Burke, and Vivian Smith.

producing for me. Not until we're a little bigger. So I'd like to direct a little more and be able to leave the theatre a little more. But really, I'm only in about one show a year. Last year I was in 2 but that was not the norm.

**RRM:** How is a play formed in your mind before rehearsals start, and what kind of criteria become important when you select a play to stage?

**CFM:** We try to choose plays that we like. Seems kind of goofy to say that, but that's pretty true. And plays we like tend to be plays that are entertaining but have some substance. We also like plays that have harder themes but are also accessible. Our goal at NC Stage is to figure out what the intent of the playwright is and produce that on stage. We don't try to put our stamp on it or our own political views on it, like doing Shakespeare set in the White House or something like that.

We are attracted to a story that tells what we think is a truth about the human experience. That's not as limiting as it might seem. It includes tragedies, dramas and comedies. In fact, the truth of the human condition the playwright taps into is what makes the play particularly tragic, dramatic, or funny.

We're not attracted to dogmatic or pedantic plays and we don't like plays that wrap everything up at the end in a nice little package. We prefer plays that raise more questions than answers because we think that's the way life really is. Much more grey than black and white.

**RRM:** Do you have any commercial concern when you start to prepare a play? How does this affect the development stage of the play?

**CFM:** Sure. Aside from the question of whether anyone will come to see a par-

ticular play, there are all sorts of concerns, commercially and financially. On some shows we're required to use a certain amount of union actors and stage managers and that can raise the cost up quite a bit. Do we do a smaller show? Does that bring in as many audiences as a larger show? How much is it going to cost to build that set, how much will shop rental be? Where will we rehearse it? Etc.

We have tried to make a lot of those things second nature, using the same builder for multiple shows, we have a dedicated rehearsal and class space we pay for year round out at the Riverside Business Park. Those kinds of things make it so we don't have to find things like that as we start to develop a production. But, it adds to the overhead of the organization. It's a big balancing act that there isn't a magic formula for. At least that I've discovered.

**RRM:** Where do you see live theatre in the Asheville area in five years?

**CFM:** That's a good question. When we were first starting NC Stage, when it was just Angie and me meeting in our Brooklyn apartment with a full pot of coffee or three and talking about how we should go about this thing, there was an article in the paper about the boerging theatre scene in Asheville including, I think, 3 professional theatres. 5 years later, there was only one left. So there will be some attrition in the theatre world but then others will pop up. As it always does.

We have at least two new theatre spaces with as many theatre companies opening in the past 12 months and I think there's another one in West Asheville that's opened up. Theatre is the passion of a lot of people who feel it's important to tell a compelling story in this manner.

Now, whether or not there is enough demand in the public for buying tickets to such events is another story. There is a movement in theatre to find your tribe. Scott Walters talks a lot about this on his blog mentioned earlier. It's different than finding the market niche you can sell to. It's more about finding the people that share your values and for whom you perform mainly.

It feels like theatre is moving more toward this idea. But I think a lot of people who do theatre feel that this is not them. They feel that everyone should love what they do and flock to their performances. I think theatre folks should figure out who they're having this theatrical conversation with and continue that discussion and then maybe the individual tribes can branch out and experience other theatre companies.

And a word about the word professional. That word gets bandied about rather loosely. And it means different things to different people.

'Charlie Flynn-McIver' continued on page 28

# stage preview

## HART PRESENTS Hay Fever

August is a time for a good comedy, and no one writes them better than Noel Coward. HART's next production, "Hay Fever," directed by Jeff Bachar, is one of Coward's early successes. From the 1920's until his death in 1973 he was the most popular British playwright of his age. "Hay Fever," written in 1924, opened on Broadway with Laura Hope Crews in the role of Judith Bliss, the matriarch of a very odd family. The story is simple. Each eccentric member of the family has invited an unsuspecting guest for the weekend. Crews is best remembered as Aunt Pittypat in "Gone With the Wind."

IF  
YOU  
GO

HART presents Hay Fever, August 19, 20, 25, 26, 27 at 7:30 p.m., and August 21 and 28 at 3 p.m. Tickets: \$18 Adults; \$16 Seniors; Student/child \$8.

Special \$5 discount tickets for students for Thursday and Sunday performances. Box Office opens to season ticket holders Wednesday, August 10, and to the general public on Saturday, August 13.

Box Office Hours: Mon.-Sat. 1-5 p.m. Call (828) 456-6322 for reservations. Tickets available at [www.harttheatre.com](http://www.harttheatre.com). Performing Arts Center at the Shelton House, 250 Pigeon St., Waynesville, NC 28786.

## Haywood Arts Regional Theatre

The Haywood Arts Regional Theatre, founded in 1985, is a volunteer-based community theatre showcasing the talents of the people of the region. HART, under the leadership of Executive Director Steven Lloyd, has grown into one of the most active theatres in the Southeast, producing a year-round schedule of plays and musicals.

HART's main stage performances take place in the James Auditorium, a 255-seat theatre that operates April through November. In the winter, productions shift to the 75-seat Feichter Studio Theatre for a second season of more experimental work.

### HART 2011 Season

#### The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Weekends, September 30 - October 16. It is time for the annual spelling bee and this year's contestants are all out for the big prize with no holds barred. This hilarious show is full of heart and went on to become one of Broadway's biggest hits. Audition dates: August 7 & 8.

#### Ah, Wilderness!

Weekends, November 11 - 20. O'Neill is possibly the greatest American playwright, winner of three Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize for literature.

"Ah, Wilderness!" is his only comedy. Audition dates: September 25 & 26.

### HART 2012 Season

#### Look Homeward Angel

April 27, 28, 29, May 4, 5, 6. By Ketti Frings. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize. This classic drama, based on the book by Thomas Wolfe and set in pre-WWI Asheville, is one of the theater's greatest adaptations. Auditions March 11 & 12, 2012.

#### The Marvelous Wonderettes

May 25, 26, 27, and June 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10. Hit off-Broadway musical by Roger Bean. The Marvelous Wonderettes takes you to the 1958 Springfield High School prom where we meet the Wonderettes: four girls with hopes and dreams as big as their crinoline skirts with voices to match. Classic '50s songs. After intermission the girls' ten-year reunion. The Wonderettes perform classic '60s tunes. Auditions April 1 & 2, 2012.

#### La Cage Aux Faux

July 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29. Tony Award-winning best musical! This smash Broadway production by Jerry Herman, based on the French film "The Birdcage," is shocking, daring, and hilarious. Auditions May 6 & 7, 2012.

#### Lost in Yonkers

August 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, September 1, 2.



HART's home is a stunning facility constructed in the style of the traditional Summer Stock playhouses of the 1920's.

By Neil Simon. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize. Set in the 1930's, this comedy is considered one of Simon's best and most reflective works. The story of two young boys, left to be raised by grandma, who must learn to adapt and stay light on their feet in a changing world. Auditions June 24 & 25, 2012.

#### The Light in the Piazza

September 28, 29, 30, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14. There is love in the air in this story of a woman from Winston-Salem on vacation in Florence, Italy with her daughter. Set in the 1950's to a sweeping romantic score, this was one of Broadway's biggest hits. Auditions August 5 & 6, 2012.

#### August Osage County

November 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11. By Tracy Letts. Tony Award-Winning Best Play, and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama. A sweeping family drama set in the mid-West, filled with humor and shocking revelations. Considered by many to be one of the greatest plays ever written. Auditions September 16 & 17, 2012.

## NC STAGE 10TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

NC Stage is Asheville's only professional Equity theatre, and since 2002 it has produced a Mainstage season of four to six plays, as well as providing educational programming. For its 10th Anniversary Season, NC Stage has pulled out all the stops with a line-up of some of the best contemporary American theatre.

Subscriptions start at just \$75 for a four-play FlexPass. The theatre is also offering a "Super FlexPass" for just \$12 per month, which allows patrons to see every ticketed event in the theatre (including special events and second stage offerings) for one monthly price.

#### Hedwig and the Angry Inch

Music and lyrics by Stephen Trask  
August 24 - September 25, 2011

#### Angels in America: Millennium Approaches and Perestroika

By Tony Kushner  
October 12 - November 13, 2011

#### Live From WVL Radio Theatre: It's a Wonderful Life

Adapted by W.V.R. Repoley  
November 16 - 27, 2011

#### Love Child

By Daniel Jenkins and Robert Stanton  
February 15 - March 18, 2012

#### Circle Mirror Transformation

By Annie Baker. Co-produced with Immediate Theatre Project!  
March 28 - April 22, 2012

#### In the Next Room (or the Vibrator Play)

By Sarah Ruhl  
May 9 - June 10, 2012

IF YOU GO: Tickets are \$17 - \$29, based on day of the week. Call NC Stage at (828) 239-0263 or visit [www.ncstage.org](http://www.ncstage.org).

NC Stage is located at 15 Stage Lane, Asheville, NC 28801.

### 'Charlie Flynn-McIver' continued from page 6

My feeling is, if your performers are: a) mainly people who have now or in the past been involved in theatre as their vocation, which includes mostly union members; b) mainly people with extensive training and professional experience in theatre; c) mainly people who sustain the highest expectations of a professional workplace and performance; then, as part of your business practice as a producer you: a) hold those performers to a very high standard; b) compensate those performers with a reasonable, guaranteed salary, and safe rehearsal and performance space; and, c) pay payroll taxes and unemployment insurance for your employees, THEN you are running a professional theatre.

If not, then it's something else. And there's nothing wrong with being something else. But professional is a word that many people have worked a lifetime to achieve and it's not something you wear on your sleeve. You know why? Cause no one cares. The audiences simply don't care. You know who cares? The person saying they are professional. That's it.

**RRM:** How can we get the government/people to believe in theatre and that it is worth supporting?

I think we have to continue making the point to lawmakers and the general public that theatre is a valuable commodity in our community. But we also need to work hard to make theatre a valuable commodity in our community. There are already important ways that the arts impact our daily lives (see copy of speech I gave to Arts Day 2011 participants in Raleigh this year, attached) but we need to find other ways that theatre becomes important to others than just the usual suspects.

We need theatre and arts as part of the education process in schools. We need the arts as part of the correctional system in the prisons. We need the arts to be a daily part of everyone's lives and theatre has to find a way to do that without having to get people to pay a lot of money and come to a theatre somewhere. I don't know how this is done per se but this is what has to happen.

To be continued in the September issue of Rapid River Magazine.



# stage preview

## Part 3 of a 3-Part Discussion

### CONVERSATIONS WITH

Charlie  
Flynn-McIver

Charlie Flynn-McIver is the Artistic Director of Asheville's North Carolina Stage Company. Last month, Flynn-McIver shared his thoughts on the future of theatre in Asheville. This month we continue our conversation, beginning with the value of theatre.

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Charlie Flynn-McIver in *Boeing-Boeing*.

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**RRM:** How has fundraising for NC Stage changed over the years?

**CFM:** It's gotten harder in some ways, but in other ways, it's been about the same. About 4 years ago, NC Stage was awarded a recurring General Operating Support grant from the NC Arts Council. We are among only 4 arts organizations in the community (Wortham Theatre, Asheville Arts Museum and Asheville Symphony are the others) to receive this grant.

I can't tell you how grateful and proud we are to have made it into this league in the first 10 years of our existence. It's quite an accomplishment and it helps us, not only with our general operating needs but with raising money with local foundations and individuals. It gives us a certain stamp of approval from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources that we're a dependable and sustainable organization that would be safe to contribute money to. But fundraising continues to be a one person at a time kind of endeavor.

A lot of people think there must be some silver bullet organizations or fundraiser party that will solve all their funding needs. It's not that way. It might have been at one time but now it's about individual

### INTERVIEWED BY DENNIS RAY

relationships with your donors. Speaking with them one on one and engaging them in your organization.

**RRM:** What does it mean for a community to have live theatre?

**CFM:** Well, it means you have a gathering place where ideas are shared and individuals become a group. A place where you can be entertained and challenged all at the same time. A place where you can experience conflicting emotions at the same time. A place that reflects life for examination and implementation and, as Shakespeare said, hold the mirror up to nature. It also means that surrounding restaurants and businesses have help in attracting people to their location. My speech talks of a few more things.

**RRM:** What's the greatest threat to theatre?

**CFM:** Of course performing arts are threatened by the ease of entertainment options these days. You can watch a movie, streaming online, at ANY moment. You can watch bits of stuff for free on Youtube. There is an immediacy of stuff today that simply can't be met with theatre. We hold performances at a specific time and at a specific place and we must convene a group of people. Plus, it's expensive to produce. So these are all out there.

But I believe the biggest threat to theatre is apathy among the producers of theatre. The belief that what you're doing is good enough. It never is. I assume that everyone coming to the theatre needs to be won over to loving theatre. So you have this one chance to change their perception of theatre from this boring thing that their parents forced them to go to when they were kids, to this relevant and vital art form that they don't know how they lived without before.

And if you squander that opportunity, you put another nail in the coffin of live theatre. If someone comes to a play and their response is, "Meh," then all is lost. I would almost rather them leave outraged and on a vendetta AGAINST live theatre than feel that it's mediocre. But of course it would be best if audiences came away saying that it was amazing and they can't wait to tell a friend about it. And you need that reaction from total strangers. Not your buddies that love everything you do.

**RRM:** What's the biggest myth about live theatre?

**CFM:** Two answers. To the general public: Theatre is harder than it looks. But you should never see how hard it is. The easier something looks on stage, the longer it's been rehearsed, the more skilled the actors, designers and director and the more nuanced it has become over the course of rehearsing and performing it. In order to do

a lot of this, a theatre needs to be run like a business.

I was talking to some bankers the other day and describing cash flow needs in our theatre and trying to get them to understand things like how we have to have a bond in New York for the union members, and that money is taken out of our cash flow. There are times when the money flows better than others with ticket sales, fundraising appeals and subscription sales, and there are slow times when there's not enough revenue generating activity to keep bringing in money. Creating revenue generating activity costs money to produce. They looked at me and said, "Wow. I never thought of it before, but that's just like any small business!" Duh!

To people who would produce theatre: Theatre is harder than it looks. I don't know why this is, but so many people view theatre as something they can do. And to a certain extent I get it. I mean, you can't say you're a musician unless you can play an instrument.

You can't call yourself a dancer unless you can act. You can't call yourself a pilot unless you can fly a plane, and have a license. Ditto for lawyer and accountant and so on. But because theatre seems to be about getting up in front of people and just speaking while pretending to be someone else, so many people think it's something they can and should do.

Expressing an emotion is not acting. Eliciting laughter from an audience is not acting. Acting is a complex task of figuring out what a character's belief system is that makes them do what they do in a play and then, using skills learned over a lifetime of classes, professional and life experiences, and a very vivid imagination, putting that character on display in front of an audience as just a part of the whole play.

Theatre is about expressing the human condition and the human condition is FAR more complex than people want to think about. Sometimes characters' actions are hard to explain without limiting the character with your own limited experience. A really good playwright has crafted a play that deftly catches characters and their best and worst of behavior.

An actor's job is to figure out why the character is behaving the way he is. It usually has to do with an unfulfilled need. Emotion is the by-product of an unfulfilled need. So to theatre people out there, when you think you've nailed something about a character's behavior or a playwright's intent, assume you haven't and ask yourself one more time, "Why do they want this? To what ends?"

Figure out the answer and then ask the same question to those answers. See how it doesn't end? And that it's maddening? There ya go. Now you're getting to what it means to do theatre.

Read all three parts of this conversation online at [www.rapidrivermagazine.com](http://www.rapidrivermagazine.com)

She's ba-ack....  
at NC Stage

HEDWIG AND THE  
ANGRY INCH

Wednesdays – Fridays at 7:30pm  
Saturdays at 7:00 and 10:30pm  
Sundays at 2:00pm

15 Stage Lane, Asheville  
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