

stage preview

The Magnetic Field – Changing Theatre, Play by Play

Can Asheville have an impact on the national theatre scene? Sure, the city has its fair share of theatre companies, of all colors and stripes, but is it enough to capture attention above and beyond WNC? Chall Gray and Steven Samuels think that it can. They are the principal creative forces behind The Magnetic Theatre, the resident producing company in The Magnetic Field, a chic new River Arts District venue which Gray opened last December and began planning 2 ½ years before that.

“What we’re doing is unique. We’re the only theatre in the Southeast that produces all-original works, but the response from the community, both audiences and theatre artists, has been overwhelmingly positive,”



Chall Gray and Steven Samuels.

Photo: Peter Brezny

Samuels, the artistic director, said recently.

The Magnetic Field has set a blistering pace since day one, with nine full-scale productions already under its belt, and they are already making waves outside of Asheville, with write-ups in the *New York Times* and *Charleston Magazine*.

“In just the past few months, we’ve received scripts from New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Arkansas, and Connecticut, as well as here in WNC,” Gray, who is the producer, noted. “It’s surprised even us how fast word has spread. It’s incredibly hard to get new plays done, even for established playwrights, and that’s one of the reasons we’re dedicated to premiering original works.”

The Magnetic Field includes an intimate 64-seat theatre, and a bar and restaurant in a separate space. With the wide variety of dynamic shows they’ve done, the company has surprised audiences with works such as: Lucia Del Vecchio’s *The Family Tree*, a dramatic work leavened with comedy; and David Eshelman’s *The Witches’ Quorum*, a wild revisionist historical romp set in the 1600’s, but with raunchiness, bawdy humor, and some risqué content.

The Magnetic Field has also received praise from many publications and journals. A reviewer from CVNC.org, an arts journal, proclaimed that “The Magnetic Field lives up to its branding as one of America’s most inventive and audacious theatrical troupes, and a groundbreaking leader in the development and production of the nation’s new plays.”

This young company has also amassed an impressive base of talent—they have a section on their website featuring the bios of everyone they’ve worked with, a group which already amounts to more than 50. “It’s really amazing, the quality of talent this town has,” Samuels said. “The local creative pool is deep and wide, supplemented by successful, experienced transplants from large cities like New York and LA, like myself and any number of our colleagues.”

While The Magnetic Field has six artistic associates whose work they present on an ongoing basis, and the much larger group of talents who have worked on all of their shows so far, they’re always looking to add new people to their group. “We very much want to create a place that’s open to the best we can find, and we’re always interested in meeting and working with people we don’t already know,” Gray said.

Magnetic Midnight is one of their avenues for meeting fresh faces and giving them a chance to perform. The show, which occurs on the first Friday of each month, has a simple premise: show up at 10 p.m. to perform something of your own or someone else’s. The only guidelines are that pieces must be original and no longer than five minutes. Other than that, pretty much anything goes.

In addition to their theatre efforts, there is also a multitude of other programming that occurs at The Magnetic Field. Mondays play host to storytelling and poetry slam events—two popular series, The Asheville Poetry Slam and the Synergy Story Slam,



anchor the programming. Tuesdays are the night for comedy, with touring stand-up comedians booked in by the Disclaimer Comedy Series, and improv performances by the in-house troupe, Reasonably Priced Babies. Music is frequently presented on Wednesdays.

So, can Asheville have an impact on the national theatre scene? With companies like The Magnetic Theatre continuing to present new, different and innovative works, the odds are looking better all the time.

The Magnetic Field
Glen Rock Depot, 372 Depot Street
in the River Arts District
(828) 257-4003
www.themagneticfield.com

THE MAGNETIC FIELD RESTAURANT



In addition to the groundbreaking work in their theatre, The Magnetic Field is fast making a name for itself as a restaurant and bar. Co-head chefs Liam Luttrell-Rowland, who recently was invited to prepare dinner for Ruth Reichl, and Jason Rowland, who has cooked at the renowned James Beard House, consistently produce great dishes. Award-winning bartenders match the chefs’ creations with their own innovative cocktails.

MAGNETIC FIELD’S FALL SEASON

Shangri-La, a new comedy by Lucia Del Vecchio, set in a retirement mobile-home park in Florida, premieres in September. October brings *Brief Encounters: New Magnetic Voices 2011*, a presentation of short plays by new writers.

Next comes *Rock Saber*, a crazed, late-night only show about the world’s worst epic metal band, by Julian Vorus, and December brings the return of the much loved Bernstein family in the *28th Annual Bernstein Family Christmas Spectacular: Christmas in Space, in 3-D!*

IF YOU GO: For more details please visit www.themagneticfield.com.

WORLD PREMIERE

Dreamland Motel

VACANCY

pg. 39 H

A band of misfits in a comedy of dreams lost and found.

Be Be Theater Sept 15-18 & 22-25 Thur - Sat @ 8:00pm Sun Matinee @ 2:00pm
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