



WSR to stage 'Rocky Horror' at Raue

By JAMI KUNZER – jkunzer@shawmedia.com

Williams Street Repertory will stage "The Rocky Horror Show" this weekend. (Photo provided)

It's the show that started it all for Williams Street Repertory.

If any show is going to "jump out and say, 'Hey, here we are,' " as the theater company sought to do, it's "The Rocky Horror Show."

"Rocky had this sort of raw, fun, edginess to it that we thought would be a good way to establish ourselves," said T. Paul Lowry, who directed the musical comedy and cult phenomenon last year when it served as the inaugural season opener.

Because of its previous success, the show returns this weekend to once again open the season for Williams Street Reperatory, the in-house theater company at the Raue Center for the Arts in CrystalLake.

Now with five productions under its belt, the theater company has made a name for itself and built a camaraderie and community of artists bonding over a common goal – to present "innovative and emotionally challenging work."

With Lowry again at the helm, "The Rocky Horror Show" contains a mix of previous and new cast members.

"With new cast members, it puts a whole new dynamic on the show," Lowry said. "We're hoping it's the kind of show people would come to year after year. I think we've changed it up enough that there's enough newness to it that people should have a fun experience with discovering the show."

Lowry, who spent 15 years working in theater in New York City and Connecticut before coming to the Raue, wanted a show with popular appeal. He found that in the musical that became a movie and started a 35-year nonstop cultural phenomenon.

"I think it's just about embracing the ridiculous '70s camp that is 'The Rocky Horror Show.' It's not intended to be serious. ... It's supposed to be fun," said Amanda Flahive of Hoffman Estates, who repeats her role as Magenta in the show.

"I always joke that Magenta is not about subtlety in any way. It's huge. It's over the top," she said. "Magenta is like the quintessential vixen sort of character, but she also happens to be an alien.

"I get to have so much fun."

Having worked in theater since age 18, Flahive sought out Williams Street Repertory as a way to get back into theater after getting married and “busy with a day job” for several years. This is her fourth production with the company.

“It’s the biggest blessing to be involved with a theater company from the ground up,” she said.” This is what an actor dreams of, to be on the ground floor of a new company.”

Last year’s production of “The Rocky Horror Show” drew enthusiastic audience members, many of whom dressed up as the characters.

“I got shot with water pistols, hit with flying objects,” Flahive said. “You name it, it happened, and people are talking back to you all the time. As an actor you get to stretch your improv muscles a little bit.

“Just because they shout out doesn’t mean we cannot shout back at them.”

Other repeating cast members include Amy Ferraro as Usherette/Eddie/Dr. Scott, Frank Gaughan as Narrator, Kate Hein as Columbia and Mark Mahallak as Riff Raff.

All cast members, including those making their “Rocky Horror” debut – Jim Gritschke as Rocky, John McNally as Dr. Frank-N-Furter, Chris Davis as Brad, Sarah Jordan as Janet, and Angela Dello, Heidi Liefheit and Lucy Zukaitis, all as Phantom – bring such energy to the show, Lowry said.

“The cast this year really reflects that growth in terms of the connection they all have to each other and the connection they have to the company,” he said.

“THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW”

As presented by Williams Street Repertory

WHEN: Opening 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 19. Shows take place at 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 20; Thursday, Oct. 25; Friday, Oct. 26; and Saturday, Oct. 27.

WHERE: Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

COST: \$22 for adults; \$6 for ages 18 and younger and \$10 for those older than 18. “Pay What You Can” seats are available on opening night. Balcony seats will be open to interested patrons who are encouraged to leave a donation. These seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

INFO: www.wsrep.org, www.rauecenter.org or call the box office at 815-356-9212.

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