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Death inspires song, then musical

Author: Michelle Kinsey; Staff

Article Text:

By MICHELLE KINSEY

mkinsey(at)thestarpress.com

MUNCIE --It started out as a song.

That's how Collin Warren, local actor and songwriter, explained how his first musical, *Bridges*, came to be.

'It was a song about street kids in Portland and what happened when a mentally disabled girl who was hanging out with them was killed," he said.

He started working on the song in May 2003, gathering information about the tragic event and researching the street kids. The more he discovered, he said, the more he realized the song needed to be a show. He wrote more songs --12 in all --and placed the action in the politically charged period between Sept. 11 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Bridges quickly evolved into what Warren calls a musical that 'illustrates the danger that arises when the defense of a society undermines the very ideals it is built upon."

He finished the musical in August of this year.

As for the name, Warren said, bridges make a lot of connections in Portland. He should know --he's originally from the nearby city of Vancouver, Wash.

Bridges will premiere at Muncie Civic's Studio Theatre, 222 E. Main St., at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 12-13, as well as 8 p.m. Nov. 18-20.

Tickets are \$10. Reservations and ticket sales are available by calling 765-288-PLAY or at the Box Office.

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Bridges, we should point out, is intended for mature audiences and contains strong adult language mature themes.

Warren, 21, came to East Central Indiana last year with a Woody Guthrie production and decided to stick around. He is studying religion and sociology at Ball State and is the assistant tech director at Muncie Civic. He has appeared in numerous Civic productions, such as *Sigfried in Das Barbecu* and *Dr. Frank 'n' Furter* in *The Rocky Horror Show*.

He also released his debut album, *Rough Drafts*, in September.

Warren said he has gathered a very talented group of young actors for the show. The ensemble features Adam Fried, Rusty Ramstrom, David Black, Celeste Reno, Kristen Calvin, Rebecca Zygmontowicz, Paul Keller and Kevin Heller.

These seven actors take on various roles throughout the play. The first act uses flashbacks to show why these kids ended up leaving society behind for the streets of Portland. It also gives some background into the young murder victim's life. The second act focuses on the three days she spent with these street kids.

Warren said he was impressed with the work of the cast. "It has not been as easy process for them," he added, citing several rewrites and staging changes. "They have been instrumental in getting the show where it is now."

Rebecca Zygmontowicz, 20, said this was "the most amazing show" she's ever worked on. "The songs are fantastic," he said. "I wake up to the CD every morning."

Adam Fried, 20, said working with a new show has been an "exciting process." "We have really been able to develop these characters."

David Black, 18, agreed. 'Collin doesn't tell us exactly what these characters are thinking or feeling," he said. 'It was up to us to figure it out. I have really appreciated being able to have input."

The cast members also did a lot of research on Portland and its street kids before rehearsals began in October. But don't expect a lot of fancy dancing in this musical. 'It's more complex than most musicals," Fried said. 'It deals with a greater picture."

A picture Warren hopes will have a lasting impact.

For tickets and more information call (765) 288-PLAY.

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