March/April 2008 Barhoppers Series Featured Short Play by Kenley Smith

**Barhoppers** is the 17 year old brainchild of Offstage Theatre in Charlottesville, Va. The premise is simple: locally written, produced, acted and directed short plays set in and then performed in bars. That’s right: mixed drinks and mixed up characters, humor and hangovers, craziness and cranberry based cocktails. The plays are short, usually around 10 minutes in length (about 6 plays each night). Add to the mix some local music flavor, the wonderful people at the Byers St. Bistro, for an amazingly good night of art in the valley.

The show featured *The Barfly Kid*, by our own MFA playwright, Kenley Smith.

Past Barhoppers events have included work by Tina Fey, Doug Grissom, William Rough, Laura Quinn, Joel Jones and many others.

Offstage is dedicated to new plays in non-traditional spaces.

http://www.offstagetheatre.org/

**Student Spotlight: Samantha Macher**

Samantha Macher is a New Yorker by birth and a Virginian since 1989. A graduate of the University of Virginia in Religious Studies she has pursued playwriting, since she was 17 years old.

Her first production was *How About That!* a musical in one act she wrote, scored, directed, produced and played piano for as the main Fall season production at her high school in 2003. Since that initial foray into writing for the stage, Sam has had 4 plays produced through the UVA drama department under the guidance of Doug Grissom, UVA’s head of playwriting.

Most recently she has written and directed a full length piece, *Folks Like You*, an ensemble piece about a mildly dysfunctional (but amusing) family that may or may not have been based on personal experience.

*Folks Like You* was given a studio production in the UVA Department of Drama’s Helms Theatre this month. It might seem unusual for a Religious Studies major to receive a full production in the drama department, but Samantha is not your usual student.

She has completed several independent studies in playwriting under the instruction of professor Doug Grissom, and the production is the culmination of that guided study in writing for the stage.

“Samantha has only been writing plays for a couple of years,” Doug Grissom said of his former student. “She has a lot to learn but already has a quirky, original voice, and I think a unique talent. She writes engaging, original characters and her dialogue is crisp, idiosyncratic, and very funny.”

The play, and this production, bear out Grissom’s assessment, having received the 2008 Clay E. Delauney, Jr. Award given annually for an original play written during the current academic year at UVA.

Samantha is a founding member and President of the Leonard D. Grissom Playwriting Society, UVA’s playwriting club, named for Professor Grissom. She also helped draft its constitution and organized its first annual festival of short pieces. She also writes and performs stand up comedy, participating in the 2008 National College Comedy Competition in the Nation’s Capital this year.

At UVA, Sam took her first college playwriting class just because it sounded like fun, but working with Doug Grissom led her to investigate playwriting as a lifelong pursuit. Doug recommended Hollins to her as a possible MFA program.

“I like the commitment to not having a Hollins voice, but rather everyone bringing something new and different to the table,” Sam said in her application. She’ll be joining us in the Playwright’s Lab this summer, and we’re glad to have her at our table.
Courses and Events Listing for Summer 2008

The Playwright’s Lab has finalized the summer schedule for 2008. We’re looking forward to our new students and visiting faculty. Here’s what they’ve got to look forward to:

THEA 501  Playwright’s Lab (4)  Ristau  MW 7-10PM
THEA 505  The Collaborative Art of Theatre (4)  Ristau  WF 9-12
THEA 510  Playscript Analysis and Criticism (4)  Ristau  WF 1-4
THEA 511  Dramaturgy (4)  Brown  TTH 1-4
THEA 520  Narrative Theory and Dramatic Structure (4)  Dorf TTH 1-4
THEA 550  Special Topics in Playwriting: Theatre for Young Audiences (4)  Dorf  (Section A)  WF 1-4
THEA 550  Special Topics in Playwriting: Theatre for Young Audiences (4)  Dorf  (Section B)  TTH 9-12

Course descriptions available in the graduate catalog, or online at the program website under the link for Summer 2008 Courses.

June 16: Opening Reception

June 18: Lab: Introductions, including 5 minute shorts by students

June 20: 7-9: Joint presentation with Film and Playwriting by Jeff Goode and Toby Huss

June 21: 2-4: Jeff Goode writing workshop

June 23: 2-4: Jonathan Dorf Final Draft Tutorial

June 25: Lab: Paul Meshejian talk

June 27: 7-9: Student Reading: Samantha Macher

June 28: 2-4: Randy Rollison: Arts Management Presentation (30 Campbell Ave. Space)

June 29: 7-9: Student Reading: Sunny daSilva

June 30: Lab: Student Reading: Kris Knutsen

July 2: Lab: Student Reading: Jayne Benjulian

July 11: 7-8:30 Overnight Sensations Opening Reception at Mill Mountain Theatre.

July 12: 8-12: Overnight Sensations writers & directors meet to discuss scripts and make any needed changes.

July 14: Lab: Lucy Thurber talk

July 16: Lab: Student Reading: Erin Allen

July 17: Michael Williams talk (Artistic Director of Young Audiences of Virginia)

July 18: 7-9: Student Reading: Neeley Gossett

July 19: 2-4: Workshop with Bonnie Metzgar

July 21: Lab: Bonnie Metzgar talk

July 23: Lab: Student Reading: Tim Cochran

July 25: 7-9: Goodbye Reception

July 26: Checkout

http://www.hollins.edu/grad/playwriting/courses.html

Events calendar subject to change.
Guest Artist Profile: Cheryl Snodgrass

Cheryl Snodgrass is a director, actor, singer, and producer. She resides in Chicago, and her work has always focused on new play development.

Cheryl has directed The Third Wish, by Program Director Todd Ristau, as part of the 2007 Norfolk Southern Festival of new works at Mill Mountain Theatre. She will be returning next month to work with our playwriting students and direct the staged reading of Jeff Goode's hilarious new play, Love Loves a Pornographer, or Please as You Please.

Cheryl has also directed and/or produced new works by playwrights Rebecca Gilman and Brett Neveu. Her professional directing credits include working with Mill Mountain Theatre, The Bailiwick, Trap Door Theatre, ARFTCo, I.O., and Zebra Crossing.

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Cheryl has worked with Jeff Goode as a director, actor, and producer on a number of his premieres, including Poona the Fuckdog and other plays for children, as well as one of the earliest productions of THE EIGHT: Reindeer Monologues.

“There is nothing more exciting than working on a new play,” Cheryl told us. “Every person on the project is taking a leap of faith into the unknown. That level of trust and respect is unmatched in established works. It is thrilling, terrifying and ultimately satisfying. I hope to have the opportunity to experience this with some of the playwrights from Hollins.”

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Cheryl has been a guest artist at Lawrence University and hosts a new works reading series. She helped found No Shame Theatre, The Unusual Cabaret, and Les Enfants du Maïs.

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Playwright’s Lab Listed as a "Top Program" in The 2008 Dramatists Guild Resource Directory

The 2008 Dramatists Guild Resource Directory included the Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University in its current listings of MFA programs. Inclusion is reserved only for programs considered to be “top tier” in the nation, and is a significant honor to be bestowed on a program after only its first year.

We’ve worked very hard to get the word out about our program here at Hollins, and people are talking about our innovative program model, academic rigor, aggressive advocacy for student work in the professional world, top notch guest artists and visiting faculty, as well as a truly beautiful campus. It isn’t surprising we’ve already established a great reputation.

Area Highlight: Pop’s Ice Cream Shop

The best soda fountain in town! In fact, the only soda fountain in town. When Morgan Jenness was here last year, this was her favorite spot to visit.

The owners are Brandon Davis and his wife Anna Robertson. He’s a gourmet chef, bagpipe player, puppeteer, and rockabilly bassist. She’s a baker and massage therapist. They’re both vegetarians and serve up the most amazing soups and grilled cheese sandwiches you ever imagined coming off a toastmaster. Vintage décor, old fashioned ice cream, soda fountain, and delightful conversation. You won’t regret your visit to Pop’s!

1916 Memorial Avenue
Roanoke, VA 24015
(540)345-2129
http://www.myspace.com/soda_bar

Toastmaster. Vintage décor, old fashioned ice cream, soda fountain, and delightful conversation. You won’t regret your visit to Pop’s!

The Lab Report

www.handbagproductions.org

If anyone can create or establish an environment where playwrights can flourish while challenging both themselves and their audience, it's him.”

We appreciate the vote of confidence, and look forward to Cheryl playing a significant role in the program’s future success!

www.handbagproductions.org
Just what you need.  More Drama.

Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University
Todd Ristau, Director
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Hollins University
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Learn the craft of writing dramatic works and study the collaborative art of theatre during our six-week intensive schedule—and earn an M.F.A. in playwriting in just a few summers. You’ll work closely with such guest artists as Ruth Margraff, Naomi Wallace, and Mac Wellman and form professional relationships that can lead to reading and production opportunities before graduation—a potent formula few other programs offer.

For application materials, please call (540) 362-6326 or visit on the web at www.hollins.edu/grad/playwriting for more information.

Check out our MySpace page!
http://www.myspace.com/hollinsplaywrightslab

From the Director: Submission Tips #9 (SASE)

In addition to my role as Program Director, I’m also the Literary Associate at a professional theatre. This means I read (and reject) a lot of plays. For the next few issues, I’ll be presenting tips to take some mystery and agony out of the submission process.

Include an SASE for response, not return of the play.

SASE means Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope. Almost all submission guidelines ask for an SASE for return of script, and that is important, because theatres watch every single penny and mailing back a rejected script could run as much as $5 in envelope and postage. It would add up real quick.

Here’s a secret inside tip, though. There is almost no point in getting your script back. The only way it would be in condition to send out to another theatre after it has already been read is if it hasn’t been read.

I’ve gotten scripts in the mail at my theatre that were clearly read by somebody else before it was sent to me. Coffee rings, dog eared pages, even in one case scribbled notes about the play. If you send me a script that, just by looking at it, I can tell has been rejected at least once before...you’re not getting off on the best foot, are you?

I strongly recommend including a normal business sized SASE and include in your letter something like, “Thank you for reading my play. If the script does not suit the needs of the theatre, kindly recycle it and use the SASE provided for your response.”

What about a SASPC? (Self-Addressed Stamped Post Card)

A lot of playwrights include a SASPC to acknowledge receipt of their script. Again, don’t bother. I can’t speak for all theatres, but we don’t even open the envelope of the submission until we’re ready to read the play. That means that your SASPC didn’t get seen, let alone mailed back to you, for months. If do mail it, I’d likely mail it the same day as the response to your play.

If you want to know we got your script, pay the extra money for a delivery confirmation sticker. That way you can track it online.

Todd Ristau, Director
Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University