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# Director's new project is smaller scale

Story Discussion

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David Burke | Posted: Sunday, August 8, 2010 2:00 am | 0 Comments Posted

So far, Philip Wm. McKinley's year has included spending four months in Singapore directing "Voyage de la Viea," a resident circus company for Resorts World Sentosa, a newly opened attraction there.

McKinley created the show with Mark Fisher and Ray Winkler, whom he worked with last year on "Ben Hur Live," an operatic sports spectacular that premiered at the '02 Dome in London.

His newest project, directing "Wit" for the Curtainbox Theatre Company, is obviously on a much smaller scale.

Kimberly Furness, who was directed by McKinley in 2007's "Creme de Coco: A Portrait of Coco Chanel," had tentatively floated the idea of him returning to the Quad-Cities to direct a show for her Curtainbox Theatre Company. "Wit" opens this week.

"It's just all kind of come together," McKinley said. "When Kim said she was doing a new company, I thought that was important, and I wanted to support that theater in the community."

A native of Avon, Ill., a town of about 900 people south of Galesburg, McKinley has directed several tours of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, as well as Hugh Jackman's Tony-winning role in the Broadway musical "The Boy From Oz."

An Augustana College graduate, McKinley considers Dennis Hitchcock, the owner of Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse in Rock Island and his former theater professor, to be his mentor.

McKinley wants to see theater thrive in this area.

"I wanted to make sure this kind of thing goes on and this company continues and grows," he said. "It's important the kind of theater she's (Furness) doing. It's not really competing with what Denny's doing at Circa or with the other arts organizations. It's offering yet another alternative."

Whether it's elaborate productions or intimate dramas such as "Wit," McKinley said he enjoys directing and the creative process.

"I keep saying I'm still doing shows in my backyard," he said. "It's just that my backyard is bigger and more expensive."

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