

**ACT 1**  
Theatre



**AD LIB**  
Newsletter Dec. 1, 2017



*Avelon Tice will be drawing on all his theater experience to transform Puyallup's historic Liberty Theater into a myriad of settings for ACT 1 Theatre's much-varied performances this season.*

Photo by SCOTT HANSEN

## Designer has his hands full setting stage for ambitious ACT 1 season

By Cliff Rowe

For Avelon Tice, the journey from his native Trinidad to the Pacific Northwest has been an exercise in “expanding what I know.” Most of that expansion has come through his

steady and varied involvement in theater, which makes its most recent advance with the opening next month of the 2017-18 season of Puyallup's ACT1 Theatre Productions.

He will be designing sets for all five of the plays this season, beginning with *The Best Christmas Pageant — Ever*, opening at

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*Logistic challenges at the historic Liberty Theater mean that set-designer Avelon Tice has to plan for every minute detail.*



Photo by SCOTT HANSEN

## AVELON

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the Liberty Theater on Dec. 1.

That will be followed over the next six months with an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, and *Urinetown*.

As each brings its distinct design challenges, Tice sees ample opportunity for continued expansion.

For example, *Christmas Pageant* calls for a dual set that allows the play's action to move between the living room of the Herdman family home and the interior of the church where the pageant takes place.

Rotating pieces of scenery present stained-glass windows on one side and interior walls on the residence on the other. An altar in the church becomes a table in the house.

One specific challenge with the stained-glass pieces, was blocking a view from inside the church, while simultaneously creating the effect of light passing through from the outside.

By researching websites, Tice came up with a type and shade of paint that creates that desired illusion.

Another problem came with the absence of coat hooks on the house interior walls, calling for creation of appropriate spaces where coats could be dropped as an alternative.

Then came the realization that access to the Liberty Theater for actual construction of the set would not be available until a week before opening night. Tice plans to

get some of the pieces ready for installation elsewhere and moved onto the stage in that final week. But he also plans to be building and painting on stage at the same time.

In this play, as well as the others throughout this season, he will be drawing from some 12 years' experience of not only set-designing, but acting, directing, producing, costuming and dance.

Much of this varied experience was accumulated at Pacific Lutheran University where he graduated in 2015 with a bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in acting and directing.

Before that he received a diploma in environmental science and theater from Fyzabad Composite School in Trinidad. and, since PLU, he has worked extensively with ACT1 Theatre, as well as with Taproot and Village theatres in the Seattle area.

ACT1 audiences got a rich look at both his directing and designing skills with the production in Sumner last year of *Treasure Island*, which Tice set in a Caribbean island, not unlike his homeland.

Whatever his particular role in any production, Tice recognizes and appreciates the collaboration among those involved in pulling it together.

For example, his set design will influence the actor's movements in accordance with the blocking introduced during rehearsal by Director Abbey Homan.

During the two weeks that the play is produced, the interaction of all those involved may lead to even more alterations, expanding further what Tice and the others "come to know."

# Chaos to sensibility

## First-time ever director trying to make this The Best Christmas Pageant

By Cliff Rowe

As the curtain came down on the final week of October, 16 aspiring actors, ages 6 to 16, took tentative steps toward a theater career under the watchful eye of a new director.

Their stage was the meeting room at the Bowman-Hilton Community Club in east Puyallup.

There, against a vibrant backdrop of fall leaves appearing through the windows from the trees outside, they began rehearsing.

Their play is *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, the opening production of ACT1 Theatre's 2017-18 season. It opens Dec. 1 for two, weekends at Puyallup's historic Liberty Theater.

For several of the young actors this would be their first experience working with a director, other actors and a script.

The director, Abbey Homan, in her sixth year of theater involvement, describes her previous five years as a process of discovery.

The Eatonville native was graduated last year from Eastern Washington University a major in theater. She has

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Photo by SCOTT HANSEN

*Abbey Homan makes her directoral debut herding the Herdman's in ACT 1 Theatre Production's presentation of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever starting Dec. 1.*

## HOMAN

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learned in her short-time involvement not only the workings of theater and those who create it, but she has come to realize how much it all means to her.

Now, working with these young actors and the five adults who round out the cast, her progression takes a new turn: Directing on her own.

In one corner of this fall-afternoon rehearsal, the five-member “angel choir” practices Christmas carols as the cast members become familiar with the script and each other.

Homan acknowledges the directing challenges that await her: the actors’ short attention spans, the lack of familiarity with scripts and the underlying task for all involved of translating text into performance.

One part of the story they are to tell is the familiar biblical tale of the Christ child in a manger, joined by shepherds, wise men and all that.

The other part is the far-less familiar tale of the unruly, unholy Herdman family and their unlikely involvement in the local church’s annual Christmas pageant.

Only by chance have the Herdman children been encouraged to take part in the

pageant — much to the dismay of nearly everyone else.

So, it’s the original Christmas story, but not just the original Christmas story.

Early on, Homan hands to her young cast the task of creating character, within their roles in the play, especially the children in the Herdman family.

Taking their director’s cue, the actors discuss how disruptive children would behave. How would they look? How would they sound?

At the same time, she looks for and finds among the older youngsters and adults a willingness to work with the younger ones.

“This is how the real passions for theater are passed on,” Homan said.

On this fall day, the opening of the play in December seems a long way off. But limited early access to the Liberty Theater, and the inexperience of so many on and off the stage have created a sense of urgency for all.

Homan sees it as a reflection of the play itself. She characterizes *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* as not so much a religious play, but rather a universal lesson in seeing things from different points of view. In the play, the Herdman children step from a world of disruptiveness into one of collaboration and caring.

“It’s an interesting concept,” Homan said. “Chaos to sensibility.”



## ACT 1 Theatre

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### Theater:

Our performances are held at the historic

### Liberty Theater

116 W Main Ave  
Puyallup, WA 98371

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# ***The Best Christmas Pageant — Ever*** kicks off ACT1 Theatre season Dec. 1



## **The Best Christmas Pageant — Ever**

Give your family the holiday gift of laughter with this hilarious Christmas classic, a couple struggling to put on a Christmas pageant is faced with casting the Herdman kids—probably the most inventively awful kids in history.

You won't believe the mayhem when the Herdmans collide with the Christmas story head on!

**Dec. 1 (7pm) • Dec. 2 (2 & 7pm)**  
**Dec. 8 (7pm) • Dec. 9 (2 & 7pm)**

## **Romeo and Juliet**

When the children of two rival families fall in love, they must keep their new and budding romance a secret.

In this re-imagining of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's classic love story, the

conventions of time and sequence have been manipulated to reposition the original dialog and plot lines to highlight new connections and themes for a modern audience. You will experience this love story as you have never before.

**Feb. 9 (7pm) • Feb. 10 (2 & 7pm)**  
**Feb. 16 (7pm) • Feb. 17 (2 & 7pm)**

## **Charlotte's Web**

Determined to save Wilbur the pig from the butcher, Charlotte the spider begins her campaign with the "miracle" of her web in which she writes, "Some pig."

It's the beginning of a campaign which ultimately ends with the now-safe Wilbur doing what is most important to Charlotte.

**March 2 (7pm) • March 3 (2 & 7pm)**  
**March 9 (7pm) • March 10 (2 & 7pm)**

## **Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike**

The 2014 Tony Awards winner for Best Play, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* is a brilliant comedy written by Christopher Durang.

The story revolves around the relationships of three middle-aged single siblings, two of whom live together, and takes place during a visit by the third, Masha and her young actor boyfriend.

They discuss their lives and loves, argue, and Masha threatens to sell the house.

**April 6 (7pm) • April 7 (2 & 7pm)**  
**April 13 (7pm) • April 14 (2 & 7pm)**

## **Urinetown**

Winner of three Tony Awards, three Outer Critics Circle Awards, two Lucille Lortel Awards and two Obie Awards, *Urinetown* is a hilarious musical satire of the legal system, capitalism, social irresponsibility, populism, bureaucracy, corporate mismanagement, municipal politics and musical theater itself!

In a Gotham-like city, a terrible water shortage, caused by a 20-year drought, has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets.

The citizens must use public amenities, regulated by a single malevolent company that profits by charging admission for one of humanity's most basic needs.

Amongst the people, a hero decides that he's had enough and plans a revolution to lead them all to freedom!

**June 1 (7pm) • June 2 (2 & 7pm)**  
**June 8 (7pm) • June 9 (2 & 7pm)**