

Cygnnet opens year with 'Sons of the Prophet'

Cygnnet Theatre in Old Town San Diego continues its run of presenting Southern California premieres with "Sons of the Prophet" (now through Feb. 15), the latest work by Stephen Karam ("Speech and Debate").

With the play premiering at New York's Roundabout Theatre in 2011, Karam was hailed as "a major new voice in American Theater." His brutally funny and explosive comedy was a finalist for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and has received multiple other awards, including the 2012 Drama Critics Circle, Outer Critics Circle, Lucille Lortel and Hull-Warriner awards for Best Play.

Inspired by an actual news story about a high school prank gone wrong, Karam's contemporary tale about two gay brothers dealing with a family tragedy in a run-down area of Nazareth, Penn., deals with themes of family, culture and resilience. Two brothers are on their own after their father dies of a heart attack two weeks after a car accident, leaving them alone to care for themselves and their aging uncle. What unfolds is a comedy about human suffering, love, strength and hope.

Director Rob Lutfy returns to Cygnnet after a critically acclaimed mounting of "The Motherf**ker with the Hat" last season. Lutfy is the 2014-2015 National New Play Network Producer-in-Residence at Marin Theatre Company. He has worked on plays in development at The Kennedy Center, The O'Neill Theatre Center and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. He was the 2012-13 William R. Kenan, Jr. Directing Fellow at The John F. Kennedy Center. He is a graduate of the directing program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts School of Drama, where he returns annually to teach acting as guest faculty.

"We see so much humor and pathos in these layered people," said Lutfy. "Karam portrays a uniquely American phenomenon. It's an immigrant story. The world of 'Sons of the Prophet' is just as complicated as the conflict in the Middle East: present over past, the new world over the old world, and a fall from a more prosperous, meaningful past."

The nine-member cast includes a majority of actors making Cygnnet Theatre debuts, as well as two actors in a long line



'Sons of the Prophet' was inspired by a news story about a high school prank gone wrong. Cygnnet Theatre in Old Town San Diego stages 'Sons of the Prophet' from Jan. 15-Feb. 15. The cast (from left) includes Alex Hoeffler, Maggie Carney, Navarre T. Perry and Dylan James Mulvaney. Courtesy photo

of University of North Carolina School of the Arts graduates to gravitate to fellow alumni and Cygnnet Artistic Director Sean Murray in San Diego.

The production team includes costume design by Veronica Murphy, set design by Sean Fanning, lighting design by Chris Rynne, sound design by Matt Lescault-Wood, and properties design by Syd Stevens.

Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 8 p.m. Friday, 3 and 8 p.m., Saturday; 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets from \$32 at 619-337-1525, cygnnettheatre.com or the box office at 4040 Twiggs St., San Diego.



Evelyn Sparks and Collin Seaman in 'The Pirates of Penzance.' Courtesy photo

J* Company Youth Theatre offers 'Pirates of Penzance'

J* Company Youth Theatre launches 2015 with a rollicking classic, Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance."

Directed by Joey Landwehr, this operetta tells the story of the morally centered Frederic, who has erroneously been apprenticed to and raised by a band of pirates. Upon his release on his 21st birthday, he decides to strike off on his own and become an upstanding citizen — which may even mean bringing the pirates to justice. But soon he meets Mabel and they fall in love. Everything seems perfect until Frederic discovers that he was born on Feb. 29, and technically has a birthday only on a leap year. Will his sense of duty and honor force him to leave Mabel and serve the pirates for another 63 years until he officially turns 21? Will Mabel and her sisters be captured by the pirates and be forced to lead the very life Frederic is trying to escape?

Performances run from Friday, Jan. 16, through Sunday, Jan. 25 at the David and Dorothea Garfield Theatre at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, Jacobs Family Campus, 4126 Executive Drive, La Jolla. Call 858-362-1348 or visit www.sdcjc.org/jcompany.

