

We Knew Them Before They Were Famous!

BY SUSAN BRANDT | PHOTOS COURTESY OF
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REPERTORY THEATRE

Been to the musical theatre meccas of New York or Chicago recently and taken in a show? Chances are you saw some familiar faces you first saw on Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre's stage in Grand Lake!

Artistic Director Michael Querio and Artistic Associate Jeff Duke possess a well-earned and growing reputation for the excellence of Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre (RMRT) productions and for the excellence of talent chosen from 1,500 auditions. Couple that with the charmingly rustic mountain town of Grand Lake, the warmth, encouragement and appreciation of its people, and the support of Trustees who accomplish "whatever it takes," and it's not surprising that RMRT – *The Broadway of the Rockies* – is viewed as the summer musical theatre of choice by so many young actors, musicians, theatre technicians and devoted patrons.

Managing Director, Carol Wolff states, "You couldn't write a better script or choose a finer setting! The synergy has become legendary." At season's end, they leave in pursuit of their professional dreams, but for many, an undeniable bond with the theatre and Grand Lake draws them back.

ELIZABETH (BETH) LANZA spent four summers with RMRT, her fondest memory being 2011's opening night in RMRT's brand new theatre in her dream role of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. She



ELIZABETH LANZA spent 4 summers at RMRT honing her theatrical talents.

recalls that in her first season, 2006, the idea of building a new theatre was "but a pipe dream."

"To see that dream grow, become a reality, and feel a part of it over those few years – we all felt ownership of our theatre, our town of Grand Lake. I will never forget that joy."

Back home in Chicago since 2011, Beth loves that theatre community and evidently the feeling is mutual. In 2013, as Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*, she "*Washed That Man Right Out of Her Hair*" eight times a week at the Marriott Theatre earning a Jeff Nomination (Chicago



RMRT's Shining Stars!

BROADWAY:

- Andrew Cao – *Aladdin*
- Joe Carroll – *Cinderella*
- Abby Mueller – *Kinky Boots*
- Dylan Paul – *Cabaret*

CHICAGO:

- Beth Lanza – *Godspell*

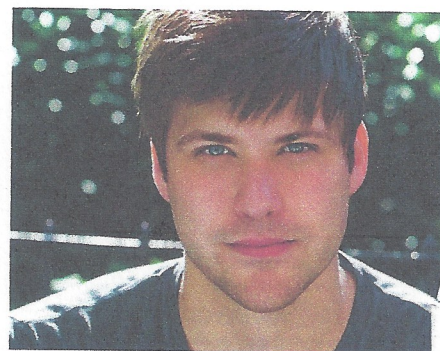
STRATFORD, ONTARIO:

- Josh Franklin – lead role *Crazy For You*

theater awards). She is currently playing in the Marriott Theatre's production of *Godspell*.

"Michael and Jeff are phenomenal teachers and role models, as well as directors. I continue to value their professional advice above all others and feel lucky to call them my friends."

Beth has fond memories of times she returned for RMRT's *Home for the Holidays* shows recalling, "It truly is returning home to the family and friends that helped me grow."



DYLAN PAUL



HANDS ON A HARD BODY: This is the hilarious, hard-fought contest where only one winner can drive away with the American dream. Ten contestants. Four days. One truck. Photo Credit: Chad Batka – from the original Broadway production.

DYLAN PAUL, who recently opened on Broadway in *Cabaret*, spent three seasons at RMRT and recounts a “shattering” experience in 2005. In the midst of rehearsal for his role as the toothy-grinned Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* he took, in his words, “a huge and cartoonish swig from my ceramic mug and quickly realized that I had shattered my front tooth.”

Undeterred, Dylan went on to earn an MFA, recreated an archive of accents and dialects from around the world (dialectsarchive.com), worked at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival and as a resident troupe member of the American Shakespeare Festival in Virginia, and taught abroad as a Fulbright recipient.

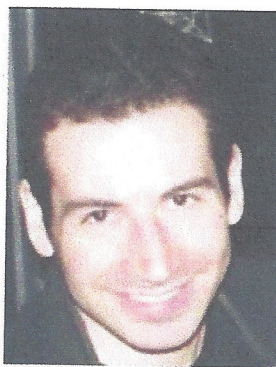
Dylan has returned to RMRT to appear in a number of holiday shows. “As RMRT continues to build an enviable national reputation, I remember that the people here invested in me and I want to reciprocate and celebrate that.”

Both Dylan Paul (*Cabaret*) and fellow RMRT alum, Andrew Cao (*Aladdin*), performed at the recent Tony Awards in New York City.

BEHIND THE SCENES

MICHAEL ROSEN is a veteran of eight years in the RMRT pit. And yes, this theatre has a real live pit with real live musicians! Should you hear a clarinet, flute, oboe or one of a dozen or more instruments, that’s Michael. Since 2008, when not at RMRT, he has performed with many national tours and regional theaters.

“Why have I invested so many years in this theatre? I truly



MICHAEL ROSEN

believe in the people running it.

Michael Querio and Jeff Duke really understand musical theatre and consistently prove it by achieving way beyond the norm and coming close to selling out each summer season.”

He further cites the fine people of the area (some of whom are his musical students) and their support of RMRT as well as the staff’s integrity in constantly raising its standards and expectations as

KENT BARRETT, Production Manager and Set Designer, hires and supervises the entire technical staff and is RMRT’s “resident middle man,” coordinating the needs of the production team and directors. When the sound is just right, the Jesus Perez-designed costumes shine, and the exceptional sets are illuminated to perfection, thank Kent and all of his behind-the-scenes team!

Seven years into his RMRT tenure, Kent recalls his first year’s impression. “The sense of community among the theatre company itself and with the town – I had never been around so many lovely, gracious and wonderful people all in one place.” >>>



KENT BARRETT

Kent's career took him to regional theatres across the US and 10 countries. He soon realized that Grand Lake was where he wanted to be each summer, tailoring other opportunities around that.

"With the opening of the new theatre in 2011, RMRT began to invest in equipment, technology and personnel, and evolved into a major professional theatre. We now possess one of

the best sound systems in a three-state radius and one of the top projection systems in Colorado." He applauds Michael Quiero and Jeff Duke for creating an artistically nurturing environment that is "light-hearted and jovial," with flexibility in their artistic approach.

Many shows sell out, so don't miss any of them in RMRT's new, state-of-the-art theatre in the quaint mountain town of Grand Lake. ■

RESOURCE:

Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre – 970.627.3421,
www.rockymountainrep.com

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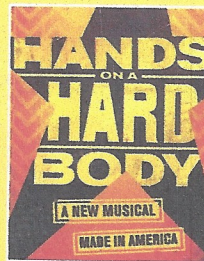
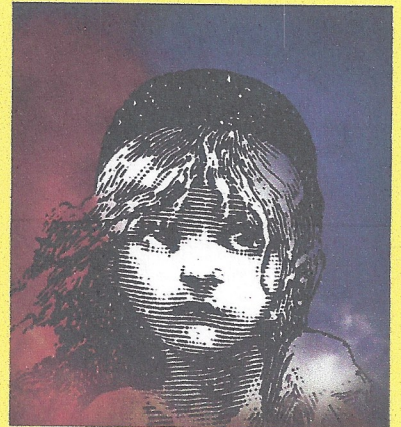
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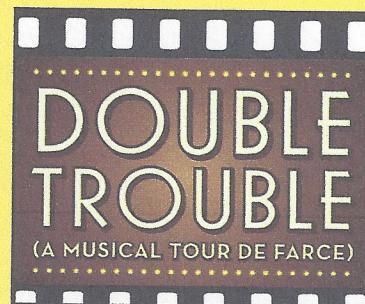
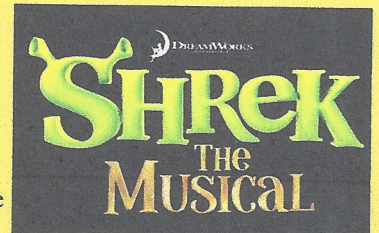
WHAT'S ON STAGE
SUMMER 2014

RMRT's 2014 Season opens June 13 with the international smash hit, **LES MISERABLES**, a musical that's hard not to love. Set in 19th century France, where Jean Valjean has just been released after 19 years of unjust imprisonment, Les Miz packs an emotional wallop! Directed by Jeff Duke, it is a powerful affirmation of the human spirit and a contemporary masterpiece. Rated PG.



The 2013 Tony Award-nominated, fresh-from-Broadway **HANDS ON A HARDBODY** opens June 20. Inspired by true events and infused with a fresh, roots-rock vibe, this is the hilarious, hard-fought contest where only one winner can drive away with the American dream. Ten contestants. Four days. One truck. This is directed by Michael Querio and rated PG.

SHREK THE MUSICAL opens July 5, and it's a great one for taking the whole family. Based on the Oscar-winning film that started it all, it brings the hilarious story of everyone's favorite ogre to life on the stage. With brilliant choreography and breathtaking special effects, *Shrek The Musical* is part romance, part twisted fairy tale and 100 percent irreverent fun for everyone! This musical is directed by Jeff Duke and is rated G.



RMRT's fall show, **DOUBLE TROUBLE**, is a two-man farcical nod to 1940s Hollywood that opens August 29. With only two performers playing ten larger-than-life characters, this hilarious tale of singing, dancing and songwriting brothers is sure to get your

funny bone tickling and your toes tapping. *Double Trouble* is directed by Michael Querio and is rated G.