

Spring 2011

# Perform It! Folio

★ Perform It! Young People's Stage Company

Volume 7, Issue 1

## *Shakespeare, Sakespeare...*

### *Who Cares About Shakespeare?*

By Jan Helling Croteau

Ask high school students about Shakespeare and they are likely to groan and mumble something about relevancy, like "So what, who cares?" Ask middle school students and they might easily leer at you with a distrustful air. And really, who can blame them? I mean what relevancy *does* Shakespeare have to a young person living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Does the Bard have anything to say that would make a young person feel any different about the world today, and where the heck does he fit in an environment populated with smart-phones and i-pods, movies and cyberspace, Facebook pages and instant messengers.

Well, it appears Shakespeare does have a place in the hearts of young people, especially when the door to Elizabethan poetry has been kicked open by a lively theater company who revels in the power of poetry. Here at Perform It! we have 42

students who love Shakespeare, understand his language, and learn to speak "Bard" fluently by the time they have completed their first year or two of study. But they didn't start out that way. As a matter of fact, many of them looked a bit bleary-eyed when they initially joined the troupe.



On the first day of class in September, our new students are nervous. Sometimes they have that my-mom-made-me-come look in their eyes. Some walk in with high hopes, having

seen the previous year's show in which our actors, after a year of studying Shakespeare, made the work look easy and effortless. (Oh contraire!) And then, of course, we have our returning students who know what they're in for and can't wait to get started again.

That's quite a mix of expectations. Everyone undergoes transformation during the school year. The quiet ones

*cont'd on Page 2*

Inside this issue...	
Spring Production	2
Fall Classes	3
All the World's a Stage	4
This Year's Intern	6
Alumni Corner	8
A Tribute	9
As You Like It	10
Talent Show	10
Behind the Scenes	11

work through their fears and surprise themselves on opening night. The cocky ones are humbled by the sheer magnitude of the work, and the returning students get even better than the year before.

As director, I get to witness these transformations of our students, who are caterpillar-like as they go through metamorphosis and emerge out of their cocoons of fear and self-doubt as full-winged actors, taking the audience with them as they fly

toward success under the stage lights.

Every year, as I stand in back of the theater and watch the show, I gesture thumbs up when our young actors nail a scene. I know just how hard this journey has been for them. They invest long hours into memorizing lines. They have extensive discussions while learning to translate their part and lengthy rehearsals to master their dance steps and stage blocking. The whole process is riveting to witness.

Shakespeare, Sakespeare ... who cares about Shakespeare?

We do! This is the best time of year for Perform It! Stage Company. The Bard teaches us about life and love and the journey of the human heart, which is relevant to everyone. The theater experience hands us a lovely gift of lessons that we unwrap as we strive toward our shared goal of bringing you our very best. With a troupe of this year's actors getting ready to present what they have learned over the course of the past year, the Perform It! experience remains an exciting learning adventure for all of us.

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## Perform It! Presents Our 2011 Spring Show

### *As You Like It*

#### **Our Production**

Wherever I go, I am asked three questions about the backstage work on our productions. First, who made the costumes? Second, who designed and painted the set? And third, where did you find those musicians?

#### **Costumes**

Catherine Dion and Brenda Lush have co-chaired the costume committee for the past two years, and both contributed their creative flair to costumes for Perform It! for many years before that. They do an outstanding job. Their attention to detail and their creative spirit shines through every costume they create. It takes weeks to

put the whole wardrobe together as the costume designers and seamstresses dress 45 to 50 actors every year, some of them needing a change of costume! (And imagine, we have boys who continue to grow throughout the weeks, oftentimes barely fitting into the costumes they were measured for a few months earlier!) Catherine and Brenda are unflappable. They keep their army of seamstresses on track (about a dozen devoted needle workers) and make the actors happy by creating costumes that help each one of them get into character. Susan Beam joined Catherine and Brenda this year and has been an invaluable help in heading

up the huge endeavor of costuming.

#### **Set**

Four years ago Tammy Hale, a professional muralist whose work graces many public buildings in and around Portsmouth, started helping us with our sets. She gives sheets of canvas and luan stage flats depth and beauty as she paints her magic onto the scenes.

This year Tammy and her daughter Tabitha are the heads of the set committee. Tammy is a gifted teacher and demonstrates to our student set painters the techniques used to achieve various effects onstage. Tabitha, an alumna of Perform

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It!, is an artist in her own right and volunteered to return and work on set. This dynamic duo is full of fun and brings joy to the set work for our spring show. Get ready! There is the Forest of Arden scene which we guarantee will delight you with its many whimsical features.

### Music

I don't know how we get so lucky, but every year musicians

make themselves available to compose and play the scores for our shows. This year is no different. Randy Lawrence-Hurt is an alumnus of Perform It! Stage Company who graduated from UNH last year and helped us with the music for our last show, *The Comedy of Errors*.

This year he composed the entire score and plays all the music for *As You Like It*. We

are thrilled that he was able to squeeze us into his busy schedule. Randy is preparing to attend grad school soon, and he holds down a job as well. Many of our audience members will remember Randy's portrayal of Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2006. He was a longtime member of our acting company and grew up learning Shakespeare with us.

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## Fall Theater Classes a Success

“... this learning mayest thou taste”

Perform It! is a yearlong theater school in which our budding thespians learn every aspect of theater arts in a fun and safe learning environment. We started weekly classes on September 22 with 46 students. The Perform It! theater arts curriculum included voice training, stage movement, and learning improvisational and team-building skills as well as Shake-

speare's theater and Elizabethan history.

Students learned to scan Shakespeare's lines by identifying iambic pentameter and elisions and by understanding the importance of line punctuation. They also learned theater terminology, set and costume design considerations, and lighting.

Students worked together in small groups to create lively

skits using their new knowledge of voice projection, stage movement, and stage etiquette. Our emerging young thespians, ranging in age from 7 to 18, participated with enthusiasm. Since the fall theater arts instruction is required before acting in the spring play, our students become skilled actors by the time they enter the stage.



# “All the World’s a Stage”

I can’t believe I’ve been in Perform It! for five years already! I can remember the first day I came, so shy and not knowing who to talk to, but by the second week I felt so comfortable and was having a fabulous time.

I have always admired this program because everyone can be themselves and not feel like they have to fit an image that suits everybody else. It would take more than both hands to count how many times I’ve done something embarrassing in this group, but I actually wasn’t embarrassed because no one

cared. It’s really helped me become the person I am today.

I would like to thank all you moms for everything that you do for Perform It! It’s such a blessing! Also, thanks to our wonderful director Jan for your



Abby Catalano

patience and love towards us kids. Thank you, Donna Powell, for your amazing work on the ads and for being right there for us if we can’t remember our blocking. Abbie Powell, thank you so much for helping me to understand my character more and more. You have been so helpful.

And last but not least, thank you to all my friends in P.I. You guys are such terrific people, and I love you all so much! Keep up your amazing talent. It’s been such a privilege!!  
Love, Abby (Duchess Senior)



Sarabeth Hart

I’ve been with Perform It! for two years and have loved every second of it. The first year I was a motley in *The Comedy Of Errors*. I didn’t have any lines, but

I had a grand time anyway. This year I am Duchess Frederick, the evil one who banishes everyone, even my own kin, to the Forest of Arden.

When we got the cast list, I was thrilled! I went to my script and started highlighting and counting my lines. Twenty lines! And these were not little lines. Some of them were whole paragraphs! That’s when I started getting a little nervous. You see, the first year, during the fall classes, Jan had each of us write a short story, and then if we wanted, we could go on stage and read it. I thought, how

hard can it be. Well, when I got on stage to read my paper, my heart started pounding, my breathing quickened, and I was so nervous I thought I was going to pass out. But I didn’t; I read that story, and now here I am a year later about to become Duchess Frederick.

I memorized those twenty lines as fast as I could. And now I can’t wait for the play to finally start. I am so excited! To see everyone come together and put this whole production into motion is just amazing. I love my Perform It! family. And I feel very honored to be a part of it.

For me, when you get on-stage, you become your character. Your lines drift to the back of your mind, and you recite them with precision, barely realizing that you have said the same words so many times before. When your character is happy, so are you. When your character is surprised, you are surprised, even though you knew what was coming.

I have always been shy, but willing to meet new people if they come up to me (sort of like a tortoise). Joining Perform It! did a lot for me, helping me to become a more outgoing per-



**Haley Depner & Brutus**

My experience in Perform It! has been tremendous. On my first day I was so nervous, and I had an extreme case of the butterflies. But, of course, that's how I always was at any type of thing where I didn't know anyone. I used to be so shy and closed in, unless I was at home or by myself. Perform It! has helped me so much to get out of my shell and to become more outgoing and open to people. It has also helped me understand Shakespeare a lot more than I would have ever imagined (and I have found that it's a beautiful language of poetry and other cool things that you have to try and decipher). Sometimes it is a challenge for me to do this sort of thing, but Jan (our beloved director) has always helped us

to push through and do the best we can—and more. I don't know where I'd be if Jan didn't help me with projecting my voice and acting in general. She's given me tips and techniques to work with and is very encouraging in the process. Thank you so much, Jan! You're awesome! I also must mention Donna Powell for always helping me with those lines that seem to slip the tongue. She has also been very encouraging and sweet to me. Thank you to all the other moms, too, for being there and helping with the little things that matter. Thank you to all the kids in Perform It! It's a great group, and it makes me so happy to see how much of a family we all become. I will

son. In turn, this has also helped me make lots of new friends.

Perform It! is an amazing organization, most certainly not what I would have expected to find in the small town of Wolfeboro. At the moment, I am the only student attending that lives out of state, but some people drive farther than me to get to this wondrous creation of Jan's.

This year, I'm playing the part of Mirth, a narrator. As usual, the little "group" of actors I am with—the narrators—is truly wonderful. Everyone is really supportive of each other and fun to work with.



**Danny Catalano**

always remember this experience because it has helped me to be more confident in who I am, and it has helped me open up to the world. Thank you, Perform It! I will be sad when I have to leave.

Doing the Perform It! plays is by far the thing I look forward to most every year (even more than my birthday!) because I get to see all my friends, have fun, and learn Shakespeare. I've been in Perform It! for two years and am hoping that I will be in it until I am too old. The year I joined, we did *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and we won the Moss Hart Award. It was amazing! We got to go to The New England Theatre



Gwen Collins

Conference awards banquet and receive a giant two-foot trophy! Last year we did *The Comedy of Errors*. I was disappointed at first to be only a town kid, but as Jan says, "There are no small parts, just small actors." I ended up having a lot of fun. This year we are doing *As You Like It*. I have two parts, one as a lady of court and the other as the goddess of marriage. Although we haven't performed the play yet, so far I am having a blast!

## Perform It! Intern



Abbie Powell

Thirteen years ago, people could see me literally hiding behind my mother's skirts. The thought of following in my brothers' footsteps and performing on stage was terrifying to me. This year I am the intern for Perform It! Young People's Stage Company and have many fond memories from ten years of

acting with Perform It! I was greatly blessed to be able to play parts like Verges from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Viola from *Twelfth Night*, Nick Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Adriana from *The Comedy of Errors*. Every role that I have ever had in Perform It! has taught me valuable lessons that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life.

My "role" as intern this year has proved no different. At our first fall class, I was to lead the students in warm-ups, which included voice exercises and stretches. As I drove to the theater, I could feel that familiar nervous excitement of starting another year with Perform It! But it would be different this year. I was no

longer a student. I had joined the ranks of educators. As I stepped onto the stage to lead the students in warm-ups, however, I felt like I was playing roles from the past. I felt the surge of command that Adriana possessed, the enthusiasm of Nick Bottom, the pluck of Viola. Yes, I was no longer an actress in the program, but the roles I had played in the past merged into a new role, the role of intern. Leading warm-ups was another "performance." I needed to captivate my audience and keep their attention every second. I projected my voice, letting it fill the theater, and walked about with confidence. I smiled and showed my love for this organization, for the students, for theater. Everything went smoothly, and I was rewarded with the respect of the students and the admiration of

the parents.

Fall classes came and went. The talent and determination demonstrated by the students was outstanding. And before I knew it, the day of auditions arrived. While watching the students get up on the stage and give their auditions, I felt a pang, an itch to get up there. Towards the end, when Jan was looking for a few volunteers, I wanted to call out that I would be willing to read for a part, but I restrained myself.

Things went from strange to stranger as I later sat with Jan and the board of directors to cast the play. I returned home feeling good about how things were turning out, but I remembered all the students anxiously waiting to hear what part they got. Although every student in Perform It! is guaranteed a part in our productions, many have high hopes of who they'd like to be. I had been one of those students not long ago, but not now. Now I was one of the people who decided the "fate" of these thespians. Yikes!

During the first two weeks of rehearsals, I watched Jan as she

blocked the play (planning the actors' movements on stage) and instructed students how to portray their characters. I recorded everything she said, so that I could help coach students later. I made many mental notes as well on Jan's outstanding directorial skills, so that I could make use of them when working with the students.

One day Jan asked me if I'd like to block one of the narrations. The thought of doing it right there on the spot was a little too much for me. Thankfully, Jan was fine with me planning it out at home first. I started to make nervous scribbles in my script. Granted this narration was only a page long, but I wanted it to be up to Jan's standards. I knew that Jan would be very encouraging with whatever I came up with, but I didn't want there to be any tell-tale signs that this was a beginner who was blocking the narration.

I was a bit nervous when the time came for me to direct the students for that narration. But once again I told myself that this was a part I was playing.

Stay focused stay in the moment, forget about the "audience," and play your part with confidence. I consulted Jan on a few points, but the narration was all blocked in a few minutes, and Jan was pleased with the result. I stepped off the stage, feeling like I had just finished another successful performance.

I'm now helping students to finish memorizing their lines and coaching them in their scenes. If I'm ever in doubt about how something should be portrayed, I ask Jan before I work with the actors to make sure I fully understand her vision.

Even though I miss acting with Perform It!, I have greatly enjoyed my new role. I have always loved delving into Shakespeare, deciphering the language, and developing a character. Now I have students coming to me with questions about the text and the characters they're playing. Not only am I doing something that I love, but I'm also being challenged to have a greater grasp on Shakespeare and theater and to mature more as a person..



# Where Are They Now?

## Alumni Corner

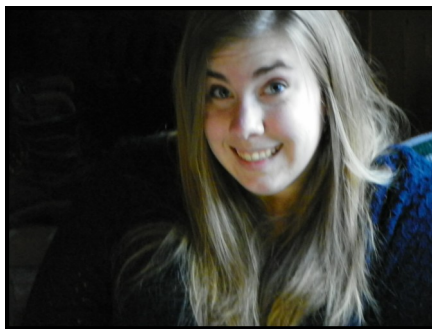
by *Diana Evans*

It all started with a green dress. To be specific, a green silk dress with lace trim. It was on the Wadlinger's counter one day when I went over to play with Erin. I was eight years old. Mommy Wad was working on it, and it was Erin's dress for *Romeo and Juliet* in which she got to dance with the cute older boys in a pretty party scene, or so she told me. I'd been watching Perform It! plays since age six, but I had forgone joining that year, even though I was finally old enough. My Momma was pregnant with my baby brother, and it was too much for her to commit to. So I watched Erin twirl around in her dress, and I sat in the front row, developing a HUGE crush on Paul Johnson because he was Romeo. (No worries, Paul, I have since moved on.)

The next year, it was finally my turn, and I was so excited about the first day that I didn't sleep the night before and I wore my nicest church outfit—I remember I was remarkably overdressed, but it didn't matter. I was in Perform It! I was going to be on that stage, finally, the romantic heroine in

some brilliant masterpiece . . . or so I thought.

Being an unnamed sailor wasn't all that I wanted, not when Erin got to wear the pretty dress again and had lines, but I loved it—every minute of it. Right down to getting my makeup done by Mrs. Darcy,



**Diana Evans**

and learning how to swing dance.

I never did get to be the romantic heroine I dreamed, but I wouldn't change a role, not even the year I was a duke instead of a duchess or the year there was the attack of the Narrator genie pants. I've been a singing sailor, a narrator, a mother abbess, a wedding planner, an exiled duke, a mischievous lady-in-waiting, a wronged magician, a protective mother, and a foolish gossip of a housekeeper. My brother says Mis-

tress Quickly was his favorite—I say that it was my last one, so I gave it all I had . . . because looking back, I'm not sure I could pick a favorite. I keep a little piece of all of them with me.

Flash forward half my lifetime and it is June 2007. I am sitting on the stage in The Village Players Theater, while everyone else is putting the supplies away at the end of clean-up day. I was 17 years old, and it had been nine years since a little girl had come skipping into the theater, excited to begin. That day it was all ending, and as I sat on the stage, surveying what had become my domain—my home—my good friend Travis came up to sit next to me and asked, "How you doing, Dee?"

"I'm okay."

"Eight years, huh?"

"Nine."

"Wow, nine. You had a good run though, right?"

"Yeah, Travis, I had a great run."

It's been nearly four years since I walked out of that theater that day, ready to take on the challenge of whatever came

next. But I don't think a day goes by when I don't think about Perform It! or the memories my theater family gave me. Now as I approach another ending—college graduation—I realize that Perform It! wasn't just a theater company or an awesome way to grow up, it is part of who I am as a person. We've all grown up, but when the alumni get together, it's almost like we've never been apart. That is what Perform It! meant and still means for me, and that is what I carry with me, always.

And for the record, I finally got my pretty dress—in fact, I got six.



*Our readers will remember Diana's roles as Prospero in The Tempest and Mistress Quickly in The Merry Wives of Windsor. Diana will graduate from New England College next month with a bachelor's degree in journalism, with dual minors in English and creative writing. Congratulations, Diana!*

## *Tribute to Ellie Tappan*

*"This web of our life is of mingled yarn, good and ill together."*

Ellie Tappan, who was a beloved member of the Wolfeboro arts community, passed away in March from leukemia. As a fiber artist and appreciator of fine arts, she supported many arts organizations, and Perform It! Stage Company was no exception. From our earliest years as a performance troupe, she brought her grandchildren to see our shows and always made a point of seeking one of us out

and giving high praise.

One year Ellie wrote me a note in which she exclaimed, "What other small town can boast of having its very own Shakespearean theater company for young people?" She was most enthusiastic about our endeavors, but really, Ellie was one of those people who made everyone feel good about their role in life.

Ellie hosted some memorable

evenings of play readings at her lovely home on Rust Pond for a handful of friends each month. I was one of those lucky people who attended her evenings with a script in hand. She loved getting together with people and discussing plays over good food and fine wine. Always gracious and warm, Ellie was a treasure and will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to know her.

*As You Like It* is the story of two royal courts of characters, one banished to the woods and the other in power behind the castle gates. Duchess Frederick has recently usurped the power of her sister, Duchess Senior, who now lives in exile in the Forest of Arden. When Duchess Frederick throws her niece, Rosalind, out of the court, she heads into the Forest of Arden to find her mother. She is joined by Celia, her cousin, who is the daughter of Duchess Frederick, and Touchstone, the witty court jester. A lively romp through the Forest of Arden makes *As You Like It* a fanciful interplay

## *As You Like It*



of danger, romance, and hidden identities.

The performance schedule includes a Wednesday morning matinee on May 4 at 10:00 AM at a reduced ticket price for the general public, a special school matinee on May 5 for the Kingswood Middle School (sold out), two evening performances on May 6 and 7 at 7:30 PM, and a Sunday afternoon matinee at 2:00 PM on May 8 for the general public. Tickets can be purchased in advance at The Country Book-seller in Wolfeboro, or by calling 569-6401. For more information, please visit our website.

[www.PerformItStageCompany.org](http://www.PerformItStageCompany.org)

## *Talent Show*

“A rare talent”

In December our fall classes culminated with our annual Perform It! Talent Show, right before we took our break for Christmas vacation. This year we had a number of outstanding talented students entertain us with piano and violin music, dances, poetry recitations, songs, tributes, and comedy skits that had us rolling in the aisles! Two senior actresses were the mistresses of ceremony, and they did a fine job of announcing the numbers and keeping the show rolling. The



final dance of the show was performed by nine dancers who recreated a slap dance technique that one of our family members

learned while in South Africa. The two-hour show went by in a flash as each student gave us his or her best performance.

The Talent Show is an excellent introduction to stage work for our actors. The entire show is in their hands, and they experience the exhilaration of putting it on for family and friends. About 130 people attended this year. It was a show to remember and a wonderful way to wrap up the fall semester of theater classes.

# Behind the Scenes

“By inspiration of celestial grace”

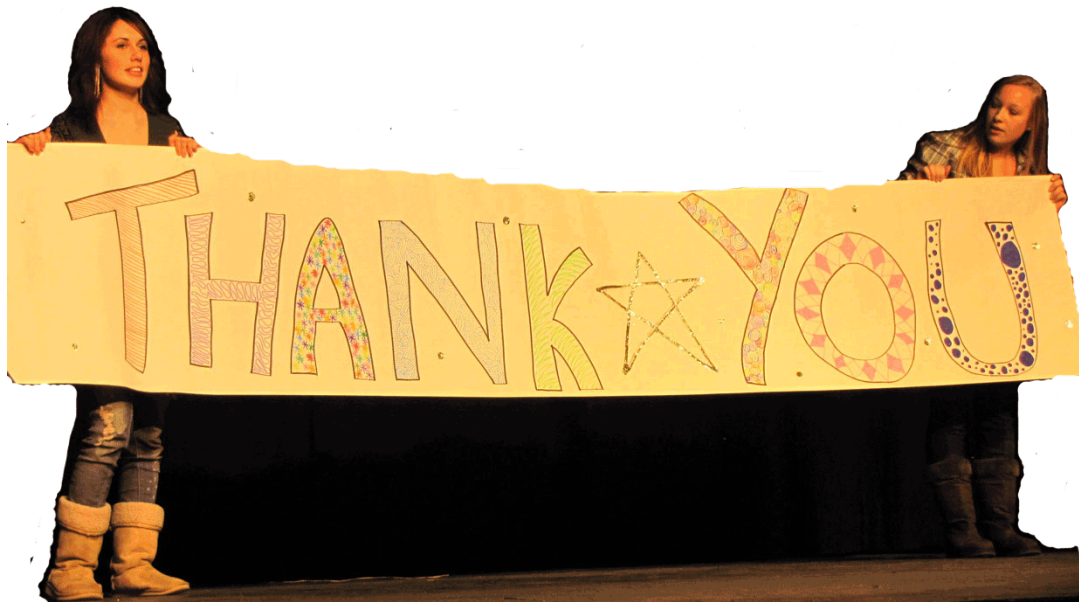
Lynne Marie Evans has served on the Perform It! board of directors for the past ten years. She is the mother of three children who have either graduated from Perform It! or are currently actors with the company. Lynne serves as the financial manager of our shows and as vice president of the board. She helps with all fundraising activi-

ties, T-shirt and DVD orders, and ticket sales.

Every year during rehearsals Lynne opens her “office” by setting up a table and chairs near the light booth in the theater. She coordinates the advertising campaign for the playbill, writes reimbursement checks, and makes bank deposits. She has the especially challenging

job of handling ticket sales, and you will find her in the ticket booth before all our shows, keeping track of reserved seating and selling tickets at the door.

This year we give a standing ovation to Lynne Marie Evans, angel of finances, caring mom, and outstanding board member!



**Perform It! is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your tax-deductible donation helps Perform It! use the works of William Shakespeare to provide theater projects that build bridges between people of all ages in our community.**

## **I WOULD LIKE TO HELP PERFORM IT!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Your **tax-deductible** donation may be made to:

**Perform It! Young People's Stage Company  
P. O. Box 2093  
Wolfeboro, NH 03894**

**Thank You!**

★ **Perform It!**  
★ Young People's Stage Company  
★ 2009 Moss Hart Award

★ presents  
★ William Shakespeare's

★ **You Like It**  
★



Directed by  
Jan Helling-Croteau

**Friday & Saturday May 6 & 7 at 7:30pm**

**Sunday May 8 at 2:00pm**

*at The Village Players Theater Wolfeboro*

~Tickets~

The Country Bookseller, Wolfeboro  
by Ph 569-6401 or [PerformIt@myfairpoint.net](mailto:PerformIt@myfairpoint.net)

*In Advance: Adults/\$10, Kids 12 & under/\$5--At the Door: Adults/\$12, Kids 12 & under/\$6*

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