

STEPPING OUT

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO DO, WHO TO SEE

Weekend

IN CONCERT

South Shore Symphony

The South Shore Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Music Director Scott Jackson Wiley, welcomes spring as it continues its season at the Madison Theatre. Violinist Muneko Otani and cellist Nicole Johnson, members of the acclaimed Cassett Quartet, are the featured soloists. The program includes Mozart's Magic Flute Overture, Rimsky-Korsakow's Scheherazade and Johannes Brahms' Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, op. 102 in A minor.

Saturday, March 29, 8 p.m. \$18, \$15 seniors, \$5 students. Molloy College, Madison Theatre, 1000 Hempstead Ave., Rockville Centre. (516) 323-4444 or www.madisontheatreny.org or www.sssymphony.org.

Musical Treasures

The American Chamber Ensemble returns to Hofstra University this weekend in "Classic Quartet and Quintets." Hear Mozart's Quintet for clarinet and strings, Peter Schickele's Quartet for clarinet, violin, cello and piano and Dvorak's Piano Quintet. ACE Directors pianist Blanche Abram, clarinetist Naomi Drucker and pianist Marilyn Lehman, with violinists Eriko Sato and Deborah Wong, violist Lois Martin, and cellist Chris Finckel perform. The ensemble's members are frequently cited by critics for their superb presentations of chamber masterworks. Their latest CDs on Elysium include American Clarinet Treasures, featuring core members of ACE performing works by George Kleinsinger, Virgil Thomson, Daniel Gregory Mason, Elliott Carter, Douglas Moore, and Gary Schocker, with guest artist Stanley Drucker.

Sunday, March 30, 3 p.m. \$15, \$12 seniors and students. Hofstra University's Helene Fortunoff Theater, Monroe Lecture Center Theater, California Ave., South Campus, Hempstead. (516) 463-6644.



PLAYWRIGHT TERENCE McNALLY (from left), with cast members Frederick Weller, Tyne Daly and Bobby Steggert, and Director Sheryl Kaller, are delighted that McNally's newest play, "Mothers and Sons," has arrived on Broadway.

Director credits Valley Stream roots

Sheryl Kaller finds her calling on Broadway

By **IRIS WIENER**

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From playing Rosie in Valley Stream South High School's production of "Bye Bye Birdie" to being a sought-after Tony-nominated director of Broadway plays, Sheryl Kaller remains grounded in her roots, praising her hometown for helping to get her where she is today. With the March 24 opening of her latest vehicle, Terrence McNally's "Mothers and Sons," Kaller excitedly reflects on the journey that brought her from the Green Acres community to the Great White Way.

"I loved living very close to the city

because I got the best of both worlds," she recalls. "My mom died when I was 29 and my dad died when I was 34, so I don't have memories of them moving to Florida or wherever. Memories of them and Valley Stream is all I have. What I got from Valley Stream was absolutely wonderful. I remember going to Grant Park and North Woodmere Park when it was built and it opened," she says nostalgically. "It was a childhood with a lot of breadth and imagination."

One thing Kaller never imagined was that she would one day be directing Tyne Daly in the premiere of a new play by Terrence McNally. In fact, lead producer Tom Kirdahy (also a Long Island native) and McNally

sought out Kaller as director. She immediately jumped on it because of the play's relatable content.

"It's about family and mothers and fathers and how they raise their children, and specifically in this play, how they raise their sons," she explains. "I think that the exploration of the generations and the exploration of forgiveness and hope is what really speaks to me."

"Mothers and Sons" centers around Katharine, a woman who unexpectedly visits her late son's partner, who is now married to another man and has a young son of his own. Katharine's struggles with motherhood, homophobia and raising a son during the AIDS crisis also hit a note with Kaller.

"Although my parents raised me more lib-

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Sheryl Kaller's journey to Broadway

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erally in the '70s in Valley Stream, Katharine went through the same challenges as my parents did raising children in an ever changing world," she says. "I feel like starting with Katharine's generation is when this world really changed a lot. A mother like Katharine having had to confront having a gay son, and having this child living through the AIDS crisis — that's big. I remember my parents didn't know too much about this horrible disease, and they were fearful about my own well-being."

Kaller jokes that her own kids have deserted her, as they are now both grown (her daughter is in her junior year at Tulane, while her son is working in New York and living on the Upper West Side — much like the family in her play). Though her kids went to elementary school in Valley Stream, she primarily raised them in Bergen County, N.J. However, she kept them close to Manhattan because of the opportunities it gave her, which included seeing theater regularly. In fact, Kaller points out that Valley Stream has had a strong impact on how she approached *Mothers and Sons*.

"I was raised in a very liberal family, but the town wasn't necessarily on the cusp of liberalism yet," she says. "It helped me understand Katharine a lot better because these very loving people always thought they were doing the right thing."

One person who definitely was far from close-minded was Kaller's English teacher at



Courtesy Joan Marcus

BOBBY STEGGERT, Frederick Weller, Grayson Taylor, and Tyne Daly in a scene from *"Mothers and Sons."*

Valley Stream South, who also directed her in the play that paved the way for Kaller's career at the helm of theatrical pieces.

"I was acting in *Bye Bye Birdie*, and in my humble opinion the teacher had screwed

up *"Telephone Hour,"*" she says, laughing at her chutzpah. "I told her what I thought, and asked her if I could take a hit at the number."

Kaller wound up choreographing the

entire show because of how well she did with *"Telephone Hour."*

New York has also taken notice of her talents, which included a Tony Award nominated Broadway debut with *"Next Fall"* in 2010, and Roundabout Theatre Company's off-Broadway production of *"Too Much, Too Much, Too Many"* in 2013. Next she'll be directing *"Kinky Boots"* star Billy Porter's new play, *"While I Yet Live,"* for off-Broadway's Primary Stages. But with *Mothers and Sons'* recent opening, Kaller is elated at the potential ways in which the play could help people to change their modes of thought.

"*Mothers and Sons* is important to Long Islanders, as well as to everybody who thinks there is anything different about the gay community and family," she says of why people should get on the LIRR (a fond memory of city trips past), and check out her powerful piece of theater. "It's also important for people who don't feel that way, because we're absolutely celebrating how far we've come."

Kaller ponders this sentiment for a moment. "This is a play about four generations of people, and a celebration of family. I want people to talk about it at dinner, and take away with them that people can change. Sometimes change is hard thought, but if we stay in there and really believe in each other, people can change."

For more information about *"Mothers and Sons"* or to purchase tickets, visit www.mothersandsonsbroadway.com or www.telecharge.com.