

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

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Act II Playhouse Presents the Philadelphia Premiere of *john & jen*

On Stage Sept. 21 – Oct. 17, 2010; Press Opening is Sept. 24th

AMBLER, PA – Act II Playhouse opens its 12th season of live theatre in Ambler with the Philadelphia premiere of *john & jen*, written by Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald. This original chamber musical about family connections – which recalls the “Forrest Gump” era – will be on stage Sept. 21-Oct. 17; Opening Night is on Friday, Sept. 24.

Megan Nicole O’Brien, Resident Director of 11th Hour Theatre Company and two-time Barrymore nominee, directs *john & jen*, which stars Sarah Gliko and Barrymore Award-winner Michael Phillip O’Brien.

Lippa, who wrote the music for *The Wild Party* and *The Addams Family*, currently on Broadway, and Greenwald will attend the Guest Speaker Talkback performance at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 29.

Three preview performances of *john & jen* will be held Sept. 21-23, with tickets discounted at \$27. Opening Night is Sept. 24, and the show runs through Oct. 17. Tickets are \$33 for all Wednesday-Thursday performances and \$38 for Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees. Tickets can be purchased in person at the Act II Box Office at 56 E. Butler Ave., over the phone at (215) 654-0200, or online at www.act2.org. Discounts are available for students (\$15 tickets) and for groups of 10 or more.

john & jen shines a light on the complexities of relationships between brothers and sisters, and parents and children, set against the 40-year background of a changing America. It’s the story of Jen, and her relationships with the two Johns in her life: her younger brother, who served in Vietnam; and his namesake, her son who is trying to find his way in the world.

(continued on page 2)

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When Ms. O'Brien read *john & jen*, she was immediately attracted to its storyline. "*john & jen* is a love story, just a very unique one," she notes. "I think one of the most interesting parts about this show is that it explores a brother/sister relationship, which we don't normally see in theatre; it's usually romantic love stories."

The show is especially meaningful to Ms. O'Brien, as she gets to direct her brother Michael, with whom she co-founded 11th Hour Theatre Company and has a close relationship. "He has had such an immense impact on my life," says Ms. O'Brien. "I wouldn't be the person I am today without him and his guidance and influence. Jen has a similar tie to her brother, and throughout the play, we see how this relationship impacts her whole life, and that of her son."

Ms. Gliko, whom Ms. O'Brien directed last year in *The Irish...And How They Got That Way* at the Walnut Street Theatre Independence on Studio 3, stars as Jen. She was mostly recently seen in *The Musical of Musicals (The Musical)* at Walnut Street Theatre and also starred in Media Theatre's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Mr. O'Brien won the Barrymore Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical for 11th Hour's production of *Avenue X* and also starred in *Rooms: A Rock Romance*.

Vince DiMura, who wowed Act II audiences as musical director and arranger for the theatre's summer smash hit *Burt & Me*, returns to the stage as music director for *john & jen*. The creative team also features scenic design by Dirk Durossette, costume design by Lauren Perigard, lighting design by James Leitner (Barrymore Award for Act II's 2004 production of *Mary's Wedding*), and sound design by Mark Valenzuela (Barrymore nomination for Act II's 2010 production of *The Story of My Life*).

"I think that *john & jen* is best presented in an intimate venue, such as Act II," says Producing Artistic Director Bud Martin. "It gives the actors the opportunity to really connect with the audience in a subtle, yet poignant way."

Act II Playhouse's 2010-2011 season is sponsored by Normandy Farm Hotel & Conference Center and Blue Bell Country Club.

(continued on page 3)

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SPECIAL DRESS REHEARSAL FUNDRAISER

The final dress rehearsal of *john & jen* will be open to the public on Sunday, Sept. 19, at 2 p.m. Suggested donation is \$10, and all contributions will be donated to the King of Prussia chapter of **Parents Without Partners**. Parents Without Partners is the largest nonprofit membership organization devoted to the welfare and interests of single parents and their children – and provides them with an opportunity for enhancing personal growth, self-confidence and sensitivity towards others.

ABOUT ACT II PLAYHOUSE

Act II Playhouse, entering its 12th season of professional theatre in the Philadelphia suburb of Ambler, PA, is committed to creating world-class theatre in a venue whose intimacy draws audiences and actors into dynamic interaction. Act II produces new, classic, and contemporary plays and musicals under the artistic direction of **Bud Martin** (Producing Artistic Director), **Harriet Power** (Associate Artistic Director) and **Pam Dickler** (Managing Director). In July 2010, Howard Shapiro of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared that “Act II Playhouse is arguably the most up-and-coming of the region’s small professional theaters outside Center City.”

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS

ANDREW LIPPA (music and book) – New York theater credits include *The Addams Family* (currently on Broadway), *The Wild Party* (Manhattan Theatre Club), the score for Aaron Sorkin’s *The Farnsworth Invention* (Broadway), new songs for *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Broadway); *john & jen* (co-written with Tom Greenwald). Recordings: *The Wild Party*, *john & jen*, ...*Charlie Brown*, Julia Murney’s *I’m Not Waiting*, *Bat Boy* (producer), and the forthcoming *A Little Princess* (co-written with Brian Crawley). Awards: 2000 Grammy nomination, winner of Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, ASCAP/Richard Rodgers and Gilman/Gonzalez-Falla Theater Foundation Awards. (can you clarify this area?) As Kristin Chenoweth’s music director: Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco Symphonies; Carnegie Hall; The Metropolitan Opera House, among others. Next up: Music/lyrics for *The Man in the Ceiling* (Disney Theatrical). Andrew is a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Music. www.andrewlippa.com

(continued on page 4)

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TOM GREENWALD (lyrics and book) is a Creative Director at SpotCo, a theatrical advertising and marketing company. Some of his clients include *RENT*, *Chicago*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Avenue Q* and *All Shook Up*. Tom's first screenplay, *Sweet Emotion*, was optioned by Jeffrey Seller and Kevin McCollum, the producers of *RENT*, and he is currently at work on a second. He lives with his wife and three sons in Connecticut.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

MEGAN NICOLE O'BRIEN is the Co-Founder and Resident Director of 11th Hour Theatre Company. Directing credits include: *Little Shop of Horrors* (11th Hour/Theatre Horizon), *Reefer Madness* (11th Hour/Montgomery Theater), *Rooms*, *Avenue X* (Barrymore nomination), *The Bombitty of Errors* (Barrymore nomination), *tick, tick...BOOM!*, *Austentatious*, and *Six of One* (all for 11th Hour Theatre Co.), *The Irish...and How They Got That Way* (Walnut Street Theatre Independence Studio on 3), and *Adding Machine: A Musical* (University of the Arts). Upcoming: *RENT* (11th Hour/Drexel University), and *The Bombitty of Errors* (Milwaukee Repertory Theater). In 2007, at the age of 25, Megan became the youngest director ever to be nominated for a Barrymore Award for *The Bombitty of Errors*. This year Megan was chosen as a semi-finalist for the F. Otto Haas Emerging Theatre Artist Award.

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Attachment – *john & jen* Fact Sheet

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FACT SHEET *john & jen at Act II Playhouse*

Performances:	Dates: September 21 – October 17, 2010 Previews run September 21-23 Opening Night is Friday, September 24, 2010
Tue. 9/21 p 8 pm (talkback)	Location: Act II Playhouse 56 E. Butler Ave. Ambler, PA 19002
Wed. 9/22 p 8 pm (talkback)	
Thur. 9/23 p 8 pm	Parking located in municipal lot off Cavalier Drive (meters are free after 6 pm)
Fri. 9/24* 8 pm (opening)	
Sat. 9/25 8 pm	Tickets: Previews: \$27 Tues-Thurs: \$33 Fri-Sun: \$38 Students: \$15 Discounts starting at 10% for groups of 10 or more
Sun. 9/26 2 pm	
Wed. 9/29 2 pm	<u>PUBLIC CONTACT INFORMATION</u> Online sales: www.act2.org Phone sales: 215-654-0200 (Tues.-Sat., 2-6 p.m.)
Wed. 9/29 8 pm (talkback**)	
Thu. 9/30 8 pm	<u>PRODUCTION TEAM</u> Music by Andrew Lippa, Lyrics by Tom Greenwald Book by Tom Greenwald & Andrew Lippa Directed by Megan Nicole O'Brien
Fri. 10/1 8 pm ^	
Sat. 10/2 8 pm	Musical Direction: Vince DiMura Set: Dirk Durossette Costumes: Lauren Perigard Lighting: James Leitner Sound: Mark Valenzuela Production Manager/Technical Director: Scott Weddell Production Stage Manager: Marguerite Price
Sun. 10/3 2 pm	
Wed. 10/6 2 pm	
Wed. 10/6 8 pm	
Thu. 10/7 8 pm	
Fri. 10/8 8 pm ^	
Sat. 10/9 2 pm	
Sat. 10/10 8 pm (talkback)	
Wed. 10/13 2 pm	
Wed. 10/13 8 pm	
Thu. 10/14 8 pm	
Fri. 10/15 8 pm ^	
Sat. 10/16 8 pm	
Sun. 10/17 2 pm	

p – Preview performance * Opening Night

^ Wine Friday – Patrons can unwind after a busy week and enjoy conversation with the Assistant Director before the show, beginning at 7:15 pm

**** Guest speakers** – The writers of *john & jen*, Andrew Lippa & Tom Greenwald, will be hosting a post-show discussion about the show.