

William Inge's "Bus Stop"
directed by Sam Hack Feb 1-11 at Clayton Community Theatre

Eight people are obliged to pass the time together overnight in a small-town diner due to a snowstorm. Three are locals; five are passing through on a bus from Kansas City to Denver. Although the bus cannot proceed, the interactions, relationships and discoveries of the eight characters continue in a flurry. By the time the road is cleared and the travelers are able to move on, no one is quite the same as they were at the start of "Bus Stop," the 1955 ensemble work by William Inge - master of the mid-century, Midwestern slice-of-life comedic drama.

"Bus Stop" is the second play of the 2017-2018 season of Clayton Community Theatre (CCT - www.placeseveryone.org) and is directed by Sam Hack, CCT artistic director. Performances: February 1-11, 2018 (Thursdays-Sundays) at Washington University South Campus Theatre 6501 Clayton Rd, Clayton MO 63117. This is CCT's 20th season. Tickets/more info: visit www.placeseveryone.org or call 314-721-9228. Financial assistance for this project has been provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency.

William Inge (1913-1973) was a celebrated playwright, screen writer and novelist from Independence, KS. His St. Louis ties include a stint as drama and music critic of the St. Louis Times and teaching at Washington University. His honors include an Academy Award, a Pulitzer and a star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame.

Inge's breakthrough work was "Come Back, Little Sheba," which played on Broadway in 1950 and was released in a film version in 1952. His 1953 "Picnic" earned him a Pulitzer. In Hollywood, his screenplay for Elia Kazan's "Splendor in the Grass" (1960) brought him an Oscar.

Many are familiar with the film version of "Bus Stop" (1956), which starred Marilyn Monroe as Cherie, a nightclub singer trying to find her way in life. Cherie's uneasy relationship with Bo, a brash but emotionally inexperienced cowboy, is key to the story in both the movie and the play. But the original play CCT audiences will see is much more of an ensemble piece, with additional characters, relationships and complexities.

"Bus Stop" explores those relationships, with a focus on three romantic pairings, and its depictions of male-female dynamics are topical and relevant. Two of the relationships venture into areas of unequal treatment bordering on abuse. "There is a lot in the play that speaks to what's going on in the world now, through the lens of the mid-1950s point of view," says director Sam Hack.

The characters look into one another's hearts - and their own hearts - and wrestle with complicated feelings and behavior. "We learn about them, they learn about themselves, relationships develop and grow and change," says Hack. "Some of it is relatively serious, some is humorous, nothing is extreme. They are real people, living their lives for these few hours in a very realistic way. It is essentially, I think, an examination of love in various forms and shapes and how love affects the people who are living with it."

All the action of "Bus Stop" takes place inside the diner. Those who saw CCT's most recent production, "Two Trains Running" by August Wilson, will recognize the set, which has been kept and slightly modified. ("Two Trains" was also a mid-century ensemble piece set in a diner, albeit in 1960s Pittsburgh.)

About Clayton Community Theatre

The Clayton Community Theatre (CCT) was founded by a group of Clayton residents interested in expanding access to the performing arts through community theatre. The organization's motto is "Places everyone," the announcement traditionally made by the stage manager a few moments prior to curtain to call the actors and crew to readiness. The motto reflects the goals of Clayton Community Theatre, which are: to offer Clayton and surrounding communities top-quality theatrical entertainment; to showcase local talent; and to provide any interested member of our community the opportunity to become involved in theatre production. We are a volunteer-driven organization and welcome all theatre lovers interested in assisting in our productions.

Clayton Community Theatre derives revenue primarily from ticket sales, with additional support from program advertising, contributions, sponsorships and grants.

Members of the press: Promotional photos and more information are on the CCT Media Resources page, <http://www.placeseveryone.org/media>. Media contact: Nathan Schroeder, media@placeseveryone.org; tel. [314-721-9228](tel:314-721-9228).

CAST and CREW – "Bus Stop"

Elma Duckworth: **Lucy Sappington**, previously seen on the CCT stage in "Born Yesterday", and part of the "Not Quite Right" improv group

Grace Hoylard: **Erin Struckhoff**, nominated for two Arts for Life awards for her portrayal of Lady Macbeth in CCT's "Macbeth" and of Mary in CCT's "The Women", featured also in CCT's "A View from the Bridge" and "Inherit the Wind," the Theater Guild of Webster Groves's "Sylvia," and Midnight Company's "The Everest Game"

Will Masters: **Jeff Lovell**, who played Lennox in CCT's "Macbeth," and was also featured in "Sylvia," "Wait Until Dark," and "The Trip to Bountiful" at the Theater Guild of Webster Groves, as well as "Titus Andronicus" and "Cardenio" at St. Louis Shakespeare

Cherie: **Brittney Henry**, nominated for an Arts for Life award for her performance as Miranda in CCT's "Enchanted Island," also featured in TGWG's "The Underpants" and St. Louis Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," "Titus Andronicus," and "Cardenio"

Dr. Gerald Lyman: **Joe O'Connor**, nominated for an Arts for Life award for his portrayal of Henry in CCT's "The Lion in Winter," also familiar to CCT audiences from his roles in "Midsummer Night's Dream," "A Piece of My Heart," "Enchanted Island," "The Unexpected Guest," and "Born Yesterday"

Carl: **Jeff Struckhoff**, last seen on the CCT stage as Dunlap in "Inherit the Wind" and as an immigration officer in "A View from the Bridge," also featured in a number of productions at East Central College

Virgil Blessing: **Gene Rauscher**, a veteran of CCT's productions of "Our Town," "The Fantasticks," and "To Kill a Mockingbird"

Bo Decker: **Michael C. Bouchard**, making his St Louis stage debut but familiar to fans of Ozark Actors Theatre from their “Comedy of Errors” and “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe”

Director: Sam Hack is well known throughout the St. Louis theatre community as one of our area’s most distinguished theatre educators. Sam retired from full-time teaching after more than two decades as theatre director at Hancock High School in St. Louis County. In a career of more than 40 years he has acted and directed with numerous professional and community theatre companies. His recent directorial work with CCT includes “The Lion in Winter,” nominated for three 2015 Arts for Life awards including Outstanding Drama, and “Born Yesterday” in 2017.

Assistant Director: Jessica Knust

Lighting Design: Amy Ruprecht

Costumes: Jean Heckmann

Set Design: Andrew Cary, Zachary Cary and Nada Vaughn

Props: Kelly Hunter