



ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT



» SUBSCRIBE

ARTS & LEISURE

1-2-3 Act! Bristol's one-act plays are back



TODD GOODYEAR, SAMANTHA Martin, Caroline Engvall and Meridith McFarland sing in the Greek chorus behind lead actor Dana DeWitt in “Medea” by Christopher Durang. This is one of the two comedic plays that Theater 1-2-3 will perform on Feb. 24, 25 and 26 at Holley Hall in Bristol. Independent photo/Steve James

February 9, 2023

By Elsie Lynn Parini

The stage is set; the audience is seated; the curtain rises... Putting on a play, is as easy as 1-2-3, right?

“Easy” might be a stretch, but a group in Bristol is trying to make acting at least *accessible* to anyone interested.

“Let’s get some live theater going in Bristol!” read a Front Porch Forum posting from Carl and Caroline Engvall, on behalf of the Bristol Gateway Players. “We’re resurrecting Theater 1-2-3. In a nutshell, it’s rehearsing and performing one-act plays for two months, two nights

a week, and doing three performances.... I see it as a way for anyone to do some acting without committing to something huge like a musical or Shakespeare.... All are welcome, no matter how much (or little) acting experience you've had. Best of all, no auditions! If you want to act, you're in!"

This is the third round of Theater 1-2-3, Engvall explained in a recent interview. There were two other rounds before the pandemic; then it all got shut down. This time, Engvall decided to partner with the Bristol Recreation Department.



TODD GOODYEAR playing Beethoven.

Independent photo/Steve James

"We have this beautiful hall, and theater is something that we're missing," Bristol's Recreation Director Meredith McFarland explained sitting in front of the Holley Hall stage. "We need theater in here."

So when Engvall approached the rec department with the idea to partner with the Bristol Gateway Players to put on another round of Theater 1-2-3, it was an easy "yes."

“We’re excited to partner with the Bristol Gateway Players,” she said. “We can give it a social media push, and help get the word out about this group... It’s nice to be able to say the Bristol Players are back.”

McFarland even took it a step further, and is an actor in this round too.

“As someone who’s never acted before, Carl made it easy to feel included,” McFarland said. “I am super busy, but the rehearsals two times a week is doable, which is really nice.”

Engvall, a recently retired Middlebury Union High School science teacher, is doing his best to break down any barriers to acting with no auditions and a manageable rehearsal schedule.

“If you show up you get a part,” he said. “We’re very informal in that way. I want to make it easy for people interested in theater but who are intimidated by the auditions part... I’ve noticed in many theater companies, they can tend to rely on the same people all the time, and I worry about that approach excluding people.”



Independent photo/Steve James

Engvall got his start in theater in kindergarten. “I was a theater dork all the way through

college," he explained. "I did a tiny bit of professional theater, then went to get my BA in Zoology."

After a long career at MUHS, he now does home energy audits, works as a handyman and, of course, directs theater.

Theater 1-2-3 will perform two one-act plays at the end of February (both are comedies): "Roll Over, Beethoven" by David Ives, and "Medea" by Christopher Durang. Admission is free, with donations benefitting the Bristol Gateway Players.

"I play Medea," said Dana DeWitt, a first-time actor from Bristol. "I did the murder mystery at Holley Hall back in October, but that's it for acting... In terms of acting experience: I have absolutely none."

DeWitt is also a science teacher at Mount Abraham Union High School, and first noticed Theater 1-2-3 a few years ago when one of her neighbors was in a production.

"He certainly wasn't an 'actor,'" she remembered. "So I thought, 'Golly, if he can do it so can I!'"

When she saw the posting pop up again, she figured she'd give it a try.

"It is very challenging and out of my comfort zone," said DeWitt, who plays the lead role to this farce of the ancient Greek tragedy written by Euripides. "It's helpful how structured the rehearsals are, and I get a lot of feedback and encouragement... I appreciate that Carl is aware of how new I am to acting."



Terry Ryan plays Jason in a one-act comedy coming to Holley Hall at the end of February.

Independent photo/Steve James

“Everyone who shows up brings their own strength and charisma,” Engvall added enthusiastically. “It’s all about the little surprises.”

Like, they discovered two of the actors in this round of Theater 1-2-3 can actually sing really well.

“It was jaw-dropping,” McFarland said.

“They did the whole big toe in the sand thing,” Engvall said smiling. “But they knew they had chops... When an actor brings a surprise — that’s the good stuff.”

“I’m on stage every day as a teacher,” DeWitt said, “but, oh my goodness, I didn’t realize acting was so hard! Trying to understand the character... and realizing I don’t know how this character would respond to different situations... it’s an exciting challenge.”

“I see Theater 1-2-3 as a great way to do theater, with low impact on participants’ lives,”

Engvall reiterated. "It's like theater training light bootcamp for people who want to try theater. There's very much an education component; and hopefully it starts to act as a feeder program for our larger productions."

"Anybody can do it," DeWitt encouraged. "It's fun and Carl will help you be the actor that's inside!"

Share this story:



This article's tags:

[Bristol](#), [Bristol Gateway Players](#), [Elsie Lynn Parini](#), [Theater 1-2-3](#)

MORE NEWS

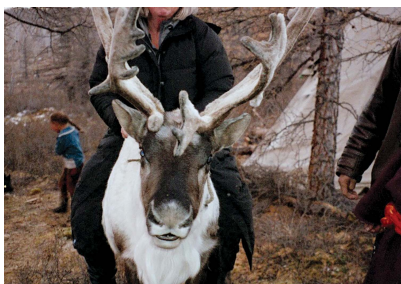
ARTS & LEISURE



Oscar Wilde's classic comedy takes the stage

Middlebury Community Players proudly presents its February 2023 production of Oscar Wilde' ... (read more)

ARTS & LEISURE



A book of a lifetime: Sas Carey shares her memoir

"Everything that happened in my life led me to Mongolia. Or maybe it just seems that way a ... (read more)

ARTS & LEISURE
