

Interactive drama at Broad Museum

Lansing City Pulse Story

By [David Winkelstern](#)

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“Framing Device” is an immersive theater creation by Peppermint Creek Theatre artistic director Chad Swan-Badgero and three other co-directors from the Michigan State University Department of Theatre: Grant Cleaveland, Sarah Hendrickson and Rob Roznowski.

“There was no script until we got together and conceived the show’s themes,” Roznowski said.

The premise of “Framing Device” is that a “new” exhibit at the MSU Broad Art Museum is being revealed.

“A collection of artists, critics, donors and more gather for the opening,” Roznowski said. “A harried curator welcomes the audience to the opening and then sets the audience free to roam and look at the art, as well as talk with the other ‘patrons.’” The cast of 25 planted attendees will be mostly made up of MSU students, some community actors and two school children.

Roznowski said audiences should expect to see, “a zany collection of ‘artistic types,’ pretentious performance art, critique sessions and coffee art.”

While experiencing “Framing Device,” actors will interact and encourage dialogues with the public. “There are times when audiences may be on their own seeking out the next character,” Roznowski said.

“They might not know who the audience and who the actors are.”

The public can also choose not to interact with the “Framing Device” players.

“Actors have been trained to interact with those based on their level of willingness,” Roznowski said. “So you can hang back and observe, but actors will try to involve you.”

He expects people will find the never-the-same “Framing Device” more fun than intimidating. “Audiences like this sort of thing because it is like virtual reality where you feel immersed in the action,” Roznowski said. “However, it is reality.”



Roznowski has directed a similarly interactive play, “Thus With a Kiss I Die,” and “really loved the form and how it affected the audience.” With a desire to do another immersive show, Roznowski contacted the MSU Broad Art Museum about doing a show there this year.

“Once I had those meetings, serendipitously, Chad had contacted me about consulting on an immersive theater piece,” he said. “Sarah teaches improv for MSU and is a good friend of Chad’s who wanted to get involved as well.”

Fellow co-director Cleaveland is an MSU undergraduate student who worked with Roznowski on “Thus With a Kiss I Die,” running several cast improvisations.

Hendrickson, an acting professor at Michigan State University, has a background in performing in many theaters, including Chicago’s the Second City and on the Norwegian Cruise Line. Hendrickson has facilitated workshops, appeared in commercials and has worked as a media casting associate.

“We all four equally directed and conceived the production — relying and depending on each other’s strengths,” Roznowski said. “We met regularly to discuss themes of the show.”

“Then we decided on the 20-plus characters for the show and decided on who would write outlines and backgrounds for each,” Roznowski said. “Chad, Sarah, Grant and I did the outlines and the layout for the event, and then the cast were given prompts within which they improvise,” he added. “So I would say all involved were the authors.”

Note: For each performance of “Framing Device,” four participants will be selected as VIP patrons who must arrive one hour before show time.

They will be taken to the Art Lab across the street from the MSU Broad for a creative activity. Their work will be displayed at the museum. E-mail Sarah Hendrickson at sarahreules@gmail.com and indicate an interest for what night.

“Framing Device” \$15 General, \$10 Students/Seniors 65+ 8 p.m., Nov. 14-17 7 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 18 MSU Broad Art Museum 547 E. Circle Dr., East Lansing Peppermint Creek Theatre: 517-927-3016 www.peppermintcreek.org