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ON STAGE

"Puffs," through Jan. 5, by LAFF productions at District Theatre, 627 Mass. Ave., Indianapolis; indyfringe.org

OPENING

"Steel Magnolias," Jan. 4-Feb. 2, Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre, 9301 N. Michigan Road; www.beefandboards.com

"Be Here Now," Jan. 9-Feb. 2, by Summit Performance at Phoenix Theatre, 705 N. Illinois St., Indianapolis; phoenixtheatre.org

"First Date," Jan. 10-19, Footlite Musicals, 1847 N. Alabama St., Indianapolis; footlite.org

"Gloria," Jan. 10-26, American Lives Theatre at IndyFringe Theatre, 719 E. St. Clair St., Indianapolis; indyfringe.org and americanlivestheatre.org

"Morning After Grace," Jan. 14-Feb. 9, Indiana Repertory Theatre, 140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis; irtlive.com

"Salt Pepper Ketchup," Jan. 17-Feb. 2, Fonseca Theatre, 2520 W. Michigan St., Indianapolis; fonsecatheatre.org

"Lie Cheat and Genuflect," Jan. 17-Feb. 2, Main Street Productions at Westfield Playhouse, 1836 W. SR 32, Westfield; westfieldplayhouse.org

"Murder for Two," Jan. 24-Feb. 16, Actors Theatre of Indiana, The Studio Theater, 4 Center Green, Carmel; www.atistage.org

"Four Old Broads," Jan. 31-Feb. 9, Buck Creek Players, 11150 Southeastern Ave. (Acton Road exit off I-74), Indianapolis, www.buckcreekplayers.com

"In the Beginning...," Jan. 31-Feb. 15, Mud Creek Players, 9740 E. 86th St., Indianapolis; mudcreekplayers.org

"The Watsons Go To Birmingham — 1963," Feb. 1-March 1, Indiana Repertory Theatre, 140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis; irtlive.com

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Theatre Bulletin

Indianapolis & Central Indiana

FREE

No. 0014 – January 2, 2020

New year, new voice

(From press release) After nearly a year of planning, a new downtown Indianapolis theatre company hosts its first opening night. **American Lives Theatre** opens "**Gloria**," an office satire by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, on Friday, Jan. 10, at the IndyFringe Theatre, 719 E. St. Clair.

An Indy premiere of a Pulitzer finalist, the play exposes the hilarious, brutal ambition among eager assistants in publishing. Artistic Director Chris Saunders directs local actors Joe Barsanti, Kim Egan, Bridget Haight, Morgan Morton, Joshua Short, and Tom Weingartner.

This is the first of three plays that comprise ALT's first season. The second is "Boy Gets Girl," by Rebecca Gilman, in March, and the third is "Detroit," by Lisa D'amour, in May.

"Gloria" was carefully chosen for ALT's first play, Saunders said. "It's incredibly current, and it asks questions about who we are as humans and Americans in a thoughtful, and often very funny way." Although primarily a sharp comedy, "Gloria" is known for shocking audiences. Ticket buyers are advised of a trigger warning and encouraged to email Saunders directly at chris@americanlivestheatre.org for more information. Go to www.IndyFringe.org for show information and tickets.

REVIEWS

Edited; see full reviews online at www.playswithjohnandwendy.com

Puffs: Wizarding world from another perspective

The goofballs of LAFF (Loud and Fast Funny Shows) are back, and they've brought some friends. In "**Puffs**," an Off-Broadway show by Matt Cox, this time the parody target is the "Harry Potter" novels. However, the seven-year epic (presented in 100 minutes) is told from the perspective of House Hufflepuff. It should be noted that the more you know about the Potter books and films, the more you will get all the jokes and references. But for fans, no matter what your House, this fun and touching take on the stories is a must-see.

The LAFF regulars — Matt Mullen, Jim Banta, and Olivia Schaperjohn — are our central trio of students, sorted into the Puffs (rather than the Braves, Smarts, or Snakes) only to find that it is apparently a House of losers. The one exception is handsome prefect Cedric (Christian Condra), who is a shining leader up until the climax of Book 4. Afterward, Condra portrays He-whose-name-we-shouldn't-be-talking-about (never mind the irony), with taped-down nose and hilariously dramatic flair.

Dave Ruark rejoins the company as our Narrator, keeping this complex plot moving along. Various roles are ably filled by Mark Cashwell, who plays a lot of the faculty; Gorgi Parks Fulper, parts include Professor Sprout, and an evil Puff escaped from Wizard Prison; Chelsea Leis Mullen, notably as charming and cheerful Leanne, as well as the Puffs founder; Tyler Lyons; Maddie Deeke; Kayla Lee; Anthony Nathan; Justina Savage; and Frankie Bolda, whose roles include Harry.

While this is a very funny parody, what might be surprising is the amount of emotional heft this underdog (under-badger?) story carries, as the group that would be happy to rank third out of the four Houses grows to prove they are just as important as any other aspect of the Wizarding world.

Final performances are this weekend (through Jan. 5) on the main stage at the District Theatre, 627 Massachusetts Ave., managed by IndyFringe. Get info and tickets at www.indyfringe.org.