

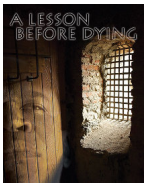
What's Happenin': Tuesday, July 5, through Wednesday, July 20

Written by Mike Schulz
Tuesday, 05 July 2011 06:00

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Theatre

A Lesson Before Dying

Playcrafters Barn Theatre

Friday, July 15, through Sunday, July 24

Running July 15 through 24, the Playcrafters Barn Theatre's latest production is author Romulus Linney's *A Lesson Before Dying*. And yes, the title does feature a particular word that

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might make you think the show is depressing as all get-out. Allow me, though, to alleviate your fears: Just because a production has “lesson” in the title doesn’t mean it’s downbeat! There are all sorts of fun lessons out there! Piano lessons, dance lessons, – !

What’s that? It was the word “dying” that made you think the play was a downer? Hmm. I hadn’t thought of that

Okay, so *A Lesson Before Dying* is pretty sad. But since this stage drama is adapted from a much-admired, Pulitzer Prize-nominated book by Ernest J. Gaines – which was also adapted into an Emmy-winning HBO movie starring Don Cheadle – chances are excellent that it’ll be an *exhilarating* kind of sad.

Set in 1948 Louisiana, the story concerns an unjustly convicted man whose spirit has been annihilated by his death sentence; even his own attorney, attempting to gain favor with the all-white jury, referred to the man as a hog. Yet thanks to the devoted efforts of his grandmother and a committed grade-school teacher, the prisoner gradually learns how to die with dignity, and the true meanings of compassion, forgiveness, and self-worth.

Noted area performer, storyteller, and radio host Shellie Moore Guy directs Playcrafters’ presentation of Linney’s piece, a stage work that the *New York Times* praised for its “irresistible momentum and cathartic explosion,” and that DCTheatreScene.com called “visually, aurally, psychologically, and emotionally breathtaking.” And if all this isn’t enough to convince you that *A Lesson Before Dying* might be worth a visit regardless of its somber subject matter, trust me: There are *way* more depressing ways to spend a couple hours this summer. Have you seen *Green Lantern* ?

For more information on, and tickets to, *A Lesson Before Dying*, call (309)762-0330 or visit Playcrafters.com

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Music

Music on the Lawn: Thaddeus Rex with Rock

Butterworth Center

Wednesday, July 13

See that tall, adorable, amusing creature in the accompanying photo? That's the latest guest in the Butterworth Center's annual Music on the Lawn concert series, and he's in the area to get your kids excited about reading through silly songs, goofy dancing, and a whole lot of roaring.

Oh, and standing next to him is his dinosaur buddy, Rock.

Winner of the 2008 John Lennon Songwriting Contest and described by the *Washington Post* as "part Monty Python, part Dr. Seuss," popular children's entertainer Thaddeus Rex will perform at the Moline venue on July 13, delivering his signature blend of education and rockin' whimsy at 8:30 a.m. and 1 and 6:30 p.m. Stopping at more than 200 venues annually, Rex and his

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plush, seven-foot-tall companion have proven a continual smash with family audiences nationwide for their high-energy ditties that encourage literacy while also encouraging interactive participation; in sentiments shared by many,

Time Out New York

wrote, "It's pretty rare these days to find a kids' performer as imaginative and original as Thaddeus Rex, and rarer still, a musician who weaves educational content into his tunes in a hip way."

But the best way to get a sense of Thaddeus Rex's musical (and hysterical) talents is by listening to them yourselves. I hereby direct you to the artist's Web site at ThaddeusRex.com , where you're able to hear selections from the albums

Martian Television Invasion, Shakin' in Chicago,

and

We Wanna Rock

, including songs with such titles as "Where Can I Find Green Eggs & Ham," "Slimy Green & Kinda Funny," and my personal favorite, "I Stepped in Dog Doo." Seriously, I've been giggling at that one for hours. And I wonder why no one at my workplace will share an office with me.

Admission to Thaddeus Rex's and Rock's concert is free, you're advised to bring lawn chairs and/or blankets, and more information on the day is available by calling (309)743-2700 or visiting

ButterworthCenter.com



Music

Rock the District with Tesla

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The District of Rock Island

Saturday, July 16, 7 p.m.

I live a stone's throw away from the District of Rock Island. Granted, it would require Superman throwing the stone to actually *hit* anything there, but I'm still reasonably close. And on breezeless summer nights, with the windows open, I can always hear the happily infectious sounds of music and audience revelry during the District's outdoor concerts in the Great River Plaza.

Consequently, I'd invite you all to my place to enjoy this year's annual, all-ages Rock the District concert with featured guests Tesla, but I'm sure we'd have a much better time seeing the venerated rockers in person. (That, and my living room can comfortably seat, like, six or seven of you *tops*.)

Formed in Sacramento, California, in 1984 under its original moniker City Kidd, the group made a significant splash with Tesla's very first studio album, as 1986's platinum-selling *Mechanical Resonance* rose to number 32 on the *Billboard* charts and scored a top-10 single with "Modern Day Cowboy." Over the next five years, a bunch of other top-10 hits followed – among them "Love Song," "Signs," "Call It What You Want," and "The Way It Is" – along with tours alongside such rock legends as Def Leppard, David Lee Roth, and Poison.

A quarter century after the band's studio debut, Tesla is still going strong, with the rockers' most recent release – 2008's *Forever More* – hitting *Billboard's* top-30 chart, its single "I Wanna Live" hitting the top *five*, and a recent world tour finding the musicians visiting Australia, Japan, and Europe. All told, Tesla's is an inspiring success story, so on behalf of fans everywhere, I'd just like to say: "Words can't explain what

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you give when you stir it up with song and emotion, so thank you.” (And in case you’re wondering: Yes, five song references in 18 words

is

a new record for me. Not that I’m one to brag.)

Tesla performs with opening sets by Pop Evil, Three Years Hollow, and Kyng, tickets are \$25, and more information on this year’s Rock the District event is available by visiting RIDistrict.com.



Theatre

The Importance of Being Earnest

Richmond Hill Barn Theatre

Thursday, July 7, through Sunday, July 17

Just how beloved is Oscar Wilde’s classic farce *The Importance of Being Earnest*, running at

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the Richmond Hill Barn Theatre July 7 through 17? Critiquing its 1895 debut production, *The World*

's William Archer wrote that the play was "an absolutely willful expression of an irrepressibly witty personality." And that's a line from one of

Earnest

's

negative

reviews.

Nowadays, of course, it's nearly impossible to find any of those, and that's certainly not due to critics' lack of opportunity; presentations of Wilde's timeless comedy are routinely staged for patrons of educational, community, and professional theatre. (Broadway's most recent, Tony Award-winning *Earnest* – described by the *New York Times* as "buoyant and consistently funny" – closed four days before Richmond Hill's opening.) Yet there's nothing routine about this madly inspired entertainment that finds two 19th Century scoundrels avoiding social obligations and pursuing romance through a pair of "Earnest" aliases, as audiences will discover in director Joe DePauw's Richmond Hill outing – one of the very few period comedies the Barn has produced over the past several decades.

Boasting wonderfully memorable situations and characters – none more so than the intimidating dowager Lady Bracknell – *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a true theatrical hoot, boasting some of the most clever dialogue ever composed for the stage. You may be asking: "

How

clever?" Let's see! Among the following, which is the only sentiment

not

uttered in Oscar Wilde's

Earnest

?

1) "It is awfully hard work doing nothing."

2) "Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else."

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3) "An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise – pleasant or unpleasant as the case may be."

4) "London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained 35 for years."

5) "Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes."

6) "All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his."

Tickets to *The Importance of Being Earnest* are \$8 on opening night and \$10 for the remainder of the show's run, and can be reserved by calling (309)944-2244

or visiting

RHPlayers.com

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Answer: 5. That one's actually from Wilde's comedy Lady Windermere's Fan ... just like I told you in our April quiz on the author's quotes! I can't believe you're not committing these articles to memory!

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What Else Is Happenin' ...?

MUSIC

Saturday, July 9 – Echoes of Pink Floyd. An all-ages, outdoor concert with the ultimate Floyd experience. Rock Island Brewing Company (1815 Second Avenue, Rock Island). 8 p.m. For information, call (309)793-4060 or visit RIBCO.co
[m](#)

Monday, July 11 – *Rhythms Along the River: The 2011 Drum Corps International Show.* Outdoor event featuring a lineup of world-class drum and bugle corps. Brady Street Stadium (3600 Brady Street, Davenport). 7 p.m. \$15-25. For information, call (317)275-1212 or visit DCI.org

Thursday, July 14 – Tea Leaf Green. Acclaimed indie-rock musicians in concert. The Redstone Room (129 Main Street, Davenport). 9 p.m. \$15. For tickets and information, call (563)326-1333 or visit RedstoneRoom.com

Friday, July 15 – Jolie Holland. Folk, country, and blues singer in an “Intimate at the Englert” concert. Englert Theatre (221 East Washington Street, Iowa City). 8 p.m. \$16. For tickets and information, call (319)688-2653 or visit Englert.org

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Sunday, July 17 – Bill Bell. Famed musician performs and educates as part of Polyrythms' Third Sunday Jazz Matinée & Workshop Series. The Redstone Room (129 Main Street, Davenport). 3 p.m. all-ages jazz workshop – \$5 per adult, children free; 6 p.m. concert – \$10-15. For tickets and information, call (309)373-0790 or visit polyrythms.org and RedstoneRoom.com [Po](#)

Monday, July 18 – Igor & the Red Elvises. Russian-American rockers in concert, with opens The One Night Standards. Rock Island Brewing Company (1815 Second Avenue, Rock Island). 8 p.m. \$10. For information, call (309)793-4060 or visit RIBCO.com

Tuesday, July 19, and Thursday, July 21 – Four Play Cabaret. Concert performance with Heather Beck singing Carly Simon, Laura Miller singing Carole King, Sunshine Ramsey singing Janis Joplin, and Jan Schmall singing Joan Baez. Circa '21 Speakeasy (1818 Third Avenue, Rock Island). 6 p.m. \$10. For tickets and information, call (309)786-7733 extension 2 or visit Circa21.com

THEATRE

Thursday, July 7, through Sunday, July 31 – Jesus Christ Superstar. The Harrison Hilltop Theatre's production of the classic rock opera, running in repertory with *The Last Five Years*. The District Theatre (1611 Second Avenue, Rock Island). \$18-20. For tickets and information, call (309)235-1654 or visit HarrisonHilltop.com

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Friday, July 8, through Sunday, July 17 – *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Quad City Music Guild's presentation of the Broadway smash. Prospect Park Auditorium (1584 34th Avenue, Moline). Thursdays-Saturdays 7:30 p.m., Sundays 2 p.m. \$10-15. For tickets and information, call (309)762-6610 or visit QCMusicGuild.com

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Saturday, July 9, and Sunday, July 10 – *High School Reunion*. Original comedy performed by the Clinton Area Showboat Theatre's intern staff, written by artistic director Patrick Stinson. Ericksen Community Center (1401 11th Avenue North, Clinton). Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday 3 p.m. \$16-20. For tickets and information, call (563)242-6760 or visit ClintonShowboat.org

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Wednesday, July 13, through Saturday, July 30 – *The Last Five Years*. The Harrison Hilltop Theatre's production of the musical romance, running in repertory with *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The District Theatre (1611 Second Avenue, Rock Island). \$18-20. For tickets and information, call (309)235-1654 or visit HarrisonHilltop.com

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Thursday, July 14, through Saturday, July 23 – *Red Herring*. Farcical comedy of love, marriage, and Soviet spies, set in the 1950s. Timber Lake Playhouse (8215 Black Oak Road, Mt. Carroll). Tuesdays-Saturdays 7:30 p.m., Sunday 2 and 6:30 p.m. \$15-23. For tickets and information, call (815)244-2035 or visit TimberLakePlayhouse.org

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Thursday, July 14, through Sunday, July 24 – *The Drowsy Chaperone*. The Tony Award-winning musical comedy within a comedy. Clinton Area Showboat Theatre (311 Riverview Drive, Clinton). Thursdays-Saturdays 7:30 p.m., Sundays and Wednesday 3 p.m. \$16-20. For tickets and information, call (563)242-6760

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or visit

ClintonShowboat.org

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Friday, July 15, through Sunday, July 17 – *All Shook Up*. Elvis meets Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

in Broadway's musical comedy. Ohnward Fine Arts Center (1215 East Platt Street, Maquoketa). Friday and Saturday 7 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m. \$10-18. For tickets and information, call (563)652-9815 or visit

OhnwardFineArtsCenter.com

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Saturday, July 16, through Sunday, July 24 – *King Lear*. Genesisius Guild's production of Shakespeare's classic tragedy. Lincoln Park (11th Avenue and 38th Street, Rock Island). Saturdays and Sundays 8 p.m. Free admission, with donations encouraged. For information, visit Genesisius.org .

MOVIES

Sunday, July 10 – *Jews & Baseball: An American Love Story*. Documentary about immigration, assimilation, bigotry, heroism, the passing on of traditions, and the shattering of stereotypes, presented by the Jewish Federation of the Quad Cities. Figge Art Museum (225 West Second Street, Davenport). 4 p.m. \$5, students free. For information, call (309)793-1300 or visit

JFQC.org

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EVENT

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Tuesday, July 19, through Sunday, July 24 – Rock Island County Fair. Annual summer event featuring rides, games, vendors, 4-H and children's activities, live music, truck and tractor pulls, stock-car races, a demolition derby, and more. Rock Island County Fairgrounds (Archer Drive and Avenue of the Cities, East Moline). Tuesday and Thursday 7:30 a.m. gates, Wednesday and Friday 8 a.m. gates, Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. gates. Free gate admission. For information, call (309)796-1599

or visit

RockIslandCountyFair.com