



BWW Interview: Zuzanna Szadkowski in THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR at TRT

by Marina Kennedy



Two River Theater (TRT), under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, continues its 2016/17 Season with Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, directed by Eric Tucker. Performances will begin in Two River's Marion Huber Theater on Saturday, February 25th and continue through Sunday, March 26th.

The TRT production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* will explore the darker undercurrent of one of Shakespeare's silliest comedies. In the play, the lecherous buffoon John Falstaff (perhaps Shakespeare's greatest comic character) decides to seduce both Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, respectable married women of Windsor. When the two women immediately see through Falstaff's plot, they decide to turn the tables on him and devise a plot of their own-for hilarious revenge.

Broadwayworld.com interviewed Zuzanna Szadkowski who plays an Actor in *Merry Wives of Windsor* about her career and the upcoming show at TRT.

Szadkowski played Dorota in the CW's hit drama series *Gossip Girl*. She can be seen as Nurse Pell on the Cinemax series from Steven Soderbergh, *The Knick*. Other television credits include *The Good Wife*, *Elementary*, *Girls*, *Guiding Light*, *The Sopranos*, *Law & Order*, and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. Film credits include *Growing Up* and *Other Lies*, *Loserville* and *Butterflies* of Bill Baker. Theater credits include *The Comedy of Errors* as part of The Public Theater's Mobile Shakespeare Unit, *Nora*

and Delia Ephron's *Love, Loss and What I Wore* Off-Broadway and on tour, and *The 39 Steps* at Actors Theatre of Louisville. She received a B.A. from Barnard College and an M.F.A. in acting from the A.R.T./MXAT Institute at Harvard.

When did you first start acting?

I started acting in sixth grade. I was in the chorus of *Kiss Me Kate* at Blackhawk Middle School in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was hooked the minute they brought out the stage make-up.

What performers do you admire?

I am a huge fan of Laurie Metcalf. She blows me away on stage, but I'm especially in awe of her work on the small screen. Her timing, the specificity in her work, the layers of heart and heartache under the skin of her characters - all of that inspires me to pieces. Roseanne! *Getting On!* She's amazing. I also am crazy about the transformative John Hawkes.

You have diverse performance credits. What have been some of your most challenging roles?

I have been most challenged performing Shakespeare's comedies. It's been a tall order to find an honest way to connect to an audience from inside some of the broader characters I've played. For example, I had a heck of a time cracking the Abbess in *Comedy of Errors* when I performed with The Public Theater's Mobile Unit. It wasn't easy to figure out who she was and what could be funny. On the other end of the spectrum, I find guest starring on television often challenging. When I worked on *Gossip Girl* for six seasons, or *The Knick* for two seasons, I had time to grow with the show, to develop my character and to build chemistry with my scene partners. Sometimes fleshing out a role and delivering a performance when you are dropped into the world of a series as a guest star for only a day or two is pretty scary.

Tell us a little about your role(s) in *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

In *Merry Wives* three actors take on the whole story. We are all over the place switching in and out of roles. I think it's going to be as surprising for the audience as it is fun and crazy for us to juggle. I have never felt so deeply connected on stage to the other actors. Jason, Nicole and I have to function almost as one organism. I have to tell you that these two are hysterically funny and brilliant actors - working with them we discover new aspects of the characters and relationships every day in rehearsal, and I think we are building something special.

How do you like working at TRT?

TRT is a beautiful theater, and we are made to feel very taken care of. The people working in this theater are truly inspired. It is very cool to be asked to make something brand new and personal of something classic. Also, Red Bank is a happening town, and it's fun to be working so close to NYC.

What would you like metro area audiences to know about the show?

I would like audiences to know that we are very excited to show them our *Merry Wives*. We have been working to find the lives of these characters and to make ourselves vulnerable enough to be as funny as possible and real - to tell the story in way that is unique to us as artists.

Tell us a little about your plans for the future.

I have some projects in the works and my writing partner, Deb Knox and I are working toward a production of our new play, "Sorry, Dad".

Anything else, absolutely anything?

In my spare time I am passionate about animal rescue, and I work with Badass Brooklyn Animal Rescue.

You can follow Zuzanna Szadkowski on Instagram and Twitter @zuzannawanda.

Ticket prices for The Merry Wives of Windsor range from \$50 to \$70, with discounts available for groups, seniors, and U.S. military personnel, their families, and veterans. A limited number of \$20 tickets are available for every performance; \$20 tickets may be partial view. Tickets for patrons under 30 are \$20 and include the best available seats at every performance. The theater is located at 21 Bridge Street in Red Bank, NJ. Tickets are available from www.tworivertheater.org or by calling 732.345.1400.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of Zuzanna Szadkowski