



Brandon J. Dirden and Crystal A. Dickinson to Star in Two River Theater's *Raisin in the Sun*

BY BERET LEONE

The New Jersey theatre has announced its 2017-18 season.



Following his recent turn in *Jitney* on Broadway, Brandon J. Dirden will star alongside Crystal A. Dickinson in the Two River Theater staging of Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun*. The fall production will kick off the New Jersey theatre's newly announced 2017-2018 lineup, which also features a revival of Regina Taylor's *Oo-Bla-Dee* helmed by *Jitney* director **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**.

The upcoming season will open September 2017 and run through July 2018. Also included in the ten-show lineup are world premieres from Matt Barbot and the Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, as well as David Greenspan's adaptation of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, also starring the award-winning actor.

Barbot's *El Coquí Espectacular And The Bottle of Doom*, scheduled to begin January 2018, tells the story of a washed up comic book writer who dresses up as his favorite creation, a Puerto

Rican superhero named El Coquí Espectacular. The play won the 2016 **Kevin Spacey** Foundation Artist of Choice Award, the Kennedy Center's Darrel Ayers Award for Outstanding Student-Written Play for Young Audiences, and the Latinidad Award for an Outstanding Play Written by a Student of Latino/Hispanic Heritage.

Based off the popular children's book by Marcus Pfister, Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia will bring *The Rainbow Fish* to the stage this December. Intended for a younger audiences and told through "enchanted puppetry," *The Rainbow Fish* tells a story of a beautiful fish who learns to share his most prized possession: his colorful scales.

Full details of Two River Theater's 2017–18 lineup, as outlined by the theatre, are listed below:

A Raisin In The Sun

By **Lorraine Hansberry**

Directed by Carl Cofield

September 9–October 8, 2017

Brandon J. Dirden (*Jitney*, Two River's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) and Crystal A. Dickinson (*Clybourne Park*, Two River's *Seven Guitars*) will play Walter Lee Younger and Ruth Younger in Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 masterpiece.

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Directed by **Michael Cumpsty**

November 11–December 3, 2017

Tony-nominated actor and director Michael Cumpsty (*The End of the Rainbow*, Two River's *The Lion in Winter*) previously directed *Third* at Two River Theater. He returns to direct Oscar Wilde's comedy of manners.

El Coquí Espectacular And The Bottle of Doom

By Matt Barbot

Directed by Jose Zayas

January 6–February 4, 2018

In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a masked figure has been spotted: the Puerto Rican superhero, El Coquí Espectacular. In reality, it is out-of-work comic book artist Alex, who has been secretly dressing up as his favorite creation. As Alex learns that fighting crime is harder than it looks, his older brother Joe wants Alex to join him at his advertising agency, selling sugary soda to Latino consumers. Can El Coquí defeat his own self-doubt and be a hero for his neighborhood?

The Bridge of San Luis Rey

By **Thornton Wilder**

Adapted for the stage by David Greenspan

February 17–March 18, 2018

This quiet masterpiece—a dazzling rumination on the nature of love—has been adapted and will star writer and actor David Greenspan, the winner of five Obie Awards.

Dancing at Lughnasa

By Brian Friel

Directed by Jessica Stone

April 14–May 13, 2018

Brian Friel's memory play about five unmarried sisters on the west coast of Ireland in 1936 won the 1992 Tony Award for Best New Play. Director Jessica Stone returns to Two River, where she previously helmed ***A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum***, and *Absurd Person Singular*.

Oo-Bla-Dee

By Regina Taylor, Original Music by Diedre L. Murray

Directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson

June 9–July 1, 2018

Golden Globe-winning actor and playwright Regina Taylor's *Oo-Bla-Dee*—a shimmering portrait of a female bebop band of African-American musicians traveling the country following the end of World War II—has its first major revival with new music by two-time Obie-winning jazz composer Diedre L. Murray (*Running Man*, The Gershwins' ***Porgy and Bess***).

Skeletons: A Day of the Dead Bedtime Story

Teatro Sea, New York

October 12-15, 2017

Performed in Spanish and English simultaneously, *Skeletons* is a comedy about a boy, Jimmy, who is dealing with the loss of his best friend, his Grandfather. His parents try everything to help Jimmy cope, but nothing works, until the eve of Day of the Dead, when his Grandfather comes back to life for just one night to orchestrate an adventure. *Skeletons* is recommended for audiences ages 7 and up.

The Rainbow Fish

Based on the book by Marcus Pfister

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

December 15–18, 2017

With his silver scales and heart of gold, *The Rainbow Fish* will enchant even the youngest children in this adaptation of the award-winning book about a beautiful fish who learns to share his most prized possession. Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia brings *The Rainbow Fish* to life with enchanting puppetry in this world-premiere production. *The Rainbow Fish* is recommended for audiences age 3-7.

A Little Shakespeare

March 6–11, 2018

Celebrating its 5th season as one of Two River's most popular programs, *A Little Shakespeare* engages young artists and audiences with the work of the Bard. A 75-minute version of one of Shakespeare's plays—adapted, directed and designed by professional artists—will be performed by local high school students on the stage of the Rechnitz Theater. The play title will be announced shortly. *A Little Shakespeare* is recommended for ages 9 and up.

The Young King

Based on the short story by Oscar Wilde

Adapted for the stage by Nicki Bloom

Produced by Slingsby Theatre, Australia

April 20–22, 2018

What kind of King would you be? A naïve boy raised by goatherds is discovered to be heir to the kingdom. Treasures and privileges are laid at his feet, but at what cost to others? The achingly beautiful and tender language of Oscar Wilde joins the intimate and magical world of Slingsby in this coming-of-age story. *The Young King* is recommended for audiences ages 8 and up.

For more information visit **tworivertheater.org/**.