

World-Premiere Comedy *Hurricane Diane* Begins at Two River Theater

Performances start tonight ahead of a January 27 opening.

Jason Zednick • Red Bank, New Jersey • Jan 14, 2017



Becca Blackwell plays Diane in the world premiere of Madeleine George's *Hurricane Diane*, directed by Leigh Silverman, at Two River Theater. (photo provided by Two River Theater)

Hurricane Diane begins its world-premiere run tonight at Two River Theater.

In Madeleine George's comedy, the Greek god Dionysus takes form as Diane, a lesbian separatist permaculture gardener from Vermont whose mission is restoring the Earth to its natural state — and gathering acolytes. She begins in a tidy suburban cul-de-sac in Red Bank, New Jersey, populated by four women. As Diane changes their yards into a wild wonderland of paw-paw

trees and chokeberry bushes, she sets out to draw the women into her ultimate plan: to stage a bacchanal in her forest garden, and usher in a new era of Dionysian worship in the dying days of the American empire, as the planet warms and the oceans rise.

"Red Bank is a coastal community, and climate change is as much an issue on the Jersey Shore as anywhere," says George, who wrote *Hurricane Diane* as a commission for Two River Theater. "I was eager to write a play that both rolls out a welcome mat in front of the theater, inviting people in and making jokes that specifically enfranchise them, and also offers people the chance to interrogate their own feelings about these climatic shifts that are happening whether we're ready for them or not."

Becca Blackwell stars as Diane, with Mia Barron as Sandy Fleischer, Nikiya Mathis as Renee Shapiro-Epps, Danielle Skraastad as Pam Annunziati, and Kate Wetherhead as Beth Wann. Leigh Silverman directs.

The creative team includes Sonya Tayeh (choreography), The Bengsons (original music), Matthew Dean Mars (music director), Rachel Hauck (scenic design), Kay Voyce (costume design), Jen Schriever (lighting design), Bray Poor (sound design), and Melanie J. Lisby (production stage manager). Performances continue through February 12.