



New Paradigm Theatre & The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk

New Paradigm Theatre chooses 2022 nonprofit community partner, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, for its live August production of Disney's "The Little Mermaid"

FAIRFIELD, CT – The New Paradigm Theatre Company (NPT), well-known for its inventive productions that are presented with multi-cultural, multi-generational and multi-gendered casting, has chosen a community nonprofit that echoes the themes in their summer live production of Disney's "The Little Mermaid."

For each production, The New Paradigm Theatre Company partners with a nonprofit organization that reflects the theme of the show to raise awareness and to support that organization's mission and activities. For its August 2022 production of Disney's "The Little Mermaid," NPT is proud to partner with The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, whose mission is to inspire people of all ages to appreciate and protect the Long Island Sound ecosystem and the global environment through exhibits, conservation and education.

"In partnering with the Aquarium, we are excited to highlight for our audiences the many threats facing the ocean in creative and unique ways through our production," said NPT's Artist Director and Broadway veteran Kristin Huffman. "For example, one of the interesting elements of this production is that NPT will be using trash collected during beach-cleanup initiatives and volunteer collections to create some of the sets and costumes for our show. If the Little Mermaid was swimming through the ocean today, she might bump into some of the items we will be using in our sets and costumes."

Among the many ways that NPT will collaborate with the Aquarium is by working with teens volunteering in the Aquarium program called ECHO (Education Conservation Heritage and Outreach).

"The focus of ECHO during the next two years is on marine debris, and 'The Little Mermaid' will be staged at precisely the time when our ECHO teens will be sharing what they have learned in their first year out into the community," said Tom Naiman, the Aquarium's Vice President of Education. "We are excited by the opportunity to have them contribute in various ways in the leadup to the production. It will be wonderful for participants in our beach cleanups to know that what they collect might end up in a costume in 'The Little Mermaid.'"

Jason Patlis, President and CEO of The Maritime Aquarium, welcomed the collaboration.

"The magic and beauty of the fairy tale reflects the magic and beauty of the ocean itself, and that is what we try to capture with our exhibits and our activities at The Maritime Aquarium," Patlis said. "I am very grateful to NPT for the opportunity to partner with them on educational

programming, conservation initiatives, shared marketing for our respective audiences, and on the production itself.”

Huffman and Patlis believe NPT and The Maritime Aquarium will form a powerful partnership that will transcend the production.

“The ocean inspires art in all forms – ‘The Little Mermaid’ being just one example – and this partnership allows us to explore how the ocean inspires us through the performing arts in a way that complements our own exhibits of living animals,” Patlis said. “In fact, our own Ariel – one of our five resident harbor seals – is named after Ariel the mermaid.”

Huffman agreed that the organizations are a natural fit.

“It not only aligns with the show, Disney’s ‘The Little Mermaid,’ but also with our own nonprofit’s mission of promoting social responsibility and fostering creative problem solvers, leaders and global citizens through theater-arts education and productions,” Huffman said. “New Paradigm Theatre believes that we can produce shows and display a social justice conscience. These shows not only entertain with Broadway pros, local performers and youth of all abilities on stage, but they also connect directly to our community. During the rehearsals, youth from both organizations and college interns will participate side-by-side with Broadway pros to learn and to create this production of Disney’s ‘The Little Mermaid.’”

As partnerships between nonprofits continue to form in order to tackle social challenges from all sides, and as youth lead the way to a better world, this type of collective impact production has become increasingly relevant and a vital component of a community, she said.

For more information about the show, which will be performed Aug. 19 and 20 at Black Rock Church’s state-of-the-art theater, please visit www.nptheatre.org. Registrations for students will begin in mid-January. Auditions for adults will be starting in early spring.

Learn more about The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk at www.maritimeaquarium.org.

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