

CALLBOARD

racine theatre guild February 2023

The Tin Woman Opens February 24



*A Note From RTG Director
Doug Instenes*

A Heart-filled Drama

The human heart can be filled with joy and can be broken with sorrow and loss. Those two contrasting facts are part of *The Tin Woman*, and are portrayed by the characters in this drama. Based on a true story, the plot shows us each character on a journey of grief and acceptance.

We were happy to have a number of people come to our first rehearsal to share their stories. The wife of a donor, the donor agency, and two people with heart transplants helped share their thoughts and experiences with organ donation. You will read the experiences of one of them, Frank Sterbin and actor Katie Gleason. We thank them all for helping us understand what is like to be in need of an organ to sustain life and what an organ donor's family goes through.

For those of us who have an organ donor sticker on our driver's license, perhaps this play will be eye opening about what that really means. For one person to provide another the gift of life is truly amazing. Others may be motivated to become organ, tissue, and eye donors.

Jack's sister Sammy says to Joy in the script, "You never knew Jack, but ... you're together in a very profound way and the river keeps flowing and it's a circle, you know?" It is insightful to realize how one death can give another person life.

If you haven't already, the cast and crew of *The Tin Woman* ask you please to sign up to be an organ donor. You can truly give the gift of life.

The next show at the Racine Theatre Guild explores the themes of life and death, with a story about an organ donor and the recipient. *The Tin Woman*, by Sean Grennan, was based on a true story and premiered at The Peninsula Players in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, in 2014. With poignancy and humor, we meet a family suffering a death in the family, and the recipient of the donor's heart. The show opens February 24 and runs three weekends through March 12.

We meet Joy, a single woman in her 30s, in the hospital, as she recovers from surgery to receive a donor heart. While dealing with regaining physical strength, she is also in a mental crisis, having survivor's guilt and questioning what she can do to deserve another chance at life. Her best friend Darla, flamboyant and colorful and dedicated, works to support Joy through this stretch of confusion and depression.

Jack, the organ donor, was a bright man in his 30s, who died in a car accident. His presence on stage as a non-participating observer adds to the drama.

Jack's mother and father, Alice and Hank, are coping with the tragic death of their son, one with capable, solid emphasis on everyday life, the other barely acknowledging his sorrow, while thinking that he is handling everything just fine. Jack's sister Sammy is a pre-school teacher who has emotions that run the gamut, from

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The Tin Woman

By Sean Grennan

Sponsored by Frank Sterbin

CAST

Joy Katie Gleason
Hank Kevin Hlavka
Alice Mona Lewis
Sammy Isabella Bullock
Jack Philip Evreniadis
Nurse/Darla Raquel Wright

CREW

Director Douglas Instenes
PSM Stacey Malacara-Flynn
Stage Manager Leonardo Waite
ASM Ashley Grainger
Set Design Bob Benson
Tech Director Jane Srnick
Light Design Jenny Bauer
Light Tech Elliot Swanson
Sound Design Lauren Instenes
Sound Tech Jonathan Wright
Props Design Erin Barnlund
Props Run Mary Waid
Costume/Wardrobe Penny Giese
Hair&Make-up LaurenHaumersen
Understudies Lauren Instenes,
Jane Meyers, Jonathan Wright

Feb/March - Production Calendar - *The Tin Woman*

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
						24 25
26	27	28	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						

FRIDAY, Feb 24	7:30 pm
SATURDAY, Feb 25	7:30 pm
SUNDAY, Feb 26	2:00 pm
FRIDAY, Mar 3	7:30 pm
SATURDAY, Mar 4	2:00 & 7:30 pm
SUNDAY, Mar 5	2:00 & 7:00 pm
THURSDAY, Mar 9	7:00 pm
FRIDAY, Mar 10	7:30 pm
SATURDAY, Mar 11	2:00 & 7:30 pm
SUNDAY, Mar 12	2:00 pm

MAINSTAGE

The Tin Woman February 24 - March 12, 2023
Stand and Deliver April 14 - 23, 2023
Sweeney Todd May 19 - June 4, 2023

RACINE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Cat in the Hat March 17 - 19, 2023

COMEDY TONIGHT

Brad Upton - SOLD OUT Saturday, March 18, 2023

JEAN'S JAZZ

The Tony Casteñada Latin Jazz Band Saturday, March 25, 2023
Rico Vibes Saturday, April 8, 2023

MARCH 17 - 19
On a dreary, rainy day, Sally and her brother are bored with nothing to do until a mischievous cat with a tall red-and-white hat appears.
 Performed by Upstart Theatre

JEAN'S JAZZ
 SEASON 2023

Sat, Mar 25 | 7 PM
Wisconsin's premier Latin Jazz Band for over 20 years!

Sat, APR 8 | 7 PM
High energy sounds, blending funk, Latin and jazz rhythms.

WISCONSIN DONOR FACTS



1,615 people are waiting for an organ transplant in Wisconsin

The patients on the waiting list could fill more than 4x the number of seats in the Racine Theatre Guild

1,615

4X

With a donation of an organ eight lives will be saved

8

Donating tissue will help heal seventy-five lives

75

Donating a cornea will be able to restore sight to two people

2

What Can Be Donated

- Heart
- Kidney
- Lungs
- Pancreas
- Liver



- Eyes/Cornea
- Nerves/Veins
- Skin/Tissue

Anyone aged 15 1/2 or older can register regardless of health history

15 1/2

2.9 MILLION

Only 2,916,720 people in Wisconsin are registered as organ donors!

TO LEARN MORE!



www.donatelifewisconsin.org

Upcoming Auditions

Stand and Deliver

Mon, Feb 27 & Tues, Feb 28 | 7 PM

When Jamie Escalante is assigned to an inner-city school, his offbeat teaching methods and quirky humor motivate his math students to reach their full potential.

ROLES FOR

Large, diverse cast of men, women, and teens ages 16+, especially actors of Hispanic/Latinx origin including Afro-Caribbean Latinx cultures, or familiar with the Spanish language or Chicano culture

9 Students (able to play ages 16 - early 20s)

7 Adults (ages 20s - 60s)

Production Dates: April 14 - 23, 2023

& daytime outreach performances April 18, 20, 25 & 26
 Scripts available to checkout from the Box Office

All actors and crew members are required to be fully vaccinated to volunteer on productions.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Sat, March 4 & Sun, March 5 | 12 - 6 PM

Attend the tale of a barber wrongly convicted and out for vengeance against the corrupt judge who sent him to prison and tore his family apart.

ROLES FOR

Strong singers and performers, ages 15+

Prepare a song and bring sheet music.

An accompanist will be provided.

There will also be a cold reading from the script.

Production Dates: May 19 - June 4

Call (262) 633-4218 to schedule an audition!

At the heart of it: The Gift of Life

The Tin Woman's impact beyond the stage

Katie Gleason, who plays Joy in the RTG production of *The Tin Woman*, knows what it is like to love someone who needs a life-saving organ. Her late husband was twice listed for a heart transplant due to complications from childhood kidney cancer.

Katie says, "My good friend Mark Minch invited me to the announcement of the RTG's season, and that's when I first learned of *The Tin Woman*. I felt compelled to be a part of this play in some significant way. I was humbled and thrilled to be cast as Joy in this show."

Katie's husband was diagnosed with heart failure in 2001 but was stable enough to return to his work until a relapse in 2009. He recovered somewhat, but his condition gradually worsened over time.

As Katie recalls, "By December 8th, 2017, my husband was in end-stage heart failure, and he would not be able to leave the hospital until he received a heart and kidney transplant. He died of complications on March 5th, 2018, never having recovered enough to undergo the two transplants."

Katie explains her attitude toward organ donation. "When you're faced with imminent death because a vital organ is failing, you feel set apart, different. You feel like a 'freak' because you look different or you act different or your perspective is misunderstood. You detach from the world of the living - or the world of taking life for granted. You don't recover from that, I don't think; you are permanently changed."

"The last entry my husband wrote in his journal talked about the 'inconsolable grief' he'd feel if he received a heart transplant knowing someone had to die for him to live. He told me to look out my window and see the tree that was in the courtyard of our townhouse and to see it as a symbol of the 'per-

manence of impermanence and the impermanence of permanence.' He told me to live my life."

The story of organ donation does not get much attention or representation, Katie says. She appreciates that *The Tin Woman* shines a light on a perspective of both the hell and heaven coexisting in a person, and that death is part of life - there is continuation.

Katie wishes she and her family had known more about organ transplant before going through her husband's experience. "I think it would have helped me to know of a story like *The Tin Woman* before going into crisis mode. I hope this play will open the eyes of many people."

Frank Sterbin is the recipient of a donated heart, and when he found out about the RTG's production of *The Tin Woman*, he said he wanted to sponsor the show and do whatever he could to support the production. The story is close to his heart. "My life was saved," Frank says, "and now I will do whatever I can to encourage people to be organ donors to save other lives."

Frank had scarlet fever as a child, which damaged one of his heart valves. In 1995, he found out how serious the heart condition was, and in 2002 he needed open-heart surgery and a pacemaker.

"In 2015, they told me I would go on a heart transplant list," Frank recalls. "They installed an LVAD (left ventricular assist device), which is like an artificial heart that kept my heart pumping. By February of 2016, I started getting such pain, I was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee. They said my heart failed, and they brought me back to life with paddles. I was put into an induced coma for four weeks. During that time I had two more 'death'

experiences where I was going to give up, but I had visions of someone talking to me and telling me it wasn't my time. It was a profound religious experience."

Frank was told on March 27, 2015, Easter Sunday, that there was a heart for him. It came from a donor on the East Coast, a 33-year-old man who died of a brain aneurism. He underwent the transplant surgery, and the doctors said it was such a perfect match, it started up right away.

"I will be forever grateful to the doctors and nurses at St. Luke's," Frank says. "They were so incredibly dedicated and skilled to get me through the experience. I went home in less than a week, to the support of my wife and family and got to hold my grandchild. The recovery takes a long time, and it was six to eight months before I was strong enough to return to work full time."

In reflection about having the heart of a donor keeping him alive, Frank is thankful. "I wrote letters to the donor's family and never got a reply. I am still trying to trace him. I am so indebted to the young man who gave me his heart to save my life. I want to live my life to give back in gratitude. I encourage others to become organ donors and save the lives of others."

TALKBACKS

Throughout productions of *The Tin Woman*, RTG will be working with Frank Sterbin, our sponsor and a heart recipient, with the support of Versiti Organ and Tissue and Donate Life Wisconsin, to provide information and advocacy for organ, tissue, and eye donation. You can register to be a donor at www.DonateLifeWisconsin.org.

Talkbacks with the cast, crew, Frank Sterbin, Versiti, and donor families will take place after performances on:

- Friday, February 24 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 4 at 2 p.m.
- Sunday, March 12 at 2 p.m.

The Racine Theatre Guild
2519 Northwestern Avenue, Racine, WI 53404

Box Office (262) 633-4218

www.racinetheatre.org



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tears to laughter, while she over-shares her sentiments on a blog.

The hospital tells Joy she can get in touch with the donor's family, and finally she makes the decision to do that. As Joy visits Alice, Hank and Sammy, all four find ways to deal with grief, rebirth and a new start on life. Each character makes a journey of facing loss and coming to acceptance.

When *The Tin Woman* premiered in 2014, critics praised the show, and it has gone on to regional productions across the country.

"The play is loaded with questions, answers, dilemmas and paradoxes – the stuff of humanity. Nearby is humor forged of fire." – Warren Gerds, review of Peninsula Players premier

"*The Tin Woman* is a thought-provoking story that explores final moments, family relationships, and what it means to be given a second chance at life." – DC Theatre Arts

"There is a wonderful balance to the tragic and comedic elements in Grennan's script, and

also in the pacing and portrayals." –San Francisco Bay Area critic

Make plans to see *The Tin Woman* and learn about what breaks hearts and what makes hearts strong. The show runs February 24 to March 12. Call the box office at (262) 633-4218 to order tickets or for further information. Or visit the RTG website at racinetheatre.org.

The Callboard is written by
volunteer Nancy Moldenhauer,
a freelance writer