'Metamorphoses' debuts Thursday in Burke Theatre

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette performing arts department will present "Metamorphoses," an adaptation of Ovid's classical myths, March 10-20 in the Burke Theatre in Burke-Hawthorne Hall.

The production, by Tony Award-winning playwright Mary Zimmerman and directed by assistant professor Carl Granieri, premieres Thursday, March 10 at 7:30 p.m. The play will also begin at 7:30 p.m. on March 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19. The two Sunday performances, March 13 and 20, will begin at 2 p.m.

Based on a collection of poems by the Roman poet Ovid, "Metamorphoses" explores classical myths in a decidedly contemporary fashion, brought to life in a 3,000-gallon pool.

The pool was constructed in Burke-Hawthorne Hall exclusively for this production. The watery environment is the medium by which the gods of "Metamorphoses" reveal themselves and transform the mortals who cross their paths.

"Zimmerman blends the comic and tragic when she reimagines these ancient myths," said Granieri. "She brings them bursting to life in all sorts of surprising, hilarious and upsetting ways. It's a deeply affecting piece, one of my absolute favorites. I'm thrilled to have the chance to work with our talented students, community performers and this remarkable team of collaborators to bring this luminous world to life at UL."

"Metamorphoses" contains some adult themes and situations, Granieri warned. "Zimmerman gives us mythology for its original audience: adults. So it's best not to bring the kids to this one," he said.

The ambitious scenic design was made throughout the fall by a team of faculty and students who collaborated with UL Lafayette alumnus Joe Stewart.

A Lafayette native, Stewart's work through his Los Angeles-based design company, Shaffner/Stewart, is internationally renowned.

"It's been a tremendous learning opportunity for our design students," said Shannon Miller, performing arts professor, technical director and lighting designer.

"It's hard to overstate the value of their 'METAMORPHOSES'
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collaborating with someone as gifted and knowledgeable as Joe Stewart.”

The production team also features costume design by performing arts faculty member Kendra Weeks, choreography by dance faculty member Sonia DeVille and an original live score composed by Dakota Pique, a student in the School of Music.

Because the play is composed of 11 separate vignettes, several cast members play multiple characters. Cast members and their principal characters include: Ryan Broussard as Orpheus, Rachel Chambers as Psyche, Tanner Cole as Silenus, Brandii Champagne as Myrrha, Andre Trahan as Midas, Joey Mills as Ceyx, Jasmine Moore as Alcyone, Christian Mouisset as Hermes, Jessica Romero as Iris, Kiana Washington as Eurydice. Chambers, Champagne, Kyla Zimmerman and Kameshia Chatman are dancers.

Playwright Zimmerman, 55, is the recipient of a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship and the 2002 Tony Award for Best Director of a Play. She is a member of the Lookingglass Theatre Company of Chicago, an artistic associate of the Goodman Theatre, and a professor of performance studies at Northwestern University. She earned her bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate from Northwestern.

“Metamorphoses” had its world premiere at the Lookingglass Theatre in 1998, after first being performed by students at Northwestern. Its off-Broadway debut was in October 2001; it was in rehearsal during the 9/11 attacks. The Broadway debut was in March 2002 at the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York City. In 2002, it won the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, the Drama League Award for Best Play, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play, and Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play.

Tickets are $10 for the general public and free for students, staff and faculty. Free tickets must be reserved in advance through www.ulpfar.org. For more information, call 482-6357. The auditorium will open 45 minutes prior to performances.