



BEING ME AT UC!
OPEN HOUSE | APR. 25th | 7 PM
 1600 Martine Ave. • Scotch Plains, NJ • www.unioncatholic.org

Union Catholic
 HIGH SCHOOL

f U t i

Arts & Entertainment

Anything But Goodbye Offers Refreshing Look at Troubling Themes

SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

RAHWAY – The opening scene of *Anything But Goodbye* is a stark cemetery. Friends and relatives of Ben, a teen who succumbed to suicide, huddle under umbrellas to fend off the drizzling rain. But they are not sheltered from the pervasive chill of death that touches each of them in a different way. That's what this one act, 50-minute production is all about. It's the aftermath of what the author calls the "sonic boom" of tragic, needless death.

The Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) in Rahway is lighting up their three stages: the main theatre, the Loft and the Hamilton Theatre. Their latest production, *Anything But Goodbye* by Wayne N. Bullock, had its World Premiere at the Hamilton Theatre last weekend.

Geared to young adult and teen audiences, 10 a.m. weekday performances included students from Westfield High School. Westfield crisis hotline workers were also at one of the performances to glean more information about the effects of suicide.

Because suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth, ages 10 to 24, Mr. Bullock, as a middle school teacher and a preacher with a church in Roselle, felt he had to write this piece. He explained in his program notes that "a good story coupled with good music has the power to draw, captivate, educate and inspire...it can permeate the mind and spirit of a person without them consciously allowing it to happen." He is not only the playwright, but producer and songwriter with musical composer Shaun A. Darling.

The opening performance of the

show of 14 short scenes with musical numbers did just what it intended: it showed raw emotion, confusion, regret and anger. The play focuses on the reactions of the father, the sister and the best friend who look for answers and express their feelings. It doesn't focus on the why of the tragedy, but the effect it has on the friends, family and school mates.

Scene after scene show how the sister and best friend try to cope. It's a thin storyline with the heaviness of weighty topics. Nine songs share poignant stories and feelings of teens desperate to belong, to fit in, to be understood. Presented in a non-preaching way, the interaction of the actors helps to propel the authentic aspect of the story. Powerful voices, reminiscent of those in *Rent*, bring the audience to tears.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Cocktail Hour Confessions Proves That Sometimes the Truth Hurts

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

RAHWAY – It's always thrilling to see a new play. And when it is produced by Fearless Productions of Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) in Rahway, and written by Jared Kelner, you know it's going to be good.

Playwright Kelner's newest work, that was presented for four performances during the weekend of March 16 to 18, is a 90-minute intriguing piece titled *Cocktail Hour Confessions*. The audience was greeted by the wait staff (attired in tuxes, no less) who offered non-alcoholic mimosas. It's a cute touch for a celebratory mood of a wedding. We never see the bride and groom, a mixed-race couple,

but we meet the bride's mother Candice (Mary Sullivan), the bride's brother Larry (Ross Pohling) and the groom's father Martin (Di Shawn Gandy).

But before we see them, the bride's co-worker Katherine (Mary Elizabeth Giamonde) and the groom's friend Freddie (Scott Tyler) meet in the outer room of the reception area. The stage (of the intimate Loft Theatre at UCPAC) is dressed appropriately for the reception with flower garlands and subdued colors of lavender and silver. (The set design is by Howard Goldberg, an Event Planning specialist). On stage left is the requisite table that houses the place cards for dinner and in the opposite corner is a cozy bar tended by Terrance (nicely played

by Russ Ortiz).

Freddie (Scott Tyler), an overly friendly attendee who is there by himself, wants to meet single guest Katherine (Mary Elizabeth Giamonde) to whom he immediately attaches himself. She's quirky, socially uncomfortable and feels invisible to the other guests. Freddie says he's in the "people business." As an entrepreneur, he says he observes people and reads their body language.

This garrulous guy makes inane conversation, but we excuse him because he's trying to score points with Katherine. He asks her what she's passionate about and is somewhat floored when she says "words." They would never be a match on Match.com., but their relationship is not the primary focus of the play.

Delicately, the play starts to peel back layers of information about the motives of characters both seen and unseen. When the bride's brother Larry breaks onto the scene, he's a tornado of emotion. Ross Pohling does an amazing job in fleshing out the character of Larry in speech pattern, pacing, as well as body language. Larry is "on the spectrum" and his mother tries to calm him down by reminding him to do his breathing exercises or "that tapping thing on your face."

He may appear to have the emotional barometer of an eight-year-old, but he's insightful and bright. He's the truth teller at the wedding reception and is rarely politically correct. Through his interactions with both Terrance and Martin, the audience learns of the family and spoken and unspoken prejudices.

The frustrated mom Candice drowns her exasperation in a water glass full of bourbon while trying to assist Martin on writing his toast.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times
TOUGH TALK...Last week at the Thursday morning performance of *Anything But Goodbye* on the Hamilton Stage, the cast and director Erik Bloomquist (with mic), hold a talkback for audience members. Hamilton Stage is a part of Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) in Rahway. Playwright, producer and songwriter Wayne N. Bullock was on hand to lend insight and speak about plans for the future of his work.



Jean Marie Morgan
 Sales Associate, International President's Elite
 2017 NJ Realtors® Circle of Excellence
 Sales Award® Platinum
 Top 1% of Sales Associates Nationwide
 Direct Line: 908-279-4441

COLDWELL BANKER
 RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE



751 Prospect Street, Westfield \$1,385,000

This stunning and elegant five bedroom colonial is nestled on deep, beautifully landscaped property ideally located just steps away from Franklin Elementary School & playground area and very close to Westfield's award winning Downtown. This home has every amenity imaginable and has been extensively renovated to perfection for today's lifestyle with an open floor plan ideal for entertaining. The gracious entry foyer leads into the formal living room with wood burning, stone fireplace. The formal dining room flows perfectly into the large, gourmet eat in kitchen with custom white cabinetry, a 10' quartzite island & granite countertops, a high end six burner Wolf stove, Sub-Zero refrigerator, built in Miele coffee maker, wet bar w/Marvel wine fridge and gleaming hardwood floors throughout. The large family room just off the kitchen boasts custom millwork, a cathedral ceiling with tray lighting & wood burning fireplace. On the second level, the private master bedroom suite features a fabulous walk-in closet w/custom shelving and its own luxurious spa bathroom with double sink, marble countertops and a fabulous tiled glass stall shower & radiant heat. There are two additional bedrooms on this level, an updated hallway bathroom and a convenient second floor laundry room. The third level offers two more bedrooms (one with its own sitting room), a loft and another beautifully renovated full bath. Entertain at ease on the outdoor raised bluestone patio featuring brick built in fireplace and sound system overlooking the private, professionally landscaped yard with underground sprinklers. The lower level has a large finished recreation room w/radiant heat and a custom bar area w/wine fridge, dishwasher, microwave and built in cabinetry. Additional amenities include a whole house generator, a hard wired alarm system, built in speakers, 8 zone heat and Marvin custom wood windows. Conveniently located close to parks, schools, New York City transportation, and downtown Westfield, this is the perfect place to call home!

WESTFIELD EAST OFFICE
 209 CENTRAL AVENUE
 (908) 233-5555

Jean Marie Morgan

Follow me on Twitter
 @JeanMarieMorgan

AMERICA'S BEST
 REAL ESTATE AGENTS

13th ANNUAL JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

Spring 2018 April 10 - May 7
Rialto NewVision Theater
 250 E. Broad Street, Westfield

Plenty of seating... screening in 2 auditoriums

THE TESTAMENT
 Tuesday, April 10
 7:30 p.m.

BYE BYE GERMANY
 Monday, April 16
 7:30 p.m.

BEN-GURION EPILOGUE
 Wednesday, April 25
 7:30 p.m.

HUMOR ME
 Tuesday, May 1
 7:30 p.m.

THE LAST SUIT
 Monday, May 7
 7:30 p.m.

Tix at www.jccnj.org or Film Festival Hotline at 908-889-8800 x208.

JCC OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY WJF JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS

live up

f You Tube i p t