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General

PushPush Theatre looking for new home

By Melissa Davis
DeKalb Neighbor Staff Writer

PushPush Theatre in Decatur has grown a lot since its humble beginnings — so much that it's running out of space.

Founded in 1990, by a group of actors who wanted to create workshops and classes to improve their skills, the theater is now having trouble meeting the public's demand for such programs.

The theater has been operating in its current 1,300-square-foot location since 1997. Located at The FloatAway Building, at 1123 Zonolite Rd., the building does not have its own restroom, so actors and visitors must share a restroom with other businesses in the complex.

"We don't have enough space to hold many classes, so we've been hunting for a new location," said Managing Director Shelby Hofer.

The theater is eyeing a new location in Decatur, but is waiting on a large financial contribution before making any commitments.

"We really want to stay within a 10-mile radius of our current location," Ms. Hofer said. "And we are pretty specific about our needs: high ceilings, private bathrooms for artists, parking options and public visibility."

The theater hopes to receive word about the pending contribution by mid-September. Until then, it will continue to function as normal.

On Sept. 5, "Pill Hill," a play about the failures, successes and relationships of six black steel mill workers, will open. The show portrays the men's attempts to move from blue-collar to white-collar jobs. "Pill Hill" will run through Sept. 27 and feature former members of the Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble.

The theater will also hold The Adam Rapp Festival Oct. 10 to Nov. 22. Adam Rapp is a young playwright whose outrageous sense of humor has attracted national attention.

"We still haven't released a holiday schedule yet," Ms. Hofer said. "We could be moving."
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PushPush is pushing for room to expand

PushPush Theater, a small Atlanta experimental ensemble that has operated in the Floataway Building on Zonolite Road since 1997, is looking for a bigger space.

"We know exactly what we are doing this season," says **Shelby Hofer**, managing director. "We just don't know *where*."

Hofer says the theater has designs on two locations, one in Decatur and one in Virginia-Highland, but that it would like to raise \$10,000 to cushion the move. PushPush's annual operating budget is about \$170,000. Artistic Director **Tim Mabeger** and Hofer draw part-time salaries for full-time work.

PushPush says its programming has outgrown its 1,300-square-foot space, which houses props, costumes, the box office, dressing rooms and a theater that seats 100 — but no restrooms.

"We simply ran out of room and we are sort of spilling out all over the place," Hofer says. The theater's only restroom is used by the entire Floataway complex of galleries, studios and restaurants. Actors share toilets with diners, who sometimes stumble tipsily into performances on the way to the restroom.

Though PushPush had hoped to be out of its current space by fall, Hofer says it could take until the end of the year to move. "Our fantasy is to have our grand opening in January with something big like Tennessee Williams' 'Camino Real,'" she says.

The theater's first choice is 533 DeKalb Ave. in Decatur, next to the Thinking Man Tavern. Recently, a Virginia-Highland space emerged as a possibility, but the PushPush board didn't want to divulge the location for fear of jeopardizing negotiations.

Munich performances build German connection

Artistically, actor-driven PushPush has made a mark with bare-bones productions of classics and edgy con-

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STEVE HANKINS / PushPush Theater
Daniel Pettrow in "Nocturne," which PushPush staged in Munich.

PushPush tours in Germany

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temporary work. On Tuesday, Habeger and three actors will return from Munich, Germany, where they staged two Murray Mednick one-acts ("Tirade for Three" and "Virtuosity") and Adam Rapp's "Nocturne" at Theater am Sozialamt (TamS), a like-minded group that Habeger compares to New York's hip La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club.

Habeger is building connections with German artists and hopes to stage a festival of new German plays in Atlanta next year.

On the trip were Atlanta actors **Trent Merchant**, **Joan Croker** and **Daniel Pettrow**. Pettrow, whose performance of "Nocturne" was among the best solo shows of the past Atlanta season, is no stranger to Europe. He toured France in 2001 and 2002 with **7 Stages'** "Black Battle With Dogs."

If you missed "Nocturne," PushPush plans to remount it as part of an Adam Rapp Festival from Oct. 12 to Nov. 12 (along with the New York playwright's "Finer Noble Gases" and "Bingo With the Indians"). Though the laid-back troupe traditionally has produced work almost at random, Hofer says the five major plays of its 2003-04 season will be announced all at once. The new space will determine the final pieces of the program, and PushPush has the option of remaining at Floataway until it acquires a new home.

The season will begin with Samuel L. Kelley's "Pill Hill" (Sept. 5-27), featuring artists formerly with the **Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble**. While in Munich, Habeger has been working on a translation of Marius Von Mayenburg's "Fireface," which PushPush plans to include in the German festival next April and May.

For more information: