

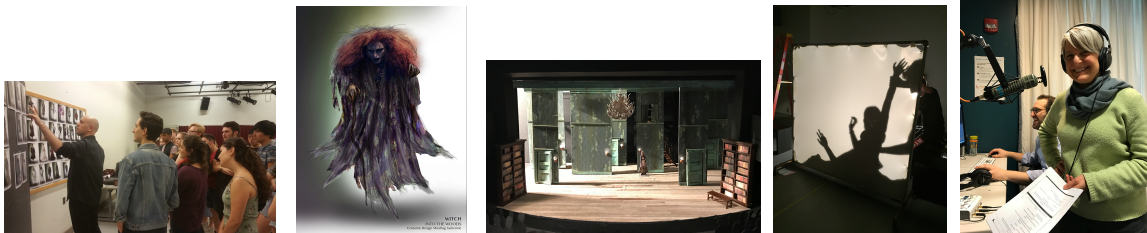
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**For Immediate Release**

April 6, 2016

**Lewis Center for the Arts presents *Into the Woods***  
***Hit Sondheim musical celebrates Princeton's Program in Music Theater***



Photos providing a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of Princeton's production of *Into the Woods*

**Photo caption 1:** Students view the costume designs by professional designer Miodrag Guberinic for *Into the Woods*

**Photo credit 1:** Carmelita Becnel

**Photo caption 2:** Costume design sketch for the Witch

**Photo credit 2:** Miodrag Guberinic

**Photo caption 3:** Model of the set for *Into the Woods*

**Photo credit 3:** Reid Thompson

**Photo caption 4:** Shadow workshop, one of the devices being used to bring the story to life

**Photo credit 4:** Abby Jean-Baptiste

**Photo caption 5:** Professor of Theater Stacy Wolf recording the voice of The Giant

**Photo credit 5:** Ethan Heard

**What:** *Into the Woods*, the masterful musical fairytale-remix that asks the question: What happens after “happily ever after?” Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by James Lapine.

**Who:** Season signature production by the Lewis Center for the Arts’ Programs in Theater and Music Theater at Princeton University, directed by faculty member Ethan Heard.

**When:** April 14, 15, 20, 21 and 22 at 8:00 p.m.

**Where:** Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, 91 University Place in Princeton

**Tickets:** \$12 general/\$11 students & seniors when purchased in advance; \$17 general/\$15 students & seniors on the day of the performance or at the door

(Princeton, NJ) The Lewis Center for the Arts’ Programs in Theater and Music Theater at Princeton University will present *Into the Woods*, one of the most beloved musicals by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, on April 14, 15, 20, 21 and 22 at 8:00 p.m. in the Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center. The production celebrates the launch of Princeton’s Program in Music Theater and is directed by faculty member Ethan Heard with music direction by Music Department alumna Emily Whitaker and a featured performance by senior Emily Libresco.

*Into the Woods* is one of Sondheim’s most popular works in which he and Lapine take everyone's favorite characters from the Brothers Grimm fairytales and bring them together for a timeless, yet relevant story. The Tony Award-winning book and score follow a Baker and his wife, who wish to have a child; Cinderella, who wishes to attend the King's Festival; and Jack, who wishes his cow would give milk. When the Baker and his wife learn that they cannot have a child because of a Witch's curse, the two set off on a journey to break the curse. Everyone's wish is granted, but the consequences of their actions return to haunt them later with disastrous results. Sondheim’s sophisticated score provides the performers a challenge musically and Lapine’s book calls upon the actors to bring to life characters who depart from stereotypical myth. Designers stretch their imaginations in creating the fantastical elements of this magical world.

In Heard’s directorial approach, a young girl replaces the old man as narrator, and she begins the journey that brings these iconic storybook characters together in a library where the stories spring to life from pop-up books. The story then voyages into the woods through a series of doors. As the story moves into what happens “after happily ever after” in the second act and the characters face the outcomes of the choices they have made, this architecture begins to break down and the audience is drawn more deeply into an apocalyptic world where the characters are now refugees in a brutal landscape. Heard sees a clear parallel between the plight of the

characters and current world events and draws very sharp contrasts between the first and second acts of the play.

“For me, this show is about parents and children, loss of innocence, growing up, and learning,” explains Heard. “The Woods are a place of yearning and adventure, adolescence and growth, magic and transformation, desire and possibility.”

“In post-election 2017,” he adds, “I’m especially interested in illuminating the harsh contrast between Jack and his mother’s poverty and Cinderella’s stepsisters’ Kardashian fashion; the Wolf as sexual aggression incarnate; the Giant wreaking havoc like a terrorist or natural disaster; characters fleeing the kingdom as refugees; and the deaths of some of the characters as sudden and horrific.”

Professional designers working with Heard to bring his vision to the stage are Miodrag Guberinic designing the costumes and Reid Thompson designing the sets. Guberinic has designed theater productions from contemporary to avant-garde along with work for Madonna, Prada, Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, and Tiffany & Company. Thompson has provide scenic design for a number of theater and opera companies including Yale Repertory Company, Berkshire Theater Festival, Ars Nova, Heartbeat Opera, Theater Squared, and Stonybrook Opera.

Emily Whitaker, Princeton Class of 2015, serves as music director and conductor. She earned her A.B. from the Department of Music as a pianist and a certificate in theater from the Lewis Center for the Arts. For her senior thesis in theater she created *Ding!*, a participatory musical experience using toys, games, and other childhood objects as non-traditional instruments. During her time at Princeton she worked on a number of productions including *The Producers* with Heard. During her sophomore year McCarter Theatre selected Whitaker for an apprenticeship to work on the 2013 Fiasco Theater/McCarter production of *Into the Woods* before its move to Broadway.

The production is part of a spring semester theater/music theater course that provides students with a rigorous and challenging experience of creating theater under near-professional circumstances. Students work with a professional director, a majority professional design team

and stage manager, and either are cast in a role or take on major production roles such as designer, stage manager, assistant stage manager, assistant designer or assistant director. The show that is the focus of this annual course is the Program in Theater's main production of its season, which this year included 11 thesis productions in which seniors directed, performed a major role, wrote, or designed a classic, contemporary or new play or musical. One of the students in the production of *Into the Woods*, Emily Libresco, is performing the role of the Baker's Wife as her senior thesis in theater. The class also had a workshop with professional actor Gregg Edelman, a Tony Award nominee for his performance as the Wolf/Cinderella's Prince in the 2002 Broadway revival of *Into the Woods*.

Heard directs plays, musicals, and opera, ranging from new work to Shakespeare and from Sondheim to Monteverdi. He is founding co-artistic director of Heartbeat Opera and Resident Director of Cantata Profana. He also teaches acting and directing at Yale School of Drama, Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and Princeton. His direction of musicals has included *Little Shop of Horrors* nominated for five Berkshire Theatre Awards including Outstanding Direction, *Bells Are Ringing* starring Kate Baldwin and Graham Rowat, *A Little Night Music* starring Kate Baldwin, Gregg Edelman, and Phillipa Soo at Berkshire Theatre Group, the world premiere of Mark Campbell and Marisa Michelson's *The Other Room* starring Phoebe Strole for Inner Voices, *Sunday in the Park with George* at Yale School of Drama, and *Merrily We Roll Along* at Yale Dramat, and is currently developing Marisa Michelson's *Desire & Divinity Project* and Megan Loughran and Alex Trow's *F Theory*. At Princeton's Lewis Center Heard has co-taught "Acting and Directing in Musical Theater" with Broadway director John Rando and directed *The Producers*, as well as Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* for Princeton's Department of Music.

In addition to Libresco, the all-student cast includes Tessa Albertson '20, Ben Diamond '19, Kat Giordano '18, Jared Brendon Hopper '18, Allison Light '18, Nico Krell '18, Kateryn McReynolds '20, Richard Peng '20, Meagan Raker '18, Manny Ramirez '20, Justin Ramos '19, Calvin Rusley '20, Marshall Schaffer '20, AJ Sermarini '19, Raina Seyd '19, Allison Spann '20, Abby Spare '20, and Emma Watkins '18. Professor of Theater Stacy Wolf voices the Giant.

Students taking on production roles include Sydney Becker '17 as lighting designer; Hillel Friedman '17 as sound designer; Marni Morse '17 as stage manager; Abby Jean Baptiste '18 as assistant director; Annabel Barry '19 as assistant set designer; Marc Fishman '17 as assistant music director; Jake Schade '17, Carl Sun '20 and Shirley Klimkiewicz '20 as assistant stage managers; Gunnar Rice '17 and Emma Watkins '18 as dramaturgs; and Nehemiah Teferi '18 and Frank Africano '17 as run crew.

A student musical ensemble led by Whittaker performs the score for the production.

The Program in Music Theater, which launched in the fall, is a collaboration among the Lewis Center for the Arts' Program in Theater and Program in Dance and the Department of Music, which brings together students, faculty, and guest artists in the creation, study, and performance of music theater to support and develop all forms of music theater—that is, any theatrical form that combines singing, acting, and movement—as both an artistic practice and a field of scholarly study.

Tickets for *Into the Woods* are \$12 general admission and \$11 for students and seniors when purchased in advance, and \$17 general admission and \$15 for students and seniors purchased the day of performances at the box office. Tickets are available through University Ticketing and McCarter Box Office. To purchase tickets online visit <http://arts.princeton.edu/events/into-the-woods/2017-04-14/> or call Princeton University Ticketing at 609.258.9220 or McCarter at 609.258.2787, or stop by the Frist Campus Center Ticket Office or McCarter Box Office. Tickets will also be available at the door prior to performances.

To learn more about this event, the Programs in Theater or Music Theater, and the over 100 performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts, and lectures presented each year at the Lewis Center, most of them free, visit [arts.princeton.edu](http://arts.princeton.edu).

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