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Zootopia Theatre Company to present world premiere of "Still the River Runs" by Barton Bishop, directed by Matthew J. Nichols.

WHERE AND WHEN:

June 19 to July 6, 2008

Center Stage, NY, 48 West 21st Street, 4th Floor (Buzzer #401), New York, NY 10010.

Presented by Zootopia Theatre Company (www.zootopiatheatre.org), Britney Burgess and Matthew J. Nichols, Co-Artistic Directors.

First week: Thu - Sat @8pm, Sun @3pm

Second and third week: Wed - Sat @8pm, Sun @3pm.

Tickets \$18; SMARTTIX (212) 868-4444 www.smarttix.com

CRITICS ARE INVITED on or after JULY 19.

NEW YORK, May 12 -- "**Still the River Runs**" by **Barton Bishop** is a hilarious and moving portrait of two estranged brothers on a mission to heist their deceased Paw-Paw's body and put him to rest in the wilds of their old hunting grounds. A delightfully colorful play, it is a saga of stubborn dreams, family loyalty and living on the edge in rural Florida. **Zootopia Theatre Company** (www.zootopiatheatre.org) will present its world premiere **June 19 to July 6** at **Center Stage, NY**, 48 West 21st Street, directed by **Matthew J. Nichols**. It will be an exciting new work from a playwright who combines the gentle wit of Thurber with the local color of Mark Twain.

Shocks like Paw-Paw's death are not usually occurrences that bring out the best in families. Jesse, the elder brother, is saddled with a mountain of debt and mouths to feed. Wyatt, the younger brother, is on leave from the War in Iraq. They have disagreed about almost everything since childhood and their abduction of Paw-Paw's body is fraught with misgivings, not the least because of their concerns for the comfort of the deceased, their imaginative disagreements about the afterlife, and the shortness of time before Wyatt must report for re-deployment to Iraq. Still, they steal the body right from under their family's nose. With a sack of soil replacing Paw-Paw in his casket and the old man bouncing in the bed of the truck, they set out for the swampy woods near Bartow. There, in the sanctuary of the wilderness, they hope to provide Paw-Paw's spirit the serenity they seek for their own lives. Through a series of progressive vignettes, "Still the River Runs" paints with vivid strokes a cumulative portrait of two brothers who have become strangers, struggling to find their place in a world where real men are a dying breed.

The actors are Steve French as Wyatt and Jaron Farnham as Jesse. Set design is by Tim McMath. Lighting design is by Andrew Lu. Costume design is by Britney Burgess and Allison Rodgers. Original Music is by Drew Cutler.

Following this production, "Still the River Runs" will be presented by The Promethean Theatre in Miami, FL for its southeastern premiere.

Playwright **Barton Bishop** was recently tapped by The Dramatist magazine as "One of 50 To Watch." His short play "Things Fall (Meanwhile)" was commissioned and performed this year as part of Keen Company's Keen Teens. Another NY production was "God's Daughter" (Abingdon Theatre, 2004) about a woman drawn back to her unhappy childhood home when her father reaches the final stages of Alzheimer's disease. The NY Times (Neil Genzlinger) commended its "sharp performances and unflinching dialogue, delivering a jolt." Bishop received his MFA from NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing, where he was the recipient of the Harry Kondeleon Graduate Playwriting Award. Other recent honors include the Witter Bynner Fellowship with the Abingdon Theatre Company and the Holloway Playwright In Residence Fellowship at the University of South Florida. He is author of "Up Up Down Down," "Still The River Runs," "Things Fall (Meanwhile)," "bloodrust," "Peaceful Easy," "bliss," "God's Daughter," "Graduation Day," "The Great Who Knows," "The Amphibian Song," and "The Complex." His work has been commissioned by Florida Stage, and read and produced in New York, Los Angeles, Montana, and Florida, where he was a three-time winner of the Florida Playwrights Process award.

Director **Matthew J. Nichols** is founder and Co-Artistic Director of Zootopia Theatre Company and has an MFA in Acting from Brandeis University. As a director, he has overseen productions of "The House of Blue Leaves," "The Zoo Story," "Of Mice and Men" and "Without a Song," an original script he also wrote.

A recent graduate of the Juilliard School's centennial class, **Jaron Farnham** (Jesse) has appeared in "Streamers," "Platonov," and "Henry the 6th Part II & III." He also originated the role of Price in the world premiere of Craig Lucas' "The Listener." He has performed at such reputable theatres as the RedCAT in Los Angeles, and the MCA in Chicago.

Steve French (Wyatt) appeared in Zootopia's inaugural production, "Professional Skepticism," last season, receiving critical praise for his performance as Leo, the revolting yet likable bully in charge of a rush-job audit that proves to be his downfall. He has appeared in "A Moon For The Misbegotten" and "The Mystery of Irma Vep" at the Long Wharf and "Othello" (Cassio) and "A Christmas Carol" at Hartford Stage.

Last summer, **Zootopia Theatre Company** made an auspicious debut with "Professional Skepticism" by James Rasheed, presented at the Abingdon Theatre Complex. The play was a dark comedy about an accounting scandal set in a Big Five CPA firm in Charleston. The New York Times (Ginia Bellafante) called it "[A] dark comedy of corporate immorality" adding, "Matthew J. Nichols plays [Paul] as a first-rate disgruntled sycophant." Backstage (A.J. Mell) wrote, "playwright James Rasheed has somehow turned the world's most eye-glazingly dull profession into an entertaining, stiletto-sharp satire of office politics and macho head games. As enacted by an offbeat and very funny cast, it is flat-out terrific." Nytheatre.com (Robert Buckwalter) called it "an enjoyable evening of darkness....In fact, it is as solid a production as one could hope to find in the world of independent theater." The Village Voice (Andy Propst) stated, "the play often crackles with rich dialogue and keen detail."

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