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## Campfire Quorum theater keeps to the dunes with upcoming play

**Susan Blood, Banner Correspondent**

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PROVINCETOWN — A nomadic theater concept has found a home in the dunes here, at least for now.

“It came about through personal conflicts I've held, of wanting to be an environmentally friendly and active person,” Campfire Quorum founder Megan Nussle said. “It’s been a very important principle in my life, to figure out a way to live within our limited resources. Modern theater is a fairly wasteful art form, and yet I love theater. It's bothered me for a while and I've had a hard time reconciling these two things. This past winter I had a lot of time to think and was trying to dream up a version of how you could do both, and not sacrifice the quality of the theater performances.”

With a current focus in the Herring Cove Beach area, Campfire Quorum strives for a minimalist approach to theater that feeds creativity and imagination, breathing life into the way an audience experiences a performance.



Nussle is building her company with the help of friends and the support of Provincetown Community Compact's Think-ubator program, which assists grassroots projects that benefit the Outer Cape community.

Now a year-round resident, Nussle has been involved with the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival since 2013. In 2018 she became the festival's artistic associate, assisting festival curator David Kaplan. For this year's festival, Kaplan asked Nussle to direct "The Witch," a 17th century play in which Rosamund, Duchess of Ravenna, summons the witch Hecate to assist in killing her husband Alboin. Set in Provincetown, Nussle's version tells the story within the framework of the First Landing, when the Pilgrims arrived in 1620 on the Mayflower.

"The conceit of the play is that the women of the Mayflower are stealing away from the men on their first day on land, which is known as the day of washing" Nussle said. "My idea is that the women escaped into the woods to finish the laundry and put on a theatrical play for themselves. It's the first time away

from the men in over two months, at least, and their opportunity to do all the things they can't do either because of the men or because of strongly held Puritan limitations. Anything to do with witches is a huge taboo, so they're going to have fun with that.”



Auditions were held in July and casting is nearly finalized. The original plan was to produce the play in August, but it was postponed due to the spike in COVID-19 virus cases in Provincetown, as well as difficulties in casting, Nussle said. Actors often work in the service industry, on the Outer Cape and elsewhere. With widespread staffing shortages in Provincetown, actors weren't as available as they normally would be to do creative projects, she said.

The location for the festival production is yet to be decided, but Nussle envisions it as theater in the round, in the woods.

“It really is like witches in the woods, and the audience is sitting around them, so you get that feeling that you could be back in time,” Nussle said. “You have gone into a different world, out in nature.”

Nussle sees Campfire Quorum evolving as an agile, migratory company. The theater company provides an immersive experience and “a dynamic synthesis of place and play,” according to the website.

“Places have a history and you can use that as an underpinning of whatever story you're telling,” Nussle said. “It can shine a light on an aspect that you might not have thought of before. I think that's a really interesting way to have a space become more than a character. It fills in the gaps that theater with minimal props and less lighting and less sound leave open, since you're getting so much more meaning in a different way.”

Nussle holds a master's degree in directing from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, and a bachelor's degree in theatre and English from Dickinson College. She has worked as a director, dramaturge, producer and administrator with companies from England to Nashville, Boston and the Berkshires. She likens her mobile company to the traveling troupes in England in Shakespeare's time.

“There's something interesting to me about a roving troupe, as a means to keep costs down, reach different audiences and find the right place for certain work,” Nussle said. “I know it's counter to what a lot of theaters do, embedding themselves in a community — which is something I really admire and appreciate. I also have a hard time staying put in one space. There's no set plan for the next show. I will say that I would like the next show to be in P-town as well, so this is very much our starting place, on the Outer Cape.”

INFO

To learn about Campfire Quorum, visit <https://www.campfirequorum.org/>

To learn more about the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival,  
visit <https://www.twptown.org/2021-performances>