



'Leaving Iowa' is the start to Fox Valley Repertory leaving behind old name

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St. Charles, IL — It's a new year, and a new season for theater. And apparently a new beginning for Noble Fool Theatricals, or rather, Fox Valley Repertory, as it is now called. Under a new name, the St. Charles theater company performs the touching comedy "Leaving Iowa" on the Mainstage of Pheasant Run Resort through March 13. Fox Valley Rep's Artistic Director John Gawlik addresses the name change and the theater company's new direction that includes their first ever arts festival.

Why was it felt that it was necessary for the name change?

I've been here for five years now and before we were just doing four to five shows that were comedies and that was it. Eventually, we started branching out and offering more than our comedy shows. ... We needed a name that reflected our growing theater, and we wanted to be able to identify with the Fox Valley community with our broader range of programs. We feel the new name helps patrons connect more with the theater.

Will this in any way change how the theater company is run?

No. Staff is the same. Our board has grown. We have a spectacular year planned, where we're trying new things. In the summer, we'll have our first ever Summer Arts Festival that showcases theater at Pheasant Run Resort and throughout the area. ... We've been working with playwrights for this event as a new project, giving them the chance to learn from scientists and the opportunity to premiere their work at the summer festival.

Why was "Leaving Iowa" chosen as the first play of the season under a new name?

I had read it a few seasons ago, and I've also seen the play. ... It's a play that has a lot of heart to it that audience members, I feel, would be able to relate to it or connect with it. "Leaving Iowa" is about a guy who hasn't been home in a while that takes a road trip with his family, looking for a place to scatter his father's ashes. The play flips back and forth between his childhood with his father and the road trip with his own children. ... It's a deep theme that will really resonate with the audience.

Do you think this theater season falls in line with the theater "trying new things?"

Following "Leaving Iowa," we'll have Patsy Cline, which is a musical but not a comedy musical. ... The play looks at the connection to Cline and a friendship she had with a fan of hers, all performed to Patsy Cline's music. "Around the World in 80 Days" we see it as our big theater adventure ... where more than 30 roles are played by five people. The production is part of our Summer Arts Festival. "They're Playing Our Song," written by Neil Simon with music by Marvin Hamlisch, is a comedy about a man and woman who fall in love through their music. ... We're also bringing back "It's A Wonderful Life," and also in the fall, we'll be producing "The Woman in Black," which is a chilling ghost story.

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