

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Rainbow Stage to present *Big, The Musical* starting July 31



DEBBIE MASLOWSKY



JORDY BELLAN



ALEXANDRA FROHLINGER



JOEY FROHLINGER



LINDSAY SHEARER-NELKO



NOAH HORNSTEIN

Canada's largest open air theatre, Rainbow Stage, is in high gear as it readies itself for this year's upcoming presentation: *Big, The Musical*, beginning July 31.

*Big, The Musical* is the Broadway adaptation of the hit 80's movies, *Big*, which starred Tom Hanks. It is a witty and insightful look at growing up.

Josh Baskin is a frustrated adolescent whose wish of being big unexpectedly comes true. When he wakes up one morning as a 30-year old man, he discovers there

is much more to being an adult than he had bargained for.

After a six-month run on Broadway, the show enjoyed much success on a two-year national tour. Rainbow Stage's production will be the premiere presentation of *Big, The Musical*, in Winnipeg. Rainbow Stage will be using the same set as the Broadway production of *Big, The Musical*.

One especially exciting aspect of this year's production is that it will feature the largest cast of kids that Rainbow Stage has ever put on

stage, with 22 children taking part in the show, including five Jewish kids:

**Jordy Bellan** - a Grade 9 student at Churchill High School, Jordy has been studying singing professionally for the past two years with Joy Lazo. In the past year, Jordy has sung publicly at the NDP provincial convention, Grant Park School's Ad Astra talent showcase, the "In Your Face Talent Showcase", and is a semi-finalist in the Royal Bank Stars of Tomorrow competition at the Red

River Ex.

**Alexandra Frohlinger** - a Grade 8 student at the Gray Academy, Alexandra played Oliver in the Rady JCC's production of the same name this past year and has appeared in the RWB's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Nutcracker*. Alexandra studies musical theatre, jazz, tap and ballet at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and voice with Donna Fletcher.

**Joey Frohlinger** - a Grade 5 student at Shore Elementary School, Joey has danced with the Karpas Hungarian Dancers during Folklorama. Joey loves sports, especially basketball, soccer, baseball and golf. He studies tap and musical theatre at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

**Noah Hornstein** - a Grade 8 student at Grant Park, Noah has performed in many musicals. Noah was an orphan in the Rady Centre production of *Oliver*. Noah has also participated several times in the Junior Musical Theatre Company and played the lead role of

Daddy Warbucks in the musical, *Annie*, at Brock Corydon School.

**Lindsay Shearer-Nelko** - a Grade 10 student at St. John's Ravenscourt, Lindsay has been performing locally and nationally since she was five years old. Lindsay has also performed in several feature movies and a music video, and has competed in dance competitions around the world. A former student at the Shelley Shearer School of Dance, Lindsay is also taking voice lessons from Donna Fletcher.

In addition to these young performers, all of whom will be appearing at Rainbow for the first time, well-known local performer **Debbie Maslowsky** will be making her eighth appearance at Rainbow Stage. A U of W Theatre graduate, Debbie toured the country with the Manitoba Tourism Showcase, performed in over 50 dinner theatre productions, and wrote and hosted CKY TV's *Wish Upon a Star* with brother Jerry.

Debbie's diverse talents

have been showcased in several Winnipeg Jewish Theatre productions, including the recent *Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh*. She also enjoys her role as musical theatre coach and choreographer for school and community musicals.

*Big, The Musical* has been described as "near-perfect musical entertainment" (*The Chronicle Journal*) "the ideal family musical" (*USA Today*); and "so exuberantly gifted, it gives you the helium high of a balloon flight...It worked as a show" (*New York Times*).

Show time for *Big, The Musical* is 8:00 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. The show will run from July 31-August 26. There will be special ticket prices for seniors on Sunday evenings and for children under 12 throughout the run.

The Red River Ex (ending June 30) is currently featuring the kids from *Big, The Musical* performing three times daily, on the Canwest Commons Stage, at 3:00, 5:00 and 8:00.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'State of Grace' pairs Jewish, Catholic youngsters

A fresh new TV show pairs a Jewish 12-year-old girl with a Catholic one in an amicable culture clash

By NAOMI PFEFFERMAN, Arts & Entertainment Editor  
*Los Angeles Jewish Journal*

LOS ANGELES - In the pilot episode of "State of Grace," 12-year-old Grace McKee sashays out of her limousine and plucks the mezuzah off her friend Hannah Rayburn's front door. "It was crooked," she insists. Hannah's appalled parents nail it back on with a shoe. It's one of the best gags in "State of Grace," a kind of Jewish "Wonder Years," that premiered last Monday night on the Fox Family Channel.

The series, set in 1965, follows Hannah, a shy Jewish girl, (Alia Shawkat), who moves from Evanston, Ill., to a small town in North Carolina, where she enrolls in a Catholic school and meets her free-spirited new best friend, Grace (Mae Whitman). The offscreen narrator, Oscar-winner Frances McDormand, plays an adult version of Hannah who wryly comments on the action.

At her elite new school, The Pines, Hannah is the only brunette in a sea of blonds. At home, she's forced to mind the family furniture store with her Holocaust-survivor father, anxious mother, bubbie and quirky Uncle Heschie. When she visits Grace's mansion, she loves the glamorous decor but is disconcerted by what she calls "the Dead Animal Room," filled with moose heads. McKee's alcoholic mother, Tattie, is equally shocked when she learns the Jewish Rayburns don't drink.

For "State of Grace" co-creators Hollis Rich and Brenda Lilly, the amicable culture clash is the point.



Cast of "State of Grace".

They say the show is about embracing differences through friendship, a phenomenon they know a lot about. They've done it themselves. Rich grew up Jewish in the Midwest and the Valley, the daughter of a Polish Holocaust survivor who (surprise!) owned a furniture store. Lilly grew up Catholic in Asheville, N.C., where she attended an exclusive Catholic school called The Pines.

The 40-something co-executive producers have been good friends since they were the only women writers on a short-lived ABC drama in 1995. "We brought our own chemistry to the characters in 'State of Grace,'" says Lilly, who like Grace, is

brash and playful. "They're younger manifestations of ourselves." "We wanted to create a girls' coming-of-age story, not the boy-stories you always see on TV," adds Rich, who, like Hannah, is cautious and wry.

But when the women pitched the pilot last year, they found they had two strikes against them: girls and Jews. "Everyone kept saying, 'Can't you just change the characters to boys?'" Rich recalls. "We felt, 'Let's do whatever we want, because no one's going to buy it anyway.'" The creators were shocked when Fox Family Channel did buy the series, practically on the spot.

Since then, the show has elicited good buzz around town. But Rich still feels nervous. "Usually, when Jews are on TV, they're ultra-assimilated, like 'Seinfeld,'" she says. "But our characters have a more complex Jewish identity. They're Northern Jews who've moved South. They observe some ritual, but they're not Orthodox. It's something I've never seen on TV."

The Rayburns' Jewish experience reflects Rich's childhood. While she never lived in the South, her family - including an uncle and a bubbie - moved from a Jewish neighborhood in Evanston to a then-rural, non-Jewish area of Northridge. Dairy farms were everywhere. The next-door neighbors were anti-Semites. And the people across the street, "were ... like hillbillies," Rich says. "They had a goat."

Lilly, too, felt like a bit of an outsider in her hometown, not unlike Grace in the TV show. (Cont. on page 16. See "Amazing Grace".)

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