

Local playwright to debut new musical this weekend

You don't have to go to New York City and pay Broadway prices to see a musical this summer.

Furthermore, Calvert County has produced something that Broadway hasn't done in a long time — the premiere of a brand-new musical, written, directed and performed by our talented Southern Maryland residents.

"The Moment," written by Ken Garvin, with music by Roy Johnson and Travis Lynch, is a big musical with 15 new songs performed by a cast of more than 30 singers, actors and dancers. The Patuxent Playhouse is presenting this musical starting this Friday at the Family Life Center of St. John Vianney Roman Catholic Church in Prince Frederick.

This new musical is Garvin's fourth collaboration with the Patuxent Playhouse. Garvin, a county resident since 1982, lives in Port Republic with his wife, Connie, and their children. He believes in theater that both entertains and provides a positive message. Two of his earlier productions looked at issues affecting families, and his 2006 musical, "The Project," with a high school setting and cast, demon-

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Pat Ullberg reports from Prince Frederick north

strated how cooperation and teamwork could help the kids achieve their cherished goals.

The plot of "The Moment" is, Garvin said, "the problem that peer pressure causes for the young, and the not so young." It is the story of a young man, Aaron and his father, Charlie. Father and son each have their dreams, hopes and desires. To make their dreams reality, they must learn how to focus, and not allow distractions — including not-so-good friends — to sway them from the paths to success.

As with his earlier musical, Garvin makes extensive use of the performing talents of local students. Young performers from five area high schools are working in this production, as well as veteran actors from

several local theater groups. Professional choreography is provided by Gracie Myles, the owner of Gracie's Guys and Gals Dance Studio in Leonardtown. Myles worked with her son, Justin, who was a cast member of the national traveling production of "STOMP!"

This musical is very much a family show, Garvin said.

"I'm trying to get people to come out and support these young people," he said "The show is about what a good kid must go through to stay a good kid."

That seems like something all families must consider, not only for their own kids, but also their kids' companions. The production's student characters, in particular, represent the types of personalities — both good and bad influences — that every young person is likely to meet at some time or other. For example, "Aaron," played by Matt Garrett, is the voice of reason in his peer group, but he is struggling to find his own identity. "Alphonzo," played by Shawn Asher, is the person who will go over the top to attain popularity and peer approval. These characters play off against their detractors,

who behave — in various ways — like the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

The elder characters in the cast illustrate how adults can help - or hinder - growth and maturity by their actions, or reactions to other characters' hopes and dreams. Jeri Reynolds, the founder of the Patuxent Playhouse, directs, as well as acts a part the production. Jeri and Jack Reynolds, her husband, who is currently the president of the playhouse board, work tirelessly for the Patuxent group. They both often act in or direct Playhouse productions. Dave Hoffman, a board member of the Patuxent Playhouse, logged in many (contributed) hours as the show's technical producer, making sure that everything backstage goes smoothly. Garvin also appreciates the support given by the Family Life Center, in the persons of Dave and Cindy Brown, members of the center's board.

It isn't often that a real premiere — the first performance of an original production — comes our way out here, far away from the bright lights of Broadway. This young, all-local talent, family show is a chance to take the kids and let them see the amazing dif-

ference between a live performance in real time, and the canned presentations, however educational those may be, that are available on television and other electronic gadgets. And this theater is only a short ride away; a real consideration in these days of huge gas prices.

"The Moment" opens on Friday, July 25, at 8 p.m., and a second performance at 8 p.m. on Saturday, July 26. The final performances are on Friday and Saturday, Aug. 1 and 2 at 8 p.m., with a matinee on Aug. 2 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15, and may be reserved at 410-326-2871, or at patuxentplayhouse.com, or be purchased at the door an hour before curtain time.

Note: Recorder readers may wonder why North County News hasn't appeared for several weeks. It's because your fearless columnist has been coping with necessary medical procedures, which will continue for the near future.

I thank my readers, and hope to return with weekly reports on doings and events in North County before too long.