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Music, Drama At MMC



COURTESY PHOTO
Christian musician Matt Maher will perform with Chris August and Bellarive at Mount Marty College's Laddie E. Cimpl Arena April 29.

Christian Musician Set For MMC Show April 29

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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Christian musician Matt Maher believes you shouldn't say "AMEN!" only in church.

Next Tuesday, the two-time Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter and worship leader is releasing his unique and most revealing project yet with his fourth album titled, "All the People Said Amen."

And on the heels of its release, he's bringing his music to Yankton. Mount Marty College (MMC) is preparing to welcome the "All the People Tour" to campus for a special night of music and worship in Cimpl Arena at 7 p.m. April 29.

Joining Maher on the tour are three-time Dove Award-winner Chris August and the new band, Bellarive. This past summer, August released his sophomore album, "The Upside of Down."

Maher spoke about his Yankton appearance during an email interview with the *Press & Dakotan*. He said he welcomes the opportunity to perform on the Catholic college campus.

"We're super excited to come," he said. "Our nights really have been attended by people of all ages, young people included, so it sounds like a great fit (with the MMC concert)."

The audience should be prepared for a fun and uplifting experience, Maher said.

"The 'All The People' tour is a great night of music, sharing and ministry," he said. "I'm on tour with Bellarive, a fantastic energetic band from Florida and Atlanta, Ga., as well as the super talented Chris August."

Maher considers it a blessing to work with both Bellarive and August.

"I've always loved both acts and wanted the opportunity to tour with them, but it really was a happy coincidence," he said. "But as a friend of mine says, 'In the world of Divine Providence, there are no coincidences.'"

The MMC concert will feature the artists individually and as a group, Maher said.

"There are some great moments in the night where we'll all be on stage together, as well as more intimate moments," he said.

While entertaining, the concert will also contain a spiritual message, Maher said.

"The heart of the tour — aside from presenting the ministry of Compassion International — is to help call the Church to remember that we're meant to be a people who proclaim the Good News of Jesus, specifically found in the Beatitudes," he said. "Those sayings of Jesus, these beatitudes — well, I don't know many people that wouldn't agree with them. It's about saying things that are worth saying 'AMEN' to."

Maher comes to Yankton a week after releasing his latest album. He believes the music will offer something for everyone.

"Well, I think every artist hopes they're bringing something unique to the table. Nobody wants to sound directly like somebody else," he said.

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A Fairy Tale Is Transformed Into A 'Small Room At The Top Of The Stairs'

BY ANDREW ATWAL
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When director Stephen English set out to choose a play for the upcoming Mount Marty College spring production, he decided on a post-modern show that would be performed in the small bistro area on campus.

The production, *The Small Room At The Top Of The Stairs*, will be presented in an intimate setting in which audience members will be "in the round" and surrounding the stage.

"I like this kind of environment," English said. "When I was in grad school, we had three or four different spaces to perform in. One was thrust-style like this. Two years ago was the first show I did in this space with this type of style."

He added that, up until that production, he had never seen anything on campus that was thrust style.

"The comments were very positive about it," English said. "In some ways, it has to be more real because audience members are not looking from afar like with a show in a big auditorium.

"The play will ask a lot of questions, and it really wants audience members to go there with the characters and wonder about what's happening and what the answers are."

STEPHEN ENGLISH

a post-modern play," English said. "With the post-modern culture, a lot of times productions don't make sense or have a conclusion, and this one may leave the audience asking a lot of questions."

The play follows a young woman named Grace, who has just married an older man. The man, who is rich, gives her his entire house and says everything in it is hers. The only thing he asks is that she not go into a small room at the top of the stairs.

"Nature ultimately dictates that she must discover what's in the room," English said. "The production is about her finding out what's in the room and, when she does find out what's inside, it is not what she or the audience expect it to be."

After Grace finds out what is in the room, questions are asked about what exactly the thing she finds is and what it means.

English said the play is a thriller and has a sort of Hitchcock-type of feel to it.

"It's really a mystery because we don't know what is in the room, so Grace needs to go in and discover what is inside," he said. "Audience members will want to know what is in the room, as well."

English added that Grace represents all of us that want life to be like a fairy tale. But, he said, the play poses questions such as, is a fairy tale really what we want? The play also asks a number of questions about social issues.

"The play will ask a lot of questions, and it really wants audience members to go there with the characters and wonder about what's happening and what the answers are," English said. "It's a different kind of play for us here at Mount Marty and for the Yankton audience. I'm not sure how the audience will react — some may think it's neat



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
ABOVE: Henry (played by Ben Gothier) confronts his wife Grace (Brooke Fischer) after she tells him she entered "The Small Room at the Top of the Stairs," a play the Mount Marty College Theatre Department is producing in MMC's Bistro. The play, written by Carole Frechette, is loosely based on the fairy tale "Bluebeard's Castle." BELOW: Joyce (Gina Dethlefsen) tries calming her distraught daughter Grace in a scene from the production, which will be presented April 24-27. Showtimes are at 7:30 p.m.



and interactive in the small space. Others, who are used to the more traditional style of theater, may not understand it."

Because the production is in a smaller space, there are only about 75 tickets available for each show. Performances take place at 7:30 p.m. April 24-27.

English said rehearsals have been going well, but some of the actors in the production are not used to the thrust style of setting.

"It's a different style, even for our actors," he said. "When they're not on stage, actors sit in chairs around the outside of the stage, so they can be seen by audience members even when they're not in a scene." English added that actors need to be

more focused in the smaller environment.

"I was saying to an actor the other night, 'You need to find a way of engaging the audience. Even though they're close, you need to draw them in to what you're doing without making physical eye contact with them,'" he said. "Actors need to be able to look through audience members so that when you talk, the audience will hear it as if it's said directly to them."

English said there is some mature content in the production, so he tags it with the 'PG-13' rating.

"It deals with a lot of material that asks deep questions," he said. "The original fairy tale is about a man who murders his first three wives, but a lot of that doesn't follow suit in this play. This is very modern in its use of the material from the fairy tale."

CAST LIST:

Grace — Brooke Fischer
Henry — Ben Gothier
Anne — Raegan Layher
Joyce — Gina Dethlefsen
Jenny — Samantha Tobey
Director and Designer — Stephen English
Costume Designer — Dawn Ferris

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