

Press Release

Appleton North Theatre Department to Present Tony Award-Winning playwright Mary Zimmerman's *JOURNEY TO THE WEST*

The Appleton North High School theatre department will present Tony Award-winning playwright Mary Zimmerman's critically acclaimed play, *JOURNEY TO THE WEST* on May 8TH -11TH in the Appleton North High School auditorium. This adaptation of a late sixteenth-century classic Chinese comic novel, (one of the four great novels of Chinese literature) based on Anthony C. Yu's translation, takes as its point of departure the true story of a seventh-century monk and his fabled pilgrimage from China to India in search of sacred texts. Mixing whimsy with spiritual weight, Zimmerman's script combines comedy, adventure, and satire in a moving allegory of human perseverance. The Chicago Sun Times wrote of the premiere performance at the Goodman Theatre, "Part vaudeville, part mystical dreamscape and Eastern-inflected ballet, Zimmerman's meticulously choreographed production is a fabulous balancing act that stunningly juxtaposes the rambunctious energy and low comedy of a Wizard of Oz-like trip with the lyrical beauty of Chinese poetry and the mysterious revelations of a religious search. There is not a second in the show that does not contain a character-revealing gesture, an awe inspiring sense of nature, or a dazzling example of the artist's gift for invention."

This is the latest in a series of the playwright's works which have been presented by the North Theatre program including *METAMORPHOSES*, *ARABIAN NIGHTS*, *THE ODYSSEY*, *SECRET IN THE WINGS*, and *ARGONAUTIKA*. North theatre educator and director Ron Parker states, "We are very committed to Mary's work. She's an amazing playwright and theatre artist."

In the past she has granted us permission to produce works even before they have been published! Twice she has honored us with attending our performances. This year, unfortunately, she is opening her latest work at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago at the same time we are performing JOURNEY TO THE WEST, but she has already sent us her well wishes and expressed her excitement our latest production of her work. It is a great honor to have this renowned, world-famous artist aware and supportive of this little high school in Wisconsin! JOURNEY TO THE WEST is one of her earlier works that focuses on an epic story that is extremely popular throughout Asia, but is virtually unknown to us in the West. It is very exciting to bring this great work of Eastern literature to audiences here.”

North’s production will feature a large cast, an original score by British composer Jay Chakravorty and innovative staging including a set built to resemble an ancient Buddhist temple, a moving “conveyor belt-like” floor, and audience members seated directly upon the stage in a “studio environment” to make them part of the action and storytelling. Performances time are: May 8th, 9th and 10th at 7:00 p.m. and May 10th and 11th at 1:00 p.m. General admission is \$10.00. Tickets are available during Box Office hours from 3:00-5:30 on May 1st, 5th and 8th and at the door one hour before each performance. Seating is limited to 170 per performance. Further information can be found on the North theatre website www.appletonnorththeatre.com or by contacting Ron Parker, director at 832-4300 or via e-mail: parkerronaldc@aasd.k12.wi.us .

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