

Jonathan Slaff & Associates

Press Representative - 55 Perry Street, #1M - New York, NY 10014
Tel. (212) 924-0496 - Fax (877) 534-4061 - js@jsnyc.com - www.jsnyc.com

"Lemon Meringue" by Rich Ryan, with songs by Athena Reich, dramatizes one man's recovery from childhood sexual abuse. This production will help endow the We Are Many Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to helping others break their silence. The author, director, songwriter and some ensemble members are survivors.

WHERE AND WHEN:

July 8 to 10, 2011

TADA! Theater, 15 West 28th Street (Betw. B'way & 5th Ave.)

Presented by at Rich Ryan Productions, LLC. This presentation is not a production by TADA! Theater.

Friday at 7:00 PM, Saturday at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM, Sunday at 1:00 PM

Tickets \$18 general admission. Buy tix online at www.lemonmeringue.org or call SMARTTIX, (212) 868-4444.

Show's website: www.lemonmeringue.org

CRITICS ARE INVITED to all performances.

NEW YORK, June 2 -- The process of recovering lost sections of one's life after childhood sexual abuse is inherently dramatic and theater is a home for powerful emotions. So it's not surprising that plays by survivors are starting to appear on the subject. However, the art related to child sexual abuse has been predominantly women's stories to-date. **Rich Ryan**, a Long Island-based survivor, breaks the mold with "**Lemon Meringue**," his new ten-character play with songs by **Athena Reich**, a survivor/recording artist. The play is directed by **Terri Muuss**, a theater artist and social worker who is also a survivor. Ryan's production company, Rich Ryan Productions, LLC, will present the work **July 8 to 10, 2011** at **TADA! Theater, 15 West 28th Street**, for one-week only. The short run, an Equity Showcase, will also be a fundraiser for a new nonprofit devoted enabling other survivors to break their silence on the issue and build magnificent lives.

The play arises from dialogues between a mature man and his two therapists as he is recovering from childhood sexual abuse, interspersed with flashbacks and musical scenes. The lead character, who bears the author's name of Rich, had fallen victim to a pedophile--shockingly, a pediatrician--who saw that he was abused at home by black and blue marks on his body, a clue that he would be an easy victim. "Rich" takes the audience on his emotional roller-coaster as he ends thirty years of hiding from the truth, facing up to the arduous and scary task of discovering his inner child. Dance scenes illustrate episodes from the "gap" in his life, including the "lost black periods" when he took refuge in drugs and his discovery of sexual intimacy during his thirty year "period of hibernation." Rich's recovery began with a recollection of eating his grandmother's lemon meringue pie, "the last sweet thing before the volcano got me," and this is the central motif and title of the play.

The play has no graphic descriptions or re-enactments of Rich's youthful ordeals. They are not needed when the first-hand experience of so many in the company can give the play such emotional ballast. The production tastefully dedicates itself to a lofty thematic goal: dramatizing the triumph of bravery over resistance and the joy of recovering one's own lost soul. It exposes its audience to a test of strength that most adults rejoice in when they see it, especially if they have ever been brave enough to accomplish something similar themselves. Its reward is the feeling that nothing truly evil will happen to one who survives a test of courage.

Joe DeGise II heads the cast in the role of "Rich from Long Island." He is a performer, writer, and the director of New York's longest running comedy review, Chicago City Limits. He co-founded the improvisation group Unexpected Company (which held regular runs Off-Broadway) and the sketch comedy group Bitter Harmless People. With "Lemon Meringue," DeGise returns to the dramatic stage for the first time in over a decade. He has been featured at both the Aspen and Toyota Comedy Festivals. His film and television credits include "Hacks" (with Jim Gaffigan), "Law & Order," "Live! With Regis and Kelly" and "Nickelodeon."

The cast also includes James Koroni (as teenage Rich), Logan Riley Bruner (as child Rich), Ann McCormack (as Grandmother), Athena Reich (as the "good" therapist), Maureen Van Trease (as the No-Good Therapist), ensemble actors Rhett Hackett and Keith Smith and dancers Carly Fox and Shelley McCaughlin. For their biographical info, please visit the show's website, www.lemonmeringue.org.

Playwright **Rich Ryan** is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and father of three. He grew up and currently lives in Hauppauge, Long Island and works in New York City. Since breaking his silence in 2003, he has been dedicated to raising awareness about childhood sexual abuse and helping others heal from the effects. In 2010, he appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show to share his story with a group of 200 male sexual abuse survivors. Recognizing that sharing one's story can have a profound impact on healing others, and acknowledging the power of theater, Ryan undertook writing this autobiographical play, which is dedicated to all the men and women who have perished from the effects of childhood sexual abuse as well as those who continue to struggle. He has attended many male survivor conferences and his artwork has been displayed at several survivor art shows. Following his undergraduate studies at the State University of New York at Old Westbury, Rich pursued a career as a certified public accountant. He has, for the past 18 years, served as Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer of a large wholesale produce distributor. He recently founded the **We Are Many Foundation**, a non-profit organization devoted to helping others break their silence and build the magnificent lives they deserve. In conjunction with this show, funds are being raised to endow this foundation.

The director and several cast members are also activists who have made significant contributions on the issue of child sexual abuse, working for healing, raising awareness, promoting prevention and advocating for prosecutions of sex offenders:

Terri Muuss (Director/Adapter) is a survivor. She is also a director, performer, educator, writer, social worker, motivational speaker and life coach. Since 1988 she has performed a solo show, "Anatomy of a Doll," which confronts the awakening of memory and the revealed truth of the devastation of the child and the triumph of the woman. It received "Best Theatre-Pick of the Week" from The Daily News as well as a grant from Poets and Writers and was part of the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2003. Muuss has directed and/or adapted numerous plays including Athena Reich's rock opera "Athena Under Attack," Lisa Ramirez's one-woman show "Exit Cuckoo," Deborah Ortiz's "Changing Violet" (nominated for IT awards for best solo performance and best solo show) and Veronica Golos' performance of "A Bell Buried Deep" from her award-winning book of the same title. She trained for theater at Kean University and AMDA and also earned an MSW from Hunter College School of Social Work, where she won the Helena Rubinstein Award for Academic Excellence and graduated with honors. Originally from NYC, she now maintains a private practice as a licensed social worker in Bay Shore, LI, where she lives with her husband and two sons. (www.terrimuuss.com)

Songwriter **Athena Reich** (Gail, Song-Writer), an internationally-touring musical artist, has done numerous magazine and TV interviews about being a survivor of physical and sexual abuse. She is originally from Toronto and is now based out of New York City. She has released five CDs and her music videos have charted #1 on MTV LOGO. She won Best Comedy Improv on YTV with Judge Eugene Levy and her song "Love is Love" won Best Pop Song at the Outmusic Awards on MTV LOGO. (www.AthenaReich.com)

Rhett Hackett (Ensemble) is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. In 2010, he went public with his abuse on the Oprah Winfrey Show and continued to go public through articles in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, WHYY, and ABC's "Perspective New Jersey." He frequently speaks out for other male survivors, supports the Children's Alliance of Philadelphia and has provided testimony at the NJ Senate Judiciary Hearings on the statute of limitations. He has been married for 20 years and has two children.

Keith Smith (Ensemble), author of the novel "Men in My Town," is an advocate for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse and a survivor of a Stranger Abduction Sexual Assault. The story of Keith's ordeal and recovery has been featured in newspapers and magazines. His program, "5 Steps You Can Take to Keep Kids Safe," has been discussed on radio and television. A member of the RAINN Speakers Bureau (Rape, Abuse, Incest National

Network), Smith has testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee seeking an end to the Statute of Limitations in Civil Actions related to sex crimes against children. A Fortune 500 corporate executive, he has served 15 years (six years as Chair) on the Board of a non-profit, social service agency providing crisis intervention counseling to child victims of sexual assault.

Choreography is by Tracey Katof. Set design is by Carly Levin, who is also Production Stage Manager. Lighting Design is by Sam Gordon. Sound Design is by Craig Mallone.

Performances are July 8 to 10, 2011, Friday at 7:00 PM, Saturday at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM and Sunday at 1:00 PM at TADA Theater, 15 West 28th Street (Betw. B'way & 5th Ave.). The show is produced by Rich Ryan Productions, LLC and it is not a production by TADA! Theater. Tickets \$18 general admission and can be purchased online at www.lemonmeringue.org or by phone through SMARTTIX, (212) 868-4444. Donations to the We Are Many Foundation can also be made through www.lemonmeringue.org.

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Captioned, high-resolution photos of this show and all other shows currently represented by Jonathan Slaff are available for download at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/jslaff/Jsnyc>.