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No Monkeying Around with Gorilla Tango

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

A new commercial theatre venue, **Gorilla Tango Theatre**, will open between Oct. 14 and Nov. 1 (depending on construction schedule) at 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave. It will be home for a number of local scripted, improvisational, and sketch groups. Classes also will be offered and the venue will be available for events. The venue will have an 85-seat house set up cabaret-style (BYO initially, liquor license to come) plus three rehearsal rooms. Gorilla Tango Theatre (GTT) will produce under its own name and also present other companies. The GTT opener will be the world premiere of *Confessions* by Chicago author Shane Abbott. A kids' show also will be offered.

GTT is the brainchild of Evanston native Dan Abbate, 26, who opened a GTT two years ago in Albuquerque, New Mexico to test his ideas about running an arts organization on a corporate business model, including building ownership. GTT owns both its locations.

"It is possible to be successful in theatre if you tightly control your expenses and meticulously maintain your organization and structure," Abbate says. "Diversify, diversify, diversify. Theatre is heavily dependent on word-of-mouth. The majority of the people that come out to see live theatre have a direct connection to the show – knowing a member of the cast, director, or crew – or recognizing the name of the piece. So the key is to offer as many

different genres of theatre with as many different people involved as possible. This helps reach the greatest number of audience at any given time."

Potential GTT tenants will find that the deal includes performance space, rehearsal hall, insurance, box office services and basic marketing services. The cost is \$200 per performance hour – figured from curtain up to final curtain – plus a 50/50 split of the box office. Better not do Shakespeare or O'Neill. Eventually GTT expects to operate seven days a week, with up to three shows in any given evening.

I suspect that most of you are not regular readers of *Vanity Fair* magazine. Me neither. However, better late than never. Last April's *Vanity Fair* offered a photo spread of the **world's finest Shakespearian actors**, as featured in the 2006-2007 Complete Works Festival at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Among the familiar and distinguished thespians in the group portrait were Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart and F. Murray Abraham. There, also, was **Greg Vinkler**, who is far too modest to have said a word in the course of several conversations over the spring and summer.

ComedySportz of Chicago just doesn't seem able to keep a roof over its head. The troupe that was gentrified out of 2851 N. Halsted last spring, has announced new permanent quarters on the second floor of Ann Sather's on Belmont sometime in 2007 (**PERFORMINK**, Aug. 18). In the meantime, the comedy jocks are producing their mainstage show in the studio theatre at the Chicago Center for the Performing Arts. ComedySportz units also are performing one night a week at the IO and at The Spot on Broadway.

The Bohemian Theatre Ensemble has patched up its differences with the management of the Heartland Studio and will remain there to produce *Yerma* (Oct. 14-Nov. 19). However, it's a short-term solution. Boho will

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