



**PRODUCTION CONTACT**

Cory Wilkerson  
717.838.8164  
[cory@dramainside.net](mailto:cory@dramainside.net)

**MARKETING CONTACT**

Derek Dunham  
717.991.3268  
[marketing@HersheyAreaPlayhouse.com](mailto:marketing@HersheyAreaPlayhouse.com)

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**HERSHEY AREA PLAYHOUSE THEATRE ACADEMY PLAYERS  
TO PRESENT *BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL***

HERSHEY, Pennsylvania—October 13, 2008 – On November 7, 8 and 9, Hershey Area Playhouse presents a theatrical event that echoes the timeless patterns of ancient Greece by combining broad comedy with intense drama. The performance includes Nathan Hartswick's joyful comic farce *Café Murder* and Nickki Leigh Mondschein's intense and moving drama *Characters*. These two short plays mark the inaugural season of the Theatre Academy Players – a youth troupe dedicated to providing professional performance opportunities and audience entertainment. The plays, directed by Cory Wilkerson, are bound by a common thread – in each play, the characters break the fourth wall to interact directly with the audience who become crucial to the plot.

*Café Murder* tells the story of an eccentric hypochondriac named Rosemary who is murdered by one of several odd characters gathered in a small café. Each of the restaurant-goers have reason to hate Rosemary – including the wait staff and the detective who arrives to investigate. The audience becomes the only impartial witness who can put together the pieces and solve the crime – that is if they were watching carefully. Sarah Bixler gives us a joyfully over-the-top Rosemary, Evan Drexler plays a convincingly snobby maitre'd and

Samantha Wend surprises with the odd ball detective Regina Harris. The cast is rounded out by Nathan Mierski's delightful fumbling waiter, Neil Muscat's fantastic comic rendition of an outrageous fake French chef, Maura McErlean's droll portrayal of hippy Melanie, Christina Marmol's convincing "valley girl" Valerie and Michelle Hoffer's quirky Volleny. Other restaurant-goers are played by Paul Luckenbaugh, Cassandra Hoffer, Holly Yaw, Carissa Strohecker and Katie Kanoff.

The slapstick of *Café Murder* is perfectly balanced by the drama *Characters*, which immerses the audience in the life of a headstrong teen named Jessica. This character is searching for meaning in an existence which seems all too often to be some sort of façade. One day, to her shock, she realizes that in fact she is in a play – she exists only to please the playwright. She is determined to break free from the mold and live her own life. Sadly her best friend Missy can't seem to leave the play and seems threatened to be swallowed up by it, and the audience becomes silent witness to her plunge into despair. The despondent Missy is sensitively played by Katie Kanoff, Carissa Strohecker tugs heartstrings in the difficult role of Jessica, complex bully Helena is played by Holly Yaw and her sidekick Amy is beautifully played by Cassandra Hoffer. Nathan Mierski and Maura McErlean command the stage as Jessica's overacting siblings, Samantha Wend and Evan Drexler evoke laughter as outrageous characters with stage fright and Sarah Bixler, Michelle Hoffer, Neil Muscat and Christina Marmol portray a modern day Greek chorus as Audience Members.

*Breaking the Fourth Wall* – including both *Café Murder* and *Characters*, will be staged at Hershey Area Playhouse at Country Meadows, located on Sand Hill Road at Cherry Drive in Hershey. Performances will be held on Friday, November 7 and Saturday, November 8 at 7:30 pm both evenings. A final matinee performance will be held on Sunday, November 9 at 2:00 pm. Reserved seating tickets are available from any cast member or by calling the Theatre Academy Players ticket sales chair Lori Yaw at 717.832.0611. Ticket prices are

\$5.00 for students and \$7.00 for adults. All proceeds benefit Hershey Area Playhouse and Hershey Area Playhouse Theatre Academy Players.

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Hershey Area Playhouse ([HersheyAreaPlayhouse.com](http://HersheyAreaPlayhouse.com)) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to providing residents of the community with an opportunity to participate in the creation and production of a theatrical experience. Since its inception in 1999, Hershey Area Playhouse has staged 32 productions at numerous venues around the Hershey area. In April 2007, the Playhouse opened its new permanent home, Hershey Area Playhouse at Country Meadows.