



wineloversthemusical@gmail.com

646.823.1192



SAMPLE RELEASE – NEW ORLEANS 2010 PRODUCTION

MEDIA CONTACT: Holly-Anne Ruggiero; 917.757.4422; producer@wineloversthemusical.com

WINE LOVERS REJOICE

THE WORLD'S FIRST WINE TASTING MUSICAL RETURNS TO NEW ORLEANS

Audience Members See, Swirl, Smell, Sip and Savor Six Wines while attending a fantastically fun show!

First week of shows in conjunction with New Orleans Wine & Food Experience

New Orleans, La., APRIL 15, 2010 – WINE LOVERS, the world's first wine-tasting musical, returns to New Orleans for a limited run at Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré's Muriel's Cabaret Theatre, Tuesday, May 18th, 2010 through Sunday, June 13 with a performance on Friday, June 11 to benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Over the course of the play, audience members enjoy a tasting of six delightful wines along with the cast.

"No one knows music, wine or food like New Orleans. The way in which this community is able to share a meal, hoist a glass, and channel soul through song is incredible. WINE LOVERS is the perfect hybrid of these passions, and is sure to bring New Orleanians together for a wonderful evening out, doing what they do best - celebrate!" says Wine Lovers Director Holly-Anne Ruggiero.

WINE LOVERS tells the story of lovable painter Brian Scott and know-it-all business woman Katherine Reese, two mismatched students, attending a wine class led by an effervescent teacher, Charles Thompson, whose goal in life is to take the mystery out of wine. Over the course of 70 minutes, Brian, Katherine and the audience learn all about reds, whites, screw caps, Zinfandels...and a little bit about love.

"The original concept came out of the inherent theatricality of a wine class, and the reasons why people attend such a class," says Michael Green, the show's creator and a long-time participant and seminar panelist of the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience. "Wine is such an inherently romantic beverage that turning a wine tasting into a musical love story just felt natural."

Hailed as a "great evening out" by the New York Post, WINE LOVERS "has something for everyone... beginners and wine snobs alike! – You'll be drunk with love over this unique, witty show!" (*DrVino.com*).

-more-

WINE LOVERS/Add 1

WINE LOVERS features a score written by international wine expert Michael Green and jazz pianist Gary Negbaur and book by Travis Kramer with additional contributions by Green and Negbaur. Presented by New Orleans-based Solomon Group and Holly-Anne Ruggiero (*Broadway: Jersey Boys, Billy Crystal's 700 Sundays*) who also directs the show. WINE LOVERS is choreographed by Holly Cruz (*Broadway: Seussical, CATS*), stars Jamie Wax, P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke and features wines from Muriel's Jackson Square's own vineyard.

The first week of performances of **WINE LOVERS** are held in partnership with **Muriel's Jackson Square** and the **NEW ORLEANS WINE AND FOOD EXPERIENCE**, which runs from May 25th – May 29th. For more information on the **New Orleans Food and Wine Experience**, go to www.nowfe.com.

Muriel's Cabaret Theatre is located in Le Petit Theatre at 616 St. Peter Street New Orleans, LA 70116; 504.522.2087. To learn more and to purchase tickets, go to www.lepetittheatre.com or www.wineloversthemusical.com. **Tickets are \$59 which includes the 6 tastings of wines.**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

WINE LOVERS will play the following scheduling:

Tuesday, May 18th at 8:30pm

Wednesday, May 19th at 8:30pm

Saturday, May 22nd at 5pm

Wednesday, May 26th at 5pm – Special NOWFE Full Registrants Performance

Thursday, May 27th at 9pm – OPENING NIGHT/NOWFE Patrons – Discount price of \$50 for NOWFE package registrants.

Friday, May 28th at 8:30pm

Saturday, May 29th at 12:30pm –Special NOWFE Performance

Saturday, May 29th at 5pm – Special NOWFE Performance

Sunday, May 30th at 1pm – Special NOWFE Performance

Thursday June 3rd at 8:30pm

Friday, June 4th at 8:30pm

Saturday, June 5th at 8:30pm

Sunday, June 6th at 5:00pm

Thursday, June 10th at 8:30pm

Friday, June 11th – 8:30pm –Benefit Performance for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

Saturday, June 12th at 8:30pm

Sunday, June 13th at 5:00pm

All seats are \$59, which includes six glasses of wine, and are available online at www.wineloversthemusical.com, www.lepetittheatre.com, or at the Le Petit Box Office at 616 St. Peter Street New Orleans, LA 70116. Group Sales for 10 or more patrons are also available.

Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, approaching its 95th season, continues its long history as a cultural icon in the New Orleans theatre and performing arts community. A launching place for young talent, a stalwart for local talent and a return stage for those who have gone on to further careers, Le Petit features a full season of traditional and new musical productions. In addition, Le Petit offers concerts, a daily film series and an eclectic mix of other productions on both its Main Stage and in the smaller Muriel's Cabaret Theatre. **Tickets for Le Petit's 95th season can be purchased online at www.LePetitTheatre.com or by calling the box office at 504-522-2081.**

###

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

MICHAEL GREEN (Conciever/Book/Lyrics/Music): Michael Green is a world-renowned wine and spirits consultant and educator. For the past 25 years Michael has worked in the wine and spirits trade as an educator, importer, writer, consultant and retailer, including 19 years as Gourmet Magazine's exclusive Wine & Spirits consultant. Green is the creator Wine Down, one of New York's premier wine tasting parties. Additionally, he has been a guest on Food Network's Emeril Live and Cooking Live as well as CBS Marketwatch, NPR and Clear Channel radio. He has been featured in many national publications including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Times-Picayune, Business Week, U.S. News and World Report and House Beautiful. Michael has consulted with many of NYC's top restaurants, and his varied, lengthy client list includes three-star rated Oceana and Molyvos, as well as Christer's and Empire Restaurant. He is a proud graduate of the University of Virginia. He resides in New York City.

TRAVIS KRAMER (Book) is the creator & writer/lyricist of IT'S KARATE, KID! THE MUSICAL (Best Musical, NYIT Awards 2005), co-creator & writer/lyricist of the blaxploitation musical DIAL 'N' FOR NEGRESS with Kevin Smith Kirkwood, writer/lyricist of SEX ROAD TO RUIN - a segment from THE PAPERBACK MUSICAL, and lyricist of original compositions for the Resonance Ensemble world premiere of Charles L. Mee's MAIL ORDER BRIDE. Travis has also written pop culture parodies for CRACKED MAGAZINE, illustrated FLORIDA MARLINS FROM A TO Z for Barnes & Noble, and designed publicity & props for the Off-Broadway cabarets IT'S ME BABY, IT'S KEVIN! and IMPOSSIBLE BITCH! Other freelance work includes feature articles and editorial illustrations for various trade publications and commissioned tattoo designs. "Cheers!" to a wonderful team of artists and collaborators for bringing this show to life. Viva la buss!

GARY NEGBAUR (Book/Music/Lyrics, Musical Director) writes music for theater and film, as well as songs for recording artists. His musical Librarians in Love (co-written with Tony-nominee John Cariani) appeared at the NYC Fringe Festival. He contributed music to the feature film An American Summer. His song, Red Pontiac, was featured on NPR's Car Talk. As a performing pianist/singer, Gary continues to tour across the U.S., Europe and Australia. His recordings include a CD of original music (Let me explain) as well as a critically acclaimed solo album of standards (Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat) and a children's CD (Max's Family Band). Gary's work continues to be informed by the education he received at Harvard University and the Berklee College of Music. Thanks to the entire Wine Lovers team for this wine-derful journey! For more info, visit www.garynegbaur.com.

HOLLY-ANNE RUGGIERO (Director, Lead Producer) Ms. Ruggiero is the Artistic Director of Impulse Theatre and the Development Director for the Broadway Artists Alliance. **Recent Directing Credits:** *Hope In Chaos* (New York); *Soul Doctor* (Le Petit Theatre/National Tour 2011), *Dirty Pictures* (NY Workshop), *Oklahoma* (Reagle Players), *All Shook Up* (Ogunquit Playhouse – Starring Sally Struthers); *Steel Magnolias* (Starring Loni Ackerman), *The Wedding Singer*, *Wine Lover*, *White Noise*, *Aida* (Le Petit Theatre, New Orleans). **Selected Credits: Broadway/National Tour/West End:** *Jersey Boys* (Resident Director); *Billy Crystal's 700 Sundays* (Associate Director); *Walking With Dinosaurs* (North American Tour); *Dracula*; *Zhivago*; *As You Like It*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *Cover Girls*. **New York:** *Gentleman's Wish*; *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (Barrow Group, NY); *For the Love Of Christ*, *The Musical!* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *Platforms* (Theatre at St. Clements); *Dancing With Abandon*; *Inventing Avi Aviv* (Abingdon Theatre); *Morgan Karr: An Awfully Big Adventure* (Joe's Pub); *City of Light* (Book/Director). Ms. Ruggiero is currently the Book Writer & Director for Dani Tapper and Phil Benson's *Class Reunion*, and Beverly Ross's *City Of Light*. She has also written dozens of cabaret and solo shows for Broadway artists and published musicians that have been performed all over the country and on International Cruise Lines.

HOLLY CRUZ (Choreographer) NY credits: Broadway by the Year- Town Hall; Broadway Jukebox- Birdland; Christmas Review-Rockefeller's Rainbow Room; Triad Theatre. Regional: Theatre Under the Stars- Houston; Seatte's Fifth Avenue Theatre; North Carolina Theatre; Ogunquit Playhouse- Maine; Goodspeed Opera House- CT. Allenberry Playhouse- PA. Cheers and Love to her parents and Eddie!

JOSHUA PALMER (Production Design, Tour Production Supervisor) is a Production Manager and Designer currently working on projects in New York, Maine and New Orleans. Current projects include: Ogunquit Playhouse 2011 Season, *Hope In Chaos* (New York), *Wine Lovers* and *Class Reunion* (New York). Recent Design Credits: 13, Title of Show, Bang The Law, Mr. Marmalade, Little Dog Laughed (Le Petit Theatre).

CAST BIOS

KRISTY CATES* (Katherine Reese) was a member of the Original Broadway Cast of *Wicked* and understudy to the lead role of Elphaba, played by Idina Menzel. She performed with the *Wicked* cast on the 2004 Tony Awards, the Late Show with David Letterman and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Cates went on to play Elphaba in the Chicago and first National Tour productions of *Wicked*. Recently, Kristy starred as Madison in *Click, Clack, Moo* at the Lucille Lortel Theatre. Also, Off-Broadway, Kristy starred in *Boobs! The Musical* which celebrated the songs of legendary 50's and 60's singer Ruth Wallis. She received positive reviews for playing Ruth Wallis and a barrage of other characters (including a medicated Mary Poppins and a Follies Bergere wannabe). Cates was also seen in *Snapshots* (by Stephen Schwartz), the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players' Production of *Princess Ida* and the world premiere of the new musical *Unbeatable* (original cast album available at www.unbeatablemusical.com). She has performed at St. Louis MUNY, The Eugene O'Neill Conference and the NY Fringe Festival. Kristy's extensive concert experience ranges from guest spots at Joe's Pub and The Duplex to solo concerts at the Metropolis in Chicago, the Laurie Beechman Theatre and various other venues across the nation. Recently, she was honored to perform concerts at the Palace of Versailles in Paris and on a chartered cruise in the Mediterranean. She is also a voice-over artist and National Anthem soloist for several professional sports teams.

BRYAN MCELROY* (Brian Scott) is happy to be a part of *Wine Lovers*. A Chicago native, his past credits include: Chicago: *Jersey Boys* (Tommy). First National Tour: *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Jimmy). Off Broadway: *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Chuck) Regional: *Across the Way* (Peter), *King O' the Moon* (Rudy), *Grease* (Kenickie), *Taming of the Shrew* (Hortensio), *Evita* (Che), *The Big Funk* (Gregory), *Lucky Stiff* (Bellhop), *The Rink* (Lucky), *School House Rock Live!* (Joe and Tom). Off-Broadway reading: *The Navigator* (Nate), *Wingman* (Josh). Bryan is a proud member of AEA and would like to thank you for your support of the arts. www.bryanmcelroy.com

JAMIE WAX* (Charles) started his career as an actor, writer, and comedian at the age of fourteen. His Equity stage roles include Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Pilate in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Brad in *The Rocky Horror Show*, Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Father Flynn in multiple productions of *Doubt*, and Mr. Applegate in *Damn Yankees*. He also appeared as Toy in the play *Guns for the Mark Taper Forum* in Los Angeles. He is the author of seven plays, including the acclaimed one-man show *Goin' to Jackson*, which he continues to tour throughout the country. With composer Paul Taranto, he created and appeared in the musical *Evangeline*, which was seen nationally on PBS. The pair later collaborated on the musical *Passages*, which was also made into an award-winning special for public television. His latest play, *The Scutley Papers*, was recently awarded the Eudora Welty prize. He has several television, film, and theatre projects in development, and is the father of two amazing kids.

ZAK MOSES (Production Stage Manager) is a proud NOLA native. Last August, he became a member of The Young Americans. Since then, Zak has been spreading his love of music with at-risk children in Southern California. He has recently returned to the States after having spent the last three months with The Young Americans traveling through Germany, Lithuania, and the Netherlands, giving the gift of music to local students and communities. He is happy to be back with the *Wine Lovers* team after Stage Managing the New Orleans production. Other credits include *Soul Doctor* (SM), *The Little Dog Laughed* (SM), *13* (ASM), and [title of show] (ASM)—all with Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré. He also served as the Assistant Stage Manager for the National WWII Museum's live exhibit *Let Freedom Swing*.

The Times-Picayune

Published: May 10, 2010

By Todd Price

'WINE LOVERS' AT LE PETIT BLENDS MUSIC AND WINE



The story is old. Boy meets girl. They share six glasses of wine. And boy and girl fall in love. At “Wine Lovers,” a musical that begins a run at **Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre** on May 18, the romance is set to rhythm and the audience gets to sip along with the cast.

“Theater people love a good drink, whether it’s before or after the show,” said Holly-Anne Ruggiero, the show’s New York-based director. “To be able to combine those two things? I thought it was a great idea.”

When the public enters the Muriel’s Cabaret Theatre at Le Petit, they’ll find tables set with glasses of wines from the California vineyard Hess and the cellar of Muriel’s restaurant. The audience came for a play, but they’re getting a class. The teacher is Charles Thompson, played by Jamie Wax. He explains the basics of wine and wanders occasionally into the audience, asking their opinions or critiquing how they grip their glasses.

“We take pauses for the audience to appreciate what the actors are saying,” said Ruggiero. “You’ll hear the audience say, for example, ‘oh yeah, it really does taste like cherries.’”

Over the course of the play, two of the “students,” played by P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke, learn to appreciate each other as well as reds and whites.

The wine writer Michael Green created the show and debuted it at **NOWFE** in 2006. He then teamed up with Ruggiero, who has worked on the New York production of “Jersey Boys” and Billy Crystal’s “700 Sundays.” She turned Green’s two-hour work, with music by jazz pianist Gary Negbaur and book by Travis Kramer, into a snappy 70-minute musical.

A wine tasting musical presents extra challenges for the director and actors. When the wines are changed, Green supplies new descriptions and the script must be updated. Having a cheerfully inebriated audience, though, also has its advantages.

“By the time we bring out the champagne, people are toasting everybody,” she said. “You can’t get people to leave the theater at the end of the show, because everybody sits there and wants to talk about the wines.”

Ruggiero now divides her time between New York and New Orleans. She directed “Steel Magnolias” at Le Petit, collaborated with the New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars and is working to bring Broadway-bound shows to New Orleans for tryouts.

Green and Ruggiero have considered other drinks that might benefit from a musical treatment. “Michael Green does beer tastings in the summer,” said Ruggiero, “and we’ve talked to a company in Dublin about doing a beer tasting musical. I don’t think, though, that you could do a liquor tasting musical. People would just be too drunk.”



New Musical *Wine Lovers* Extends Run in New Orleans; Tour to Launch in August

By Andrew Gans
03 Jun 2010

Wine Lovers, the new wine-tasting musical that is currently playing Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré's Muriel's Cabaret Theatre, has extended its run at the New Orleans venue through June 20.

A national tour of the production will launch in Florida in August; additional dates are expected. Casting for the tour will be announced shortly — the New Orleans cast includes Jamie Wax, P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke.

Wine Lovers features a score by international wine expert Michael Green and jazz pianist Gary Negbaur and book by Travis Kramer with additional contributions by Green and Negbaur. Holly-Anne Ruggiero directs and produces, and Holly Cruz choreographs.

The new musical, according to press notes, "tells the story of lovable painter Brian Scott and know-it-all business woman Katherine Reese, two mismatched students, attending a wine class led by an effervescent teacher, Charles Thompson, whose goal in life is to take the mystery out of wine. Over the course of 70 minutes, Brian, Katherine and the audience learn all about reds, whites, screw caps, Zinfandels...and a little bit about love."

During the play, audience members enjoy a tasting of six wines along with the cast.

Muriel's Cabaret Theatre is located in Le Petit Theatre at 616 St. Peter Street in New Orleans. Tickets are \$59, which includes the six tastings of wines. To learn more and to purchase tickets, go to www.lepetittheatre.com or www.winloversthemusical.com.





NEW ORLEANS' *WINE LOVERS* EXTENDS RUN THROUGH JUNE 20th!

WINE LOVERS, the wine-tasting musical, previously scheduled to run through June 13 at Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré's Muriel's Cabaret Theatre in New Orleans, will now run through June 20, according to the theatre's official website. Over the course of the play, audience members will enjoy a tasting of six delightful wines along with the cast.

"No one knows music, wine or food like New Orleans. The way in which this community is able to share a meal, hoist a glass, and channel soul through song is incredible. WINE LOVERS is the perfect hybrid of these passions, and is sure to bring New Orleanians together for a wonderful evening out, doing what they do best - celebrate!" says WINE LOVERS Director and Producer Holly-Anne Ruggiero.

WINE LOVERS tells the story of painter Brian Scott and businesswoman Katherine Reese, two mismatched students, attending a wine class led by an effervescent teacher, Charles Thompson, whose goal in life is to take the mystery out of wine. Over the course of 70 minutes, Brian, Katherine and the audience learn all about reds, whites, screw caps, Zinfandels...and a little bit about love.

"The original concept came out of the inherent theatricality of a wine class, and the reasons why people attend such a class," says Michael Green, the show's creator and a long-time participant and seminar panelist of the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience. "Wine is such an inherently romantic beverage that turning a wine tasting into a musical love story just felt natural."

Hailed as a "great evening out" by the New York Post, WINE LOVERS "has something for everyone... beginners and wine snobs alike! - You'll be drunk with love over this unique, witty show!" (DrVino.com).

WINE LOVERS features a score written by international wine expert Michael Green and jazz pianist Gary Negbaur and book by Travis Kramer with additional contributions by Green and Negbaur. Presented by Holly-Anne Ruggiero (Broadway: Jersey Boys, Billy Crystal's 700 Sundays) who also directs the show, and New Orleans-based Solomon Group. WINE LOVERS is choreographed by Holly Cruz (Broadway: Seussical, CATS), stars Jamie Wax, P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke and features wines from Muriel's Jackson Square's own vineyard.

Muriel's Cabaret Theatre is located in Le Petit Theatre at 616 St. Peter Street New Orleans, LA 70116; 504.522.2087. To learn more and to purchase tickets, go to www.lepetittheatre.com. Tickets are \$59, which includes the 6 tastings of wines. Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, approaching its 95th season, continues its long history as a cultural icon in the New Orleans theatre and performing arts community. A launching place for young talent, a stalwart for local talent and a return stage for those who have gone on to further careers, Le Petit features a full season of traditional and new musical productions.

DWIGHT THE WINE DOCTOR

WINE LOVERS, THE WINE TASTING MUSICAL CABARET GOES SOMMELIER

Wednesday, June 2, 2010
by Dwight Casimere

In New Orleans, especially in the French Quarter, wine and food are not only the 'national pastime,' they're a passion. They not only enjoy them 24/7, they write musicals about them. Wine Lovers, the first ever wine tasting musical returned to New Orleans for a limited engagement at its theatrical home, Le Petit Theatre, Muriel's Cabaret on historic Jackson Square. Held in conjunction with the 2010 New Orleans Wine and Food Experience, **the play incorporates elements of musical theatre with an actual wine tasting experienced by the audience and led by a singing sommelier.**

The interactive show is a collaboration of internationally acclaimed wine writer Michael Green and local New Orleans singer/songwriter Gary Negbaur and is directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero, who has worked on the Tony Award-winning New York production of Jersey Boys.

Audience members are immediately brought into the action and storyline by participating in a 'wine tasting' led by the show's narrator and lead singer, Jamie Wax. They are seated at tables containing an array of red and white wines in numbered glasses and are asked by the narrator/singer to participate in a wine class led by the mythical sommelier, Charles Thompson. Thompson's sole mission in life is to rhapsodize about the joys of drinking wine and to pass his enthusiasm and expertise on to others. He gloms on to a pair of mismatched would-be lovers, Brian, an idealistic painter(P.J. McKinnie), and Katherine(Jennifer Schemke), a know-it-all, no nonsense businesswoman. The two are about as compatible as a rip roaring Zinfandel and a delicate Souffle!

Over the course of 70 minutes of singing and dancing, Thompson attempts to spark some chemistry between the two while singing the joys of drinking Chardonnay, Cabernet, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Merlot.

"The original concept came out of the inherent theatricality of a wine class, and the reasons why people attend such a class," Green, a long time participant and seminar panelist of the New Orleans Wine & Food Experience said of the musical. "Wine is such a romantic beverage that turning a wine tasting into a musical love story just felt natural."

The score, a collaboration of Green and Negbaur, with book by Travis Kramer, skewers wine snobs and tired conventions. There's even a number dedicated to the controversy over the use of screw caps in wine bottling.

The wines are provided by Muriel's Jackson Square restaurant owners Rick and Denise Gratia and include a selection of Barossa Valley Semillon, 2006 (\$13.99 retail), by legendary Australian winemaker Peter Lehmann, who Dwight The Wine Doctor had the pleasure of visiting at his estate in the Barossa last year and additional wines, including Hess Select Sauvignon Blanc, Lake County, California 2008 (\$13.99 retail) and Poema Cava Brut(\$11.98 retail), an intriguing Spanish sparkler. The tasting/musical also included Muriel's own private label, Jackson Square Merlot, Chalk Hill 2007(\$38), Napa Valley Chardonnay, 2009(\$38) and Napa Valley Cabernet 2007(\$38), all available at the restaurant on their wine list, which offers over 300 bottles from around the world.

"Theatre people love to have a drink, particularly a glass of wine, either before or after a show or at intermission," director Holly-Anne Ruggiero said of the concept. "Its great to be able to combine those two elements into a single experience."

Drinking the selection of highly approachable wines and listening to the performers go through their paces was a perfect way to spend an afternoon. As one who loves music and who also loves good wine, it was a match made in heaven!

**Dwight Casimere is one of the world's premiere connoisseurs and wine and food writers and reviewers, based in Chicago.*

THE NEW ORLEANS MENU DAILY

Eating And Drinking, Out And In

By Tom Fitzmorris

Five-Star Edition

No Advertising

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Wine Lovers, The First Wine-Tasting Play

The theatre is ever changing. Opening tonight at Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre (a.k.a. The Little Theatre) is **Wine Lovers**, an unusual musical that catches my attention because it concerns wine, too. It's a love story about a soft-spoken painter and a hard-nosed businesswoman. They meet at a wine appreciation class, and then. . . well, by that point something else is going on. Not only are they tasting actual wines on stage, but so is the audience in the seats. Six wines will be poured, accompanied by commentary from a wine instructor who straddles the divide between play and reality. In other words, you see a play and you taste some wine--during the play! It's written by Michael Green, who has traveled the country putting on wine events for years. He's a frequent visitor to New Orleans. Opening night is tonight at 8:30 p.m. It runs through June 13, with a mix of matinee and evening performances. Tickets are \$62 (they include all the wines). More information and tickets can be had at www.lepetittheatre.com. *Muriel's Cabaret Stage at Le Petit Theatre. French Quarter: 616 St. Peter (diagonally across from Jackson Square). 504-522-2081.*

*Holly-Anne Ruggiero, Director; Michael Green, Writer, and Jamie Wax, Star of *WINE LOVERS*, appeared on Mr. Fitzmorris' radio show twice to discuss the show and it's New Orleans run, during the week of the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience.

BIOGRAPHY:

*Tom Fitzmorris is the leading wine and food critic in writer in New Orleans. His program, The Tom Fitzmorris Show, airs for three hours a day, six days a week, on WWL (1350 AM) and WWL (105.3 FM). "I'm not sure of that much radio time spent on food will work," he says. "It's only been on the air since 1988."

Tom writes and publishes the New Orleans Menu, a newsletter published every weekday online at NOMenu.Com. It covers the whole New Orleans food scene: restaurant reviews, recipes, top-ten lists, a calendar of local food events, a daily food almanac, and his Dining Diary. "It's what's now called a blog, but I've written it since decades before that word was invented," he says.

He's the author of sixteen restaurant guides, four cookbooks, and a memoir. The most recent include the fifth edition of "The Unofficial Guide to New Orleans" (Menasha Ridge Press, 2008) and "Tom Fitzmorris's New Orleans Food: 250 of the City's Best Recipes for Cooking at Home" (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, Second Edition, 2010). The memoir--which focuses on the reaction and recovery of the restaurant scene in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, as well as other major turning points in the city's culinary past--is "Hungry Town" (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2010).

WINE LOVERS The Musical Opens in New Orleans

May 19, 9:05 PM

New Orleans Performing Arts Examiner: Alan Smason



"Wine Lovers" cast members (from left) are P. J. McKinnie, Jennifer Schemke and Jamie Wax.

It is a natural pairing. Put six glasses of fine wine together with a musical "class" about the joys of tasting wine and you've got some idea of what "Wine Lovers" is all about. Attendees sit at tables of four seeing, swirling, smelling, sipping, swishing, swallowing or spitting the various varieties of wines covered in this course "taught" by the renowned Charles Thompson (**Jamie Wax**). Think of it as a unique offering. Both wine connoisseurs and neophytes of wine tastings can glean a lot about wine in a relatively short period (approximately 70 minutes) through the very fast patter songs and humorous ditties that make up the first few songs.

Somewhere around the third glass of wine, the two class attendees on stage Brian (**P. J. McKinnie**) and Katherine (**Jennifer Schemke**) are falling in love with wine and each other. It's a very cute study in contrasts: Brian is the plain, rugged guy who is lonely and looking for companionship, while Katherine is the self-assured career woman, who is looking to make more closings by ordering the right kind of wines. Slowly, they begin to realize that there is more to sample on their tongues than the bouquet or body in the wine.

Wax's portrayal of Charles Thompson is spot on. He is delightfully playful with both the actors and the audience and hams it up as often as he plays it straight on stage. While McKinnie and Schemke are on stage alone, the audience naturally becomes interested in their budding relationship. Yet, when Wax is onstage, he sets the tempo for what action will occur and makes the most of the comedic elements contained within. Producer and director Holly-Anne Ruggiero first became familiar with "Wine Lovers" in 2007 and 2008, when she directed the production in New York.

The clever scenic design by Joshua Palmer and lighting by Matthew Foucheaux is worthy of mention. Especially compelling are the video bits on the large screen that seconds as a virtual wine rack. Producers Ruggiero, Gary Solomon, Jr. , Jonathan Foucheaux and the creator of this show, Michael Green, are holding this presentation at the Muriel's Cabaret Stage at Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré. The Solomon Group and Ruggiero are providing major backing for the show and plan on taking the show on the road, presenting it at other U.S. venues over the course of the next year including several international dates.

For performance times, check out the Le Petit [website](#) or call 504-522-2081. Tickets are \$59 each, and the first five performances (after previews are over on May 26) will be considered part of the New Orleans Food and Wine Experience, the annual festival that showcases food and spirits. Another great pairing.



COUNTRY ROADS

ADVENTURES CLOSE TO HOME

Le Petit Théâtre presents *Wine Lovers*, the world's first wine tasting musical. That's right, audience members enjoy a tasting of six wines during a musical praising the joys of wine and love. Due to popular demand, the show has extended its run at the French Quarter Theatre through to Sunday, June 20th.

Wine Lovers features a score written by international wine expert Michael Green and jazz pianist Gary Negbaur. Directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero and choreographed by Holly Cruz, this interactive experience stars Jamie Wax, P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke and features wines from Muriel's Jackson Square's own vineyard. May 18—June 20. Showtimes are 8:30 pm on Thursday—Saturday; 5 pm Sunday. \$59 includes six glasses of wine. (504) 522-2081 or www.lepetittheatre.com.

GOOD LIVER NOLA.COM

May 26, 2010...8:00 am

The annual New Orleans Wine and Food Experience gets under way today.—You know, the past ten years of my life could be categorized as a “New Orleans wine and food experience.”—Anyway, the “experience” is a non-profit festival in its nineteenth year, and one of the most prestigious of its kind. It continues through the weekend. Tonight at 7 are myriad wine dinners at notable restaurants throughout the city. Each dinner is accompanied by offerings from a different winery. The meals are all-inclusive and run between \$75-\$125 a head. Some of them are sold out.

Before dinner, however, do check out *Wine Lovers: a Musical*. Apparently, it's some kind of romantic comedy about a couple of yuppies people falling in love at a wine tasting. **But, here's the kicker: this show is interactive, and the price of admission includes six glasses of wine. Yes, six!** The play is in conjunction with the festival, but is continuing its run at Le Petit Theatre past the weekend.





MAY 24, 2010

Wine Lovers, the Musical

BY WILL COVIELLO

Comedy sets with two-drink minimums are for lightweights. The musical *Wine Lovers* comes with a wine-tasting six-pack. Jamie Wax, P.J. McKinnie and Jennifer Schemke star in the musical comedy about love and wine. Performances are in conjunction with the New Orleans Wine & Food Experience (www.nowfe.com) and run May 25-30, June 3-6 and June 10-13; show times vary, visit www.lepetittheatre.com for details. Tickets \$62.



PUBLICITY: NON-CLIPS – RADIO AND APPEARANCES

MAY 10 th , 2010	THE WINE SHOW with Tim McNally Holly-Anne Ruggiero and Jamie Wax discuss the show LIVE
May 18 th , 2010	WSMB Radio – The Food Show with Tom Fitzmoris Holly-Anne Ruggiero and Jamie Wax discuss the show LIVE
May 23 rd , 2010	WTUL – Stage and Screen Appearance Holly-Anne Ruggiero and Jamie Wax discuss the show LIVE
May 27 th , 2010	WSMB Radio – The Food Show with Tom Fitzmoris Michael Green and Holly-Anne Ruggiero discuss the show LIVE
May 28 th , 2010	NOWFE: Super Dome Appearance Gary Negbaur, Holly-Anne Ruggiero and Cast present from the show
June 9 th , 2010	Margarita Bergen's New Orleans Living Round Table Appearance Holly-Anne Ruggiero and Cast present pieces from the show
July Issue	St. Charles Avenue (Society Editor, Diane Sustendahl) – Covered Opening Night
July Issue	New Orleans Living Magazine – Managing Editor, Cheryl Lemoine

CORK GOES BROADWAY

Amorim Cork America has supplied 5000 corks for the world's first wine tasting musical, the off-Broadway production 'Wine Lovers – The Musical'.

"At first we thought the request was very strange," said general manager Daryl Eklund. "When it was explained that the corks would be integral to the set design and part of the theme of wine and romance, how could we say no."

'Wine Lovers – The Musical' is a unique interactive experience that allows audiences to taste six wines while learning about the joy of wine and love. The play revolves around two mismatched students and their journey of discovery at a wine class.

"Using natural cork as a background added greatly to the play," said Julian Brizzi, the show's general manager. "When you think of romance, history, and the ritual of wine, natural cork is one of the first things that comes to mind."

Amorim supplied 5000 corks for the set of 'Wine Lovers – The Musical'.



Bark to Bottle, Issue #23, June 2008: Amorim

EXPLORE DANCE REVIEW: www.exploredance.com

By Robert Abrams

I thought Wine Lovers, a musical where the audience not only learns about wine but also gets to taste some excellent vintages, was a superb show, and so did Captain Janeway of Star Trek Voyager. Kate Mulgrew was in the audience the night I saw the show, and she gave the show a standing ovation at the final curtain call, but more on that later.

The Triad Theatre is an intimate venue with risers to help with the sight lines. Wine Lovers transformed the whole space, audience and stage included, into a bistro where a wine class was taking place. The audience area was packed fairly tightly with small tables packed fairly tightly with ten glasses of wine for two people each. The set on stage was an extension of the audience area, just with more room. The walls were hung with pictures of grapes and wine.

There are plenty of shows where you can sit at a table and drink (ExploreDance.com uses the Spanish term Tablao to refer to all shows of this sort), but I have never seen a show that was also a wine tasting. I thought that it was a good concept well executed. On some level the show was a paean to wine, and so one could argue that it was a skill, but if you believe in your product there is nothing wrong with being a skill. Someone who already knows that they can't stand wine and just wants a musical might not like this show, but other than that I think that people will find they are getting either a quality musical with six glasses of good wine thrown in as a bonus or six glasses of quality wine with a good musical thrown in as a bonus. Normally, one would get only one or the other for the \$65 ticket price, not both. The only way Wine Lovers could have given better value was if they had given away a set of steak knives with each ticket purchase.

The characters had depth. The music, by Gary Negbaur and Michael Green, fit in a range of styles, with some reminiscent of Gilbert and Sullivan in terms of very fast lyrics and others echoing West Side Story in terms of memorable notes that float away. Tuck Milligan, Jessica Phillips and Eric Rubbe all had articulate voices, which was fortunate because the lyrics were intelligently written, such as "enough of ordering by the glass" to describe the desire to fall in love. The actors also had excellent comic timing. The show was directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero who did a fantastic job steering through the piece.

The choreography, by Holly Cruz, was small to fit a small stage, but it served its purpose of making the motion flow. The choreography included a very nice grapevine, no pun intended. There was tap dancing accompanied by wine glass and pencil percussion in the Screw Cap number. The Spin The Bottle number had a little Swing dancing. Again, there wasn't much dancing, but what was there was good with clean technique. The dancing enhanced the impact of each number. My notes indicate that Ms. Mulgrew was clapping enthusiastically at the end of the Spin the Bottle number. I thought that the Spin The Bottle song might have Westie-Hopper potential, but I would need to listen to it again to be sure. There was an entire musical number that discussed the merits of Sherry, a wine from Spain. Appropriately, the number incorporated some Flamenco. While there was nothing wrong with the Flamenco as danced, if the creators of Wine Lovers were looking for ways to improve an already excellent show, this is one number I would take another look at. I thought that the cast could have taken their Flamenco further. A few lessons could give the dancing in the number even more impact. There is another dance related problem with the Sherry number. In addition to the Flamenco, the number uses some Argentine Tango. The Tango is there because the number needs some partner dance type interaction. While it is true that Tango is a dance developed and danced largely by people who speak Spanish, it is not a dance from Spain. In a lesser show, this would be okay, but Wine Lovers' lyrics are so intelligent that unless the number made reference to Argentina, which it doesn't, the Tango looks out of place. Fortunately, there is a partner dance from Spain that has some stylistic similarities to Tango and which is also closer to Flamenco: Paso Doble. I think if Paso Doble were substituted for the Tango in the Sherry number, the number would work better. Not that the show should get rid of the Argentine Tango choreography by any means: it should just be put into a new number that discusses Argentine wines.

Between the music and the book, by Travis Kramer, Gary Negbaur and Michael Green, the show provided quite a bit of useful information while simultaneously being very amusing. For instance, the process of making wine involves a reaction between the sugar on the inside of the grapes and the yeast on the outside of the grapes. You should hold wine glasses by the stem of the glass, not the bowl of the glass. The show gave interesting conceptual approaches to pairing wine with food, such as light versus heavy, and similarity versus contrast. One of the challenges of being an editor is that people end up expecting you to review everything. I like wine, but I wouldn't claim to be an expert on it (which may be a good thing because it helps me avoid compulsions to buy \$500 bottles of wine). The audience got to drink six wines at key moments as the show progressed. The first, a 2006 Ca' Donini Pinot Grigio from Veneto, Italy was very pleasant with a light and fruity taste. The second wine, a 2007 Los Vascos Sauvignon Blanc from Casablanca, Chile was stronger than the first wine. The third wine was a 2006 Simon Hackett Chardonnay from Barossa Valley, Australia. It was very buttery. I thought it was an excellent Chardonnay. The fourth wine was a 2005 Louis Jadot Moulin-A-Vent "Chateau des Jacques" from Beaujolais, France. It had strong fumes and a rich tannin taste. The fifth wine was a 2005 Frances Coppola "Diamond Series" Zinfandel from California. It had excellent aroma and was very smooth. The final wine of the night was a Cava Cordon Negro Brut sparkling wine by Friexenet from Penedes, Spain that was very refreshing.

And since the creators of Wine Lovers did such a good job with a wine tasting musical, I am hoping they try their hands at a chocolate tasting musical.



Milligan, Rubbe and Phillips Are Wine Lovers Beginning Dec. 1

By Andrew Gans
December 1, 2007

Wine Lovers, billed as "the wine-tasting musical," makes its debut at the Triad Theater Dec. 1. From Dec. 1-3 and Dec. 8-10, theatregoers have the chance to enjoy six different wines while watching the Manhattan premiere of the new musical. Holly-Anne Ruggiero directs the production, which stars Kinsey's Tuck Milligan, Blue Man Group's Eric Rubbe and The Scarlet Pimpernel's Jessica Phillips. Show time is 7 PM. Wine Lovers features a score by composer-jazz pianist Gary Negbaur and wine expert Michael Green and a book by Travis Kramer. The musical, according to press notes, "tells the story of two mismatched students at a wine class led by an effervescent teacher and their journey of discovery."

Co-creator Green said in a statement, "The original concept came out of the inherent theatricality of a wine class, and the reasons why people attend a class." Negbaur added, "Wine is such an inherently romantic beverage that turning a wine tasting into a musical love story just felt natural."

The Triad Theatre is located in Manhattan at 158 West 72nd Street. For more information or to purchase \$65 tickets, visit www.wineloversthemusical.com. Attendees must be 21 or over.





CURTAINS AND CORKS

November 30, 2007

Trying to decide which play to see during the holiday season can drive you to drink, but Triad Theater's "Wine Lovers" has oenophiles and theatergoers covered.

Possibly the first-ever "wine-tasting musical," this show pairs an onstage performance - by two wine-tasting students and their teacher - with an audience that quietly samples the same six wines as the actors, but from the comfort of their seats.

The limited run starts tomorrow night and continues with performances Sunday, Monday and Dec. 8-10 at 7 p.m. 158 W. 72nd St.; (212) 362-2590. Tickets are \$65 at wineloversthemusical.com.



Issue Date: November 1, 2007, Posted On: 11/8/2007

How to Make a Wine Glass Sing

By Kara Newman

While “interactive” musicals like Tony n’ Tina’s Wedding have been around for some time, now wine is taking on a starring role in a new production.

Wine Lovers, a new wine-tasting musical from Late Harvest productions opening at New York’s Triad Theater on December 1st, features a score written by wine expert Michael Green and composer Gary Negbaur.

“The original concept for Wine Lovers came out of the inherent theatricality of wine classes and the fascinating reasons why people are driven to attend a class in the first place,” says Green.

The play tells a love story about two mismatched students who meet in a wine education class. Audience members sample 6 wines along with the on-stage class.

Although the production originally premiered in New Orleans in May 2006, Green says that the play since has been significantly reworked and features an entirely new cast of three—the two lovers and their “effervescent” teacher (who ebullient wine educator Green insists is not an autobiographical character).

While the specific wines have not yet been selected, varietals and flavor profiles will include an aromatic, unsoaked Sauvignon Blanc; an oaky, warm-climate Chardonnay; a light, high-acid red wine such as Beaujolais or Pinot Noir; a full-bodied red such as Zinfandel or Cabernet; and will finish off with a festive sparkler, such as Cava.

“This is not about aggressively promoting a specific brand of wine,” Green explains. “We didn’t want to feel this was a reality show with obscene product placement. But at a wine tasting class, you would know the wine and the region and who produced it as well.”

Wine Spectator

LEARN MORE, DRINK BETTER

In recent years, we've seen Broadway musicals based on an Abba song, a canned pork product, and some singers from the state of New Jersey, so why not a musical about wine tasting? In early December, Wine Lovers, dubbed "the world's first wine-tasting musical," will make its New York debut in a limited run off-Broadway (which makes it immune to the ongoing strike that's darkened many theaters). The show, which Unfiltered caught a dress rehearsal of earlier this week, tells the story of two students in a wine class who meet and—surprise!—fall in love. The show also touches on such topics as screw caps, the history of wine and the layman's fears about the beverage, and includes a six-wine tasting for all audience members as well as those onstage. Michael Green, who began writing the musical's score several years ago on Valentine's Day (and eventually pulled in collaborator Gary Negbaur, a composer and jazz pianist), said of his inspiration, "I think there's such an inherent theatricality in the whole food-and-wine landscape that to bring the worlds of wine and theater together is just an intuitive thing." Should Wine Lovers be met with success, Unfiltered might just come up with its own wine-based musical. Working titles include "A Bottling Line," "Damn Brettanomyces," and "The Best Little Crush Facility in Napa."



DR.YINO.COM

SIDEWAYS, THE MUSICAL?

Wine has conquered the silver screen with *Sideways* and two forthcoming wine movies. Now our favorite beverage turns its sights on Broadway (well, off-off Broadway). Michael Green, Gourmet wine contributor, is the force behind the interactive production that encourages the audience to “see, swirl, smell, sip, and savor *WINE LOVERS* — a romance in six glasses.” On their web site, Green says that it’s a send-up of the “theatricality” of wine education—wait, he doesn’t mean my forthcoming class, does he?

From what we hear, the musical is a must-see, so get yourself over to the Triad Theatre on 72nd Street and hoist a glass before this Off Broadway run ends on January 22nd!

WINE LOVERS

Conceived by Michael Green

Book by Michael Green, Travis Kramer and Gary Negbaur

Lyrics by Michael Green and Gary Negbaur

Music by Gary Negbaur

Directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero

Choreography by Holly Cruz

FIRST WINE TASTING MUSICAL PREMIERES IN NYC

A unique, interactive concept of incorporating wine tasting with a musical is being introduced to audiences in New York, December 1 at the Triad Theatre.

"Wine Lovers" tells the story of two mismatched students attending a wine class led by an effervescent teacher and their journey of discovery. During the show, audience members enjoy six delightful wines along with the class, and everyone learns a little about wine... and love.

"Wine Lovers" features a score written by Michael Green and Gary Negbaur, an award winning composer and jazz pianist and the book is by writer Travis Kramer (It's Karate, Kid! The Musical). The show stars Tuck Milligan (Kinsey, The Kentucky Cycle, Chappelle's Show) and is directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero, (Jersey Boys, 700 Sundays).





WINE, THE MUSICAL

Michael Green is Gourmet Magazine's wine and spirits consultant. He's also appeared on a variety of Food Network shows. He's now done something truly new and different - written a musical about wine. Well, wine and love. It premieres in New York City in early December. I'll let him explain:

As many of you may know, for the last few years I have been working on a unique concept - the first wine tasting musical. Yes, a wine tasting musical!

WINE LOVERS tells the story of two mismatched students attending a wine class led by an effervescent teacher and their journey of discovery. During the show, audience members enjoy six delightful wines along with the class, and everyone learns a little about wine... and love.

The show will have an initial run beginning December 1st at the Triad Theatre. Tickets can be purchased through www.wineloversthemusical.com.

WINE LOVERS features a score written by myself and Gary Negbaur, an award winning composer and jazz pianist and the book is by writer Travis Kramer (It's Karate, Kid! The Musical). The show stars Tuck Milligan (Kinsey, The Kentucky Cycle, Chappelle's Show) and is directed by Holly-Anne Ruggiero, (Jersey Boys, 700 Sundays).

